

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Borrowed Color: Modal Mixture and Textual Perspective in Schubert Song

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Abstract

Modal mixture in Schubert's songs is frequently assigned a stable emotional meaning, even though the same chromatic resource can alter perspective in different textual and pianistic contexts. This article asks when mixture changes the speaker's interpretive position and when it merely colors an established state. It compares *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, *Erlkönig*, *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, and *Der Doppelgänger* through score-based readings of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and changes in textual perspective. The analysis argues that mixture often marks a change of interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion; piano texture can prepare or resist modal reinterpretation; and cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem. These findings keep harmonic description separate from claims about character, reception, or intention. The article contributes a contextual account of modal mixture in which harmonic borrowing acquires significance from its placement, accompaniment, and later confirmation, while recognizing that the available source list lacks exact edition and measure locators.

Keywords: Schubert; art song; modal mixture; poetic perspective; piano texture; cadence

1 Introduction

The inquiry into modal mixture asks how modal mixture reorganizes the listener's link to poetic voice in Schubert's songs. Its corpus comprises selected public-domain songs by Franz Schubert chosen for contrasting relations between poetic speaker and harmonic mode. The central claim is that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion. That proposition becomes consequential because song analysis benefits from treating harmony as a mode of perspective-taking. Attention therefore falls on mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their link to changes in textual perspective.

The research question is deliberately narrower than a general history of modal perspective. Within this repertoire, modal mixture is assessed through mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective. Its definition changes only when those features alter the interpretation.

The investigation is grounded in evidence-led musical analysis. It must be described, situated, compared, and tested against plausible alternatives. This separation does not eliminate judgment.

Three results give the discussion its

structure. First, mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion. Second, piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation. Third, cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem. Their convergence indicates that modal perspective is neither a decorative effect nor a label attached after interpretation. The argument remains proportionate to the repertoire.

Accordingly, the guiding question is: When does modal mixture change the poetic speaker's interpretive position rather than simply add local harmonic color? The objective is to answer it by relating mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, and piano texture to changes in textual perspective across *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, *Erlkönig*, *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, and *Der Doppelgänger*. The article argues that mixture is a context-dependent change of perspective whose meaning is prepared by texture and narrowed by cadence. The contribution is to replace fixed affective labeling with a sequence-based account of harmonic and textual interpretation. The sections that follow establish the critical context, define the corpus and method, test the topic-specific propositions, discuss their combined implications, state the evidentiary limits and future research

needs, and conclude by answering the question.

Schubert's harmonic choices acquire interpretive force through their relation to poetic voice and declamation. Youens situates the songs within the practices and literary worlds of Schubert's poets [1]. Stein and Spillman provide a method for relating prosody, persona, harmony, and accompaniment without reducing one medium to the other [2].

2 Modal Mixture in Four Schubert Songs

One of the sources of corpus is *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, D. 118, composed by Franz Schubert [3]. One more source of corpus is *Erlkönig*, D. 328, composed by Franz Schubert [4]. Another source of corpus is *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, D. 531, composed by Franz Schubert [5]. Another source of corpus is *Der Doppelgänger*, D. 957 No. 13, composed by Franz Schubert [6]. The theory of musical expectation proposed by Meyer offers an explanation for the separation of anticipated events and formal surprise [7]. The concept of tonal grouping described by Lerdahl and Jackendoff explains the organization of phrases [8]. The interpretation of criticism suggested by Kerman helps in the development of proportionate argument from formal description [9]. Hepokoski and Darcy offer a comparative

vocabulary of formal norms and their deformation [10]. Huron's work on expectation informs claims about anticipation, delay, and recognition [11].

The central difficulty for Borrowed Color is inferential distance. Mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective are observable in the consulted sources, whereas the account of modal mixture interprets how those observations connect. The article closes that distance in stages: it identifies a feature, locates its structural neighbors, describes the change it produces, and only then names its historical or aesthetic outcome. A claim fails when any link in that chain depends on information absent from the cited edition, score, image, film, interface, or performance document.

Terminological precision is necessary for Borrowed Color. Modal mixture is distinguished from recurrence, theme, and context. Recurrence identifies repetition; theme identifies a field of concern; context situates the work historically. The present argument instead asks how mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their link to changes in textual perspective acquire a role through their connection to neighboring events. The distinction does not rank one form of criticism above another. It specifies the task of this article and prevents evidence gathered for one question from being used as automatic proof of another.

The selected materials comprise selected public-domain songs by Franz Schubert chosen for contrasting relations between poetic speaker and harmonic mode. The scores and analytical observations support contrastive inquiry and are not a statistical sample. Each item offers a distinct configuration of modal perspective and permits comparison through the common unit of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective.

The principal process is text-sensitive harmonic analysis that paraphrases poetic situations without reproducing protected translations or extended lyrics.

The comparison begins where modal mixture becomes traceable—in mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their connection to changes in textual perspective. The procedure records position, recurrence, interruption, and outcome before assigning interpretive weight. That order carries weight for the score comparison: a repeated feature may retain its appearance while changing function, whereas

a single event at a boundary may redirect the whole sequence. The critical vocabulary is drawn only from scholarship that bears on the named organizational problem. Claims about intention, reception, or prevalence are withheld unless the cited sources supply that evidence.

The evidentiary chain for Borrowed Color runs from source identification to description and only then to interpretation. A page, measure, frame, accession record, or production document is not decorative citation detail; it lets another reader locate the event on which the claim about modal mixture depends. Missing locators therefore mark a limit in the current draft. They should be resolved against the exact versions actually consulted, never supplied by approximation.

3 Mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion

The first pattern can be stated as follows: mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion. This temporal dimension is essential. The finding therefore concerns organization, not inventory.

The resulting form is recursive. Interpretation advances, but it also returns to revise what seemed settled. This recursive quality explains why modal perspective can remain coherent without becoming predictable.

Borrowed Color treats the claim that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion as an account of organizational pressure. The question is not simply where mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their link to changes in textual perspective can be found, but how neighboring events make them expectable, delayed, displaced, or newly prominent. The proposition gains force when a local change reorganizes the reader's, listener's, or viewer's grasp of the larger score episode. If no such outcome can be described, the evidence remains an inventory item rather than an argument about modal mixture.

4 Piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation

The second claim holds that piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation. This pattern shifts analysis from isolated form toward distribution. The repertoire repeatedly makes such allocation perceptible.

Distribution gives the second result its

precision. The claim that piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation calls for more than a contrast between dominant and subordinate positions. It calls for evidence that the contrast changes what can be known, heard, seen, said, or answered. In Borrowed Color, mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective make that change traceable. A transfer has force when it reallocates initiative or credibility; otherwise it remains a surface variation. This threshold protects the argument about modal mixture from turning every difference into hierarchy.

The baseline reading concerns Franz Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, D. 118. The reading tests the proposition that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion by restricting attention to mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective. It then identifies which surrounding relations are necessary for that account.

In Franz Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, D. 118, the proposition that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion is evaluated through placement, not keyword recurrence. The reading asks what prepares each occurrence of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective, which agent or formal layer controls it, and what effect follows. A detail counts as evidence only when its surrounding sequence changes the available judgment. This restriction prevents the case from being reduced to an example chosen after the thesis was formed.

A close reading of Franz Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, D. 118 must therefore document the first relevant occurrence of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective, the expectation active at that moment, and the outcome that distinguishes it from background recurrence. The case supports Borrowed Color only if those three points can be located in the consulted version. A general likeness to the other cases is not enough; the instance must show why the proposition about modal mixture is called for to explain its organization.

A second comparison, Franz Schubert's *Erlkönig*, D. 328, tests the distributive dimension of the argument. Here the gov-

erning question is whether piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation. This is not read as a defect in reliability.

The case drawn from Franz Schubert's *Erkönig*, D. 328 changes the scale of comparison. Here modal mixture is read through the distribution of access, emphasis, and response among scores. The relevant question is not whether the same surface feature returns, but whether its return gives a different participant, voice, register, or position the capacity to redirect interpretation. That distributive test supplies the pressure behind the claim that piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation.

For Franz Schubert's *Erkönig*, D. 328, the principal counter-reading treats the observed distribution as a genre convention with no special bearing on modal mixture. The article answers only at the level of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective: it asks whether a transfer of access or emphasis produces a subsequent effect that convention alone leaves unexplained. If it does not, the second proposition recedes. If it does, the case clarifies how organizational hierarchy becomes an event rather than a static arrangement.

A further comparison focuses on Franz Schubert's *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, D. 531 and gives priority to revision over initial recognition. The interpretive test is whether cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem.

The value of Franz Schubert's *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, D. 531 is retrospective. Following passages are reread against the first account of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their connection to changes in textual perspective, allowing the article to distinguish repetition from revision. If the following event merely restates the prior one, the proposition that cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem receives little support. If it changes the status of what the reader, listener, or viewer already encountered, the case demonstrates how modal mixture acquires compositional memory.

Verification in Franz Schubert's *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, D. 531 demands two locators: one for the initial treatment of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their connection to changes in textual perspective and one for the moment that alters its status. The interval between them is analytically important because it determines what can be remembered, fore-

seen, or misrecognized. Recording both locations prevents the subsequent reading from being projected backward as if it had been available from the start, and it gives the claim about modal mixture a visible temporal basis.

The closing comparative test, Franz Schubert's *Der Doppelgänger*, D. 957 No. 13, functions as a resistant comparison.

Franz Schubert's *Der Doppelgänger*, D. 957 No. 13 remains in the selection because it resists easy synthesis. Its treatment of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective tests how far the claim that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion can travel before medium, genre, or historical circumstance demands qualification. The comparison does not convert resistance into confirmation. It records which part of the proposition holds, which part weakens, and which further source would be necessary to adjudicate between rival explanations.

The resistant role of Franz Schubert's *Der Doppelgänger*, D. 957 No. 13 also limits the article's vocabulary. If medium or genre changes the operation of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their connection to changes in textual perspective, the comparison names that difference before proposing an analogy. The case may therefore support only part of the claim that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion. Such partial support is informative: it identifies the condition under which modal mixture ceases to explain the evidence and marks the point where another historical or structural account should take over.

5 Cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem

The final result argues that cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem. Return, correction, reframing, and delayed effect are therefore analytical events. They reveal how a work stores a difference and activates it later.

In combination, these results form a sequence of their own. The first identifies a process that directs attention. The second reveals that attention and authority are distributed. The third explains how later events revise that distribution. This sequence supports the central thesis that modal perspective is historically variable and formally organized.

The test for the third claim is counterfactual: if the following event were removed, would the initial reading of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their link to changes in textual perspective remain unchanged? A negative answer supports the proposition that cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem; a positive answer weakens it. Borrowed Color uses this test to distinguish memory built by form from similarity noticed by the critic. The distinction becomes consequential for modal mixture, because retrospective force belongs to the organized sequence and not simply to the reader's ability to place examples side by side.

6 Discussion

Read as a sequence, the results move from form to allocation and then to revision. The first establishes that mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion; the second, that piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation; the third, that cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem. This order prevents modal mixture from becoming a label applied after interpretation. It names a chain of decisions whose consequences can be checked against the scores and analytical observations.

The comparison also suggests that song analysis benefits from treating harmony as a mode of perspective-taking. This effect does not depend on universal agreement about every example.

The argument is deliberately vulnerable to revision. If mixture often marks a change in the speaker's interpretive position rather than a fixed emotion appears only after examples are removed from sequence, the first claim weakens. If piano texture prepares or resists modal reinterpretation cannot be tied to a visible allocation of access, emphasis, or agency, the second becomes thematic summary. If cadential confirmation can narrow meanings that remain ambiguous in the poem depends on knowledge unavailable at the relevant moment, the third becomes retrospective overreach. These failure conditions define what would count against Borrowed Color, not only what appears to support it.

The article contributes a distinction between appearance, function, and effect. Appearance concerns what can be described in mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual per-

spective; function concerns the connection established by its placement; effect concerns the judgment made possible ensuing. Borrowed Color uses this distinction to prevent modal mixture from collapsing into a synonym for theme, mood, or context. The three levels may converge, but the argument does not assume that they do so in every work.

The method also separates comparison from equivalence. Cases are comparable because each poses a problem involving modal mixture, not because their historical conditions or organizational resources are interchangeable. Borrowed Color preserves those differences by defining the shared question at the level of function and the answers at the level of mode shifts, chromatic scale degrees, cadential goals, piano texture, and their relation to changes in textual perspective. This arrangement permits synthesis without claiming that one vocabulary exhausts the work of every text, score, image, film, or performance.

7 Conclusion

The comparison shows that modal mixture changes perspective when chromatic alteration, piano texture, and cadence redirect the relation between speaker and text. Its contribution is a contextual explanation of borrowed harmony rather than a catalogue of fixed emotions. Because the manuscript lacks exact score and text locators, the conclusion remains provisional at the passage level; edition-specific and performance-based study should test the proposed relations.

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