

# Chromatic Chords

## Neapolitan

Neapolitan chords (flat chord II) provide a colourful way of sidestepping onto a chord from a very distant key before returning to Chord **V**, usually just before a cadence. It is a modification of chord **II** in which the root and fifth are both flattened to create a new major chord.

In C major, a Neapolitan would be a Db major chord. It is often found in first inversion, which is why it is sometimes called a Neapolitan 6<sup>th</sup> (short for a sixth and a third above the bass).

The next part of this handout explains how to create an augmented sixth and there are some examples over the page that you can use as influences to help you use these chords effectively. Choose an example that best matches the circumstances in your own piece.

### How to create a Neapolitan sixth (step-by-step guide)

1. decide on the chord to which your Neapolitan will resolve (will always be a dominant chord)  
*in this example a G chord (V of C)*
2. work out the second note of the scale and flatten it  
*in this example a D (second note of a C major scale) becomes Db*
3. construct a major chord on this note  
*in this example a Db major chord*
4. the chord can be in root or first inversion  
*in this example, as in much Classical music, the chord is in first inversion*



C:  $\flat\text{II}^6$    V   I                      c:  $\flat\text{II}^6$     $\text{V}^6_{4/3}$    i

# Chromatic Chords

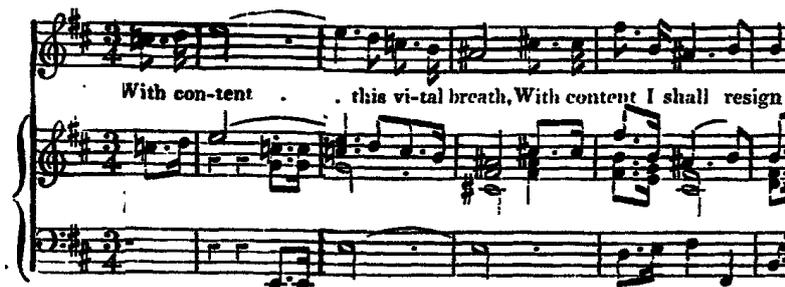
## Examples

### 1. Bach – Brandenburg Concerto No. IV, first movement (from Anthology p. 15)

In this movement, Bach spices up his cadence in E minor by going to the dominant via an F major (**bII**) chord at the beginning of bar 155. This is the most conventional use of a Neapolitan chord as a bit of local colour on the approach to a cadence.

### 2. Handel – ‘Happy they’ from Jephtha (B minor)

In this example, the first two full bars (plus upbeat) are all based on a C major chord in first inversion. C major is the flattened chord **II** of B minor. Note it resolves here onto a dominant seventh in third inversion before proceeding to the cadence.



Bm: **bII**                      V7D            **ib**    V7    I

### 3. Beethoven – Symphony No. 3 ('Eroica') [extract in E minor]

One of the most dramatic cadences in the Classical/Early romantic repertoire. A drawn-out Neapolitan in E (F major chord) is forcefully punched out in the first four bars, made more striking because of an added major seventh. This then resolves to a B dominant seventh, which also has various dissonances, including an added minor 9<sup>th</sup>. It all finally resolves to E at the end of this extract.



## Chromatic Chords

### 4. Beethoven – String Quartet Op. 95, first movement

Beethoven expands the use of the Neapolitan chord in this example by hinting at a modulation to **III** as a key. In bar 6 the material from the F minor beginning is transposed up a semitone into Gb major and this is followed in the next bar by chord **viib** in that key. Beethoven then lapses back onto **V** of the original F minor but he returns to this semitone key relationship later in the quartet.

Allegro con brio. Componirt im October 1810.



Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello.