EXAMPLE OF A COMPOSITION
A simple example of composition is now fully developed.

The 3 basic elements of music are clearly distinguished: Melody, Harmony and Rhythm.

The composition will consist of two parts, each one having 32 bars. The first part will be in Major mode and the second one in minor mode.

Along the whole process, the Harmonic Wheel will be used to harmonize, that is, to add chords to the melody.
We will begin by composing an 8 bar phrase.

To do that, we choose a Key, a Time Signature and a Tempo.

For instance, we choose the A Major key, the 4 over 4 time signature (or common time) and the tempo $\text{♩ = 120}$. 

Now, we focus on the 3 elements of music: Melody, Harmony and Rhythm.
Many melodies are made from a Motif.

A Motif is a small group of notes which is repeated, although usually with some variations.

Example: Motif with 4 notes and 2 bar length.

(By clicking on this symbol, we shall hear what is written on the staff)
We repeat the same motif several times, but changing the notes, until completing an 8 bar phrase.

Generally, phrases have 8, 12 or 16 bars, although there are phrases of any length.
We can also displace some notes inside a bar in order to avoid a monotonous melody:
Now, we are going to harmonize the last phrase. To do that, we use the Harmonic Wheel, where we select the A Major Scale:
The Harmonic Wheel gives us the 7 basic chords to perform the harmonization, which are:

- VII G\#Ø
- II Bm7
- VI F#m7
- III C#m7
- IV DΔ
- I AΔ
- V E7

It is also possible to use these chords without the 7th, that is, 3 note chords or triads.
Choosing the chords in each part of the melody needs some experience.

A **basic rule** states that long notes in the melody must not be a half step above the chord notes, since they produce strong dissonances. The best thing is that they coincide with the chord notes or they be more than a half step above them.

As an exception, the minor $9^{\text{th}}$ and minor $13^{\text{th}}$ dissonances in a V7 chord are accepted.
A simple way to begin is to put the Tonic chord or I degree in both the initial and the final bars. In our case, this chord is $A\Delta$ or A.
To go on with the harmonization, there are several chord progressions which are widely used, such as:

\[
\begin{align*}
V7 &\quad I \\
IV &\quad V7 &\quad I \\
I &\quad IIm &\quad V7 &\quad I \\
I &\quad VIm &\quad IIm7 &\quad V7 &\quad I \\
\end{align*}
\]

For instance, we can try the chord progression

\[
I &\quad IIm &\quad V7 &\quad I
\]

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This harmonization meets the basic rule previously explained, as every note in the melody is a chord note or is more than a half step above.
In any case, the quality of any harmonization must be evaluated by ear. To do that, we write the chords with whole or half notes and hear the phrase several times.

When a bad sound result is heard, we shall change the corresponding chord, or adapt the melody as well.

On the other hand, if the harmonization appears to be too simple, we can add some more chords. In our case, we shall include a pair of more chords and then hear the result obtained:

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Between the chords IIm and V7, we can put a IIm7.

Between the chords V7 and I, we can put a V+ in order to raise the dissonance of the V7 before reaching the I, which is a rest point.
If the result is considered satisfactory, we then go on to the next element of music: the Rhythm. So, we introduce a rhythmic pattern in the chords.

Next, 3 possible options are presented:

- Rhythm 1, which is “syncopated”.
- Rhythm 2, which is “arpeggiated”.
- Rhythm 3, which is a combination of the previous two.

Logically, it is possible to implement many different rhythms.
RHYTHM

Rhythm 1

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RHYTHM

Rhythm 2

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RHYTHM

Rhythm 3

Piano

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We can create a second phrase similar to the first one, but carrying out some variations.

In the melodic aspect, it is possible to vary the motives by introducing appoggiaturas, suspensions and other embellishing tones. For example, when composing the second phrase, some motives have been changed by appoggiaturas, as can be seen in the next figure (bars 12, 14 and 16).

With respect to the rhythmic pattern, we chose the Rhythm 1. From now on, only the chords will be shown and not the full rhythmic pattern.
SECOND 8 BAR PHRASE

Rhythm 1

I
A

IIm
Bm

V7
F7
F+
I
A

IIm7
Bm7

V7
F#7

I
I
A

IIm
Bm

V7
E7
I
A

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Regarding the harmony, two new chords have been introduced, which are:

- The chord F♯7, which is the V7 of the II degree, that is, Bm (or Bm7), which is indicated by V7/II. This means that, provisionally, we consider the Bm chord as a tonic chord (I degree) and just before it we put its corresponding dominant chord.

- The chord G♯Ø. This is the nearest diminished chord to the A Major key, since 3 of its 4 notes belong to this key.
Let us check that chord F#7 is the V7 of Bm:
and that $G^\#_7$ is the “nearest” diminished chord to A Major:

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THIRD AND FOURTH PHRASES

Next, we are going to add 16 other bars to the previous ones, in order to complete the first part of 32 bars.

To do that, we can add two other 8 bar phrases by repeating the melodic and harmonic structure of the first 16 bars. In the next figure, we see a possible result.

Logically, the composition of a work can be as complex as desired. Here, a simple example is shown.
To complete the composition, we shall add 32 other bars, now in the key of F# minor, which is the relative of A Major.

To move to a new key, it is necessary to introduce some chords that perform the transition from the first key to the second one. This process is called Modulation.

As the new key is very affine to the first one, we can only use the chords Im V7 Im in the new key.
Regarding the melody, we will begin with an 8 bar phrase, using similar motives to those in the first part.

In order to harmonize, we will use the Harmonic Wheel. We select, for example, the F♯ harmonic minor scale.
The F♯ harmonic minor scale and its associated chords:
SECOND PART: MINOR MODE

Now, the 7 basic chords to harmonize are:

II G♯Ø

IV Bm7    I F♯mΔ    V C♯7

VI DΔ     III A+Δ   VII E♯Ø

It is also possible to use these chords without the 7th, that is, 3 note chords or triads.

As previously indicated, we will begin with the chords Im  V7  Im, that is, F♯m  C♯7  F♯m, to move to the new key.
When harmonizing, let us remember that long notes in the melody must not be a half step above the chord notes, except if we are dealing with the V7 chord or if we want to create strong dissonances.

Example of a harmonization using the Rhythm 2:
SECOND PART: MINOR MODE

- Apart from the chords belonging to the F# harmonic minor scale, we have used the following:
- A, taken from the F# natural minor scale, preceded by its V7, that is, E7. Take into account that, in a minor mode, it is common practice to combine the natural, harmonic and melodic scales.
- G#7, which is the dominant of C#7, that is, the V7/V.
- The dominant seventh chords corresponding to any degree except I, are called secondary dominants.
SECOND PART: MINOR MODE

- We can add 3 other 8 bar phrases with identical melodic and harmonic structures to the previous ones, by only varying the motives. This way, we complete the second part of 32 bars.

- The only point to take into account, is that the last phrase should end with the tonic chord and preferably preceded by its V7.

- In the next two figures we can see the full second part, obtained by keeping to this procedure.
SECOND PART: MINOR MODE

Rhythm 2

33
Im F#m
V7 C#7
Im F#m
V7/III E7
III A
V7 C#7

37
IVm Bm
Im F#m
V7/V G#7
V7 C#7

41
Im F#m
V7 C#7
Im F#m
V7/III E7
III A
V7 C#7

45
IVm Bm
Im F#m
V7/V G#7
V7 C#7

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SECOND PART: MINOR MODE

Rhythm 2

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Now, we can hear the full composition:

In this website (www.harmonicwheel.com) you may download the following files:

- Score with the Melody and the Chords
- Score for Piano (Rhythms 1 and 2)
- Score for Guitar (Rhythm 3)

A performance of this piece can be seen in www.youtube.com, by searching “harmonicwheel”.

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