Section 5.6

Nonchord Tones 2: Suspensions

Suspensions

A suspension is a delayed step down. Suspensions may occur on any part of the chord (root, third, fifth, or seventh), but they always resolve down by step. Ties are optional. A suspension always has three parts:

Preparation

1. The preparation (P) note before the suspension, which is consonant and metrically weak (see “stress patterns” in Section 1.5);

Suspension

2. The suspension (S) itself, which is dissonant and metrically strong;

Resolution

3. The resolution (R) note, which is always metrically weak.

Suspension types

Suspensions are labeled based on intervals above the bass. The four common suspension types are 9-8, 7-6, 4-3, and 2-3. Many other types are possible, especially if the bass moves before the resolution occurs.

Chain of suspensions

A chain of suspensions (or suspension chain) uses the resolution of one suspension as the preparation for another.