Harmonic Vocabulary - Major Key
Part 4 - Diatonic Major
Ted Greene 1984-07-14

A lot can be said about the I IV & V chords. Whole forms of music, entire cultures, depend mainly on them for their very existence! Remove these chords from the planet and you have just removed Bach, Mozart, rock & roll, and the blues just to name a few. There are no more important chords in all of music.

One satisfying fact concerning these 3 Primary Triads, as they are often called, is that collectively, they contain all the notes of the major scale. Therefore, any melody that one can conceive from notes of this scale can be harmonized using these three chords exclusively. This feature will concern us for some time now.

Examples of I IV V progression:

3/4 time

Notice that this melody uses all notes of the scale except for the 4th.

Please try contrapuntal isolation here now.

etc.

Now try this variation:

or close triad

or Gb

or open

or close

Now play the 1st one again and compare.

And then we can add some decoration:

and
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Key of Eb

Here is an example now with a modulation to the key of V. Also notice the tied notes. More on the ties on the next page [part 5]

Key of D
4/4 time

Notice the imitation between the voices.

Now, a variation with different imitation:
Key of Db

Assignment: As before, study all the progressions very carefully. And write down a few examples now - some with just blocks, some with decorations. Imitation and modulations are optional for now.
A lot can be said about the I, IV, and V chords. Whole forms of music, entire cultures depend mainly on them for their very existence. Remove these chords from the planet and you have just removed Bach, Mozart, rock 'n' roll, the blues—just to name a few. These are no more important chords in all of music.

One satisfying fact concerning these 3 PRIMARY TRIADS, as they are often called, is that collectively, they contain all the notes of the major scale. Therefore, any melody that one can conceive can be harmonized using these 3 chords exclusively. This feature will concern us for some time now. Examples of I, IV, V progression:

PLEASE TRY CONTRAPOINT. ISOLATION HERE, NOW.

Now try this variation:

Now play the 1ST ONE AGAIN AND COMPAR...

And then we can add some decoration:

Here is an example now with a MODULATION to the key of E, also notice the lead notes:*

NOTICE THE RELATION BETWEEN THE VOICES Key of Db

Now, a variation with different imitation:

ASSIGNMENT: In groups, study all the progressions carefully. And then write 1 or 2 examples, now—or come up with just block some with operations. Limitation and modulations are optional for now.

* More on the ties on the next page.