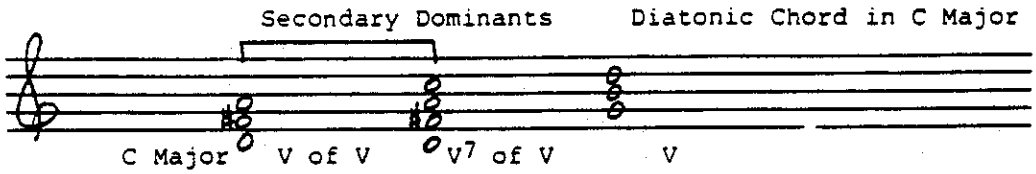
UNIT 12: THE SECONDARY DOMINANT

Beginning with this unit the chords described are in the realm of chromatic harmony, that is chords which contain accidentals. These chords may facilitate modulation or they may simply provide a change of color without altering the tonal center.

A. THE SECONDARY DOMINANT CHORD

For each chord in the diatonic scale (major or minor), there are chords which relate to it as V of ___ or V^7 of ___, known as secondary dominants. The root of the secondary dominant is a Perf. 5th above (or Perf. 4th below) the root of the diatonic chord to which it relates.

Example 12.1

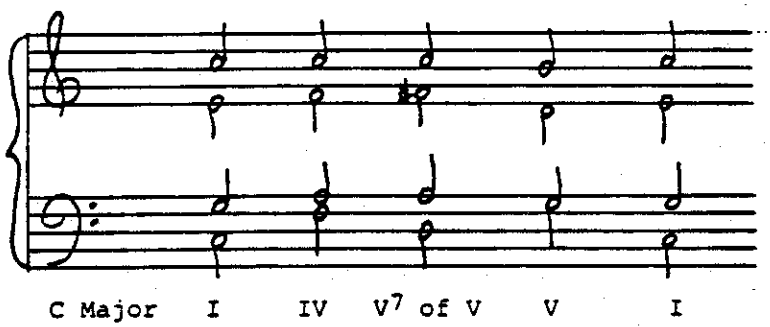


Observe the following in Example 12.1:

1. The roots of the V of V and V^7 of V are a Perf. 4th below G, the root of the diatonic V.
2. The V of V is a major triad, therefore the F# accidental.
3. The V^7 of V is a major-minor seventh chord, therefore the F#.
4. The usual progression is from secondary dominant to the diatonic chord on which it is based.
5. The V^7 of V to V behaves as a V^7 I in G Major.

The chords in Example 12.1 are incorporated into a progression written in four parts in Example 12.2

Example 12.2

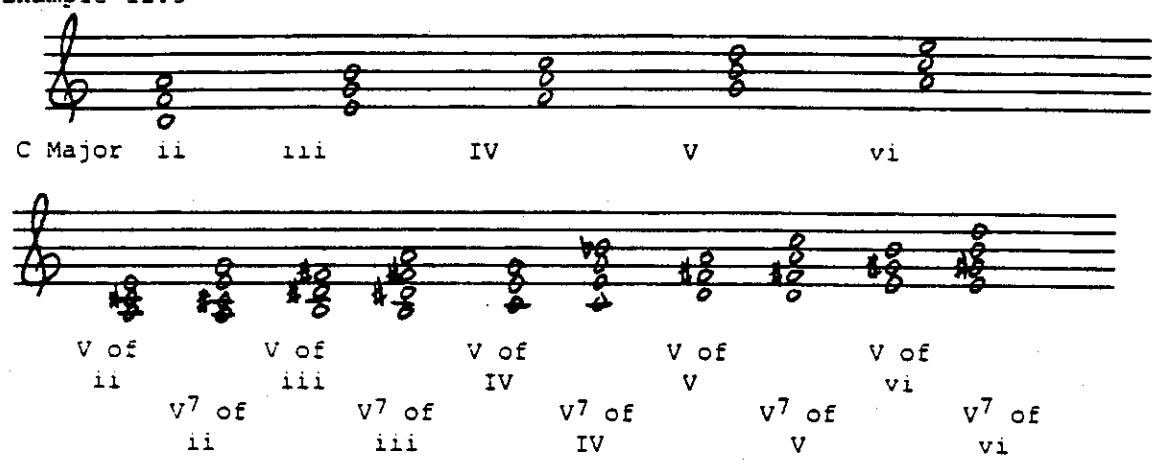


Observe the following in Example 12.2:

1. The secondary dominant precedes the V.
2. The progression is basically I IV V I and the secondary dominant adds color to it. C Major is still heard as the tonal center, so no modulation has occurred.
3. The seventh of the secondary dominant has resolved down by step.

The secondary dominants for the other tones of the C Major scale are written in Example 12.3.

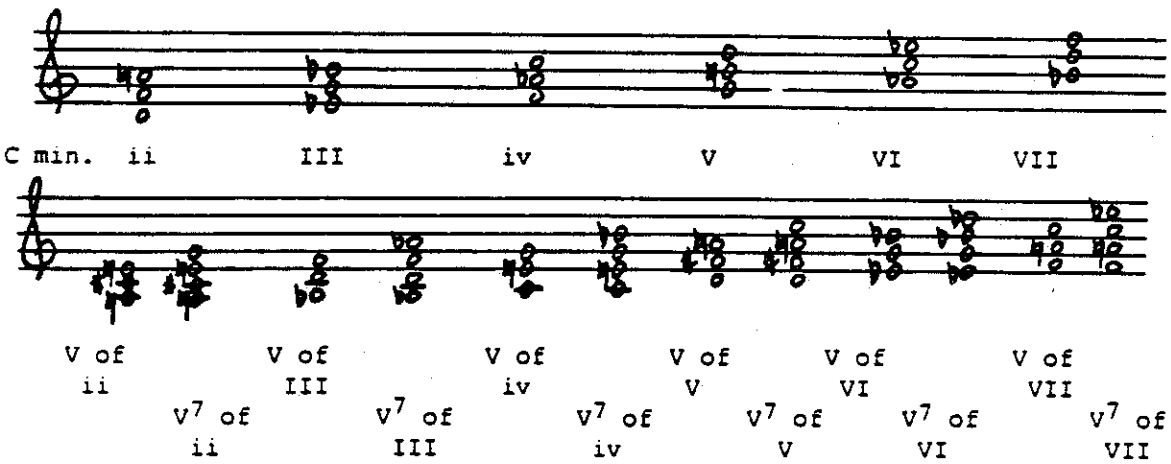
Example 12.3



Because the secondary dominant does not resolve usually to a diminished triad, the vii is omitted. Also there is no I because the V is the actual dominant of the key.

The secondary dominants for the triads in the C minor scale are written in Example 12.4.

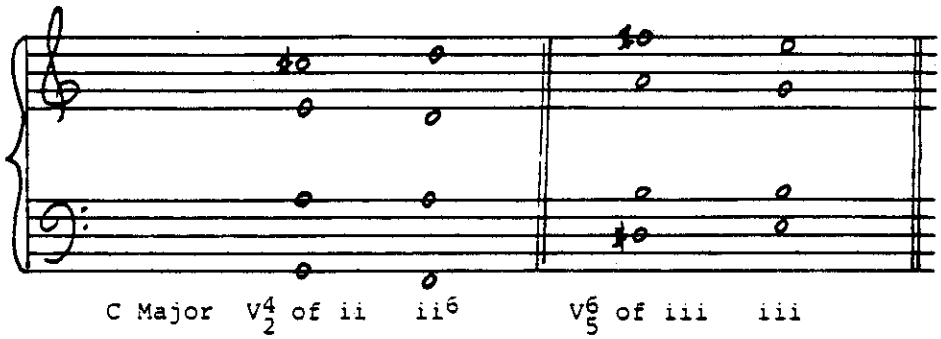
Example 12.4



Because the diatonic triads, as resolutions of the secondary dominants, serve as temporary tonics in their key (see observation #5 from Example 12.1), the diatonic triad must be major or minor. (It is not convincing to resolve the secondary dominant to a diminished or augmented triad.) Therefore, there is no single form of the minor used in the diatonic chords in Example 12.4. The roots are from the pure minor scale and the triads are built to be major or minor.

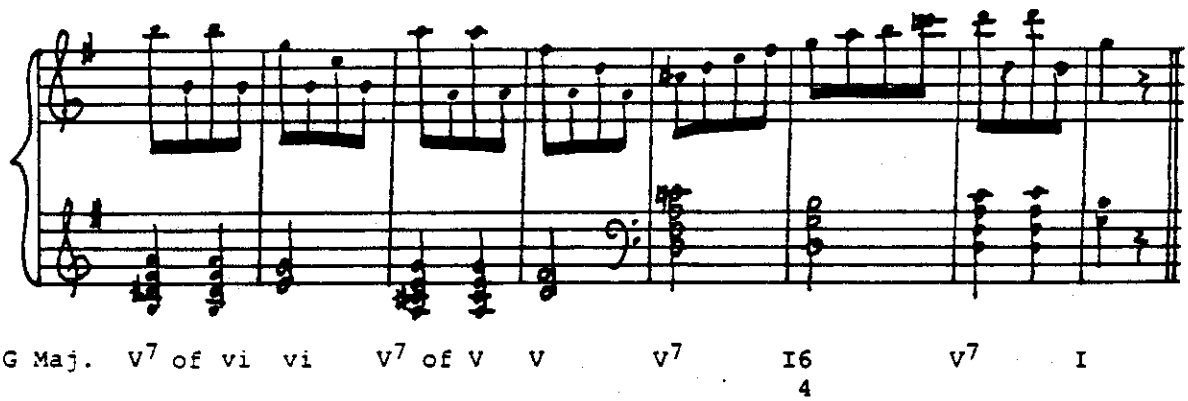
The secondary dominants may appear in inversions and are resolved according to the guidelines of the dominant seventh chord (see Unit 9).

Example 12.5



The excerpt from Schubert in Example 12.6 shows the secondary dominant in practice.

Example 12.6 Schubert - Ecossaise



Drill 12.1

For each of the chord progressions listed below, observe the following procedure:

1. Write the diatonic triad upon which the secondary dominant is based.
2. Write the secondary dominant.
3. Write the progression (secondary dominant and resolution) in four part harmony.

4. One chord is completed as an illustration.

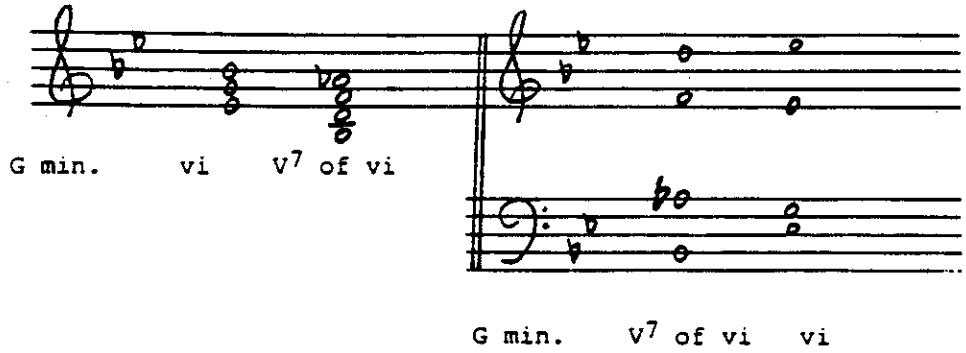
Chord Progressions:

Key of G Major: V^7 of iii, V^7 of V

Key of Bb Major: V of ii, V^7 of vi

Key of D minor: V of iv, V^7 of V

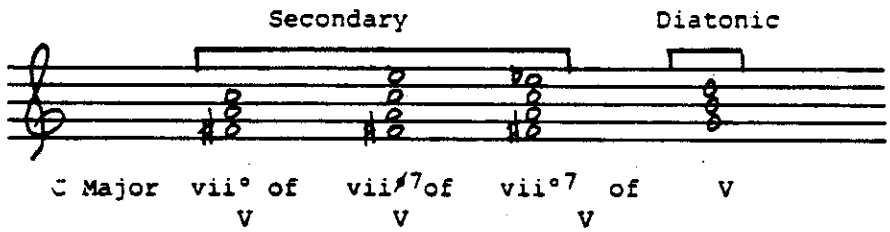
Illustration: Key of G minor V^7 of vi



B. THE SECONDARY LEADING TONE CHORD

For each diatonic chord in the major and minor scale there are chords which relate to it as vii° of ___, vii°7 of ___, or vii ø7 of ___. The root of these secondary vii is a minor second below the root of the diatonic chord to which it relates.

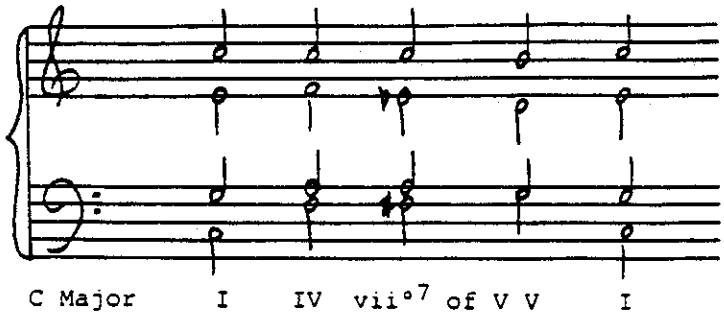
Example 12.7



Observe the following in Example 12.7:

1. The roots of the three secondary chords are a half step below G, the root of the diatonic V.
2. The vii° of V is a diminished triad.
3. The vii ø7 of V is a half diminished seventh chord.
4. The vii°7 of V is a fully diminished seventh chord.
5. The secondary vii usually progresses to the diatonic chord on which it is based.
6. The vii°7 of V progressing to V behaves as a vii°7 to I in G Major.

Example 12.8



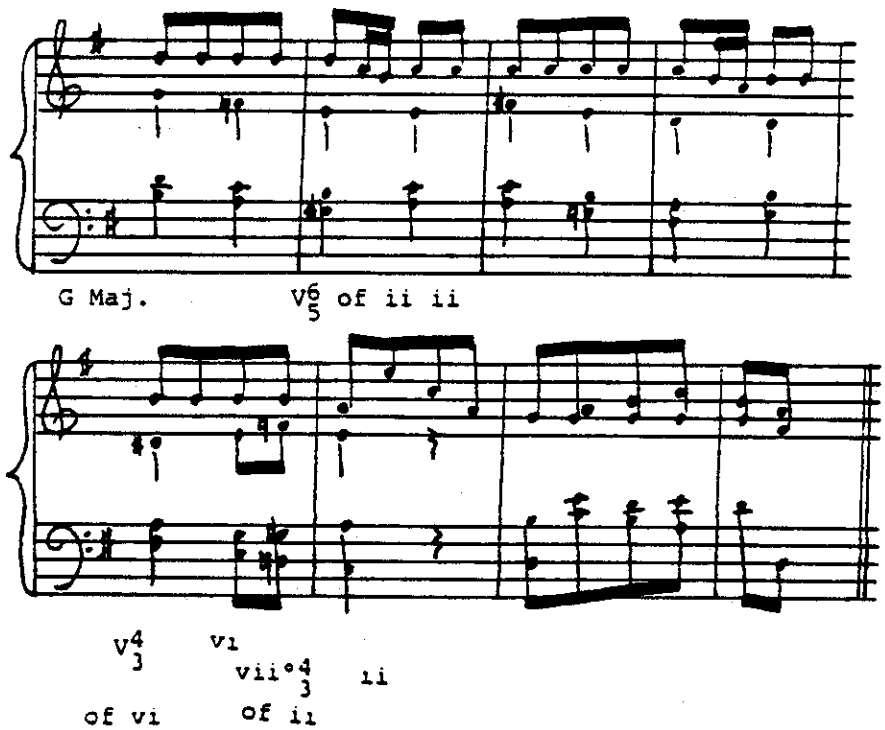
Observe the following in Example 12.8:

1. The vii°7 of V precedes the V.
2. The progression is basically I IV V I and the vii°7 of V adds color to it. No modulation takes place.
3. The vii°7 of V has resolved according to the guidelines given in Unit 9 on the resolution of diminished seventh chords.

The various secondary leading tone chords may appear in inversions and the resolution is treated the same as in Unit 10.

The excerpt in Example 12.9 shows a mixture of secondary dominant and secondary leading tone chords.

Example 12.9 Volkmann - Once Upon a Time



Drill 12.2

Write the three types of secondary leading tone chords (vii° of ___, vii°7 of ___, and vii ø7 of ___) using the same procedure as in Drill 12.1.

Key of F Major: _____ of iii, _____ of V

Key of D Major: _____ of ii, _____ of vi

Key of E minor: _____ of iv, _____ of V