

## EXAMPLE 5.7

D: 5—6 5—6 5—6 4—3

If there is an accidental on a pitch above the bass, the same accidental is attached to the corresponding interval in the figured bass; if the accidental occurs on the interval "3" in the figured bass, the number 3 is omitted and only the accidental is written. These accidentals are called **chromatic alterations**. For example, a composer writing in the key of C major would indicate the E $\flat$ -major and B-major triads as shown in Example 5.8. In Example 5.8A, the " $\flat 6$ " in the figured bass indicates that the E (a sixth above the bass) should have a flat; the " $\flat$ " by itself refers to the third above the bass (B, which becomes B $\flat$ ). You do not have to put anything in the figure when there is an accidental in the bass (such as the D $\sharp$  in Example 5.8B); the figures apply only to the notes *above* the bass. Chromatic alterations in the figured bass are applied only to the pitches that appear directly above; that is, they do not carry through the measure, as do accidentals that appear in the score.

## EXAMPLE 5.8 Chromatic Alterations

A. B. C. D. E.

b6 6 b b5 +6 or 6

In the key of C major we would write the figured bass for a root-position F-minor triad and an E $\flat$ -minor triad as in Example 5.8 C and D. Since these are root-position triads, the figured bass  $\frac{5}{3}$  normally would be assumed. However, because of the chromatically altered third, we must show the accidental in the figured bass. Since the third is one of the assumed intervals, we simply abbreviate this figure with the accidental alone (although it is not uncommon to see the redundant " $\sharp 3$ " or " $\flat 3$ "). Additional symbols include the plus sign (+) and the slash through a number (/), which raise the pitch to which the number refers one half step (Example 5.8E).

Following is a summary of the most common figured bass symbols for triads, followed by their shorthand abbreviations. Note that there is some redundancy, given that many of these notations are alternate ways to indicate the same thing.