

MODERN HARMONY

STACKED CHORDS:

Traditional harmony uses primarily triads and 7th chords. But additional chords are possible if one continues to stack thirds on top. 9th chords, 11th chords, and 13th chords are especially common in popular styles, such as jazz.

a)

CM: ii ii⁷ ii⁹ ii¹¹ ii¹³

b) Voiced in SATB

CM: ii ii⁷ ii⁹ ii¹¹ ii¹³

Note:

1. On the 9th, 11th, and 13th chords, the root, 3rd, and 7th are kept (5th is omitted).
2. The "higher" tones (9th, 11th, 13th) appear in the soprano. This is common.

Stacked chords appear primarily in two contexts:

1.) Within a traditional circle progression:

c)

CM: I vi⁷ ii⁹ V¹³ I⁹ IAC

d)

CM: iii⁷ vi⁹ ii⁷ V⁹ I⁷ IV⁹ V⁷ I IAC

Note:

1. The stacked chords are all in root position. Inversions are rare.
2. The 9th, 11th, and 13th are like 7ths: they resolved downward (by step or leap), or they stay put as a common tone.
3. In example b, the chords alternate between 7th and 9th chords. This type of alternating pattern is common.

2.) in complete parallel motion ("parallelism") -- explained below

MODALITY:

Placing a chord progression in one of the church modes can provide a fresh alternative to the usual major keys and minor keys.

a) (adapted from Debussy String Quartet, mvt. 1)

G Phrygian: i vø $\frac{4}{3}$ III vø $\frac{4}{3}$ (5) i vø $\frac{4}{3}$ i III vø $\frac{4}{3}$ i

Note:

1. This progression uses a "G minor-ish" mode with scale degree 2 lowered (Ab). That gives us G Phrygian.
2. This composer used the G minor key signature and added flats to lower each A to Ab. He could also have placed Ab in the key signature (and saved some ink). Both ways are acceptable.

Suggestions for writing modally:

Modes are very close to their major/minor counterparts. Therefore, a composer must clearly establish the mode being used. In other words, you want to highlight the unique "flavor" of the mode in use.

To do this:

- a) **emphasize the tonic** (notice the number of G minor chords in our example)
- b) **emphasize the pitch(es) that are unique to the mode** (notice the emphasis on Ab in our example)
- c) **stick to the modal pitches and avoid chromatic** ("outside") notes that could confuse the ear

PARALLELISM:

Definition: chords moving completely by parallel motion. May be applied to any type of chord (triad, 7th chord, or stacked chord).

b)

FM: I IV I iii IV ii I vi V I IAC

c)

CM: I¹³ iii¹³ IV¹³ iii¹³ IV¹³ vi¹³ vi⁶ ii⁷ V HC

d)

Dm: i⁷ iv⁷ III⁷ i⁷ VI⁷ i⁷ III⁷ i⁷ v⁷ i⁷ IAC

Note:

1. In each example, there are at least 3 parallel chords in a row. Any fewer would sound like a part writing error. (Needs to sound like you *meant* to write parallel chords!)
2. Parallel chords can appear within a traditional chord progression (as in exs. b and c), or as the entire chord progression (as in ex. d).
3. Be careful to avoid voice crossing/overlap.