

XVI. Melodic Uses Of The Non-Chord-Tones

Music is an art form that is presented in real time. It is usually reasoned that the listener of a piece of music perceives a series of musical events, some of which are accented (i.e. emphasized), and some of which are not. Harmonically speaking, it is usually consonance that is emphasized and dissonance that is de-emphasized. Of course, the above scheme can be reversed as well. A piece of music that had no accented dissonance would likely sound motionless and boring. A piece of music that only used dissonance would be extremely unsettled. It is these types of contrasts that create the ebb and flow, or the forward moving force, in a piece of music.

Here are some other pairs of opposites that can be useful in music:

Calm - Tension - Resolution - Tension - etc.
 Call - Response - Call - etc.
 Home - Departure - Return - Departure - etc.
 Question - Answer - Question - etc.
 Inactivity - Activity - etc.
 Slow - Fast - Slow - etc.
 Soft - Loud - Soft - etc.
 Chord-Tones - Non-Chord-Tones - Chord-Tones etc.

Any length of musical time can be thought to contain a series of Stronger and Weaker musical events, at the discretion of the composer. Usually we think of Strong moving to Weak and back to Strong (home, away-from-home, back home) etc., but this scheme can also be inverted for effect. The following examples illustrate the ways that we usually experience the hierarchies of stronger and weaker metrical positions within 4/4 time.

The first example shows a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The right hand has notes on the first, second, and fourth beats, while the left hand has notes on the second, third, and fourth beats. Labels 'S' and 'W' are placed above and below the notes to indicate their metrical strength. The second example shows a single melodic line with notes and rests. Labels 'S', 'W', 's', and 'w' are placed above the notes. Brackets with the number '3' are used to group notes in the second and third examples.

Jazz music, more often than not, involves a pre-determined harmonic progression and song form as a framework for improvisation. When analyzing a melody over a given chord progression, the Chord-Tones (CT) are deemed to be more or less Strong notes and can be used freely I.e. They are generally safe to accent, and will not result in many harsh dissonances that need to be reckoned with, or resolved, during the chord's duration. This is not always true, but it is mostly true.

There are generally thought to be two categories of Non-Chord-Tones (NCT) (aka "Inharmonics") in melodic analysis, namely the Accented and the Un-Accented.

A. The Accented Non-Chord-Tones

1. The Appoggiatura (App):

A Non-Chord-Tone struck on a strong beat, that resolves by step at a weaker metrical position. (Appoggiatura means: "to lean" in Italian.)

App App App App App App App App App App App App

App App

2. Available Tensions (T)

Any NCT that blends vertically into a chord when held for a long duration or when accented due to its relative rhythmic placement. Leaping *away* from a note can also cause it to be accented more than it would be within a step-wise passage. Any App that does not resolve by step is a T of some sort.

Cmaj7 T9 T13 G7 T13 T#9 T13 T9 G7 T13 App Cmaj7 T#11

G7 App T#9 Cmaj7 App G7 App T#9 (S#2) T13 G7 T9 T#9 (Ant) Cmaj7 App

G7 T11 Cmaj7 T11

(Avoid-Note) No Good (Avoid-Note) No Good

Note: Most NCTs found a min 2nd or min 9th above a CT will not blend into the chord as an Available Tension. These notes are usually referred to as "Avoid-Notes". The 2 main exceptions to this 1/2 step above "rule" are: $\flat 9$ and $\flat 13$ on Dom7 chords. (Please see Chapter XI for a more detailed explanation of avoid-notes.) If an avoid-note is used as a tension then it should be represented as a tension in the analysis, even if it does not sound very good.

B. The Un-Accented Non-Chord-Tones

1. Passing Tones (PT) (2 types - Diatonic and Chromatic):

a) Diatonic Passing Tones:

A diatonic note that bridges a leap of a 3rd (or sometimes a 4th) between two notes (usually CTs). PTs are always on weaker beats than the notes that they pass between, otherwise they would be Apps.

Note: PTs are not always NCTs. But, when a CT is functioning as a PT there is usually no need to label it in the melodic analysis.

b) Chromatic PTs:

Chromatic notes used to bridge the gap of a Major 2nd or Augmented 2nd.

2. Auxiliary Tones (Aux):

The Auxiliary is a decoration of a stationary note. It is used at a weak beat, one step (or 1/2 step) above or below the principal note. It returns to the principal note.