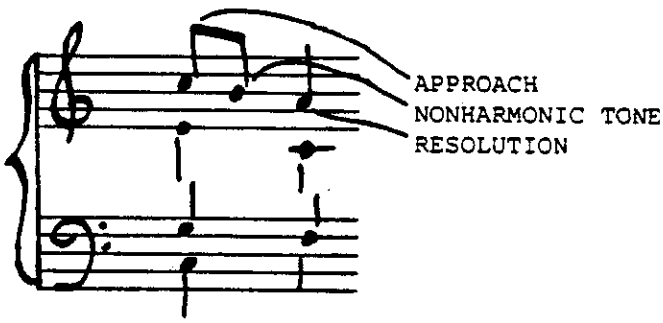
UNIT 6: NONHARMONIC TONES

The musical interest of a phrase comes from many sources, one of which is from dissonance derived from pitches, known as nonharmonic tones, which are not part of the chord. In surveying the history of music from the Renaissance (1450-1600) to the Twentieth Century one can observe the gradual increase of dissonance. Even between the Baroque (1600-1750) and Romantic (1825-1880) periods, the use of nonharmonic tones increased. In fact, one can state regarding nonharmonic tones that a) they increased in number, b) they became longer in duration, and c) they became stronger in volume, or placed in more accented parts of the measure.

Nonharmonic tones are given specific names depending upon how the dissonant tone is approached and resolved in the same voice.

Example 6.1



The following chart summarizes the nonharmonic tones. It includes the name of the nonharmonic tone, whether or not it appears on a strong part of a beat, the manner of approach and resolution, and the direction of the second and third pitches in comparison to the first and second pitches.

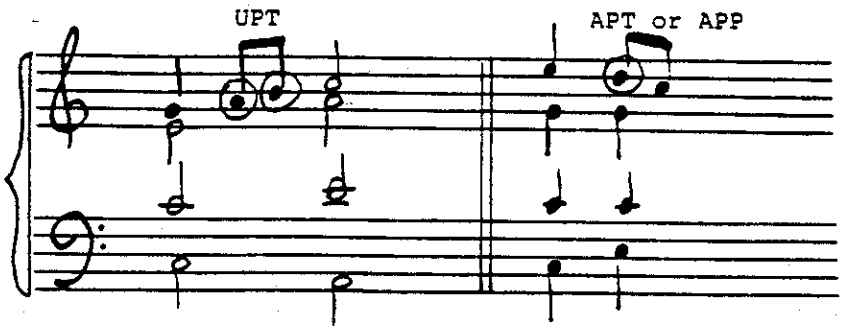
	NAME	ABBREV.	ACCENT	APPROACH	RESOLUTION	DIRECTION
1.	Passing Tone, unaccented	UPT	no	step	step	same
2.	Passing Tone, accented (called appoggiatura by some theorists)	APT	yes	step	step	same
3.	Neighbor Tone	NT	may be	step	step	reverses dir.
4.	Appoggiatura	APP	usually	leap	step	reverses dir.
5.	Suspension	S	yes	same	step down	
6.	Retardation	R	yes	same	step up	
7.	Escape Tone or Échappée	ET	no	step	skip	reverses dir.
8.	Cambiata	CAM	no	skip	step	reverses dir.
9.	Anticipation	ANT	no	any note	same	

10. Changing Tones - explained with musical examples

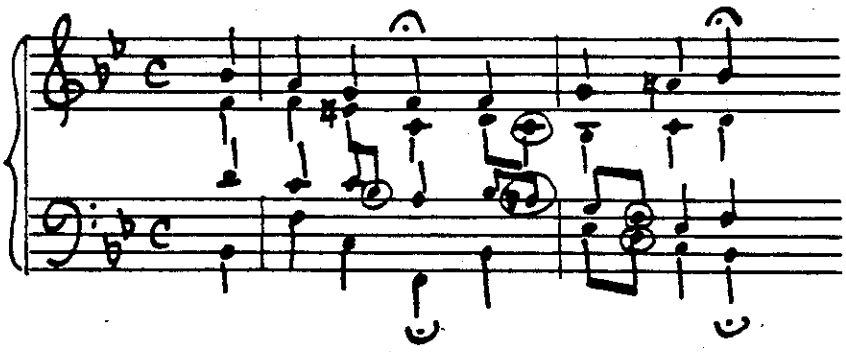
11. Pedal Point - explained with musical examples

1. and 2. -- The PASSING TONE fills in the gap between chord tones and may be diatonic or chromatic. Most often it is unacccented, but may be found on strong parts of the beat as well. Some theorists consider accented passing tones as appoggiaturas.

Example 6.2

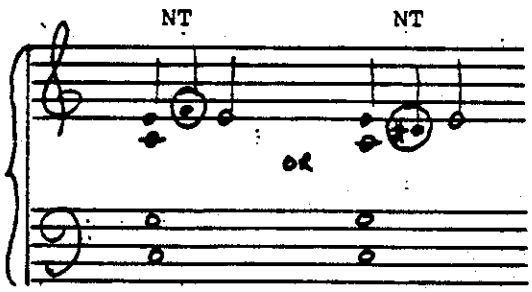


J. S. Bach - Ach Gott und Herr



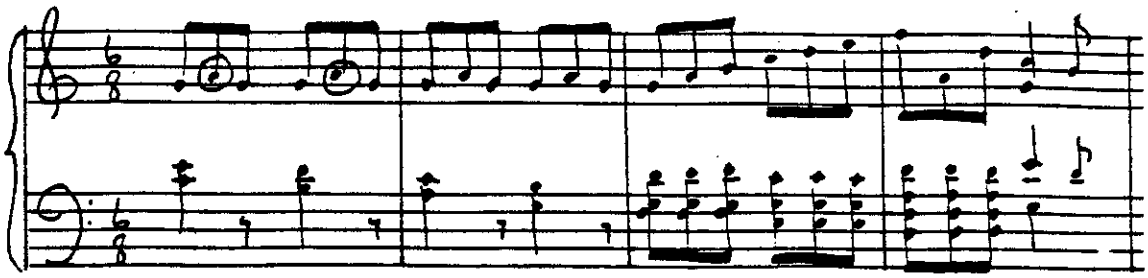
3. -- The NEIGHBOR TONE (also referred to as Auxiliary) ornaments a note by moving by whole or half step and then returning to the note.

Example 6.3



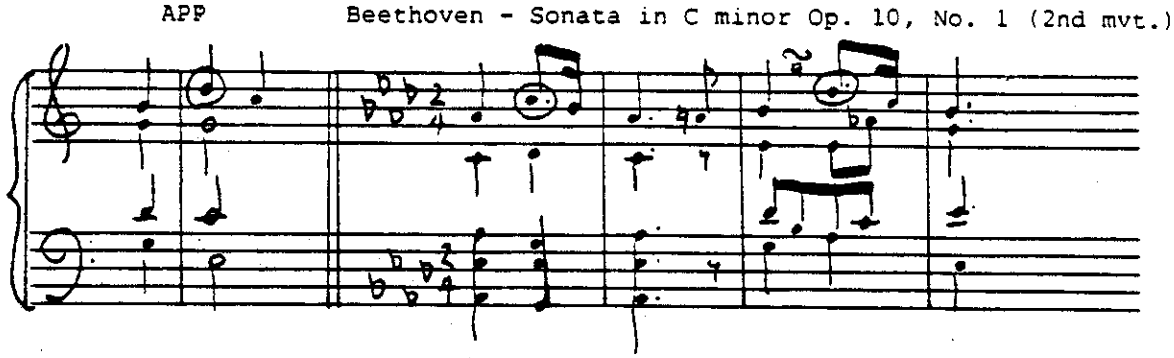
Example 6.3 (continued)

Mendelssohn - Song without Words Op. 102, No. 3



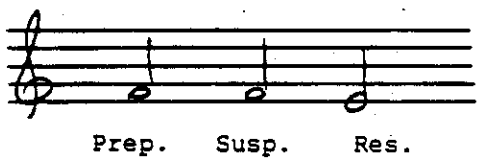
4. -- The APPOGGIATURA (from the Italian verb "appoggiare" meaning to lean) creates strong dissonance by leaning on the note to which it resolves.

Example 6.4



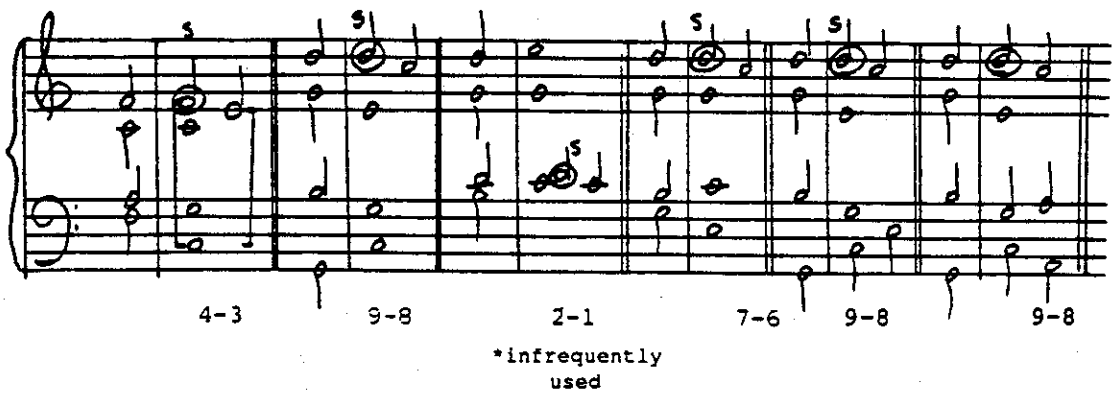
5. -- The SUSPENSION is approached by the same note (called the preparation) and resolves down by step (called the resolution).

Example 6.5



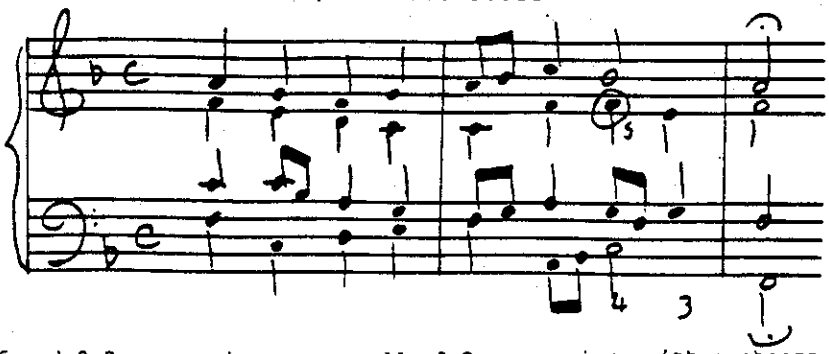
The suspension is further named by the intervals formed between the suspension, resolution and the bass note at the point of dissonance.

Example 6.6



Example 6.6 (continued)

J. S. Bach - Schmucke dich, O liebe Seele

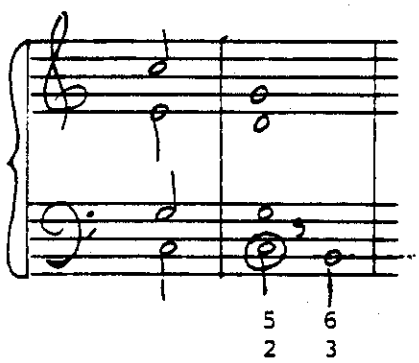


*The 9-6 and 9-3 suspensions are really 9-8 suspensions with a change in the bass note.

In addition to the 4-3 suspension, the 9-8 suspension and 2-1 suspension appear over a root position chord. The 7-6 suspension occurs over a first inversion chord.

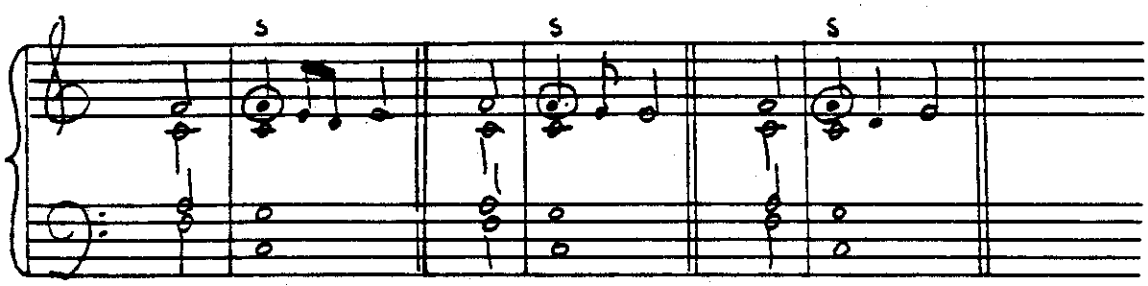
All the suspensions described thus far occur in the soprano, alto, or tenor voices. When a suspension occurs in the bass, double numbers are needed to explain the intervals between the bass and other chord members.

Example 6.7

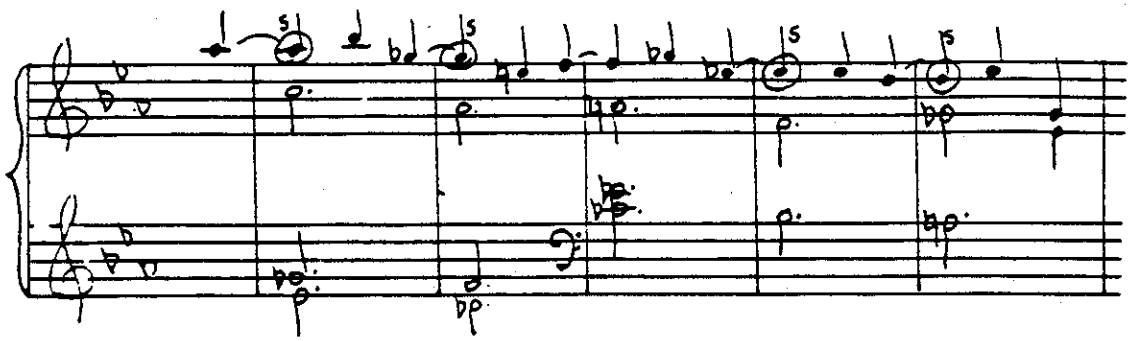


The resolutions of suspensions may be ornamented with neighbor tones, anticipations or other nonharmonic or chord tones.

Example 6.8 Beethoven - Piano Sonata Op. 10, No. 1 (1st Mvt.)



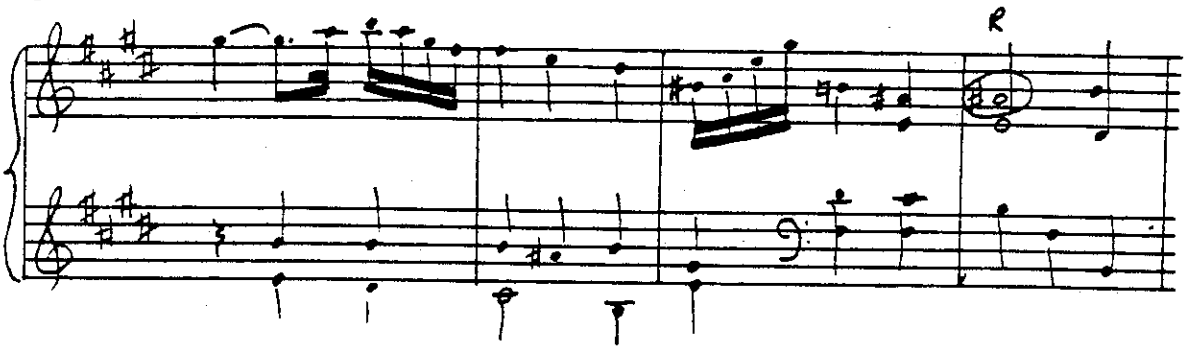
Example 6.8 (continued)



6. -- The RETARDATION is similar to a suspension with the exception that the resolution ascends. Retardations appear frequently at cadence points in combination with suspensions.

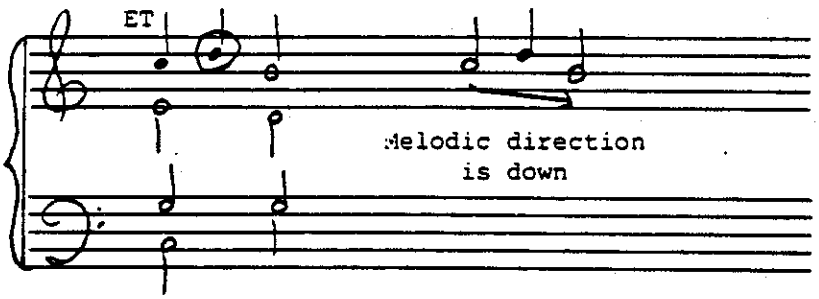
Example 6.9

Haydn - Sonata No. 22 (Finale)



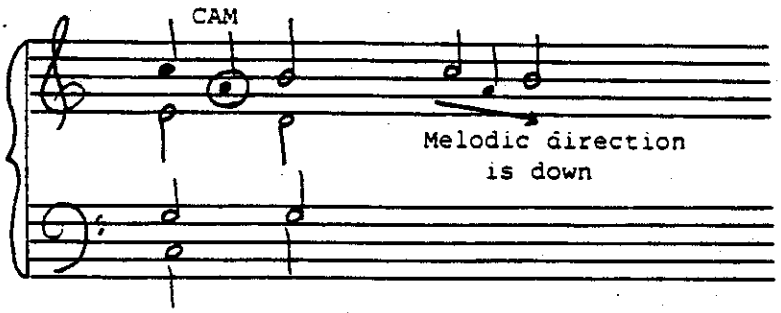
7. -- The ÉCHAPPÉE or ESCAPE TONE moves opposite to the prevailing melodic direction.

Example 6.10



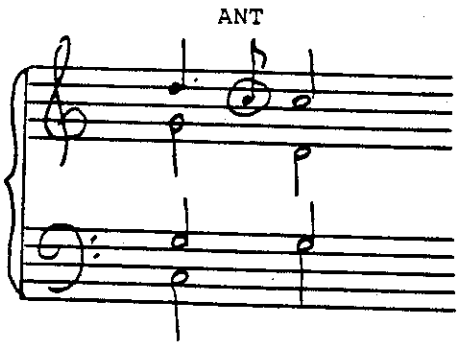
8. -- Contrary to the Escape Tone, the CAMBIATA moves in the direction of the melody.

Example 6.11



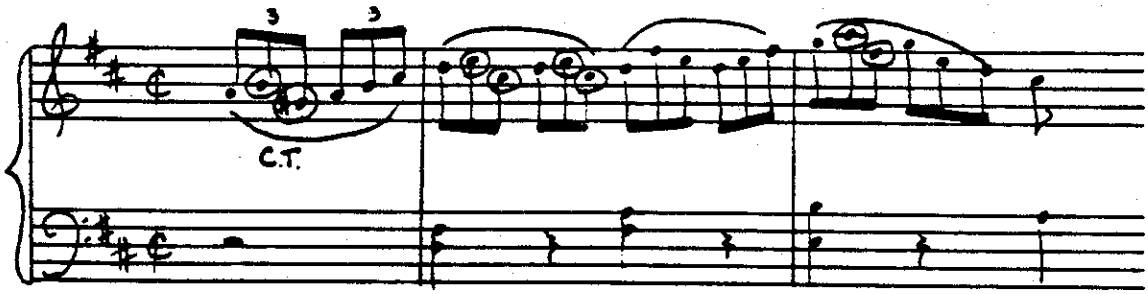
9. -- The ANTICIPATION sounds a pitch before the remainder of the harmony occurs.

Example 6.12



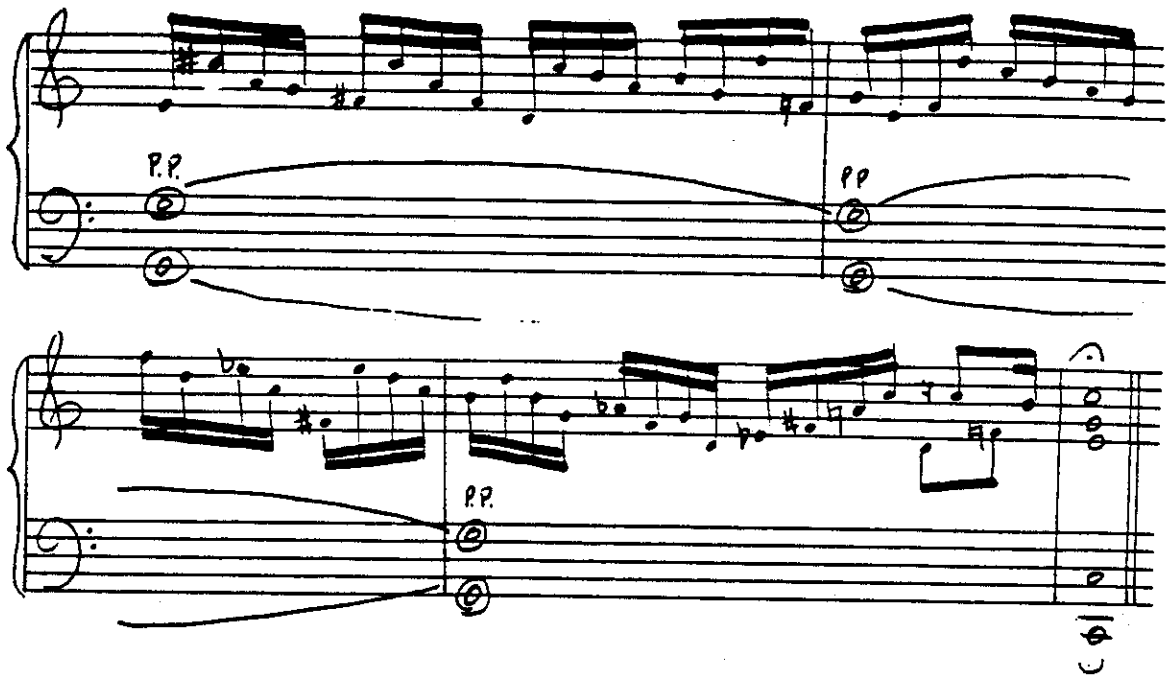
10. CHANGING TONES are consecutive nonharmonic tones employing the upper and lower neighbor tones of a note.

Example 6.13 Mozart - Piano Sonata K. 284 (3rd Mvt.)



11. The PEDAL POINT (also called Pedal Tone, Organ Point, Organ Tone) is a sustained or repeated tone usually placed in the lowest voice while the harmony changes above it. The name is derived from organ literature where the organist would hold a pedal note while playing other harmonic progressions with the hands. Since the pedal point is often pitched on the tonic or dominant, the prolonged note tends to strengthen the sense of tonality.

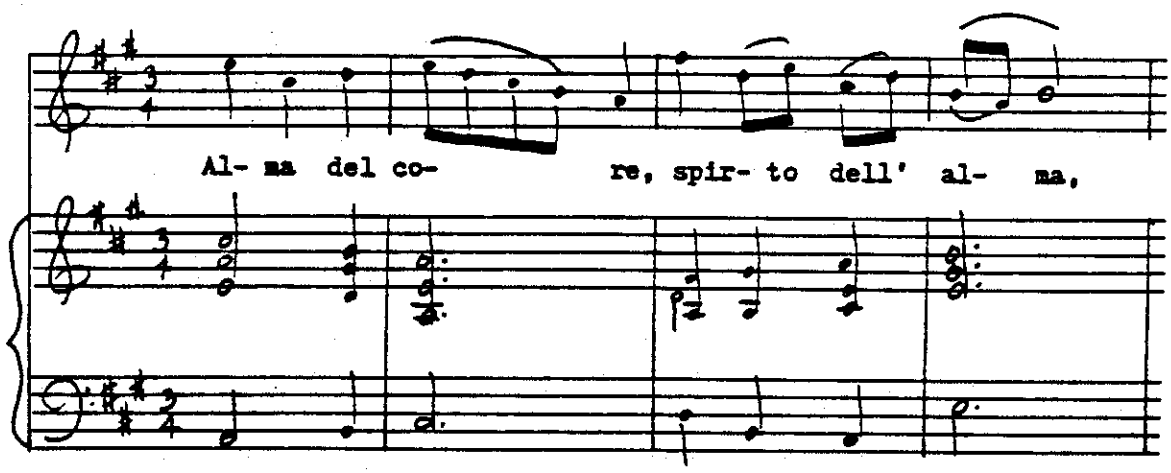
Example 6.14 J.S. Bach - Little Prelude in C from Clavierbüchlein für Friedemann Bach



Drill 6.1

Analyze the excerpt from Caldara's Alma del Core for key center, chords, and nonharmonic tones.

Caldara - Alma del Core



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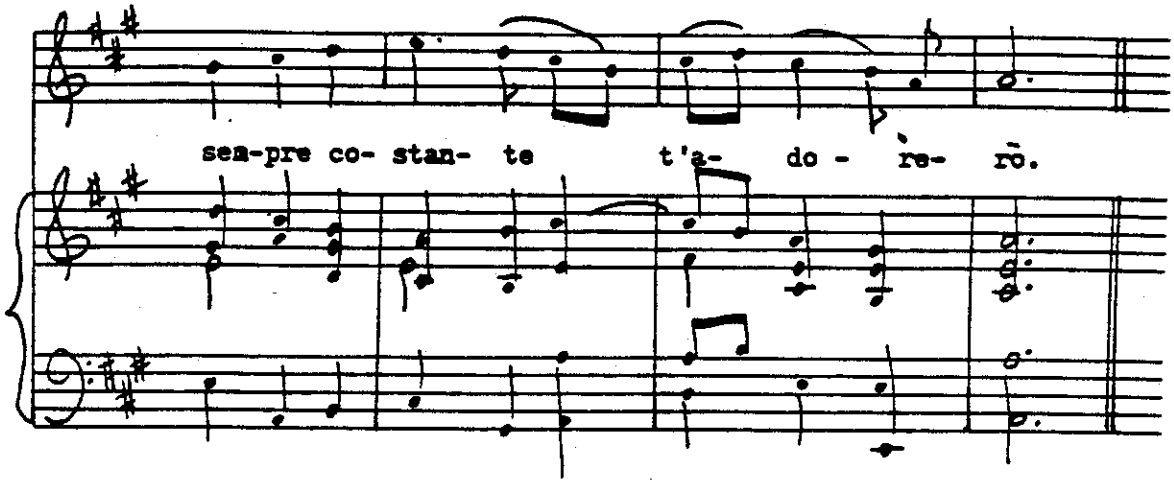

Drill 6.2

Select a composition which you play or sing and analyze it for key center, harmonic progression and nonharmonic tones. It is useful to write the Roman numerals beneath the chords and identify the nonharmonic tones by circling and labeling them. Then summarize what you have found by observing a) the number of nonharmonic tones, b) the variety used, and c) their relative importance in the composition.