

## Passing Tones

Using contours to create arpeggio patterns gives us a basic outline with which to compose a melody. While an arpeggio can create a relatively satisfying melody on its own, what is truly pleasing to the ear is stepwise motion. Arpeggios, because they inherently are composed of skips, therefore need additional tones to be added to create this type of motion.

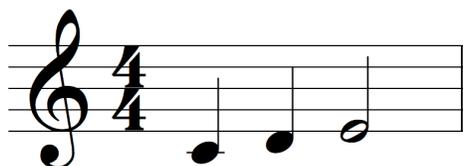
When embellishing an arpeggio, we draw on notes that fall in between the notes of the chord known as *non-harmonic tones*. Any note that is not a member of the chord is a non-harmonic tone. The non-harmonic tones that are of greatest interest to us are *scale tones*, i.e., notes that are members of the scale. Any notes that are not members of the chord or members of the scale are called *chromatic tones*. These are the most dissonant and should be used with care.

For example, if we were playing a C major arpeggio in the key of C the chord tones would be C, E, and G. The non-harmonic scale tones would be all the remaining notes in the scale, namely D, F, A, and B.

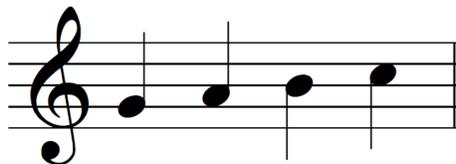


Non-harmonic tones naturally sound more intense than chord tones. As such, when using them one must be aware of the direction of motion used and also the beat on which they occur. Any time a non-harmonic tone is approached or left by skip it will add more intensity to the sound. Similarly, if the non-harmonic tone occurs on a strong beat it will create more intensity than if it occurs on a weak beat.

The first type of non-harmonic tone that we will learn to utilize is called a passing tone. As its name suggests, a passing tone happens when we pass from one chord tone to another.

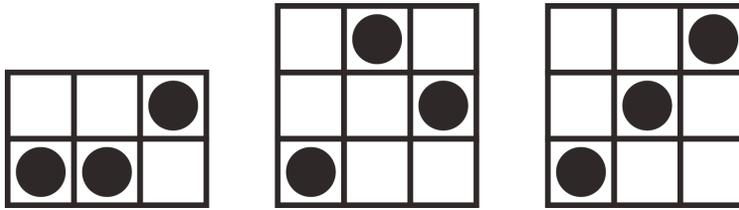


If played over a C major chord, the second note D would be a passing tone. A passing tone is a non-harmonic tone which is approached and left by step in the same direction. It is also possible to have several passing tones one after another like this:



In this case the notes A and B are both passing tones. You will inevitably get two passing tones any time you move from the fifth of the chord up to the root of the chord (or vice versa). The reason is that this interval is a Perfect 4<sup>th</sup>, which is larger than the other intervals in the chord.

In order to use a passing tone, you first need two chord tones that are adjacent to one another, vertically. In each of the following contours, identify where there is an opportunity for a passing tone:



**Exercise: Using Contours and Rhythms Together**

Step 1: Using the pattern of whole steps and half steps, determine the notes in the key of \_\_\_ major.

\_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: Determine the names of the chords in the key you have chosen.

Chord #	Roman Numeral	Notes	Chord Name
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

Step 3: Create a chord progression that contains four chords. Write it with Roman numerals.

\_\_\_\_\_

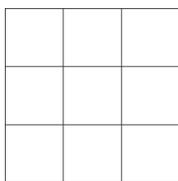
Step 4: Write this same progression using actual chord names. Ex: C Major.

\_\_\_\_\_

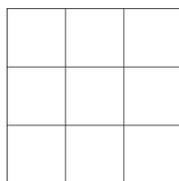
Step 5: Write the chords on the staff using proper voice leading. For now, write out treble parts only.



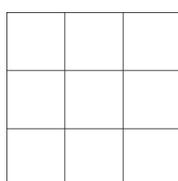
Step 6: Choose three contours. Note that each contour can vary in terms of how many events and pitches it contains. Note: IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO USE EVERY SQUARE.



**A**



**B**



**C**

Step 7: choose three rhythms that correspond to the contours you have chosen.



**A**

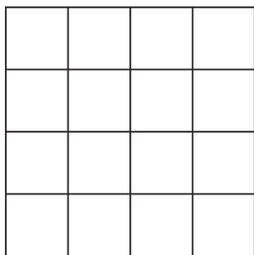


**B**

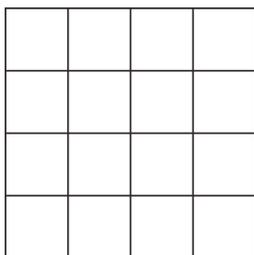


**C**

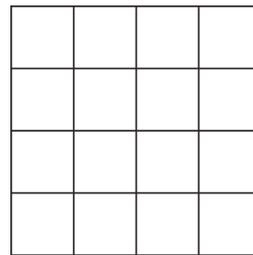
Step 8: Write out a motive that combines each contour with its corresponding rhythm.



**A**

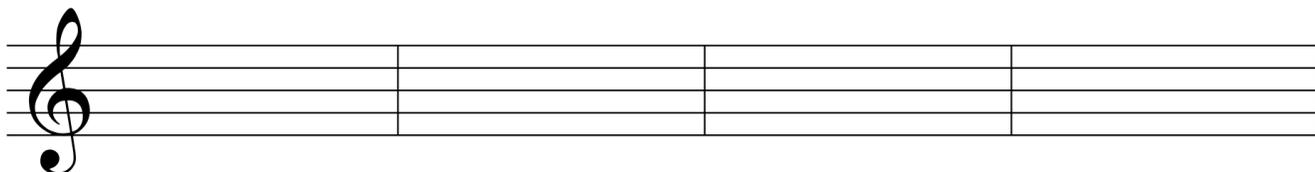


**B**



**C**

Step 9: Apply each motive to the chord progression you have already written out above.



Step 10: Add passing tones to at least one of the motives. Be sure to reuse the passing tones if the motive occurs twice. Also, use the correct rhythmic values to ensure your measure contains 4 beats.

