

## The Neapolitan Chord ( $\flat$ II)

Listen to the excerpt from one of Schubert's songs in Example 29.1. The music divides clearly into three phrases, which are marked by cadence type. As you follow along, try to keep a running tally of particularly striking chromatic harmonies. Where are they, and what contributes to their novel sound? A new chromatic harmony first appears in m. 8. This same chord then recurs in mm. 16 and 25. To understand the sound and function of a new chord, it often pays to dissect it into its individual voices (C–E $\flat$ –A $\flat$ ). Let's begin with its bass, whose C ( $\hat{4}$ ) functions like a standard pre-dominant that leads to V. The E $\flat$  also functions as we'd expect it to, as a  $\flat 6$  pulling down toward D ( $\hat{5}$ ). A $\flat$ , however, is a chromatic pitch that substitutes for the diatonic A: Instead of creating a diatonic  $ii^\circ_6$  (C–E $\flat$ –A), Schubert has written a major triad that includes  $\flat 2$  (A $\flat$ –C–E $\flat$ ). A major triad built on  $\flat 2$  is called the **Neapolitan** ( $\flat$ II).

### Ex 29.1 Schubert, "Der Müller und der Bach" ("The Miller and the Brook"), *Die schöne Müllerin*, D. 795, no. 19

Mässig (Der Müller)

Wo ein treu-es Her-ze in Lie-be ver-geht, da  
Where a true heart wastes away in love,

ken die Li-lien auf je-dem Beet; da muss in die Wolk-en der Voll-mond-  
wilt the lilies in every bed; Then into the clouds must the full moon go,

(PAC)

DVD 1  
CH 29  
TRACK 1



Continued

14

(HC)

gehn, da-mit sei-ne Trä-nen die Men-schen nicht seh'n; da hal-ten die Eng-lein die  
So that her tears Men do not see; Then angels

22

(PAC)

Au-gen sich zu und schluch-zen und sin-gen die see-le zur Ruh.  
shut their eyes and sob and sing to rest the soul.

### Common Contexts for $\flat\text{II}_6$

The Neapolitan (named after a group of Baroque composers from the area of Naples who are said to have frequently used its sound) usually occurs in first inversion as the **Neapolitan sixth chord** ( $\flat\text{II}_6$ ). The Neapolitan is easy to write as long as you double stable chordal members, such as the bass ( $\hat{4}$ ) (if necessary, you may double  $\hat{6}$ ). Do not double  $\flat\hat{2}$  in  $\flat\text{II}_6$  (Example 29.2).

#### EXAMPLE 29.2

double

c: i  $\flat\text{II}_6$   $\text{V}^7$  i

The Neapolitan sixth chord functions as a pre-dominant that pulls strongly toward V. It occurs more often in minor-mode pieces than in major-mode pieces. When it occurs in the major mode, it is as a product of modal mixture. In these cases, lower both  $\hat{2}$  and  $\hat{6}$  (see Example 29.3B). Avoid the augmented second that can occur between  $\hat{3}$  and  $\flat\hat{2}$  in a major mode by using the soprano  $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{2}$  (Example 29.3B). The  $\flat\text{II}_6$  usually appears at cadences, but it can be used with EPMs (Example 29.3C).



### LE 29.3

A. in minor:  $\hat{3} \rightarrow \flat\hat{2}$       B. in major:  $\hat{1} \rightarrow \flat\hat{2}$  (not  $\flat\hat{4}\hat{3} \rightarrow \flat\hat{2}$ )      C.

C: i  $\flat\Pi^6$   $V^7$  i      C: I  $\flat\Pi^6$   $V^7$  I      C: i  $\flat\Pi^6$   $V^4_2$  i<sup>6</sup>

i i<sup>6</sup>

EPM

♭II<sup>6</sup>-V progressions typically have ♭2- $\hat{7}$  in the soprano. The diminished third between ♭2 and  $\hat{7}$  is perfectly acceptable, although it is possible to fill it with  $\hat{1}$  that will function as a passing tone. There are two common ways to harmonize the passing  $\hat{1}$ , by using either a cadential six-four chord or an applied diminished-seventh chord, as shown in Example 29.4.

## LE 29.4

$\text{C: } i \text{ } b\text{II}^6 \text{ } V_{4-5}^{6-5} \text{ } i \text{ } i \text{ } b\text{II}^6 \text{ } vii^{\circ} \text{ } \frac{7}{V} \text{ } i$

## EXERCISE INTERLUDE

## PERFORMING

## 29.1

The following arpeggiations create progressions that incorporate the Neapolitan sixth chord. Sing them and/or play them on an instrument. Listen to how often harmonies change; then analyze the progressions with roman numerals. Next, transpose the arpeggiations to other minor keys.

