

Preface

Harmony, rhythm, and melody are the three basic features of our present-day music that are usually mentioned in one breath. No one would seriously assert that they only happen to meet in music by chance. Nevertheless, there is to date no scientific representation of the music which demonstrates that these three aesthetic characteristics necessarily cohere and which develops the musical concepts accordingly. Instead, music theory juxtaposes harmony, rhythm, and melody as subfields without revealing any inner connection. This is symptomatic of a state of musicology to which still applies what was already noted in the 19th century about the efforts to establish its theoretical foundation:

*“All attempts of this kind have, up to now, not been able to create a really tenable scientific-musical system according to which all phenomena in the musical field are presented to be always necessary consequences of one basic principle ... But what is laid down in musical textbooks with scientific justification has so far proved a failure, partly ... because it was just as little able to create a self-contained system with undoubted conclusions, partly because, as a fantastic construction, it lacked any scientific basis.”*¹

The present book on the tonal music and the laws of its beauty emerged from a project initiated in 1980 to overcome the deficiency mentioned by Richter and to present the basic musical forms systematically and coherently. The reader can now be informed about what harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic structures have in common, how they differ, and how they are connected internally. The fact that such an analysis also yields some surprising results lies in the nature of a project that did not want to settle for the previous state of knowledge in musicology. The reader is therefore cordially invited to verify the validity of a whole series of unfamiliar findings and conclusions.

¹ Ernst Friedrich Richter, *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*, Leipzig 1886, preface to the first edition (1853).