

Harmony Lecture

*(topic: introduction to modal mixture; borrowed chords;
subtopic: mixture in a major key [^b6, ^b3, ^b7])*

(N.B. I assume that students have been taught on a track equivalent to that of *The Complete Musician*, i.e. they will have had exposure to applied chords, tonicization, modulation, but have not yet been exposed to the Neapolitan or Augmented Sixth chord)

I. Introduction to concept

A. Example of primary mixture in major mode (using ^b6)

1. First exposure (theoretical issue)

- Handout score to Chopin excerpt (Waltz in A minor, op. 34, no. 2, mm. 121-152)
- Play through the first half of the Chopin example (mm. 121-136)
- Ask students what key the snippet of mm. 121-136 is in and how they can tell
- Remark that these 16 bars, despite being clearly in A major, contain a lot of chromatic notes not otherwise found in A major
- Work through (bar by bar with students providing answers) the chromatic alterations in mm. 121-131, all of which can be explained as either chromatic passing notes or members of applied harmonies
- When bar 132 is reached, ask students what they think the purpose of the F-natural and C-natural alterations are (ignore the D# on the third beat of bar 132 for now)
- Point out the parallel phrase structure between mm. 121-124 and mm. 129-132, noting that in the first case, the chord was F# minor, while in the second instance, it is F major
- Remark that as of yet in our discussion of music theory, we have no way of accounting for (or labeling) an F major chord in A major; the former doesn't "belong" to the latter

2. Derivation of ^b6

- Play through mm. 137-152 of the Chopin excerpt (i.e. the second half)
- Ask students to compare the 16 bars of this second half to the 16 bars of the first half; what is the main difference? Answer: the second is a minor-mode version of the first
(N.B. The Bb and resulting Neapolitan chord in mm. 70 & 78 will be ignored)
- Remark that in bars 140 and 148 we have examples of F-major chords, similar to bar 132
(N.B. I realize that the D# in mm. 132 & 148 turn the F-major chord into a diminished-third inversion of an augmented-sixth chord, but I am ignoring that during this lecture)
- Ask students, now that they have seen the second 16 bars, whether they can provide an explanation for the F-major sonority of m. 132
- Emphasize that the F-major chord in m. 132 foreshadows the change from A major to A minor, thus the F-major chord can be seen as being "borrowed" from the upcoming period

B. Definitions

- Explain that the technique of using a chord from the parallel key is referred to as "mixture;" the chords are often called "borrowed" chords because they derive from this parallel key
- Notate an ascending C-major scale on one staff of the board; on a staff below, notate an ascending C-minor scale
- Ask class to think about and provide examples in which notes and chords from the parallel minor key can be imported into C-major as new triadic harmonies:
–C-minor, Eb-major, Ab-major, F-minor, Bb-major, D-diminished, etc.

- Remark on the variety of possibilities that can arise from just having three notes imported from the minor to its parallel major; conversely, observe how just a simple process of importing merely one or two of these notes can open upon a world of harmonic options

C. Labeling

- Write the bass line (A, D, E, F) from bars 129-132 from the Chopin example on the board
- Have students label the first three bass notes using figured bass
- Have students derive the figured bass notation for bar 132 (nat5)
- Have students add Roman numerals to the figured basses of mm. 61-63 (I, ii⁶, V⁷)
- Show students that the label for m. 132 would be bVI-nat5
- Make a clear distinction between the accidental (flat) in front of the Roman numeral (which is independent of the key signature) versus the figured bass (which is dependent on key)
- Return to the harmonies that were derived from importing the chords from C minor to C major and help students derive Roman numerals and figured bass for these chords

D. Deriving mixture chords from various scales

- Do some exercises where a certain key is given (Bb major for example) and students have to give the spelling of a variety of mixture chords (iv^b would be Eb, Gb, Bb)
- Ask students about their strategies for coming up with these chords outside of the key
- Propose a couple methods

- 1) Finding the equivalent chord in a parallel minor key (works great from G major to G minor)
- 2) Finding the major key chord and then making alterations (works better when the spelling a chord from the parallel minor is tricky, such as from Gb major to potentially Gb minor)
- 3) Be open to other methods that the class may come up with

E. Harmonizing with chords derived from ^b6

- Use opening melodic phrase from "Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen" (Bach chorale #139) as a melody to be harmonized by the class with a chord derived from ^b6 (use key signature of C major)
- Fill in first and last chords of the melody as C major chords, such that the phrase begins and ends on the tonic without modulating (unlike Bach)
- Ask class under which notes of the melody would a ^b6 borrowed chord work: only real option is on the second (or possibly) third beat of measure 2
- Ask class, given the apparent Perfect Authentic Cadence into m. 3, what the most obvious harmonization for the second half of m. 2 would be: answer should be a dominant 6/4-5/3
- Working backwards from the cadence, fill in the borrowed chord in m. 2 (perhaps at this point just writing in bass notes with figures and Roman numerals, saving inner voices for later)
- Harmonize m. 1 and the first beat of m. 2 with the class; fill in inner voices as necessary
- Have class sing the harmonization that they have created.
- Make any changes as necessary based on the feedback of the class
- Pass out the harmonization by Bach and comment that he has come up with a similar solution as the class, despite the phrase modulating from G major to C major.
- Remark how in the Bach example, a iv⁶ chord appears on the beat but, via the passing note (D), this borrowed subdominant changes to a dim-ii chord in second inversion
- Comment on how the ^b6 sonority has been used to extend and embellish the pre-dominant function

F. Example of primary mixture in major mode (using ^b3)

- Hand out score to Kuhlau's Sonatina op. 20, no. 1; play up to about bar 20 or 21
- Ask students what key this excerpt begins and ends in (C major to G major)
- Remark on how we see a modulation from tonic to dominant at the opening (seen before)
- Ask students if they notice any examples of mixture in this passage (mm. 13-14 are it)
- Ask students how they would label the chord in bars 14-15 (secondary dominant)
- Ask students if the C-minor chord in mm. 13-14 fits into either C major or G major
- With students, derive Roman numeral and figured bass notations for the C minor chord from mm. 13-14 in both C major and G major
- Remark on how in this example, the mixture again acts in a pre-dominant function, seen as ^b6 in G major
- Remark as well, though, that the Eb acts as ^b3 in C major and thus destabilizes the C major tonality and thereby helps engender the modulation away from C major
- Emphasize similar purposes in the use of mixture between the Chopin and Kuhlau examples: in both cases, mixture provided a destabilization of the prevailing mode to allow an easier modulation to a new key (particularly evident in the Kuhlau excerpt)

G. Harmonic dictation of primary mixture in major mode (using ^b7)

- Ask class to get out a sheet of paper (doesn't necessarily have to be staff paper)
- Tell class that we are going to do try to figure out some chord progressions by ear (i.e. harmonic dictation, but don't frame it that way)
- Ask students if they can write down the Roman numerals that they hear
- Let the class know that the song will be "With a Little Help from My Friends" off *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by the Beatles and then play the verse on the piano with root position chords while singing the melody ([I-V-ii / ii-V-I])
- Ask students to respond back with the chord progression they heard, playing the excerpt a couple more times if necessary
- Ask students to see if they can hear what happens in the chorus [bVII-IV-I]); play chorus
- Play excerpt a couple times; if necessary, just do melodic dictation with the bass line to get the point of the bVII root note across
- Write chord progressions on the board for the verse and chorus with Roman numerals
- Point out the descending fourths pattern of the bVII-IV-I progression; show how this pattern of descending fourths derives from the beginning of the verse (I-V-ii) with the same harmonic rhythm: in the verse these descending fourths move away from the tonic, while in the chorus they move back to the tonic
- Play final outro of the song, which is a few iterations of the chorus with a bVI-bVII-I tag at the end and have the class attempt to transcribe that progression
- After playing the outro a few times, explain how the mixture of the bVI heightens the sense of closure, perhaps playing around with a final chord of bIII since the progression of bVI-bVII implied a move to bIII
- Ask students what they think the purpose of this mixture at the end of the song is for
- Propose that the mixture at the end helps signal closure to the tune
- Joke that it also signals a closure to this class period

FUTURE CLASSES

1) subtopics:

- mixture in a minor key
 - already using ^#6 and ^#7 to create true dominants and pre-dominants
 - harmonic options (I#, ii, #iii, #vi, etc.)
- voice-leading
 - explorations on part-writing in more chromatic textures
 - issues of cross relations and chromatic lines
 - avoiding augmented seconds

2) subtopics:

- secondary mixture
 - harmonic options (III# in major, iii in minor, VI# in major, etc.)
- differentiating primary versus secondary mixture versus applied chords
 - how to make analytical decisions on chord function
 - melodic mixture (as an embellishment without harmonic implications)

3) subtopics:

- mixture and remote modulation (moving to foreign keys)
- using mixture as pivot chords
- the harmonic ambiguity of diminished seventh chords
- free composition using mixture

4) transition class that uses mixture to derive Neapolitan 6th chords and Augmented 6th chords