

Affective Uses of Key Signatures

Mattheson's Guide:

D minor - devout, calm, grand, agreeable, and expressive of contentment

G minor - almost "the most beautiful key — uncommon grace and complaisance

A minor - plaintive, dignified, and relaxed

E minor - pensive, profound, sad, expressive of grief

C major - rude and impertinent character, but suited for the expression of joy

F major - express the most beautiful sentiments, whether those be generosity, steadfastness, love, or whatever else may be high on the list of virtues

D major - sharp and stubborn; for noisy, gay, war-like, and cheering things. No one will deny however that if a flute is used instead of a clarinet and a violin is the predominant instrument instead of the kettledrum, it can very well be used for delicate things

G major - insinuating and persuasive; somewhat brilliant; can express serious as well as gay effects

C minor - both liveliness and sadness

F minor - mild and relaxed, yet heavy and profound; black, helpless, melancholy

B-flat major - diverting and showy; somewhat modest; both magnificent and delicate

E-flat major - pathetic, always serious, plaintive, the opposite of lasciviousness

A major - very touching; somewhat brilliant; plaintive and sad passions

E major - desperate or fatal sadness; piercing, sorrowful, and penetrating

B minor - bizarre, moody, and melancholy, and therefore seldom used

F-sharp minor - somewhat languid, amorous, abandoned; can lead to great sadness

Rameau's Guide:

C, D, or A - in the major mode are suitable for songs of mirth and joy

F or B-flat - appropriate for tempests, furies, and such subjects

G or E - right for both tender and happy songs.

D, A, or E - express grandeur and magnificence

d, g, b, or e minor - apt for sweetness and gentleness.

c or f minor - suitable for gentleness or laments

f or b-flat minor - appropriate for melancholy songs.