

# The Harmonic Cadences



A **CADENCE** IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE THE **LAST TWO CHORDS** OF A **PHRASE, SECTION OR PIECE**. THERE ARE **FOUR** TYPES OF CADENCES, EACH WITH THEIR OWN SPECIFIC **REQUIREMENTS** AND **VARIATIONS**.

A **PERFECT CADENCE** CONSISTS OF A **DOMINANT FUNCTION CHORD (V OR VII)** MOVING TO **TONIC**.

G: V I

A **PLAGAL CADENCE** CONSISTS OF A **SUBDOMINANT FUNCTION CHORD (IV OR II)** MOVING TO **TONIC**.

G: IV I

AN **IMPERFECT CADENCE** IS ANY CADENCE THAT ENDS ON THE **DOMINANT CHORD (V)**.

G: I V

A SPECIFIC TYPE OF IMPERFECT CADENCE IS THE **PHRYGIAN CADENCE**, WHICH MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:  
IT OCCURS ONLY IN **MINOR**  
IT USES A **IV** CHORD MOVING TO **V**  
THE SOPRANO AND BASS MOVE **BY STEP** IN **CONTRARY MOTION**  
THE SOPRANO AND BASS BOTH END ON THE **FIFTH SCALE DEGREE**

e: iv<sup>6</sup> V

e: iv V

AN **INTERRUPTED CADENCE** IS A CADENCE WHERE THE **DOMINANT CHORD (V)** RESOLVES TO SOMETHING **OTHER THAN TONIC...** ALMOST ALWAYS THE **SUBMEDIANT CHORD (VI)**.

G: V vi



REALLY, IT'S THE **PSYCH-OUT CADENCE**, IN THAT YOU **EXPECT** IT TO RESOLVE TO TONIC, BUT IT **DOESN'T**.

AND, IN FACT, IT'S MORE COMMON TO SEE THIS IN THE **MIDDLE** OF THE PHRASE RATHER THAN THE **END...** WHERE YOU MIGHT CALL IT A **"CADENCE-LIKE STRUCTURE"**!

IT'S WORTH MENTIONING THAT **AMERICAN THEORISTS** CALL PERFECT CADENCES **"AUTHENTIC" CADENCES**, AND CALL IMPERFECT CADENCES **"HALF" CADENCES**.

THEY USE THE TERMS **PERFECT** AND **IMPERFECT** TO REFER TO TWO **DIFFERENT TYPES** OF AUTHENTIC CADENCES:

TO BE CONSIDERED A **PERFECT AUTHENTIC CADENCE**, A CADENCE MUST MEET **ALL** OF THESE CRITERIA:

- ▶ IT MUST USE A **V** CHORD (NOT A **VII**)
- ▶ BOTH CHORDS MUST BE IN **ROOT POSITION**
- ▶ THE SOPRANO MUST **END** ON THE **TONIC**
- ▶ THE SOPRANO MUST MOVE **BY STEP**

G: V I



IF THE CADENCE DOESN'T MEET **ALL** OF THOSE CRITERIA, THEY CONSIDER IT TO BE AN **IMPERFECT AUTHENTIC CADENCE!**

