

## UNIT IV: SIXTH-CHORDS, CADENCES

1. A chord arranged so that its *third* is in the bass is called a “first inversion” chord; with its *fifth* in the bass, it is a “second inversion” chord. The intervals formed with the bass in a compactly-arranged first-inversion triad are a sixth and a third; the figured-bass (bass-continuo, Bc) symbol for such a chord is therefore  $\frac{6}{3}$ , applied to a given bass note. It is customarily abbreviated simply “6”, hence the other term for these chords, “sixth chords”. By a similar calculation, second-inversion chords are figured  $\frac{6}{4}$  and are known as “6-4 chords”. In harmonic analysis, we adopt this figuring as superscript to Roman numerals: a first-inversion subdominant is labeled  $IV^6$ ; likewise for  $I^6$ ,  $V^6$ ,  $_{\circ}vii^6$ , etc.

To expand on previous remarks about the Bc notation of chromatic alterations: a first-inversion triad with, say, a chromatically raised root would, in Bc notation, be marked  $\sharp 6$ ,  $\natural 6$ , or  $\flat 6$ ; with a lowered root,  $\flat 6$  or  $\natural 6$ . Similarly, in such a chord a raised fifth would be  $\sharp \frac{6}{3}$  or  $\natural \frac{6}{3}$ , in a flat key  $\flat \frac{6}{3}$ ; or simply  $\frac{6}{\sharp 3}$  or  $\frac{6}{\natural 3}$ , since in first inversion chords the fifth of the chord is a third above the bass. A 6th-chord with an altered third would not have to be figured, since the accidental is already on the page, in the music. In Roman numeral analysis, though, if we want to show this alteration, we would have to write something like  $IV^{\frac{6}{\sharp 3}}$ .

Indicating chord sonority, however, makes the indication of chromatic alterations redundant, so we won't do it. In any case, much more interesting for harmonic studies is the scale degree altered, not the interval above the bass. Bc notation is best learned at the keyboard.

### 2. Doubling Rules for Sixth-Chords:

- a) In major and minor triads, the first choice is to double the root or the fifth. The third, however, is quite permissible for voice-leading reasons (unless, of course, it's the leading-tone.) In secondary-triad sixth-chords ( $ii^6$ ,  $iii^6$ ,  $vi^6$ ,  $VI^6$ ), the 3rd is doubled quite as often as not; it's always a “tonal degree” - 1<sup>o</sup>, 4<sup>o</sup>, or 5<sup>o</sup>.
- b) In augmented and diminished triads, it is preferable to double the third (i.e., the bass).
- c) Don't double the leading tone, (except maybe as the 5th of  $iii$  in major).

3. There are no special rules for connecting 6th-chords different from those for  $\frac{5}{3}$  chords; in general, keep the common tones, and move the other parts the minimum distance.

4. Sixth-chords are less conclusive and emphatic than root-position chords; phrases will only very rarely begin with them, and even less often conclude with a sixth-chord.

5. Parallel 6th-chords are common, especially as a result of a bassline and a soprano in sixths. It will become obvious that this pattern requires a variety of doublings.

## 6. Common uses of the individual sixth-chords:

$I^6$  – The bass usually wants to proceed to  $4^\circ$ , making the progression  $I^6-IV$  or  $I^6-ii^6$ . Like all the 6th-chords, it is used frequently as a passing chord, as in  $V^2-\textcircled{\small o}vii^6-I$ : [EX 1](#). Notice also here the typical use of a sixth-chord as part of a bass-arpeggiation.

$ii^6, \textcircled{\small o}ii^6$  – Most common in cadences (cf. below) as in the pattern  $ii^6-V-I$ . In major and especially in minor, the supertonic sixth is more common than the  $\frac{5}{3}$  version of the triad: while the progression  $I-ii$  is uncommon and awkward, for some unknown reason,  $I-ii^6$  or  $I-\textcircled{\small o}vii^6$  are very common and useful: [EX 2](#).

$iii^6, vi^6$  – These are almost always found as passing chords to adjacent 6th chords: [EX 3](#); occasionally the submediant sixths are used in deceptive cadences: [EX 11](#).

$IV^6, iv^6$  – Used as a passing chord ([EX 3](#)) and in deceptive cadences ([EX 11](#)).

$V^6$  – This very common chord usually proceeds to the tonic, the LT ( $7^\circ$ ) in the bass rising: [EX 3](#). In a chain of descending sixths, though, this need not occur:  $I-(vi^6)-V^6-IV^6$  etc. - also [EX 3](#).

$\textcircled{\small o}vii^6$  – This chord is much more common than the  $\frac{5}{3}$  position; it is very useful as a passing chord, as in  $I-\textcircled{\small o}vii^6-I^6$ : [EX 2](#).

## Cadences

A cadence, in the most general sense, is any pause and/or falling of the melody at the end of a phrase, section, or piece. In harmonic theory, “cadence” refers to the chord progressions that occur at such a place, which comprise the most important harmonic formulae in common-practice tonal music. There are basically four types of cadences:

1. The full cadence (“authentic cadence”),  $V-I$  (or  $V-i$ ). It is most conclusive with the tonic in the soprano (the “perfect authentic cadence”), and when  $V$  is preceded by  $IV$  or  $ii^6$ : [EX 4](#). A more elaborate full cadence,  $ii^6-I_4^6-V-I$ , uses the “cadential 6-4”, a chord we meet in the next chapter: [EX 5](#). The full cadence is made less conclusive by a variety of means:  $3^\circ$  in the soprano instead of the tonic, using  $V^6$  or  $V_3^6$  instead of the root-position dominant, and by many rhythmic factors, especially the use of a “feminine” (weak-beat) ending, as opposed to a strong-beat (“masculine”) one: [EXX 6-7](#).

2. The half-cadence,  $X-V$ . Any of the formulae above can stop on  $V$  (i.e.,  $ii-I_4^6-V$ ); also common is simply  $I-V$ : [EX 8](#). The half-cadence is used at intermediate points in the phrase or section, and is commonly compared in rhetorical effect to a comma or semicolon, as opposed to the “full period” represented by the full cadence.

A common type of half-cadence, in which the bass descends a half-step to the  $5^\circ$ , might be called “Phrygian”:  $VI-V, iv^6-V$ , etc. Often this is used as a “bifocal cadence” in Baroque slow movements; the final quick movement proceeds in the relative major: [EX 9](#).

3. The plagal cadence, IV–I, iv–i, iv–I: [EX 10](#). This is the “Amen” cadence; it is quite conclusive, but in longer works it usually occurs only after considerable V–I motion.

4. The deceptive cadence, V–X. Most typical are V–vi and V–VI; also used to the same effect are

V–I<sup>6</sup>,  
V–IV<sup>6</sup> or iv<sup>6</sup>,  
V–VI<sup>6</sup> or vi<sup>6</sup>,  
V–vi or VI,

and other progressions that defeat the expectation that the dominant will resolve to the tonic: [EX 11](#).

(We will encounter other possibilities for deceptive cadences when we study secondary dominants).

Deceptive cadences are most effective when the melody (soprano) proceeds as normally to the 1<sup>o</sup>,

while the inner parts move to produce a chord other than the tonic.

The whole notion of “deceptive” cadences raises interesting questions of aesthetics – in what sense, for example, is one “deceived” by a cadence-formula one has heard scores of times before? The same point is famously raised in Thomas Peacock's *Headlong Hall*: Mr. Gall remarks of his landscape architecture, “I distinguish the picturesque and the beautiful, and I add to them, in the laying out of the grounds, a third and distinct character, which I call *unexpectedness*.” To which Mr. Milestone rejoins, “Pray, sir, by what name do you distinguish this character, when a person walks round the grounds for the second time?”

# Examples, Chapter IV

EX 1

D: I<sup>6</sup> IV I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup>      D: V V<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup> I<sup>6</sup> <sub>o</sub>vii<sup>6</sup> I I<sup>6</sup> V

EX 2

C: ii<sup>6</sup> V I      c: <sub>o</sub>ii<sup>6</sup> V i

C: I ii I<sup>6</sup>      I <sub>o</sub>vii<sup>6</sup> I<sup>6</sup>      I ii<sup>6</sup> V

EX 3

C: V iii<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> I      vi ii<sup>6</sup> iii<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup> I<sup>6</sup>      I vi<sup>6</sup><sub>o</sub>vii vi

(EX 3)

C: I vi<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> iii<sup>6</sup>

EX 4

B<sub>b</sub>: I IV V I I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup> V I

EX 5

B<sub>b</sub>: I ii<sup>6</sup> I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V I

EX 6

**B $\flat$ :** I IV V I

EX 7

**C:** ii<sup>6</sup> I<sup>4</sup> V V I

EX 8

**F:** I I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup> I<sup>4</sup> V I<sup>6</sup> I V

EX 9

**e:** IV<sup>6</sup> V **G:** I V<sup>6</sup>

EX 10

**F:** IV I **f:** iv i

EX 11

**B $\flat$ :** V vi V VI V IV<sup>6</sup> V iv<sup>6</sup> V vi<sup>6</sup> V VI<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> vi<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup>