

# 7

## THE SIXTH

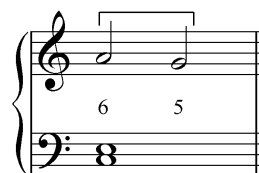
The 6th as an appoggiatura  
The 6-5 progression

The moment has come to enlarge our harmonic vocabulary. The more chords we can use, the more varied our harmonic language will become.

In ch.1 we listened to the tension and relaxation of the descending major scale:



Above the root C, the 4-3 and 9-8 progressions move from tension to relaxation. We experience the 9-8 progression as a movement from dissonance to consonance. This is less so with the 4-3 progression. And it is even less so in the movement from 6 to 5. The 6th is not dissonant; it does create a certain tension, however, especially if we add the 3rd above the bass:



The 6th has become an appoggiatura (from the Italian *appoggiare*, to lean), leaning as it does against the 5th, which almost has the effect of a resolution. This remarkably expressive use of the 6th, as an ornament of the 5th, is found in much music of the Renaissance and early Baroque, for example at the end of Heinrich Schütz's setting of *Aus meines Herzens Grunde*:



and at the end of John Dowland's *Now, O now I needs must part*:



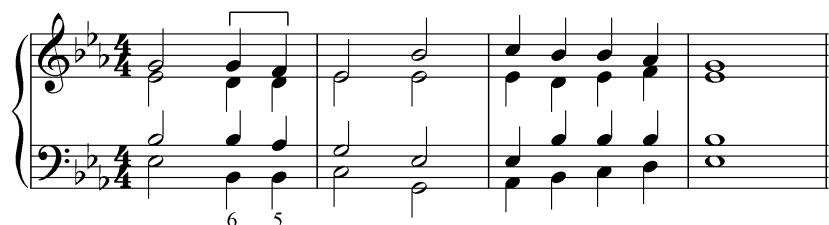
In these examples, in which the tension of the 6th is evident, we hear an echo of the linear texture of Renaissance polyphony. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Renaissance composer Claude Goudimel used the same cadence in 1565 in many of his metrical psalm tunes, as at the end of Psalm 1 (the melody is in the tenor):



Listen also to this fragment from the first of Sweelinck's organ variations on *Allein Gott in der Höh sei ehr*:



Is this Sweelinck's way of accentuating the highest point in these two lines of the melody? We experience the 6th as an appoggiatura, resolving into the 5th. There can be no doubt, however, that the bass note C, below both the 6th and the 5th, is the root of the harmony. Three centuries later, in Monk's *Abide with me*, the credentials of the 6th as an appoggiatura prove to have a long history:



In all the examples except the last, the 6th is not 'prepared' in the way a dissonance would first be heard as a consonance. It is clear that the 6-5 progression is not in the same category as the 9-8 progression. The interval of the 6th sounds milder, and therefore requires no preparation; at the same time, one could say that the tension is heightened precisely because the preparation is absent. In the next chapter we will see that, in the course of the 17th century, the chord of the 6th acquired an independent function.

## EXERCISE:

Practise the following cadences in four parts in the major keys of C, G, D, A, F, B flat and E flat:

