

Basic materials melody – Part 1

CHAPTER 1. SCALES

This text is about the relationships between musical tones (pitches). We hope that you will get a feeling for interaction between tones for sight singing is more than producing a succession of intervals...

Tones in the exercises are selected from basic scales without accidentals (within the range c' and e''). An example of such a basic scale is the C-major scale.



Another example is the D-dorian scale (a so called church mode).



And a last example is the E-phrygian scale (a church mode too).



All tones of a scale have a number: the first = 1, the second = 2 etc.

CHAPTER 2. MAIN TONE, FAMILYTONES, CONTRASTTONES AND FAMILYTRIAD

In music, tones are somehow related to each other (by the way, this has nothing to do with the sort of scale: major, minor, church mode etc.) Basically it has something to do with the experiencing of contrast.

Example 1: Sing the following melody, merely consisting of first and the second tones of C-major (in short: 1-2) and ask yourself what you are experiencing.



Conclusion: Probably you experience some drive of tone D to the tone C. In other words: tone D creates -in relation to C- tension. When you sing after tone D tone C again, you probably experience this: tone C resolves the tension of tone D. The tone C functions as a stable tone; we call this tone therefore the **main tone**. Tone D is an active tone; we call this tone a **contrasttone**.

Example 2: Sing the following melody, merely consisting of tones C, E and G of C-major (in short 1-3-5) and ask yourself what you are experiencing.



Conclusion: Probably you experience hardly any drive of the last tone E to the tone C. In other words: E and C are stable tones in relation to each other. There is no need for tone E to solve some sort of tension. Tone E we call a **familytone**.

In the same way you can investigate all possible relationships between tones of a scale. After doing so, probably you'll accept the following conclusions when investigating the tones of the C-major scale:

1. Tone C is the most stable tone and is called the main tone, the tonic of 'finalis'. The function of this tone (in this case the first tone of a major scale) is complete relaxation ('we are home again'): remember this always!
2. Tones E and G are more or less stable tones in relation to each other and to the tonic. There is no explicit drive to resolve tension (if any) into the tonic. Tones E and G are familytones
Important note: there are melodic situations where tone G more or less has to relax in tone C. But the drive to relax is less and not to compare with the drive of the contrasttones (see below).
3. Tones D, F, A and B are contrasttones: tones that –generally speaking- contrast to the familytones. They have a drive to relax, to resolve some sort of tension. Resolving their tension is only successful when the main tone or its familytones follow (nota bene: this is true from a melodic point of view; we don't discuss the influence of other musical parameters such as rhythm).

You already have noticed the following: familytones are tones of a triad, built on the main tone. Generally speaking, tones of a triad built on the main tone of a scale are familytones: the **'familytriad'**. Tones outside this familytriad are contrasttones (of course, these tones can form a triad too...but the familytriad is for now the most important).

In our trainingtool you'll fully understand how these so called functional relations between melodytones work. It will help you to understand the goals of musical motion and thus the logic of a melody as a whole.

In the next chapter we'll give some simple examples interaction between main tone, family- and contrasttones.

CHAPTER 3. FIRST BASIC MELODIC MODEL: neighbour tones.

All examples in this chapter are based on of the C-major scale. That means that the tones C, E and G (1-3-5) are the most stable tones.

3. First basic model: neighbour tones

A neighbour tone is a ornamental tone: it embellishes a main tone. In the first example below you see the main tone C and the (upper) neighbour tone D, in the second the main tone C and the (lower) neighbour tone B etc. Study the following short musical fragments and draw some conclusions.

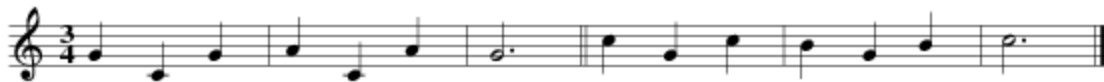


Remarks:

- Main tone is C and the familytones are E and G. All the other tones are contrasttones.
- All contrasttones are in this example neighbour tones (2,7,4 and 6): they have a explicit drive to resolve
- In fact, these examples show the main tone and its familytones that are embellished with a neighbour tone.

3.2. Neighbour tones as longdistance connection.

Let's have a look to the following melodies.



These melodies without embellishing tones look like:



So, they are based on the progressions 5-6-5 and 1-7-1 in C-major when we look to the most important tones.

3.3. Incomplete neighbour tones

Let's have a look to the following melody in C-major. That means that the tones C, E and G (1-3-5) are the most stable tones.



The first example shows you a smooth, curved melody with main tone E and neighbour tones F and D. The neighbour tones are called complete because they are preceded and followed by tone E. In the second example the second tone E is missing. Tone F is not followed by tone E and is therefore called an incomplete neighbour tone. Tone F is fact followed by another neighbour tone. However, when you sing this melody, you probably experience that

the goal of tone F is tone E. In other words: the tension of tone F is solved, but not immediately.

IMPORTANT: for educational reasons we think in the examples so far from the C major scale. Let's put in another way: in the example above tone E is start and goal of the melody. In these examples you may see the tone E as the first tone of a E-phrygian scale or the fifth tone of a a-minor scale or the first tone of a self-defined scale! The function of such a tone is complete relaxation and gives stability. The exercises of our trainingtool doesn't necessarily start or end with a stable tone...so take your time for a good look! Examples below will illustrate this point.

CHAPTER 4. SECOND BASIC MELODIC MODEL: PASSING TONES.

Again, all examples in this chapter are based on tones of the C-major scale. That means that the tones C, E and G (1-3-5) are the most stable tones.

4.1. Second basic model: passing tones

A passing tone is a ornamental tone too: it allows smooth, scale-wise motion by "filling-in" the space between two tones. In the first and second example below you see the main tone C and its familytone E, connected by passing tone D. In the last example you see the main tone C and its familytone G, connected by passing tones B and A. Study the following short musical fragments and draw some conclusions.



Remarks:

- The function of passing tones is connection. Passing tones in these examples make a connection between 1 – 3, 3 - 5 and 5 – 8 (= 1)
- There are two types of passing tones: ascending and descending.
- In fact, these examples show main tones and familytones that are connected with contrasttones.

4.2. Passing tones as longdistance connection.

Let's have a look to the following melodies.



These melody without embellishing tones looks like:

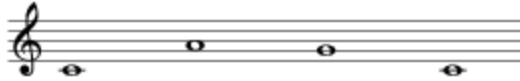


So, these melody is based on the progression 1-2-3 in C-major when we look to the most important tones.

CHAPTER 5. HOW TO TRAIN YOURSELF

It will be clear that finding the main tone, the familytones and contrasttones is an important job when studying a melody. However, the most important job is to find the main tone, i.e. the tone of a melody that has the function of complete relaxation (what the role is of the tonic in major-, minorscales and the role of the finalis in the church modes). What we further know is that tones of the triad built on this main tone are familytones. Other tones have a drive to these tones. Let's give some examples.

5.1 Example 1



Remarks:

- Tone C is start and goal. Let's assume tone C is the main tone.
- Tone G is a familytone of tone C
- Tone A is an (incomplete) neighbour tone of tone G

Study plan

- Sing the tones C'-E'-G'-G'-E'-C'
- Sing the tones C'-G'-G'-C'
- Sing the tones G'-A'-G'
- Sing the tones C'-G'-A'-G'-C'
- Sing the complete melody C'-A'-G'-C' and listen to the inner movement of the tones

5.2 Example 2



Remarks:

- Tone F is goal and can be seen as the main tone (this example could be an end of a melody, e.g. in F-major)
- Tone A is a familytone of tone F
- Tone G is a passing tone, that connects tone A with tone F

Study plan

- Sing the tones F'-A'-C'-C'-A'-F'
- Sing the tones F'-A'-F'
- Sing the complete melody A'-G'-F' and listen to the inner movement of the tones

5.3 Example 3



Remarks:

- Tone C is start and tone G goal (however, imagine that tone C follows tone G; it would be a possible, not necessarily ending which give a sense of completeness...). We can see tone C as the main tone.
- Tone G is a familytone of tone C
- Tone D is a (complete) neighbour tone of tone C

Study plan

- Sing the tones C'-E'-G'-C''-C''-G'-E'-C
- Sing the tones C'-D'-C'
- Sing the tones C'-C''-G'-C'
- Sing the complete melody and listen to the inner movement of the tones.

Memorytraining

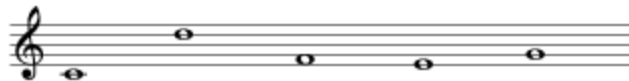
Try to sing tone D' at the end, so:



Remarks:

- in this case, most of our students think that they have sing a new tone D...we hope you know better!

5.4 Example 4



Remarks:

- Tone C is start and tone G goal (however, tone C as last note is not necessarily but would complete the melody...see remark 'memorytraining' below). We can see tone C as main tone.
- Tone G is a familytone of tone C
- Tone E is a familytone of tone C
- Tone F' is a neighbour tone of tone E'
- Tone D'' is a neighbour tone of tone C'', that isn't written

Study plan

- Sing the tones C'-E'-G'-C''-C''-G'-E'-C'
- Sing the tones C'-C''-D''-C'' and C'-D''-C'
- Sing the tones C'-E'-F'-E'-G' and C'-F'-E'-G'
- Sing the tones C'-D''-C'-E'-F'-E'-G' and C'-D''-C'-F'-E'-G'
- Sing the complete melody and listen to the inner movement of the tones.

Memorytraining

Try to sing tone C" at the end, so the tension of tone D" is resolved!

5.5 Example 5



Remarks:

- Tone B is start and tone B is goal.
- Tone B is a familytone of tone E. Tone E can be seen as the main tone. Why? Because we experience in an interval of a fifth the lowest as the final, the tone which complete relax (exercise: sing the tone B for a few seconds; you'll experience a drive to fall to the tone E...children don't to think about this natural phenomenon)
- Tone A is a neighbour tone of tone B
- Tone D" is a neighbour tone of tone E", that isn't written

Study plan



- Sing the tones E'-G'-B'-E"-B'-G'-E'
- Sing the tones B'-E'-E"-B'-E' and B'-E'-E"-D"-E"-B'-E'
- Sing the tones B'-E'-B'-A'-B'-E'-B'-A'-B'
- Sing the tones B'-E'-E"-D"-E"-B'-A'-B'
- Sing the tones B'-E'-E"-D"-E"-A'-E'-A'-B'
- Sing the tones B'-E'-D"-E"-A'-E'-A'-B'
- Sing the complete melody and listen to the inner movement of the tones.

Memorytraining

Try to sing tone E" at the end, so the tension of tone D" is resolved!

5.6 Example 6



Remarks:

- Tone D has the function as a tonic (see remark 'memorytraining' below and listen to the implicit basic model D-C-D)
- Tone F is a familytone of tone D
- Tone E is a passing tone that connects the familytones tone D and F
- Tone C' is a neighbour tone
- Tone C" is a neighbour tone of the not written D"

Study plan

- Sing the tones D'-F'-A'-D'' and vice versa
- Sing the tones D'-E'-F'-D'-C'-D'
- Sing the tones D'-E'-F'-C'-D'
- Sing the complete melody and listen to the inner movement of the tones.

Memorytraining

Try to sing tone D'' at the end, so the tension of tone C'' is resolved!

5.7 Last examples with suggestions to understand the melodic structure

5.7.1 Implied main tone or familytone at the end

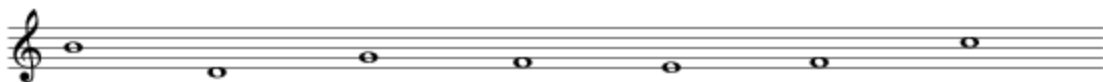


could be understood as



Note the incomplete neighbour tones G and B and their implied resolution in A.

5.7.2 Internal main tones or familytones implied



could be understood as



Note the incomplete neighbour tone B (first tone) and its resolution in C (last tone).

5.7.3 Basic models simultaneously



The last tone (main tone C) is implied. Study this example carefully and be excited about the wonderful interaction between the passingtone model (circles; 3.3 above) and the incomplete neighbour tone model (squares; 4.1 above).

EPILOG

The study plans are only suggestions. Other interpretations of the examples -which tone is the main tone- are possible. However, the most important point is that you as a student has to develop your own strategy. The basics should be clear and the software provides you many challenging examples.

We make for you software which generates more than 10 million exercises. When you've time on your side, you'll see them all!

Last but not least, some advice:

If you don't see the inner structure of a melody, the relationship of the melodytones, don't sing the melody and select an other exercise!