Common Diatonic Chord Progressions in Baroque Harmony
Ted Greene, 1975-03-24

**Major Keys:**
The I, IV, and V are the most commonly used chords in major keys, probably due to the fact that they are the only diatonic major triads (the ii, iii, and vi being minor and the vii° being diminished). In other words, because the I, IV, and V are all major chords, a generous use of them strongly establishes the feeling of being in a major key. An interesting sidelight to this is that the I, IV, and I, when considered collectively, contain all seven notes of the major scale. Because of all these reasons, the I, IV, and V are call the PRIMARY TRIADS.

The ii, iii, vi, and vii° are often referred to as the SECONDARY TRIADS, but to avoid confusion later with another use of the term “Secondary,” they will be called NON-PRIMARY TRIADS. These non-primary triads are sprinkled in with the primary triads to add variety and interest. One of the common ways in which they are used can be illustrated from the following:

Each of the primary triads has a strong relationship to two other triads whose roots are a 3rd higher and lower. Example: A (I) is related to C#m (iii), and F#m (vi). The reason for this is that each of the triads a 3rd above and below a primary triad have two tones in common with it. These common-tone brothers are called RELATED TRIADS. Any primary triad may be preceded, followed, or replaced with its related triad(s).

Theoretically, according to the above principle, I is related to iii, vi; IV is related to vi, ii; and V is related to vii°, iii. In practice though, composed have favored the following relationships:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Related</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Related</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>vi, iii</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>vii°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Subdominants</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dominants</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The following is a list of some chord progressions of the Baroque era, all listed with root position triads, although inversions are commonly mixed in was well. Notice that in many cases, the related triads are just elaborating on the I-IV-V type patterns. Also, in any progression, you might wish to try vii° or iii₆ for V as they will not be listed to save space. Also, I₆⁴ is commonly used before V at ends of phrases.
1)  I - IV - I
2)  I - V - I
3)  I - IV - (I) - V - I
4)  I - V - (I) - IV - I
5)  I - IV - ii - V - I
6)  I - IV - vi - ii - V - I
7)  vi - ii IV - V - (I)
8)  I - vi - V - I
9)  (I) - vi - ii - V - I
10) (I) - vi - IV - (V) - I
11) (I) - vi - IV - (ii) - V - I
12) I - iii - IV - (V) - I
13) (I) - iii - IV - (ii) - V - I
14) vi - IV - ii - V - (I)
15) (I) - iii - vi - ii - V - I
16) (I) - iii - vi - IV - ii - V - I
17) (I) - vi - iii - IV - (V) - I
18) (I) - vi - iii - IV - ii - V - I
19) I - V - vi - IV - ii - V - I
20) I - V - vi - iii - IV - V - I (or swap last V and I)
21) I - IV - viiº - iii - vi - ii - V - I

    III and other cycle variations or fragments

22) ii - vi - (viiº) - IV - I
23) ii - V - (I)
24) IV - V - (I)
25) vi - ii - IV - (V) - I

    Non-diatonic:

26) II - III - IV - V - I
27) #ivº - viiº - IV - (V) - I
28) vi - viiº - IV - (V) - I
29) #viº - I - IV (and/or ii) - V - I
30) #viº - I
31) (I) - iii - IV - vi - ii - V - (I)
32) I - V - vi - IV - I - (ii) - V - (I)
33) ii - vi - IV - V - (I)
34) I - IV - ii - V - (I)

Remaining progressions are “other root progressions using non-diatonic chords.”
Minor Keys:

The concepts in minor keys are similar to the above, but due to use of three different types of minor scales, there are more chords involved. Generally, the PRIMARY TRIADS in minor keys are considered to be i, iv, and V.

Here is a breakdown according to the common use by composers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Related</th>
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<th>Related</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>(§vi°, VI, III)</td>
<td>iv</td>
<td>ii°, bII, IV,</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>vii°, III+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I – Picardy 3rd)</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii, VI</td>
<td></td>
<td>(v, VII)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some common minor key progressions:

1) i - iv - i
2) i - V - i
3) i - iv - (i) - V - I
4) i - V - (i) - iv - i
5) i - iv - ii° - V - i
6) i - iv - VI - ii° - V - i
7) i - VI - V - i
8) i - VI - ii° - V - i
9) i - VI - iv - V - i
10) (i) - VI - iv - ii° - V - i
11) i - III - iv - (V) - i
12) (i) - III - iv - ii° - V - i
13) (i) - III - VI - ii° - V - i
14) (i) - III - VI - iv - ii° - V - i
15) (i) - VI - III - iv - (V) - (i)
16) (i) - VI - III - iv - ii° - V - i
17) i - v - VI - ii° - V or i - v - VI - iv - V
18) i - v - VI - iv - ii° - V - i
19) i - v - VI - III - iv (and/or any kind of ii) - V - i
20) i - iv - VII - III - VI - ii° - V - I

And other cycle variations or fragments.

21) iv - i - ii° - (VI) - V - (i)
22) ii - iv - (V) - (i)
23) (ii°) - VI - bII - V - (i)
24) ii° - VI - iv - (V) - i
25) ii\(^\circ\) - VI - (iv) - (V) - (i)
26) V - i
27) ii\(^\circ\) - V - (i)
28) iv - V - (i)
29) II - V - (i)
30) IV - V - (i)
31) bII - V - i
32) II - ii\(^\circ\) - V (i)
33) ii\(^\circ\) - II - V (i)
34) [VI] - IIb9 - V - (i)
35) bII - ii\(^\circ\) (or iv) - V - (i)
36) V7b9 - iv - IIb9 - (i) - V - (i)
37) i - 7\(\flat\)vi\(^\circ\) - II (and/or ii\(^\circ\)) - V - (i)
38) 7\(\flat\)vi\(^\circ\) - ii\(^\circ\) - V - i\(^\circ\)

The ii, IV, and vi\(^\circ\) can be used as substitutes above according to *melodic minor principles*, while vii\(^\circ\), III\(+6\) can be used, like in major keys, for V.

Some other common types of chord progressions result from 1) bass lines, 2) sequences, and 3) successive 1st inversions, all of which have to be covered as separate topics.

[1/2 cadences]
COMMON DIATONIC CHORD PROGRESSIONS IN BAROQUE HARMONY

MAJOR KEYS:

The I, IV, and V are the most commonly used chords in major keys, probably due to the fact that they are the only diatonic major chords (the ii, iii, and vi being minor and the vii being diminished). In other words, because I, IV, and V are all major chords, a genuine use of them strongly establishes the feeling of being in a major key. An interesting side note to this is that the I, IV, and V, when considered collectively, contain all seven notes of the major scale. Because of all these reasons, the I, IV, and V are called the PRIMARY TRIADS.

The ii, iii, vi, and vii° are often referred to as the SECONDARY TRIADS but to avoid confusion later with another use of the term "SECONDARY" they will be called the NON-PRIMARY TRIADS. These non-primary triads are sprinkled in with the primary triads to add variety and interest. One of the common ways in which they are used can be illustrated from the following:

Each of the primary triads has a strong relationship with two other triads whose roots are 3rd higher and lower. → EXAMPLE: A is related to C, F, and B. The reason for this is that each of the triads 3rd above I and below a primary triad have 2 tones in common with it. These common-tone relationships are called RELATED TRIADS. Any primary triad may be preceded followed or replaced with its related triads, theoretically according to the above principle, I is related to iii, vi, and vii°; IV is related to iii, vi, and vii°; and V is related to iii, vi, and vii°.

In practice though, composers have favored the following relationships:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY</th>
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<th>RELATED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>vi, iii</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>ii, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUBDOMINANTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>DOMINANTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>vi, iii</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii, IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following is a list of some chord progressions of the BAROQUE era, all listed with root position triads although inversions are commonly mixed in as well. Notice that in many cases, the related triads are just elaborating on the I IV V type patterns. Also, in any progression, you might wish to try vii° or vii° or V for all or they will not be listed to have space. Also I, V is commonly used before V to sound of phrase.

I IV V I... I IV V I... I IV V I... I IV V I... I IV V I...

MINOR KEYS:

The concepts in minor keys are similar to the above, but due to the use of three different types of minor scales, there are more chords involved. Generally, the primary triads in minor keys are considered to be I, IV, and V. Here is a breakdown according to the common use by composers:

<table>
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<th>PRIMARY</th>
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<th>RELATED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>vi, ii, iii</td>
<td>iv</td>
<td>vii°, III (V, VII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUBDOMINANTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>DOMINANTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>vi, ii, iii</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some common minor key progressions:

I vi, ii, iii, iv (i) i, vi, i, ii, iii, iv (i) i vi, ii, iii, iv (i)

The ii, i, and vii° can be used as substitutes above according to MELODIC MINOR PRINCIPLES, while III is commonly used in major keys, also.

Some other common types of chord progressions result from 1) BASS LINES 2) SEQUENCES, and 3) SUCCESSIVE 1ST INVERSIONS, all of which have to be covered in separate topics.
The I, IV, and V are the most commonly used chords in major keys, probably due to the fact that they are the only diatonic MAJOR triads, (the ii, iii, and vi being minor and the vii being diminished). On other words, because the I, IV, and V are all major chords, a generous use of them strongly establishes the feeling of being in a major key. An interesting sidelight to this is that the I, IV, and V, when considered collectively, contain all seven notes of the major scale. Because of all these reasons, the I, IV, V are called the PRIMARY TRIADS.

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Each of the primary triads has a strong relationship to two other triads whose roots are a 3rd higher and lower — EXAMPLE: A is related to

The reason for this is that each of the triads a 3rd above and below a primary triad have 2 tones in common with it. These common-tone triads are called RELATED TRIADS. Any primary triad may be preceded, followed, or replaced with its related triads. Theoretically, according to the above principle, I is related to ii; vi is related to iv; vii is related to vii; and I is related to vii.

In practice though, composers have favored the following relationships:

PRIMARY RELATED PRIMARY RELATED PRIMARY RELATED

TONICS SUBDOMINANTS DOMINANTS

I  vi, iii  IV  ii  V  vii (their counterparts, other iii's are rare)

Following is a list of some chord progressions of the BAROQUE era, all listed with root position triads. Although inversions are commonly mixed in as well. Notice that in many cases, the related triads are just altering on the I, IV, V type patterns. Also, in any progression, you might wish to try vii or iv for all they will not be identical to I, ii, vi, or V. Below is a common use before it begins of phrases:

I vi ii III vii iv vii III vii IV vii III vii I vii iii I vii iii

MINOR KEYS:

The concepts of minor keys are similar to the above but due to the use of three different types of minor scales, there are more chords involved. Generally, the primary triads in minor keys are considered to be i, IV, and V. Here is a breakdown according to the common use by composers:

PRIMARY RELATED PRIMARY RELATED PRIMARY RELATED

TONICS SUBDOMINANTS DOMINANTS

I (vii0, I, iii)  IV  ii, vi, v  V  vii, III (v-vii)

Some common minor key progressions:

I vi i iii vii iv vi e i v i i iii vii iv vi e i v

(iii vi i) (i) vii (i) vii (i) vii (i) vii (i) vii (i) vii (i) vii (i) vii

Some other common types of chord progressions result from (a) bass lines, (b) sequences, and (c) successive I-IV-V, all of which have to be covered in separate topics, (c) cadences.