

# MODULATING

## A. The Basics

1. A basic element in understanding modulations is a thorough knowledge of chords and how they progress. Know the primary chords of each key: I, IV, & V chords.

Three staves of musical notation showing primary chords (I, IV, V) in 12 keys. Each staff contains four measures of chords. The keys are: C major, D minor, D major, E minor, E major, F major, F minor, G major, G minor, A major, A minor, and B major. The chords are labeled I, IV, V, and I below each measure.

2. Know the V7 chord of each key with its inversions.

Three staves of musical notation showing V7 chords in 12 keys. Each staff contains four measures of chords. The keys are: C major, D minor, D major, E minor, E major, F major, F minor, G major, G minor, A major, A minor, and B major. The chords are labeled V7 below each measure.

3. Know the secondary ii chord of each key with its inversions.

Three staves of musical notation showing secondary ii chords in 12 keys. Each staff contains four measures of chords. The keys are: C major, D minor, D major, E minor, E major, F major, F minor, G major, G minor, A major, A minor, and B major. The chords are labeled ii below each measure.

4. Chords tend to progress to the chord whose root is a fifth below its own.

Musical notation for exercise 4, showing chord progressions in 12 keys. Each key is represented by a system of two staves (treble and bass clef). The keys are: Key of C, Key of Db, Key of D, Key of Eb, Key of E, Key of F, Key of Gb, Key of G, Key of Ab, Key of A, Key of Bb, and Key of B. Each system shows a ii-V7-I progression. The bass line (LH) is on the root of each chord, while the treble line (RH) is in an inverted position. The keys are arranged in three rows of four.

5. The most common last three chords of a song are the ii to V7 to I chords—whose roots are a fifth apart. The RH triads are often inverted. The lowest sounding note tells you the chord analysis, not the RH triad. In the example below, even though the RH V7 chord is inverted, the LH is on the root, so the sound is root position.

Musical notation for exercise 5, showing chord progressions in 12 keys. Each key is represented by a system of two staves (treble and bass clef). The keys are: Key of C, Key of Db, Key of D, Key of Eb, Key of E, Key of F, Key of Gb, Key of G, Key of Ab, Key of A, Key of Bb, and Key of B. Each system shows a ii-V7-I progression. The bass line (LH) is on the root of each chord, while the treble line (RH) is in an inverted position. The keys are arranged in three rows of four.

6. The second most common last three chords of a song are the I chord in 2nd inversion (called the I 6/4 chord) to V7 to I chords.

Musical notation for exercise 6, showing chord progressions in 4 keys. Each key is represented by a system of two staves (treble and bass clef). The keys are: Key of C, Key of Db, Key of D, and Key of Eb. Each system shows an I6/4-V7-I progression. The bass line (LH) is on the root of each chord, while the treble line (RH) is in a second inversion (I6/4) position. The keys are arranged in one row of four.

Key of E                      Key of F                      Key of Gb                      Key of G

16/4 V7 I                      16/4 V7 I                      16/4 V7 I                      16/4 V7 I

Key of Ab                      Key of A                      Key of Bb                      Key of B

16/4 V7 I                      16/4 V7 I                      16/4 V7 I                      16/4 V7 I

7. A suspension (sus) chord is formed by replacing the 3rd in the middle of a chord with the 4th above the root. Know the sus chords on every note of the scale, starting on C.

Csus                      Dbsus                      Dsus                      Ebsus                      Esus                      Fsus

Gbsus                      Gsus                      Absus                      Asus                      Bbsus                      Bsus

8. A "sus" commonly occurs on the V chord in a key. The P4th above the root of a sus chord often resolves down to the 3rd of the chord. Thus receiving the name: 4-3 suspension. A common progression is Vsus to V to I.

Key of C                      Key of Db                      Key of D                      Key of Eb                      Key of E                      Key of F

Gsus G C                      Absus Ab Db                      Asus A D                      Bbsus Bb Eb                      Bsus B E                      Csus C F

Key of Gb                      Key of G                      Key of Ab                      Key of A                      Key of Bb                      Key of B

Dbsus Db Gb                      Dsus D G                      Ebsus Eb Ab                      Esus E A                      Fsus F Bb                      F#sus F# B

## B. The Definition

1. **Modulate - to change from one key center to another.** Sometimes a key change occurs between two songs; sometimes a key change occurs between two stanzas of a song; and sometimes a key change occurs within a song.

## C. Changing keys without a modulation.

1. Recognize the I chord of each song. Most songs begin and end with the I chord. Sometimes a song will not begin on the downbeat of the first measure, but on a pick-up beat to the first measure. When this pick-up beat occurs, the chord assigned to it is almost always the I or V chord of the song.

2. For clarification, we will call the I chord of the first song before the modulation the Old I chord; and the I chord of the second song after the modulation the New I chord. We will also refer to the V7 chord of the second song as the New V7.

3. A key change which needs no modulation is when the I chord of the first song is a P5th above the I chord of the second song. (Optional: Although none is necessary, a possible transition between two songs with this key relationship is to walk down the bass in the LH, adding a minor 7th to the Old I chord as it descends down to the New I chord.)

A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound That saved a

I - G chord

wretch like me! I once was lost but now am

found; Was blind but now I see.

Optional bass lead-in

Old I chord

The Old I - G chord is a P5th above the New I - C chord. (Optional: You may flat the 7th of the Old I chord as you walk down the bass.)

God is so good. God is so good.

New I - C chord

God is so good; He's so good to me.

2. Dovetailing - When two consecutive songs are in the same key, it works well to make the final I chord of the first song the I chord downbeat of the new song.

God is so good; He's so good to Years I spent in van - i - ty and pride.

*Dovetailing*

3. Another key change which needs no modulation is when the I chord of the first song is a major 3rd above the I chord of the second song. This transitions smoothly because of the common tone between the two I chords. (Optional: Although none is necessary, a possible transition between two songs with this key relationship is to walk down the bass with two whole steps.)

at Cal - va - ry. *Optional bass lead-in* Down at the cross where my

*Changing keys down a major 3rd*

### D. Modulation # 1 - Old I—New V7

1. Changing keys, going up by half step. The common tone between the two songs is the root of the I chord of the first song with the 3rd of the I chord in the second song. Think: LH - walks down 2 whole steps. RH - top note stays the same; bottom two notes move down a half step each; add the root of the V7 in the RH.

Old I New V New I Old I New V New I Old I New V New I etc.

Example: God Is So Good

God is so good; He's so good to me. God is so good.

*Key of C*

Modulation - Old I to New V      New I

2. To further develop the previous modulation, the LH of the bass can also continue going down in a major scale with a flat 7th of the new V chord.

Key of C

God is so good; He's so good to me. God is so good.

I Modulation - OLD I NEW V7 - desc. NEW I  
Ab major scale with flat 7th.

### E. Modulation #2 - Old I—New V7sus—New V7—New I

A second basic element in understanding modulations is being confident with the feel of chords and progressions in your hands.

1. The Vsus chord is used often in modulating. Although it is not necessary, adding a minor 7th above the root in the LH makes this chord more colorful. Therefore, in all our examples we will be using the sus 7th chord, when built on the V chord is called the V7sus chord. Learn it well! The V7sus chord example below is inverted with an ornamental resolution in the RH; and a minor 7th is added above the root in the LH.

Key of C Key of Db Key of D Key of Eb Key of E Key of F

Key of Gb Key of G Key of Ab Key of A Key of Bb Key of B

Gsus7 G7 Ab7sus7 Ab7 Asus7 A7 Bb7sus7 Bb7 Bsus7 B7 C7sus7 C7

Dbsus7 Db7 Dsus7 D7 Eb7sus7 Eb7 Esus7 E7 F7sus7 F7 F#7sus7 F#

2. The Old I—New V7sus—V7 modulation works for all key relationships by going directly from the Old I to the New V7 sus. Observe that this modulation encompasses an entire 4/4 measure. To further develop this modulation, it works well to include a melodic lead-in to one of the chord tones of the New V7sus modulation measure. It is best for the first note of the melodic lead-in to be a chord tone of the Old I chord; and the last note to lead up by step to the top note of the New V7sus chord.

The skeletal chords of the modulation. The modulation including a RH melodic lead-in.

RH melodic lead-in; the first note is a chord tone of Old I chord; last note of lead-in leads up by step to the top note of New V7sus chord

C Eb7sus Eb Ab C Eb7sus Eb Ab

The modulation including a LH melodic lead-in. Modulating to a minor key.

Musical score for piano, showing a modulation from C major to F minor. The score includes a left-hand melodic lead-in. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats. The time signature is 4/4.

Chords: C, E $\flat$ 7sus, E $\flat$ 7, A $\flat$ , C, C7sus, C7, Fm

God Is So Good incorporating Old I—New V7sus—V7 modulation:

Musical score for piano, showing a modulation from F major to E $\flat$  minor. The score includes a right-hand melodic lead-in. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats. The time signature is 4/4.

Chords: F, Fm, D, C, G, G7, C, E $\flat$ 7sus, E $\flat$ 7, 8 $\flat$

At Calvary - key of C - modulating to I Surrender All - key of D.

Musical score for piano, showing a modulation from C major to D major. The score includes a right-hand melodic lead-in. The key signature changes from no flats to two sharps. The time signature is 3/4.

Chords: C, C, E, Dm, F, G7, C, A sus, A, D, G, D, D

I Need Thee Every Hour - key of G - modulating to Search Me, O God - key of F. No matter what time signature the first song is in, it is easiest to put the the one-measure modulation in 4/4 time.

Musical score for piano, showing a modulation from G major to F major. The score includes a left-hand melodic lead-in. The key signature changes from one sharp to one flat. The time signature is 4/4.

Chords: G, G, B, A $\flat$ m, G, D, D7, G, C7sus, C7, F, B $\flat$ , B $\flat$ m, G

Near the Cross - key of F - modulating to Standing on the Promises - key of A $\flat$ .

Musical score for piano, showing a modulation from F major to A $\flat$  minor. The score includes a right-hand melodic lead-in. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats. The time signature is 4/4.

Chords: F, C, C7, F, E $\flat$ 7sus, E $\flat$ 7, A $\flat$ , A $\flat$ , E $\flat$

## F. Modulation #3 - Old I—New ii7—(New V7sus)—New V7—New I

This modulation is undoubtedly one that you will find yourself using often. The Old I—New ii7—New V7sus modulation works for all key relationships. Until you become proficient in using this modulation, plan your modulations carefully.

1. This modulation encompasses two 4/4 measures.
2. End the song before the modulation as you normally do.
3. The first measure of the 2-measure modulation is in its totality the New ii chord, with or without the minor 7th. We will often use the ii7 chord because it is more colorful.
4. The second measure of the 2-measure modulation begins with
  - a. the New V7sus chord on beats 1 and 2, resolving to the New V7 chord on beats 3 and 4; or
  - b. the New V chord, with the LH bass walking up stepwise in 10ths with the RH alto line.

### Skeleton modulation - C to D

Ex. 1: End the first hymn; use inversions of the ii chord.

C Em A7sus A D C Em A7sus A D

Ex. 2: Create a melodic lead-in to the root of the V chord; add a minor 7th above the root of the ii in the LH.

Ex 3: Use broken intervals in the RH; walk the bass in the LH.

C Em7 A7sus A D C Em A D

*LH bass walking up in 10ths with the alto*

Ex. 4: Use a combination of inverted intervals and melodic lead-ins.

C Em7 Asus A D

### Skeleton modulation - key of C to Eb.

Ex. 1: End the first hymn; use inversions of the ii chord.

C Fm7 Bb7sus Bb Eb C Fm Bb7sus Bb7 Eb Eb/Bb



Ex. 2: Create a melodic lead-in to the root of the V chord; add a minor 7th above the root of the ii in the LH.

Ex 3: Use broken intervals in the RH; 9 walk up the bass in the LH.

C Fm7 B<sup>b</sup>7sus B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> C Fm B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

*LH bass walking up in 10ths with the alto*

Skeleton modulation - C to Db

Ex. 1: End the first hymn; use inversions of the ii chord.

C Em A<sup>b</sup>7sus A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> C E<sup>b</sup>m A<sup>b</sup>7sus A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup>

Ex. 4: Use a combination of inverted intervals and melodic lead-ins.

Ex 3: Use broken intervals in the RH; walk up the bass in the LH. The modulation works with a pick-up beat in 2nd song.

C E<sup>b</sup>m7 A<sup>b</sup>7sus A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>m A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup>

*Pick-up beat: Beneath the Cross*

*LH bass walking up in 10ths with the alto*

Skeleton modulation - C to Ab

Ex. 1: End the first hymn; use inversions of the ii chord.

C Bm E<sup>b</sup>7sus E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup> C B<sup>b</sup>m E<sup>b</sup>7sus E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>

Ex. 4: Use a combination of inverted intervals and melodic lead-ins.

Ex 3: Use broken intervals in the RH; walk up the bass in the LH.

C B<sup>b</sup>m7 E<sup>b</sup>7sus E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> C B<sup>b</sup>m E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

*Pick-up beat: He Lives*

*LH bass walking up in 10ths with the alto*