

HARMONY

WHAT IS IT?

In music, harmony is the use of simultaneous pitches (tones or notes) or chords. Harmony can also be known as chord and chord theory. The study of harmony involves chords, their constructions and progressions, as well as the principles of connection that govern them. Harmony can occur with any number of voices, but must include at least two separate melodic lines (or melodies) that are sung or performed at the same time.

WHAT IS COUNTERPOINT?

Counterpoint is the use of two or more melodic lines at the same time, polyphony is the study and relationship of the independent voices, slightly different than the definition of harmony. Courses in harmony, counterpoint and formal analysis exist, but are beyond the scope of this website. Harmony generally refers to the vertical aspect of music, whereas counterpoint is the horizontal aspect and pertains to melody and melodic structure.

AMBIGUITY OF THE TERM IN MODERN USE

Although harmony refers to sounds pleasing to the ear by using pre-established compositional principles, in context, modern usage of the term varies widely. This is due to giving the word a clear, concise definition. Some say that harmony is more so related to the sounds that we hear; others argue that harmony has more to do with musical texture. This is where musical space comes in, and it's two dimensions, vertical and horizontal. One could refer to harmony either in a horizontal and/or vertical aspect and be correct in thinking, depending on how they view it.

ROOT WORD OF HARMONY

The term harmony derives from the Greek harmonia, meaning "joint, agreement, concord", from the verb harmozo, "to fit together, to join". The term was often used for the whole field of music, while "music" referred to the arts in general. In Ancient Greece, the term defined the combination of contrasted elements: a higher and lower note. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether the simultaneous sounding of notes was part of ancient Greek musical practice; harmonia may have merely provided a system of classification of the relationships between different pitches. In the Middle Ages, the term was used to describe two pitches sounding in combination, and in the Renaissance the concept was expanded to denote three pitches sounding together.

WHAT ARE INTERVALS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

An interval is defined as the relationship between two separate musical pitches. Intervals are important as by creating and combining specific intervals, we create chords and therefore, harmony.

WHAT IS A CHORD?

In simple terms, a chord consists of a set of notes, creating intervals that are played simultaneously (at the same time).

WHAT IS A CHORD PROGRESSION?

A chord or harmonic progression is a series of musical chords or chord changes that "aims for a definite goal" of establishing or contradicting a tonality founded on a key, root or tonic chord..

WHAT IS HARMONIZATION?

Harmonization is the chordal accompaniment to a line or melody. Harmonization is formed by using chords and melodies to create harmony. Harmonization is the basis for chordal or harmonic progression, a series of musical chords or chord changes which aims for a definite goal of establishing or contradicting tonality founded on a key, root or tonic chord. One notable exception to this is in J.S. Bach's Fugues, where he ends on a major chord in said Fugues that have a clear tonal center which is minor; to understand this proper is beyond the scope of this website.

HARMONIC TENSION

Tension occurs when an additional chord member creates a relatively dissonant (unstable) interval in relation to the bass. Tension is a quality of music that indicates uncertainty and a sense of unease. Usually a dissonant chord (chord with tension) will resolve to a consonant (stable) chord. Without tension, there would be no balance in music, as all music would sound relaxed and pleasant. Generally speaking, tension is prepared and then resolved.