CHAPTER 6 - CADENCES

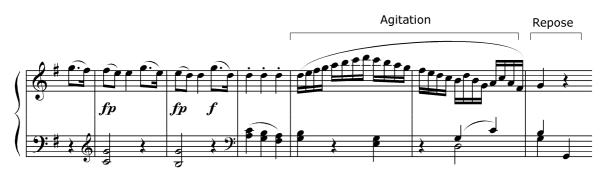
Cadences are one of the main mechanisms for the organisation of musical form. In this unit we study the main types of cadences that take place in classical tonal music, according to the harmonic colour that characterises them.

1. WHAT IS A CADENCE.

- A cadence is a resting point in the musical discourse. They are equivalent to punctuation marks in text (in fact, this is their origin to a certain extent). In tonal music, they are essential to delimit the phrases, parts and sections within a piece of music.

- Cadences are basically a rhythmic process. In order to produce a resting point, all you have to do is.... to rest !, that is, lengthen a note, or write a rest, so that the musical discourse can come to a pause at that point. As simple as that.

- However, it is common to make cadences still more effective. The technique lies in heightening the musical tension before the resting moment. In this way, the repose is more striking, by contrast with the previous agitation. This can be clearly seen in this example from the first movement of Mozart's Sonata No. 5:



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- It is therefore clear that a cadence is basically a rhythmic process. However, harmony also plays an important role, as it can modify the character of the pause, depending on which chord we place at the end. We will see this in the following sections.

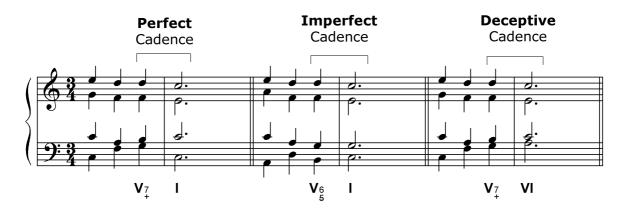
2. CADENCES WHICH END ON THE TONIC.

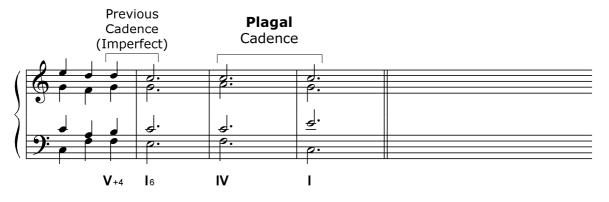
- There are several types of cadences that end on the tonic, depending on the chord that precedes it and their (possible) inversion. We see all of them and their features in the following table.

Name	Previous Chord	Resting Chord	Indications	Features
Perfect	V	I	Both chords are in root position	This is the strongest cadence of all. It is used at the end of a piece or section.
Imperfect	V	Ι	At least one of the chords is inverted	The sound is similar to the perfect cadence, but lacking such sense of conclusion.
Deceptive	V	VI	Both chords are in root position	It sounds like a perfect cadence which is thwarted. That is why it is called "Deceptive".
Plagal	Other chord than V	I	The tonic is in root position	The most common plagal cadence is IV - I. It is normally used at the end of a piece, as a reinforcement of a previous cadence.

- Pieces or large sections usually end with a perfect cadence (or, exceptionally, with a plagal cadence).

- Here you can see some examples of these cadences. Note one important aspect: the last chord is always placed on the strong beat.





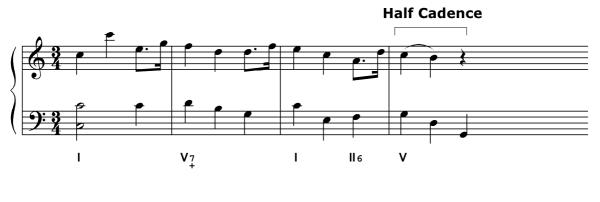
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3. CADENCES WHICH DO NOT END ON THE TONIC. HALF CADENCES.

- Any repose on a chord without tonic function is a Half Cadence. In any case, half cadences end almost exclusively on the V degree.

- In half cadences, any chord can precede the last chord and, unlike cadences that end on the tonic, the half cadence to the V degree is a "tense" cadence, because the V degree is a degree with harmonic tension. Therefore, it does not create relaxation, but a distinct musical tension that urges the musical discourse to continue.

- Observe the half cadence in this minuet by Haydn (Hob. XVI:7):



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4. ACCELERATION OF THE HARMONIC RHYTHM BEFORE THE CADENCE.

- Harmonic Rhythm is the rate at which the harmony changes.

- In the same way that the melodic rhythm is usually altered in this "agitation" phase prior to the cadence, the harmonic rhythm is also frequently accelerated. This can be clearly observed in the example above.

5. SUGGESTED EXERCISES:



- Write two versions of this exercise, creating different cadences in each of them:

- Version 1: a- Imperfect cadence, b- Half cadence, c- Perfect cadence, d- Plagal cadence

- Version 2: a- Perfect cadence, b- Imperfect cadence, c- Deceptive cadence, d- Plagal cadence

- 2. Write a harmonic structure with the following features:
 - Key: D major
 - Time signature: 4/4
 - Form: 3 phrases of 4 measures (12 measures in total)
 - Cadences (at the end of each phrase): Imperfect, Half, Perfect
 - Harmonic rhythm: Half notes, with an acceleration before the cadences.
- 3. Write a harmonic structure with the following features:
 - Key: F major
 - Time signature: 3/4
 - Form: 3 phrases of 4 measures + 2 ending measures (14 measures in total)
 - Cadences (at the end of each phrase): Half, Imperfect, Deceptive + Plagal
 - Harmonic rhythm: Dotted half notes, with an acceleration before the cadences.