



Bite size Composition

THEME - Thinking about phrases

Whilst noodling about you've found a pattern of notes that you like so what can we do with these notes? We basically want to build our patterns (Motifs) into **phrases**.

A phrase is a group of connected notes that more or less create a complete musical thought.

If you think of a small pattern/motif as a musical word, then a **phrase** is a musical sentence. As sentences become paragraphs and chapters, phrases become **periods** and **sections**.

Your phrase can be as long or as short as you like.

It's important to then think how your phrases fit with each other.

Your phrases can be **balanced** (same number of bars in each) or **Unbalanced**. (Differing numbers of bars in each) - likely to happen with yesterday's Nigella recipe.

We can also think of them as **open** or **closed**. Comma or question mark vs full stop.

An **open phrase** will finish on a note/chord that **doesn't sound resolved/finished**.

A **closed** phrase will finish on a note/chord that sounds **resolved/complete**.

A common pattern is to have an open phrase followed by a closed phrase in a kind of **question and answer**. (Antecedent and Consequent)

The musical content of your phrases can be **the same, similar** or **contrasting**.

Exercise

Play around with your own patterns or this snippet to try and create the following:



An **open** 2 or 4 bar phrase. - finishing on a note that's not the tonic

A **closed** 2 or 4 bar phrase. - finish on the tonic.

2 **parallel** phrases - very similar!

2 **sequential** phrases - similar with the notes moved about

2 **contrasting** phrases - Different musical ideas.

With each of them think about having the first phrase **open** and the second phrase **closed**.

EXAMPLES

(Played for you in today's video)

Here are some ideas of what you can do with your phrases.

Parallel phrases are very similar, in this one only the last few notes are changed to make the 2nd phrase complete/resolved in answer to the first one. (Think Ode to Joy)



Sequential phrases use the same musical idea but move it to a different pitch. (think Darth Vader's theme tune in star wars)



Contrasting phrases use a different musical idea but can still balance the first phrase in number of bars and resolve it by bringing the melody or chord back to number 1 (tonic)



Here is an example of **unbalanced** phrases.



With all of this, all the time, everywhere in all music, keep in mind rhythm is just as important as pitch.

It's always good to look at your favourite melodies and see if you can spot the phrases and how they are working with each other.