

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:

c: ii° ii°⁷ III iv VI vii°⁷

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

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.

C: ii° ii°⁷ **bIII** iv **bVI** vii°⁷

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

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 ROOTS 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

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

THE *TIERCE DE PICARDIE* IS A MAJOR TONIC CHORD AT THE END OF A *MINOR* PIECE, SO MANY THEORISTS CONSIDER IT A *BORROWED CHORD*. REALLY, THOUGH, IT'S NOT ADDING *CHROMATIC VARIETY*... IT'S A *LAST-MINUTE MODULATION*!

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

g: i V⁷ i VI ii°⁶ V I

*NOPE.