LearnMusic Theory. net 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.

$$V \longrightarrow I \text{ or } i$$

2. Circle-of-Fifths Sequence

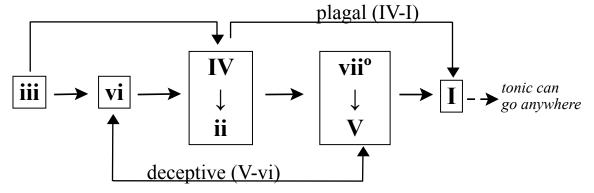
Extending the V-I progression backwards creates a whole series of root motions by 5th down.

In major keys (minor keys below): iii
$$\xrightarrow{down}$$
 \xrightarrow{down} $\xrightarrow{a \ 5th}$ $\xrightarrow{a \ 5th}$

3. Harmonic Progression Diagram for Major Keys

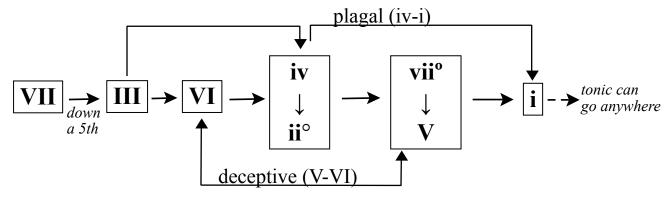
By convention, composers added 4 more progressions to the circle-of-fifths above:

- 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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