

CHAPTER IX

MAJOR TRIADS (FIRST INVERSION)

So far we have regarded the root of a Triad as the bass note (*i.e.* the lowest note of the harmony). But since a Triad consists of three notes it is obvious that any one of these may be used as a bass note.

When the root of a Triad is in the bass, the Triad is said to be in **root position**. When either of the upper notes is in the bass, the Triad is said to be **inverted**. Two inversions are possible: (1) when the third from the root becomes the bass, and (2) when the fifth from the root becomes the bass.

In Example 93 the chords marked (b) are first

EXAMPLE 93

O Come all ye Faithful. ENGLISH (18th Century)

inversions, and the chord marked (c) is a second inversion.

You may wonder why these inversions are used, and

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whether they really add anything to the music. A simple experiment should convince you. First play Example 93, listening carefully to the effect of the chord progression. Follow this with Example 94, in which the same melody is harmonized entirely with chords in root position. How much clumsier and weaker it sounds when compared with the previous example!

Each inversion needs separate consideration, and for the moment we shall confine our attention to the first inversion, in which the third of the chord appears in the bass.

EXAMPLE 95

Example 95 shows the first inversion of the Tonic Triad in the key of C Major. The letter *b* which is placed beside the Roman numeral indicates a first inversion. The use of these small letters, combined with Roman numerals, is a convenient means of identifying chords. In future *a* will be used to indicate the root position of a chord, *b* the first inversion, and *c* the second inversion. Thus *Ia* means the root position of the Tonic Triad, *IVb* the first inversion of the Subdominant Triad, *Vc* the second inversion of the Dominant Triad, and so on.

EXAMPLE 96

Example 96 shows the three Primary Triads in the key of C Major, in root position and first inversion. Play