

GRADE 8 MUSIC THEORY

Dr. Declan Plummer
Lesson 5: Piano Textures

Piano Writing Guidelines

There are several important differences between writing for piano and writing for vocal/choral/SATB music:

- SATB 'range' rules no longer apply. Rather than 4-part texture, the piano texture has a wider register and there is a RH / LH division.
- **8ves** & **5ths** are often used as sonic devices, but **not for part-writing**.
- The texture will also include music that is characteristic of the piano (e.g. scales arpeggios etc.,)
- The **leading note**, the **3rd** and any **chromatic dissonant** note **may** be doubled, provided there are plenty of other notes in the chord that are also doubled to balance its effect!

Beethoven, Sonata Op.10 No.1



doubled root, (leading note), 3rd, 5th & 7th

Piano Writing Guidelines

- There are several different directions for **stems** in piano music:
Notes that are to be played together share one common stem



Up and down stems are used to show movements of parts in multitiered textures

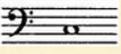
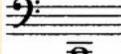


Piano Writing Guidelines

Notes with different rhythms, held notes etc., also need independent directional stems



Piano Writing Guidelines

- For **spacing**, notes between  and  should be more than a 3rd apart.
- For notes below  at least an octave or more is preferred.

Markiert und kräftig M.M. ♩ = 108 Schumann, Novelette No. 1 Op. 21

Start *f*



Piano Writing Guidelines

- There are several common piano **accompaniment styles**

7:23

Block Chord / Harmonic Style

Beethoven, Sonata Op. 53 (1st movt)

dolce *cresc.* *f*



Start

Leaping Bass Accompaniment

Allegro assai Tchaikovsky, Waltz Op. 39

p



Piano Writing Guidelines

0:30

Alberti Bass Accompaniment

Mozart, Sonata in A minor K.310 (1st movt)

f etc.



5:25

Broken Chords and Arpeggios

Schubert, Impromptu Op. 90 No. 1

pp



Piano Writing Guidelines

Piano music has exceptions to the consecutive 5^{ths} and 8^{ves} rule:

- For keyboard music that is clearly **not contrapuntal**, the normal voice-leading conventions do not apply. Either the right hand or the left hand may be **doubled in octaves**.
- By the Classical period, consecutive perfect 8^{ves} in **contrary motion** were commonplace at perfect cadences

End (Allegro) Mozart, Piano Sonata, K.331 (1st mvt)



Piano Writing Guidelines

Piano music has exceptions to the consecutive 5^{ths} and 8^{ves} rule:

- For keyboard music consecutive 5^{ths} and 8^{ves} between upper and lower parts were accepted in a passage that was melodic and in unison.

Mozart, Sonata in C minor K457 (1st movt)

- For keyboard music consecutive 5^{ths} in the right-hand part are not allowed, though acceptable in the left-hand accompaniment figures

Mozart, Sonata in C major K545 (2nd movt)

acceptable

Stylistic Features: Classical Piano

1. Well-articulated and distinct phrases, two or four bars in length. Inclination towards symmetry leads to periodic sentences and formalised sections being organised around related key structures.
2. Constructed on simple, straightforward chords, decorated by lots of NHT. Chromatic chords justified by resolutions of dissonances, established cadences and conventional key structures.
3. Motivic development was favoured (esp. Haydn and Beethoven), using sequences and repetitions. Rhythmic patterns are usually consistent and predictable giving beauty, pulse and momentum to the music
4. Mostly homophonic texture, never too cluttered, thick or complex. Predictable accompaniment patterns (broken chords, Alberti bass).
5. Most works written in extended binary, ternary, variation, rondo or sonata forms

Stylistic Features: Romantic Piano

1. Artistic freedom of the individual, unrestrained movement, passion, expression of personal feelings. Replaces the classical ideals of universality, control, order, equilibrium, serenity and restraint.
2. Piano more capable of a range of expressions than the classical piano. Sudden and extreme changes in range, tempo, dynamics and tonality.
3. New styles emerged, nearly all of which suggest some specific mood or scene (sometimes specified in the title): imagination, fantasy, quest for adventure, far-off lands, distant past, nature, human emotions, legends, fairy tales, magic and the supernatural were all popular.
4. Homophonic accompaniment much thicker and based more often on chromatic harmony that takes longer to resolve. Multi-tier texture consisting of a melody (which can be in any register), a bass line and inner parts.

Stylistic Features: Modern Piano

1. A period of searching, turmoil experimentation and discovery. No unanimous style or ideals, but instead a whole range: *impressionism, expressionism, serialism, post-modernism, neoclassicism* etc.
2. Rhythm received the greatest attention in modern music: especially freedom from regular metric pulse: Russian composers introduced and integrated speech accents into their rhythms, which included wider leaps, more syncopation and shifted accents.
3. Melody became more discursive and fragmented, using repeated pitches, variations of a single motivic cell, atonal procedures like 12-tone serialism, or modal, pentatonic, whole-tone scales.
4. Traditional harmony often replaced by non-functional chords, poly-chords, note clusters, quartal harmony and many other possibilities.