1-1-2016

The Chromatic Singalong Project: Pop/Rock as a Framework for Sight-Singing Fluency

Jena Root

The Chromatic Singalong

Dr. Jena Root, Youngstown State University
This activity is suitable for the third or fourth semester of a typical ear-training curriculum. Students should be familiar with chromatic chords that are likely to occur in popular music.

---

0. Please do this project in Noteflight and set up your score like this. (Change the key and time signature so that it fits with your song.) Or, you can use the template found here.
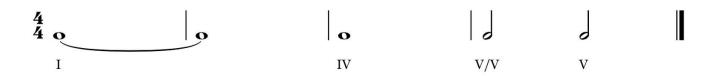

1. Choose a favorite pop/rock/jazz tune that has at least two different chromatic chords. Songs may not be duplicated among class members. If you post it first, it's yours. Post the following information in this document (<<Instructor creates link to sign-up sheet)
   ● Title
   ● Artist
   ● Link to the song on Spotify, YouTube, etc. Please link to the version you actually want to use. For example, if you choose "Ticket to Ride" by the Beatles, don't post a link to the Carpenters' version!
   ● Duration (if your song is longer than about 4 minutes, I will suggest that you do an excerpt.)

Step 1 is due by <date>

---

2. **On the bottom staff:** Transcribe the chords in the song, using Roman numerals and rhythmic durations to indicate the duration of each chord. For example, your song might have a tonic chord for two measures, then a subdominant for one measure, and then a single measure containing V/V followed by V. (Hint: in Noteflight, enter the rhythm first, then use the chord tool to attach the chords. The first chord will appear above the staff. Drag it below the staff, and the rest of the chords will appear in the right place.)

3. At this point you might be wondering whether you're allowed to look up the chords for your song on

the internet. Here are my feelings on this:

- I can't really stop you from doing this, but remember that this is an Aural Skills class. At least *try* to transcribe the chords by ear, then you can check your work online. But...
- ...remember that MOST of what you read on the internet is entirely false, so you'll want to double-check your chords at the piano, with a friend, with me, or all of the above.
- The chords you find on the internet will likely be expressed as letter names. For example: em | am | em | B7 || You will still need to convert these to Roman numerals, which is a different kind learning experience, but it still is one.
- Did I mention that a lot of the stuff on the internet is WRONG?

4. After you write out the Roman numerals with rhythm, notate each chord in simple position **on the middle staff.** Be sure to notate the pitches in the actual key of the song. (If the song is in E major, write the chords in E major.) Block chords are fine: remember that they are simply a framework for the melody; we're not concerned with voice leading quite yet.

^Steps 2 through 4 are due <date>

Be sure to share your Noteflight score, then post a link to it <u>in this document.</u> (<<Instructor creates document)

---

5. On the top staff, compose your sing-along melody. You will probably use mostly quarter notes and half notes, depending on the tempo and harmonic rhythm of your song. In general, you will write anywhere between 2 and 4 notes per chord. If you have trouble getting that many notes per chord, then the harmonic rhythm of your song is too fast. Here are some things to keep in mind.

- Your melody should stay mostly within the chord tones for each chord, but...
- ...use passing tones and neighbor tones to make it musical. Don't just write strings of arpeggios or it will sound...well...dumb.
- Avoid disjunct non chord tones. You should write a smooth, singable melody.
- Wherever possible, incorporate the chromatic tones into your melody.
- Stay in a singable range for the class! (Around A3 to E5; one octave lower for boys.)

^Step 5 is due in DRAFT form by <date>.^ (Even though it's a draft, you will receive a grade for having done it.) I will go through your melody and suggest corrections/improvements, then ***your final version is due <date>.***

6. We will perform the melodies--singing along with the recording of the song--during the last week of classes

7. You must perform your project with a recording of the song on the Sight Singing final exam. This will be worth one in-class quiz grade.

Summary of Due Dates (all components are due <u>by class time</u> on their respective dates)**:**

<date>:	Choose and post your song information
<date>:	Chords transcribed in Roman Numerals and pitches
<date>:	Draft version of melody
<date>:	Final melody