

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	FIRST INVERSION			SECOND INVERSION			
<p>IN ROOT POSITION TRIADS, COMPOSERS USUALLY DOUBLED THE ROOT, WHICH IS IN THE BASS OF THE CHORD.</p>	<p>THE DOUBLING OF FIRST INVERSION TRIADS DEPENDS ON THE TYPE OF THE CHORD BEING WRITTEN.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="299 396 592 695"> <p>IN MAJOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE SOPRANO OF THE CHORD.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="592 396 878 695"> <p>IN MINOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE BASS OR SOPRANO OF THE CHORD.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="878 396 1063 695"> <p>IN DIMINISHED FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, THEY DOUBLED THE BASS OF THE CHORD.</p> </td> </tr> </table>			<p>IN MAJOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE SOPRANO OF THE CHORD.</p>	<p>IN MINOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE BASS OR SOPRANO OF THE CHORD.</p>	<p>IN DIMINISHED FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, THEY DOUBLED THE BASS OF THE CHORD.</p>	<p>IN SECOND INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS USUALLY DOUBLED THE FIFTH, WHICH IS IN THE BASS OF THE CHORD.</p>
<p>IN MAJOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE SOPRANO OF THE CHORD.</p>	<p>IN MINOR FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, COMPOSERS DOUBLED THE BASS OR SOPRANO OF THE CHORD.</p>	<p>IN DIMINISHED FIRST INVERSION TRIADS, THEY DOUBLED THE BASS OF THE CHORD.</p>					

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**.

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**: THE MIDDLE NOTE OF A **STEPWISE LINE** MOVING UP OR DOWN.

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**: A NOTE PRECEDED AND FOLLOWED BY THE **SAME NOTE**.

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**.