

Music 232

Chapter 11, Non-Chord Tones I

These notes are a distillation of Kostka/Payne's Tonal Harmony. They are in no way a substitute for reading and working through the actual text book.

Overview

- Passing tone
- Neighboring tone
- Suspension
- Retardation

I. A Non-chord tone (NCT) is a diatonic or chromatic tone that is not a member of the chord with which it sounds. In a contrapuntal sense, it is dissonant relative to the chord.

A standard way to classify NCTs is according to the ways in which they are approached and left (just like dissonance in a contrapuntal setting). Below is a complete list of NCTs.

NCT name and abbreviation	Approached by...	Left by...
Passing Tone (p)	Step	Step in same direction
Neighboring Tone (n) aka: Auxillary tone	Step	Step in opposite direction
Suspension (s)	Same tone	Step down
Retardation (r)	Same tone	Step up
Appoggiatura (app)	Leap (accented)	Step usually in opposite direction
Escape Tone (e)	Step (unaccented)	Leap in opposite direction
Neighbor Group (n.gr)	Step above and below ornamented tone	Step back to ornamented tone
Anticipation (ant)	Step or leap	Same tone (oblique motion)
Pedal Point (ped)	Same tone	Same tone

- A. A passing tone fills in the space between two other tones by diatonic or chromatic step.
- B. A neighboring tone is used to embellish a single tone, either above or below by diatonic or chromatic step.
- C. A suspension holds on to (suspends) a chord tone after the other parts have moved on to the next chord; the tone then resolves down by step into the new chord.
- D. A retard begins the same as a suspension, but the held-back note resolves UP by step.

II. Further classification is by duration and accent

- A. Submetrical (accented or unaccented)
- B. Metrical (accented or unaccented)
- C. Supermetrical (accented or unaccented)

III. Figured bass analysis of suspensions

Suspension	Figured bass symbol
9-8	9 8
7-6	7 6 or 7 6 3 -
4-3	4 3 or 4 # (or natural symbol)
2-3	5 under first bass note 6 under the next 2

IV. Lead sheet symbols

- A. The traditional 4-3 suspension is indicated by "sus", such as C7sus (spelled C, F, G, Bb).
- B. The suspended 4th, however, may not resolve down to the 3rd of the chord.
- C. There are alternative symbols, such as "sus 4" or "sus 11", but they are not referred to in this text.