

Rob's Piano Room - Module 16 - PDF

Using Colour Notes Without Resolving/ Borrowing from Minor

Main Ideas

Up to this point, we have been looking at our colour notes as existing in contexts where they need to resolve to a chord tone. Although this will remain true most of the time, it is possible to play colour notes without necessarily resolving

In a major chord the 2, 6 and 7 can all be used as color notes on their own

When using the 7 on the I or IV chords, this will result in a Major Seventh chord, (1,3,5, and 7 of the major scale) not traditionally thought of as used in classical harmony, but more common in the romantic era and following, especially in Jazz (You will definitely come across it in earlier styles, such as in the preludes and fugues of Bach.

The 4th, over a major triad, is the one note that is unlikely to use without resolving (very likely to the 3rd). It is often thought of as an 'avoid' note for this reason

Over a minor, the same notes are now possible, but the 4th is now possible as well, as it does not conflict as harshly with the third. The b6 on the I chord in minor is one note that can be thought of as an 'avoid' note in a minor key

When using a colour note in an unresolved way, do so with a decided intent to highlight that colour.. As well, the context around it will likely follow our previous 'rules'. It does not mean any note is now possible in any order, at least not if we want a sense of direction in this classical harmonic context.



You may have come across the idea of a chord containing the 9, 11 or 13 of the chord and wondered what these mean. If we play the 1,3,5,and 7 of a scale then continue skipping up every second note, we get the 9, 11 and 13 before coming to the root two octaves above where we started (see video). So the 9 is the same note as the 2, the 11 is the 4, and the 13 is the 6.

$$9=2$$

$$11=4$$

$$13=6$$

(Notice there is always a difference of 7 between the ones that are the same)

So when do we use these higher number names? In a melodic context we always use the numbers 1-7. When we think of them as 'upper' notes of a chord, we use the higher numbers. The general rule is that if the 7th is present in a chord, we think of an added 2 4 or 6 as 9,11 or 13, wherever it is in the chord. So, if we have a triad with an added 2, 4 or 6, they are still called 2, 4 or 6. But, if we have a 7th chord with these same notes added, they are now called 9,11 and 13.

Borrowing from Minor

Sometimes, when we are in a major key, we can borrow chords from the minor to give a different colour. This is not the relative minor, but the minor with the same root, such as C major borrowing from C minor.

The chords most often borrowed are the iv and the V7, as well as the ii.

The four chord then becomes minor rather than major, but will still resolve to a major I

The V7 chord actually has the same chord notes as it would in major, but the non chord tones will be different if we are thinking in minor (using the notes of C harmonic minor)

The ii chord will become a diminished chord.

In all cases, we at some point slip back to the major key, most often on the I chord.

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece in C major. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a flat sign (Bb) in the second measure. The bass staff contains a series of chords, each represented by a group of notes. The chords are: C major (C-E-G), C minor (C-Eb-G), F major (F-A-C), F major (F-A-C), C7 (C-E-G-Bb), C7 (C-E-G-Bb), F major (F-A-C), and C major (C-E-G). The progression demonstrates the use of borrowed chords from the C minor scale (C minor, F major, C7, F major, C major) within a C major key context.