

Music 11, 7/25/06

The dynamism that connects the chords V—I can be observed on multiple levels:

1. Locally, these chords are usually responsible for the repose that gives a phrase a sense of arrival, or completion (Cadence).
2. More broadly, these chords connect phrases. One phrase might “land” on the dominant as a kind of midpoint that gives a period its “half-way” mark. Then, the next phrase might end on the tonic harmony, finally giving the music a sense of closure, and articulating the period structure. This is very common—a phrase that is relatively open will be followed by a phrase that is relatively closed.
3. Globally, a piece of music might actually *modulate* to the key of the dominant. In this more long-range connection, a composition reflects the V—I movement with not only one chord to the next, but with a whole section of music to the next.

In short, the dominant and tonic interact as chords (“on the surface” of the music), as phrases (in melodic forms), and as sections (in complementary key areas in modulation).

Modulation is a concept that we will not have time to explore more fully, but the idea is that a key can change during the course of a composition. Keys do not simply change arbitrarily. Composers may modulate a lot over the course of a piece, but common practice has shown that a modulation to the dominant key area in the progress of a single movement is much more common than modulations to other keys. Even if a composer modulates to other, more “remote” key areas, that of the dominant functions to give a piece of music an overall sense of wholeness and completion, just as a V—I chord progression has a sense of completion.

### Dominant Preparation Harmonies

A dominant harmony is often preceded by another harmony that further accentuates its energy towards the tonic, its resolution. One such dominant preparation harmony is the triad built on scale degree 2 ( $\hat{2}$ ), or the ii chord.

The relationship between the V and I chord that gives the progression “purpose” is paralleled by the relationship between ii and V. The roots of ii and V, like V and I, are related by perfect fifth. Thus, in a progression ii—V—I, the energy toward the tonic resolution is drawn-out a bit. Root movement by “falling” fifth is extremely common in the music, even jazz standards and pop tunes that we hear today.

About ii:

The ii chord has  $\hat{4}$ . This is something it shares with the dominant seventh chord. Since this scale degree resolves to  $\hat{3}$  in the tonic, the ii chord can be understood as not only interacting with the V chord that typically follows it, but also with the tonic chord to which the V chord resolves. We already encountered this motion in the dominant seventh harmony (the added minor 7<sup>th</sup> above the root is scale degree 4,  $\hat{4}$ ). In a ii—V—I

progression, the dynamism in  $\hat{4}$  and  $\hat{7}$  are *culminative*, while the  $V7—I$  motion is more immediate. In  $ii---V—I$ , the resolution of  $\hat{4}$  is delayed. We can “back-up” further, and complete the scale by making falling-fifths series *from C to C*, but we will focus on the basic motion  $ii—V—I$ .

### Cadence

The sense of rest that is achieved in the  $ii—V—I$  progression is called a *cadence*.

Cadence: a moment of relative repose that is sensed in the resolution of tension in a  $V—I$  progression. The  $ii$  chord accentuates this sense of repose.

(For the purposes of our class,) There are three types of cadences:

1. Perfect authentic cadence  
     $V—I$  motion in the harmony, and  
    The resolution is a landing on  $\hat{1}$  in the melody.
2. Imperfect authentic cadence  
     $V—I$  motion in the harmony, and  
    The resolution is a landing on *some scale degree other than  $\hat{1}$*  ( $\hat{3}$  and  $\hat{5}$  are common).
3. Half cadence  
    Dominant preparation harmony (like  $ii$ )— $V$  motion in the harmony, and  
    The melody usually lands on  $\hat{2}$  (although any member of the  $V$  chord is a good expectation).

Remember the other, more broad levels of  $V—I$  I mentioned earlier in these notes? In a period, the first phrase often ends in a half-cadence with  $\hat{2}$  in the melody. The second phrase will usually end with an authentic cadence with  $\hat{1}$  in the melody. This is one of the details that give such phrases the sense that they complement each other, and characterizes them as a period. A half-cadence landing on  $V$  and an authentic cadence landing on  $I$  is a way of explaining the broad-level motion from  $V—I$ .

Try to memorize the characteristics of the different cadence types. You will be tested on these. ☺