

## Secondary Leading Tone Chords

The most typical way to tonicize a major or minor chord (NOT a diminished chord!) is to approach/precede it with a secondary dominant. Approaching a chord (such as a ii, iii, IV, V or vi) with its own relative dominant emulates the recognizable and strong push that a regular V has as it moves to I. So when a V/V goes to V (as it should), the V chord is arrived at in an emphasized way, and the V/V chord stands out because it has a chromatic note in it—that musical moment stands out in the texture.

But similar to V (or  $V^7$ ) moving to I (or a V/V moving to V) is when  $vii^{\circ}$  moves to I. Recall that  $vii^{\circ}$  can act as a substitute for  $V^{(7)}$ ;  $vii^{\circ}$  is also, in fact, a type of *dominant-functioning* chord. Because  $vii^{\circ}$  also functions as a dominant, it can function as a secondary dominant, and tonicize a chord a half-step above it—in the same way that  $vii^{\circ}$  resolves to I up a half-step. In that capacity, we call it a **secondary leading tone** chord.

In as much as there can be a V/V, or a  $V^7/V$ , there can be a  $vii^{\circ}/V$  (or  $vii^{\circ}/\text{anything}$ ). (There can even be a  $vii^{\circ 7}/V$ , or a  $vii^{\circ 7}/V$ , but we'll just focus on the triad version...). Just as a V/V is built off a root a 4<sup>th</sup> below the V chord, a  $vii^{\circ}/V$  is built off a root a half-step below the V chord.

In context for the key of C:

V/V	= a D-major chord	= D-F#-A
$V^7/V$	= a D7 chord	= D-F#-A-C
$vii^{\circ}/V$	= an F# diminished chord	= F#-A-C

The F# diminished chord (the  $vii^{\circ}/V$ ) is called a secondary leading tone chord because its root is *functioning* like the *leading tone* of G (the tonicized V chord).

A diatonic progression could consist of this simple set of chords:

$C \rightarrow Am \rightarrow Dm \rightarrow G^7 \rightarrow C$  (aka:  $I \rightarrow vi \rightarrow ii \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow I$ )

A chromatic progression incorporating a secondary dominant might alter the ii (Dm) chord and make it a  $V^{(7)}/V$  ( $D^{(7)}$ ):

$C \rightarrow Am \rightarrow D^{(7)} \rightarrow G^7 \rightarrow C$  (aka:  $I \rightarrow vi \rightarrow v^{(7)}/V \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow I$ )

A chromatic progression incorporating a secondary leading tone chord might replace the ii chord with a  $vii^{\circ}/V$  ( $F\#^{\circ}$ ).

$C \rightarrow Am \rightarrow F\#^{\circ} \rightarrow G^7 \rightarrow C$  (aka:  $I \rightarrow vi \rightarrow vii^{\circ}/V \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow I$ )

The effect of a secondary leading tone chord is striking because its conspicuous root resolves (moves) up a half-step to the root of the next chord (like  $F\#^{\circ}$  moving up to G).