

Tonality vs. Atonality

Characteristics of Traditional Harmony:

- Tonality. A tonal center embodied in the tonic triad.
- Tonality is established by the progression V-I and the resolution of the leading tone to the tonic pitch. Harmonic progressions point towards the tonic.
- Functional harmony. Chords are polarized around a tonal center.
- Voice-Leading Procedures: 7th resolves up; 4th scale degree resolves down to the third.
- Melodic emphasis on scale degrees 1,3,5; Melodic Skips between 1 and 5.
- Works begin and end in the same key.
- Diatonicism. The more chromatic chords are used the less stable the tonality becomes.
- Strong cadences. PAC

In the 20th-century, composers thought of new ways to establish a tonic:

- reiteration
- return
- pedal point and ostinato bass create stability.
- accent
- formal placement
- register - draw the listener's attention to a pitch class or focal pitch.

Factors that weaken tonality

- Avoidance of the tonic.
- Suppression of the dominant harmony.
- Continuous modulation.
- Chromaticism.
- Weak cadences.

Atonal music is marked by a weakening or a suppression of the factors that produce tonality.