

# Theory I - FINAL PROJECT

I think it's nice to create something as a culmination of all we've learned in the semester. In the last session we can show each other our projects and perform them. This semester I want us to try to write a short melodic composition. Just melody -- no accompaniment!

## LENGTH

Let's shoot for something at least 8 measures long, but not longer than 16.

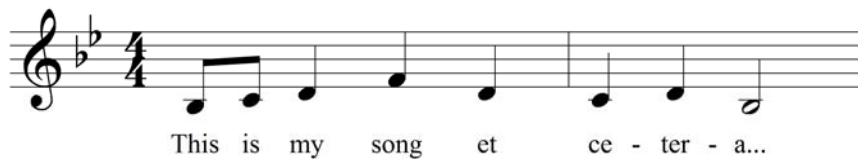
## KEY

It should be in a key other than C major. Use a key signature to enforce the scale. My examples here will be in B-flat major.



## WORDS

If you like, it can be a song with words. I think that using lyrics will help you come up with a more natural rhythm and phrasing. The words do not have to be particularly beautiful or profound - they can be mundane or silly. In the past, for example, someone wrote a song about not being able to get cilantro at the grocery store.



## PHRASES

One key to writing a melody of any length is that it should be broken up into phrases - short chunks that go for a little bit and then pause. A good plan for our composition would be to work in 2 or 4-measure blocks, and combine four of those for a total of 8 or 16. But if you are inspired to do something different, go with it!

phrase one

phrase two

phrase three

phrase four

Phrases tend to end on a variety of notes -- if you want your phrase to sound very closed off and final, you would probably want to end on do. This is called a "perfect cadence."

perfect cadence


(whatever you want goes in here)

3 mi 2 re 1 DO

the most stable and conclusive ending

Another option for a cadence which is stable but still somewhat "up in the air" is the imperfect cadence, which ends on another tone from the home chord, either mi or sol.

imperfect cadence

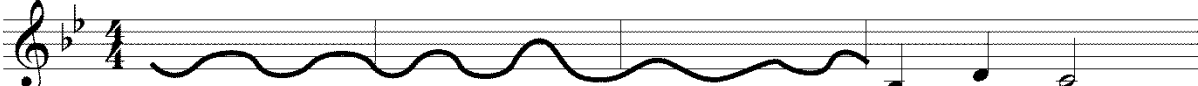


5̂      4̂      3̂  
sol    fa    MI

still stable, but somewhat "up in the air?"

The most unstable option of all is the half cadence, which ends on a tone outside the home triad, usually re or ti.

half cadence



1̂      3̂      2̂  
do    mi    RE

super unstable, demands more material

The half cadence is the only one that you can't possibly end on – it sounds very unstable and basically demands that more material must follow. Thus, creating pairs of half cadence -> full cadence or half cadence -> imperfect cadence will push your composition forward and give it a sense of shape.

## REPETITION

Repetition is your friend. Re-using material from phrase to phrase makes your tune easy to understand and gives it structure. It is very common for a composer to write two phrases with the same beginning but different endings.

## SCHEDULE

We've got four sessions left in the semester, so let's try to work a little bit each week to come up with a composition you can really be proud of. Try to test a short idea or two at first, maybe one complete phrase or a few interesting fragments. Then work on building that into a complete tune with multiple phrases. If you try to write your tune in one sitting I think you will probably end up sad and frustrated.

May 22 - Class 12 – I will happily look at a phrase or fragment on this date.

May 29 - Class 13 – Let's say that one phrase or a few fragments are definitely due on this date.

June 5 - Class 14 – I will give your entire composition a once-over on this date.

June 12 - Class 15 – FINAL CLASS. Presentation time. We'll make photocopies of your work so that everyone can look at it, and we'll try to perform it together.