

# A New Type of Musical Coherence

Module 17 of *Music: Under the Hood*

John Hooker

Carnegie Mellon University

Osher Course  
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# Outline

- Nationalism in music
- Biography of Claude Debussy
- Analysis of *Clair de lune*

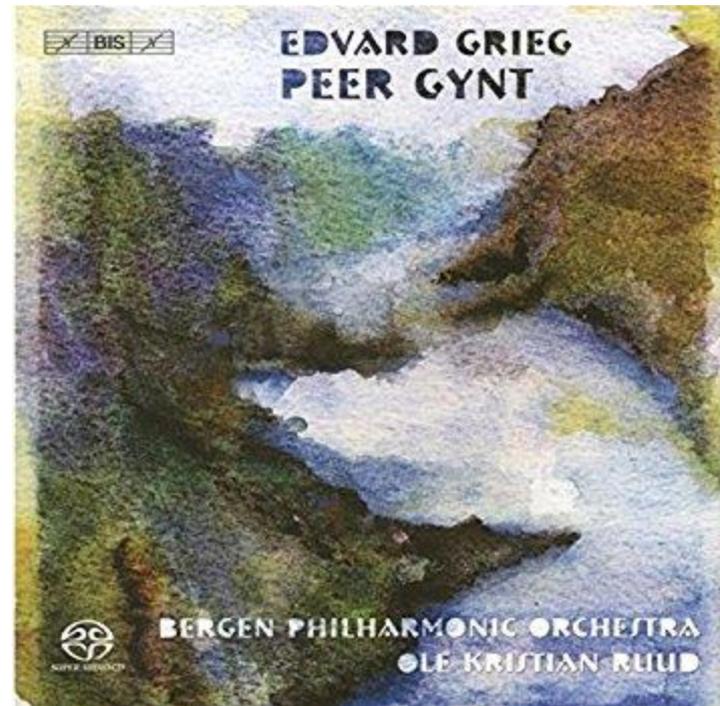
# Nationalism in Music

- Rise of ethnic consciousness and nationalism
  - Late 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - Rooted in colonialism and development of the concept of “a culture.”
    - As described by new field of cultural anthropology.
    - Whence self-conscious “national culture.”
    - Remains with us today, for better or worse.



# Nationalism in Music

- Rise of ethnic consciousness and nationalism
  - Led to nationalistic styles in music
    - During late Romantic era
    - Often inspired by rejection of “development”
    - ...and rejection of German domination of music scene.

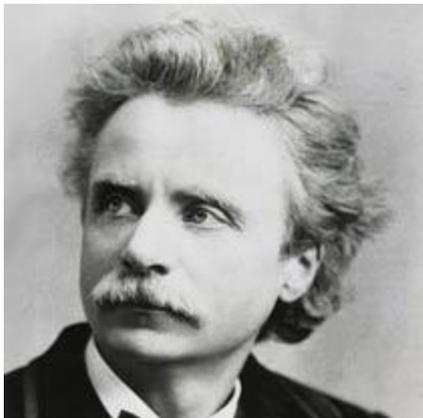


# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools

- Scandinavian

- Edvard Grieg, Norway (1843-1907)
    - Carl Nielsen, Denmark (1865-1931)
    - Jan Sibelius, Finland (1865-1957)



Grieg



Sibelius



Nielsen

# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools

- French

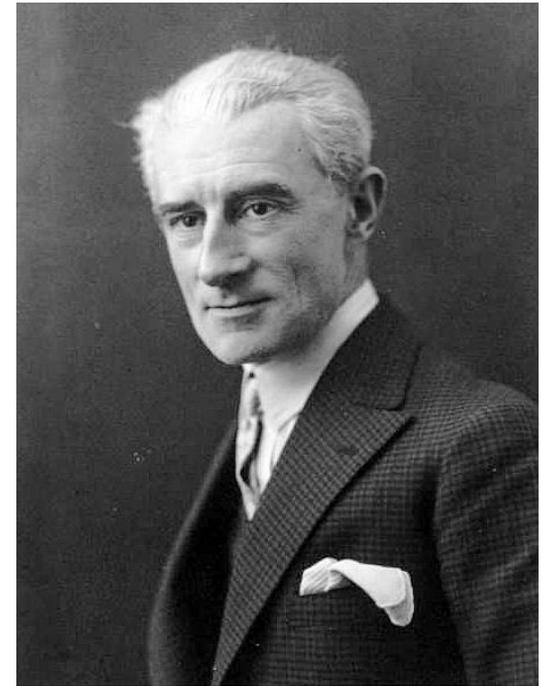
- Georges Bizet (1838-1875)
    - Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
    - Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
    - Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)



Bizet



Saint-Saëns



Ravel

# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools
  - German
    - Richard Wagner (1838-1875)



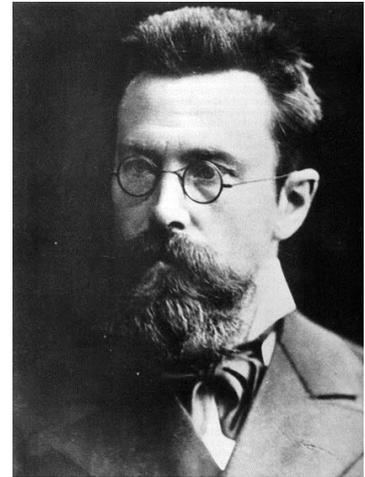
# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools

- Russian

- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
- The “Russian Five”
  - Mily Balakirev (1837-1910)
  - Cesár Cui (1835-1918)
  - – **Modest Mussorgsky** (1839-1881)
  - **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov** (1844-1908)
  - **Alexander Borodin** (1833-1887)

They took an oath to avoid development in their music!



Rimsky-Korsakov



Mussorgsky



Tchaikovsky



Borodin

# Nationalism in Music

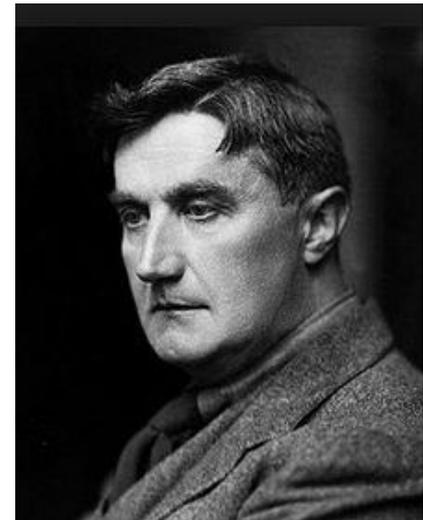
- Some nationalistic schools
  - British
    - Edward Elgar (1857-1934)
    - Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
    - Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)



Elgar



Holst



Vaughan Williams

# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools
  - Spanish
    - Issac Albeniz (1860-1909)
    - Manuel Da Falla (1876-1946)
    - Enrique Granados (1867-1916)



Albeniz



Da Falla



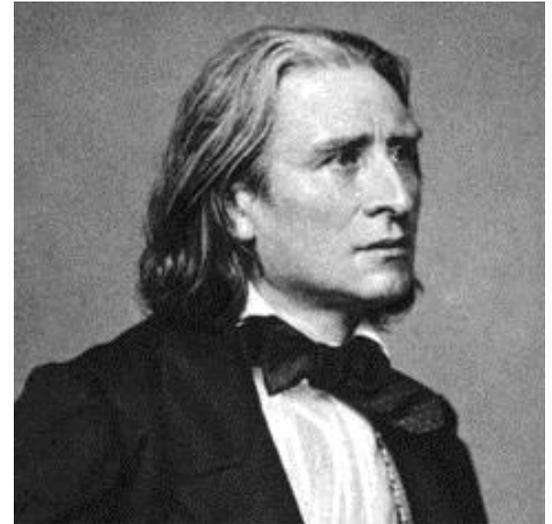
Granados

# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools
  - Czech/Slovak
    - Antonin Dvořák (1860-1909)
  - Hungarian
    - Franz (Ferenc) Liszt (1811-1886)



Dvořák



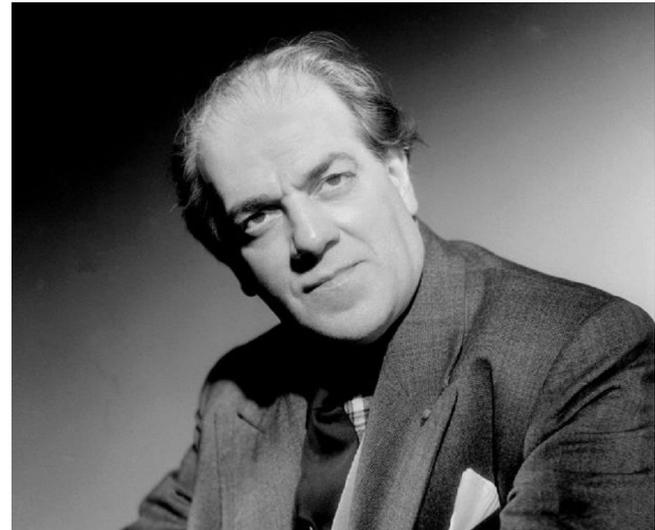
Liszt

# Nationalism in Music

- Some nationalistic schools
  - Romanian
    - Georges Enescu (1881-1955)
  - Brazilian
    - Heitor Villa-Lobos, Brazil (1887-1959)



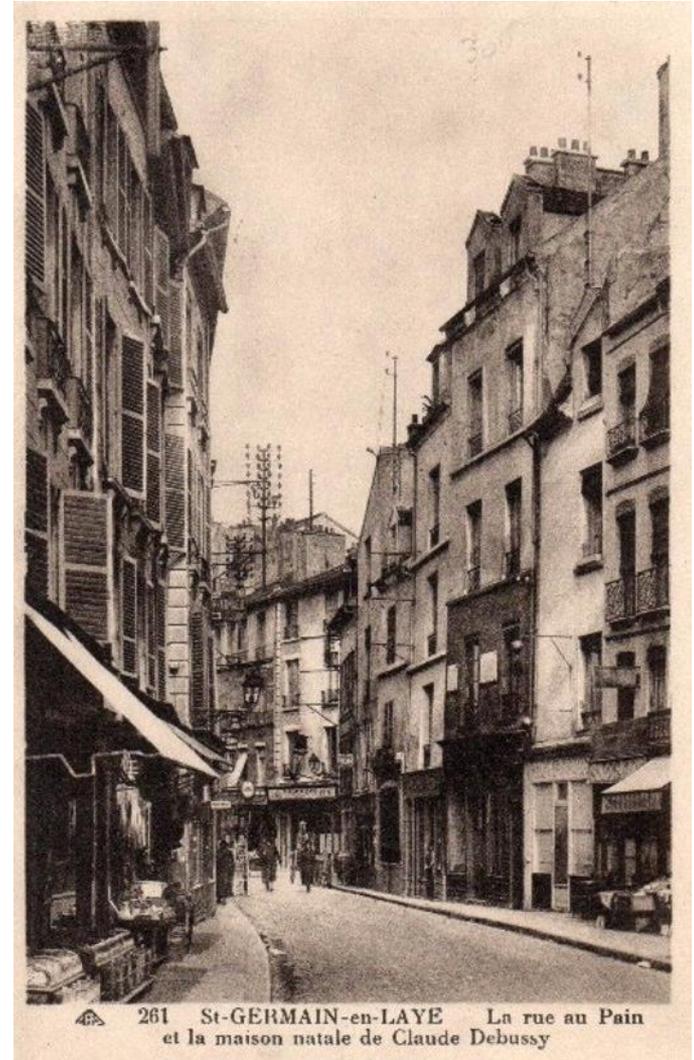
Enescu



Villa-Lobos

# Biography

- **Claude Debussy, 1862-1918**
  - **Born into poor French family**
    - Aunt paid for piano lessons, age 7.
  - **Entered Paris Conservatoire, age 10.**
    - Studied composition, etc., 11 years
  - **Sponsored by Nadezha von Meck, ages 18-20**
    - She was wealthy patron of Tchaikovsky



Where Debussy was born

# Biography

- Career

- Received *Prix de Rome* composition prize, age 22
  - Included 4-year fellowship in Italy
  - Left after 2 years.
- Went to Bayreuth, age 28
  - Strongly influenced by Wagner's *Tristan & Isolde*, which pushed boundaries of tonality.
  - But later ridiculed the music in *Golliwogg's Cakewalk*



# Biography

- **Career**
  - **Musical milestones**
    - *Suite Bergamasque*, ages 28-33.
    - *Prélude à l'après-midi d'une faune*, age 32.
    - *Pelléas et Mélisande*, opera, age 40, after 10 years of work
    - *La mer*, age 43
    - *Children's Corner Suite*, age 46, dedicated to his daughter.
    - *Préludes* for piano, first book, his best composition for piano, age 48



# Biography

- Personal life
  - Tumultuous
    - Various wives, mistresses
    - One of whom shot herself (but survived)
    - “He was a very, very strange man.”
    - But was devoted to his daughter.



Debussy and daughter Claude-Emma

# Biography

- Personal life

- Tumultuous

- Various wives, mistresses
    - One of whom shot herself (but survived)
    - “He was a very, very strange man.”
    - But was devoted to his daughter.

- Died of cancer, age 55.

- Daughter died a year later from diphtheria at age 14, due to doctor prescribing wrong medicine



Debussy and daughter Claude-Emma

# Biography

- Approach to composition
  - Perhaps not self-consciously nationalistic
    - But keenly interested in **symbolist** movement of French literature
      - Discussions with Stéphane Mallarmé about Wagner, Edgar Allen Poe
      - The purpose of art is “to depict not the thing but the effect it produces,” according to Mallarmé.



Manet's portrait of Mallarmé

# Biography

- Approach to composition
  - Perhaps not self-consciously nationalistic
    - Often identified with French **impressionism** in art
      - Debussy himself **rejected** this identification
      - He liked J. M. W. Turner.
    - Unclear what symbolism or impressionism can mean in a **non-representational** medium.



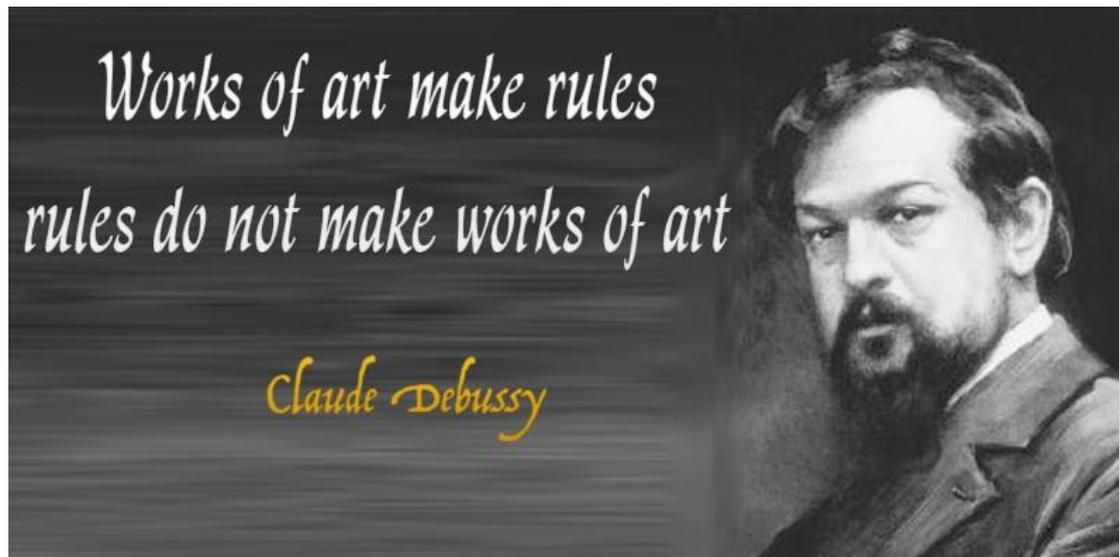
# Biography

- Approach to composition
  - Always experimental, on the cutting edge
    - Departed somewhat from tonality.
    - Nonstandard scales
      - Modes, whole-tone
    - Parallel and “nonfunctional” harmonies.
      - [La fille aux cheveux de lin](#) (1:04)
      - We will see something similar from Jule Styne!
    - Late pieces are scarcely tonal.
      - [Préludes, book 2](#)



# Biography

- Approach to composition
  - Debussy's fundamental challenge
    - Find a new type of musical coherence
    - A new type of organization for an abstract medium



# Biography

- Legacy

- Closed out the romantic era

- Pushed tonal framework to the limit.
    - Even though Mahler, Bruckner were yet to come.

- Innovative harmony influenced many

- Stravinsky, Bartók, Boulez, Villa-Lobos
    - Gershwin, Ellington, Strayhorn

- Particular influence on jazz

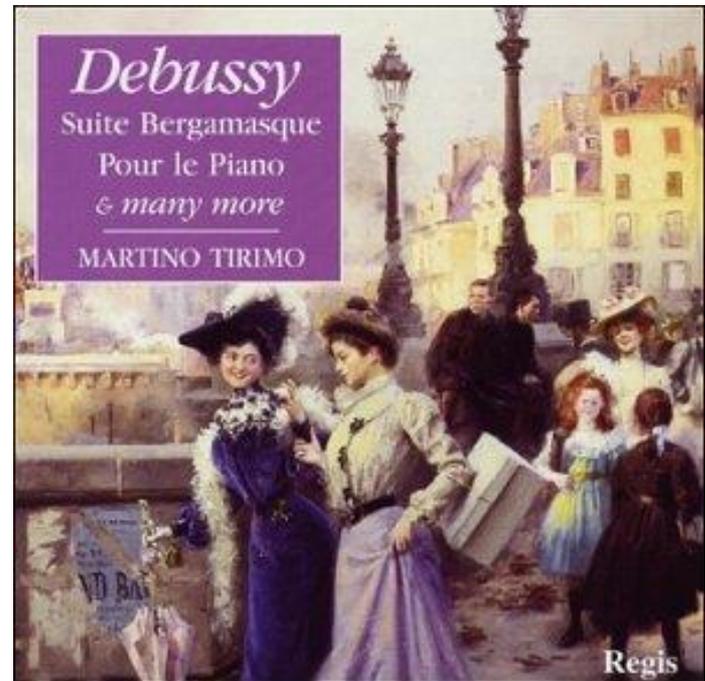
- 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> chords and other tensions.



*Jazz Harmony*

# Clair de Lune

- Movement 3 of *Suite Bergamasque*
  - 1890, substantially revised 1905.
  - *Bergamasque* = a type of country dance
    - *Clair de Lune* (Moonlight) is not a dance!
    - Debussy originally called it *Promenade sentimentale*.



# Clair de Lune

- Perhaps Debussy's best-known composition
  - Successfully blends traditional and novel techniques to achieve coherence.
  - Easy to follow because this early work relies primarily on traditional methods.



# Clair de Lune

- Traditional organizational techniques
  - Approximate sonata allegro form
  - Tonal center (D $\flat$  major)
  - Unifying motif
  - Melody based on major triads
  - Some traditional **V-I** cadences
- Debussy's own techniques
  - Couplets
  - Replace **I-V-I** with **I-III $\flat$ -I**

# Clair de lune

## Audio file

Approximate sonata  
allegro form:

**A<sub>1</sub>A<sub>2</sub>BA<sub>3</sub>+Coda**

Melody consists of  
major triads.

**V:** A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> C A<sup>b</sup>

**I:** A<sup>b</sup> F D<sup>b</sup>

A classic technique.

Compare with [Mozart](#)

Classic **V<sup>7</sup>-I** cadence,  
then **I-IV-I** progression.

“Cheats” by borrowing  
traditional expectations.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Clair de Lune" by Debussy. The score is in G-flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. It is marked "Andante" and "très expressif". The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number in a box (1, 4, 8, 12). The score includes treble and bass staves. Handwritten annotations in green and blue circles highlight specific notes and chords. The notes A<sup>b</sup> and E<sup>b</sup> are circled in green in the first system. The notes C, A<sup>b</sup>, and F are circled in green in the second system. The notes D<sup>b</sup> and A<sup>2</sup> are circled in green in the third system. The chords V<sup>7</sup>, I, IV<sup>6</sup>, and I are labeled in red in the third system. The chords IV<sup>6</sup> and I<sup>7</sup> are labeled in red in the fourth system. The score also includes performance instructions like "pp" (pianissimo) and "con sordino" (with sostenuto pedal).

Couplets with approximate repetition

Musical score for measures 15-17. Measure 15 is marked with a red box. The tempo is *Tempo rubato* and the dynamics are *pp*. The score includes a right-hand (R.H.) part starting in measure 16. Handwritten annotations include fingerings (1-5) and slurs.

Musical score for measures 18-20. Measure 18 is marked with a red box. The instruction *peu à peu cresc. et animé* is present. Handwritten annotations include fingerings (1-5) and slurs.

Musical score for measures 21-23. Measure 21 is marked with a red box. Handwritten annotations include fingerings (1-5) and slurs.

Musical score for measures 24-26. Measure 24 is marked with a red box. The instruction *8va* is present. Dynamics include *dim.* and *molto*. Handwritten annotations include fingerings (1-5) and slurs.

**I-III $\flat$ -I** replaces **I-V-I**  
(pivot on A $\flat$ )

Melodic & rhythmic motif

Couplets with almost literal repetition

Musical score for measures 27-29. Measure 27 is marked with a purple box. The tempo is *un poco mosso* and the dynamics are *pp*. The score is marked with **I**, **III $\flat$** , and **I** above the notes. Handwritten annotations include fingerings (1-5) and slurs.



Melodic & rhythmic motif

Couplets with approximate repetition

Musical score for measures 39-42. Measures 39 and 40 are highlighted with purple boxes, showing a melodic motif in the treble clef. Measures 41 and 42 are also highlighted with purple boxes, showing a similar melodic motif. The score includes piano accompaniment in the bass clef and various performance markings such as *f*, *dim.*, and handwritten notes like "3 2 1" and "5 4 3 2 1".

Couplets with almost literal repetition

Musical score for measures 43-48. Measures 43 and 44 are highlighted with purple boxes, showing a melodic motif in the treble clef. Measures 45 and 46 are also highlighted with purple boxes, showing a similar melodic motif. Measures 47 and 48 are highlighted with purple boxes, showing a similar melodic motif. The score includes piano accompaniment in the bass clef and various performance markings such as *pp*, *Calzadillo*, and handwritten notes like "4 3 2 1" and "5 4 3 2 1".

Return to recapitulation  
with  $V^7-I^{maj7}$  cadence.  
(but suspended 4<sup>th</sup> in  $V^7$ ,  
Tonic omitted from  $I^{maj7}$ )

Musical score for measures 49-50. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). Measure 49 features a melodic line with a suspended 4th and a bass line with a 5th. Measure 50 ends with a  $V^{47}$  chord. Handwritten annotations include a '5' above the first measure and a '4' below the first measure.

$A_3$

Musical score for measures 51-52. Measure 51 starts with a  $I^{maj7}$  chord, marked 'Tempo 1' and 'ppp'. Measure 52 features a  $III^7$  chord. Handwritten annotations include '8va' above measure 51, '5 4 2 1 2 1' below measure 51, and '5 3 1 3 2' below measure 52.

Fairly standard  
progression.

Musical score for measures 53-54. Measure 53 features an  $I^6$  chord, marked '8va'. Measure 54 features a  $V^7$  chord. Handwritten annotations include '5 4 3 2 1 2' below measure 53 and '3 2 1 3 2' below measure 54.

Musical score for measures 55-56. Measure 55 features a  $ii^7$  chord. Measure 56 features a  $V^7$  chord and a  $III^7$  chord. Handwritten annotations include '5 4 3 2 1 2' below measure 55 and '5 3 2 1 3' below measure 56.

Move to coda with  
traditional  $V^7-I^7$   
cadence

Musical score for measures 57-58. Measure 57 features a  $vi^7$  chord. Measure 58 features a  $ii^7$  chord, a  $vi^7$  chord, and a  $V^7$  chord. Handwritten annotations include '5 4 3 2 1 2' below measure 57 and '4 3 2 1 2' below measure 58.

# Coda

Couplets with approximate repetition

Couplets with almost literal repetition

I-III<sup>b</sup>-I replaces I-V-I

Conclude with III<sup>b</sup>-I cadence rather than V-I

**Couplets**, an ancient technique used in Hebrew poetry (e.g. the *Psalms* of David) help the ear digest the music.

### **Psalm 8 (KJV)**

- [1] O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
- [2] Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
- [3] When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
- [4] What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
- [5] For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
- [6] Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:
- [7] All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
- [8] The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
- [9] O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

[Audio file](#)

Replace **I-V-I** with **I-III<sup>b</sup>-I** by pivoting on **A<sup>b</sup>**

**I V I I III<sup>b</sup> I**

The image shows a musical score in 4/4 time with three flats in the key signature. The first sequence consists of three measures: a tonic chord (I), a dominant chord (V), and a tonic chord (I). The second sequence also consists of three measures: a tonic chord (I), a mediant minor chord (III<sup>b</sup>), and a tonic chord (I). The pivot chord, Ab, is circled in blue in both sequences. The notation is presented in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs.