The VI as a Substitute for I: The Deceptive Cadence and Progression

Another familiar use of the submediant is its substitution for the tonic in a perfect authentic cadence. In our previous melodic analysis of the tune “Old One Hundred” in Chapter 3, we noted the premature arrival of scale degree 1 at the end of the third phrase. In order to avoid a conclusive-sounding cadence on the tonic before the piece is finished, we may substitute a vi chord for the expected I (Example 17.4). This exchange of vi for I maintains the sense of harmonic momentum until we finally arrive at the last authentic cadence.

Example 17.4

This cadential substitution of the submediant for tonic is called a deceptively cadence. Other features of the authentic cadence remain intact—it is still approached by a pre-dominant or 6 (such as I-ii6-V) and still features the typical 2-1 or 7-8 in the soprano. But in place of the usual resolution to I, the bass moves up a step from 5 to 6 while replacing the tonic with submediant harmony, as shown in the first two models of Example 17.5. Above all, avoid a soprano line from 7 down to 6, since the leading tone’s wrong resolution would become obvious (Example 17.5c).
Example 17.5

A. \[\text{C: } I^6 \quad V \quad vi \]

B. \[\text{E: } I^6 \quad vi^6 \quad V \quad VI \]

C. \[\text{C: } IV \quad V \quad vi \]

The stepwise root motion in this deceptive cadence can easily foster partwriting mistakes, such as parallel octaves or 5ths (Example 17.6a) and even an augmented 2nd in minor keys (Example 17.6b). To avoid these, move two of the upper voices contrary to the bass, producing a doubled chordal 3rd in the submediant triad; refer to Examples 17.6c and d.

Example 17.6

A. (parallel octaves/5ths)

B. A2

C. OK

D. OK

Other Treatments of the V-vi Progression

Deceptive progressions may also occur within the phrase using 5-3 motion in the soprano (Example 17.7a). In some cases these V-vi progressions seem to form interpolations within the phrase's interior harmonies. The V-vi in the second measure of Handel's aria (Example 17.7b) could almost be omitted, as indicated by the brackets, since the overall voice leading in the reduction is hardly disturbed (Example 17.7c). In “America” (Example 17.7d), the dominant 5-3 in measure 2 appears to be leading to an authentic cadence (3-5-1). The detour to vi not only thwarts the cadential expectation but also continues the harmonic flow until we arrive at the real cadence two bars later.