

Intro to Songwriting

Preliminary Questions:

Who are some of your favorite bands/songwriters?

What do you think makes a song good?

Today's Objective:

SWBAT identify/discuss the most important compositional element within a particular song.

Intro to Songwriting

The Four Elements:

- Lyrics
- Melody
- Harmony
- Rhythm

Examples:

[Gettin' Jiggy Wit It - Will Smith](#)

[Tombstone Blues - Bob Dylan](#)

[She Loves You - Beatles](#)

[I Only Want to Be with You - Dusty Springfield](#)

[Losing My Religion - R.E.M.](#)

[Summer Sun - Texas](#)

[Everybody Dance Now - C&C Music Factory](#)

[Running Up That Hill - Kate Bush](#)

For each of these examples, listen and identify the most important element.

Intro to Songwriting

To think about...

Go home and listen to some music today, perhaps one of your favorite bands. Do many of their songs tend to focus on one of the four elements, or do they take a more varied approach?

For next class...

You will bring in one of the songs you listened to and play it for the class on your ipod. Be prepared to discuss what element/elements are most important.

Top-Down Songwriting

- Start with a melody
- Add lyrics
- Harmonize (add chords)
- Add rhythm

Examples:

[Bob Dylan](#)

[Paul McCartney](#)

[Burt Bacharach/Hal David](#)

Bottom-Up Songwriting

- Begin with drumbeat/strum pattern
- Add chords
- Work out a melody to fit the chords
- Add lyrics

Examples:

[Paul Simon](#)

Kate Bush

Hook Method

- Create a riff with melodic/rhythmic interest
- Write words to make the riff into a hook
- Expand outwards with melody/harmony to frame the hook

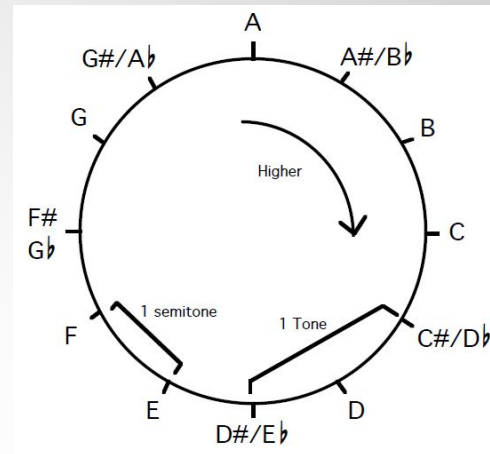
Examples:

[Brian Wilson](#)

Harmony Basics

Chords can be built starting from each note in a major or minor scale.

In the key of **C Major**, the chords would look like this:



To determine the **quality** of these chords (whether they are major or minor), let's analyze their intervals.

Major Chord Intervals:

Major 3rd

Perfect 5th

(count intervals starting on root note)

Minor Chord Intervals:

Minor 3rd

Perfect 5th

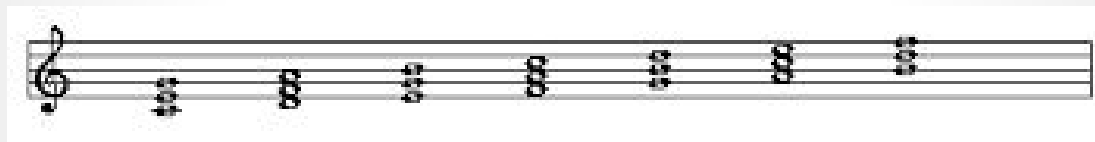
(count intervals starting on root note)

Minor 3rd = 3 half steps, **Major 3rd** = 4 half steps, **Perfect 5th** = 7 half steps

Harmony Basics continued...

All chords built from a particular scale are related, and can sound good in any order.

Chords built from a **C Major** Scale:



A musical staff in treble clef showing seven chords from the C Major scale. The chords are represented by their letter names and Roman numerals below the staff.

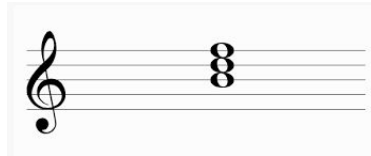
C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	Bdim
I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o

These chords can also be represented in **Roman numerals**. This is helpful because the chords relate to each other in the same exact way no matter what scale we use.

[Take it Easy - The Eagles](#) - Which of these primary chords does this song use?

Harmony Basics continued...

The chord built on the 7th scale degree of a major scale is a diminished chord and doesn't work so well in popular music.



Bdim
(vii° in C Major)

By lowering the bottom note of the triad by a 1/2 step, we create a much more usable chord. Is it major or minor?

[Help - The Beatles](#) - This song uses the chord built on the flat 7th

Melody Basics

What makes a melody memorable?

Melody Basics

Characteristics of a good melody:

combination of inside/outside notes

contour

rhythm

Melody Basics

We can classify a note in 3 ways:

- inside a chord
- outside a chord
- alien

Contour (shape)

- linear (mostly steps) [It's The End of the World As We Know It - R.E.M.](#)
- vertical (mostly leaps) [Immigrant Song - Led Zeppelin](#)
- rhythmic [Wanna Be Startin' Somethin' - Michael Jackson](#)

Lyrics Basics

What can you write about?

Lyrics Basics

Here are some suggestions:

- love songs (duh!)
- geography
- telephones/letters/other forms of communication
- cars/trains/planes
- crime and punishment
- the urban landscape
- answer songs and parodies
- time
- famous people
- books/movies
- put-down songs
- what's on the radio
- articles of apparel
- dances
- fantasy
- songs about writing songs
- politics/religion/spirituality/protest