

This Advent moon

SATB divisi, a cappella

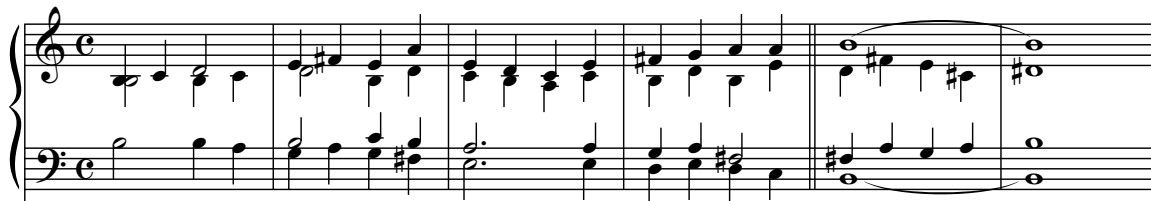
Text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
from the poem *Advent* (1858)

Music: Charles H. Giffen, 2009

Notes on Musical Structure

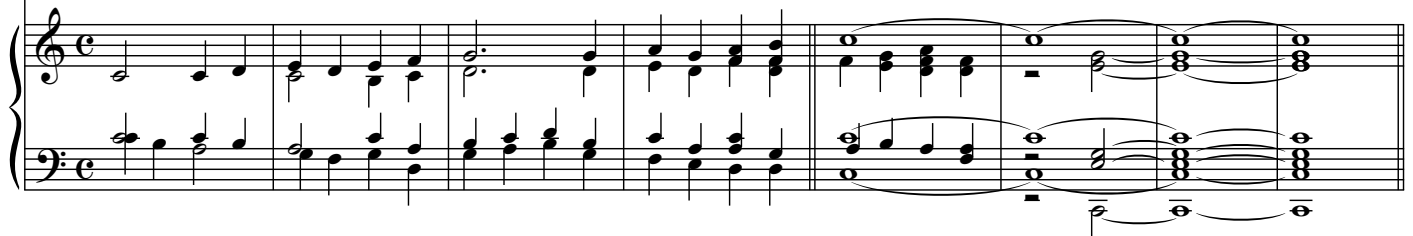
A principal compositional device in this piece is the use of strict chromatic inversion. There are two instances of this, in which the music of one section (except for the way cadences are handled) is inverted, note for note, each ascending (or descending) interval replaced by a descending (or ascending) interval of the same size. This requires that the inverted soprano line becomes the bass line, the inverted alto line becomes the tenor line, the inverted tenor line becomes the alto line, and the inverted bass line becomes the soprano line - to preserve the inverted intervallic structure. The opening six bars, when inverted in this fashion, become the final six bars (plus two bars that extend the final chord) - the inversion is strict through the first four bars (disregarding added notes from the 8-part structure in the fourth bar):

Bars 1-6:



Musical notation for Bars 1-6, showing a piano accompaniment with treble and bass staves. The music is in common time (C) and features a chromatic descending line in the treble staff and a corresponding ascending line in the bass staff.

Bars 77-84:



Musical notation for Bars 77-84, showing a piano accompaniment with treble and bass staves. This section is a chromatic inversion of the first six bars, with the treble staff containing the inverted bass line and the bass staff containing the inverted treble line.

The other strict inversion occurs when bars 7-21 are inverted to form bars 44-59 (there is a one bar extension in the inversion). Immediately after this inversion, the uninverted music returns in bars 60-76 (there is a much longer extension and cadential change beginning in bar 73 to arrive at the musical high point of the piece in bars 74-76):

Bars 7-21:

Musical score for Bars 7-21, showing a strict inversion. The score is written for piano in G major, 4/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving bass lines. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

Bars 44-59:

Musical score for Bars 44-59, showing the inverted version of the previous section. The melodic and harmonic relationships are preserved from the original section but mirrored. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one sharp, and a 4/4 time signature.

Bars 60-76:

Musical score for Bars 60-76, showing the return of the uninverted music. This section includes a longer extension and a cadential change starting in bar 73. The notation is consistent with the previous sections, featuring a key signature of one sharp and a 4/4 time signature.

Musical score for Bars 74-76, showing the musical high point of the piece. The right hand has a more active melodic line with sixteenth notes, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment. The key signature remains one sharp.

Musical score for Bars 77-80, showing the continuation of the piece. The right hand features a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand provides a harmonic base. The key signature is one sharp.

Musical score for Bars 81-84, showing the final section of the piece. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand provides a harmonic base. The key signature is one sharp.

In bars 22-35 part of the melody of the chorale "*Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme*" appears briefly in strict inversion, moving from the alto, to the bass, and finally to the tenor part. The example below gives the uninverted melody in the treble staff with the inverted form in the bass staff for comparison (of course only the inverted form appears in this work):

"Wach - et auf!" ruft uns — die Stim - me der Wäch - ter sehr hoch auf der Zin - ne,

Bars 22-35:

"Wach auf du Stadt Je - ru - sa - lem! — Wohl - auf der Bräut' - gam kommt."

The recitative in bars 36-43 consists of four 2 bar phrases in which the melody ascends by a whole step. The contour is essentially the same in all but the third phrase, which is slightly more elaborate:

Bars 36-43:

Finally, a few evident properties of strict inversion:

- (1) strict inversion of a major chord becomes a minor chord (and vice-versa),
- (2) strict inversion of a major 7th chord is a major 7th chord, and
- (3) strict inversion of a minor 7th chord is a minor 7th chord.

Also, although a major 6-4 chord is harmonically somewhat weak (except in passing), a minor 6-4 chord possesses a greater degree of stability; hence, it follows that, when a major chord with the root as the top note is strictly inverted, the result is acceptable.