

## UNIT XVI: EMBELLISHING DIMINISHED SEVENTHS

An “embellishing diminished seventh” is one which resolves in such a way that the fifth and third of the triad of resolution, not the root, are preceded by half-step leading tones:

C:  ${}_o e^7$        $I^6$       F:  ${}_o e^7 \rightarrow V^7$

As in the example, the most common embellishing diminished sevenths are

1. built on the raised 2<sup>o</sup>, enharmonically equivalent to  ${}_o vii^7/V$ , and normally embellish the tonic; or
2. built on the raised 6<sup>o</sup>, enharmonically equivalent to a  ${}_o vii^7/ii$ , and normally embellish the dominant. These I prefer to label  ${}_o e^7 \rightarrow V$

(Many analytical systems refer to these chords as  $\sharp II^7$  and  $\sharp VI^7$ , or something similar.)

Notice that the  ${}_o e^7$  contains the root of the triad it embellishes – it is, again, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> of the resolution-triad that are “embellished” with their half-step lower neighbors.

Notice also: in any one key,  ${}_o vii^7$ ,  ${}_o e^7$ , and  ${}_o vii^7/V$  exhaust the diminished-seventh possibilities, enharmonically speaking.

Whether to designate a diminished seventh as  ${}_o vii^7/V$  or  ${}_o e^7$  depends upon its behavior. In case it resolves to  $I_4^6$ , it is preferable to label it according to its ultimate destination:  ${}_o vii^7 I_4^6 \rightarrow V$

In practice, embellishing diminished sevenths can be spelled any-which-way; for example, in the resolution to a minor triad:

Besides the examples attached ([EXX 1-10](#)), see also especially Unit XIV, EX 12.

# Examples, Unit XVI

EX 1

Beethoven, SQ Op 18#3/iii

Allegro.

Musical score for Example 1, Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 18 No. 3, third movement. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a section marked *cresc.* (crescendo) leading to a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score ends with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic.

EX 2

Schubert, String Quintet, D.956/i

Allegro ma non troppo

Musical score for Example 2, Schubert's String Quintet D.956, first movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features five staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello I, and Violoncello II. The music starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a section marked *f* (forte) and *pp* (pianissimo).

Continuation of the musical score for Example 2, Schubert's String Quintet D.956, first movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features five staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello I, and Violoncello II. The music starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a section marked *f* (forte) and *pp* (pianissimo).

EX 3

Rossini, Semiramide, overture

Andantino.

Fl.  
Cor. (D)  
p  
1.  
50  
pp  
60

EX 4

Chopin, Waltz Op 18

leggiermente

1  
3 2 1 3  
2  
1 3 2 1  
3 2 3 2 3 2  
5 4 3 2 1 1  
3 1 3 1 3 1  
2 4 1  
1  
20  
p  
p  
Tad. 4 \* Tad. \* Tad. \*  
3 1 3 1 3 1  
2 3 1 2 3 5  
3 2 3 2 3 2  
5  
26  
Tad. \* Tad. \* Tad. \* Tad. \*

EX 5

Chopin, Nocturne Op 15 #3

6. Lento (♩ = 60.)

*p languido e rubato* *f* *dim.* *p*

♩ = 60.

*p* *f* *dim.* *p*

♩ = 60.

EX 6

VII.

Schumann, Dichterliebe

Nicht zu schnell. *mf*

Ich grol-le nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht,

e-wig ver-lor'-nes Lieb, e-wig ver-lor'-nes Lieb! — ich

grol - le nicht, ich grol - - le nicht. Wie du auch

*mf*

*f*

EX 7

Liszt, *Les Preludes*

70

*espressivo ma tranquillo*

*(p) dolce* *espressivo ma tranquillo*

*(v.l. p)*

*smorzando* *(pp) dolcissimo*

*(pp) dolcissimo*

*p dolce* *espressivo ma tranquillo*

div. in 2 parti con Sordino

Br.

Vc.

Kb.

Hr. (E)

Hrf.

1. V.

2. V.

Br.

Vc.

Kb.

Hr. (E)

Hrf.

1. V.

2. V.

Br.

Vc.

Kb.

*espress.* *espress.*

EX 9

Tchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker*

Tempo di Valse.

Flauto I.  
Flauto II.  
Piccolo.  
Oboi I.  
II.  
Clarineti I.  
II, in A.  
Fagotti I.  
II.  
Corni in F  
I.  
II.  
III.  
IV.  
Trombe in A.  
Tromb. Tenori.  
Tr. Basso e Tuba.  
Timpani A, D, E.  
Triangolo.  
ArPa.

This system of the score includes parts for Flute I and II, Piccolo, Oboe I and II, Clarinet I and II in A, Bassoon I and II, Horns in F (I, II, III, IV), Trumpets in A, Trombones (Tenors), Bass Trombone and Tuba, Timpani (A, D, E), Triangle, and Harp. The harp part features a prominent arpeggiated figure with triplets. Dynamics include *sf* and *mf*.

Ob. I, II.  
Cl. I, II.  
Fag. I, II.  
Corni I, II.  
Corni III, IV.  
Timp.  
ArPa.

This system continues the woodwind and brass parts from the first system, including Oboe I and II, Clarinet I and II, Bassoon I and II, Horns I, II, III, and IV, and Timpani. The harp part continues with the arpeggiated figure. Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, *dim.*, and *p*.

