

CHAPTER 5 - THE DOMINANT 7th CHORD

This chapter describes the practical use of the dominant 7th chord: resolution, inversions and placement in the Basic Harmonic System.

1. DEFINITION AND RESOLUTION OF THE CHORD

- The Dominant 7th chord is created by adding a 7th to the V degree. This gives more tension to this chord and further strengthens the need for resolution on the tonic.

- Like the leading tone, the 7th is a note of compulsory resolution, in this case descending a second downwards.



Im.5.1

2. APPLICATION IN 4-PART WRITING. INVERSIONS AND (FIGURED BASS) NOTATION

- The Dominant 7th chord is used in all its inversions, and it is almost more common to find it inverted than in root position, which entails a certain complexity. For this reason, we first show its use in inversion:

The image shows three examples of 4-part writing for the resolution of the dominant 7th chord to the tonic. Each example consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first example is labeled '1st Inversion' and shows the V₆/₅ chord resolving to the I chord. The second example is labeled '2nd Inversion' and shows the V₊₆ chord resolving to the I chord. The third example is labeled '3rd Inversion' and shows the V₊₄ chord resolving to the I₆ chord. In all cases, arrows indicate the resolution of the 7th of the dominant chord to the 6th of the tonic chord and the 3rd of the dominant chord to the 2nd of the tonic chord.

Im.5.2a

- As you can see, the Dominant 7th chord is complete in its three possible inversions. As it has 4 different notes, none of them are doubled in 4-part writing. The tonic is also complete, with its usual doubling.

- However, in 4-part writing, the resolution of the dominant 7th chord in root position implies that one of the two chords, either the V₇ or the I chord, will be

incomplete. In both cases the 5th of one of the chords is omitted, avoiding consecutive fifths.

Root Position

V_7^+ I
 V_7^+ I
 V_7^+ VI

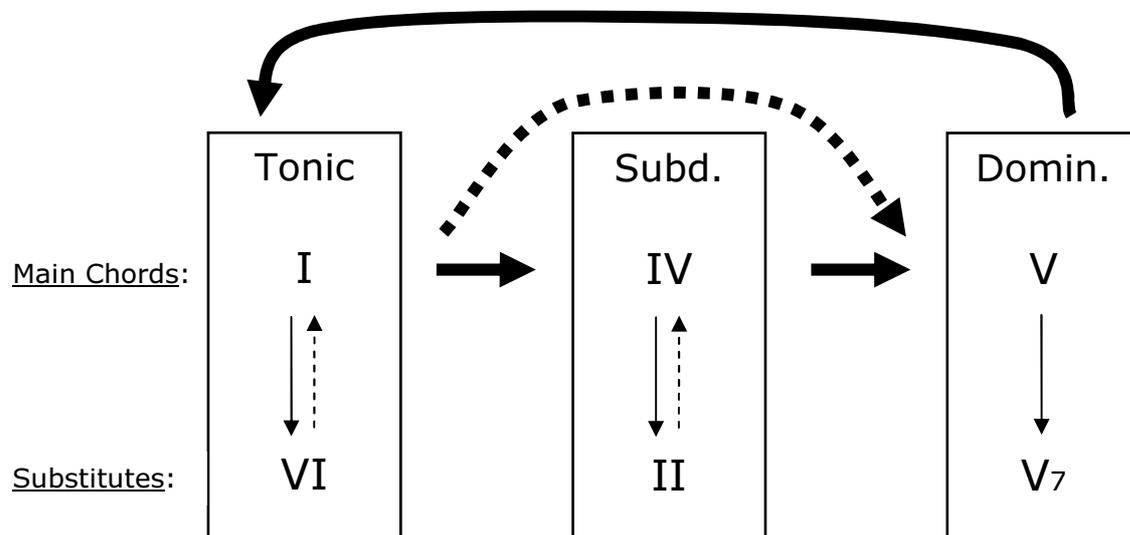
Incomplete Tonic
Incomplete Dominant
Both Complete

Im. 5.2b

- On the other hand, the progression $V_7 - VI$, with both chords in root position, does not cause any particular problem, and both chords can be complete.

3. LOCATION IN THE BASIC HARMONIC SYSTEM AND APPLICATION TO EXERCISES

- As you can see in the diagram, V_7 is used as a substitution or expansion chord for V , always going from lower to higher tension.



- In the exercises, V_7 should be used in the following way:

- Most of the V 's should have a 7th.
- Most of the V_7 should be in inversion.
- Only if the V is placed at a resting spot (cadence), the 7th is usually omitted, as it contradicts the resting character.

- These recommendations that we establish for the exercises come, as all the indications in this manual of Classical Tonal Harmony, from the most common patterns observed in the music literature.

- And if we review the classical repertoire, the Dominant tends to have a 7th and to be mostly inverted, except at resting points.

4. SUGGESTED EXERCISES

- Harmonise the following melodies in 4 parts, making use of the V7 chord as described in this chapter.

