Unit Four: Cadences

Although I-ii-V-I is a very basic progression, it can be useful to get started in musical theatre composition. The progression breaks down into two parts, the early part of the phrase, or the I, and the cadence, ii-V-I.

Let’s take a moment to review cadence options. You may have learned about the following cadences in your studies in music theory and composition:

* **Authentic Cadence: V-I** — oftenpreceded by a predominant (often either ii or IV).
* **Deceptive Cadence: V-vi** — often used to create a turnaround to a tag.
* **Half Cadence: I-V** — often used to create a feeling of continuation
* **Plagal Cadence: IV-I** — often used in pop music to create an alternative to V-I.

The cadence at the end of a phrase is also noteworthy for an increase in the speed of the **harmonic rhythm**, for example, which might move from one chord per measure, to two at the cadence so that ii-V would be within one bar.

In contemporary musical theatre writing — and in other genres of contemporary, popular music — the four cadence types are often presented in an altered form. In essence, the specific structure of the cadence may be less important than the specific chord to which the cadence arrives. The concluding chord in a cadence may also be a substitution for one of the chords listed above.

Substitutions include the following suggestions:

* Replace ii with IV, a secondary dominant, or a diminished seventh
* Replace V with IV, a tritone substitution, or a ii-V within the scope of a tritone sub
* Replace a final I with a slash chord a minor second away, an inverted I, or a major 7th

Many other substitutions are possible. Have fun exploring different alternatives.