

hey, it's kids!

# SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!



**Q:** Dear Sparky: Can you elaborate on why suspensions are identified by numbers? Also, what should one watch out for when writing suspensions in four-part harmony?

--S.S., Detroit, MI

**A: WOOF!\***

**\*TRANSLATION:** WHEN ANALYZING SUSPENSIONS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY BOTH THE **NOTE OF SUSPENSION** (THE NON-HARMONIC TONE ITSELF) AND THE **NOTE OF RESOLUTION** (THE NOTE THAT COMES RIGHT AFTER THE NON-HARMONIC TONE IN THE SAME VOICE).



THIS A IS THE **NOTE OF SUSPENSION**... IT DOESN'T BELONG IN THIS G MAJOR TRIAD.

IT RESOLVES TO THIS G, WHICH DOES FIT IN THE CHORD. IT'S THE **NOTE OF RESOLUTION!**

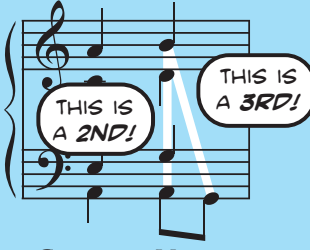
C: IV V<sup>6</sup>

IN ALMOST EVERY CASE, THE SUSPENSION IS THEN LABELED USING TWO INTERVALS: THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE **NOTE OF SUSPENSION** AND THE **BASS**, AND THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE **NOTE OF RESOLUTION** AND THE **BASS**.



C: IV V<sup>6</sup>  
...SO IT'S A 7-6 SUSPENSION!

WHEN **WRITING** AN EXAMPLE WHICH INCLUDES A SUSPENSION, IT IS VERY OFTEN USEFUL TO **BEGIN** BY WRITING THE CHORD THAT IS GOING TO CONTAIN THE SUSPENSION, **THEN** ADDING THE SUSPENSION, AND FINISHING BY WRITING THE **CHORD OF APPROACH**.



C: vi V  
...SO IT'S A 2-3 SUSPENSION!

THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS IS THE **2-3 SUSPENSION**, WHERE THE SUSPENSION OCCURS IN THE **BASS**. FOR THIS ONE, WE LOOK AT THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE NOTES OF SUSPENSION AND RESOLUTION AND THE **NEAREST CHORD TONE**, WHICHEVER VOICE IT MAY BE IN.

THE REAL TRICK, THOUGH, IS TO **PLAN AHEAD**... IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO WRITE A PARTICULAR TYPE OF SUSPENSION, YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE **INTERVAL THAT NEEDS TO BE PRESENT** IN THE CHORD THAT INCLUDES YOUR SUSPENSION.

FOR THE **9-8 SUSPENSION**, THE SUSPENSION RESOLVES TO AN **OCTAVE** ABOVE THE **BASS**... THAT'S **EASY**, SINCE **ANY CHORD** CAN INCLUDE AN OCTAVE.

FOR THE **7-6 SUSPENSION**, THE SUSPENSION RESOLVES TO AN **SIXTH** ABOVE THE **BASS**. THAT MEANS YOU CAN'T USE A CHORD IN **ROOT POSITION**, BECAUSE THEY HAVE A **FIFTH** AND A **THIRD** ABOVE THE **BASS**. YOU NEED A **FIRST** OR **SECOND INVERSION TRIAD!**

FOR THE **4-3 SUSPENSION** AND **2-3 SUSPENSION**, YOU NEED A CHORD WITH A **THIRD** ABOVE THE **BASS**... WHICH MEANS YOU CAN USE ANYTHING **EXCEPT** A **SECOND INVERSION TRIAD**.

## DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!