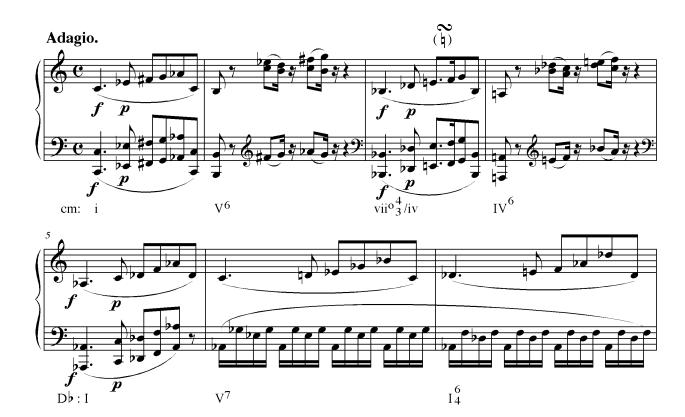# Web Feature 18.1

Modulation in Context—Mozart, Fantasy in C Minor K.475

Mozart's Fantasy in C Minor (K.475), composed in 1785, presents an interesting example of the dramatic and narrative power of modulation. Web Example 18.1 shows the opening nineteen measures of this piece. Notice that although the key is ostensibly C minor, Mozart uses no key signature. This is not a careless omission on Mozart's part; it is a *tabula rasa* ("blank slate"), signifying that theoretically any key would be equally accessible within this piece. Early on, then, Mozart appears to disregard C. P. E. Bach's advice to avoid modulating too distantly and too early (see Web Feature 17.1), and he does so with abandon. The opening four bars do establish C minor, but weakly—the tonic triad is decorated with an appoggiatura and escape tone on either side of the fifth scale degree in measure 1, followed by a tonicization of V in measure 2 and a tonicization of IV in measures 3–4. As this happens, notice also the slow chromatic descent (C – B – B♭ – A) in the bass; this continues one step further, to A♭, in measure 5, and our journey begins.
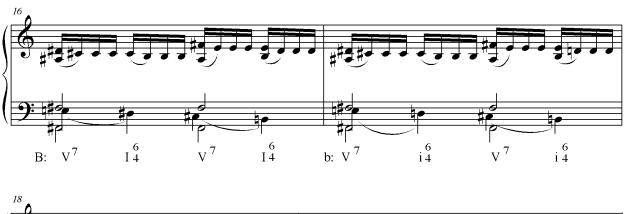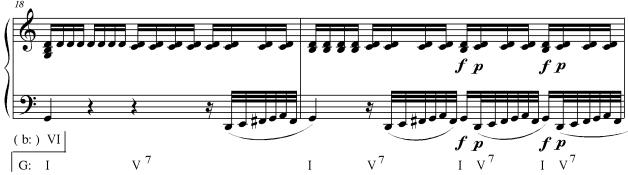
Web Example 18.1. Mozart, Fantasia in C Minor, K.475, mm. 1–19.

In the remainder of this excerpt, Mozart moves rapidly through a number of key areas, mainly by capitalizing on the strong dominant implications of a major-minor seventh chord (which must be a "V^7 of something") or a second-inversion triad (which, we have learned, most commonly has a cadential function). For example, measures 5–7 briefly establish the key of D♭ major by means of a V^7 of D♭ (measure 6) followed by a I_4^6 in measure 7. Measures 8–9, on the other hand, suggest the key of E♭ minor, due to the i_4^6 in measure 9.

The proliferation of sharps in measure 10 indicates yet another key change; the major-minor seventh chord in measure 11 indicates a $I - V_5^6$ in measures 10–11, in the key of B major. Another major-minor seventh chord, in measure 12, indicates a very fleeting reference to D major or minor (A^7 being the V^7 of D), but this is not followed through; instead, we slip chromatically to a first-inversion F minor triad in measure 13. The G major-minor seventh chord in measure 14 tells us that the F minor chord in measure 13 is a iv^6 in C minor (the tonic at last!), followed by a V^7 in the following measure.

Again, however, Mozart does not follow through with the expected tonic chord. In measure 15 we see a first-inversion E♭ minor triad; because of the first-inversion F

minor triad just two bars before and the overall chromatic descent in the bass that began with the B in measure 10, this chord could be interpreted as another iv^6, this time of B♭ minor. Because of the pattern of measures 13–14, we would expect measure 15 to begin a sequence of that pattern a whole step down (iv^6 – V^7 in B♭ minor). Once again, however, Mozart does not follow through on these expectations; instead, measures 16–17 present a V^7 – I$^6_4$ progression in the key of B major.

Surveying the keys traversed in this passage, then, notice how briefly Mozart stays in the tonic—after measures 1–4 (which arguably weaken the tonic by emphasizing tonicizations rather than a strong statement of the tonic and dominant chords), the only reference to the tonic is through the iv^6 – V^7 progression in measures 13–14. Almost all of the other keys touched upon in the passage—D♭ major, E♭ minor, B major, and B♭ minor—are not closely related keys of the tonic. This is a highly unusual move so early in a composition of this period, and it is intended to have a disorienting effect—like Hansel and Gretel wandering deeper into the woods.

In literature, the narrative of departure and return goes back to ancient mythology, in epics such as Homer's *The Odyssey.* In music, a tonal version of this narrative can be found in works ranging from the "free fantasias" of C. P. E. Bach through the symphonies of Beethoven and on to Chopin's Ballades and Wagner's operas.