NEAPOLITAN CHORDS

In Chapter 8, we identified the importance of the relationship between tonic, subdominant, and dominant. Many of the progressions we have studied follow this movement throughout the entire composition. Study the following progression, and play it several times on your guitar or keyboard.

\[ \text{G minor: } i \quad \text{VI} \quad \text{iv} \quad \text{V} \quad i \]

Both the tonic and submediant chords function as tonic, followed by the subdominant and the dominant chord leading to the cadence.

[Student: Demonstrate how the Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords function as predominant]
[Teacher: Notate Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords in various keys]
[Teacher: Recognize Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords in musical context]
[Teacher: Resolve Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords using proper voice leading]
As we have seen in previous chapters, the use of chromaticism adds color, tension, and dissonance to a tonal composition. Using the previous progression, let’s add a few altered pitches to the subdominant chord. Instead of fa-le-do (4, ♭6, 1), how would the sound change if the do was raised and spelled enharmonically as a ra? What quality of chord would be created? Using the same progression above, realize both line 1 and line 2 on your guitar or keyboard.

Gmin: i VI iv V i

Gmin: i VI N6 V i

Notice how the Ab major chord is functioning as a predominant chord, leading to the D. The same principle works in major keys. Play the following progressions, substituting the chord shown for the subdominant harmony.

G: I IV ii V I

G: I IV N6 V I

The Neapolitan chord (N or N6) is a major chord built on the lowered second scale degree. Functioning as a predominant, the Neapolitan is usually found in first inversion and resolves to the V or a cadential six-four pattern. The N is typically used more often within a minor key and is often preceded by a I, iv, or VI chord. In writing for four voices, the 4 is typically doubled and the ♭2 moves to the 7 in order to avoid an augmented second that would occur from the movement of Le to Ti. Play through the following progressions on a piano, paying careful attention to the resolution of each N6.
Ask any cellist to name the great performers of cello literature and Jacqueline du Pré will certainly be at the top of many lists. According to a recent review of one of du Pré’s recordings, Tom Godell noted, “No one before or since has played the cello quite like Jacqueline du Pré. The cello sang with a warmth and expressiveness usually achieved only by great vocalists. Not only that: her profound understanding of vast portions of the cello repertory demonstrated a maturity well beyond her tender years.”

Born in 1945 in Oxford, England, Jacqueline began studying cello with her mother at the age of five. Immediately, she was recognized for her raw talent and emotion in her playing. After studying with teachers such as William Pleeth, Paul Toretelier, and Mstislav Rostropovich, du Pré became one of the most sought-after classical musicians during the 1960s. Rostropovich went as far as to say that du Pré was “the only cellist of the younger generation that could equal and overtake [his] own achievement.” Although she made her formal debut in London at the age of 16, it was her performance of the Elgar Cello Concerto in 1962 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra that gained du Pré international recognition.

Study the excerpt taken from Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A*, Mvt. I. In this particular excerpt, the tonal center is C♯ minor, having modulated from A major. The first few chords are diatonic. At measure 133, there is the sudden use of the D♮. Listen to du Pré’s performance several times. Your ears should notice that something is different at this point; however, the transition to the cadential six-four chord brings us back into the tonal center of C♯ minor. The chord in question is the Neapolitan sixth, a harmony built on the lowered second scale degree—in this case, the D major chord.
In the majority of classical music, the Neapolitan chord tends to resolve to the dominant; however, the movement from the N6 to the V can be delayed through the introduction of another chromatic chord. Study the excerpt taken from Robert Schumann's Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129.

Instead of resolving the N6 to the V like you would expect, Schumann chooses to introduce a secondary leading tone chord. Talk about an amazing point of dissonance and resolution! The listener may be unsure as to the tonal center until the resolution with the prolonged dominant pedal point.
SONG SPOTLIGHT

The Elgar Cello Concerto

Most performers have a signature piece (or pieces). For Idina Menzel, it is “Defying Gravity” and “Let it Go”; for Jimmy Buffet, it is “Margaritaville”; and for Etta James, it is “At Last.” For Jacqueline du Pré, her signature performance was that of the Elgar Cello Concerto. Why is that? What is so special about the way that du Pré tackled this complex and difficult composition? For one, du Pré highlighted the composer’s use of chromaticism in her own playing, bringing out points of dissonance and relaxing on resolutions. New York Times reviewer Raymond Ericson noted the following about her 1965 performance of the Elgar:

Miss du Pré and the concerto seemed made for each other, because her playing was so completely imbued with the romantic spirit. Her tone was sizable and beautifully burnished. Her technique was virtually flawless, whether she was playing the sweeping chords that open the concerto, sustaining a ravishing pianissimo tone, or keeping the fast repeated note figures in the scherzo going at an even pace.
After watching du Pré’s performance on the YouTube channel, study the score from the fourth movement of Edward Elgar’s *Cello Concerto*. In this particular example, the Neapolitan chord is found in root position. Although rare, the function is exactly the same. What effect does this sudden use of chromaticism have on the overall progression?
A Love Story: Daniel Barenboim and Jackie

Daniel was an up-and-coming conductor, and Jackie was one of the premier string performers of her time. It only seems natural that the two would meet each other at a party in 1966. After a brief and romantic courtship, Jackie flew with Daniel to Jerusalem, where she converted to Judaism, and the two were married at the Western Wall on June 15, 1967. On the stage, they were considered to be a classical music power couple. They performed chamber works and concertos together and du Pré frequently performed in the orchestras where Barenboim was the conductor. But behind closed doors and in the wings of the stage, things were far from perfect. Both had alleged affairs, including Barenboim’s well-publicized affair with Russian pianist Elena Bashkirova.

AUGMENTED SIXTH CHORDS

Let’s begin our discussion of augmented sixth chords by playing the same progression introduced at the beginning of this chapter, this time in the key of F.

F: I vi IV V I

**Italian Augmented Sixth (It⁺⁶)**

By altering the pitches of the IV chord (fa–la–do) to include a ♯4 and a ♭6 (fi and le), we now hear the first of the augmented sixth chords, the Italian augmented sixth (It⁺⁶). Play the progression again, substituting the ♯4 and the ♭6 on the subdominant chord. It is interesting to notice that the lead sheet symbol for the It⁺⁶ is a dominant seventh chord with the omitted fifth. While the It⁺⁶ does in fact sound like a dominant chord, it does not function that way. The ♭6 is typically the lowest sounding pitch.

Similar to the N⁶ chord, the It⁺⁶ functions as a prominent chord and also resolves to a dominant chord (or the cadential six-four). The chromatic pitches of ♯4 and ♭6 naturally want to resolve up (or down) to the dominant.

So why is it called an augmented sixth chord? It all has to do with the intervals created by the particular pitches. The lowered sixth, or le, creates a great sense of dissonance with the ♯4, or fi. The resulting interval between these two pitches is an augmented sixth.

Study the following two examples in order to better understand how the It⁺⁶ works in context of harmonic movement. Notice that in the minor mode, an accidental is only needed to create the ♯4, as the ♭6 is diatonic in a minor key and is thus taken care of by the key signature.
Listen to the excerpt taken from the first movement of *Cello Sonata No. 2*, Op. 58, by Felix Mendelssohn. Found toward the end of the movement, the use of chromatic pitches creates tension, resolving to the dominant seventh chord. Notice how the $\flat 6$ (the B♭) resolves down to the A while the $\sharp 4$ (the G♯) resolves up to the A.

Mendelssohn, *Cello Sonata No. 2*, Op. 58, Mvt. I
French Augmented Sixth (Fr\(^+6\))

The French augmented sixth (Fr\(^+6\)) is made up of the same pitches as the It\(^+6\), but with the addition of 2, or re. Play through the same progression as before. Compare the effect of the Fr\(^+6\) with the It\(^+6\). How does the addition of the 2 (re) completely change the overall sound in terms of dissonance? As if a ♭6 and ♯4 weren’t enough! The resolution of the augmented sixth chord is exactly the same; the ♭6 (le) resolves down to sol and the ♯4 resolves up to sol.

Listen to Barenboim’s performance of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13, Mvt. III. Where is the French augmented sixth chord? Look for a lowered sixth scale degree. How is the chord resolved? There are other chromatic chords included in this excerpt as well. How are they functioning?

Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13 (“Pathétique”) Mvt. III

German Augmented Sixth (Ger\(^+6\))

Used extensively in classical music, the German augmented sixth (Ger\(^+6\)) is made up of the same pitches as the It\(^+6\), but with the addition of the ♭3 (me). In a minor key, the ♭3 is diatonic, so no additional accidentals are necessary. Play through the same progression as before, only this time, realize the chords in F minor. The lead sheet says D♭7, but it certainly isn’t functioning that way!
The next excerpt is from Schumann’s *Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129*, Mvt. I. In the excerpt, the inclusion of the E♭ and the C♯ suggest the augmented sixth chord. The pitches found in the chromatic chord in measure 78 are in fact the i6, 1, 4, and 3 in the key of G major. Try to complete a harmonic analysis for the chords leading up to the Ger+6. Are they all diatonic in the key of G?


The next two examples are taken from Beethoven’s *Cello Sonata in A Major* and both indicate clear examples of the German augmented sixth chord. Be sure to notice that the lowest sounding pitch is in the cello voice, not the piano voice. The 6 in the cello, or F♮, is the le, resolving to the sol. How are these two excerpts similar in how the Ger+6 chord is approached and resolved?

Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A*, Mvt. I
Although not typical, the German augmented sixth chord can resolve to other chords besides those with dominant function. There are also examples in which the $b6$, i.e., is not found as the lowest pitch. Study the following excerpt taken from *Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 2, Op. 99*, by Johannes Brahms. How does the sound of resolution differ from the conventional resolution of the augmented sixth chord?
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

An Artist’s Early Demise

Beginning in 1971, Jackie began to lose sensitivity in her extremities, and her musical performance suffered. In October 1973, Jackie was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She received some negative reviews of her playing during this time. Her final public concerts included four performances of the Brahms Double Concerto with Pinchas Zukerman and Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic. She played three concerts but had to cancel the last due to numbness in her fingers. Bernstein actually took her to the doctor, but it took 2 years for a correct diagnosis. “My hands no longer worked,” she recalled in 1978. “I simply couldn’t feel the strings.” Jackie passed away in 1987 after a long battle with the illness. In a New York Times obituary, she is remembered for her playing, “characterized by an unusual mixture of elegance and ferocity . . . [She] clearly was born to play the cello.”
SUMMARY OF AUGMENTED SIXTH CHORDS

Italian sixth chord  le, do, fi  i6, i, i♯  i6 in the bass

German sixth chord  le, do, fi, me  i6, i, i♯, i♭  i6 in the bass

French sixth chord  le, do, fi, re  i6, i, i♯, i♭  i6 in the bass

• Demonstrate how the Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords function as predominant (pages 2, 7, 9)
• Notate Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords in various keys (pages 2, 7, 9)
• Recognize Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords in musical context (pages 4–6, 8–12)
• Resolve Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords using proper voice leading (pages 2, 7, 9)
EXERCISES

I. When given the key, correctly identify the chromatic chord.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{F:} & \quad \text{G:} & \quad \text{C:} & \quad \text{E}: & \quad \text{A:} \\
\text{D:} & \quad \text{Gmin:} & \quad \text{Es:} & \quad \text{Emin:} & \quad \text{C:}
\end{align*}
\]

II. Correctly notate the following chords on the staff.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{G:} & \quad \text{N}^6 & \quad \text{D:} & \quad \text{Gr}^6 & \quad \text{C:} & \quad \text{It}^6 & \quad \text{B:} & \quad \text{Fr}^6 & \quad \text{E:} & \quad \text{It}^6 \\
\text{B:} & \quad \text{Fr}^6 & \quad \text{Dmin:} & \quad \text{Gr}^6 & \quad \text{Gmin:} & \quad \text{N}^6 & \quad \text{C:} & \quad \text{Gr}^6 & \quad \text{Emin:} & \quad \text{Fr}^6 \\
\text{Ab:} & \quad \text{N}^6 & \quad \text{D:} & \quad \text{Fr}^6 & \quad \text{F:} & \quad \text{It}^6 & \quad \text{F:} & \quad \text{N}^6 & \quad \text{Emin:} & \quad \text{Gr}^6
\end{align*}
\]

III. Give the correct Roman numeral or identifier (Gr$^6$, It$^6$, Fr$^6$, N$^6$) for the following chords, and resolve each voice into the next chord. Use SATB voicing and follow all part writing rules.
ANALYSIS

Dedicated to his older sister, this nocturne was not published until 26 years after Chopin's death. This piece is featured in several films such as *The Pianist* and *The Karate Kid*. Give a Roman numeral analysis of the entire excerpt. Be sure to circle and identify non-chord tones.

Chopin, *Nocturne in C# Minor No. 20*
One of Haydn's six Opus 20 quartets, No. 5, is considered to be exceptionally haunting and emotional. The emotions portrayed in the Opus 20 quartets are considered to be indicative of the tensions in Haydn's life during the time of composition. Give a Roman numeral analysis of the entire excerpt. Be sure to circle and identify non-chord tones.

Haydn, *String Quartet No. 5 in F Minor, Op. 20, Mvt. I*
“Lacrymosa” is a section in the “Dies Irae” sequence in Mozart’s *Requiem Mass*. The mass was not completed by the time of Mozart’s death, and perhaps was completed by Franz Xaver Sussmayr (although it is speculated that other composers assisted Sussmayr). Only the first eight bars of Lacrymosa were completed by Mozart. Give a Roman numeral analysis of the entire excerpt. Be sure to circle and identify non-chord tones.
Mozart, “Lacrymosa” from Requiem

Basset Horn in F

Bassoon

Trumpet in D

Timpani D-A

Alto Trombone

Tenor Trombone

Bass Trombone

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Cello

Bass
Mozart, "Lacrymosa" from Requiem (continued)
A standard in *Twenty-Four Italian Arts Songs and Arias of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, “Quella fiamma che m’accende” has been attributed to several composers; however, scholars cannot come to an agreement. This short excerpt includes one significant chromatic chord. Give a Roman numeral analysis for the entire excerpt. Be sure to circle and identify non-chord tones.

Anonymous, “Quella fiamma che m’accende”

“Moonlight Sonata” is one of Beethoven’s most famous works. The melody should be very familiar to you. Provide a Roman numeral analysis of the following excerpt paying careful attention to accidentals in terms of harmonic function.

Beethoven, *Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor (“Moonlight”)*
PHOTO CREDITS

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