

# Part-Writing: Using Inversions



WHEN COMMON PRACTICE COMPOSERS USED *INVERTED CHORDS* IN FOUR-VOICE WRITING, THEY FOLLOWED SOME *GENERAL PATTERNS* REGARDING WHICH NOTE OF THE CHORD SHOULD BE *DOUBLED*.

## ROOT POSITION

IN **ROOT POSITION TRIADS**, COMPOSERS USUALLY DOUBLED THE **ROOT**, WHICH IS IN THE

**BASS**

OF THE CHORD.



## FIRST INVERSION

THE DOUBLING OF **FIRST INVERSION TRIADS** DEPENDS ON THE *TYPE* OF THE CHORD BEING WRITTEN.

IN **MAJOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS**, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE

**SOPRANO**

OF THE CHORD.



IN **MINOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS**, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE

**BASS**  
OR  
**SOPRANO**

OF THE CHORD.



IN **DIMINISHED FIRST INVERSION TRIADS**, THEY DOUBLED THE

**BASS**

OF THE CHORD.



## SECOND INVERSION

IN **SECOND INVERSION TRIADS**, COMPOSERS USUALLY DOUBLED THE **FIFTH**, WHICH IS IN THE

**BASS**

OF THE CHORD.



HERE'S **ANOTHER** WAY TO THINK OF IT: THE **ONLY** TIME YOU CAN'T DOUBLE THE **BASS** IS IN **FIRST INVERSION MAJOR TRIADS**, WHERE YOU SHOULD DOUBLE THE **SOPRANO** INSTEAD.

OKAY, WE KNOW **HOW** TO USE INVERSIONS IN FOUR-PART WRITING... BUT **WHEN** CAN WE USE THEM?

THE ONLY "RULE" REGARDING **ROOT POSITION TRIADS** AND **FIRST INVERSION TRIADS** IS THAT **DIMINISHED TRIADS** ARE ALWAYS PLACED IN **FIRST INVERSION**.

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ii<sup>o</sup><sub>6</sub>

OTHER THAN THAT, YOU CAN USE **ROOT POSITION** AND **FIRST INVERSION** ESSENTIALLY **WHENEVER YOU WANT!**

IT'S **SECOND INVERSION TRIADS** THAT HAVE THE **BIG RESTRICTIONS**.

### THE **CADENTIAL** $\frac{6}{4}$ CHORD

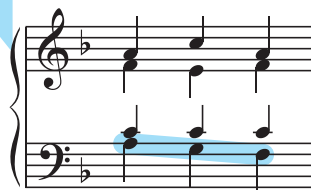
IS A **TONIC TRIAD** IN **SECOND INVERSION** FOLLOWED BY A **ROOT-POSITION DOMINANT CHORD** AT A **CADENCE**.



F: I $\frac{6}{4}$  V I

### THE **PASSING** $\frac{6}{4}$ CHORD

IS A CHORD PLACED IN **SECOND INVERSION** WHERE THE **BASS** IS TREATED LIKE A **PASSING TONE**.



F: I $\frac{6}{4}$  V $\frac{6}{4}$  I

### THE **PEDAL** $\frac{6}{4}$ CHORD

IS A **SECOND INVERSION CHORD** WHERE THE **BASS** IS TREATED LIKE A **PEDAL TONE**.



F: I IV $\frac{6}{4}$  I

IF YOU WRITE A **SECOND INVERSION TRIAD** AND IT'S NOT ONE OF **THESE THREE SITUATIONS**, THEN YOU ARE **NOT** WRITING IN THE **COMMON PRACTICE PERIOD STYLE!** THE COMPOSERS OF THE STYLE JUST DIDN'T USE THESE CHORDS **WILLY-NILLY**.