

Borrowed Chords

ALTERED CHORDS USE NOTES *OUTSIDE THE SCALE* AS A MEANS OF ADDING A DIFFERENT "COLOR" TO THE CHORD.

HOW DOES A COMPOSER DECIDE WHICH ALTERED NOTES TO USE? IN A **MAJOR KEY**, ONE POSSIBILITY IS USING NOTES AND CHORDS FROM THE **PARALLEL MINOR**.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE FOLLOWING CHORDS ARE **DIATONIC CHORDS** IN **C MINOR**:

"BORROWED"? WHY CALL THEM THAT WHEN MAJOR NEVER BRINGS THEM BACK?

c: ii° ii°⁷ III iv VI vii°⁷

HEY, MINOR! I'LL HAVE THEM BACK BY THURSDAY THIS TIME, I PROMISE!

BUT IF WE USE THEM IN A MAJOR KEY, THEY REQUIRE **ACCIDENTALS** AND ARE THEREFORE **ALTERED CHORDS**. WE CALL THESE **BORROWED CHORDS** BECAUSE THEY ARE **BORROWED** FROM THE **PARALLEL MINOR**.

SOME THEORISTS REFER TO THE USE OF THESE CHORDS AS **MODE MIXTURE**.

C: ii° ii°⁷ **bIII** iv **bVI** vii°⁷

AND, IN FACT, THESE SIX CHORDS ARE THE SIX MOST COMMONLY USED **BORROWED CHORDS** IN THE COMMON PRACTICE PERIOD. (ONE OF THEM, THE MAJOR TRIAD ON THE LOWERED MEDIANT, OR "FLAT THREE," WAS NOT USED MUCH BY COMPOSERS BEFORE THE **ROMANTIC ERA**.)

TWO OF THESE CHORDS, THE "FLAT THREE" AND "FLAT SIX," HAVE **ALTERED TONES AS ROOTS**. WE PLACE A **FULL-SIZED FLAT SYMBOL** BEFORE THE ROMAN NUMERAL ITSELF TO INDICATE THIS **ALTERED ROOT**.

ALL THE USUAL PART-WRITING RULES APPLY TO THESE CHORDS. FOR EXAMPLE:

ii°⁶ THE **BORROWED SUPERTONIC** IS A **DIMINISHED TRIAD**, AND IS THEREFORE ALWAYS USED IN **FIRST INVERSION**.

THE BORROWED **SEVENTH CHORDS** CAN BE USED IN ANY INVERSION, BUT THE **SEVENTH MUST BE APPROACHED AND RESOLVED** PROPERLY. **ii°⁷** **vii°⁷**

bIII **bVI** IT'S USUALLY BEST TO RESOLVE ALTERED NOTES IN THE DIRECTION OF THEIR ALTERATION, BUT DOING SO IN THE TWO **ALTERED ROOT** CHORDS WON'T WORK.

THE LEADING-TONE FULLY DIMINISHED SEVENTH IS THE **KING OF DOMINANT FUNCTION**. DON'T EVEN THINK OF RESOLVING IT TO ANYTHING BUT **TONIC**! **vii°⁷**

WAIT... **WHY?** SINCE WE DOUBLE THE ROOT, MOVING BOTH ROOTS THE SAME DIRECTION CAN OFTEN RESULT IN **PARALLEL OCTAVES**.

bVI **V**

bVI **V**

IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO AVOID PARALLELISM THAN TO RESOLVE THE NOTES A CERTAIN WAY, SO THIS USE OF **CONTRARY MOTION** IS BETTER.

THERE'S ANOTHER CHORD THAT IS OFTEN ERRONEOUSLY CALLED A BORROWED CHORD: USED IN **MINOR**, TAKEN FROM THE **PARALLEL MAJOR**. IT'S THE **PICARDY THIRD**: A TONIC CHORD WITH A **RAISED THIRD** USED AS THE FINAL CHORD OF THE PIECE.

NAMED FOR 24TH-CENTURY EXPLORER **JEAN-LUC PICARD!***

g: i V⁷ i VI ii°⁶ **I**

*NOPE.