

## Introduction to Secondary Functions

**Chromaticism.** Chromaticism is used to intensify harmonic or melodic progression in music. A chromatic pitch is a non-diatonic pitch. Because chromatic notes are foreign to the main key, they draw the listener's attention and demand resolution, usually by step to a diatonic pitch.

**Secondary Functions.** The most frequent use of a chromaticism is as a part of a secondary function. A secondary function is a chord that belongs to a key other than the main key. Consider the following example:

C: ii V I C: V/V V I  
[G: V I]

By altering the F to F# in the ii chord, the melodic progression from F (now F#) to G has intensified, drawing the listener's attention to the D major chord, and ultimately, upon resolution of the F#, to the V chord of C.

The progression D major to G major may be analyzed as V-I in the key of G major. However, the passage stays in the key of C major. Since the D major chord does not function to support the key of C, the D major chord should be analyzed as V/G (spoken V of G) or V/V. Because D major carries the leading-tone to G, the G major chord is actually being "tonicalized" (becoming like a tonic) by the D major chord. The resolution of that leading tone to G projects G as a tonic. G is only momentarily heard as a tonic, however, and the main key of C is immediately reinstated by the IAC cadence.

To more clearly understand the concept of secondary functions, it may be helpful to think of the tonal structure of an entire work. If one considers a multi-movement work from the classical period, there are several tonal levels. The entire work may be in one specific key, that is, it begins and ends in the same key. However, rarely does a work remain in one key throughout. As one looks closer at the work, the individual movements may be in several related keys to the overall key. Within the movements there may be modulations to other key areas. Within those key areas there may be "tonicalizations" of chords that are diatonic to those key areas. It is at this tonal level that one finds secondary functions.

**Secondary Dominants.** Any consonant (major or minor) chord other than the tonic may be tonicalized and preceded by its dominant. In a major key, the consonant chords, other than the tonic, are ii, iii, IV, V, and vi. The secondary dominants of these chords would be V/ii, V/iii, V/IV, V/V, and V/vi or V<sub>7</sub>/ii, V<sub>7</sub>/iii, V<sub>7</sub>/IV, V<sub>7</sub>/V, and V<sub>7</sub>/vi. Most secondary functions are either secondary dominants (V/? or V<sub>7</sub>/?) or secondary leading-tone chords (vii<sup>o</sup>/?, vii<sup>o</sup><sub>7</sub>/?, or vii<sup>o</sup><sub>7</sub>/?). The following example contains diatonic chords (open noteheads) which are each preceded by their secondary dominants (filled in noteheads).

V<sub>7</sub>/iii iii V<sub>7</sub>/IV IV V<sub>7</sub>/ii ii V<sub>7</sub>/V V<sub>3</sub> I

\* Notice the irregular resolution of the leading tone down by step. This is normal when a secondary dominant resolves to a 7th chord.

To gain a better understanding of the secondary function try the following:

Pick a major-minor 7th chord and find nine functions in nine different keys for that chord. Example:

G7 (G, B, D, F). G7 will ALMOST ALWAYS function as the dominant to C (major or minor). Find the keys in which C (major or minor) is a diatonic chord. The progression G7 to C (major or minor) may function as any of the following:

- V<sub>7</sub>/IV-IV in G
- V<sub>7</sub>/V - V in F
- V<sub>7</sub>/III - III in a
- V<sub>7</sub>/VI - VI in e
- V<sub>7</sub>/VII - VII in d
- V<sub>7</sub>/ii - ii in Bb
- V<sub>7</sub>/iii - iii in Ab
- V<sub>7</sub>/vi - vi in Eb
- V<sub>7</sub>/iv - iv in g

### Spelling Secondary Dominants

Three steps:

- (1) Find the root of the chord to be tonalized.
- (2) Go up a P5th.
- (3) Make that note the root of a major or major-minor chord.

### Recognizing Secondary Dominants

Six steps:

- (1) Determine the key.
- (2) Find a chromaticism.
- (3) Is a major or major-minor 7th chord present or implied by the chromaticism?
- (4) Find the root of the major or major-minor 7th chord.
- (5) Find a note a P5th below the root of the major or major-minor chord.
- (6) Is that note the root of a diatonic major or minor chord in the key?