ads are dissonant (relatively unstable) because of the diminished fifth between their root and fifth.

When inverted, each type of triad becomes progressively less stable. For example, in first inversion, major and minor triads are less stable than in root position because they include the intervals of a perfect fourth and a minor or major sixth. This is not true, however, for diminished triads. In root position they are highly dissonant because of the diminished fifth; but in first inversion, only consonant thirds and sixths sound above the bass (the tritone is less audible, given that it does not involve the bass). In second inversion, major and minor triads are regarded as dissonant because the perfect fourth is now formed with the bass, which drives the harmony. You may recall from the counterpoint discussion in Chapter 4 that in two voices, the perfect fourth is considered dissonant. Even in textures of three or more voices (as in the present case), when a perfect fourth is formed with the bass, we hear it as dissonant. Both root-position and first-inversion triads are common in tonal music; however, second-inversion triads, due to their greater instability, occur only in restricted contexts. As we shall see, whereas triads in root position and first inversion are more or less interchangeable, second-inversion triads are in a class of their own.

DVD 1 CH 5 TRACK 2

Note

The *root* is the generating pitch on which a triad is built and the *bass* is the lowest-sounding pitch in a sonority. For example, in the sonority E♭–G–C, E♭ is the bass and C is the root. In order to identify a triad, stack its members in thirds.

EXERCISE INTERLUDE

PERFORMING

5.1 Singing Root-Position Triads

Sing (arpeggiate on "la") root-position major, minor, and diminished triads from any pitch.

LISTENING

DVD 2 CH 5 TRACK 1

5.2 Identifying Chord Quality

Identify the type of root-position triad that you hear (major, minor, diminished). Sing, by arpeggiating, each triad after you have labeled it.

A. _____ B. _____ C. _____ D. _____ E. _____ F. _____

DVD 2 CH 5 TRACK 2

5.3 Aural Discrimination of Triad Members and Constructing Triads

Each of the given pitches is either the root, the third, or the fifth of a major, minor, or diminished triad. Listen to the pitch and then to the triad. Identify the type of triad and whether the given pitch is the triad's root, third, or fifth.