

Monteverdi Gloria a 8 M 37

Meet the Chain of Fifths use the online chord player or you keyboard to make the chords

You've already met chains of fifths several times in the Gloria though you may not have been aware that they are a "thing". This activity explains what they are, how they can make the music modulate or not, and helps you listen and look out for them in different types of music.

From lots of the activities you know that the tonic chord follows on really nicely from the dominant. In Activity 24, you studied two passages from the Gloria where there is a chain or sequence of dominant and tonic chords. Look again at that Activity Sheet.

Find the passage that starts at bar 41 "te, glorificamus te"

The chords are E, A, D, G, C. E is the dominant of A. A is the dominant of D - and so on. Each note is the tonic of the preceding note and the dominant of the next one. We really like the sound of that sort of a progression. The basses have the root of each chord, leading to their jumpy but nicely predictable line. Since dominants and tonics are a 5th apart, progressions like this are called chains of 5ths. In bars 45 to 47, Monteverdi goes through the chain again. You can see the same sort of thing happening in bars 54 - 58 (see Activity 32). Find Activity 35. There are 5 examples there of a chain of 5ths. Identify them. They are the bits that are not so tricky to sing as some of the other chord change places.

C E⁷ A⁷ D⁷ G⁷ C

Five foot two, eyes of blue, but oh, what those five foot could do, has a - ny - bo - dy seen my girl?

Here the composer, Bart Howard altered the sequence by a semitone in bar 6. He changed the expected Bb chord into a B natural one. The key changes throughout - see the accidentals.

A^{m7} D^{m7} G^{m7} C^{m7} F^{m7}

Fly me to the Moon, and let me play a - mongst the stars; let me see what

B^{m7(b5)} E^{7(b9)} A^{m7} D^{m7} G⁹ C^{m9}

spring is like on Ju - pi - ter and Mars. In oth - er words, hold my hand

Julius Wechter, the composer of this tune stuck to the pattern for ages, shifting from dominant to tonic all the way from A major to Db major. This tune modulates too.

C E⁷ A⁷ D⁷

There was a lit - tle Spa - nish flea a re - cord star he thought he'd be

G⁷ C F B^b E^b A^b D^b G

he'd heard of sing - ers like Beat - les, The Chip - munks he'd seen on T. V.

Handel uses a chain of 5ths to make the bass line for his Passacaglia in G minor. To shape the line better, he uses some of the chords in 1st inversion. The whole piece is based on the same bass line. It doesn't modulate.

Listen to it played on the harpsichord on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHiW9XLU8tM>
There's a nice arrangement for orchestra on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP9RoYfU1hM>

G^m C^m F^m B^b E^b A^b D E^m

RP 1st RP RP RP 1st RP RP