

Kern and Hammerstein — *Show Boat*
Due Wednesday, January 15

“Misery” is cut from most productions and is therefore omitted from many scores and recordings. Fortunately, it is included in the online score (starting on page 87 of the PDF; notice that measures are numbered below the staff), in the San Francisco Opera production available through the Naxos Video Library (starting a little after 39:00), and on the McGlinn recording (on reserve in the music library and available through various streaming services). I recommend watching the entire scene on the video first.

1. What is the overall dramatic purpose of this song?
2. Both the mode and the local tonic of “Misery” shift very frequently. (It’s debatable whether these constitute true modulations or merely tonicizations, but for the present purposes, we will adopt a lax standard.) For instance, although the introduction arpeggiates an A-major triad, the song clearly switches to A minor with the vocal entrance in measure 5. Where is the first apparent change of tonic? Provide the measure number, the new key, and use Roman numerals to show how we pivot from one key to the next (labeling about four chords should be sufficient, as long as the keys are shown to overlap).
3. Where is the next key change? Again, provide the measure number and the new key.
4. Are these modulations (the keys chosen and how often they change) typical or atypical? How do the modulations support the song’s lyrics (and contribute to its general mood)?
5. The melodic motives in measures 21-26 are clearly related to two other songs we have studied. Which songs? What is the relationship between the two motives?

6. A contrasting section begins at the pick-up to rehearsal D (measure 92). What compositional feature is prominent for the next few measures?
7. What chord should we expect on the downbeat of measure 107, and why do we expect it? (As always, please use Roman numerals.) What chord do we hear instead?
8. “Misery” features the black chorus.
 - Does the first portion of the song (measures 5-58) sound like it would be stereotypically associated with African-American servants and laborers?
 - Does the portion of the song in measures 92-98 sound like it would be stereotypically associated with African-American servants and laborers?For both sections, cite specific musical features to support your answer.

Extra credit: Not counting the overture (which obviously contains many themes), where have we previously heard the music from 92-98?