

# Altered Chords

UP TO THIS POINT, ALL THE CHORDS WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT HAVE BEEN BUILT USING **ONLY** THE NOTES IN THE **CURRENT KEY**.

ESSENTIALLY, THIS MEANS **NO ACCIDENTALS**, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE RAISED **SIXTH** AND **SEVENTH** SCALE DEGREES IN **MINOR**, WHICH WE CONSIDER TO BE PART OF THE KEY.

**DIATONIC**  
**ALTERED (CHROMATIC)**

NOW THAT WE'VE COVERED ALL THE POSSIBLE **DIATONIC CHORDS** IN TERTIAL HARMONY, IT'S TIME TO OPEN THE DOOR TO NOTES **OUTSIDE THE KEY...**

THESE "**ALTERED CHORDS**" ADD A CERTAIN RICHNESS TO THE HARMONY BY USING ONE OR MORE NOTES THAT ARE **NOT** IN THE KEY SIGNATURE AND THUS REQUIRE **ACCIDENTALS**.

WE'LL BE COVERING SEVERAL CATEGORIES OF ALTERED CHORDS, EACH OF WHICH HAVE THEIR OWN UNIQUE RULES FOR USE.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT THEY ALL HAVE IN **COMMON!**

FIRST, EVERY ALTERED CHORD HAS TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE **ACCIDENTAL...** IF IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY ACCIDENTALS, THEN BY **DEFINITION** IT'S A **DIATONIC CHORD!**



V/V

**ALTERED**



ii

**DIATONIC**

**BORROWED CHORDS**

NEAPOLITAN

6

**SECONDARY DOMINANTS**

**Secondary Subdominants**

**AUGMENTED SIXTHS**

SECOND, ALTERED CHORDS CAN BE EASILY USED IN PLACE OF THEIR DIATONIC COUNTERPARTS. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU CAN ADD SOME **PIZZAZZ** TO A COMPOSITION BY REPLACING A **DIATONIC CHORD** WITH AN **ALTERED CHORD** THAT HAS THE **SAME ROOT**.



I IV<sup>6</sup> IV V<sup>7</sup> **bVI**

IN GENERAL, AVOID **CROSS RELATIONS**. A CROSS RELATION OCCURS WHEN A NOTE APPEARS WITH **TWO DIFFERENT ACCIDENTALS** IN **TWO CONSECUTIVE CHORDS**, IN **TWO DIFFERENT VOICES**.



WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, ALTERED CHORDS CAN USE THE SAME **BASIC ROOT MOVEMENTS** THAT WE'VE BEEN USING.

LASTLY, WHEN YOU USE THESE CHORDS IN **PART-WRITING**, YOU SHOULD, WHENEVER POSSIBLE, RESOLVE THE **ALTERED TONES** IN THE **DIRECTION OF THEIR ALTERATION**.

SO IF A NOTE HAS A **FLAT**, TRY TO RESOLVE IT **DOWN** BY STEP OR BY LEAP.

AND WE GENERALLY AVOID **DOUBLING** ALTERED NOTES, SINCE DOING SO WOULD TEND TO CAUSE **PARALLEL OCTAVES**.



ii<sup>6</sup> V

LIKE THE DIATONIC SEVENTHS, HOWEVER, THE **COMMON ROOT** SHOULD ONLY **INCREASE TENSION...** DON'T MOVE FROM AN ALTERED CHORD TO ITS DIATONIC COUNTERPART.