

Voice Leading

| Dec 2017

Voice Leading

- Music is a linear, time-based art form
- When more than one voice sounds at the same time, **harmony** is created
- A **harmonic progression** is a series of harmonies over time.
- **Voice leading** is the way each voice approaches and leaves its note in the harmonic progression.
- **Tonal harmony** is constructed around triads, seventh chords, and scales (often we include non-chord tones)
- **Part Writing** is the process of writing 4-part SATB chorales in the style of Bach (or a simplified version thereof)
 - Generally **homophonic** — each voice has the same rhythm
 - Sometimes in **counterpoint** — independent polyphonic lines (different rhythm)

Melodic Line

(PS—these restrictions only apply to part writing for theory class)

- Rhythm — keep it simple (1 beat or longer) + end on strong beat
- Harmony — every melody note must belong to a chord
 - Don't use non-chord tones
- Contour — primarily conjunct (stepwise) motion
 - Interesting, but clear (an arch with some squiggles) with a single **focal point**, or high note

Example 5.1 (pg. 67)

Example 5-1

a Good

C: I V I - IV V I

b Uninteresting contour

C: I V I IV I V I

c Two focal points

C: I IV V I IV V I

Melody note not in chord

Melodic Line

(PS—these restrictions only apply to part writing for theory class)

- Leaps
 - Avoid augmented intervals, 7ths, anything $>P8$
 - Diminished intervals only ok if followed by contrary stepwise motion
 - Leaps $>P4$ best approached and left by contrary motion
 - leaping up? step/skip down into it and down after it
 - When 2+ smaller leaps in a row, outline a triad

Melodic Line

(it's all about the leading tone)

- Tendency tones
 - Half steps create tension in tonal music (make the exciting stuff happen!)
 - Often they create dissonance that needs to resolve.
 - Leading tone (^7) **always always always** resolves UP to the tonic (^1)
 - Except if it's part of a descending scale (1-7-6-5)
 - ^4 **very very often** resolves DOWN to ^3
 - Especially as the 7th in a V7 chord
 - Except if it's part of an ascending scale (1-2-3-4-5)

Example 5.2 (pg. 68)

Example 5-2

a Good

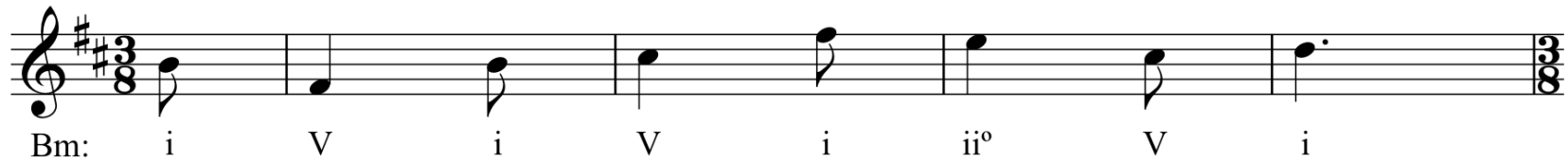
a: i V i V - i V i V i

b

a: i - V i V i V i iv i

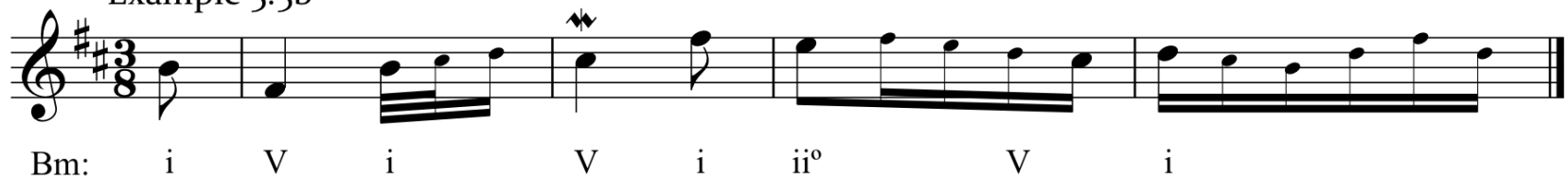
Example 5.5 (pg. 68–69)

Example 5.5



Musical notation for Example 5.5, showing a single melodic line in treble clef, key of B major (two sharps), and 3/8 time. The melody consists of eight measures: B4 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), and B5 (half). The chord progression below the staff is: Bm: i V i V i ii° V i.

Example 5.5b



Musical notation for Example 5.5b, showing a single melodic line in treble clef, key of B major (two sharps), and 3/8 time. The melody consists of eight measures: B4 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), and B5 (half). The chord progression below the staff is: Bm: i V i V i ii° V i.