

# CHAPTER 13

## TRANSPOSITION

*Transposition* is the process of moving a note or group of notes to a specific higher or lower pitch level. To *transpose* is to write or perform in a different key or at a different pitch level. Pitch relationships must remain intact during transposition.

### TRANSPOSITION BY SCALE DEGREE

The most direct means of organizing pitch relationships for transposition is to identify the pattern of scale degrees in the original key, then to perform or write the pattern in a different key. Using numbers will help identify the scale degrees.

B $\flat$  (original)

G (lower)

D (higher)

The figure displays three musical staves illustrating scale degree transposition. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The first staff is in B-flat major (one flat) and contains a sequence of notes: B-flat, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The second staff is in G major (one sharp) and contains the same sequence of notes: G, E, D, C, B, A, G. The third staff is in D major (two sharps) and contains the same sequence of notes: D, B, A, G, F, E, D. Below each staff, the scale degrees are indicated by numbers: 5, 3, 1 3 5, 3 5, 3. The first staff is labeled 'Bb (original)', the second 'G (lower)', and the third 'D (higher)'.

Figure 13.1: Scale Degree Transposition (diatonic major).

Transposition in minor keys that have accidentals may require chromatic signs that differ from the accidentals in the original music. The purpose is to keep the pitch relationships intact.

d (original):

b $\flat$ (lower):

f $\sharp$  (higher):

*Figure 13.2: Scale Degree Transposition (harmonic minor).*

Transposing diatonic melodies may be easier than transposing melodies with many accidentals because chromatic signs may be different after transposition. The pitch relationships must be kept intact.

C (original):

5 1 7 6 5 #4 6 #5 7 #5 6 b7 6 #7 1  
 (#) (#) (#) (b) (#)

A<sup>b</sup> (lower):

5 1 7 6 5 #4 6 #5 7 #5 6 b7 6 #7 1  
 (b) (b) (b) (b) (b)

E (higher):

5 1 7 6 5 #4 6 #5 7 #5 6 b7 6 #7 1  
 (#) (#) (#) (b) (#)

*Figure 13.3: Scale Degree Transposition (chromatic).*

## TRANSPOSITION BY INTERVAL

Transposing by individual intervals may increase accuracy in music that has many accidentals, creates a complex key relationship, or has complex scale degree relationships. Interval transposition may also make a half step or whole step transposition easier. A transposition written or played the same exact interval above or below the original will keep the pitch relationships intact.

Figure 13.4: Interval Transposition (harmonic).

Melodic intervals in the transposed music will correspond to the same melodic intervals in the original key.

Figure 13.5: Interval Transposition (melodic).

### TRANSPOSITION BY CHANGE OF KEY SIGNATURE

When a transposition desired is a half step higher or lower and the notes remain on the same staff degrees, transposition by key signature may be used.

This is accomplished by imagining the different key signature, reading the same staff degrees, and correcting accidentals to keep the pitch relationships intact. The same accidentals will not be used in the transposed key, so the effect of the accidental (raising or lowering) must be created by means of a different chromatic sign.

The image displays musical notation for key signature transposition. It starts with the original key signature of G major (one sharp) and D minor (two flats). The notation is organized into pairs of staves, with brackets on the left indicating the transposition direction:

- Halfstep lower:**
  - Original: G major (one sharp) and D minor (two flats).
  - Transposed: G $\flat$  major (two flats) and D $\flat$  major (five flats).
- Halfstep higher:**
  - Original: G major (one sharp) and D minor (two flats).
  - Transposed: A $\flat$  major (four flats) and A major (three sharps).
- Halfstep lower (from A major):**
  - Original: A major (three sharps).
  - Transposed: E major (four sharps).
- Halfstep lower (from E major):**
  - Original: E major (four sharps).
  - Transposed: E $\flat$  major (three flats).

Accidentals are shown as (#) and (b) to indicate the specific chromatic signs used in the transposed keys.

Figure 13.6: Key Signature Transposition.

