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INTERVALS: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHORDS

An interval is the unit of measurement used in music to gauge the distance in pitch between any two tones. All music is made up of intervals as are all chords. All chords may be broken down into smaller interval groups. This is why intervals are studied before actual chords.

The arrangement of various types of intervals determines the kind or type of chord. This is reflected in chord notation as various types of 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th chords and the like. Intervals also determine chord quality, which will be either major, minor, half-diminished, fully diminished, augmented or some combination of these.

Harmonic and Melodic Intervals

Intervals occur in two different contexts: as harmonic intervals, where two or more notes are sounded simultaneously, and as melodic intervals, where only one note is sounded at any given time.

Harmonic intervals are associated with chords as the name implies. On the other hand, melodic intervals are found in melodic passages of single line music. This book is concerned with harmonic intervals since the pitches in chords are most often all sounded simultaneously.



Theoretical Considerations of Intervals

Classical music theory generally recognizes four different aspects of intervals.

1. The theoretical description of consonance or dissonance.
(Consonances are those tones which blend well together. Dissonances are those tones which do not blend well together.)
2. The arithmetical distance between any two tones.
This is always expressed in a numerical value, except in the case of two notes which are exactly the same. In such a case, the two notes are called a prime or unison.
3. The quality of the interval.
This refers to the essence of the sound of the interval. It can be major sounding, minor sounding, augmented sounding, diminished sounding or various other combinations of these.
4. The indication of whether the interval is contained within an octave, wherein it is said to be simple, or whether it is greater than an octave, wherein it is said to be compound.

There are three classes of intervals. Two classes contain the consonants and one class the dissonants.

1. Perfect Consonants = primes (unisons), 4th's, 5th's, octaves and 11th's
2. Imperfect Consonants = 3rd's, 6th's, 10th's and 13th's
3. Dissonants = 2nd's, 7th's and 9th's

ALTERED INTERVALS IN ALL KEYS

Maj 2 Min 2 Aug 2 Maj 3 Min 3 Aug 3 Per 4 Dim 4 Aug 4

The musical score displays the following intervals across 12 key signatures:

- C:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- G:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- D:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- A:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- E:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- B:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- F#:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- C#:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- F:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- Bb:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- Eb:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- Ab:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- Db:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- Gb:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4
- Cb:** Maj 2, Min 2, Aug 2, Maj 3, Min 3, Aug 3, Per 4, Dim 4, Aug 4