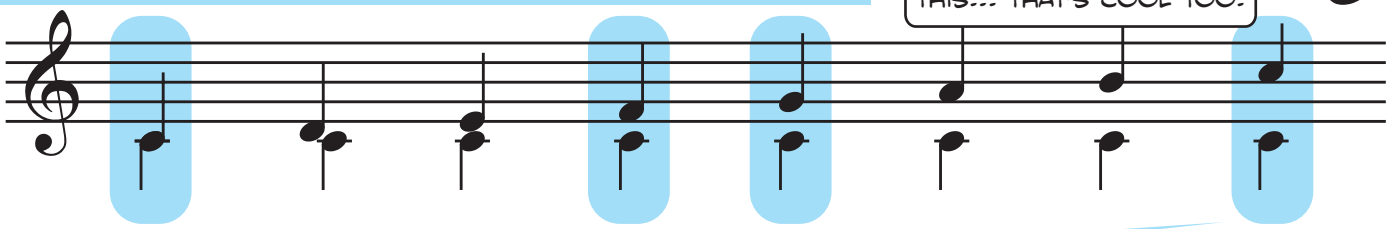
Perfect Intervals

THE **DISTANCE** OF AN INTERVAL IS **ONE** PART OF ITS NAME, BUT THERE'S **MORE:** EVERY INTERVAL HAS ANOTHER QUALITY TO IT, WHICH WE'LL CALL **INFLECTION.**

INFLECTION IS A BIT **HARDER** TO UNDERSTAND, PARTLY BECAUSE IT DEPENDS ON THE **TYPE** OF INTERVAL. SO LET'S START BY LOOKING AT **UNISONS, FOURTHS, FIFTHS** AND **OCTAVES.**

SOME THEORISTS USE THE TERM **QUALITY** FOR THIS... THAT'S COOL TOO.



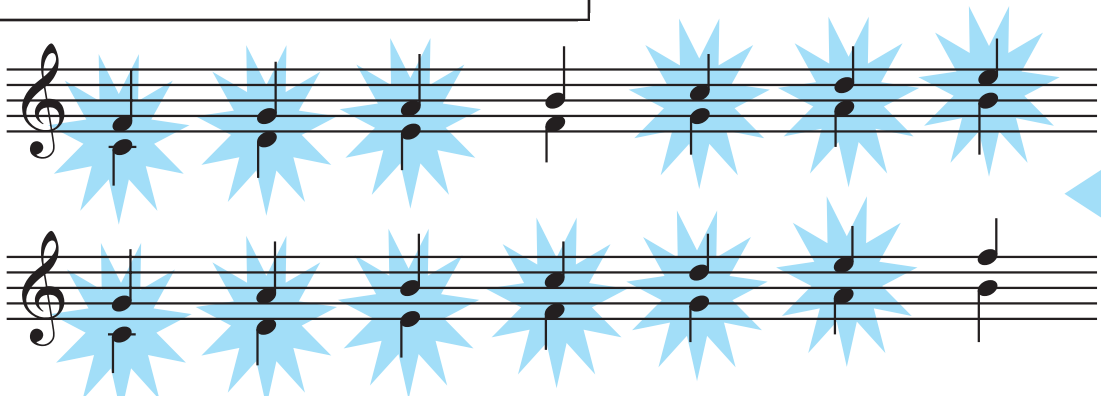
UNISONS AND OCTAVES

ARE THE EASIEST TO LABEL: IF THE TWO NOTES ARE THE **SAME** (FOR EXAMPLE, **B FLAT** AND **B FLAT**), THEN THE INFLECTION IS **PERFECT:** SUCH AN INTERVAL IS CALLED A **PERFECT UNISON** OR A **PERFECT OCTAVE.**

FOURTHS AND FIFTHS

REQUIRE A LITTLE MORE **EXPLAINING.**

IF YOU LOOK AT ALL THE FOURTHS AND FIFTHS YOU CAN CREATE USING ONLY THE **WHITE NOTES** ON THE PIANO KEYBOARD (IN OTHER WORDS, USING ONLY NOTES **WITHOUT ACCIDENTALS**):



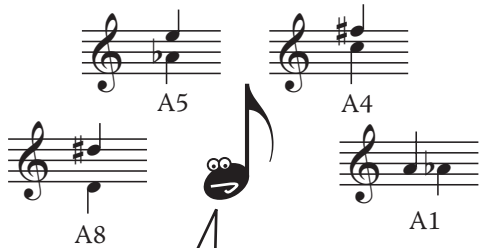
EACH ONE IS **PERFECT** EXCEPT FOR THOSE WHICH USE **F** AND **B!**

WAIT... WHY ARE THE **B** TO **F** INTERVALS **DIFFERENT?**

WELL, IF YOU WERE TO COUNT THE **HALF-STEPS** THAT MAKE UP EACH INTERVAL, YOU'D NOTICE THAT ALL THE OTHER ONES ARE **EQUAL IN SIZE,** BUT THE B TO F INTERVALS ARE NOT: **F** TO **B** IS A HALF-STEP **LARGER** THAN A PERFECT FOURTH, AND **B** TO **F** IS A HALF-STEP **SMALLER** THAN A PERFECT FIFTH.

WHICH RAISES THE **QUESTION:** IF THE INTERVAL IS NOT **PERFECT,** THEN WHAT **IS** IT?

AN INTERVAL THAT IS A HALF-STEP **LARGER** THAN PERFECT IS CALLED AN **AUGMENTED** INTERVAL.

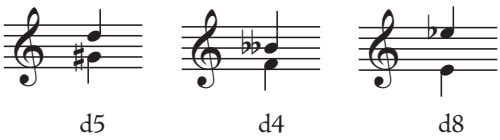


YOU CAN GO **FURTHER,** TO **DOUBLY AUGMENTED** AND **DOUBLY DIMINISHED** INTERVALS, BUT... DO YOU REALLY **WANT** TO?

AUGMENTED

PERFECT

DIMINISHED



AND THERE'S **NO SUCH THING** AS A **DIMINISHED UNISON...**

JUST LIKE TWO THINGS CAN'T BE **NEGATIVE TWO FEET** AWAY FROM EACH OTHER!

AN INTERVAL THAT IS A HALF-STEP **SMALLER** THAN PERFECT IS CALLED A **DIMINISHED** INTERVAL.