

Interpreting Some Transformational Aspects of Pentatonicism in Post-tonal Chinese Music on Dual Interval Space

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Abstract : In Chinese music, pentatonic collection is central in constituting all the harmonic and melodic elements; most of the traditional Chinese musicians particularly emphasize the importance of the smoothness between pentatonic collections when one collection modulates to another collection, articulating the roles of the pentatonic common tones. On the contrary, in post-tonal Chinese music the central features of the pentatonic modulations tend to reflect a larger number of semitonal relationships with a lesser number of common tones. This paper offers an analytical account of the transformations between pentatonic collections that arise in post-tonal Chinese music by adopting the methodology of the Tonnetz, in particular, Dual Interval Space (DIS), to elaborate and reexamine pentatonicism by focusing on the transformations between pentatonic elements, especially semitonal motion and common tones. In the essay, various pentatonic passages will be analyzed by means of DIS for highlighting the transformation of the collections. It will be shown that the pentatonic collections that are in semitonal, third, and augmented fourth relationships exhibit the maximum number of semitonal shifts.

Keywords : tonnetz, pentatonicism, post-tonal Chinese music, dual interval space, transformation

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