Chapter 6:
Root Position
Composition
(Part-Writing)

MUS 112 – Molloy College March 6 & 8, 2017

#### Introduction

- Up to this point in the semester we have been primarily focused on the elements of music
  - Meter
  - Rhythm
  - Pitch
  - Harmony
- From here on out, we will primarily be focused on combining these elements into music (i.e. composing)
  - Not just writing individual chords and melodies, but combining it all together
- We will continue to focus on and develop writing music utilizing tonal (functional) harmony.

## Composition (Part-Writing)

- We will be doing a lot of 4-part chorale writing to develop and reinforce a mastery of tonal harmony.
  - I strongly encourage you to think of this as composing for a quartet of musicians.
  - To that end, we will be performing examples in each class.
    - There will be two groups of 6 people. A Monday group, and a Wednesday group.
      - You will bring your instrument or sing.

### Root Position Composition

- Now that we know all of our diatonic chords in all keys every inversion, we can begin to connect chords together in a meaningful way
- We will begin by focusing on only triads. We will compose with seventh chords later in the semester.
  - You are still responsible for recognizing seventh chords in analysis
- We will also limit our triads to root position so we can master how each part individually moves to help create a specific harmony.

## Doubling in Root Position Chords

- When writing a triad in 4 voices:
  - All members of the triad are present. (usually)
  - Double the root. (usually)
    - But do not double ^7.
    - So if you have vii<sup>o</sup>, double the third of the chord.

- Incomplete chords are also possible.
  - This is a chord that omits the 5<sup>th</sup>

#### Root-movement

- **Root-movement**: the interval by which the root moves when switching harmonies.
  - I V has a root-movement of what?
    - By a fifth
    - Which is equal to by a fourth, why?
- What are the different types of root movement?
  - Stay the same
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> (equal to 7<sup>th</sup>)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> (equal to 6<sup>th</sup>)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> (equal to 5<sup>th</sup>)
- Now let's look at the smoothest way to compose these various root movements.

#### Repeated Root

- The root stays the same between two chords
  - (Which means the chords stays the same!) Why?
    - Because both chords are in root-position
- Basically, anything goes!
  - The upper voices may be arpeggiated freely, as long as the spacing conventions are followed.
  - The bass may also jump by an octave
  - When the root is repeated, it is a great opportunity to re-voice the chord



## Root movement by 4<sup>th</sup> (5<sup>th</sup>)

- Root movement by a fourth or fifth describes the most important harmonic progression in tonal music.
  - V to I
- We are going to develop some strategies to help us compose root-movement of a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> and avoid objectionable parallels.
- KEEP THE COMMON-TONE!
  - Whenever possible, keeping the common-tone helps to create very smooth partwriting.
- If you can't keep the Common Tone move step-wise.
- When you have root-movement by a 4<sup>th</sup>, one of the three upper voices will stay the same, and the other two will move by step.

#### Transposing Instruments

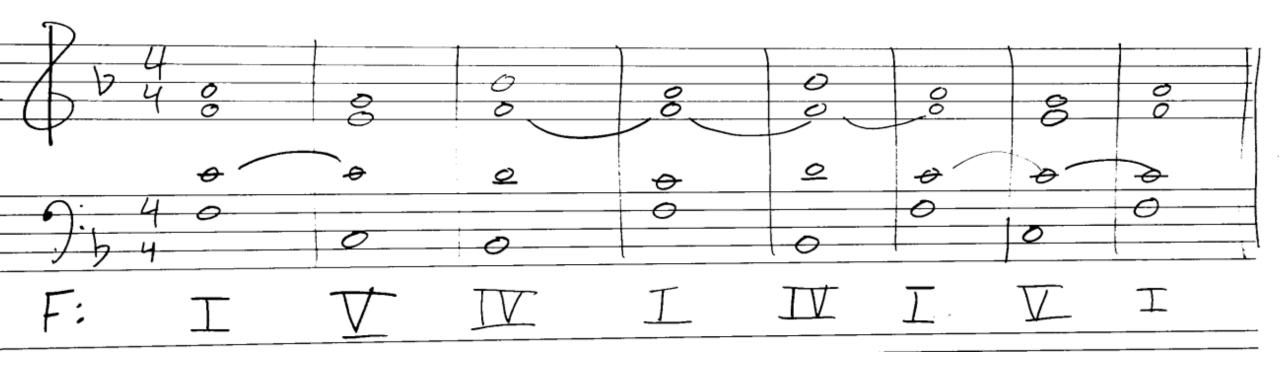
- On **Transposing Instruments** notes do not sound at the same pitch as they are written.
- Written pitch = the note on the page
- Concert pitch = the note sounding
- Transposing Instruments present at many different transposition level.
  - D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb, octave, etc.
- A transposing instrument will often indicate what key the instrument is in:
  - Horn in F
  - Trumpet in Bb
  - Eb Baritone Saxophone
- The key of the instrument tells us what note *sounds* when a C is written
- For example, on Bb Trumpet, when a C is written a Bb is the sounding pitch

# Appendix A

#### HEY JUDE



## "Hey Jude" Chorale



## Composing with Roots a 3<sup>rd</sup> (6<sup>th</sup>) Apart

- The voice leading that involves root position triads a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> apart is usually quite smooth because the two triads will always have two pitch classes in common.
- Two common tones and stepwise.



J:

# Composing with Roots a 2<sup>nd</sup> (7<sup>th</sup>) Apart

- When the root is doubled, which it normally should be:
- Move in contrary to the bass to the nearest chord tone.

