

MUSIC THEORY.aargh©

The Year of the Interval: SECONDS (Session 12)

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Bells are assigned to ringers in adjacent pairs of notes called *seconds*. Most of these pairs are a *whole step* apart, and one is a *half step* apart. D to E, F to G, A to B are *whole steps*, B to C is a half step. Each of these pairs contains two different letters and are therefore called *seconds*.

A whole step contains two half steps. The pairs of notes that are whole steps apart have a black piano keyboard note between them. If you count half steps D to E are two half steps apart or a *major second*. Two adjacent white keys on the keyboard are E to F. E to F is one half step apart or a *minor second*.

A *major second* contains two adjacent letters in the musical alphabet and two half steps. D to E, F to G, A to B are *major seconds*. A *minor second* contains two adjacent letters in the musical alphabet and one half step. A *minor second* is found between E and F. If we consider the sharps and flats, there are more *major* and *minor seconds* available. These intervals are major seconds: B to C#, E to F#, Bb to C, Ab to Bb, and so on. These intervals are minor seconds: F to Gb, A to Bb, D# to E, and so on. (The intervals from F to F#, A to A#, Eb to E are not minor seconds. These intervals contain only one letter in the musical alphabet.)

Intervals can be performed *melodically* or *harmonically*. As their names suggest, in *melodic intervals* the notes follow one another as in a melody, in *harmonic intervals* the notes are performed simultaneously.

Intervals are called *diatonic* or *chromatic*. *Diatonic intervals* are those that belong to a given major scale key signature. (In the key of C Major: B to C, D to E, F to G, and A to B are all *diatonic intervals*.) *Chromatic intervals* occur between notes belonging to the major scale key signature and other notes. (In the key of C Major: B to C#, D to Eb, F# to G, and so on are all *chromatic intervals*.)

These are all terms musicians use to easily converse with one another. They are also terms used to identify the function of the interval within a given context.

In the Music Theory column this season, we will explore all the intervals and other facets of their use. In the meantime, can you identify these intervals as *major* or *minor seconds*?



Seconds begin these well-known compositions: Are they major or minor seconds?

- *Für Elise* by Beethoven
- *Joy to the World* melody by Handel
- *Three Blind Mice* English nursery rhyme
- *Doe, a Deer* by Richard Rodgers

Answers will appear in the next issue of *Clapper Chatter*.

Until next time,

Dr. P

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