

Secondary Dominants

What is this?



D: V7 I

- Sounds like V7-I in the key of D major
- But the actual key is ...
 - G major
 - This V7-I is too brief to be a *modulation* to D major

Tonicization

- When we find a dominant to tonic progression that *temporarily* suggests a key area other than the current key, we say that that second key is being *tonicized*
- *Tonicization* means to make a chord sound like a *tonic* momentarily (“it sounds like V7-I in the key of...”)
- We can *tonicize* any major or minor chord by preceding it with its own dominant

Tonicization



D: V7 I

- So, in this progression, the D chord has been *tonicized* (has become a momentary tonic) by preceding it with its own dominant (V7 to I in D major)

Tonicization vs. Modulation

- *Tonicization* is different than *modulation*
- When music modulates, it changes key for an extended period of time, often cadencing in and confirming the new key
- Unlike modulation, tonicization is brief—afterwards we return directly to the original key

Secondary Dominants

- This tonicizing dominant is not the *regular* dominant in the current key
- Instead, it is what we call a *secondary dominant*—a dominant in another, *secondary key*
 - In this case, the A7 is not the dominant V7 chord in the home key of G major—it is a dominant in a secondary key of D major (in other words, it is a *secondary dominant*)

Labeling Secondary Dominants

- How do we label secondary dominants?
- We can call it a V^7 chord, but it is a V^7 in the key of the chord that *follows* it
- So, if we have a V^7 in the key of V , we would write V^7/V (which reads “ V^7 of V ” or “ V^7 in the key of V ”)
- The second symbol (after the slash) is always the triad that is being tonicized

Labeling Secondary Dominants

D: V^7 I
G: I V^7/V V V^7 I

- Here we have a V^7 in the key of D, which is V in the home key of G, so the secondary dominant is labeled V^7/V (a V^7 in the key of the V chord)

Spelling Secondary Dominants

- Secondary dominants are spelled like regular dominants—they are always either a *major triad* or a *major-minor seventh chord*
- To make them major triads or major-minor sevenths, secondary dominants usually need at least one accidental
- We call these *altered chords* because they use pitches that are foreign to the key

Spelling Secondary Dominants

G: I V^7/V V V^7 I

- This chord has been altered with a C^\sharp , turning it into a dominant seventh
- What would it be without the C^\sharp ?
 - A regular ii^7 chord

Method for Spelling

- There are three steps you should follow in spelling secondary dominants—if you do all of these steps in the right order, you can spell any secondary dominant
 - 1. Find the root of the chord you want to tonicize
 - 2. Go up a fifth or down a fourth to find the dominant
 - 3. Spell a major triad or dominant seventh on that note

How many accidentals?

- When spelling a secondary dominant in major, you usually just have to raise the third—the leading tone; but in minor, you may have to use additional accidentals
- The important thing is to make sure you have the right root for the chord, and that on that root you have a major triad (with a minor seventh)

V⁷/V

- The most common kind of secondary dominant is the dominant of the dominant: V/V or, with a seventh, V⁷/V
- The V/V looks like a major II chord—V/V might be described as a stronger, more activated substitute for ii
- To change a ii chord into a V/V, we raise its third (scale degree 4)
- This raised scale degree 4 (fi) is the leading tone to V

Inversions and Voice-Leading

- Secondary dominants can be inverted just like regular dominants (first find and spell the secondary dominant, then invert it)
- The first inversion of a secondary dominant is the most common inversion, with the leading tone in the bass
- The voice-leading of a secondary dominant is the same as with regular dominants (the leading tone goes up, the seventh goes down)

V⁷ of other Triads

- Although secondary dominants of V are the most common, any major or minor triad can be tonicized
- In major keys we can have V/ii, V/iii, V⁷/IV, V/V, and V/vi
- There is no V/vii^o because we cannot tonicize a *diminished* key
- In minor keys we just have V/III, V⁷/iv, and V/V (V/VI is usually analyzed as III)

V⁷ / IV

- After the V/V, V⁷/IV is probably the most common secondary dominant—usually used to move from tonic to subdominant
- When you see a lowered seventh added to the tonic, it usually resolves to the subdominant as a secondary dominant