



The Neapolitan Chord (♭II)

Characteristics, Effects, and Behavior

Listen to the excerpt from one of Schubert's songs in Example 23.1. The music divides clearly into three phrases, which are marked by cadence type. As you follow along, try to keep a running tally of particularly striking chromatic harmonies. Where are they, and what contributes to their novel sound?

EXAMPLE 23.1 Schubert, “Der Müller und der Bach” (“The Miller and the Brook”),
Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795, no. 19

Mässig (Der Müller)

Wo ein treu-es Her - ze in Lie - be ver-geht, da
Where a true heart wastes away in love,

7
wel - ken die Li - lien auf je - dem Beet; da muss in die Wolk - en der Voll - mond.
There wilt the lilies in every bed; Then into the clouds must the full moon go,

(PAC)

14

gehn, da-mit sei-ne Trä-nen die Men-schen nicht seh'n; da hal - ten die Eng-lein die
So that her tears Men do not see; Then angels

(HC)

22

Au - gen sich zu und schluch-zen und sin - gen die see - le zur Ruh.
shut their eyes and sob and sing to rest the soul.

(PAC)

A new chromatic harmony first appears in m. 8 (and again in m. 16 and m. 25). We have seen previously that there are two main types of chromaticism: (1) applied chords, which alter the function (and roman numeral) of diatonic chords in order to tonicize other keys; and (2) mixture, which alters the quality of a diatonic chord but does not change its roman numeral or function. What kind of chord do we have here? The chord in m. 8 is a major triad; its quality suggests that it may be an applied chord. However, as such it would be the dominant of D^b (bV of G minor), and we certainly have not encountered " bV "!

Clearly this is a pre-dominant function chord, with the bass C ($\hat{4}$) and the pitch E^b ($\hat{6}$) both pulling toward D ($\hat{5}$). The A^b ($\hat{2}$) is a chromatic pitch that substitutes for the diatonic A . As a result, instead of a ii^{o6} chord ($C-E^b-A$), we have a major triad in first inversion, a bII^6 chord ($C-E^b-A^b$). This chord, commonly called the **Neapolitan chord**, occurs more often in minor-mode pieces than in major-mode pieces (Example 23.2A), and it usually occurs in first inversion in order to have a smooth bass motion to $\hat{5}$ rather than an awkward tritone leap from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{5}$ (Example 23.2B). In the major mode, both the supertonic and the submediant are lowered ($\hat{2}$ and $\hat{6}$, respectively), as in Example 23.2C.

EXAMPLE 23.2 Common Neapolitan Contexts

A. B. C.

c: i bII^6 V^7 i i bII V^7 i C: I bII^6 V^7 I

Writing the Neapolitan Chord

- $\flat\text{II}^6\text{-V}$ progressions will have a $\flat\hat{2}\text{-}\hat{7}$ motion in one of the upper voices—usually the soprano (Example 23.2A).
- Double the bass, $\hat{4}$. (See Example 23.2A.) If necessary, double $\hat{6}$.
- In minor, any chord that would precede $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$ can also precede $\flat\text{II}^6$.
- In major, the common chords before $\flat\text{II}^6$ are tonic (I) and mixture chords ($\flat\text{III}$, $\flat\text{VI}$, iv). When writing in major, avoid the augmented second that occurs between $\hat{3}$ and $\flat\hat{2}$ (Example 23.2C).
- The ultimate goal of the Neapolitan chord is to move to V. However, there are two common ways to move from $\flat\text{II}^6$ to V, both of which harmonize a passing $\hat{1}$ (Example 23.3).

EXAMPLE 23.3 Filling the Space Between $\flat\hat{2}$ and $\hat{7}$

A. cad. $\frac{6}{4}$ B. $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{V}$ C. $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{V}$ and cad. $\frac{6}{4}$

c: i $\flat\text{II}^6$ $\text{V}_4^6 - \frac{5}{3}$ i i $\flat\text{II}^6$ $\frac{\text{vii}^{\circ 7}}{\text{V}}$ V i i $\flat\text{II}^6$ $\frac{\text{vii}^{\circ 7}}{\text{V}}$ $\text{V}_4^6 - \frac{5}{3}$ i

EXERCISE INTERLUDE



WORKBOOK 1
23.1–23.2

WRITING

23.1

Set the following progressions in the specified minor keys and in four voices.

A. Use the given soprano fragments and chords.

SOLVED/APP 6

Sop: $\flat\hat{2}$ $\hat{7}$ $\hat{1}$ $\flat\hat{2}$ $\hat{7}$ $\hat{1}$ $\flat\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ $\hat{7}$ $\hat{1}$ $\flat\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ $\hat{7}$ $\hat{1}$

$\flat\text{II}^6\text{-V-i}$	$\flat\text{II}^6\text{-V}^7\text{-i}$	$\flat\text{II}^6\text{-V}_4^6\text{-}\frac{5}{3}\text{-i}$	$\flat\text{II}^6\text{-vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{V-V-i}$
in: d	in: c \sharp	in: f	in: g

B. Use the given bass fragments; include a $\flat\text{II}^6$ chord in each progression.

Bass: $\hat{1} \hat{4} \hat{5} \hat{1}$ $\hat{3} \hat{4} \hat{5} \hat{1}$ $\hat{3} \hat{4} \hat{\sharp 4} \hat{5} \hat{1}$
 in: e in: b in: g

ANALYSIS



23.2

Provide a two-level roman numeral analysis for each of the following examples. To facilitate your chordal analysis, circle all embellishing tones in the melody.

Sample: Beethoven, Piano Sonata no. 14 in C# minor, "Moonlight," op. 27, no. 2, Adagio

C#: V_3^4 i V_5^6 i $\flat\text{II}^6$ V^7 i
 (P)
 (i) UN LN i
 T PD D T

SOLVED/APP 6

A. Beethoven, Bagatelle, op. 119, no. 9. Make a formal diagram.

B. Chopin, Mazurka in F minor, op. 63, no. 2, BI 162

Lento

SOLVED/APP 6

C. Chopin, Mazurka in C# minor, op. 30, no. 4, BI 105

Include in your discussion the underlying harmonic progression in the excerpt.

D. Rachmaninoff, Vocalise

What type of bass line does Rachmaninoff use? What keys are implied in m. 5?

(Aug.)
6th

Expanding \flat II

The Neapolitan chord is like any other major chord. It can be prolonged with a chordal leap in the bass (Example 23.4A), by tonicization (Example 23.4B and C), and by extended tonicization (Example 23.4D).

EXAMPLE 23.4 Expanding \flat II

A. Chordal Leap Expands \flat II

a: $i \text{ — } 6 \quad \flat II \text{ — } 6 \quad V_4^6 = \frac{5}{3} \quad i \quad i \quad V/\flat II \quad \flat II \text{ — } 6 \quad V_4^6 = \frac{5}{3} \quad i$
($\flat VI$)

B. Tonicization Expands \flat II

C. Tonicization Expands \flat II (in major)

A: $I \quad V^7/\flat II \quad \flat II \text{ — } 6 \quad V_4^6 = \frac{5}{3} \quad I$

D. Extended Tonicization Expands \flat II

a: $i \quad V^6 \quad i \quad vii^{o6} \quad i^6 \quad \underbrace{V^7 \quad I \quad vii^{o6} \quad I^6 \quad IV \quad ii^6 \quad V_{\frac{4}{2}} \quad I^6}_{\flat II} \quad V \quad i$

Sometimes composers tonicize \flat II merely by restating material up a half step—from I to \flat II. This procedure is common in middle-period Beethoven pieces, such as his String Quartet in E minor (Example 23.5). The root-position Neapolitan of mm. 6–7 occurs when the opening tune of mm. 3–4 is literally restated a half step higher in m. 6. Melodically, this presents an important motive, B–C, which is highlighted within mm. 3–6.

The analysis shows that the pre-dominant still moves to dominant function and on to tonic, creating a large-scale $i \rightarrow \flat II \rightarrow V \rightarrow i$ motion. Notice that two forms of the dominant appear: vii^{o7} is followed by V. The only two pitch classes involved in this subtle shift are C ($\hat{6}$) and B ($\hat{5}$), which can be heard as a melodic summary of the immediately preceding motion from tonic to the Neapolitan. Beethoven has therefore returned the upper-neighbor C to B, its point of origin.

EXAMPLE 23.5 Beethoven, String Quartet no. 8 in E minor, op. 59, no. 2, *Allegro*

Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Violoncello

f *pp* *pp*

5

e: i bII

9 15

sf *p* *sf* *p*

p *sf* *p*

sf *p* *p*

p *p < f*

vii°⁷ → (V⁶/₅) vii°⁴/₂ → V⁷ i

EXAMPLE 23.6 Chopin, Nocturne in B^b minor, op. 9, no. 1

21 24

poco rallentando

5 6

Db: I V⁶/₅

ppp *f* *cresc.*

a tempo

I ⁵/₃ ⁶/₄ ⁵/₃ vii°⁴/₃/V V⁷ I

bII

Listen to Example 23.6. The Neapolitan in m. 24 is contrapuntally prepared in the previous measure by the 5–6 motion from I; over the bass D^b/C^\sharp , A^b moves to A (the enharmonic spelling of $b\hat{6}$, B^b), creating a V_5^6/bII . When the Neapolitan arrives at the downbeat of m. 24, Chopin spells it enharmonically as D major rather than as E^b major. Chopin's *ppp* dynamic marking at this moment helps the performer interpret this special harmonic coloration. The Neapolitan's bass motion up to V is accomplished by the vii^{o4}_3/V chord in m. 25; this chord is pivotal, for it sounds like a mixture coloring of the right-hand B^b in m. 24, yet the vii^{o4}_3/V also leads to V^7 (A^b) as an applied chord.

The Neapolitan in Sequences

Look again at Example 23.6 and notice that the chords in m. 23, leading to the Neapolitan chord in m. 24, are identical to the way A2 (–3/+4) applied-chord sequences begin. Example 23.7A extends Chopin's ascent, continuing the sequence to V. The use of bII in the A2 (–3/+4) sequence is much more common in minor-mode works. A further bonus of incorporating the Neapolitan in sequences is that it allows for root-position $b2$ in minor pieces. (Remember, diatonic ii is diminished and cannot participate in applied sequences.)

EXAMPLE 23.7 The Neapolitan in A2 Sequences

A.

Db: I $V^6 \rightarrow bII$ $V^6 \rightarrow iii$ $V^6 \rightarrow IV$ $V^6 \rightarrow V$
A2 (–3/+4)

B.

c: i $V^6 \rightarrow bII$ $V^6 \rightarrow III$ $V^6 \rightarrow iv$

The Neapolitan as a Pivot Chord

The Neapolitan is an effective pivot chord when modulating to diatonic as well as chromatic keys. Example 23.8 contains two statements of a D^b sonority. The D^b chord in m. 9 functions typically as a bII^6 , leading to V. But when it returns in m. 23, it functions as a pivot that precipitates the modulation to A^b .

EXAMPLE 23.8 Schubert, String Quartet in C minor, "Quartettsatz," D. 703


Allegro assai

Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Violoncello

c:

5 *cresc.* *ff^s* *fp*

f *cresc.* *ff^s* *ff^s*

b II⁶

11 *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

V i

20 *dolce*

VI: b II⁶
IV⁶ V⁷ I

EXERCISE INTERLUDE

ANALYSIS



23.3

The following excerpts illustrate expanded \flat II. Provide a two-level analysis for each excerpt and a short paragraph that summarizes your analysis.

Sample analysis: Chopin, Nocturne in C minor, op. 48, no. 1, BI 142

Lento

m.v.

C: i 5—6 V₅⁶ i iv⁶ ii⁶₅

T ————— PD —————

T —————

4

stretto

V⁷ i i ii⁶₅ V⁷ vi ii V⁶₄—5[#]

D ————— T ————— III (ARP) ————— v (BRD)

8

i V₂⁴ I⁶ V₅⁶ I ° 3 i

————— PD ————— V₅⁶ i

————— D ————— T

Sample paragraph: Chopin’s C-minor Nocturne illustrates an extensive tonicization not only of \flat II, but also of several diatonic harmonies. The nocturne opens with a descending-bass arpeggiation (C–A \flat –F) that returns to tonic, followed by a balancing ascending arpeggiation (C–E \flat –G), each member of which is tonicized. The descent from G to G \flat begins the Neapolitan’s expansion (m. 9). The G \flat in m. 9 is harmonized as V₂⁴ of \flat II, and it becomes a

chromatic passing tone that connects G and the following F (m. 9), which is harmonized as $\flat\Pi^6$. Root-position $\flat\Pi$ follows its V_5^6 chord in m. 10, ending the tonicization of $\flat\Pi$. The dominant (G) is secured in precisely the same way that $\flat\Pi$ was: through chromatic passing tones that lead to V_5^6 ($D^{\flat}-C-B^{\flat}$). Notice that this bass motion $\flat\hat{2}$ to $\hat{7}$ is what usually takes place in the soprano when $\flat\Pi^6$ moves to V.

A. Beethoven, Piano Sonata no. 23 in F minor, "Appassionata," op. 57, *Allegro assai*

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a piano (right) and bass (left) staff. The key signature is F minor (three flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 1-4) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a trill in the right hand. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the trill and includes a *poco ritardando* marking. The third system (measures 9-13) shows a dynamic shift from *pp* to *f* and includes an *a tempo* marking. The fourth system (measures 14-17) features a rapid sixteenth-note passage in the right hand and a dynamic shift to *p*.

B. Rachmaninoff, Prelude in G# minor, op. 32, no. 12

Be aware of the D \flat in the bass and the chord of which it is a part in m. 7.

Allegro

p *f* *mf*

3 *p* *rit.* *meno mosso*

dim. *p* *ten.*

5 *accel.* *dim.* *a tempo* *rit.*

pp *sf*

7 *meno mosso* *accel.*

p