Ear Training - Learning to Hear Diminished

(i°, i°6(°7), i°∆7)

Ted Greene 1991-03-03

Let’s be clear: Diminished color is a sound, a sound best understood and heard as having at least two tones (the 3rd and the 5th) that scream for resolution.

Look:

![Chord Diagrams]

Doubts about this?

It’s easy to understand:

![Chord Diagrams]

So why has this chord been called °7 [diminished 7] for centuries?

Two reasons, both historical, one having to do with 3rd intervals, the other with the Harmonic Minor. But using Bb as an example, let’s look at this.

We can spell the Bb°6 chord: Bb, Db, Fb (E) and Abb and thereby call it Bb°7.

But it is just as easy and sensible in more cases to spell it with a G instead of a Abb.

(Frankly, it’s not about spelling anyway…rather good sense.)

What do you think? Be ready for either name for now.
Back to the music: ala Beethoven, Schubert and more.

Please isolate the b3 to 3 and b5 to 5 lines and learn to hear them and sing them. As you can hear, the ⁴⁵ in the bass is a note to love.
Has this °7 [diminished major 7] business got you in a quandary? Never fear, it too is easy:

There’ll be more…study hard. The diminished color is a beautiful thing and we’re not going to let it be difficult to understand.
Let's be clear: DIMINISHED color is a sound, a sound best understood as HEARD as having at least 2 tones (the b3 + the b5) that scream for resolution. LOOK:

Bb  Bbm  Bb  Bbo
8  8  8  8

1  0  0  0
Bbo6
8  8  8  8

Db  Ab  Bbo6
8  8  8  8

MAJ  3 Majb6  3 Min  3 Ming6
8  8  8  8

DIM  3 DIM6
8  8  8  8

So why has this chord been called 7th? For centuries, both historically and currently, we have rarely gone with 3rd intervals. With the harmonic minor, that isn't possible. Bb is not a major chord. Back to the example.

We can spell the Bbo7 chord: Bbo  P3  B\(\text{b}5\)  P7 (E)

In most cases to spell it with a 7 instead of a 6, it's just for the sake of ease of memory.

aza and sensible. What do you think?

To recap: For either minor scale: Bb, Ab, and the chord will spell it with a 7 instead of a 6. Back to the example.

Please isolate the b3 of Bb and b5 of Bbo7. Learn to hear them and sing them.

There will be more.... study hard. The diminished color is a beautiful thing... we're not going to let it be difficult to understand.