Composing

Now that we have had a refreshing review of chords, and we understand phrases and form, it is now time to get to the business of actually writing a composition! There are basically five steps this author uses to write music. These five steps are:

Step #1 - Write the Melodic Line

Step #2 - Repeat Patterns and Sequences

Step #3 - Select Chords for Harmony

Step #4 - Add Accompaniment and Fill-In the Parts

Step #5 - Expand the Music to a More Complicated Version



Step #1 - Write the Melodic Line

As we learned in our discussion of the Overtone Series, the notes of the Tonic Chords act as magnets for all of the other tones in the scale. You will recall that C is the strongest magnet tone, G is the second strongest magnet tone, and E is the third strongest magnet tone. On the musical alphabet below, draw three circles around every C; draw two circles around every G; draw one circle around every E:

C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

Answer the following questions using only the natural pull toward the circled magnet notes shown above:

1. D is between two magnet tones. What are they? _____ (E & G or C & E?)

2. D wants to move to _____ (C or E?) because it is the strongest magnet tone.

3. F is between two magnet tones. What are they? _____ (E & G or C & E?)

4. F wants to move to _____ (E or G?) because it is only a half-step from F. Note, G is a stronger magnet but it is a whole step away while E is only a half-step away from F. So, F pulls to E.

5. B wants to move up to C because it is only a _____(half or whole?) step away from the most powerful tone in C's scale. That is why B is called the "leading tone" in C's

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scale. The 7th tone of any major scale is the leading tone because it leads one's ear into wanting to hear next the tonic tone. The leading tone usually resolves into the tonic tone. But not always!

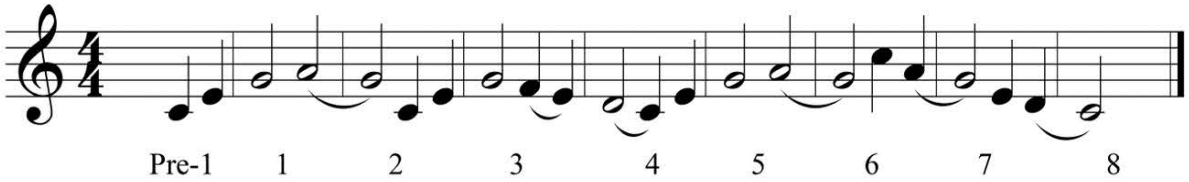
Answers: **1.** C & E; **2.** C; **3.** E & G; **4.** E; **5.** half



Arrows have been added to the musical alphabet below to show you how the tones want to move:



Here are a few measures of music to study:



1. The Natural Magnetic Pull of C's Tonic Chord is observed in several instances in the above melody. (Indicated with small slur marks). What are the three Magnetic Tones of C's Tonic Chord? _____ (C E G or F A C?)

2. At the end of M1, you see the A tone moving down to the _____ (E or G?) tone.

3. In M3, F is pulled down a half-step to an _____ (A or E?) tone.

4. M4 shows us the strong magnetic pull of C as the half note _____ (F or D?) moves down a whole step to the most powerful tone in C's scale.

5. At M5 and M6, the half note A is strongly attracted to the _____ (F or G?) tone and moves to it.

6. The attraction that moves A to G is shown again in M6 and M7. _____ (Yes or No?)

7. At M7 and M8 we see the D move down a whole step to the powerful _____ (G or C?) tone.

Answers: **1.** C E G; **2.** G; **3.** E; **4.** D; **5.** G; **6.** Yes; **7.** C

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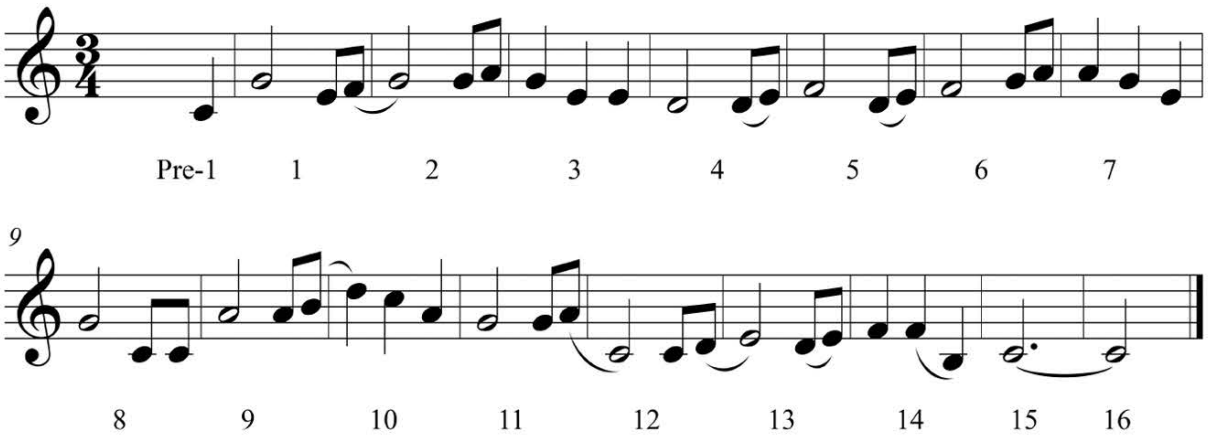
The magnetic pull does not **always** have to control the movement of tones. The magnetic pull is always present, but the **composer** is the one moving the tones around. Tones can go in any direction the composer desires. Please remember that **you** are in control and are the creative force behind your music composition. You will not always use the pull of the magnetic tones in your composition.

Below are some more measures of music to contemplate. In this example, the composer did **not** allow the magnetic pull of the Tonic Chord tones to control the movement of the non-magnetic tones (indicated with slur marks). Okay, in a few instances she **did** allow tones to move toward the magnetic tones, but only because the melody sounded better that way.

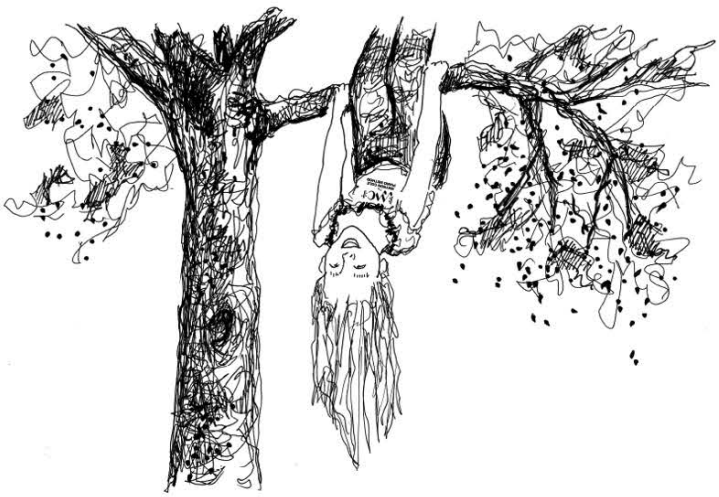


1. At the end of M1, we see an F that does not move down to E, but moves instead up to _____ (A or G?).

2. At M4, we see that D does not move down to C, but moves up to _____ (B or E?). D moves up to E again in M5. _____ (Yes or No?)

3. At the end of M9, we see Leading Tone B not moving to C, but instead moving up to _____ (F or D?).

4. At the end of M11, the A takes a big leap down to _____ (F or C?) instead of moving to a G, as it usually wants to move.



5. At the end of M12, D moves up to _____ (F or E?) instead of moving down to C, as it usually wants to move. D moves up to E again in M13. _____ (Yes or No?)

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6. At M14, F moves way down to a B tone instead of moving to _____ (E or D?), as it usually wants to move.

Answers: 1. G; **2.** E, Yes; **3.** D; **4.** C; **5.** E, Yes; **6.** E

Here are some general rules that this composer uses:



Rule 1: Begin Tune A on at least **two tones** from the tonic chord or I chord. This tells the listener the key in which you are writing.

Rule 2: Let your melody follow the pull of the magnet notes when those tones sound best; but you do **not** have to follow the magnetic pull throughout.

Rule 3: Each tune should have at least four measures. Each four measures is called a phrase. You can have as many measures as you desire, but you must have at least four measures in Tune A and at least four measures in Tune B.

Rule 4: If Tune A is **eight** measures long, end the second phrase on a tone from the I Chord (or a substitute secondary chord) or a tone from the V^7 chord (or a substitute secondary chord).

Rule 5: Begin Tune B on tones from the IV chord. In C's scale the tones of the IV chord are F A C.

Rule 6: If Tune B is only one or two phrases long, end the last phrase on a tone from the I Chord, preferably a C tone.

Rule 7: If you want the composition to repeat back to Tune A, then end the second phrase on a tone from the V^7 chord or a tone from a secondary substitute chord for the V^7 chord.

Rule 8: The piece must end with the tonic tone as the lowest note that is being played in the bass clef and the tonic tone as the highest note in the treble clef. If you are composing in C, then the tonic tone is C.

If you write your music to have only the two tunes and no repeats, the composition is in AB form. If you want the music to repeat back to the beginning, the composition is in ABA form. ABA form is often called "Sonata Form".

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Let's Pause To Review

1. Every melody must have at least two different tunes. _____ (Yes or No?)

2. Tunes are identified with letter names. If a composition has only two different tunes, that composition is in _____ form. (ABA or AB?)

3. As you progress through advanced music literature, you will hear the term "Sonata Form". "Sonata Form" means the composition is written with _____ form. (ABA or AB?)

4. If you are writing a composition in C Major (or any other major key of your choice) the first measure should contain at least _____ (five or two?) tones from the tonic chord.

5. A phrase is a musical sentence. Phrases can be any length, but the most common phrases are _____ (4 or 6?) measures.

6. A phrase ends with a cadence. _____ (Yes or No?)

7. A cadence must contain two chords. _____ (Yes or No?)

8. The Dominant 7th chord (V^7) wants to move to the _____ (Sub-Dominant or Tonic?) chord.

9. The "magnet tones" of the tonic chord pull (or attract) all the other tones in the scale towards them. _____ (Yes or No?)

10. Can the composer ignore the magnetic pull of the tonic tones and move the tones in his/her composition anywhere he/she wishes? _____ (Yes or No?)

11. Must the tones always go towards the magnet tones? _____ (Yes or No?)



Answers: 1. Yes; **2.** AB; **3.** ABA; **4.** two; **5.** 4; **6.** Yes; **7.** Yes; **8.** Tonic; **9.** Yes; **10.** Yes; **11.** No

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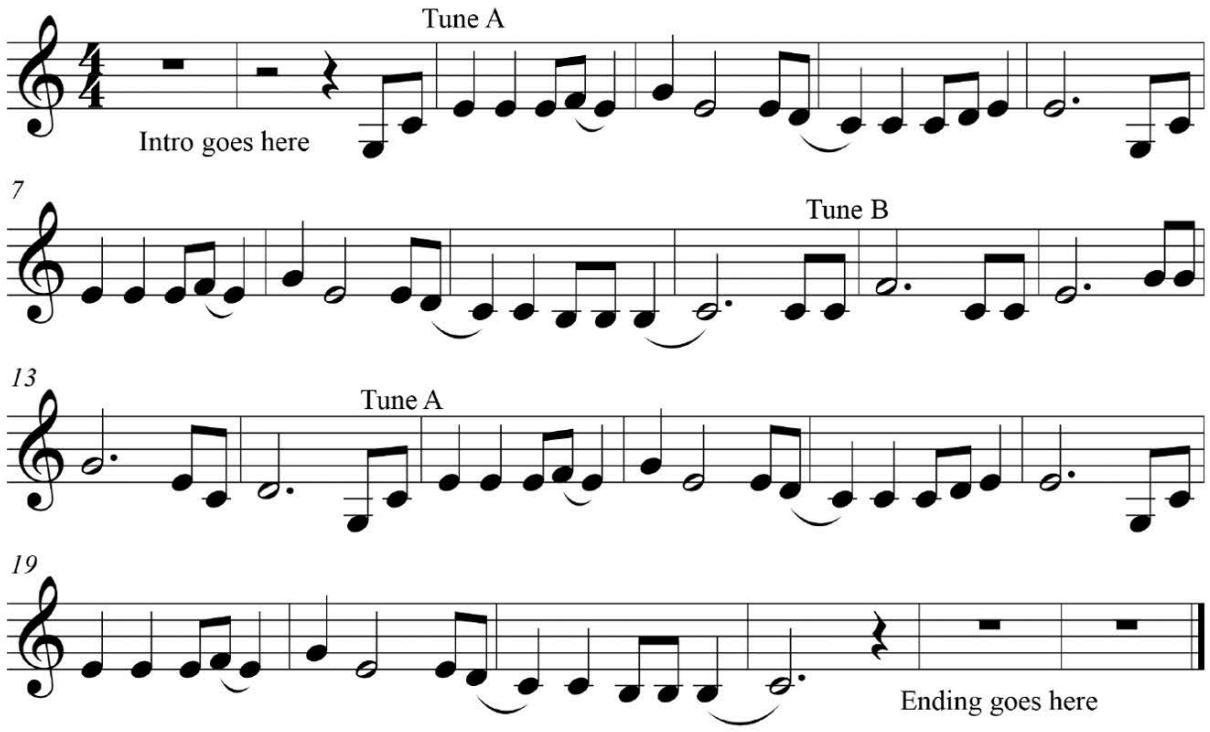

Observe that in the above example, the composer used fairly simple rhythms as she sketched in the melodic line. The natural magnetic pull of the Tonic Chord tones is indicated with small slur marks simply as a helpful reminder to you. You will **not** place slur marks in your music to show the natural magnetic pull of the tonic chord tones.

Look at the composition above to answer these questions:



1. The composer has left two measures blank at the beginning of the composition (this is optional) so that she can later create an introduction. _____ (Yes or No?) She also left space for an ending on the last two measures of the composition. Again, this is optional.

2. The composition is written in _____ form. (AB or ABA?)

3. The small slur marks throughout the composition are only visual helpers to show you where the natural magnetic pull of the tonic tones is in effect. In C Major, what are the three tones that serve as magnet tones? _____ (F A C or C E G?)

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The
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NOTES

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4. In your composition, you will **not** apply slur marks showing the pull of the magnetic tones. _____ (True or False)

5. The composer began the melodic line with tones from the Tonic Chord. _____ (Yes or No?)

6. The composer began Tune B with two tones from the _____ chord. (F or G?)

Answers: 1. Yes; **2.** ABA; **3.** C E G; **4.** True; **5.** Yes; **6.** F

NOTES: _____



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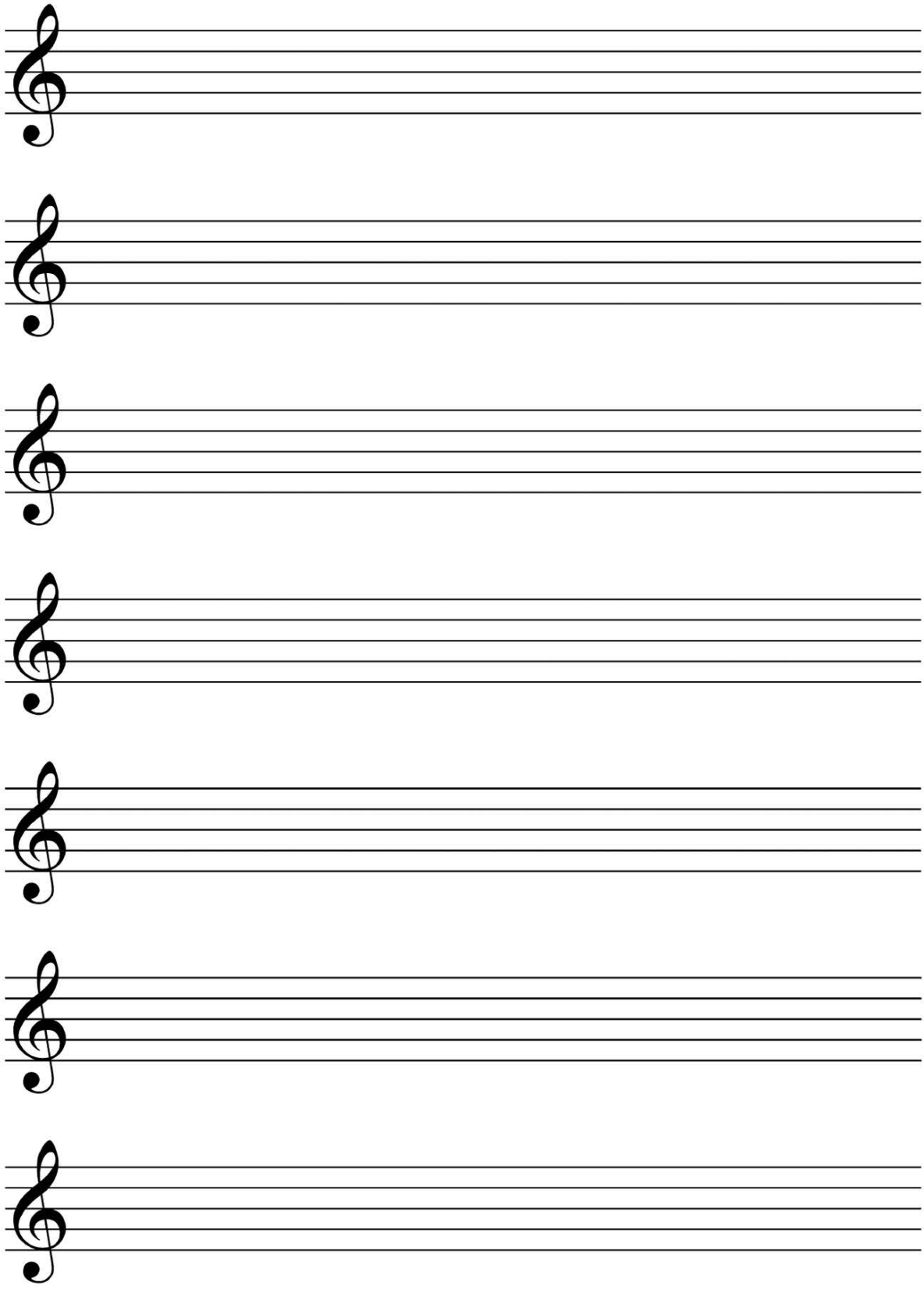
It is now your turn to compose your melodic line:



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