

MUS 233
General (Re)view of Secondary Functions

Chromaticism refers to the use of functional pitches that are foreign to the key of a particular passage.

When chromatic (“altered”) tones are present—as a result of contrapuntal voice movement—new chords are created. These chords are called **altered chords**.

The most common altered tone in tonal music is the **secondary function**.

Secondary function: a chord whose function belongs more closely to a key other than the main key of a passage (that “other key” is the tonicized chord).

Most common secondary chords: Secondary dominant [$V^{(7)}/X$]
Secondary leading-tone ($vii^{o(7)}/X$) (or half-dim. vii)

Resolution of a secondary dominant:

1. Secondary dominants resolve just like regular dominants (to a momentarily tonicized, “virtual” I chord).
2. Often, a variation of a deceptive $V^{(7)} \rightarrow vi$ (or VI in minor) progression is found: $V^{(7)} \rightarrow V^{(7)}/vi \rightarrow vi$ (or VI if in a minor key).
3. $V^{(7)}/iii$ is seldom used in major, but $V^{(7)}/III$ is common in minor.

Voice-leading in resolution:

1. The leading-tone in the secondary dominant moves up to the root of the tonicized chord.
2. If the chord of resolution is a seventh chord (a common case) the leading-tone of the secondary dominant moves down by half step to become the 7th of the resolved-to chord.
3. Any tritones in the secondary dominant (like between the leading-tone and seventh) must be resolved (aug. 4th outwards to a 6th, dim. 5th inwards to a 3rd).

Detecting the presence of a secondary dominant:

1. Find any accidentals; secondary dominants are linked to chromaticism.
2. See if the chord affected by the accidental is a major or major-minor seventh chord; also look for secondary leading-tone chords: diminished (7th) or half-diminished 7th.
3. Look at the resolution of the altered chord and see if it resolved to a chord for which it could be a dominant or leading-tone chord.