

SS1 MUSIC – WEEK 2

TOPIC: Transcription and Transposition

◆ I. TRANSCRIPTION

Meaning of Transcription in Music

In music, transcription is the process of rewriting a musical piece from one notation system to another, without changing the pitch, rhythm, or length of the notes. It allows musicians to understand and interpret the same melody using

different systems of musical representation.

The two common systems used are:

1. Staff Notation (Western Music Notation): This uses five horizontal lines and four spaces to represent pitch and rhythm. Notes are placed on these lines/spaces based on their pitch.
2. Tonic Sol-fa Notation (Relative Solmization): This system represents the function of a note in a key, using syllables like:

d (doh)

r (ray)

m (me)

f (fah)

s (soh)

l (lah)

t (te)

Transcription is especially useful in educational contexts where tonic sol-fa is easier for beginners, while staff notation is more precise and globally used.

Purpose and Importance of Transcription

Helps students and musicians become

multiliterate in music.

Encourages the understanding of pitch relationships in a key.

Aids in aural training and solmization practice.

Allows singers and instrumentalists to communicate across systems.

Enhances music arranging, analysis, and theory skills.

Steps in Transcribing from Staff to Tonic Sol-fa

Let's assume the melody is in the key of C major, where:

C = doh (d)

D = ray (r)

E = me (m)

F = fah (f)

G = soh (s)

A = lah (l)

B = te (t)

Steps:

1. Identify the Key: Determine the tonic note (the "home note" of the key).

2. Label Staff Notes with Letter Names:

E.g., C, E, G.

3. Assign Sol-fa Syllables: Convert note letters to sol-fa equivalents based on scale position.

4. Preserve Rhythm: Maintain duration (e.g., crotchet, minim).

5. Apply Dynamics/Marks if Needed.

Example:

Staff Notation: C – D – E – F – G

Tonic Sol-fa: d – r – m – f – s

Steps in Transcribing from Tonic Sol-fa to Staff

1. Identify the Tonic (Key): If given “d = G,” the key is G major.

2. Write G major scale notes: G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G

3. Match each sol-fa to the correct staff note.

4. Write on the staff with correct rhythm and time signature.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

Confusing pitch with rhythm.

Misidentifying key signatures.

Forgetting accidentals (sharps or flats).

Misplacing notes on the staff.

◆ II. TRANSPOSITION

Meaning of Transposition

Transposition is the process of shifting a

musical piece from one key to another, while keeping the intervals and rhythm intact.

For example, a melody in C major can be transposed to D major, which raises every note by a whole step (tone).

Importance of Transposition

Adjusts music to suit the range of singers or instruments.

Simplifies complex keys for easier playing.

Helps in creating harmonic modulation or smooth transitions in compositions.

Essential in ensemble arrangements where instruments play in different keys.

Steps in Transposing a Melody

1. Identify Original Key: Example – C major.
2. Determine Target Key: Example – D major.
3. Label the scale degrees in the original melody: e.g., d – r – m – f.
4. Find corresponding notes in new key with same scale degrees.
5. Retain rhythm and articulation.

Example:

Melody in C Major: C – E – G – F

Scale Degrees: 1 – 3 – 5 – 4

Transpose to D Major: D – F# – A – G

Types of Transposition

1. By Interval: Moving every note by a fixed interval (e.g., a whole tone up).

2. By Key: Changing the key entirely and rewriting all notes accordingly.

Difference Between Transcription and Transposition

Feature	Transcription	Transposition
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Definition	Rewriting in another notation system	Rewriting in a different key
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Pitch Change	No change in pitch	Yes, pitch is raised/lowered
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Rhythm Change	Rhythm is unchanged	Rhythm remains the same
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Use	Changes how it's written (staff ↔ sol-fa)	Changes the pitch level for performance
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◆ Key Terms

Tonic: The first note of a scale; the "home" note.

Key Signature: Indicates the key by showing sharps/flats.

Sol-fa Syllables: Relative pitch notation system.

Sharp Key: A key with sharps (#) in its key signature.

Flat Key: A key with flats (\flat) in its key signature.

