

## Neapolitan Sixth Chord

A *Neapolitan sixth* chord is a major triad constructed on the lowered supertonic scale degree and is used in first inversion. It is analyzed and figured as  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_{\flat 3}$ . The chord has a subdominant function. The third is always doubled.

The figure shows two examples of the Neapolitan Sixth Chord in first inversion. The first example is in E major (key signature of two sharps). The chord consists of G4, B4, and C#5 in the treble clef, and B3 and G#3 in the bass clef. The analysis below it is  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_{\flat 3}$  (N6). The second example is in C major (key signature of no sharps or flats). The chord consists of D4, F4, and G4 in the treble clef, and F3 and D3 in the bass clef. The analysis below it is  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_3$  (N6).

FIGURE 17.1. The Neapolitan Sixth Chord

The N6 chord progresses to dominant harmony or dominant harmony decorated by tonic six-four. When resolving to the dominant chord the lowered supertonic (root of N6) moves to the leading tone (third of V). This produces a cross relation which is not objectionable.

The figure illustrates four progressions of the Neapolitan Sixth Chord to dominant harmony. Each progression starts with the N6 chord in first inversion, followed by the dominant chord (V).  
 1. In G major:  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_{\flat 3}$  (N6) progresses to V. The root of N6 (B) moves to the leading tone (F#) of V.  
 2. In B major:  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_3$  (N6) progresses to V#. The root of N6 (D) moves to the leading tone (F#) of V#. The bass line shows a cross relation between the lowered supertonic (D) and the leading tone (F#).  
 3. In C major:  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_{\flat 3}$  (N6) progresses to V7. The root of N6 (D) moves to the leading tone (F) of V7.  
 4. In Bb major:  $\text{II}^{\flat 6}_3$  (N6) progresses to V7. The root of N6 (D) moves to the leading tone (F) of V7.

FIGURE 17.2. Progressions of the Neapolitan Sixth

The Neapolitan chord may occur in root position progressing to a root position tonic chord. The fifth will ascend to the tonic to avoid parallel fifths.

The figure shows two measures of music in treble and bass clefs. The first measure is in the key of Ab major (two flats) and contains a Neapolitan chord in root position (Ab major, second degree). The second measure is in the key of C major (no sharps or flats) and contains a tonic chord in root position (C major). The voice leading is as follows: the bass line moves from Ab to C; the tenor line moves from Gb to C; the alto line moves from Fb to C; and the soprano line moves from Ab to C. The Neapolitan chord is labeled with Roman numerals  ${}^{b}b\text{II}$  and  ${}^{b}5/3$ . The tonic chord is labeled with Roman numerals  ${}^{\sharp}c\text{I}$  and  ${}^{\sharp}5/3$ .

FIGURE 17.3. Voice Leading of the Neapolitan Chord in Root Position

The Neapolitan sixth chord may be preceded by its secondary dominant or secondary dominant seventh chord.

The figure shows two measures of music in treble and bass clefs. The first measure is in the key of F# major (three sharps) and contains a secondary dominant seventh chord (D7) preceding a Neapolitan sixth chord (F#m6). The second measure is in the key of D major (two sharps) and contains a secondary dominant seventh chord (A7) preceding a Neapolitan sixth chord (Dm6). The voice leading is as follows: the bass line moves from D to F#; the tenor line moves from F# to D; the alto line moves from A to D; and the soprano line moves from D to D. The secondary dominant chord is labeled with Roman numerals  $\text{V}/\text{N6}$  and  $\text{II}^{\flat}6/3$ . The Neapolitan sixth chord is labeled with Roman numerals  $(\text{N6})$ .

FIGURE 17.4. The Neapolitan Sixth Preceded by Secondary Dominant

Chords similar to the Neapolitan chord may be found on other scale degrees progressing to other than dominant chords.