

MUSIC THEORY.aargh@

Accidentals - 2 (Session 25)

For Harmonic Reasons: More Secondary Dominants

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In Session 24 (August 2016) we talked about **accidentals** used for **harmonic** reasons and specifically focused on the Dominant that leads to the Dominant, a **Secondary Dominant** (not the dominant that belongs to the key signature, the Primary Dominant.) Key factors in any dominant are that there is a pitch a half step away from its tonic (a **leading tone**) and that the chord progression is of a descending fifth, or counterclockwise around the circle of fifths. (See sessions 22 and 23)

One other factor involved in the progression of a dominant seventh chord to its tonic is that there is a **tritone** in the dominant seventh chord. A tritone is either a **diminished fifth** or an **augmented fourth** (see session 15). This interval has a long history of being described as “**diabolus in musica**” (the devil is music) because of its **instability**. The interval happens (among other places) between the 4th and 7th scale degrees of a major scale. Play F and B on the bells or piano and you will hear what I mean. The B wants to resolve to C and the F to E. Use a tritone and you instill urgency in the resolution of a chord! Go, Go, Go!!!

Secondary Dominant seventh chords can be seen in the Beethoven hymn “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee.” Two important accidentals are a **lowered 7th scale degree** and a **raised 5th scale degree**. (It also uses the raised 4th, but you know that chord, see session 24.)

The image contains two musical examples, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a piano accompaniment. The first example is labeled "V of Bb" and shows a scale from 1 to 8, with the 7th degree lowered (Ab). The second example is labeled "V of D" and shows a scale from 1 to 8, with the 5th degree raised (F#). Both examples show the resulting dominant seventh chord and its resolution to the tonic, highlighting the tritone interval between the 4th and 7th scale degrees.

At the Festival in Sioux Falls in June, 2016 the massed choir played **Hymn to Joy** based on the hymn by Beethoven and arranged for handbells by Michael Keller, Hope HP 1457. Look at measures 17-18, 23-24, and 24 beats two to three to find these chords. What did these chords do to the music? How will you treat these measures in performance? Where are these measures in the hymn tune? What are the words at this point? Why did Beethoven harmonize with the chromatic pitches? (He could have used pitches belonging to the scale, diatonic, not chromatic, pitches.) Is there an urgency of forward motion required in performance?

Until next time,

Dr. P

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