MUS 233
The Augmented 6th Chord (part I)

General
• The augmented 6th interval (+6) emphasizes the approach to a tone from a half step below (like the familiar leading tone) and from a half step above
  • This effect can be thought of as a contrapuntal gesture: two voices (natural-minor/flat-6th & raised 4th) creating a dissonance and resolving by contrary motion

Some Specifics
• Such is the case with the augmented 6th chord: it emphasizes the approach to the dominant (it goes/resolves to the dominant (V, or viiº indirectly)—and dominant harmony, meaning that it might pass through a 6/4 chord first)
  • More specifically, the typical pre-dominants that approach the augmented 6th chord are:
    • IV/iv
    • I/i
    • Nº
  • This is considered a strong approach to the dominant (unlike the more subtle Neapolitan detour)
    • Accomplished by using a lowered 6th scale degree (if not already “lowered” in minor) and raising the 4th scale degree
    • Goes to the dominant
    • If in minor mode, the 6th scale degree (or lowered 6th in major) appears in the bass the raised 4th scale degree appears in an upper part
    • The lower part resolves down to the dominant, the upper part resolves up to the dominant (an octave or compound octave apart)
      • These two parts make the +6th interval, which is enharmonic with a minor 7th (but remember the upper part of a minor 7th tends to resolve down...we want this voice to resolve up.
      • Having said this, sometimes the upper note in the +6th I resolve down to make a Vº chord
    • Do not notate as: “+IV” but as “+6” with the appropriate prefix (see below)
The Three Countries (types):

Italian +6 (It+6)
- Uses three pitches: flat-6th, raised 4th & tonic scale degrees
  \[ \text{\towards\, a M3rd above the 6th/flat-6th} \]
- The tonic note can resolve to the leading tone if the It+6 goes to V. If it goes to I6/4, it may just remain stationary (with four voices)

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{italian.png}}
\]
\[ \text{a: It+6} \quad 6 \quad 4 \quad V \]

French +6 (Fr+6)
- Four pitches: flat-6th, raised 4th, tonic and 2nd scale degrees
  - The 2nd scale degree will remain stationary if the Fr+6 goes to V, or go up to the 3rd scale degree if the harmony resolves to a I6/4

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{french.png}}
\]
\[ \text{a: Fr+6} \quad V(7) \quad \text{Fr+6} \quad 6 \quad 4 \quad V(7) \]

German +6 (Ger+6)
- Four pitches: flat-6th, raised 4th, tonic and flat-3rd (enharmonic with a dominant 7th chord)
  - In order to “spell” better voice leading in the major mode, sometimes the flat-3rd is written as a raised 2nd
  - Problematic voice leading when resolving directly to V (Ⅱ 5ths), but not forbidden–this problem is alleviated if the Ger+6 first moves to a I6/4

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{german.png}}
\]
\[ \text{a: Ger+6} \quad V \quad \text{Ger+6} \quad V^7 \quad \text{Ger+6} \quad 6 \quad 4 \quad V \quad A: \quad \text{Ger+6} \quad \text{enharmonic} \quad V \]
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As seen in stacked 3rds:

Minor:  
Major:  
C:  Italian (It.)  French (Fr.)  German (Ger.)  C:  It.  Fr.  Ger.  Enharmonic Ger.

Position: (note the sixth scale-degree in Bass)

Function: Secondary Dominant of V (note doubled root in Italian chord):