

Advanced Uses of Augmented-Sixth Chords

Other inversions of +6 chords

Unlike most chords, which are in some sense “about” the root, augmented-sixth chords are “about” the double-leading-tone effect of fi and le both moving to sol. Therefore, though they can be found in other inversions, it doesn’t really make sense to talk about “root-position” augmented sixth chords, as though those were somehow more stable, or as though the chord were to be understood as being constructed by adding 3rd, 5th, etc., above the root. It’s therefore best to think of alternate inversions as simply described by their figured bass, just as the standard inversions are.

The most common other inversions involve raised scale-degree 4 is in the bass; they are “root position” for It+6 and Ger+6/5, and “first inversion” for Fr+6/4/3. Other inversions also occur, generally leading to other inversions of V. Of these the “root position” German chord is most frequently encountered; we’ll call it Ger7. Unlike Ger+6/5, Ger7 can go directly to V without a cadential 6/4, not just in free textures but also in chorale style.

See A/S 528-531, online lecture notes on advanced uses of +6 chords

+6 chords applied to other scale degrees (a fancy case of secondary function)

Just as secondary dominants tonicize triads other than the tonic, +6 chords can be applied to other scale degrees, so that they lead to secondary dominants. See below for an example.

See A/S 531-533

+6 as a pivot chord (usually Ger +6/5)

See notes on Techniques of Modulation.

The musical notation consists of two systems of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) in common time. The first system contains four measures: a C major triad (I), an F#m7b9 chord (V7/V), an F#m7 chord (V), and a C major triad (I). A double bar line separates this from the second system, which contains four measures: a C major triad (I), an F#m7b9 chord (Fr3+6/V), an F#m7b9 chord (V8-7/V), an F#m7 chord (V), and a C major triad (I).

C: I — V₇/V — V — I

I — Fr₃⁺⁶/V — V₈₋₇/V — V — I