

Secondary Subdominants

Ted Greene - 1975-07-01

You may be wondering if any diatonic major or minor chord may be preceded with a *subdominant* type of chord in its own key (since you spent so much time working with *dominant* types); the answer is yes, but not commonly. For some reason, Baroque composers went wild over *dominant* harmony, and it is relatively rare to see a progression such as IV-I (iv i) or ii-I (ii° i) in a temporary new key unless the new I (i) is followed by a dominant type of chord.

Example: C Bb F G C is more rare than C Bb F C7 F G7 C (in Baroque music).
IV I IV I V7 I

However, you may wish to try out some of these *Secondary Subdominant* harmonies even without dominants, so here are a few examples that try to illustrate how good voice-leading and lines can help make a progression sound “more Baroque.”

I IV of IV IV V7 I
Bb Ab Eb F7 Bb



I iv of ii ii V7 I
D Am Em A7 D



I IV of IV IV V7 vi
F# E/9 B C#7/6 D#m



If you experiment with the above concepts, you will find that many secondary subdominants are chords that are diatonic in the *home* key, so they will conform to normal sounds that you have experienced so far.

A much more common use of secondary subdominants is as follows:

When any chord is being tonicized with a secondary dominant, the secondary dominant may be preceded with a chord that is functioning as a subdominant in the new key; naturally this subdominant functioning chord is called a *Secondary Subdominant*.

Examples:	Normal Progression:	C		Em
	With secondary dominant:	C	B7 ⁶ ₅	Em
	With secondary dom. and secondary subdom.:	C	F# ^ø 7 ⁶ ₅	Em
			ii ^ø 7	i
	Normal Progression:	C		F
	With secondary dominant:	C	C7 ⁶ ₅	F
	With secondary dom. and secondary subdom.:	C	Bb ₆	C7 ⁶ ₅
			IV	V7
				I

To find out what secondary subdominants are available, you should get acquainted with the “Catalogue of Baroque Harmonies” sheet; as you will notice, there are more subdominant harmonies than any other type, so we are talking about a wealth of rich sounds. As mentioned, though, many of the sounds already have appeared in progressions, so you don’t have to be worried about learning thousands of *new* chords – it’s not nearly that bad of a situation. In fact, you have already worked with the great majority of these sounds, but as *dominant* functions or diatonic chords.

Example: C E7⁶₅ A7₂ Dm₆
 II7 V7 i

You have already played progressions like this, but it would have been analyzed as:

I V7 of vi V7 of ii ii or I III7 VI7 ii

So all this amounts to is a different *viewpoint* on this progression, not any different *sounds*.

You might be saying, “If that is so, then why bother?”

Well, look at it this way: Suppose you had a normal progression of C Am F Dm, etc.

Here it is with secondary dominants and subdominants:

C C^Δ7 B⁷/A E⁷ Am Am⁷/G G⁷/F C⁷ F F^Δ7 E⁷/D A⁷ Dm etc.

I.....
 II7 V7 i..... II7 V7 I..... II7 V7 i
 └───────────┬───────────┬───────────┬───────────┘
 of vi of IV of ii

You can see that some nice sounds result from this different viewpoint; in other words, different viewpoints inspire different creative ideas and chord progressions. (There is a good chance that you wouldn’t have come up with this type of progression unless you were thinking in II7 V7 I(i) groups like these.)

Exercises:

- 1) It's suggested that you go back to any of the progressions that used secondary dominants and try to squeeze in secondary subdominants where they seem to fit.
- 2) Then take each type of subdominant harmony listed in the catalogue and make up a few progressions that use it (in different inversions, different keys, etc.) and don't forget that the whole catalogue is applicable to a tonic minor and its related keys if you *renumber* the whole business.
- 3) A separate list of some progressions using secondary subdominants will follow on the next page; these will all be cycle of 4ths because they are so common and characteristic of Baroque music.
- 4) Secondary *dominants* may resolve as in deceptive cadences; this new deceptive chord can: 1) continue in the home key (if possible) or 2) in the intended new key.

Examples: 1) C E7 F G7 C
 2) C D7 Em Am₆ G⁶₄ D7 G

The new deceptive chord can even pull into a totally different related key:

3) C A7 B \flat Gm₆ F⁶₄ C7 F
 I V of ii VI of ii

Examples 2) & 3) are....[page is cut off]

Catalogue of Common Cycle of 4ths Patterns (Including Secondary Chords)

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Give the following progressions a try, starting from all the different forms of close and open triads. These patterns are for sequence type voice-leading, but you might want to try regular voice-leading as well. Not all progressions will sound that great because of some augmented 2nd intervals that will appear in the soprano. Breaking up these patterns and using decorations will help.

Major Keys:

Normal I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I
I IV VII III vi II V I
I IV vii^o iii VI ii V I
I IV vii^o iii vi II V I
I IV vii^o iii^o VI ii V I
I IV bVII iii^o VI ii V I
I IV bVII iii^o vi ii V I

Minor Keys:

normal i iv VII III VI ii^o V (i)
i iv VII III VI ii V
i iv VII III VI bII V
i iv VII III VI II V
i iv VII III Rvi^o ii^o V
i iv bvii III VI ii^o V
i iv VII III VI ii^o V
i iv VII III Rvi^o ii V

is optional at the end
of minor key cycles



[R = raised]

- Try replacing i with I.
- Then precede all of these (using I for i) with v or v^o, using substitute voice-leading.
- Next try starting the cycle of 4ths on iv or V using sequence voice-leading.
- Try replacing IV with #iv^o in all of the above.
- Next try these:

I #iv^o vii iii vi ii V I
I #iv^o vii iii VI ii V I
I #iv^o vii iii vi II V I

Then try preceding *all* of the above with v or V, using substitute voice-leading.

If you start the cycle of 4ths from IV or V using sequence voice-leading, you will notice that vii^o, vii or bVII will sound better than VII in many cases (because of the augmented second problem again).

One last thing – you should try similar patterns with 7ths (or 4-note triads) replacing the above triads, or in patterns of your own devising.

Secondary Subdominants

You may be wondering if any diatonic major or minor chord may be preceded with a subdominant type of chord in its own key (since you spent so much time working with dominant types); the answer is yes, but not commonly. For some reason, Baroque composers went wild over dominant harmony, and it is relatively rare to see a progression such as IV I (IVi) or ii I (ii° i) in a temporary new key unless the new I (i) is followed by a dominant type of chord. Example: C B^bF G C is more rare than C B^bF C^bF G^b C (in Baroque music).

However, you may wish to try out some of these SECONDARY SUBDOMINANT harmonies even without dominants, so here are a few examples that try to illustrate how good voice-leading and lines can help make a progression sound "more Baroque".

If you experiment with the above concepts, you will find that many sec. subdom's are chords that are diatonic in the home key, so they will conform to normal sounds that you have experienced so far.

A much more common use of secondary subdominants is as follows: When any chord is being tonicized with a secondary dominant, the sec. dom. may be preceded with a chord that is functioning as a subdominant in the new key; naturally this subdom. functioning chord is called a SECONDARY SUBDOMINANT.

Examples: Normal Progression: C Em } → with SEC. DOM.: C B^b₇ Em } → with SEC. DOM. and SEC. SUBDOM.: C F[#]₇ B Em }
 Normal Progression: C F } → with SEC. DOM.: C C^b₇ F } → with SEC. DOM. and SEC. SUBDOM.: C B^b₆ C^b₇ F }

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Example: C E^b₇ A^b₇ Dm₆ + you have already played progressions like this but it would have been analyzed as I IV^o VI IV^o II^o II^o or I III⁷ VI⁷ II^o; so all this amounts to is a different viewpoint on this progression, not any different sounds. You might be saying "if that is so, then why bother?" Well look at it this way: Suppose you had a normal progression of C Am F Dm etc. Here it is with sec dom's. + subdom's.:

You can see that some nice sounds result from this different viewpoint, in other words, different viewpoints inspire different creative ideas + chord progressions - (there is a good chance that you wouldn't have come up with this type of progression unless you were thinking in II⁷ V⁷ I (i) groups like these).

EXERCISES:

- It is suggested that you go back to any of the progressions that used secondary dominants and try to squeeze in secondary subdominants where they seem to fit.
- Then take each type of subdominant harmony listed in the catalogue + make up a few progressions that use it (in different inversions, different keys, etc.) and don't forget that the whole catalogue is applicable to a tonic minor and its related keys if you remember the whole business.
- A separate list of some progressions using sec. subdom's will follow on the next page; these will all be CYCLE OF 4ths types because they are so common and characteristic of Baroque music.

④ Secondary dominants may resolve as in deceptive cadences - this new deceptive chord can: ① continue in the home key (if possible) or ② in the intended new key. Examples: ① C E^b F G^b C ② C D^b Em Am₆ G^b D^b G. The new deceptive chord can even pull into a totally different related key: ③ C A^b B^b Gm₆ F^b C^b F. Examples ② + ③ are

