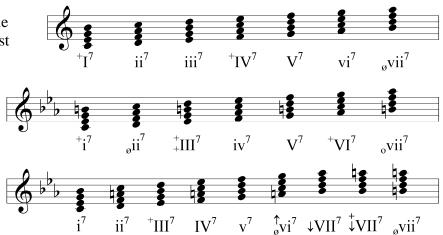
UNIT XI: NONDOMINANT SEVENTHS; SEQUENCES

Nondominant Sevenths

We have discussed seventh chords constructed on the dominant, the supertonic, and the leading tone – V^7 , ii^7 , $_{\emptyset}ii^7$, $_{\emptyset}vii^7$, and $_{o}vii^7$. The diatonic seventh-chord possibilities that remain comprise, along with the supertonic sevenths, the "nondominant sevenths":

One can find, in the Bach Chorale harmonizations, examples of most of these sonorities; whether they should be analyzed "as chords" is another matter: EXX 1-25.

In most of these examples, note that the seventh is treated like a dissonance: it is approached either by step or as a SP, and resolved (usually downward) by step as well. As we have seen, this is also the



customary treatment of the dominant, supertonic, and leading-tone sevenths. The question arises, in what sense are these "real" seventh chords, as opposed to simple triads with NHT's?

One might go further, and ask, what is the point of such a question? Since it is not claimed that seventh chords behave harmonically any differently from their corresponding triads, why not simply indicate chord roots by Roman numerals, while investigating the repertory as a whole for whatever principles underlie the contrapuntal treatment of the 7th, 9th, 11th, etc.?

This kind of investigation is, of course, essential if we are to describe the style, or any style, with the degree of accuracy and economy that one expects of a "theory". But "analysis" in music is often a different kind of enterprise, an essentially interpretive one. It is a way of drawing a picture of what the music sound like to us, an exercise that may or may not contribute to the development of a genuine theory of the music. In this case, trying to draw the picture makes it clear that our intuitive notion of "chord" is, so to speak, fuzzy at the top. Sevenths, in this style, are a borderline case: they behave partly as chord tones, and partly as NHT's. It is of some interest to see just what in the music contributes to the feeling that a given vertical entity is a "chord", and to watch this aspect of harmony change from style to style.

The most important reason many of the $7^{th}s$ in the examples sound like chord tones is that they are what we have called "slow dissonances" – the seventh lasts as long as the chord with which it is dissonant. This is most effective when both chord and seventh are (in the Chorales) quarter-notes. But now consider EX 5. It would ordinarily be analyzed as marked. If, though, we are to consider each "slow dissonance" as a chord tone, the alto $D \$ in the third measure makes the underlying chord a V^{11} at the downbeat. Further, the seventh of V^7 before the cadence is a strict PT; if we name this V^7 , then perhaps we ought to consider the soprano $G \$ in the second measure, lasting a full quarter, part of a I^{11} chord (in first inversion, I_6^9). On the other hand, if we disallow the I^{11} and the V^{11} , must we not also disallow the

similarly-treated iii⁷, ii⁷, and V⁷? Throughout the Chorales, we find the supertonic and dominant sevenths treated very strictly as NHT's, while 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths are at times used more freely. Why should we call the former instances chord tones and the latter NHT's?

These considerations call to our attention the fact that *our interpretation of individual cases is a function of our experience of the repertory as a whole*; it is against the background of the whole style that we hear an individual work. And it is in the style as a whole, regardless of individual cases, that 7ths are treated more freely than 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths, and this in turn makes any 9th dissonant, while a perfect 5th is consonant, and 7ths are in-between. That is, the difference between a chord tone and a nonharmonic tone in a given style is to be sought by scrutiny of as wide a selection of the style as can be assembled, rather than just the close consideration of the individual case. This we now proceed to do for the Bach Chorales, with respect to their treatment of the sevenths of chords.

The most important difference in the Chorales between the treatment of the 7th and that of the 9th, 11th, etc., is simply one of *frequency*: the dominant and supertonic sevenths are very common chords at cadences, and so no matter how properly the dissonance is treated, it comes to acquire the perceptual status of chord tone. Similarly, an unusual dissonance, no matter how freely treated, resists such an interpretation. The non-dominant sevenths (always excepting the supertonic sevenths) are here in an ambiguous middle ground.

The most important differences in *contrapuntal* treatment of the 7ths and other dissonances in the Chorales is as follows:

1. In all three relevant categories of dissonance: dominant 7th, non-dominant 7th, and 9th-13th – examples can be found in the Chorales of the <u>strong</u> slow SP. This treatment of 9th-13ths, however, is considerably less common:

$$82^{4-8}$$
: EX 5 150^{10-11} 85^{10} 166^{4-5} 144^{5-6} 276^3

2. It is extremely rare for a 9th, etc., to occur as <u>weak</u> slow SP; examples occur in EX 4 (193⁷⁻⁸ and 49¹¹⁻¹²), both equivocal. In contrast, nondominant sevenths occur quite often as a weak slow SP:

And treatment of a dominant seventh as a weak slow SP is routine:

3. It is virtually unknown for a 9th, etc., to occur in the Chorales as any other kind of slow dissonance (one equivocal example: 360¹, EX 9). But nondominant sevenths occur as slow PTs and NTs:

And treatment of the dominant seventh as a slow PT or slow NT is again routine:

4. The dominant seventh is frequently also a slow AP:

$$\begin{array}{lll} 91^{16} & 159^8 \\ 92^3 & 285^8 \\ 95^{3, 10} & 302^2 \\ 97^{3, 14} & 348^7 \\ \text{etc.} & \text{etc.} \end{array}$$

But this treatment of nondominant sevenths is quite rare:

And this usage does not occur with 9ths, 11ths, or 13ths.

We can summarize the relation of sonority to dissonance treatment in the Chorales with the following table:

	V^7	X^7	X^{9-13}
strong slow SP	routine	common	uncommon
weak slow SP	routine	occasional	rare
slow PT, NT	routine	uncommon	unknown
slow AP	common	rare	unknown

The most common nondominant sevenths, ii^7 and $_{\emptyset}ii^7$, are virtually always treated quite strictly as strong slow APs; the frequency of their occurrence contributes greatly to their perception as distinct and specific harmony entities – that is, as chords.

In the Chorales, the typical unit of harmonic motion is the quarter-note, and therefore sevenths lasting a quarter often have the effect of slow dissonances, even though the chord itself lasts longer: EX 1, EX 15.

These and other considerations drawn from the style as a whole suggest that we label seventh chords in the Chorales as follows:

- 1. Dominant sevenths (V⁷, _øvii⁷, _ovii⁷), supertonic sevenths (ii⁷, _øii⁷) and other major-minor sevenths (secondary dominants, IV⁷) receive the benefit of the doubt, and will be indicated even when their occurrence is incidental.
- 2. Other nondominant sevenths will be marked as seventh chords if
 - a. the seventh of the chord and the chord with which it is dissonant coexist for a quarter-note or longer, OR
 - b. both the note forming the 7th and the chord itself last *just* an eighth.

A dissonant 7th is considered to last until its resolution.

These principles, of course, are rules of convenience only, and are relevant only to the Chorales; much more complicated situations will arise in figural music. it is therefore necessary to re-emphasize that the more important question is always "how are the 7ths (or 9ths, etc.) treated", not "is this really a seventh chord?"

We now return to EXX 1-25 to discuss the nondominant sevenths according to "function":

The 7th in EX 1 is a strict PT; those in EX 2 are both SP. Both are labelled as chords because of their length. I can find no ⁺I⁷'s treated more freely.

iii⁷: EXX 3-5

EX 3 is typical of the appearance of this chord, in that it is equally plausibly interpreted as a I^6 with a SP 9^{th} . EX 4 is also ambiguous; it is not clear just when the $C\sharp$ resolves. EX 5 is a genuine slow SP, with all members of the iii⁷ present. This chord provides an example of how the interpretation of a given situation as an unusual chord is resisted, whereas an identically-treated but more common chord is not: one would not hesitate to mark the V^7 and ii⁷ chords in EX 26 as shown, but the second eighth of EX 7 would not usually be considered a iii⁶₅, even though the contrapuntal configurations are identical.

⁺IV⁷: EXX 6-8

This is the most common major-major seventh, most often found at cadences, as in EX 6. EX 7 has other interpretations (as, e.g., vi with a slow soprano PT). EX 8 is an unusual example of the use in major of a chord more often found in minor, IV⁷ (cf. EXX 19-20).

vi⁷: EXX 9-10

This chord is also comparatively common; in the Chorales it's usually in root position.

in minor, using the lowered 6° and raised 7°:

+i⁷: **EX** 11

The few examples of such a sonority in the Chorales usually have better alternative interpretations. Since the 7^{th} , $B \, \natural$, lasts longer than the eighth-note tonic chord, by our rules one should not mark a $^{+}i^{7}$. Similarly, in EX 16 the 7^{th} is an eighth, while the tonic chord is a quarter-note's length, and thus again not "really" a $^{+}i^{7}$. In more elaborate music too, this minor-major seventh occurs almost exclusively as a tonic with a delayed leading-tone SP.

⁺₊III⁷: EX 12

This example is the nearest approach to a genuine augmented-major sonority I could find in the Chorales, and since the 7^{th} , F\$\psi\$, greatly outlasts the $_{+}III^{7}$ chord, the whole situation is better analyzed as multiple PTs. (See also 319^{3} .)

- iv⁷: EXX 13-14
- In EX 14 both chord and 7th last just an eighth, and so justify the iv⁷ label.
- +vi⁷: EXX 15-16

In EX 15 the 7th is dissonant for a quarter, and so is a legitimate ⁺vi⁷; but the chord so designated in EX 16 is not, since the 7th lasts a quarter but the chord only an eighth.

in minor, using the raised 6° and lowered 7°:

i⁷: EX 1, 17

EX 17 is typical of the only way a i^7 occurs in the Chorales, the lowered 7° occurring as a PT. Here, the chord is a quarter, while the 7^{th} is an eighth, and so the chord wouldn't be marked as such; but in EX 1, where chord and dissonance coexist for a quarter, a i^7 analysis is more appropriate.

+III⁷: EX 18

Like iii⁷, the few plausible examples of [†]III⁷ are also interpretable as suspended 9ths over i⁶. Here the SP dissonance goes unresolved.

IV ⁷ : EXX 19-20	This is a surprisingly common chord in the Chorales, a useful way to harmonize the ascending melodic minor scale in the bass (EX 19) or in another voice (EX 20). It is the one example of a nondominant major-minor 7 th .
v ⁷ : EX 21	This is, I believe, the only example of such a chord to occur in the Chorales.
[↑] _ø vi ⁷ : EXX 22-24	This is also quite common as a means to harmonize the ascending melodic minor scale; it adds another half-diminished seventh to the chord vocabulary. EX 24 is an unusual instance of borrowing this sonority for use in major, but the bass is better analyzed as a SP: the dissonant 7 th is an eighth-note, but the chord is a quarter-note.
↓VII ⁷ : EX 25	This major-minor seventh occurs almost exclusively as V^7/III , and should be so analyzed.

The possibilities for which I fail to find in the Chorales even remotely-plausible candidates are $_{\emptyset}$ vii 7 in minor, ii 7 in minor, and $_{\downarrow}^{+}$ VII 7 in minor. Trying to construct such examples may help explain why they do not occur: EXX 27-30.

We can, it should be mentioned, construct many more seventh-chords by using augmented and diminished thirds, and some of these find a place in tonal music. In EX 32, nos 1-3 can be found in common-practice-period music, and nos. 4-6 in the music of, for example, Bela Bartók.

Sequences

A sequence, in general, is any musical pattern repeated at systematic transpositions. EX 33 shows two melodic sequences; the second is inexact.

Typically, however, the harmony participates in a sequence, and the unqualified word refers most often to a <u>harmonic</u> sequence: the repetition of a given chord-progression at systematic transpositions, as shown in EXX 34-46.

There are essentially two independent variables in the sequence: the harmonic pattern itself (indicated in the analyses by the brackets) and the interval at which it recurs (indicated in EX 34 by the green arrows). The interval of transposition in eighteenth century music is most often a 5th/4th or a second; the latter produces a sort of very elaborate scale (EXX 35, 40).

In order to write a sequence, it is therefore necessary to establish the harmonic "module", and then write the connection to the first chord of the next term of the sequence, taking care that it is in the same position as the original. This connection is usually diatonic, but Wagner is fond of a kind of sequence in which the repetitions are tonally quite disjunct (EX 45).

Sequences generally last at least to the beginning of the third pattern; two seems too short, and four too long for a pattern of any complexity. It often happens that either the harmonic progression or the

interval of transposition is changed for some purpose in the course of the sequence: EXX 37, 43. Hitherto objectionable practices – doubled leading-tones, awkward melodic intervals, etc. – are tolerated in the context of a sequence.

As one sees in EXX 39, 41, 42, the use of nondominant sevenths is common in sequences. The sequence is not ordinarily part of the harmonic vocabulary of Bach's Chorale harmonizations; EX 2 and EX 37 are among the few instances.

Sequences of the type in EXX 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, etc. are known as "tonal" sequences because they stay in one key. Just as commonly, a sequence will produce transient changes of key, either by means of secondary dominants (EXX 36-37), or by pivoting or juxtapositions (EXX 43-46); these are known as "modulating" sequences.

(*Sequence* is also a term from the history of medieval music, referring to a genre of monophonic composition in which rhymed metrical sacred poetry was set to the music of a Gregorian Alleluia melisma.)

Examples, Chapter XI

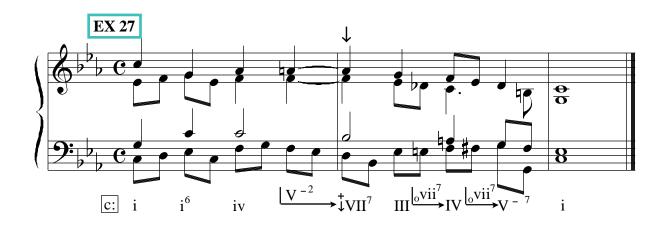


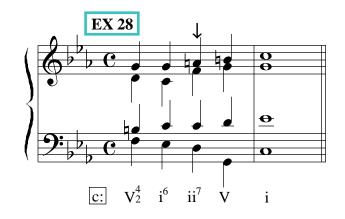


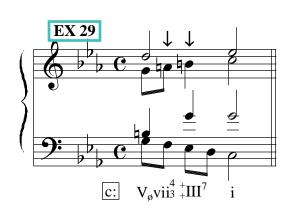


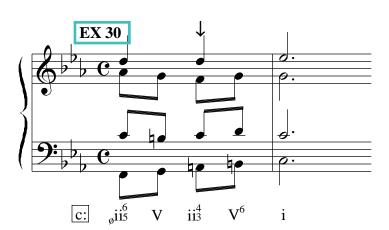


















J.S. Bach, WTC I, Fugue V



