

## chapter

# 30

## $\flat\text{II}^6$ : The Neapolitan Sixth

$\flat\text{II}^6$  is a first-inversion major triad built on lowered  $\hat{2}$ ; it has a Subdominant function.

Building  $\flat\text{II}^6$

Harmonic Progression

Voice Leading

### BUILDING $\flat\text{II}^6$

$\flat\text{II}$  is a major chord whose root is lowered  $\hat{2}$ . It usually appears in first inversion, as a  $\flat\text{II}^6$ , also known as a **Neapolitan sixth** (or  $\text{N}^6$ ).  $\flat\text{II}^6$  appears most often in minor keys, in place of a diatonic  $\text{ii}^\circ$ . The root of  $\flat\text{II}^6$  requires an accidental, which may be either a flat or a natural, depending upon the key signature.

30.1



In G minor,  $\hat{2}$  is A, thus lowered  $\hat{2}$  is  $\text{Ab}$ .



$\text{ii}^\circ$  of G minor is an A-diminished triad (A-C- $\text{Eb}$ ), in 1st inversion.

$\flat\text{II}^6$  (or the Neapolitan sixth) of G minor is an  $\text{Ab}$ -major triad ( $\text{Ab}$ -C- $\text{Eb}$ ), in 1st inversion.

In E minor,  $\hat{2}$  is  $\text{F}\sharp$ , thus lowered  $\hat{2}$  is  $\text{F}\natural$  (*not*  $\text{Fb}$ !).



$\flat\text{II}^6$  of E minor is an  $\text{F}\natural$ -major triad in 1st inversion (*not* an  $\text{Fb}$ -major triad!).

## HARMONIC PROGRESSION

Like  $ii^{\circ 6}$ ,  $\flat II^6$  has a Subdominant function.  $\flat II^6$  may be preceded by any chord that can go before  $ii^{\circ 6}$ , such as  $i$ ,  $iv$ , or  $VI$ , and it usually leads to a Dominant harmony such as  $V$ ,  $V^7$ , or their inversions.

### 30.2 Beethoven, "Sehnsucht" (Longing) ➡



$p$   
 Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt weiss, was ich leide!  
 $p$   
 G min.:  $i$   $V^6$   $i$   $V$   $VI$   $\flat II^6$   $V$

Translation: Only someone who knows longing can understand what I am suffering!

Like  $ii^{\circ 6}$ ,  $\flat II^6$  can move to  $V$  or  $V^7$ .

### 30.3 Mozart, Sonata for Violin and Piano in F, K. 377, II ➡



$f$   
 $p$   
 D min.:  $i^6$   $\flat II^6$   $V^7$   $i$

$\flat II^6$  also may lead to  $V$  via a cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  or  $vii^{\circ 7}/V$ .

### 30.4 Mozart, Sonata for Violin and Piano in E Minor, K. 304, I ➡



E min.: i V<sup>6</sup>/iv iv iv<sup>6</sup> V VI **bII<sup>6</sup>** i

$\text{V}_4^8$	$=$	$\frac{7}{3}$
$\frac{4}{3}$	$=$	$\frac{5}{3}$

(cad.  $\frac{6}{4}$ -V)

30.5 Handel, *Joseph and His Brethren*, act II ➡

and his Land be - neath the sha - dow of Thy wings.

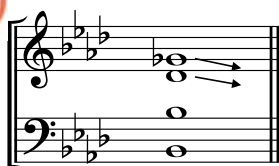
A min.: i V i<sup>6</sup> **bII<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>7</sup>/V V** I

There is a chromatic stepwise ascent in the bass as bII<sup>6</sup> moves through vii<sup>7</sup>/V to V.

## VOICE LEADING

$\flat\text{II}^6$  includes two tendency tones that lead downward: lowered  $\hat{2}$  and the minor form of  $\hat{6}$ . These tones should *not* be doubled. Instead, double the bass of  $\flat\text{II}^6$  (the third of the chord).

30.6



F min.:  $\flat\text{II}^6$

In  $\flat\text{II}^6$  of F minor, lowered  $\hat{2}$  ( $G\flat$ , the root of the chord) and  $\hat{6}$  ( $D\flat$ , the fifth of the chord) are tendency tones that lead downward and should *not* be doubled.

The bass of  $\flat\text{II}^6$  ( $B\flat$ ) should be doubled.

When progressing from  $\flat\text{II}^6$  to V, the lowered  $\hat{2}$  (the root of  $\flat\text{II}$ ) moves *down* to the leading tone (especially when it appears in the top voice). The motion directly from lowered  $\hat{2}$  to  $\hat{7}$  creates a melodic diminished third.

30.7





(G $\flat$  to E $\sharp$  = d3)

F min.: i    $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>   V   i

(C $\sharp$  to A $\sharp$  = d3)

B min.: i    $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>   V<sup>7</sup>   i

✓ **Good** Lowered  $\hat{2}$  moves down to  $\hat{7}$  when  $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup> moves to a Dominant harmony.

(G $\sharp$  to E $\sharp$  = d3)

F $\sharp$  min.: i    $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>   V<sup>4</sup><sub>2</sub>   i<sup>6</sup>

C min.: i    $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>   V<sup>4</sup><sub>2</sub> - <sup>5</sup><sub>3</sub>   i

✓ **Good** When  $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup> moves through vii<sup>o7</sup>/V to V,  $\hat{6}$  may move to  $\sharp\hat{6}$ .

✗ **Poor** Lowered  $\hat{2}$  should *not* move up to a diatonic  $\hat{2}$ !

A min.:  $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>   vii<sup>o7</sup>/V   V   i

C min.: i    $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>   V<sup>7</sup>   i

✗ **Poor** A $\flat$ -B $\sharp$  creates an augmented 2nd!

### 30.8 A. Sullivan, "A Many Years Ago," from *H.M.S. Pinafore* ➡

HC

A ma-ny years a - go, When I was young and charm-ing, As

E min.: i V<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup> i V

(F $\sharp$ -D $\sharp$  = d3) PAC

some of you may know, I prac - tis'd ba - by - farm-ing.

i V i<sup>6</sup> bII<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> i

✓ **Good** Moving from lowered  $\hat{2}$  directly to  $\hat{7}$  creates a diminished 3rd (F to D $\sharp$ ).

# A Closer Look

## $\flat\text{II}^6$ : The Neapolitan Sixth

SHOW

## review and interact


### POINTS FOR REVIEW

- $\flat\text{II}^6$  is a first-inversion major triad, known as the *Neapolitan sixth*. The  $\flat\text{II}^6$  almost always appears in minor keys.
- The root of  $\flat\text{II}^6$  requires an accidental, sometimes a flat and sometimes a natural (depending on the key signature).
- $\flat\text{II}^6$  leads to V,  $\text{V}^7$ , or their inversions, sometimes through  $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{V}$  or a cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$ .
- Double the bass of  $\flat\text{II}^6$ ; do not double lowered  $\hat{2}$  or  $\hat{6}$ .
- When progressing to the dominant, the lowered  $\hat{2}$  should move *down*.

### TEST YOURSELF

1. What accidentals need to be added to the following  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$  chords in order to change them into  $\flat\text{II}^6$  chords?

a.  F# min.:  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$

b.  Bb min.:  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$

c.  C# min.:  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$

2. What notes are in the following chords (from the bass up)?

D minor:  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$ : \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  $\flat\text{II}^6$ : \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 B minor:  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$ : \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  $\flat\text{II}^6$ : \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 F minor:  $\text{ii}^{\circ 6}$ : \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  $\flat\text{II}^6$ : \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following chords typically might precede  $\flat\text{II}^6$ ?

- a iv
- b V
- c  $\text{vii}^{\text{O}6}$
- d  $\text{i}^6$
- e VI

Show answers

4. Fill in the blanks:

$\flat\text{II}^6$  chords usually appear in \_\_\_\_\_ keys.

$\flat\text{II}^6$  is also known as a \_\_\_\_\_.

$\flat\text{II}^6$  is a \_\_\_\_\_ (major, minor, or diminished?) triad.

The root of the  $\flat\text{II}^6$  is a tendency tone that leads \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Below is a partly completed harmonization.

Would the best note for the alto voice on beat 2 be  $\text{E}\flat$ , G, or either?

Should the  $\text{E}\flat$  in the soprano on beat 2 move to an  $\text{E}\flat$ , a  $\text{C}\sharp$ , or either?



D min.: i  $\flat\text{II}^6$  V

## Know It? Show It!



Focus by working through the tutorials on:

- Recognizing  $\flat\text{II}^6$ : Neapolitan sixth chords
- Writing  $\flat\text{II}^6$ : (Neapolitan) chords



Learn with inQuizitive.



Apply what you've learned to complete the assignments:

- Spelling  $\flat\text{II}^6$  Chords
- Realizing Roman Numerals
- Realizing Figured Bass
- Harmonizing Melodies
- Composition
- Analysis