

# Borrowed Chords

ALTERED CHORDS USE NOTES *OUTSIDE* THE SCALE AS A MEANS OF ADDING A DIFFERENT "COLOR" TO THE CHORD.



HOW DOES A COMPOSER DECIDE WHICH ALTERED NOTES TO USE? IN A **MAJOR KEY**, ONE POSSIBILITY IS USING NOTES AND CHORDS FROM THE **PARALLEL MINOR**.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE FOLLOWING CHORDS ARE **DIATONIC CHORDS** IN **C MINOR**:



"BORROWED"? WHY CALL THEM THAT WHEN MAJOR NEVER BRINGS THEM BACK?

HEY, MINOR! I'LL HAVE THEM BACK BY TUESDAY THIS TIME, I PROMISE!

BUT IF WE USE THEM IN A MAJOR KEY, THEY REQUIRE **ACCIDENTALS** AND ARE THEREFORE **ALTERED CHORDS**. WE CALL THESE **BORROWED CHORDS** BECAUSE THEY ARE **BORROWED** FROM THE **PARALLEL MINOR**.



SOME THEORISTS REFER TO THE USE OF THESE CHORDS AS **MODE MIXTURE**.

AND, IN FACT, THESE SIX CHORDS ARE THE SIX MOST COMMONLY USED **BORROWED CHORDS** IN THE COMMON PRACTICE PERIOD. (ONE OF THEM, THE MAJOR TRIAD ON THE LOWERED MEDIANT, OR "**FLAT THREE**," WAS NOT USED MUCH BY COMPOSERS BEFORE THE **ROMANTIC ERA**.)

ALL THE USUAL PART-WRITING RULES APPLY TO THESE CHORDS. FOR EXAMPLE:

**ii°6**

THE **BORROWED SUPERTONIC** IS A **DIMINISHED TRIAD**, AND IS THEREFORE ALWAYS USED IN **FIRST INVERSION**.

THE BORROWED **SEVENTH CHORDS** CAN BE USED IN ANY INVERSION, BUT THE **SEVENTH** MUST BE **APPROACHED** AND **RESOLVED** PROPERLY.

**ii°7**  
**vii°7**

**bIII**  
**bVI**

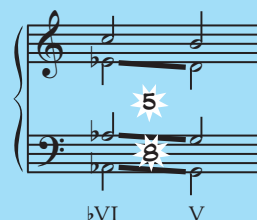
IT'S USUALLY BEST TO RESOLVE ALTERED NOTES IN THE DIRECTION OF THEIR ALTERATION, BUT DOING SO IN THE TWO **ALTERED ROOT** CHORDS WON'T WORK.

THE LEADING-TONE FULLY DIMINISHED SEVENTH IS THE **KING OF DOMINANT FUNCTION**. DON'T EVEN THINK OF RESOLVING IT TO ANYTHING BUT **TONIC**!

**vii°7**

TWO OF THESE CHORDS, THE "**FLAT THREE**" AND "**FLAT SIX**," HAVE **ALTERED ROOTS** AS **ROOTS**. WE PLACE A **FULL-SIZED FLAT SYMBOL** BEFORE THE ROMAN NUMERAL ITSELF TO INDICATE THIS **ALTERED ROOT**.

WAIT... **WHY?** SINCE WE DOUBLE THE ROOT, MOVING BOTH ROOTS THE SAME DIRECTION CAN OFTEN RESULT IN **PARALLEL OCTAVES**.



IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO AVOID PARALLELISM THAN TO RESOLVE THE NOTES A CERTAIN WAY, SO THIS USE OF **CONTRARY MOTION** IS BETTER.

THE **TIERCE DE PICARDIE** IS A MAJOR TONIC CHORD AT THE END OF A **MINOR** PIECE, SO MANY THEORISTS CONSIDER IT A **BORROWED CHORD**. REALLY, THOUGH, IT'S NOT ADDING **CHROMATIC VARIETY**... IT'S A **LAST-MINUTE MODULATION**!

NAMED FOR 24TH-CENTURY EXPLORER **JEAN-LUC PICARD!**\*



\*NOPE.