

Web Feature 14.1

Bach's partwriting solutions in the Prelude in C Major, BWV 846, from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I

In chapter 14 we learned that resolving the IV^7 to V poses special partwriting challenges because the IV^7 contains two interlocking perfect fifths. We saw there were two solutions:

- Arrange the IV^7 voicing so that the chord seventh is in a lower register than the third; or
- Use one or more connecting chords, such as a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ or a vii^{07} , between the IV^7 and the V.

The second solution is found in Bach's Prelude in C Major from Book I of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (measures 21–24), shown in Web Example 14.1; Web Example 14.2 is an annotated textural reduction of the passage that shows the voice leading and treatment of dissonance. Following the IV^7 in measure 21 is an $F\sharp$ fully diminished seventh chord that also points to the V (a fully diminished seventh chord is most likely a " vii^{07} of something; after the $F\sharp$ fully diminished seventh, some editions of the prelude have an extra measure, a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ chord for which we also expect to hear V as the resolution).

Rather than move directly to V, however, Bach adds still another connecting chord to delay the resolution we have been coming to expect, a vii^{04}_2 that is particularly rich in dissonance because of the C suspension that occurs between the B and D in the chord. Having played upon the listener's expectations to dramatically draw out this moment when the V chord arrives, Bach finally satisfies those expectations in measure 24.

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IV⁷

V⁷

Web Example 14.1. Bach, Prelude in C Major BWV 846, *Well Tempered Clavier* (Bk. I), mm. 21–24.

(chord 7th resolves down) (chord 7th resolves down)

(preparation of suspension) (suspension resolves down)

(chromatically raised tone resolves up, indirectly) (chord 7th resolves down)

IV⁷ vii^{o4}₂ V⁷

Web Example 14.2. Annotated textural reduction of Web Example 13.1, showing voice leading and treatment of dissonance.

Sometimes IV and ii are both used before the V, most often with the IV preceding the ii. In fact, such a progression can often eliminate the built-in problem of parallel fifths that can result when IV⁷ resolves directly to V. For example, resolving IV⁷ directly to V₂⁴ as shown in Web Example 14.3a would create parallel fifths between the soprano and tenor voices. Web Example 14.3b, showing the progression IV⁷ – ii₅⁶ – V₂⁴, shows how the ii₅⁶ causes the soprano and tenor voices to move at different times.

a. b.

c: IV^7 V_2^4 IV^7 ii_5^6 V_2^4

Web Example 14.3a. $IV^7 - V_2^4$ progression, with parallel fifths.

Web Example 14.3b. $IV^7 - ii_5^6 - V_2^4$ progression, avoiding parallel fifths by non-synchronous voice leading.

Bach's prelude contains an example of a $IV_2^4 - ii^7 - V^7$ progression (measures 16–19, shown in Web Example 14.4). Since this passage consists of three consecutive diatonic seventh chords, the treatment of chord sevenths is especially noteworthy. Notice that the IV chord appears in third inversion; since the chord in the preceding measure was a I^6 , the bass note did not need to move at all. The chord seventh must resolve down by step, however, and it does; the ii^7 is the result, since the other three members of the chord (F, A, and C) are common tones. (In this illustration we see one possible reason why IV usually precedes ii, and not the other way around; when a chord seventh is involved, the movement from IV to ii allows for the characteristic downward resolution of the chord seventh to provide the root of the next chord. In the reverse progression—ii going to IV—the seventh of the ii chord would not actually resolve but would remain stationary to become the fifth of the IV chord.) As the IV_2^4 moves to ii^7 , the tone that was the fifth of the IV_2^4 (C) becomes the chord seventh of the ii^7 . It resolves down by step to B in the V^7 ; meanwhile, the tone that was the third of the ii^7 (F) has become the chord seventh of the V^7 . Resolving the V^7 to I in measure 19, we see that the chord seventh has again moved down by step, and the leading tone has moved up to the tonic.

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IV²₄ ii⁷

V⁷ I

Web Example 14.4. Bach, Prelude in C Major BWV 846, *Well Tempered Clavier* (Bk. I), measures 16–19.

Only the D3 in the left hand of the V⁷ seems to disregard its tendency tone resolution; this may be accounted for by textural considerations. Each of the chords in this prelude has involved five pitches in a steady rolling pattern, with no duplications of pitch (there are, of course, duplications of pitch class). If the D3 were to resolve to C3 as a 2-1 tendency tone pair, then C3 would be struck twice in the chord, a deviation from the overall design (Web Example 14.5). The lesson to be learned here is that sometimes rules are not slavishly followed, in the service of the greater artistic impulse; consistency in texture and style trumped consistency in following every “rule.”

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IV₂⁴ ii⁷

V⁷ I

Web Example 14.5. Bach, mm. 16–19, with textural irregularity resulting from strict tendency tone resolution (D3 resolved as part of a 2-1 tendency tone pair)