Section 5.4
HARMONIC ANALYSIS 1: HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE

Harmonic analysis

Harmonic rhythm

Harmonic analysis is the analysis of chords in musical context. Harmonic analysis involves four stages or steps for each chord:

1. Determine the **harmonic rhythm**. The harmonic rhythm is the speed at which the chords (harmonies) change. For instance, if there is a new harmony every half note, the harmonic rhythm is the half note.

Pitch inventory

2. Take a **pitch inventory**: Say (or think) the pitches from low to high. Don't repeat doubled notes. Find the root and make a "stack of thirds."

3. Check the **chord quality** (major, minor, etc.) and write the **roman numeral** for the root of the chord.

4. If the chord is inverted, then add the **inversion**.

Harmonic analysis: homorhythmic textures

Homorhythmic accompaniments are among the easiest to analyze, because the harmonic rhythm or speed of the chord changes is often the same as the rhythm of the melody. Below are the four steps applied to each chord of an example. It is important to apply all four steps to each individual chord, then move on. The key and roman numerals are written **below** the music.

Resolving ambiguities:

The third harmony in the example above is ambiguous, because there are only two pitches: C and E. The missing note of the triad could be either G (for CEG, a I chord) or A (for ACE=vi). To resolve ambiguities like this one:

1. Consider progressions

1. Consider the **harmonic progressions** from **section 5.3**. Sometimes this will favor one possibility over another. Both V—vi—V and V—I—V are valid progressions, so the progressions don't help much here.

2. Assume the fifth is missing

2. If both possibilities are valid progressions, **assume the fifth is missing**. It is common to leave out the fifth, and if the progression makes sense, musicians tend to hear a two-note chord as the root and third (or root and seventh). So it is better to analyze CE as a **I (tonic) chord** here.

Harmonic Analysis: blocked chord and arpeggiated accompaniments

Blocked chord and arpeggiated accompaniments (including Alberti bass) normally change harmonies when the accompaniment pattern varies. The broken chord example below is typical. Remember to say (or think) all the notes from low to high (without repeating notes), and then reorder the notes to make a stack of thirds and find the root.

First say: **CEGD,**
CDEG,
CEG   nonchord tone

GDBC,
GBCD,
GBD   nonchord tone

Then write: C: I   V

Nonchord tones

In the examples above, D in the first measure and C in the second are nonchord tones. **Nonchord tones** are notes that don't fit in the harmony. They are normally used to connect or decorate notes in the chord. You can recognize nonchord tones because they will not fit into a stack of thirds, no matter how the pitches are reordered. See **5.5** and **5.6**.

Finding the root

When chords are inverted, the root may not be obvious. Some common patterns are helpful to remember. These patterns may not work with nonchord tones or every voicing, but they are a great place to start:

 1. The **top** note of a **second or fourth** is often the root.
 2. The **bottom** note of a **fifth or seventh** is often the root.

CDAF   **DFAC**   **EGCB**   **CEGB**

CD   **2nd**...   ...D is root   E   **4th**...   ...C is root

GEBD   **EGBD**   **DBAF**   **BDFA**

GE   **5th**...   ...E is root   D   **7th**...   ...B is root