

# the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$

## Becoming citizens: the story of the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$

Four friends, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass are immigrating from Tonic-land to Dominant-land. If they had all gained citizenship to V-land at the same time, it would have looked like this:

A musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef has a whole note G4 and a whole note E5. The bass clef has a whole note G2 and a whole note E3. A flag labeled 'V' is positioned above the treble clef. A speech bubble points to the treble clef notes and contains the text "we love this place!".

But instead two of them, let's say Soprano and Alto, decide to maintain their old citizenship for a couple of beats - they are foreign visitors in V-land.

A musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef has a whole note G4 and a whole note E5. The bass clef has a whole note G2 and a whole note E3. A flag labeled 'V' is positioned above the treble clef. A speech bubble points to the treble clef notes and contains the text "We're just not ready yet".

After a couple beats as foreign visitors, Soprano and Alto decide to become citizens, resolving down by step into V-land.

A musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef has a whole note G4 and a whole note E5. The bass clef has a whole note G2 and a whole note E3. A flag labeled 'V' is positioned above the treble clef. A speech bubble points to the treble clef notes and contains the text "Maybe we should have done this sooner".

That's how the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  works. Two tones stay at home a little longer and then become the 3rd and 5th of V.

V

$\hat{1}$     $\hat{7}$     $\hat{1}$   
 $\hat{3}$     $\hat{2}$

I    $V_4^6$     $I^6$    IV    $ii^6$     $V_4^6 = \frac{5}{3}$    I

### No, it is not $I^6$

On the downbeat of m. 3 above, yes we have the notes of tonic, but don't be tempted to say it's  $I^6$ . This is just the first time you are seeing some notes that actually don't belong to the underlying harmony.

How does it sound?

*Doesn't it sound like we have arrived on dominant harmony on the downbeat of m. 3?  
(wink, wink, nudge, nudge)*

Note that  $\hat{5}$  indeed is in the bass, and you have been told before that  $\frac{6}{4}$  chords are only passing (or not what they seem!)

The story on page 1 is meant to convey "nonharmonic tones" - notes that don't belong to the underlying harmony; the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  is root position dominant harmony with two nonharmonic tones; it isn't tonic.

In the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$ ,  $\hat{1}$  doesn't belong, but then moves to  $\hat{7}$ , becoming a citizen of V.  
 $\hat{3}$  doesn't belong, but then moves to  $\hat{2}$ , becoming a citizen of V.

**doubling:** double the bass ( $\hat{5}$ )

**voice leading:**

**preparation** (approaching the cadential  $\hat{4}_4$ )

The 4th above the bass of  $V_4^6$  is a dissonance ( $\hat{1}$ ). Your compass tells you every dissonance must be prepared as a common tone in the previous chord when possible. So, yes, you must do this.

The 6th above the bass of  $V_4^6$  is not a dissonance ( $\hat{3}$ ). It doesn't need to be prepared.

**resolution**

$\hat{1}$  moves down by step to  $\hat{7}$  (the fourth resolves down to a 3rd).

$\hat{3}$  moves down by step to  $\hat{2}$  (the 6th resolves down to the 5th).

In reality, you can approach the cadential  $\hat{4}_4$  from any chord that can go to V, guided by the voice leading above.

ex.'s:

A musical staff with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) divided into four measures. The first measure is labeled 'I', the second 'IV', the third  $V_4^6$  with a double bar line and a  $\frac{5}{3}$  below it, and the fourth 'I'.

I      IV       $V_4^6 \frac{5}{3}$       I

A musical staff with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) divided into four measures. The first measure is labeled 'I', the second  $ii^6$ , the third  $V_4^6$  with a double bar line and a  $\frac{5}{3}$  below it, and the fourth 'I'.

I       $ii^6$        $V_4^6 \frac{5}{3}$       I

## how to write the analysis

In some \*cough - inferior\* textbooks, you may see the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  written as  $I\frac{6}{4}$ . But in this class, we won't let nonharmonic tones define the underlying harmony / roman numerals.

If you are an American citizen visiting Japan, you do not get to say, hey this is America now! Likewise, the nonharmonic tones do not get to change the roman numeral.

So, we will analyze the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  as  $V\frac{6}{4} \text{---} \frac{5}{3}$ . This correctly shows that the harmony is dominant; above the bass is a nonharmonic 6th and a nonharmonic 4th; these then resolve respectively to a 5th and a 3rd above the bass.

At this point, you may be saying, well wait a minute, we've already seen  $V\frac{6}{4}$  (as a passing chord) and we definitely had all the notes of dominant harmony, not tonic.

Well - in one case the figures above the bass mean notes belonging to the chord, the 2nd inversion of V; but with the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  the figures mean notes not belonging to the chord - nonharmonics above root position V. Just remember this:

Write the cadential  $\frac{6}{4}$  as  $V\frac{6}{4} \text{---} \frac{5}{3}$  which shows how each nonharmonic tone resolves.

Write the passing  $V\frac{6}{4}$  we saw previously as plain old  $V\frac{6}{4}$ .

You can also add a 7th at the resolution; note the analysis:

i

iv

$$V\frac{6}{4} \text{---} \frac{5}{3} \quad 7$$

i

or

$$V\frac{6}{4} \text{---} \frac{5}{3} \quad 7$$

# rhythm

The candential  $\frac{6}{4}$  is an **accented** dissonance. It must begin on a strong beat (or part of a beat) and resolves on a weaker beat (or weaker part of a beat).

I    ii<sup>6</sup>    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> = <sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup>    I

I    ii<sup>6</sup>    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> = <sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup>    I

In triple meters, the second beat is stronger than the third:

I    ii<sup>6</sup>    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> = <sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup>    I

I    ii<sup>6</sup>    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> = <sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup>    I

## avoiding a strong cadence - "a trap door"

To avoid a strong cadence, the  $V_4^6$  can somewhat deceptively move to a  $V_2^4$  at the moment of the resolution:

I    IV    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> = <sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup>    I<sup>6</sup>    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> = <sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup>    I