Composer Tool: INTERVALS

You have learned that melodies make beautiful shapes with steps and skips. The distance between two notes is called an *interval*. When these two notes are played separately, they are called *melodic* intervals. Composers choose these intervals to design their best melodies. When two notes are played together, they are called *harmonic* intervals.

Composers love making shapes with their melodies. Each interval has its own sound. 2nds and 3rds are smooth and gentle. 4ths and 5ths are leaps and can be very dramatic. Notice how the following intervals grow larger as the trees sway in the wind.

Wind in the Trees

Did you know that music can ask a question? It can even come up with a good answer! Say the following aloud:

"Are you going home?"   "Yes, I'm leaving now."

Notice that with the question, the pitch of your voice goes up. With the answer, it comes back down. Composers sometimes do this with melodies. The first part of the melody goes up. The second part comes back down to the starting note. This sounds like a question and an answer!

Question and answer melodies can be composed without words, but sometimes it is fun to include them. Some composers find it easier to create the lyrics first. The natural flow of the words helps determine the rhythm and melody.

How Long and How Far?

Composition Tool: MAJOR AND MINOR HARMONY

Harmonies can be in major and minor. These harmonies can offer great support for the melody, strengthening the mood of the music. Major and minor harmonies are made with major and minor chords. *Chords* are built by playing the first, third, and fifth notes of a major or minor pentascales together.

G major chord *G minor chord*

As they do with scales, composers choose harmony based on the feeling it brings. Major chords can produce a bright, sunny day. Minor chords create the opposite mood – gathering clouds or even a storm.

Weather Report

With energy

Sunny (G major)

Stormy (G minor)

Composition Tool: MOTIF

Just as a building has a certain structure, most compositions have a musical form that gives them balance and unity. There are many different types of forms. One is based on a *motif*. A motif is a short melodic or rhythmic figure that is repeated throughout the piece. It acts like glue, holding the composition together.

Do you recognize this famous motif?

It is from Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5.

Inspiration often starts with a small musical idea. This idea can be like an echo moving through a rocky canyon. You call out a few words, and they keep repeating themselves, bouncing off the canyon walls and making beautiful music.

Echo in the Canyon

*How many times does this two-measure motif appear?

Compose Your Own: OPUS 2

Now it's time to compose your own piece using many different skills you have learned in this book. What do you want your piece to be about? A special memory? A favorite pet? An imaginary adventure? This time, it is all up to you!
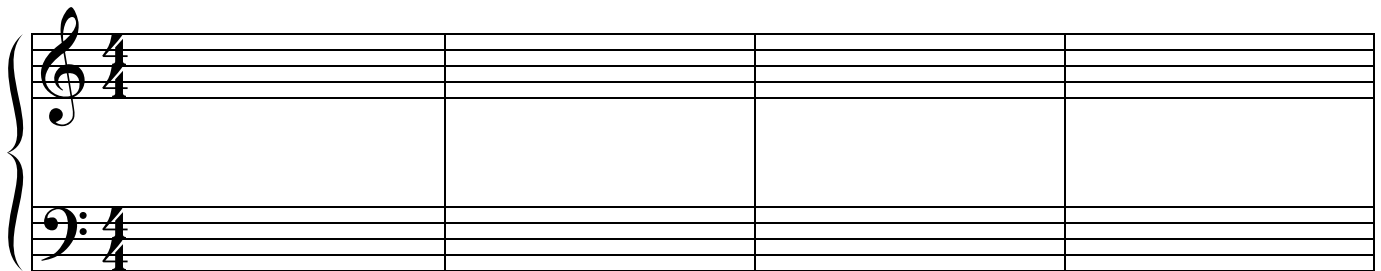
1. Create a title. 2. Choose a tempo. 3. Choose a meter. 4. Add dynamics.
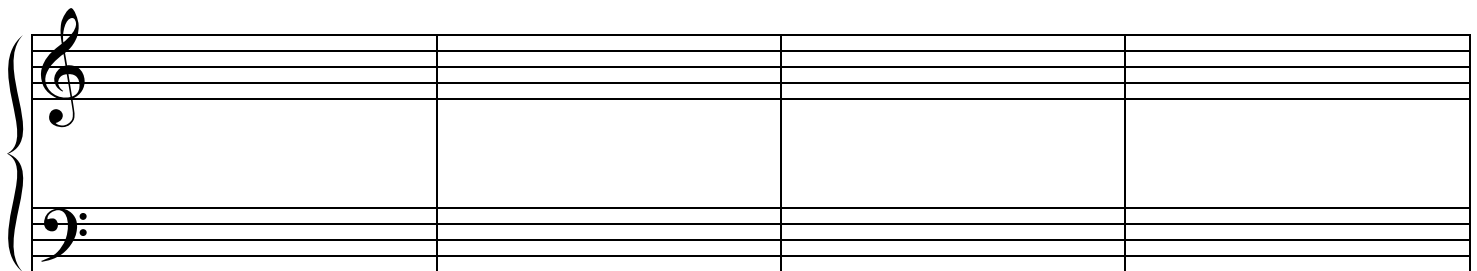
Toolbox Tips

Composers choose **intervals** carefully to design their best melodies. • **Question and answer** melodies go up then down. • **8va** means to play one octave higher or lower. • **15ma** means to play two octaves higher or lower. • **Flat** signs lower a note one half step. • **Sharp** signs raise a note one half step. • **Major and minor pentascales** are 5-note scales that form 5-note finger patterns. • **Chords** are built by playing the first, third and fifth notes of a major or minor pentascale. • Musical details such as **accents** and **staccato** add spice to music. • Composers often use **ritardandos** to give a sense of completion at the end of a piece. • A **motif** is a short melodic or rhythmic figure that is repeated throughout the piece. • Three common musical forms are **binary, ternary,** and **rondo**.

(Title)

Tempo:

5

9
(optional measures)