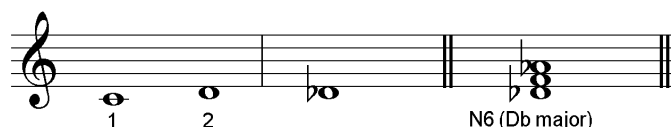


CHORD ♭II - NEAPOLITAN 6TH

One of the most commonly used chromatic chords in the Classical period (and beyond) is the Neapolitan 6th chord, or “N6”. This is a major chord, built from the flattened supertonic note. It is found in both major and minor keys (but is more common in minor keys).

In C major the supertonic note is D. Flatten the supertonic → Db. Build a major triad → Db major.



In A minor the supertonic note is B. Flatten the supertonic → Bb. Build a major triad → Bb major.



The Neapolitan 6th chord is often used in first inversion (which is why it is called a “6th” chord – after the figured bass symbol for first inversion chords). It can be found in other inversions too, however.

Usually, it is followed by a dominant chord, or a chord which behaves like a dominant (such as Ic, or vii^o, etc.)

Here is an example of a Neapolitan 6th chord in Mozart’s Piano Sonata in A minor (K310). N6 is Bb major, which moves to a chord of vii^o7.

Musical notation for the Neapolitan 6th chord in Mozart’s Piano Sonata in A minor (K310). The notation shows the Neapolitan 6th chord (N6) in first inversion (Bb, Ab, A) and the following dominant chord (vii^o7) in first inversion (G, F, E).

DISTANT MODULATION

During the Baroque and early Classical periods most modulations would be to the dominant, subdominant or relative key. Modulation to these “close” keys is relatively straightforward, because two close keys share most of the notes of their scales.

Modulating to **any** key is possible, however. From the late Classical period and onwards, composers became increasingly adventurous, exploring more distant modulations to create new types of harmonic colour in music.

Schubert (1797-1828) was an early pioneer of **mediant** modulations – moving to the key a third higher in major keys (e.g. C to Em), or the key a third lower in minor keys (e.g. Am to F major). (Moving in the opposite direction simply takes you to the relative key, of course).

Mediant modulation keys are still relatively close, because the tonic chord of the new key shares two notes with the tonic chord of the old key, and also the tonic of the new key is a chord within the scale of the old key. For example, imagine modulating from C major to E minor. The new tonic chord is Em (E-G-B) which shares two notes with the old tonic chord of C (C-E-G).

Still connected, but more distant, are **chromatic** mediant modulations; the new tonic is still a third away, but the tonic chord is chromatically altered. Some examples could be C-Ab, or C-E. There is one common note between the tonic chord of the two keys, and this acts as a “pivot note”, smoothing the transition between the two chords. The pivot note normally stays within one part during both chords. The tonic of the new key is **not** the root of a diatonic chord in the old key.

Schubert’s Piano Sonata D.960 begins in Bb major. In bar 19, the second subject is introduced, and it is in Gb major – this is an example of chromatic mediant modulation. The pivot note common to both keys is Bb.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Schubert's Piano Sonata D.960. The first system, starting at bar 16, shows the first subject in Bb major. The right hand plays chords, and the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system, starting at bar 19, shows the second subject in Gb major. The right hand plays a melodic line, and the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The modulation from Bb major to Gb major is achieved through a chromatic mediant modulation, with Bb acting as the pivot note.

THE BAROQUE CONCERTO

Concertos are “showcase” pieces designed to show off the skill of the musicians involved. The word concerto comes from the Latin for “dispute”, and the idea behind the concerto is that the soloist “argues” with the accompaniment (the rest of the orchestra).

Opposition and contrast are fundamental features of the concerto form. Contrast can be achieved by a change in dynamics, tempo or character. Concertos are usually in three movements (fast-slow-fast).

In Baroque times, most fast movements were built using a **ritornello** structure – a theme (played by the orchestra) which introduces the movement, which is alternated with **episodes** played by the soloist(s), and which may visit several keys.

There were two types of Baroque concerto – the **concerto grosso**, and the **solo concerto**.

CONCERTO GROSSO

In a concerto grosso, a smaller group of instrumentalists (e.g. two violins and a cello) were pitted against the rest of the orchestra (often just strings and perhaps high woodwind). The small group was called the **concertino** and the large group was the **ripieno** (“filling”) or **tutti** (“everyone”).

In addition to these two groups, a harpsichord (or similar) was included with the ripieno. The harpsichord player followed a “**continuo**” part (bass line and chords given in figured bass symbols).

Players	Ripieno	Concertino + accompaniment	Ripieno	Concertino + accompaniment	Ripieno	Etc.
Section	Ritornello	Episode 1	Ritornello	Episode 2	Ritornello	Etc.

Some well-known examples of the concerto grosso form are Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos.

SOLO CONCERTO

In a solo concerto, a single player (e.g. a flute or violin) is pitted against the rest of the orchestra (plus harpsichord continuo). The element of contrast was even more important in the solo concerto, and usually the solo part requires virtuoso skill. The final ritornello is often preceded by a **cadenza** (a virtuoso passage) which ends with a trill.

Players	Ripieno	Soloist + accompaniment	Ripieno	Etc...	Soloist + accompaniment	Ripieno
Section	Ritornello	Episode 1 (new key)	Ritornello	Etc...	Final episode, cadenza, trill	Ritornello

Vivaldi’s famous “Four Seasons” is a set of four solo concertos for violin.