

## Chapter 3

### Elements of Melody

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter covers the types of melody, melodic characteristics, and melodic structure. Melody should be a well-crafted element of a song or musical composition. In music, melodic construction and development are very similar to solo dance development and construction. It is also similar to a soloist dancing among other dancers. Understanding melodic construction not only lends knowledge to dance composition, it also renders students better able to select music for composition and choreography, allows them to be better listeners and analysts, and in the end, better dancers, choreographers, and teachers.

#### Glossary Terms With Definitions

**arpeggio**—The notes of a chord played sequentially from the lowest notes of the chord (ascending) or from the highest note of the chord (descending).

**bridge**—A transitional section of a song, often between the A and B parts of the song.

**cadence**—The ending of a musical phrase. It is affected by melody, harmony, and rhythm and has two classifications: complete and incomplete.

**chord**—Three or more pitches played simultaneously and that produce various types of harmonies.

**chorus**—The section of a song that follows the verse. For each verse that is sung, a chorus usually follows. Also known as a refrain. Additionally the word *chorus* may refer to groups of singers.

**climax**—A point where the intensity of a phrase reaches a peak.

**complete cadence**—A conclusive end of a phrase. It gives the listener a sense that the phrase has ended.

**conjunct melodies**—Melodies that move primarily by whole or half steps.

**contrapuntal theme**—A theme in which different versions of the theme occur simultaneously.

**disjunct melodies**—Melodies with wider leaps between notes.

**harmony**—Occurs when two or more pitches sound at the same time. The sound created by the two or more pitches may be consonant (pleasant sounding or stable) or dissonant (incongruous, not well matched, or requiring resolution).

**imitative counterpoint**—Includes canons and rounds, where instruments or voices repeat the melody in specific, overlapping time intervals.

**incomplete cadence**—A phrase ending that indicates the music will continue.

**inconclusive cadence**—See *incomplete cadence*.

**interval**—The distance from a lower tone to a higher tone or from a higher tone to a lower tone; the distance between two pitches. Musicians count the first and last tone in an interval.

**key**—The tonality of a piece of music determined by the first pitch of the scale upon which it is based.

**melodic sequence**—When a motive is repeated beginning on different (usually successive) pitches. The repetition on different, successive pitches creates a melodic sequence.

**melodic structure**—Melody made up of motives, phrases, a climax, and a cadence.

**motive**—One element of melodic structure. If present as a melodic component, it is a short group of notes arranged in a distinctive melodic, rhythmic, or melodic–rhythmic pattern or design.

**movement**—A melody’s pace, how quickly it combines or divides beats. Also describes a main section of a longer musical work such as a symphony, concerto, mass, oratorio, cantata, suite, string quartet, or sonata. Movements are considered closed in form, meaning that they can stand alone harmonically and as a form. They can also be divided into sections themselves.

**nonimitative counterpoint**—Simultaneously occurring melodies. The melodies do not have to coincide or match in rhythm, time, or key. They merely occur simultaneously.

**open-ended melody**—An incomplete melody; it leads the listener to expect more. Open-ended melodies are often the building blocks for longer songs or themes.

**quodlibet**—The simultaneous performance of well-known tunes which often complement each other harmonically and rhythmically.

**range**—Describes a melody’s highest and lowest pitches. Generally refers to how together (narrow) or apart (wide) a melody’s notes are. Range may also refer to a singer’s range or the range of an instrument describing their highest and lowest pitches.

**refrain**—See *chorus*.

**scale**—A series of eight alphabetically named pitches, which usually progress by specified steps and half steps. The name of the scale is determined by the name of its beginning pitch. For example, a C scale begins on the pitch of C.

**self-contained melody**—A melody in songs or short instrumental pieces that is complete unto itself.

**theme**—A melody in a musical composition.

**tonic pitch**—The first pitch of any major or minor scale. The tonic pitch names the scale and gives the key its name. For example, the key of A is so named because the tonic pitch, the first pitch of the scale, is A.

**verse**—The first part of a song; after the chorus, the verse is repeated with different lyrics as many times as there are different lyrics. Hymns and Christmas carols exemplify this kind of structure.

## Glossary Terms Without Definitions

arpeggio—

bridge—

cadence—

chord—

chorus—

climax—

complete cadence—

conjunct melodies—

contrapuntal theme—

disjunct melodies—

imitative counterpoint—

incomplete cadence—

inconclusive cadence—

interval—

key—

melodic sequence—

melodic structure—

motive—

movement—

nonimitative counterpoint—

open-ended melody—

quodlibet—

range—

refrain—

scale—

self-contained melody—

sequence—

theme—

tonic pitch—

## Web Links: General

- Dolmetsch Online features a music dictionary, information on music theory and history, and services such as manuscript paper and printed music. [www.dolmetsch.com](http://www.dolmetsch.com)
- How Music Works has interactive tutorials in basic to advanced music theory as well as a song library. [www.howmusicworks.org](http://www.howmusicworks.org)
- Library of Congress (music history) Performing Arts Reading Room has information on composers and their works. [www.loc.gov/rr/perform/div-intro.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/perform/div-intro.html)
- A discussion of the opening octave interval of “Over the Rainbow,” the song form, and the song’s melodic composition. At the end of an analysis is a recording of Judy Garland singing the last verse.  
[www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=94281015&m=95478263](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=94281015&m=95478263)
- Information about Ida Rubenstein. [www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8292287](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8292287)
- Arrangement of Bigard and Ellington’s “Mood Indigo”  
[http://mp3lemon.org/song/381161/Dave\\_Grusin\\_-\\_04\\_-\\_Mood\\_Indigo](http://mp3lemon.org/song/381161/Dave_Grusin_-_04_-_Mood_Indigo)
- Dave Grusin’s arrangement of Ellington’s “C-Jam Blues.”  
[http://mp3lemon.org/song/381165/Dave\\_Grusin\\_-\\_08\\_-\\_C-Jam\\_Blues](http://mp3lemon.org/song/381165/Dave_Grusin_-_08_-_C-Jam_Blues)
- Arturo Toscanini conducting the first movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony plus text discussing the first movement. [www.dailykos.com/story/2011/10/13/1025809/-Thursday-Classical-Music-OPUS-55-Beethoven-s-Fifth-Symphony](http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/10/13/1025809/-Thursday-Classical-Music-OPUS-55-Beethoven-s-Fifth-Symphony)
- An instrumental version of “My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean.”  
[www.audionetwork.com/production-music/my-bonnie-lies-over-the-ocean\\_6946.aspx](http://www.audionetwork.com/production-music/my-bonnie-lies-over-the-ocean_6946.aspx)
- Chopin’s Variations on La Ci Darem La Mano.  
[www.carolinalive.org/images/players/episodes/episodes.php?id=502](http://www.carolinalive.org/images/players/episodes/episodes.php?id=502)

## Web Links: YouTube

- Bing Crosby’s “The Christmas Song”
- Jimi Hendrix’s “Purple Haze”
- Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Bali Hai”
- “Corcovado” (“Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars”)
- “Scales and Arpeggios”

- Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee"
- Fiona Apple's "Extraordinary Machine"
- Disney version of "Someday My Prince Will Come"
- Gustavo Dudamel conducting Ravel's *Bolero*
- Jean Pierre Rampal's version of Chopin's variations on Rossini's "Non piu mesta"
- Mozart's Symphonies No. 39 and 40

## Extended Learning Activities

1. **Aural analysis:** Identifying melodic motive sequences. If you listen to these and other examples, you will become adept at identifying motives and how they contribute to the development of phrases.
  - Listen to or sing the song "Yankee Doodle." Do you hear how the melodic motive assigned to the words "Yankee Doodle" repeats at the beginning of each of the first three phrases of the verse?
  - Listen to the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The first movement motive is an example of a motive that is sequenced and developed throughout the movement.
  - Listen to Jobim, Mendonça, and Hendricks's "One Note Samba." This song employs a rhythmic and melodic motive sequence in the verse that repeats on the same pitch twice (repetition), moves to another pitch (first sequence), and then returns to the opening pitch (second sequence). A second and different rhythmic and melodic motive and its sequence appears in the chorus.
2. **Conjunct or disjunct melodies:** Listen to your favorite songs. Try to classify the melodies as conjunct or disjunct. Bring your favorite song to class to play. See if your classmates agree with your conclusion about the song's melody being conjunct or disjunct.
3. **Melodic analysis:** Bring an example of a melody to class. Be prepared to discuss its range, shape, movement, cadence, climax, motives, and phrases. What kinds of melodies were among the majority that classmates shared?
4. **Melodic mode analysis:** Locate tunes that are examples of melodies written in major, minor, and a combination of the two modes. Bring the songs to class to be played and analyzed. If this proves difficult, ask your instructor for suggestions.
5. **Melodic composition project:** Choose an instrument with which to create a melody (remember the voice is an instrument as well as glasses filled with various levels of water). If a music lab is available to you or if your computer has a program similar to Garage Band, you could create a melody using the computer. (Free music composition programs are available on the Internet.) Craft a melody including two or more melodic elements discussed in this chapter. Be prepared to perform your composition for the class. (Hint: If possible, notate or record your melody so that you can perform it or play it back in class. You will need some way of being able to



repeatedly perform or play your melody. Prerecording your melody helps to cut down on performance nervousness. You may even want to play along with your recording, perhaps creating a second melody that goes along with yet contrasts with your first melody. This would be creating a contrapuntal melody.) Remember that a melody is made up of pitches. Clapping or drumming provides a rhythm. But a melody must have a pitch sequence. You can use the notation paper on worksheet 3.1 to notate your melody.

## **Forms, Worksheets, and Other Materials for Student Work**

- Worksheet 3.1