IRREGULAR RESOLUTIONS OF ONE DOMINANT SEVENTH INTO ANOTHER

An orderly approach to understanding chromatic harmony consists of identifying three basic types of chord connection involving dominant sevenths. In each case the voice leading is identical: two voices moving in contrary motion by half step; two voices remaining unchanged. The resultant root motion is either by minor third or tritone (=two minor thirds).

Type One

Root motion is down a minor third.

Example 1

Example 2: In Schubert: Der Neugierige (Die Schöne Müllerin, No. 6) the progression marks the high point of the song:

Type Two

Root motion is up a minor third.

Example 3:
Example 4: In Schumann: Ende vom Lied (Phantasiestücke, No. 8), the progression provides a change in harmonic color matched by the quiet dynamic.

Example 5: In Franck: Fifth Beatitude, the progression is done twice, with root motion from E to G to Bb.

Type Three
Root motion by tritone.

Example 6:

Example 7: In Schumann: Davidsbündlertänze, No. 3, the progression is part of a rising chromatic bass.
Example 8: In Musorgsky: Boris Godunov, The Coronation Scene, the two dominant sevenths a tritone apart represent the Kremlin bells.

roots: Ab    D

Example 9: In Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring. Types Two and Three are often presented both vertically and horizontally.

roots: F    D    F    Ab    F    Ab

roots: B    F    Ab    F    D    F

Type One occurs frequently in the 18th century, often as a phrase extender. Types Two and Three occur with increasing frequency after 1840.

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