

2019

Tools for the Contemporary Composer

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
Listening with Purpose.....	4
Creating a Framework for Creativity	7
MELODY	9
Rest and Repetition in Melodic Writing.....	9
<i>Rest</i>	9
<i>Repetition</i>	9
MELODIC FORM.....	10
<i>Motif</i>	10
<i>Phrase</i>	10
MELODIC SHAPE	16
COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES USING MELODY	17
<i>Sequence</i>	17
<i>Rhythmic Displacement</i>	17
<i>Octave Displacement</i>	18
MELODIC DISSONANCE/ NEIGHBOUR TONES	20
SONG FORM.....	24
<i>AABA</i>	24
<i>AABC</i>	24
<i>ABABC(AB)</i>	24
<i>Blues</i>	24
TONALITIES AND SCALES	26
Diatonic.....	26
Modes.....	26
<i>Ionian</i>	26
Ethnic Scales.....	28
<i>Pentatonic</i>	28
Indian scales (Ragas).....	28
Popular Music Scales (Jazz, Blues, Rock etc)	29
<i>Blues Scale</i>	30
<i>Mixolydian Bebop Scale</i>	30
<i>Altered Scale</i>	30
Symmetric Scales.....	30
Whole tone	31
Octatonic Scales	32
12 Tone / Serialist Techniques	36
PROGRESSIONS	38
Pop/Rock Hit Chord Progressions	38
<i>Chromatic Descending Major Triads</i>	39
<i>III Major</i>	39
<i>V Minor</i>	39

The Bridge	40
Chord Progressions in 19 th Century Classical Music	41
Neapolitan chord.....	41
The Augmented 6th Chord -	42
Deceptive resolution	42
Chord Progressions Borrowing from the French 6 th	43
Mediant Movement Chord Progressions	44
Chromatic Movement of the 6 th Degree	46
BASS LINES.....	48
Parallelism.....	52
SONORITIES.....	55
Quartal Harmony	55
Quintal Harmony	57
Chimina (arrangement using quintal harmony)	58
Tone Cluster (Cluster).....	59
Clusters with semitone/tone combinations can create very interesting chords when notes are displaced into different octaves. Some of the more dissonant chords are very useful in film-scoring.....	60
Pandiatonicism	61
Polytonality	65
Superimposing Chords in Contemporary Styles/Polychords	66
RHYTHM	67
Dance Rhythms from the Middle East	67
Saidi.....	67
<i>Baladi</i>	67
<i>Fellahi</i>	67
Additive Rhythm.....	68
<i>Paidushko Horo</i>	69
<i>Rachenitza</i>	69
<i>Kopanitser</i>	69
<i>Turkish/Greek</i>	69
Additive Rhythm in Popular Music	69
<i>Hemiola</i>	70
<i>Metric Modulation</i>	70
Hocket	71
<i>Rhythmic Exercises</i>	72
Tabla	76
World Music Percussion Patterns	79
Gamelan	82
REPETITION	83
Pedal Point	83
Drone.....	83
Ostinato.....	84
MINIMALISM.....	84
<i>Phase Music</i>	85

<i>Cyclic Rhythm</i>	85
<i>Metamorphosis</i>	87
STRING WRITING FOR POPULAR MUSIC	88
String Techniques	88
Arranging	90
Strings in the studio	95
VOCAL ARRANGING	97
CONTEMPORARY HORN SECTION	103
ARRANGING CONCEPTS	103
FILMSCORING/COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES	105
Family	105
Horror	106
Action/ Adventure	107
Comedy	108
General Filmscoring Tools	108
Epic Progressions	110

COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES USING MELODY

Sequence

This melodic technique places repetitions of a motif at an interval higher or lower than the original motif. The repeated motif will have the same “shape” but not exactly the same melodic intervals in order to stay within the diatonic framework of the piece.

Toccata in F Major – J.s. Bach

A musical score for 'Toccata in F Major' by J.S. Bach. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. Both staves are in 3/8 time. The treble staff has a treble clef and the bass staff has a bass clef. The music features a repeating eighth-note pattern that shifts in pitch across the staves, demonstrating the sequence technique.

Fly Me to the Moon – Bart Howard

A musical score for 'Fly Me to the Moon' by Bart Howard. It consists of two staves of music in G major. The lyrics are written below the notes: "Fly me to the moon_ and let me play a -mong the stars_". The second staff continues with the lyrics: "let me see what spring is like on Ju - pi - ter and Mars_". The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Unlike Me – Charlie Winston

Rhythmic Displacement

This technique places the repeat of a melodic or rhythmic phrase on a different beat of the bar than the first phrase. The result is that there will be a strong shift of accents within the piece.

Fascinating Rhythm – George and Ira Gershwin

A musical score for 'Fascinating Rhythm' by George and Ira Gershwin. It consists of two staves of music in G major. The lyrics are written below the notes: "Fas-ci-nat-ing rhy-thm you get me on the go Fas-ci -nat-ing rhy-thm I'm all a - qui-ver". The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a strong emphasis on rhythmic displacement.

In the song “Here and Now” saxophonist/composer Joe Lovano displaces the rhythm of the first phrase by placing it on the 3rd beat of the bar in the 2nd measure. This pattern is a bass ostinato that plays throughout the form of the piece.



Octave Displacement

Octave displacement is the technique of shifting notes of a melody so that they appear either up or down the octave from their original location. A melody with a smooth contour is made to have dramatic leaps.

In the 2nd movement of the choral masterpiece, Symphony of Psalms, Stravinsky uses octave displacement in the main theme. The motif of descending minor thirds becomes dramatically altered through this technique.

becomes

A musical example showing a transformation. The top staff shows a simple melody of eighth notes in G major. The bottom staff shows the same melody after applying octave displacement, where some notes are shifted up or down an octave to create dramatic leaps.

Here is the entire opening melody.

A musical score for two staves. The top staff is in G major and the bottom staff is in E major. Both staves show the opening melody of the Symphony of Psalms, demonstrating the use of octave displacement in the main theme.

Improvisers such as Pat Martino and Oz Noy use octave displacement to break up the smooth contour of scales. The example below is a transcription of Oz Noy using octave displacement within the symmetric dominant scale. See Video.

A musical score for a single staff in G major. It shows a transcription of Oz Noy's improvisation using octave displacement within a symmetric dominant scale, resulting in a more complex and jagged melodic line compared to the smooth contour of the original scale.

Symmetric Diminished

A musical staff in treble clef with eight notes. The notes are: A, G, B-flat, A, C, B-flat, D, C. The first note is sharp, the second is flat, the third is double sharp, the fourth is sharp, the fifth is double sharp, the sixth is sharp, the seventh is double sharp, and the eighth is sharp. The notes are separated by quarter note rests.

Tone-semitone scalar pattern; it is used when composing or improvising with diminished chords.

The scale can be seen as a product of two diminished 7th chords a tone apart.

A musical staff in treble clef with eight notes. The notes are: A, G, B-flat, A, C, B-flat, D, C. Below the staff, the notes are numbered 1 through 8 under each note. Above the staff, a bracket groups notes 2, 4, 6, and 8, and another bracket groups notes 1, 3, 5, and 7. This indicates the two diminished 7th chords that make up the scale.

Used by 20th Century composers such as Bartok (*Mikrokosmo 101, Diminished Fifths*) and Debussy (*Nuages* - the Ostinato is based on the second tetrachord of scale 2)

A musical staff in treble clef with four notes: A, G, B-flat, A. Below the staff, the notes are numbered 1 through 4 under each note. The staff ends with a repeat sign and a bass clef with a key signature of one flat.

The scale when used as a harmonic device yields only a few possibilities.

1. diminished and diminished 7th chords
2. minor and minor 7th chords

Ex. Octatonic patterns

*

The Rock Band King Crimson often experimented with 20th century techniques. "Red" is an instrumental piece written by Robert Fripp that incorporates the symmetric diminished scale. The use of tritone intervals is prevalent in this song as well.

(tonic-dominant harmony) in favor of a system that maintained an exact ordering of pitches.

Schoenberg – 3 Piano Pieces

Bill Evans – Twelve Tone Tune (only the melody is in 12 tone)

Rob Jarzombek – Cretaceous Chasm

The fundamental principle of 12-tone is that each composer can choose his/her own unique tone-row, a unique ordering of all the pitches of the chromatic scale. Every time the row is performed in the composition it must follow the same exact order without repeating any pitches. The first row created is called the prime row. Here is a row that I have chosen to create.



The prime row gets manipulated through the use of inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion techniques. All the rows become part of a 12-tone matrix, a grid that shows all the available transpositions, inversions, retrogrades and retrograde inversions.

Inversion - takes the intervals of a melody and creates a mirror image contour
a minor 3rd down becomes a minor 3rd up



Retrograde - reverses the order of pitches - last becomes first



Retrograde Inversion - is a combination of both of the above



Additive Rhythm

Additive Rhythm

Adding groups of three and two together to create new time signatures

Moving the group of 3

Kaval Sviri(Bulgarian Womens Choir, uses both of these)

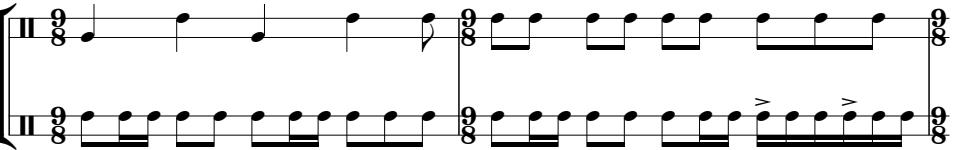
Bulgarian Dance Rhythms

- 5/16: 2 + 3 (Paidusko)
- 7/16: 2+2+3 (Rucenitsa)
- 7/16: 3+2+2 (Cetvorno)
- 9/16: 2+2+2+3 (Daicovo)
- 9/16: 2+3+2+2 (Gruncarsko)
- 11/16: 2+2+3+2+2 (Kopanitsa)
- 12/16: 3+2+2+2+3 (Petrunio)
- 12/16: 3+2+2+3+2 (Pusnoto)
- 15/16: 2+2+2+2+3+2+2 (Bucimis)
- 18/16: (3+2+2)+(2+2+3+2+2) Jove Male Mome (or 7/16+11/16)
- 22/16: (2+2+2+3)+(2+2+2+3)+(2+2) Sandansko Horo
- 25/16: (3+2+2)+(3+2+2)+(2+2+3+2+2) Sedi Donka

Additive rhythm in 4/4 time (fit odd and even number subgroups into 4/4, complex rhythms can be played in the melody while the drums play in a typical 4/4 pattern)

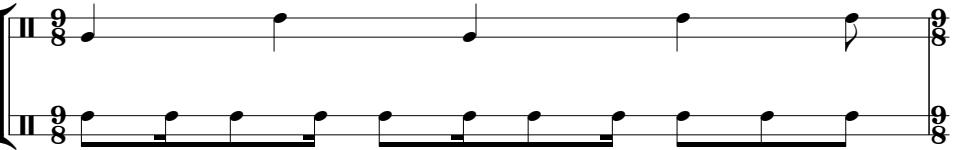
2 Karsilamas/Greek

23

Perc. 

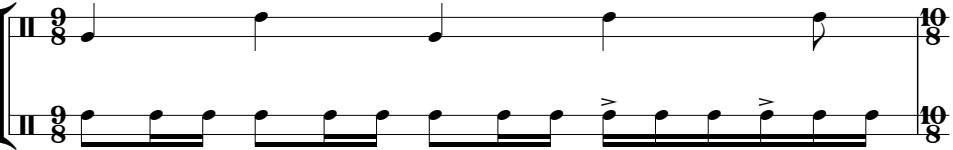
Perc. 

25

Perc. 

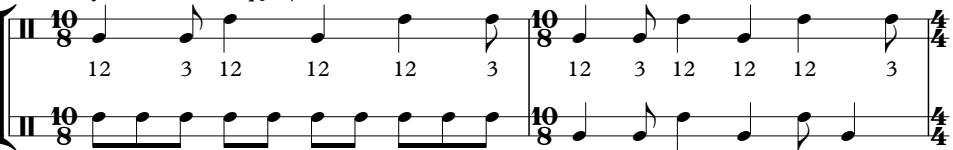
Perc. 

26

Perc. 

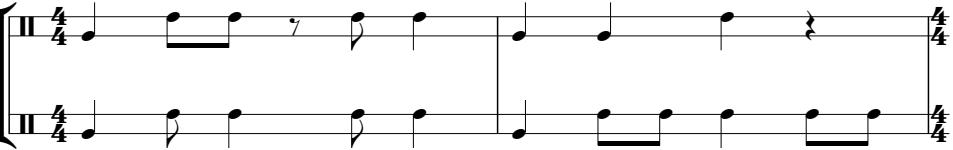
Perc. 

27 Rhythms from Iraq/Jurjuna

Perc. 

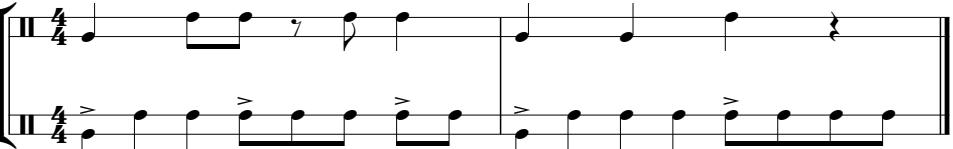
Perc. 

29 Chiftitelli/Turkish

Perc. 

Perc. 

31

Perc. 

Perc. 

VOCAL ARRANGING

Vocal Arranging

Traditional Folk

Traditional Folk
Figure out main chords ahead of time

All notes follow the contour of the main melody

All Notes follow the contour of the
Ex. Storm Comin - Wailin Jenny's

♩ = 80

SOPRANO

Em D Bm C Em

I'm on a road to sun - set_____ moon is ris-ing fast_____

ALTO

I'm on a road to sun - set_____ moon is ris-ing fast_____

Alto

I'm on a road to sun - set_____ moon is ris-ing fast_____

5 Em D Bm D Em D B

I'm on a road to sun - set know-in this won't last_____

I'm on a road to sun - set know-in this won't last_____

I'm on a road to sun - set know-in this won't last_____

Borrowed from Bulgarian Women's
One note stays the same while 2 move in 3rds or 6ths
Borrowed from Pilentze Pee

9 Em

I'm on a road to sun - set moon is ris - ing fast

I'm on a road to sun - set moon is ris - ing fast

I'm on a road to sun - set moon is ris - ing fast

13

I'm on a road to sun - set know-in this won't last

I'm on a road to sun - set know-in this won't last To T.

I'm on a road to sun - set know-in this won't last