

Final project instructions

For your final project, you'll compose a short piece (ca. 32 bars) in classical style, conforming to the principles of harmony and voice-leading as presented this semester. In particular, the piece will make good use of harmonies other than the tonic and dominant, and will incorporate at least four applied chords *outside* your cadence in another key (see below).

1. FORM

Your piece will take a *rounded* binary form, comprising two halves of roughly equal length, separated by a repeat barline. A typical piece will comprise *four* four-bar phrases, making eight bars in each half, for a total of 16 bars. These four phrases will conform to the following scheme of harmonies and cadences:

Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4
starts in the home key; ends with a HC in the home key	starts in the home key; ends with a PAC in the OTHER key	starts in the OTHER key; ends with a HC in the home key	starts in the home key; ends with a PAC in the home key

If you choose a *major* key as your home key, then the *other* key will be that of the *dominant* (V). If you choose a *minor* key as your home key, then the *other* key will be that of the *mediant* (III).

Note that each half constitutes a *period*. You may use any type of period you wish for either half (see below).

The following represents the simplest, path-of-least-resistance form:

symmetric <i>parallel</i> period		symmetric <i>contrasting</i> period	
Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4
a	a'	b	a''
4 bars	4 bars	4 bars	4 bars
starts in the home key; ends with a HC in the home key	starts in the home key; ends with a PAC in the OTHER key	starts in the OTHER key; ends with a HC in the home key	starts in the home key; ends with a PAC in the home key

Note that this form allows you to reduce, reuse, and recycle your efforts, as it incorporates *three* versions of your opening phrase.

VARIANTS

If you'd like to pursue a more varied form, you may...

...compose either half as an *asymmetric* period, i.e. with two phrases of differing length

...compose the first half as a symmetric *contrasting* period:

symmetric <i>contrasting</i> period		symmetric <i>contrasting</i> period	
Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4
a	b	c	a'
4 bars	4 bars	4 bars	4 bars
starts in the home key; ends with a HC in the home key	starts in the home key; ends with a PAC in the OTHER key	starts in the OTHER key; ends with a HC in the home key	starts in the home key; ends with a PAC in the home key

...compose the fourth phrase to end with a *deceptive* cadence in the home key, followed by a fifth phrase that provides the deferred perfect authentic cadence:

symmetric <i>parallel</i> period		symmetric <i>contrasting three-phrase</i> period		
Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4	Phrase 5
a	a'	b	a''	a'''
4 bars	4 bars	4 bars	4 bars	4 bars
HC	PAC	HC	DC	PAC
home key	home → OTHER	OTHER → home	home key	

...compose the first half as a *double* period, so that the piece comprises *eight* (two-bar) phrases:

symmetric <i>parallel double</i> period				symmetric <i>contrasting phrase group</i>			
inconclusive period		conclusive period		phrase group		conclusive period	
Phr.1	Phr.2	Phr.3	Phr.4	Phr.5	Phr.6	Phr.7	Phr.8
a	b	a'	b'	c	c'	a	b''
2 bars	2 bars	2 bars	2 bars	2 bars	2 bars	2 bars	2 bars
HC	IAC	HC	PAC	HC	HC	HC	PAC
home key		OTHER key		OTHER → home		home key	

2. MEDIUM

You may write for any of the following:

- a) SATB choir (with or without instrumental reinforcement)
- b) piano solo
- c) melody instrument, accompanied by piano

If you choose option (c), you are responsible to perform your melody (and thus to bring your instrument to class on Wed 10 Dec).

3. FORMAT

- a) If you write for SATB choir, you need to submit only *one* copy of your score. You may place the voices on two staves, as we've done all semester in four-part vocal writing. Be sure to leave *at least one* blank staff between notated systems, to allow room for analytic notations (see below).
- b) If you write for piano solo, you need to submit *two* copies of your score (one for me, and one for the pianist who will perform it).
- c) If you write for melody instrument, you need to submit *two* copies (one for me, and one for the pianist who will accompany you), and retain a third copy for your own use in performance.

Please write with *excruciating* attention to neatness. I *will* deduct points for illegible notation, including improper vertical alignment of simultaneous notes. If you're using software, be sure to override the default settings as needed to produce proper vertical spacing of staves, proper horizontal spacing of notes, proper beaming of eighth-notes, and to prevent overlapping marks. (Unless you have *extensive* experience manipulating the software, you'll probably save yourself time by simply writing in manuscript.) Keep in mind that your score must be legible to your peers as well as to me, and that it will be photocopied.

Last, but not least: under the bottom staff, identify the key(s) and cadences, and supply Roman numerals and bass figures. On the staves, label each non-triadic tone ("P," "N," "IN," "sus," "ant," or "ped"), and make sure you've handled each properly (e.g., each passing note is approached and departed by *step* in the *same* direction, each dissonant suspension is prepared as a consonance in the preceding harmony and resolves downward by step, etc.).

4. PROCEDURE

I strongly recommend that you compose your melody *last*, rather than attempt to compose a melody out of the blue and then harmonize it.

- a) Choose a time signature, a home key, and a phrase structure.
- b) Compose a bass line that fits your chosen phrase structure (paying particular attention to the necessary cadences), and that incorporates a grammatical succession of harmonies.
- c) Compose a well-shaped soprano line; as you do, elaborate the bass line, interpolate additional harmonies, and supply the inner voices.
- d) Decorate the soprano line and bass lines with tones of melodic and rhythmic figuration, and adjust the inner voices accordingly. You may find further opportunities to elaborate the harmony.
- e) Indicate the desired tempo, dynamics, and articulation. (The more expressive indications you supply, the better your chances of securing an expressive performance.)

See the attached demonstration. Note that beyond the required cadences, nothing from my original bass line is quite graven in stone; elaboration in the later stages of composition often requires altering something that was set out in the initial stages. Whenever you make such adjustments, take care that you don't introduce errors of chord construction, voice leading, or harmonic syntax.

5. ORNAMENTATION

Please keep your medium in mind as you introduce tones of melodic and rhythmic figuration:

a) If you're writing for SATB choir, remember that *le choeur, c'est nous* (which translates as, "a group of largely untrained voices"), and that we'll be sight-reading your piece in class. In practical terms, this means you need to demand little in the way of rhythmic complexity (no *alla zoppa* chains of rapid syncopations, no *coloratura* sixteenth-note passagework) and that you handle dissonances in a fairly conservative fashion (e.g., no large leaps to unprepared dissonant neighbor notes).

NB The preceding does *not* mean "avoid dissonances." You still can apply dissonances thickly (e.g., create simultaneous dissonant suspensions, let a dissonant passing note in one voice coincide with a dissonant neighbor note in another, etc.); it's just a matter of taking care how you approach and depart each one.

b) If you're writing for piano solo, you may create more elaborate figuration, but make sure that the piece is still practical to play. If you're not sure about a passage, consult a pianist. If you can't find a pianist to consult, stick with what you can actually play (in slow motion, at least).

c) If you're writing for melody instrument with keyboard accompaniment, you're limited only by your own technique on the instrument. I recommend keeping the piano accompaniment fairly simple, so as not to upstage your own role as soloist.