2.3 Harmonic Progression Diagrams

1. Dominant-Tonic Progressions

A harmonic progression is a goal-directed succession of chords. Composers from the 1600s through the 1800s favored certain strong progressions. The strongest of all progressions involves the root of the chord moving down a fifth, like V-I.

\[ V \rightarrow I \text{ or } i \]

2. Circle-of-Fifths Sequence

Extending the V-I progression backwards creates a whole series of root motions by 5th down.

In major keys (minor keys below):

\[ \text{iii} \rightarrow \text{vi} \rightarrow \text{ii} \rightarrow V \rightarrow I \]

3. Harmonic Progression Diagram for Major Keys

By convention, composers added 4 more progressions to the circle-of-fifths above:

1. IV can move to ii, and viiº can move to V.
2. The deceptive progression is V moving to vi instead of I as expected. V-vi-V was also common.
3. The plagal progression IV-I was common. The familiar "amen" cadence is one example of this.
4. Sometimes iii moved to IV, especially iii-IV-V to give a bass line rising by step.

4. Harmonic Progression Diagram for Minor Keys

The only addition in minor keys is the major subtonic (VII) chord, which moves down a 5th to III.

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