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Recent trends in music scholarship have emphasized the importance of popular music through in-depth analyses and historical studies.[1] Those of us who were brought up in households where this genre was the dominant musical presence have long been aware of its emotional power and pedagogical usefulness. Indeed, given the amount of time our students spend engaged with this music, it should be brought into the classroom and accorded the serious consideration it deserves. Popular music can provide teachers of undergraduate musicianship courses with an endless supply of pedagogically relevant examples that make lasting impressions on our students.

Popular music often presents difficult harmonic concepts in a concise and clear fashion. "Lead sheet" notation encourages comprehensible score study, allowing students to quickly correlate chord symbols to harmonic functions.[2] The clear and transparent

[1]This article was made possible with funding from Roosevelt University's Research and Professional Improvement Committee.

[2]It is important to note that the usefulness of popular music in the classroom often depends on the published editions one chooses. One must be careful to use scores that are accurate, especially if an example is to be accompanied by a commercial recording. It is not uncommon to find "easy editions" of published popular songs that are hardly representative of the recordings. These editions are not appropriate for the college musicianship classroom. However, there is an abundance of meticulously printed editions. Additionally, I have been able to find excellent examples that cover a large array of harmonic concepts from simple diatonic triads to enharmonic reinterpretations. However, especially where advanced chromatic harmonies are concerned, many chords will not be labeled with traditional, "functional," harmonic symbols even though the pitch classes represented by the lead sheet symbol are accurate (i.e., one would not find "Fr+6" written in lead sheet notation but could find the symbol "F7-5," where the chord functions as a French augmented sixth by resolving to an E-major triad). The labeling does not change the function of these chords any more than an enharmonic spelling does in "art" music. (For example, the enharmonic spelling of Ger+6 using scale degree ♯$\hat{2}$ rather than ♭$\hat{3}$ when resolving to a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ in a major key.) It is the ear, after all, which apprehends a chord's function, not the eye. Using accurate publications and teaching lead-sheet notation in terms of sound will produce positive and rewarding results.

texture found in many popular tunes promotes unencumbered aural cognition of harmonic rhythm and harmonic function facilitating a more fluid connection between written and aural work. Additionally, popular music provides an accessible frame of reference for standard harmonic progressions and melodic patterns; students find it easy to recall musical patterns that aurally resemble other works familiar to them. Finally, popular music invigorates classroom presentation: since students are exploring a familiar genre, they are able to perceive and discuss musical concepts unencumbered by details of musical styles that are often distant (historically and sometimes, aesthetically) from their personal experience.[3] If the ultimate objective of the classroom is to improve students' abilities to analyze and understand music, highlighting requisite materials in popular contexts can provide a fresh and enduring perspective toward this end. Since our students participate in and "consume" diverse styles of music, including jazz, rock, musical theater, country and world musics, our musicianship curricula should change accordingly, using this diversity to an advantage. While most music schools require students to complete one or more basic classical literature courses, popular music already familiar to these same students is seldom used or often completely ignored. The purpose of this article is to illustrate how popular music can be advantageously applied toward one pedagogical problem: the aural recognition of basic tonal prolongations.

Musicianship at the Chicago College of Performing Arts

The musicianship sequence at Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts is a four-semester program integrating

[3]There was a time when the typical music major was more familiar with "classical" music than with popular idioms. However, my teaching experience has shown that this is no longer the case. This is due, in part, to the diverse backgrounds of our students as well as the types of degrees offered by our institutions. In addition to the traditional "performance" degrees, music schools offer degrees in Music Education, Instrumental Jazz Performance, Vocal Jazz Performance, Composition (electronic and acoustic), Jazz Composition, and Music Theater as well as the amorphous "Bachelor of Arts in Music." The students enrolled in these degree plans are often more familiar, or at least equally familiar, with popular music (in one form or another) than with "art" music. These students, because of curricular dictates, must often enroll in the same musicianship courses as students with a "traditional" background. The challenge we all face is making the musicianship core a meaningful and viable experience for all of these students.

written, aural and keyboard skills; material introduced in one area is simultaneously reinforced by the others. Tonal music is covered in the first three semesters of the sequence while the fourth semester deals with music from 1900 to 1945. We currently use *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music* by Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne.[4] The aural portion of the class parallels the written and employs sight singing, rhythm reading and dictation, melodic dictation, and harmonic dictation (outer voices and harmonic functions).

While some students find the entire ear-training portion of the class difficult, harmonic dictation usually causes the greatest amount of anxiety. In our exercises, the student is responsible for identifying harmonic function and notating the pitches of the soprano and bass lines of examples resembling a four-part chorale. The goal here is to impart comprehension of Tonic/Pre-dominant/Dominant (T/P/D) function through common harmonic progressions and melodic patterns. However, this approach does contain some drawbacks. First, the examples are unrealistic in that they do not represent a conventional musical texture.[5] Second, since we provide the overall rhythm in our exercises, the student often neglects all other rhythmic concerns; thus, the underlying harmonic rhythm and T/P/D functions are often disregarded. Third, students struggle to notate scale degrees in various keys (especially in the first semester of musicianship). Even though they may "hear" pre-dominant function, they do not fluently represent it in every key. Also, since students are required to notate the outer voices they try harder to hear those pitches. This leads to a fourth problem. Rather than determining the outer voices based on T/P/D functions (which is what harmonic dictation *should* accomplish), many students use their notated outer-voice patterns to determine the harmonic function through visual logic rather than aural perception. ("If the soprano is singing scale degree three, this must be a tonic triad.") Although students may recreate the "correct answer," this process is contrary to building an aural conception of harmonic function—*they depend on their eyes rather than their ears*. Of course this method is contingent on students notating a perfect rendition of the outer voices. While

[4] Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2004).

[5] While chorale texture is often found in music, the rapid harmonic rhythm normally associated with this texture is not as commonly encountered as other more active textures that support a prolonged harmonic rhythm.

the process can "work" rather efficiently with a restricted harmonic vocabulary, students' efforts become progressively unwieldy and error-prone as dictation examples become more complex. In an effort to confront these inherent problems, I use contextual listening dictations.

Contextual listening exercises introduce real pieces in context (either at the keyboard or by playing a CD) and concentrate the students' attention on harmonic function, since they are required to notate only the Roman numeral of the harmony being heard. It is in these exercises that I find popular music most beneficial. I often use examples selected from the local "classic rock" or "easy rock" radio station playlists. Since these stations broadcast songs which are already popular, there is a better chance that the students will have prior knowledge of these works. However, I do not limit my examples to these "older" songs but use more current examples as well when appropriate. Using these works engages students in the analytical process by making classroom exercises relevant to music (or musical styles) that most of them encounter on a daily basis. During contextual listening exercises, they are given the lyrics of the song and asked to provide the harmonic "changes" over the text. With this approach, the previously mentioned notation problems associated with harmonic dictation exercises are alleviated and the students focus their attention on the desired harmonic function aspect of the exercise. Additionally, I am able to examine a student's understanding of the harmonic rhythm as well as the harmonic functions presented in the exercise.

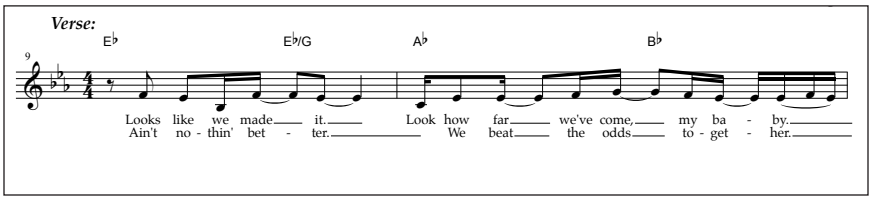
In the eleventh week of the first semester, we introduce supertonic harmony into our dictation exercises and explain the chord's traditional "P" function. An excellent contextual listening example for this lesson is *You're Still the One* by the country/pop singer Shania Twain.[6] The song's simple texture and harmonic rhythm are not overwhelming, its diatonic environment uses mostly primary triads, and its ample harmonic repetition helps the student to focus on the T/P/D pattern of harmonic functions. In addition to reinforcing the aural recognition of the newly introduced supertonic triad, the song highlights two other pedagogical problems: the prolongation of a single harmony through inversion and the prolongation of a single T/P/D function through a change of harmony. It is to the issue of prolongation that I now turn.

[6] Shania Twain, *Come on Over: You're Still the One,* CD 314-536 003-2, Mercury Records, 1997.

Prolongations of Tonic and Pre-dominant Functions

Although we introduce chord inversions in week seven of the semester, by week eleven some students still equate a movement in the bass line with a change in harmonic function. These students understand that the bass line shifts, but since they focus on the melodic aspects of the exercise they misinterpret the meaning of this movement. Consequently, the progression I – I^6 is heard as two harmonies rather than as a prolongation of "T" harmony. Using popular music examples can alleviate this problem because the melodies are already familiar to the student. Thus, they can focus their attention on the bass/harmonic aspects of the exercise. However, to many students, the idea that one harmonic function can be prolonged by employing two *different chords*, i.e., IV – ii as a prolongation of "P" harmony, can be a daunting challenge to hear. *You're Still the One* can be used to address both of these issues in a pedagogically clear and concise way.

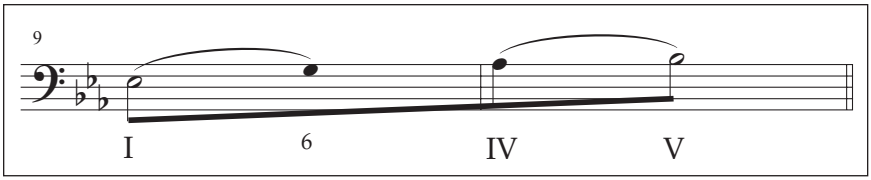
Example 1: *You're Still the One*, mm. 9 – 11.[7]



The verse of the song (Example 1) is a repeated two-measure phrase employing a I – ^{6} – IV – V harmonic pattern. Most students readily hear that each phrase begins on T and ends on D. Likewise, most students hear and understand that the pre-dominant harmony carries the passage to the half cadence on the dominant. As stated previously, the problem encountered in this passage, if any, is hearing the function of the I^6 chord. Since the example represents a clear projection of the T/P/D functions, the student is free to concentrate on the accelerating harmonic rhythm into the cadence. In this way the tonic prolongation becomes clear (see Example 2).

[7] Measure numbers used in connection with *You're Still the One* are consistent with the printed version found in *Ten Years of Pop Music History: 1990 – 2000 Remembering the '90s, The Blue Book* (Miami, FL: Warner Brothers Publications. 2000), 391 - 393. The song is also available in other sources.

Example 2: *You're Still the One*, Harmonic Rhythm, mm. 9 – 11.



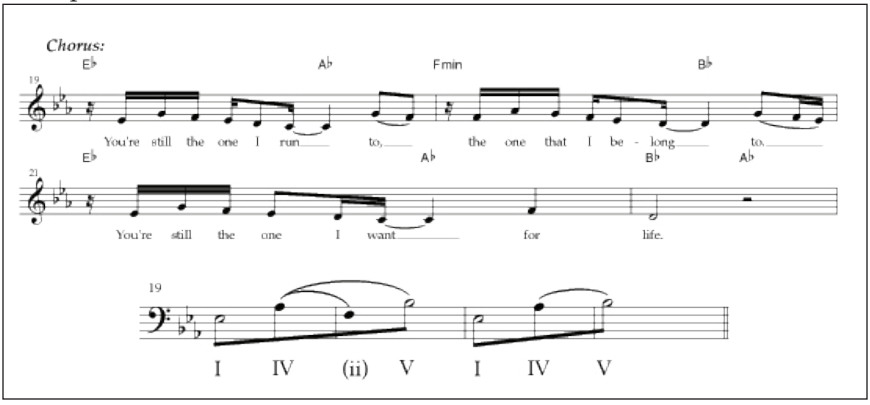
Even though the bass line moves in half notes, the clarity of the P function in the phrase's second measure facilitates the determination that I^6 is used to bridge the gap between the T and P functions in one of three ways:

a. by actually hearing T prolongation in real time,
b. by hearing T prolongation in retrospective time (i.e., "the second chord prolongs something, and it is not P because the movement to P is clear, so it must be T"), or less often,
c. by using only logic (i.e., "scale degree $\hat{3}$ is in the bass when the chord moves so it must be T").

As noted previously, solution C is not the thought process we are trying to foster; however, since students comprehend the bass motion to $\hat{3}$ (even though they are not required to notate this), they are at least using their ears (rather than their eyes) to reach a correct conclusion.

In a similar way, the song's chorus, first four measures of which are shown in Example 3, introduces a conspicuous example of pre-dominant prolongation using different chords. The chorus continues the two-measure phrase structure found in the verse as well as the half-note motion in the bass. The pre-dominant prolongation occurs in the first phrase (mm. 19-20) and is immediately followed by another harmonically equivalent phrase (mm. 21-22).

Example 3: *You're Still the One*, mm. 19 – 22.



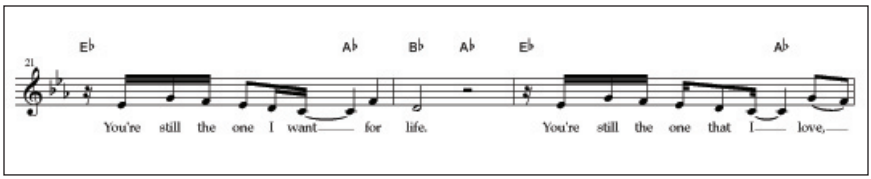
Pedagogically significant here is the representation of two different versions of a clear T/P/D movement in close proximity. Each phrase begins on tonic and ends with a half cadence. Students usually have no problem hearing this. Also, the surface harmonic rhythm (as well as the bass line) moves consistently in half notes. Furthermore, the P functions in both phrases begin at the same point (beat 3), while the cadences of each phrase occur in a different place. The weak metric position of the first phrase's half cadence facilitates understanding that its harmonic T/P/D cycle takes more time than the second phrase's T/P/D cycle. Since the harmonic rhythm is steady, and both phrases begin and end similarly, and the two are successive, students are able to realize that the difference between them is the prolongation of pre-dominant harmony in the first phrase. The change in quality between the major IV chord and the minor ii chord reveals that P is being prolonged through the addition of supertonic harmony. Also significant is that the second phrase's straight I – IV – V progression serves as a truncated harmonic summary of the first phrase's I – IV – ii –V progression. Repetition of material in mm. 15 – 18 allows for a second hearing of the entire harmonic event.

Further Pedagogy of *You're Still the One*

In addition to the two prolongations discussed above, *You're Still the One* offers further points for aural examination and discussion. The use of pre-dominant prolongation is tied to the form of the entire song and is, in fact, the chief difference between the chorus and the other sections of the work. The verse emphasizes tonic harmony through inversional prolongation while the bridge highlights dominant harmony by means of durational prolongation (i.e., by changing the harmonic rhythm from two beats of T and P to four beats of D at the end of each phrase). These sections are, however, similar in that both use only three chords: I, IV, and V. The chorus, in contrast, stresses pre-dominant function. The introduction of a new harmony (ii) and the IV-ii prolongation are critical distinctions between the chorus and the remainder of the work. These differences contribute to the chorus's role as a new section in the piece. Moreover, the pre-dominant prolongation can be used to stimulate discussion on the comparative strength between ii and IV with regard to our perception of harmonic progression (i.e., "Which is stronger to your ear, ii or IV? Why?"). Lastly, the song provides an opportunity to address the concept of cadential extension.

One possible aural obstacle exhibited in *You're Still the One* (Example 4) is the use of a plagal extension prior to the repeated phrases in the chorus (m. 22). Some students may find the IV chord difficult to recognize since it *follows* a half cadence rather than moving to D function or prolonging T function, its more traditional role.

Example 4: *You're Still the One*, mm. 21 – 23.



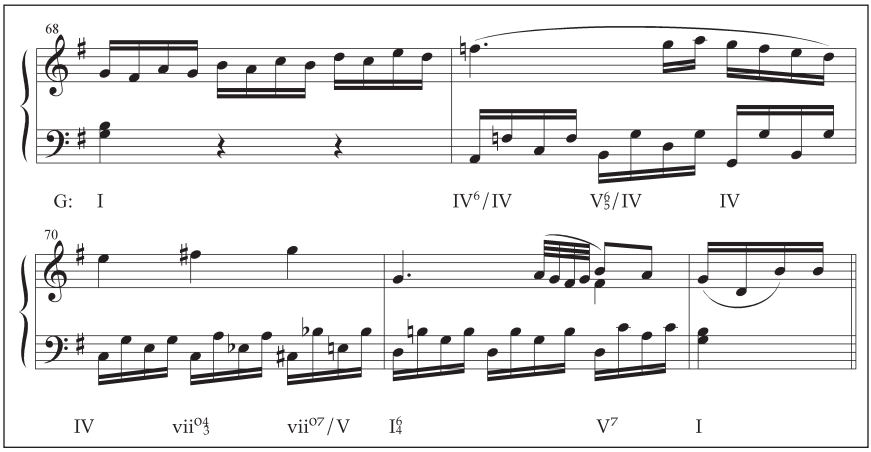
Movement from V to IV is common in popular music since this music often places more (or at least equal) importance on plagal rather than authentic cadences. Having its roots in blues and folk traditions (as well as other non-common-practice styles of music), popular music often draws on relevant and distinguishing components of these other musical genres. Both blues music (based on the "blues scale") and folk music (which is often modal) make extensive use of plagal progressions and cadences rather than the authentic progressions/cadences that govern common practice tonality. The fact that this music has roots outside of common practice should not prevent its use in the classroom. Students who have problems recognizing this V-IV progression are often the victims of our own pedagogical prejudices. It is customary to teach that V does not move to IV, or, to devalue any music that does not follow certain "rules." Yet we all experience such music on a daily basis. As teachers we should embrace various musical styles, enthusiastically addressing stylistic, harmonic, and aesthetic differences between them. Not only does this approach more realistically reflect the multiple musical styles we all experience, it also expands the usefulness of musicianship and pedagogy by couching our instruction in broader and more meaningful contexts. With this said, it is still possible to explain this harmonic movement in terms of common-practice harmony. In this instance, the function of the IV chord is clear: it postpones the half cadence's resolution to tonic. The IV chord delays the resolution of V through harmonic embellishment or possibly through a cadential extension. Although

some students may find this passage confusing, it has been my experience that once the excerpt is isolated (outside of real time) the students have no difficulty identifying the function.

Prolongations Using Non-dominant Secondary Functions and Transient Tonicization

Another type of prolongation that students can find both aurally and cognitively difficult is the use of non-dominant secondary functions such as the one shown below.

Example 5: Mozart, Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 545, II, mm. 68 – 72.[8]



Here the P area is prolonged through the use of its own IV–V–I progression. While students eventually comprehend this type of prolongation "intellectually," they rarely recognize what is happening either aurally or visually when they encounter such transient tonicization on their own. To help them confront this type of harmonic prolongation, and hopefully identify it in literature, I use the Eagles' *New Kid in Town*.[9] The A section of this song works well as a contextual listening example in Musicianship II, since it features clear diatonic functions as well as secondary dominant and non-dominant functions. The simple texture, clear-cut bass line, and

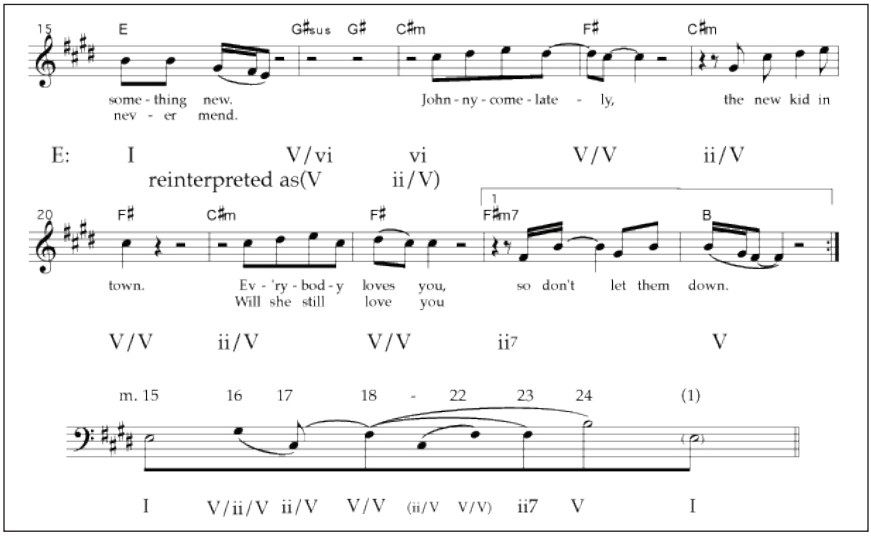
[8] As shown in Kostka and Payne, *Tonal Harmony,* p. 279

[9] Eagles, *Hotel California: New Kid in Town*, CD B000002GVO, Elektra/Asylum Records, 1976. *New Kid in Town* can also be found on: *Eagles, Greatest Hits Volume* 2, CD 60205-2, Elektra/Asylum Records, 1982.

unmistakable harmonic rhythm give rise to coherent contextual listening. Additionally, *New Kid in Town* reinforces the student's retrospective hearing.

The passage featuring the non-dominant secondary function occurs in measures 15 – 24 at the end of the song's A section (see Example 6). It displays a clear motion toward the dominant utilizing a ii/V – V/V progression. Yet before B major can be established as the new tonic, its V (F♯) chord, rather than resolving, is transformed into a diatonic ii^7 (F♯m^7) chord. This alteration encourages the cadential B major triad to be heard as the dominant of E major.

Example 6: *New Kid in Town*, mm. 15 - 24.[10]



On first hearing, the C♯m triad, which is preceded by its dominant (G♯), sounds like the submediant of E. However, when the C♯m chord progresses to F♯ (major), rather than F♯m, the tonal implication becomes that of B major. Because the C♯m – F♯ progression is repeated three times, the ear retrospectively understands the function of C♯m as ii/V rather than vi even though the C♯m chord is diatonic. The G♯ major triad heard prior to the first C♯m (in measure 16) retrospectively becomes V of the new supertonic function.

It is the repetition of the ii/V – V/V progression that proves so aurally helpful in this example. Since the students hear the

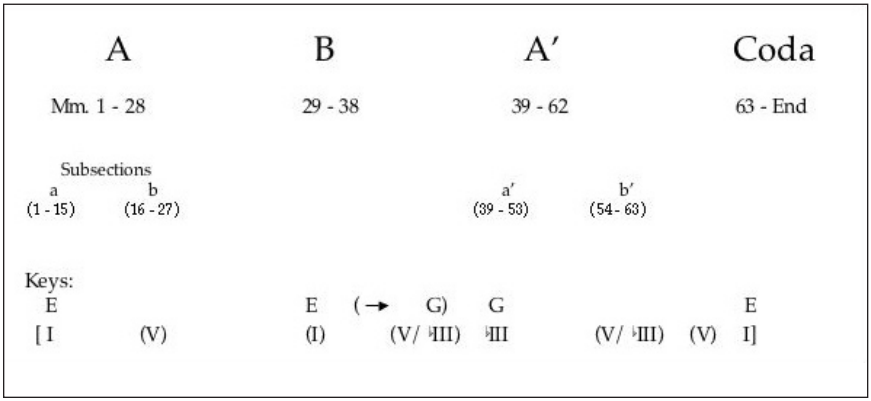
[10] Measure numbers used in connection with *New Kid in Town* are consistent with the printed version found in *Classic Rock Fake Book* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation), 170 – 171. The work is also available in other sources.

progression on multiple occasions in a short span of time, they are better able to process the tonal shift, and thus, to distinguish this crucial aural event. The repetition facilitates comprehension of the tonal shift as well as the non-dominant secondary function. When the passage concludes with the diatonic version of the same progression (ii^7 – V in mm. 23 – 24), the return to E as the tonic sounds familiar and expected. The students grasp that the passage is functioning as a large-scale prolongation of the dominant in E major even though there is only one chromatic chord (V/V). Thus the example proves useful in two ways: it aids comprehension and recognition of the non-dominant secondary function process, and it develops a sense of retrospective understanding.

Further Pedagogy of *New Kid in Town*

The example has proven pedagogically useful not only for ear training in Musicianship II, but also for harmonic and formal analysis in Musicianship III, as it contains a number of substantial mediant relationships (diatonic mediants, chromatic mediants and double-chromatic mediants). Given that most of these mediant relationships mark important points in the song's compound ternary form (material covered in Musicianship II) a discussion/ review of the overall form is beneficial.

Example 7: *New Kid in Town*, Form.

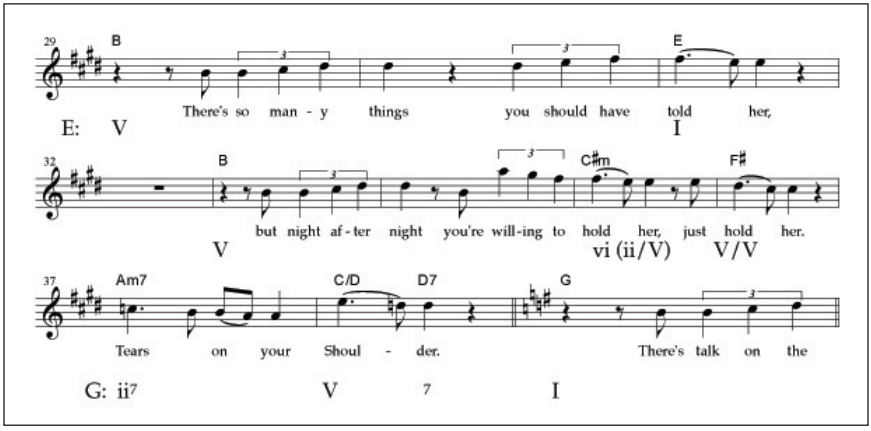


Once we have reviewed the song's form as outlined in Example 7, the student's attention is directed to the key relationships between the A section and its return in measure 39. The movement from E major at the work's beginning to G major in the reprise

creates a fresh return of A material as well as a sense of harmonic incompleteness. The chromatic mediant relationship between these two large sections provides on opportunity to address numerous mediant relationships that occur throughout the entire work. Mediant relationships are discovered at various points in the work's foreground, middleground and background. The chromatic mediant relationship between the beginning and the reprise, mentioned above, represents the broadest level. Moreover, since the reprise begins in a transient mediant key, responsibility for tonal closure falls to the coda. This makes the coda an indispensable part of the overall form.

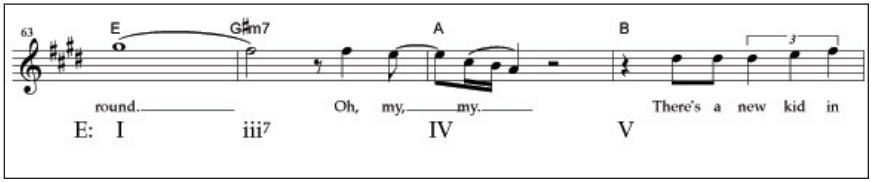
Conspicuous chromatic mediant relationships are found at other significant formal junctures. A middleground chromatic mediant relationship is exposed in the retransition to the reprise (see Example 8).

Example 8: *New Kid in Town*, mm. 29 – 39.



With the tonicization of V (B) at the end of the B section, the piece includes a local movement from B major to G major in addition to the large-scale tonal movement from E to G. Thus, the reprise's modulation to G is heightened by the simultaneous use of two of its chromatic mediants, one from above and another from below (Example 9).

Example 9: *New Kid in Town*, Chromatic Mediant Relationships, mm. 29 - 39.



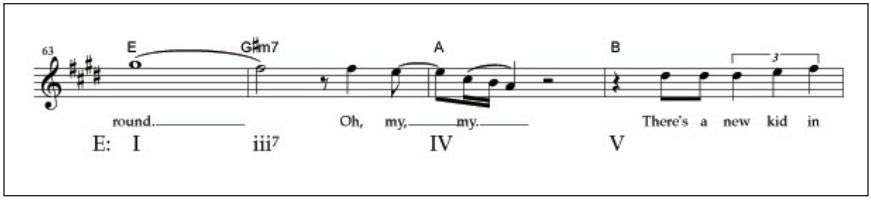
Additionally, two other chromatic mediants occur in the foreground of the piece at significant formal positions. The first can be seen in measures 15 – 16 of Example 6 connecting the two subsections of the work's A section. Here, the harmonic movement of the cadential tonic (E major) triad to V / vi (G♯) positions a chromatic mediant progression in the foreground as the work moves into the second (b) subsection of the A part. This progression hints at the harmonic relationship found later in the work between the larger formal components, that is, the E major and G major sections discussed earlier.

A similar event appears in Example 8. This illustration represents the transition between the B and A' sections of the piece. In measures 35 – 36 the V / V (F♯) is left unresolved as it progresses, by means of a direct modulation, to ii^7 (Am^7) in the new key of G major. The movement from F♯ to Am^7 creates a double-chromatic-mediant progression.[11] Here, the most abrupt harmonic progression found in the work signals the modulation to the second key area as well as the reprise of the initial material. This double-chromatic mediant, residing in the foreground, occurs in the midst of the simultaneous middleground and background chromatic mediants discussed in conjunction with Example 9.

[11] Kostka and Payne, *Tonal Harmony*, p. 435.

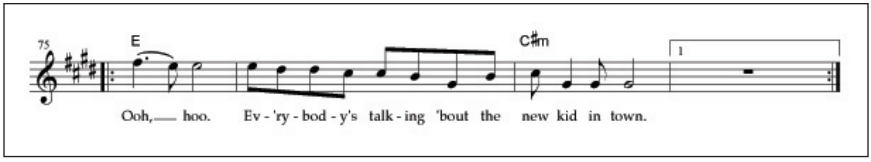
The prominence of mediant relationships is further confirmed in the coda (seen below in Example 10). As previously stated, the work's coda provides tonal closure that is not initially found in the reprise (which begins in G major). Its mediant progressions support the return of original key. Once T function is heard in measure 53, it is prolonged by a iii^7 chord (in measure 54) before continuing the movement through P and finally to the D that ends the phrase. This is the only instance of this kind of tonic prolongation in the piece. Additionally, this is the only place iii^7 is found in the entire work and the first time that a harmonic progression moves unambiguously by diatonic mediants.[12]

Example 10: *New Kid in Town*, Coda, mm. 63 – 66.



The work's final phrase then closes with another diatonic mediant progression, I – vi, as it repeats and fades at the end. The coda thus, not only closes the work tonally, it provides a diatonic summary of the important chromatic movements of the piece (see Example 11).

Example 11: *New Kid in Town,* Coda, mm. 75 - 78



As demonstrated above, popular music styles have much to offer. This music is an indispensable resource for helping our students understand most of the pertinent harmonic issues presented in our musicianship courses. Its clarity of texture and notation, as well as its familiarity, make popular music an underdeveloped pedagogical

[12]Although there is a motion from I – vi in measures 15 – 17, this motion is accomplished through the use of V/vi. As stated previously, the function of this passage is somewhat ambiguous since the progression can be heard as V of the ii/V – V/V progression that follows. See Example 6.

tool. Although the issue is beyond the scope of the present paper, I also find that popular music provides a superb forum for approaching other non-musical issues, such as multiculturalism or gender equity, that traditional "classical" analysis often fails to address. Additionally, by using popular music in the classroom, teachers validate the music to which most of their students listen. This practice helps to build rapport between student and teacher. But most important, using popular music in the classroom reflects the value of active listening. By utilizing examples not associated with the "normal" theory textbook, students are guided to encounter all music, regardless of genre, as *musicians*, energetically participating in the process of understanding what they experience. Isn't this the desired goal of musicianship?