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A pair of white over-ear headphones is positioned on the left side of the slide. The headphones have a white headband and large, padded ear cups. A white cable is attached to the bottom of the right ear cup and extends towards the bottom right of the slide.

WESTERN MUSIC ANALYSIS AND COMPOSITION

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Principles of Music Composition

Composition refers to the creation of a new work, whether prose, poetry, books, or works of art such as painting and music. Musical composition is an essential component of musical aesthetics, which consists of three main aspects: composition, performance (presentation), and listening (perception).

Composing music requires creativity and artistic freedom; however, to produce a high-quality work, knowledge of music theory is essential. The process of beginning a composition also relies heavily on theoretical foundations. The main components are discussed as follows.



1. Melodic Composition

As mentioned in Chapter 1, melody consists of two primary elements: pitch and rhythm. Pitch derives from scale systems, while rhythm refers to the duration and temporal organization of notes.

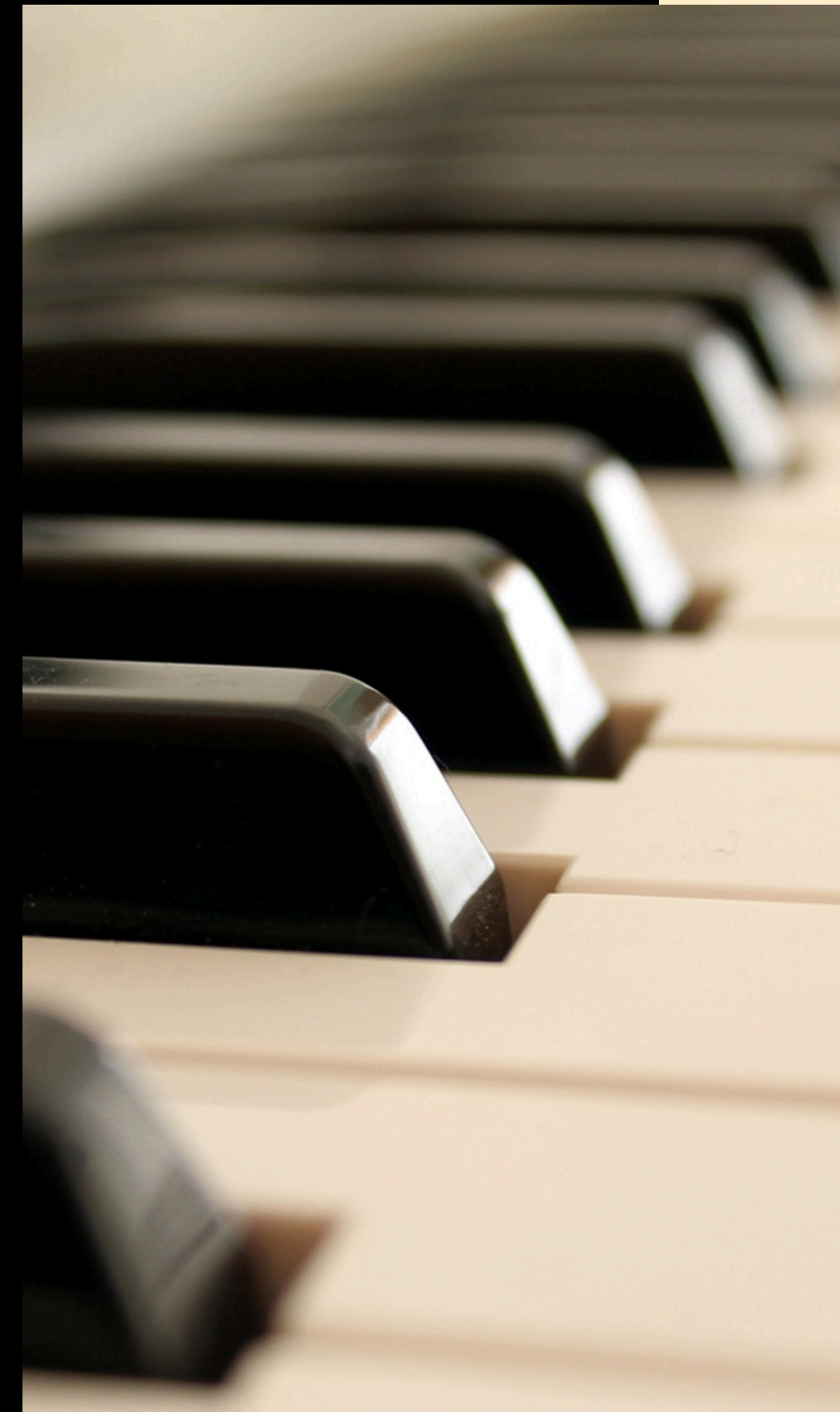
Scales

A scale is a system of pitches arranged according to specific interval patterns. Most scales consist of seven notes. The two most commonly used scales are the major scale and the minor scale. However, many other scales are also used in composition.

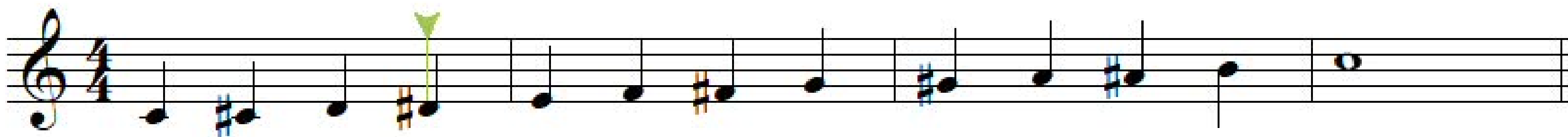
(1) Chromatic Scale

The chromatic scale consists entirely of semitone intervals (half steps). It forms the foundation of all other scales because every scale is derived from the chromatic collection of twelve pitches. Understanding its structure is therefore essential.

The chromatic scale became increasingly prominent during the Romantic period. A well-known example is Fur Elise by Ludwig van Beethoven, where chromatic motion is clearly used in melodic writing.



1. Melodic Composition



Major Scale

Pitch is the highness or lowness of sound, determined by vibration frequency. Faster vibrations produce higher pitch, while slower vibrations produce lower pitch. Pitch variation is essential for meaning in speech and for the existence of music.



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Minor Scales

The natural minor scale (also called the relative minor) is closely related to the major scale. It begins on the sixth degree of its relative major scale. For example, A minor is the relative minor of C major.

In addition to the natural minor scale, there are two other important forms:

Harmonic Minor

The harmonic minor scale raises the seventh degree by a semitone, creating a leading tone that resolves strongly to the tonic. This alteration strengthens dominant–tonic resolution and explains why the V chord in minor keys is often major.

The sound of the harmonic minor scale has a distinctive exotic quality, often associated with Middle Eastern musical colors.

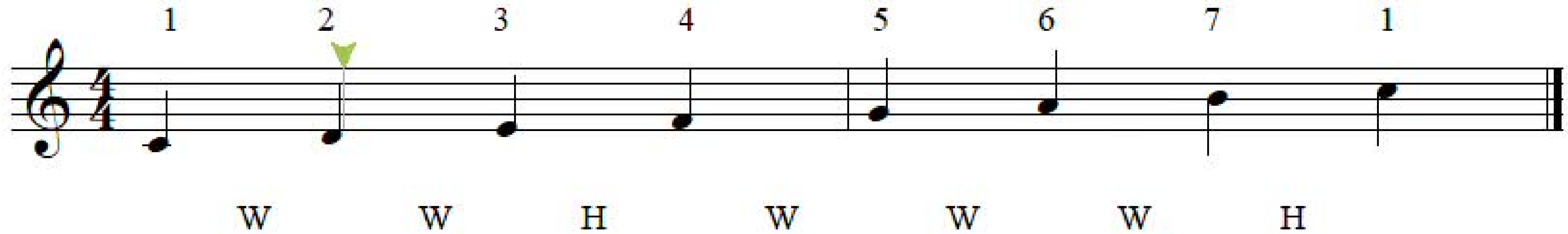
Melodic Minor

The melodic minor scale raises both the sixth and seventh degrees when ascending, but reverts to the natural minor form when descending. This design smooths melodic motion toward the tonic while maintaining natural flow in descending lines.

Major Scale



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W = Whole Step
H = Half Step

Minor Scales



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W = Whole Step
H = Half Step



2. Rhythmic Organization



Subdivision of Beats

Beat subdivision follows proportional relationships.

Simple beats divide into two equal parts (1:2 ratio).

Compound beats (dotted notes) divide into three equal parts.

Meter

Meter organizes beats into regular groupings within measures. Measures are separated by bar lines. The most common types are:

Duple Meter (2 beats: strong–weak)

Triple Meter (3 beats: strong–weak–weak)

Quadruple Meter (4 beats: strong–weak–medium–weak)

Time Signature

A time signature consists of two numbers:

The top number indicates the number of beats per measure.

The bottom number indicates the note value that represents one beat.

For example:

4/4 (Common Time) means four quarter-note beats per measure.

2/2 (Cut Time) means two half-note beats per measure.



2. Rhythmic Organization



Compound Meter

Compound meters ($6/8$, $9/8$, $12/8$) divide each beat into three equal subdivisions. For example, $6/8$ contains two beats per measure, each consisting of a dotted quarter note.

Irregular (Asymmetrical) Meter

Irregular meters ($5/4$, $7/8$, $11/8$, etc.) contain uneven beat groupings. Accents are not symmetrical and often depend on internal grouping patterns determined by the composer.



3. Harmony and Voice Leading

Harmony refers to the combination of two or more pitches sounding simultaneously. It enriches musical texture and provides structural depth.



Two-Part Harmony

Two-part harmony introduces vertical relationships between two melodic lines. Common techniques include:

Parallel thirds or sixths

Pedal tone (sustained pitch against moving melody)

Broken chords (arpeggiated harmony)



Descending direction

Four-part harmony consists of four voices: Soprano Alto Tenor Bass





3. Harmony and Voice Leading



Writing Four-Part Harmony

To construct four-part harmony:
Extract chord tones.

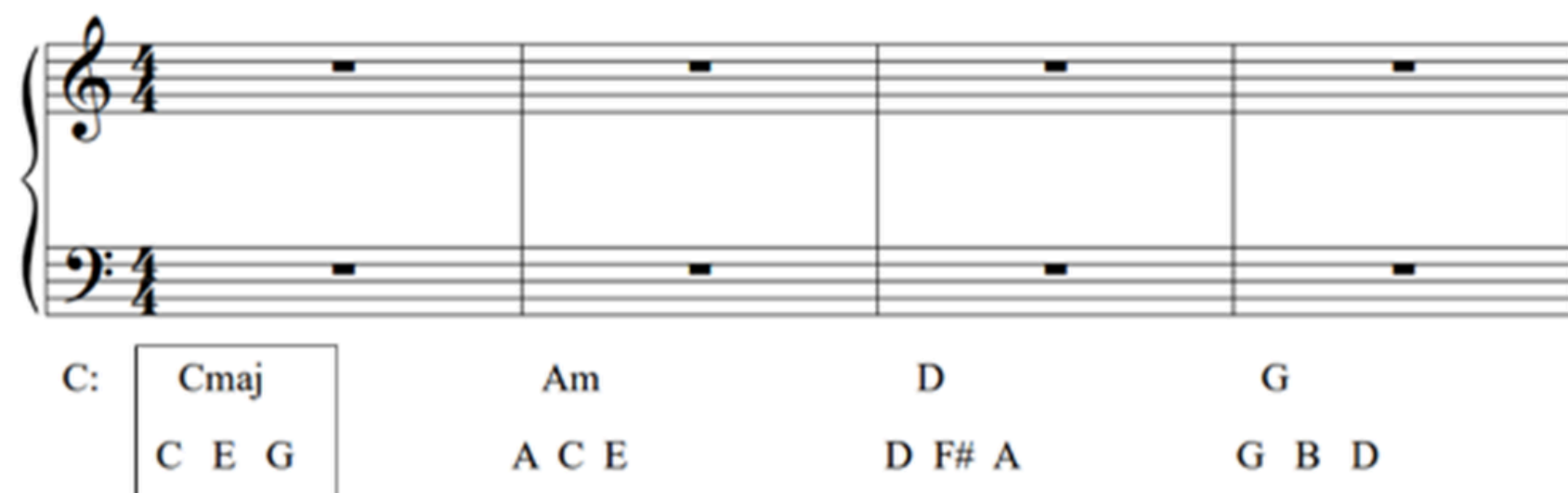
Rules of Four-Part Writing

Three primary rules ensure clarity and balance:

Spacing – Upper voices should not exceed an octave apart.

Avoid Parallel Fifths – Parallel perfect fifth motion weakens harmonic independence.

Avoid Overlap – A lower voice should not cross above the previous note of a higher voice.





3. Harmony and Voice Leading



Assign the root to the bass (unless inverted).

C: Cmaj Am D G
C E G A C E D F# A G B D

Distribute remaining chord tones among soprano, alto, and tenor.

C: Cmaj Am D G
C E G A C E D F# A G B D



3. Harmony and Voice Leading

Connect common tones between chords and check voice-leading rules.

C: Cmaj Am D G
C E G A ~~C~~ ~~E~~ D F# A G B D

Careful checking is essential before proceeding to the next chord.

C: Cmaj Am D G
C E G A C E D F# A G B D



4. Modulation (Key Change)

Modulation Using the Dominant Chord

This method modulates by introducing the dominant (V) chord of the new key before establishing its tonic (I). Because the dominant naturally resolves to the tonic, this creates a smooth and convincing transition into the new tonal center. In harmonic analysis, the dominant of the new key may function as a secondary dominant in the original key. This technique is one of the most common and structurally clear ways to change keys in popular music.





4. Modulation (Key Change)

Modulation Using the Dominant Chord

The image displays a musical staff in 4/4 time, illustrating a modulation from C major to D major using the dominant chord (V). The progression of chords is as follows:

Chord	Symbol	Roman Numeral
C	C	I
A minor	A m	vi
F	F	IV
G	G	V
A minor	A m	V7/II
D	D	I

The modulation is achieved by moving from the G chord (V) in C major to the D chord (I) in D major. The A minor chord (V7/II) acts as a secondary dominant for the new key.



4. Modulation (Key Change)

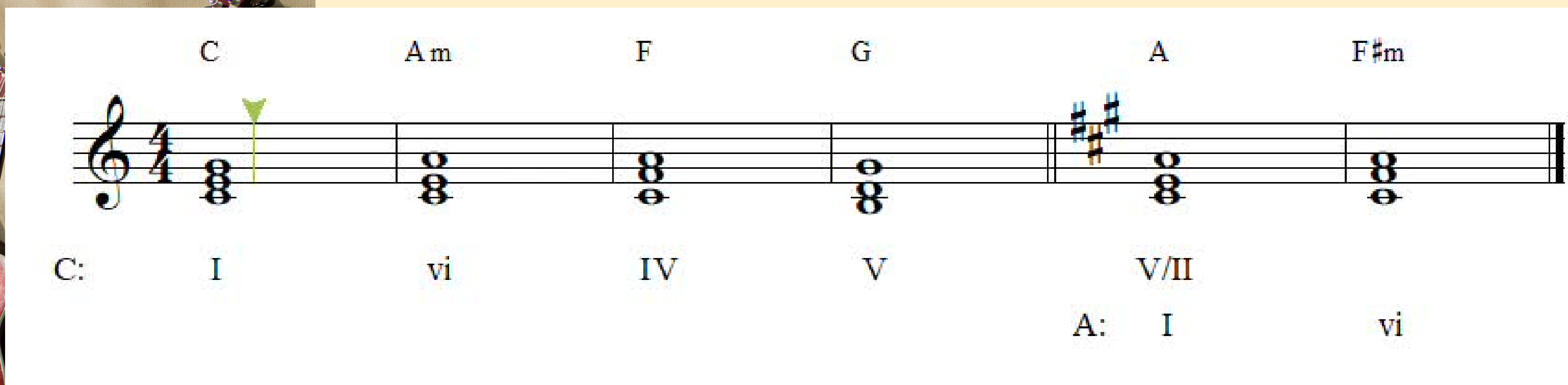
Modulation Using the Picardy Third

This technique involves altering a minor chord into a major chord by raising its third by a semitone. In practice, a vi minor chord in the original key is transformed into a major chord, which then functions as the tonic (I) of the new key. The shift often feels more sudden compared to dominant modulation, but it creates a bright and dramatic tonal change that enhances emotional intensity.



4. Modulation (Key Change)

Modulation Using the Picardy Third



The image displays a musical score on a single staff in 4/4 time, illustrating modulation using the Picardy Third. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure contains four chords: C, A m, F, and G. The second measure contains two chords: A and F#m. The key signature changes from C major to A major at the second measure. The notation includes treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature change indicated by two sharps (F# and C#) at the start of the second measure. The chords are represented by their letter names and figured bass notation.

Chord	Figured Bass
C	I
A m	vi
F	IV
G	V
A	V/II
F#m	vi

C: I vi IV V A: I vi



4. Modulation (Key Change)

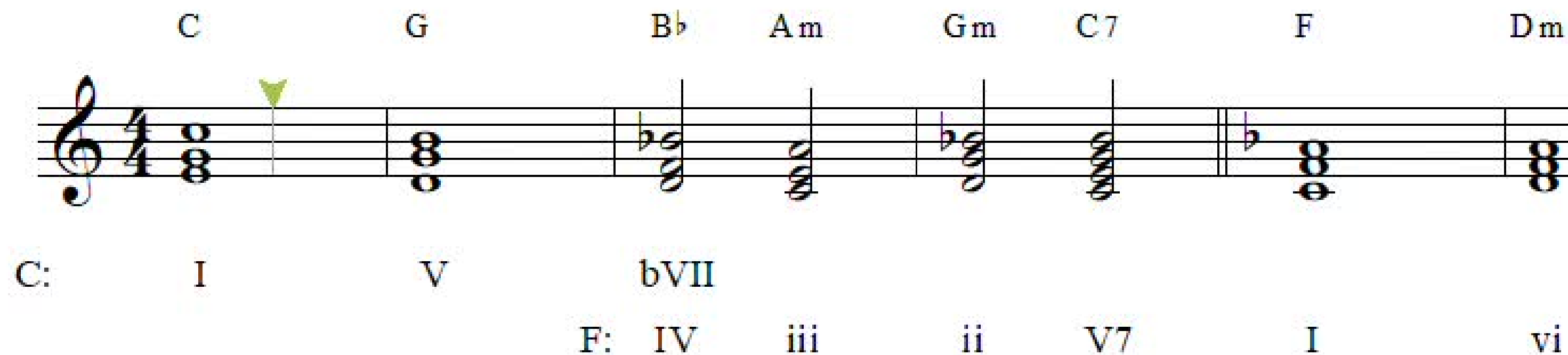
Modulation Using the $\flat$ VII Chord

In this approach, the $\flat$ VII chord (a flattened seventh scale degree chord) acts as a pivot between two keys. The $\flat$ VII in the original key can be reinterpreted as the IV chord in the new key, allowing the progression to move naturally toward the dominant (V) and then resolve to the tonic (I) of the new key. Although the modulation may initially seem abrupt, the use of intermediate chords helps maintain smooth harmonic continuity.



4. Modulation (Key Change)

Modulation Using the $\flat$ VII Chord



C G B $\flat$ A m G m C7 F D m

C: I V bVII

F: IV iii ii V7 I vi



4. CONCLUSION

Musical composition is a creative process that requires both artistic imagination and a strong foundation in music theory. Effective composition integrates melody (formed by scales and rhythm), harmonic writing, and modulation techniques. Scales—especially major and minor—provide the tonal framework, while rhythm organizes beats through subdivision, meter, and time signatures, including simple, compound, and irregular patterns. Harmony may be written in two or four parts, following essential voice-leading principles such as proper spacing, avoiding parallel perfect intervals, and maintaining smooth note movement. Modulation enhances musical expression by shifting from one key to another through techniques such as dominant chords, the Picardy third, or the use of a $\flat$ VII chord as a pivot.



Bibliography



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