

Writing Melodies

In this module you will learn how to structure a tune so that is interesting, but holds together; it is not just a few different ideas thrown together. You will understand how to use various tune-building tools (such as sequence, inversion and isorhythm) to achieve this. You will see how to increase excitement in melodies, and give them strong endings. You will be shown how to use dynamics, phrasing and articulation to make the best of the melody. You will also be given the ranges of notes different instruments can play, and the pitches that the strings of string instruments are tuned to, so you can be sure that the tune you write for an instrument can indeed be played on that instrument. There is a samples of effective melodies (some written by famous composers like Haydn), so you can see what a good melody can look like. You can also study a melody in which coloured arrows are used to show how the melody is built. There are many short assignments in which you can try out the various techniques introduced in the course. There is a special section on melodies in minor keys, which have to be based on the melodic (not harmonic) minor scale.

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An easy way of developing a melodic idea is to change the intervals between some of the notes. Here is a very simple way of doing it:

A musical staff in G major, 2/4 time, showing a sequence of chords: G, Em, C, and D. The melody consists of eighth notes. Colored arrows (blue and orange) point to specific intervals between notes, illustrating how the intervals are changed to develop the melodic idea.

M. SAMPLE OF MELODY WRITING

The arrows show how the composer has developed material.

Diminution

Augmentation

Isorhythm

Inversion

A complex musical score in 3/8 time, marked *Poco adagio*. It features three staves of music. Colored arrows (purple, blue, yellow, red, green) connect notes across the staves to illustrate various techniques: Diminution (purple arrows), Augmentation (green arrows), Isorhythm (blue arrows), and Inversion (red arrows). Dynamics like *p* and *f* are indicated throughout the piece.