

COMPOSING

For Trinity grade 3 music theory you may be asked to add a tune to a bass line, or add a bass line to a tune, to create a composition with two separate parts. To do this successfully, you first need to learn about how two individual musical parts work together in **similar** motion, or **contrary** motion.

When you've understood the different types of motion, then next step is to look at how both parts share the same **harmony**, although they might use different notes from each chord.

Once you have mastered these two tasks, the obvious way to extend your skills is to try to create both a bass line AND a tune to go with it.

WRITING A BASS LINE TO A TUNE

In the Trinity exam you may be asked to write a simple bass line to fit a given tune. The bass line will only use the tonic or dominant notes of the key the music is in, like this example which is in D major. The bass line is on the bass clef staff.

In D major the tonic note is D, and the dominant is A, so these are the two notes that are used in the bass line.

Each note in the bass line lasts for the whole bar. This piece is in 3/4 time, so a note which lasts the whole bar is a dotted minim (dotted half note).

The bass should mostly move in **contrary motion** with the tune, in order to avoid consecutive 5ths and octaves.

If you use the same chord twice in a row, you can use the same bass note, (see bars 2-3), or you might prefer to move to the same note in a different register as this can help to avoid consecutives.

Chords can be shown as either Roman numerals (I and V), or they can be shown with letter chord symbols, as in the example above.

WRITING A BASS LINE EXERCISES

Write a bass line to the following tunes. The key and chords are given.

a)

Musical notation for exercise a) in B minor, 6/8 time. The treble clef contains a melody of quarter notes: B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The bass clef is empty for the student to write a bass line.

B minor i V i i

b)

Musical notation for exercise b) in Bb major, 9/8 time. The treble clef contains a melody of quarter notes: Bb2, Ab2, Gb2, F2, E2, D2, C2, Bb1. The bass clef is empty for the student to write a bass line.

Bb major I V I I

c)

Musical notation for exercise c) in E minor, common time. The treble clef contains a melody of quarter notes: E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1. The bass clef is empty for the student to write a bass line.

E minor

d)

Musical notation for exercise d) in F major, 3/2 time. The treble clef contains a melody of quarter notes: F2, G2, A2, Bb2, C3, Bb2, A2, G2, F2. The bass clef is empty for the student to write a bass line.

F major