

(c) Chord progressions

Good harmony isn't just a matter of putting a string of chords together. The word "progression" means that there is a sense of going from somewhere to somewhere else. A chord progression has a certain sense to it in the same way as a grammatically correct sentence does in language.

The examples below show you some of the most useful types of chord-linking that go into a progression. They can be identified by the way the ROOT of the chord changes from chord to chord. To keep matters simple, in all of these examples, the root is in the Bass voice (in other words, the chords are in ROOT POSITION).

SING and PLAY these examples. Try to MEMORISE them.
Try TRANSPOSING them into different keys.

A

Musical notation for progression A, showing a sequence of chords in the bass voice: V, I, V, I, V, I, IV, I, IV, I, IV, I. The chords are written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The bass clef contains the root notes for each chord, and the treble clef contains the other notes of the chords.

TYPE OF ROOT PROGRESSION:

B

Musical notation for progression B, showing a sequence of chords in the bass voice: I, IV, V, I, I, IV, V, I, I, IV, V, I. The chords are written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The bass clef contains the root notes for each chord, and the treble clef contains the other notes of the chords.

TYPE OF ROOT PROGRESSION:

C

Musical notation for progression C, showing a sequence of chords in the bass voice: I, vi, IV, ii, V, I, I, vi, IV, ii, V, I. The chords are written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The bass clef contains the root notes for each chord, and the treble clef contains the other notes of the chords.

TYPE OF ROOT PROGRESSION:

In the next 2 examples, play 3-note chords in the right hand, making the given note the top note of the chord. The exercise uses ROOT POSITION chords throughout (so remember that the Bass note is the root of the chord). When you can play this confidently, write in what you have done and label the chords using Roman numerals.

Handel

adapted from R.O. Morris

TEACHER'S COMMENTS:

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