Music 232
Chapter 8, First Inversion Triads

These notes are a distillation of Kostka/Payne's Tonal Harmony. They are in no way a substitute for reading and working through the actual text book.

Overview

- Bass Arpeggiation
- Substitute first inversion chords
- Parallel six-three chords "parallel sixth" chords

Inversions allow for:
   A. A bass line with more contour (less disjunct)
   B. A bass line with more variety in shape
   C. A way to control the importance or impact of particular chords that are not part of a goal (cadence)

I. Bass Arpeggiation
   A. Prolongs a chord, but is not progressional
       1. in analysis, an arpeggiated chord does not need to have its Roman numeral rewritten, just the new figured bass
       2. fast, arpeggiated keyboard accompaniment does not count as moving through different inversions; just count the first note in the figure as the bass note for figured bass analysis

II. Substitute first inversion chords
   A. These are non-arpeggiated chords that would likely be found in a contrapuntal texture
   B. They substitute for root position chords to:
       1. improve the contour of a bass line
       2. incorporate more variety into a bass line
       3. lessen the importance of chords that are not part of a goal
   C. Be careful of the V-vi^6 or V-VI^6 progression! The inverted vi/VI chord will sound like a mistakenly written I/i root position chord
   D. The diminished triad is most frequently used in first inversion because there is no diminished 5th or augmented 4th above the bass note

III. Parallel six-three chords
   A. It is possible to find a series of parallel six-three chords (in a row)
   B. They will not follow the circle of fifths progression
       1. they act as filler/passing chords (not progressional, not functional)
       2. similar to a scalar melodic fill, but with three simultaneous voices
       3. usually in an instrumental texture where they go by faster
       4. can serve to smoothly fill in what would otherwise be a disjunct bass line
       5. the inversion avoids parallel fifths

IV. Part Writing, how to double
   A. In four parts, when the chords are complete and the texture is:
       1. contrapuntal texture (vocal): double to support the best voice leading
       2. homophonic texture (chords and melody): double to get the desired sonority
       3. for any texture: do not double the leading tone
   B. In four parts, doublings from most- to least-common
       1. inner voice doubles soprano
       2. inner voice double bass
       3. soprano and bass double
       4. inner voices double
   C. In three parts
       1. incomplete six-three chords are more rare, and usually the 5th will be omitted

V. Soprano and bass counterpoint
   A. The most important thing is to employ contrary motion when possible