

AUGMENTED SIXTH CHORDS

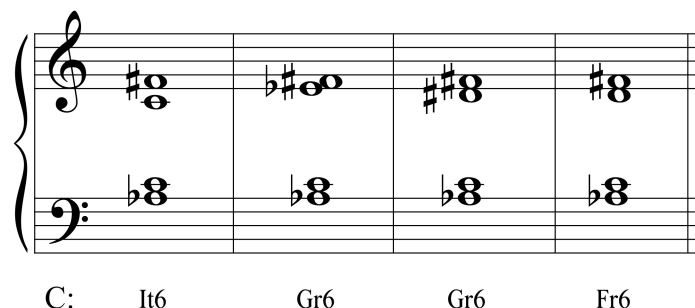
Definition:

A chord that contains the interval of an augmented sixth.

Description:

There are 3 such chords: the German 6th (Gr⁶), the French 6th (Fr⁶) and the Italian 6th (It⁶).
The chords consist of the following intervals:

Italian 6:	M3, A6
German 6:	M3, P5 (or DA4), A6
French 6:	M3, A4, A6



The Gr⁶ in major may be spelled with a doubly augmented fourth instead of a perfect fifth to show the resolution of the pitches in the direction of the inflection (see part-writing below).

A6 chords are most often built on the note a half step above the dominant (^b6) of the scale in both major and minor keys (as the above examples in the key of C).

A6 chords may also be built on the note a half step above the tonic (^b2) (see below for examples).

Sound:

It⁶ sounds like an incomplete V7 chord (i.e., with the fifth omitted).

Gr⁶ sounds like a complete V7 chord.

Fr⁶ has its own unique sound.

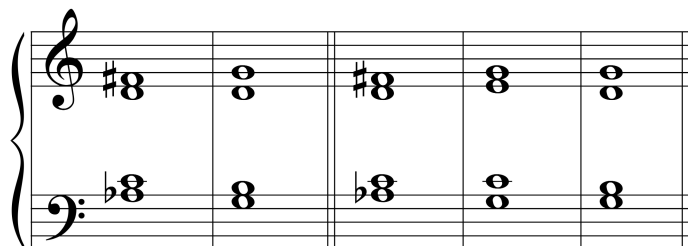
Function:

A6 chords are used for color and tension.

They can also be used in chromatic modulations.

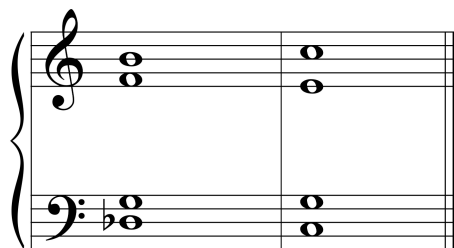
Resolution:

When built on the $\flat 6$, A6 chords usually resolve to V or a $V \begin{pmatrix} 6 - 5 \\ 4 - 3 \end{pmatrix}$ progression.



C: Fr6 V Fr6 $V \begin{pmatrix} 6 - 5 \\ 4 - 3 \end{pmatrix}$

When built on the $\flat 2$, A6 chords will resolve to I.



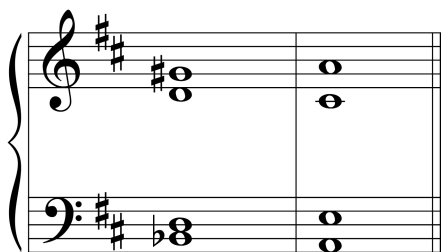
C: Fr6 I

Part-Writing:**ITALIAN 6:**

In the Italian sixth chord, double the note that is a third above the bass; double the unaltered/non-tendency tone.

Resolve the interval of the A6 to the octave; resolve the altered notes in the direction of their inflection/tendency.

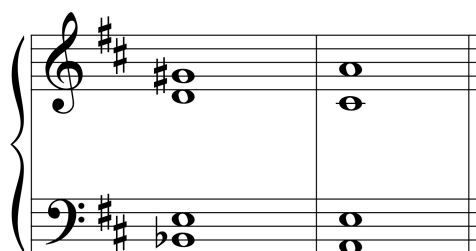
Take other notes to the nearest chord tone following part-writing rules.



D: It6 V

FRENCH 6:

The French 6 has four notes, so put one note in each voice. Do not leave any notes out. Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave; resolve the notes in the direction of their inflection/tendency. Keep the common tone. Take the other note to the nearest chord tone.



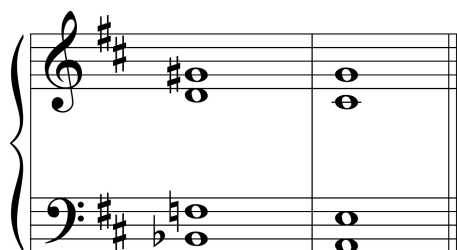
D: Fr6 V

GERMAN 6:

The German has four notes; put one note in each voice. Do not leave out notes. Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave. Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave; resolve the notes in the direction of their inflection/tendency. Take the notes to the nearest chord tone.

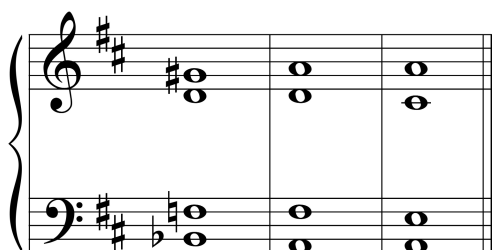
Problem – Parallel Fifths:

Resolving a Gr⁶ (on ^b6) directly to V or Gr⁶ (on ^b2) directly to I will result in parallel perfect fifths (see below).

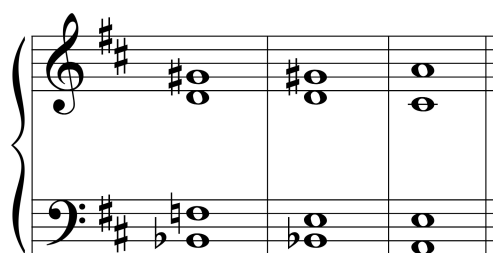


D: Gr6 V

In order to avoid the P5s, resolve the German to another chord (e.g., a cadential⁶₄ or a Fr⁶ or It⁶) before resolving to the V (see second and third examples below).

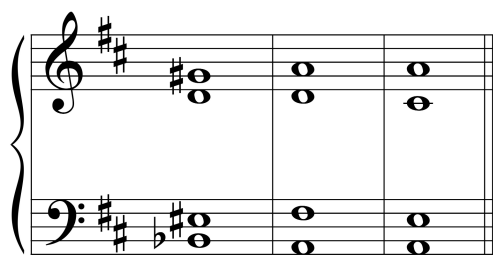


D: Gr6 V^(6 - 5)_(4 - 3)



D: Gr6 Fr6 V

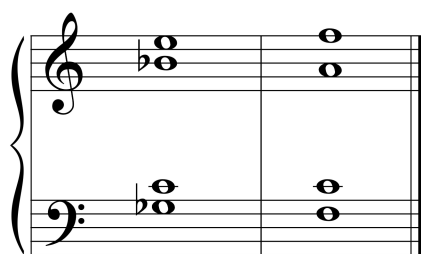
Problem: In a major key, spell the Gr⁶ with the DA4 spelling to show the resolution of that tone to the third of the V $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} 6 - & 5 \\ 4 - & 3 \end{smallmatrix}\right)$.



D: Gr⁶ V $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} 6 - & 5 \\ 4 - & 3 \end{smallmatrix}\right)$

Other:

Augmented 6th chords can be created by scale degrees other than $\flat 6$ and $\flat 2$. They may be built on the note a half-step above the note of resolution creating a secondary function. See the example below.



C: Fr⁶/IV IV