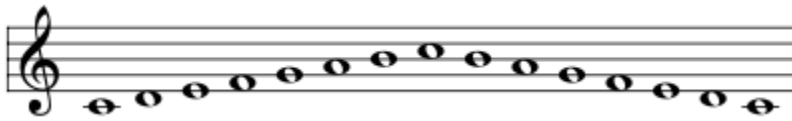


Understanding the Language of Music

A Basic Understanding of Music Theory and the Harmonic Analysis of Hymns

Scales

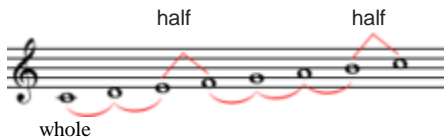
A major scale is composed of eight notes. For example, all the notes between middle C and the C an octave above it.



All of the tones are a major second apart (whole step) with the exception of the two intervals between steps *three and four* and *seven and eight*.

The disposition of major and minor second intervals is as follows:

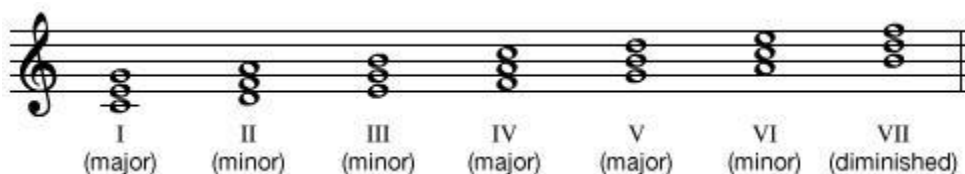
whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half



The major scale can be played starting on any note by adding appropriate chromatic notes (sharps and flats) to produce the correct placement of half and whole steps, hence the twelve major scales and their corresponding key signatures.

Triads

One of the basic building blocks in musical harmony is the triad, meaning a chord with three notes. A triad is built on each note of the major scale.



The bottom note is referred to as the root. The middle note is the third and the top note is the fifth.

In addition to a number, each triad has a name:

Scale degree	Name	Number	Type
1	Tonic	I	major
2	Supertonic	ii	minor
3	Mediant	iii	minor
4	Sub-dominant	IV	major
5	Dominant	V	major
6	Sub-mediante	vi	minor
7	Leading tone	vii ^o	diminished

Note that the major triads are written using upper case Roman numerals. Minor triads are written using lower case Roman numerals. The diminished triad is written in lower case Roman numerals with a degree sign following.

While triads have three notes, hymns are written in four part harmony: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. One of the notes of the triad will always need to be doubled. Usually it is the root or the fifth. Because of its acoustical properties, the third is doubled less often.

Non-harmonic tones

Notes that sound simultaneously with a chord that but are not part of the triad. They give color, interest, contrast, and direction to the music. The most common non harmonic tones are:

- Passing tone (PT) – A note that connects two notes of a triad, filling in gaps between the root and third or between the third and the fifth. (Sweet Hour of Prayer, measures 1, 2, 3)
- Upper neighbor (UN) – A note that connects two repeated harmonic tones found a step above them. (Sweet Hour of Prayer, measure 4)
- Lower neighbor (LN) -- A note that connects two repeated harmonic tones found a step below them. (Sweet Hour of Prayer, measure 3, alto)
- Pedal point (PP) – The bass note is sustained while harmonies change above it. (Joy to the World, second line)