Bass Lines and Harmonic Structure

The nature of the lowest voice and its relationship to harmonic structure
Three Fundamental Classes
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- Tonic (T) class
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- Intermediate (int) or “predominant” class
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- Tonic (T) class
- Intermediate (int) or “predominant” class
- Dominant (D) class
Tonic (T) Class
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- I - I6
Tonic (T) Class

- I - I6
  - Two chords, but just a prolongation of one tonic idea
Tonic (T) Class

- I - I\(6\)
  - Two chords, but just a prolongation of one tonic idea
- I - vii\(6\) - I\(6\)
Tonic (T) Class

- I - I₆
  - Two chords, but just a prolongation of one tonic idea
- I - vii₆ - I₆
  - Adds a passing chord between I and I₆, connecting the root and third of the tonic
Intermediate (int) Class
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- IV - ii₆ - V
Intermediate (int) Class

- IV - ii6 - V
  - The two intermediate chords (descending root) prepare the dominant
Intermediate (int) Class

- IV - ii6 - V
  - The two intermediate chords (descending root) prepare the dominant
- I - vi - IV
Intermediate (int) Class

- IV - ii6 - V
  - The two intermediate chords (descending root) prepare the dominant
- I - vi - IV
  - The vi acts both as a prolongation of T and a bridge into the int chord as well
Chord and Harmony
Schenkerian analysis makes a distinction between chord and harmony.
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- The *chord* is the actual labelled harmonic event
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- The *chord* is the actual labelled harmonic event
- The *harmony* is the overall function of that harmonic event, viewed either singly but more often together with other chords as a larger unit
The V43 on the third beat provides harmonic variety, but it also serves to *prolong* the initial tonic harmony.
Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II

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- The bass line in the first two measures outlines an upper neighbor tone
Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II
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- The 6-4 chord in bar three is a *neighboring* 6-4, an embellishment which serves to prolong the tonic
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- The common-tone diminished seventh chord on the third beat is also an embellishment, creating incomplete neighbor chords (contrapuntal chords)
The reduced analysis here shows the neighboring functions of the V43, IV64, and common-tone diminished chords.
Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II

- The reduced analysis here shows the neighboring functions of the V43, IV64, and common-tone diminished chords
- The reduction also analyzes the melody, using stems to show primary tones and identifying embellishments
Bars 5-6 display a continuation of the tonic prolongation
Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II

- Bars 5-6 display a continuation of the tonic prolongation
- The neighboring V43 is repeated in bar 5
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The neighboring V43 is repeated in bar 5

In bar 6, a motion from I through vi moves to I6—this is essentially the same motion as if moving upwards from I to I6.
Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II
Bar 7 is intermediate harmony—a “predominant” function leading us to the
Bar 7 is *intermediate* harmony—a “predominant” function leading us to the half-cadence in bar 8 and the *dominant* harmony.
Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II
A Reminder

V  V₆₄  5  I₆₄  V
The cadential six-four is really an intensified dominant
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- Therefore, the notation which analyzes it as a dominant with non-chord tones resolving to chord tones is more descriptive than
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Therefore, the notation which analyzes it as a dominant with non-chord tones resolving to chord tones is more descriptive than
the more logically-correct notation
Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”
At first glance, one might think that the IV in bar 2 is the intermediate, or predominant, chord.
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- It is followed by a dominant.
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- It is followed by a dominant.
- The dominant then resolves to a tonic.
Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”
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However, the opening tonic is actually prolonged over two measures, extending from the upbeat to the third beat of measure 2.
Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”
What appears at first to be a cadence in bar 2 is an *evaded* cadence (or an *implied*) cadence, a technique used specifically to extend ideas — i.e., it’s a prolongation technique.
Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”
Therefore, the intermediate chord is found on the downbeat of bar 3.
Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”

- Therefore, the intermediate chord is found on the downbeat of bar 3
- It leads to a prolonged dominant on beat 2
Therefore, the intermediate chord is found on the downbeat of bar 3

- It leads to a prolonged dominant on beat 2
- And the final tonic on the downbeat of bar 4
Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”
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The reduced version of the bass line helps make the components clear.
The half-cadence at the end of the antecedent requires a resolution
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However, the beginning of the consequent doesn’t provide the resolution.
The half-cadence at the end of the antecedent requires a resolution. However, the beginning of the consequent doesn’t provide the resolution. The end of the consequent is the true resolution.
Dominant Class
We tend to hear the end of the antecedent, and the beginning of the consequent, as an *interruption* before the dominant finally achieves full closure.
Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II

Different uses of dominant chords
Different uses of dominant chords
- Dominants in bars 1 and 2 act as incomplete neighbors
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- Dominants in bars 1 and 2 act as incomplete neighbors
- In bar 4, the V is in root position and articulates a half cadence
Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II

- Different uses of dominant chords
Different uses of dominant chords

- The V in bar 4 resolves through V42 to I6—therefore the dominant persists through bar 5 as well
Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II
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- Different uses of dominant chords
Different uses of dominant chords

- The V in bar 4 also acts so as to divide an overall bass motion from I to I
Different uses of dominant chords

- The V in bar 4 also acts so as to *divide* an overall bass motion from I to I
- And also acts to prepare the long-term motion to the ii in bar 7
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- Note important features:
  - The **dotted slur** (indicated a prolongation)
  - **Stems** indicating the primary bass line notes
  - **Flags** indicating neighbor tones
A “dividing dominant” is indicated in the analysis with a bracketed [V]

Note important features:
- The dotted slur (indicated a prolongation)
- Stems indicating the primary bass line notes
- Flags indicating neighbor tones
- Large-scale tonic prolongation
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”
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✦ Two root-position tonic chords are connected by a dominant chord in root position—octave leap subdivided by a fifth
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• Soprano moves from $\,\,^\flat1$ to $\,^\flat3$; thus the tonic triad is fully outlined in both voices.
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”
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- Register transfer back to original octave; motion from I to I6 via a passing vii6.
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- Register transfer back to original octave; motion from I to I6 via a passing vii6.
- Return to root-position tonic by means of a V43.
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Register transfer back to original octave; motion from I to I₆ via a passing vii₆.
- Return to root-position tonic by means of a V₄₃.
- Motion from ^3 to ^6 of the tonic triad
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”
Arrival at a dominant chord at bar 4, however the chord is not entirely stable.
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The soprano note is the leading tone
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Arrival at a dominant chord at bar 4, however the chord is not entirely stable
- The soprano note is the leading tone
- Bass moves back through V42 to I63
Arrival at a dominant chord at bar 4, however the chord is not entirely stable

- The soprano note is the leading tone
- Bass moves back through V42 to I63
- Thus this is a “dividing” dominant
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”
Return to I; notice the combination of stepwise motion and leaps in the bass.
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Return to I; notice the combination of stepwise motion and leaps in the bass.
- There is a voice exchange between the outer voices in this motion from I-6 to I.
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”
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• Modulation to III.
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Modulation to III.
- F is established as a key area in its own right
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Modulation to III.
- F is established as a key area in its own right
- The ‘f’ in the soprano serves as the melodic goal of the phrase, and also initiates a new melodic ascent in the next phrase
Modulation
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- Therefore, the new key is both a new tonic, and still retains whatever secondary quality in the old key (i.e., if you modulate to V in a major key, the V is a new key, but still acts like the dominant in the original key.)
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- Because of that, Schenker referred to modulation as motion to an “illusory key.”
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”
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- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
- Int harmony from 8 - 15
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
- Int harmony from 8 - 15
- D harmony at 15
Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”

- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
- Int harmony from 8 - 15
- D harmony at 15
- Final T harmony at 16
Imaginary Continuo
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Imaginary Continuo

- An *imaginary continuo* creates a harmonic representation of a composition, removing melodic and harmonic embellishment
- Feel free to move between three and six voices
- Try to stay with relatively “pure” voice leading, unless to do so means to seriously misrepresent the composition
- Generally think of piano style—the RH plays complete chords, while the LH plays single bass notes
Beethoven: Sonata Op. 10 No. 1, II
The imaginary continuo follows the original pretty closely.
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Note: my version is a bit different from the text; I think their version in bars 6 & 7 was a bit too "convenient" and slightly misrepresented the music.