Tissimo

LISTEN
Scan to hear every example
tissimo.co/worksheets/augmented-sixth-chords

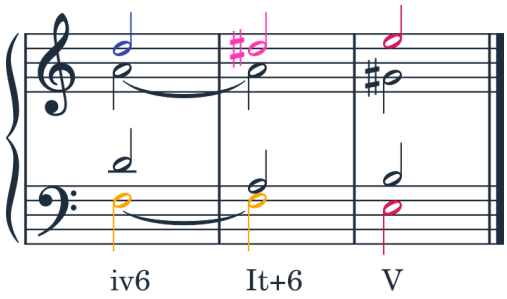
Augmented sixth chords

Some chords lean on V from both sides at once. In A minor, F sits a half step above E and D♯ a half step below it. Together they make an **augmented 6th**, and the chords built on it come in three flavors: **Italian**, **French** and **German**.

TWO NOTES THAT SPREAD APART

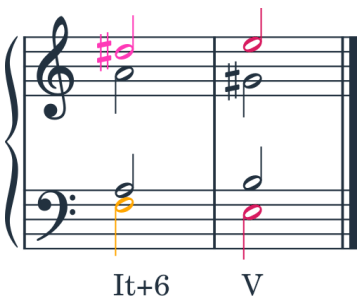
Start from **iv6** in A minor: F–A–D with **F** in the bass. Raise the top **D** a half step to **D♯**; the other D moves to A, so the Italian sixth sings the tonic twice. Now F and D♯ are an augmented 6th apart, a half step wider than the major 6th F–D.

Each one is a half step from E, so they spread apart, **F** down and **D♯** up, onto the octave **E–E**: the root of **V**. Never double F or D♯: each has just one place to go.



THREE FLAVORS

Italian It+6



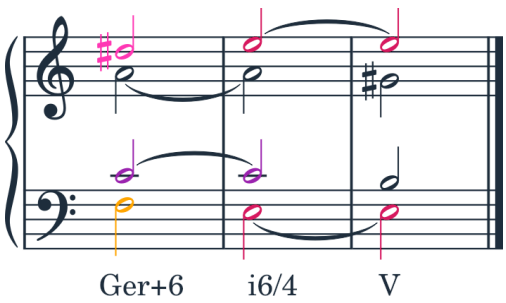
F–A–D♯: the augmented 6th plus the tonic A, sung twice.

French Fr+6



F–A–B–D♯: adds **B**, the 2nd degree, which holds into V.

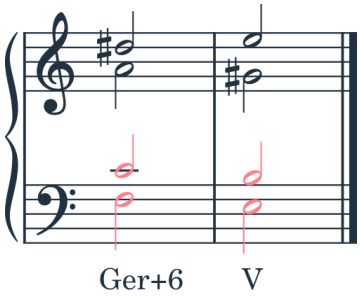
German Ger+6



F–A–C–D♯: adds **C**. These are the keys of F7, but F7 spells E♭, a 7th that falls (F7 goes to B♭). Spelled D♯, the note rises to E. It usually waits on **i6/4** first (Handout 383).

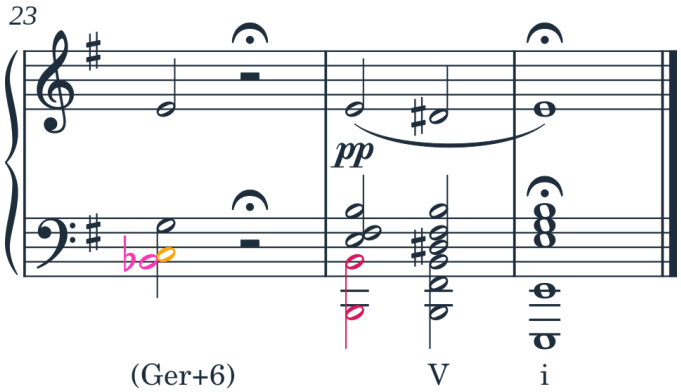
INTO V

German straight to V AVOID



Tenor and bass: C over F slides to B over E, parallel 5ths (Handout 385). Mozart let them pass now and then (**Mozart fifths**); in four-part writing, go through i6/4.

Chopin's strange chord



Prelude in E minor, bar 23 (Handout 345): B♭–C–G–E. Spell **B♭** as A♯ and it is E minor's German sixth, C–E–G–A♯. With that note at the bottom, the two close in: **B♭** rises and **C** falls, both onto **B**. After the silence, V and i.

Try it Play the three flavors in A minor, then in C minor: **A♭–C–F♯**, **A♭–C–D–F♯**, **A♭–C–E♭–F♯**. Major keys use them too: C major borrows A♭ from C minor (Handout 384), so its French sixth is A♭–C–D–F♯. Practice: Exercise 73.

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