Summary of 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 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 V, when considered collectively, contain all seven notes of the major scale. Because of 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 to two other triads whose roots are a 3rd higher and lower.
EXAMPLE: A (I) is related to C#m (iii), 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, composers have favored the following relationships:

PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED
I	vi, iii	IV	ii	V	vii°, (iii$_6$ as an appoggiatura chord, other iii's are rare)
TONICS		**SUBDOMINANTS**		**DOMINANTS**	

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 in practice. 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 iii$_6$ for V (as they will not be listed to save space). Also I$^6_4$ is commonly used before V at ends of phrases.

I IV I, I V I, I IV (I) V I, I V (I) IV I and many other combinations of I IV V (and their related chords), especially those combinations derived from a Bass viewpoint – more on this later.

(ii) V I	IV V I	[I IV ii V I]
(I) IV vi ii V I	I vi V I	(I) vi ii V I
(I) vi IV (V) I	vi ii IV V I	vi IV ii V I
vi (or I) iii IV (V) I	iii IV I vi ii V I	iii vi ii V I
iii vi IV V I	I V vi iii IV V I	I V vi IV I (or ii) V I
I V vi iii IV I ii V I	I iii IV vi ii V I	ii vi IV (V) I
[ii vi vii° IV I V I]	[vi vii° IV (V) I]	(I) IV vii° iii vi ii 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:

PRIMARY	RELATED		PRIMARY	RELATED		PRIMARY	RELATED
i	(**R**vi°, VI, III		iv	ii° bII, IV,		V	**R**vii°, III$^+$
	(I - Picardy 3rd)			ii, VI			(**L**vi°, **L**vi, iv°)
TONICS			**SUBDOMINANTS**			**DOMINANTS** (v, VII)	

[Editors Note: **R** = "Raised," "Regular," or natural.   **L** = "Lowered"
Rvi° in a minor key = a diminished chord built on the natural, "regular," or "raised" 6th degree.
Rvii° = a diminished chord built on the natural, "regular," or "raised" 7th degree of the key.
Lvi ° refers to the flatted 6th.]

Some minor key progressions:
i iv i,   i V i,   I iv (i) V i,   i V (i) iv i   also many other combinations as explained above.

(ii°) V I	iv V I	ii V i
IV V i	[i iv ii° V i]	(i) iv VI ii° V i
i VI V I	(i) VI ii° V I	(i) VI iv (V) i
VI III iv (V) I	VI III ii° (V) I	III VI ii° V i
III VI iv V I	III iv i VI ii° V I	i v VI (ii°) V (i)
i v VI III iv i ii V	i v VI III iv (or ii°) V I	i III iv VI ii° V i
ii° VI iv (V) I	ii° VI III iv (i) V (i)	(i) IV VII III VI ii° V i

The ii, IV and **R**vi° can be used as substitutes according to the melodic minor principles, while **R**vii°, III$^+$, **L**vi°, and iv° can be used for V.

Quite often, I is used for i at the end of a phrase. [Picardy 3rd]

Some other common types of Baroque chord progressions result from:
1) Secondary Harmony (chords of other keys, used in the home key).
2) Sequences.
3) Successive 1st inversions, and as mentioned,
4) Bass viewpoint;
They will be covered later as separate topics.

SUMMARY OF 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 triads, (the ii, iii & vi being minor and the vii° being diminished). In other words, because the I, IV, and V are all <u>major</u> 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 these reasons, the <u>I, IV & V</u> 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 to two other triads whose roots are a 3rd higher and lower → EXAMPLE: A is related to $\overset{I}{C\#m}$, $\overset{vi}{F\#m}$. The reason for this is that each of the triads a 3rd above & below a primary triad have 2 tones in common with it. These common-tone brothers are called **RELATED TRIADS**. <u>Any primary triad may be preceded, followed or replaced with its related triad(s).</u> 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, composers have favored the following relationships:

PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED
I	vi, iii	IV	ii	V	vii°, (iii⁶ as an appoggiatura chord, other iii's are rare)
TONICS		**SUBDOMINANTS**		**DOMINANTS**	

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 iii⁶ for V (as they will not be listed to save space). Also I⁶₄ is commonly used before V at ends of phrases.

I IV I   I V I   I IV (I) V I   I V (I) IV I   , & many other combinations of I IV V (& their related chords) especially those combinations derived from a BASS viewpoint - more on this later.   (ii) V I   IV V I   [I IV ii V I]   (I) V vi ii V I

I vi V I   (I) vii ii V I   (I) vi IV (V) I   vi ii IV V I   vi V ii V I   vi, iii IV (V) I   iii IV I vi ii V I

iii vi ii V I   iii vi IV V I   I V vi iii IV I   I IV vi IV I (or ii) V I   I V vi iii IV I   ii V I   I iii IV vi ii V I

ii vi IV (V) I   [ii vi vii° IV I V I]   [vi vii° IV (V) I]   (I) IV vii° iii vi ii 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:

PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED
i	(Rvi°, VII, III)	iv	ii°, ♭II, IV, ii, VI	V	Rvii°, III+ (Lvi°, Lvi, iv°)
TONICS	(I - PICARDY 3RD)	**SUBDOMINANTS**		**DOMINANTS**	(v, VII)

SOME MINOR KEY PROG: i iv i   i V i   i iv (i) V i   i V (i) iv i   also many other combinations as explained above.   (ii°) V i   iv V i   ii° V i   IV V i   [i iv ii° V i]   (i) iv V ii° V i

i IV V i   (i) VI ii° V i   (i) VI iv (V) i   VI III iv (V) i   VI III ii° (V) i

III VI ii° V i   III VI iv V i   III iv iV iV ii° V i   i v VI (ii°) V (i)   i v VII III iv i   ii° V   i v VII III iv V i

i III iv VI ii° V i   ii° VI iv (V) i   ii° VI III iv (i) V (i)   (i) iv VII III VI ii° V i

The ii, IV & Rvi° can be used as substitutes according to melodic minor principles, while Rvii°, III+, Lvi°, Lvi and iv° can be used for V.

Quite often, I is used for i at the end of a phrase.

Some other common types of BAROQUE chord progressions result from ① Secondary Harmony (chords of other keys, used in the home key) ② Sequences, ③ Successive 1st INVERSIONS & as mentioned ④ BASS VIEWPOINT, they will be covered later as separate topics.