

Transforming the *Tonnetz*: A Theoretical Perspective of Accordion Playing in the Music of David Lee Garza y Los Musicales

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Introduction

Accordionist David Lee Garza's leadership through memorable *pasadas* (characteristic gestures by a performer) indicates that the accordion guides the melodic and harmonic direction of each song. Because the accordion is the central focus of the band, whose songs develop through experimentation, I hypothesize that the chord progressions in the songs of conjunto music, specifically that of David Lee Garza y Los Musicales, result from the physical layout of the accordion. I develop an accordion-based *Tonnetz*—for the five-row accordion to observe progressions of adjacent Roman numerals (i.e. iii-IV-V, in which there are no common tones shared from chord to chord and therefore involve shifting all three pitches to a new chord). Using the song *Me vuelvo a enamorar* (1999) by David Lee Garza y Los Musicales, I demonstrate an analytical angle for non-notated music as a reimagined *Tonnetz*, from which I execute lyrical, formal, and harmonic analyses.

Listen to
Me vuelvo a enamorar
on YouTube:



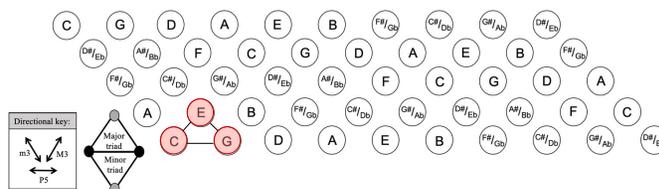
Methodology

I restructure the Riemannian *Tonnetz* in two ways: 1) By putting the *Tonnetz* into the shape of a five-row accordion (**Example 1a**) and 2) by replacing the pitches of the traditional *Tonnetz* with the pitches of the five-row accordion (**Example 1b**). The traditional *Tonnetz* includes intervals of perfect fifths, major thirds, and minor thirds compared to the accordion which involves minor seconds, minor thirds, and major thirds. With their specific intervallic structures, both diagrams highlight a C major triad for comparison. Because of this intervallic shift, the triangle created by the triad on the traditional *Tonnetz* becomes linear on the accordion, which ultimately aids in the finger positions of the player.

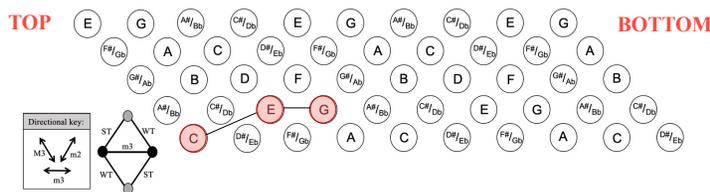
Form Analysis

The chord progression in *Me vuelvo a enamorar* (1999) by David Lee Garza y Los Musicales involves adjacent harmonies—iii, IV, and V⁷—that repeat throughout the entire song with little variation (**Example 2**). The intro and outro both set up and recap the progression without the voice. Each line in the verse moves through each harmony in the same order.

Example 1a. *Tonnetz* intervallic structure within the shape of an accordion finger board.



Example 1b. Intervallic structure of the accordion as a *Tonnetz*. The accordion is played vertically, with C at the top and the performer's fingers for E & G moving downward.



Example 2. Chord progression (I-iii-IV-V⁷-I) as it appears with the lyrics. Harmonies that stray from this progression are intentionally unlabeled.

Me vuelvo a enamorar
G Major

Intro ||: I iii IV V⁷ I :||

Chorus I iii IV V⁷ I iii
Cada vez que estoy junto a ti me vuelvo a enamorar
IV V⁷
no no hay nada en este mundo que no haré
para ti, solo por tu amor

Verse I iii IV V⁷
A medias de la noche me desperté
I iii IV V⁷
por la ansiedad de verte me desvelé
I iii IV V⁷
Como puede uno lograr
I iii IV V⁷
tanto amor de esa calidad

Link Yo quiero abrazarte
y probar la dulzura
de cada beso que me das

Intro/Link ||: I iii IV V⁷ I :||

Repeat Verse-Link-Chorus

Outro ||: I iii IV V⁷ I :||

Works Cited

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- Heetderks, David. 2020. "Play with Closing Markers: Cadential Multivalence in 1960s Prechoruses and Related Forms." *Music Theory Spectrum* 42, no. 1, 1-23.
- Koozin, Timothy. 2011. "Guitar Voicing in Pop-Rock Music: A Performance Based Analytical Approach." *Music Theory Online* 17, no. 3.
- Peña, Manuel H. 1999. *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*. Texas A&M University Press.
- Ragland, Cathy. 2012. "Tejano and Proud: Regional Accordion Traditions of South Texas and the Border Region." From *The Accordion in the Americas: Klezmer, Polka, Tango, Zydeco, and More*: 87-111.

Tonnetz Analysis

Example 3 provides a side-by-side comparison of what the chord progression from *Me vuelvo a enamorar* looks like in the form of a *Tonnetz*. In the traditional *Tonnetz* (left), iii, IV, and V⁷ appear as triangles that alternate between the right and left sides of the I chord (G-B-D). On the five-row accordion (right), the chords appear more linear with 1 to 2 common tones between chords, the exception being from chord ordering #2 (iii) to #3 (IV). While most of the progression involves fluid motion, the most disjunct movement comes from V⁷-I, where D is a common-tone, but may need a shift fingerings. This fifth motion proves more difficult to perform than adjacent harmonies.

Example 3. Chord progression (I-iii-IV-V⁷-I) from *Me vuelvo a enamorar* (1999) by David Lee Garza y Los Musicales on a traditional *Tonnetz* and five-row accordion.

Chord progression: I iii IV V⁷ I
Order of fingerings on accordion: 1 2 3 4 1

Traditional *Tonnetz* Five-row accordion