Secondary Dominants, Tonicization (part 3)
Ted Greene 1975-05-16

Sometimes it might be easier to think of secondary dominants in terms of the home key as far as Roman numeral thinking goes. Example: Suppose you are playing around with a I vi ii V progression, and decide to precede it with its V7 (which is VI7 in the home key). You might then play I VI7 ii V and think of VI7 as a chromatic substitute for vi. Experiment with this type of thinking in various progressions.

Other good places to use home key numbering are in progressions that use secondary dominants as chromatic replacements in cycles of 4ths which will be illustrated below:

A pretty common device in Baroque music is the Chain of Dominants where each secondary dominant is followed by another secondary dominant whose root is a 4th higher.

Example: in key of C → E7₂ A7⁶₅ D7₂ G7⁶₅ C

V7₂ of vi V7⁶₅ of ii V7₂ of V V7⁶₅

Such a cycle could probably be thought of (in terms of Roman numerals) more easily in the home key.

Example: III7₂ VI7⁶₅ II7₂ V7⁶₅

Also see example #23 [in part 2].

Here is an example of some chain dominants to play:

Notice the chromatic bass line; this is what happens when you alternate 3rds and 7ths in the bass in such a chain, which brings up another point: you may have noticed that in the examples of secondary dominants given so far, very few root in the bass voicings are used as secondary V’s or V7’s. All I can say is that this was the custom of the time—that is, the composers and musicians just favored the sound of inversions over root position voicings (as secondary V’s and V7’s). You must have observed how rich these inverted chords sound by now so this shouldn’t be hard to accept; it was only later in impressionistic and jazz harmony, with the addition of other colorful tones to chords, that root in the bass voicings took over again.

Another use of secondary dominants which could be labeled Sandwich Tonicization or Internal Tonicization is illustrated in the following examples:

Another use of secondary dominants which could be labeled Sandwich Tonicization or Internal Tonicization is illustrated in the following examples:
In example #25 the secondary dominant is “sandwiched” between two inversions of its tonic (ii).
In example #26 the secondary dominant precedes and then is sandwiched between its tonic (ii).

You can see why this device is given its name, I hope. To really absorb these concepts, to make them become part of your musical life, it would be good for you to make up some progressions (in both major and minor keys) using the chain dominant concept; then also make up some using the Internal Tonicization concept. Next, go back to some of your old progressions and try the following modifications:

1) Replace, precede or follow vi or vi7 with VI or VI7 or VI7b9 (this includes all inversions).
2) Replace, precede or follow ii or ii7 with II or II7 or #ivii7 (this includes all inversions).
3) Replace, precede or follow iii or iii7 with III or III7 or III7b9 (this includes all inversions).
4) Replace, precede or follow vii6 or vii67 with VII or VII7 or VII7b9 (this includes all inversions).
5) Replace, precede or follow I or Imaj7 with I7 or iii7 (this includes all inversions).

Then do similar in minor keys.

All of the above modifications will not work in all cases, but it is good for your ears to find out for yourself. You might try combining different modifications.
Example: Taking I vi ii V as a model you might play

\[ I \ \text{VI7}^6 \ \text{II} \ \text{V7}^6 \]

or

\[ I \ \text{vi6} \ \text{VI7}^6 \ \text{II7} \ \text{V6} \ \text{I} \]

or

\[ I \ \text{vi} \ \text{VI7} \ \text{II6} \ \text{ii7}^6 \ \text{V7} \ \text{I (or III)} \]

Later for variety’s sake you might wish to try different meters (such as 4/4, 3/4, 6/8, etc.) or pulses, and possibly different harmonic rhythms (harmonic rhythm has to do with how often chord changes appear in a piece of music). Examples of different harmonic rhythms applied to I vi ii V are the last two examples listed.

More exercises are listed on the follow page [part 4 of this series].
Secondary Dominant Tonicization

Sometimes it might be easier to think of a secondary dominant in terms of the home key, as for example in numerical thinking, see example 22. Suppose you are playing around in the key of C and decide to play a dominant VII with its V7 (which is G7 in the home key). You might then play I I V I and think of G7 as a chromatic substitute for V. Experiment with this type of thinking in various progressions.

Other good places to use home key numbering are in progressions that use sec. doms. as chromatic replacements in cycles of the home key, which will be illustrated below.

A pretty common device in Baroque music is the CHAIN of DOMINANTS, where each secondary dominant is followed by another sec. dom, whose root is a 4th higher. Example: V key of C -> E7, A7, D7, G7, C. Such a cycle could probably be thought of (in terms of normal numerals) more easily in the home key: Ex: iii7, vii5, ii5, i5.

Here is an example of a chain of dominants to play:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
& & & \\
& & & \\
& & & \\
& & & \\
\end{array}
\]

Notice the chromatic bass line; this is what happens when you alternate 3rds and 7ths in the bass in such a chain, which brings up another point: you may have noticed that, in the example of sec. doms' given so far, very few roots in the bass were used as secondary V's or V7's. All I can say is that this was the custom of the time — that is, the composers & musicians first favored the sound of inversions over root position voicings (as sec. V = V7). You must have observed how rich these inverted chord sounds are, now as this should not be hard to accept; it was only later in IMPRESSIONISTIC and JAZZ harmony, with the addition of other colorful tones, that root in the bass voicings took over again.

Another use of secondary dom's which could be labeled "SANDWICH TONICIZATION" is illustrated in the following example:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
& & & \\
& & & \\
& & & \\
& & & \\
\end{array}
\]

In example 23 the sec. dom. is "sandwiched" between two inversions of its tonic (ii).
In example 24 the sec. dom. precedes and then is sandwiched between its tonic (ii).

You can see why this device is given the name, I hope. To really absorb these concepts, to make them become part of your musical life, it would be good for you to make up some progressions (in both major & minor keys) using the CHAIN dominant concept, then also make some using the INTERNAL TONICIZATION concept. Next go back to some of your old progressions and try the following modifications:

1. Replace, precede or follow VI or V7 with VII or VII7 or VII5 (this includes all inversions).
2. " " with I or I7, or I7 or I7 with " ".
3. " " with II or II7, or II7 with " ".
4. " " with III or III7, or III7 with " ".
5. " " with IV or IV7, or IV7 with " ".
6. " " with V or V7, or V7 with " ".
7. " " with VI or I7, or I7 with " ".

Hands similar in minor keys.

All of the above modifications will not work in all cases but it is good for you to find out for yourself. You might try combining different modifications.

Example: Taking I V i7 V as a model you might play I VII7 V i7 V I or I V i7 i7 V I or I VII7 VII i7 V I or I VII7 VII i7 V I (or VIII).

Later, for variety's sake you might wish to try different METERS (such as 2/4, 3/8, 6/8) or PULSES, and possibly different HARMONIC RHYTHMS (harmonic rhythm has to do with how often chord changes appear in a piece of music). Examples of different harmonic rhythms applied to I V i7 V are the last two examples listed.

More exercises are listed on the following page.