

Introduction to Secondary Dominants

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Understanding Chromatic Harmony

The study of secondary dominants is the first step in understanding chromatic harmony. The first twenty chapters of *Theory Essentials* dealt exclusively with diatonic harmony, in which all chords are constructed from the notes of a scale. This is true even in diatonic modulation, where the accidental occurs only after the modulation has taken place. Even the accidentals are diatonic in the prevailing key.

Chromatic harmony extends the vocabulary of tonal music to include pitches that are part of other scales. There are a wide variety of chords that are considered “chromatic.” These include borrowed chords, Neapolitan sixth chords, and augmented sixth chords. Most of the chromatic chords can also be used as tools for modulation. All of these techniques will be presented in Chapters 21–30.

The word “chromatic” means color. In a sense, the addition of chromatic chords adds a great deal of color, or embellishment, to the diatonic harmony you have already learned. However, it is important to understand that chromatic harmony does not alter the fundamental structure of harmony. The circle of fifths progression that you learned back in Chapter 6 is still the foundation of harmony, but will be elaborated through the use of chromatic chords.

Tonicizations

Many students confuse the similar concepts of “modulation” and “tonicization.” The distinction lies in the scope of the two procedures. A modulation is considered to be lengthier than a tonicization, and it usually involves more chords in the new key than just a dominant to tonic. For example, look at the progressions that appear in Chapter 20. In all of them, the progression in the new key contains at least three chords.

A tonicization is a brief event. It lacks permanency and is usually comprised of only two chords, a dominant-type moving to a tonic. There is no overall shift away from the starting key, only an embellishment of one chord within that starting key. A secondary dominant chord can be interpreted as an ornamentation of the diatonic chord that follows it. By its nature, the secondary dominant must contain a leading tone of the chord that follows it, creating a chromatic alteration to the overall key. However, that chromatic note does not signal a shift to a new key unless it is repeated in order to establish permanence. If it is repeated and there is no return to the original key, then a chromatic modulation has taken place (see Chapter 25).

PRACTICE: Resolve Secondary Dominants

The following chords include a variety of dominant types. Determine the root and quality of each chord. Based on that information, write the note of resolution for each chord in the blank measure that follows it.

Staff 1: Bass clef, three measures. Measure 1: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3. Measure 2: Chord with notes C#3, E3, G3, Bb3. Measure 3: Chord with notes C#3, E3, G3, Bb3.

Staff 2: Bass clef, three measures. Measure 1: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3. Measure 2: Chord with notes C#3, E3, G3, Bb3. Measure 3: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3.

Staff 3: Bass clef, three measures. Measure 1: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3. Measure 2: Chord with notes C#3, E3, G3, Bb3. Measure 3: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3.

Staff 4: Bass clef, three measures. Measure 1: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3. Measure 2: Chord with notes C#3, E3, G3, Bb3. Measure 3: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3.

Staff 5: Bass clef, three measures. Measure 1: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3. Measure 2: Chord with notes C#3, E3, G3, Bb3. Measure 3: Chord with notes G2, Bb2, D3, F3.

French Overture Style

The French overture style is mentioned in *Theory Essentials* with the introduction of doubly-dotted notes. This is an instrumental style that is commonly found in music of the Baroque period. It was most often used as the opening of a multiple movement work, such as a suite (a set of dances), a ballet, or even an opera. The overture usually has three sections (slow–fast–slow) and the primary characteristic of the slow section is a majestic rhythm that is written with many dotted notes. The norm of the Baroque period was to notate these rhythms with single dots; however, the performers were expected to know the style and perform them as if they were doubly-dotted notes.

The development of the French overture style is typically attributed to Jean-Baptiste Lully, a French composer who lived from 1632–1687. He worked as court composer for King Louis XIV of France, writing many operas and ballets for the king. Other composers who wrote in the French overture style include Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frederic Handel.