

## The Harmonic Sequence

A harmonic sequence involves a series of chords that are transposed by a given interval. The chords in a harmonic sequence may or may not function in their normal manner. Occasionally, the melodic pattern involved in a sequence overrides or takes precedence over the harmonic progression. In the following example, all the chords are fully functional.

Harmonic Sequence at the Interval of a Fifth/Fourth      Harmonic Sequence at the Interval of a Third

vi    ii    V    I      I    vi    IV    ii

However, in the next example, which involves all the diatonic triads in the key of C major, the  $\text{vii}^\circ$  chord does not function properly and its leading tone does not resolve.  $\text{vii}^\circ$  normally progresses to I (i) or dissolves to V or  $\text{i}\frac{4}{2}$ . In this case,  $\text{vii}^\circ$  progresses to  $\text{iii}$ . This makes sense aurally because the logic of the harmonic sequence is overriding the function of the individual chords. It should also be pointed out that the sequence is progressing at the interval of a perfect fifth. The only exception is the tritone relationship between IV and  $\text{vii}^\circ$ .

I    IV     $\text{vii}^\circ$      $\text{iii}$     vi    ii    V    I

tritone

In progressions that involve improperly functioning chords (like the one directly above), one should understand them as contrapuntal elaborations of a framing harmony. In the case of the example above, the progression is merely an elaboration of the I chord. This may be called a *circular progression*. The harmonic sequence is not a strong harmonic progression in itself, but serves to prolong the I chord.

A harmonic sequence may involve diatonic triads, seventh chords, or both. Inverted chords are also a possibility.

Sequence at the Fifth Involving Seventh Chords      Alternating Triads and Seventh Chords

$\text{I}_7$      $\text{IV}_7$      $\text{vii}^\circ_7$      $\text{iii}_7$      $\text{vi}_7$      $\text{ii}_7$      $\text{V}_7$      $\text{I}_7$       I     $\text{IV}_7$      $\text{vii}^\circ$      $\text{iii}_7$     vi     $\text{ii}_7$     V     $\text{I}_7$

Sequence at the Second Involving First Inverted Triads

I     $\text{V}_6$      $\text{IV}_6$      $\text{iii}_6$      $\text{ii}_6$      $\text{I}_6$      $\text{vii}^\circ_6$     I

These progressions do not make harmonic sense.