9498 - Intro to Music Theory

July 12, Week 1 - Scales, Solfege, and the Circle of Fifths

Introduction

- See the syllabus for classroom and curricular expectations.
- This is where Catherine and Alex introduce themselves, the curriculum, and homework assignments. They also learn student names by playing name games.

Scales

- An interval is what you hear when you play two notes one after another.
- Intervals can be described by the distance between the two notes, measured in half-steps.
- A scale is a sequence of notes that spans an octave, which is 12 half-steps.
    - For our purposes, every scale has 8 notes, from octave to octave (inclusive).
- The spacing between the notes - the intervals - is what makes scales sound distinct.
    - For major scales, the spacing is 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1 (in half-steps)
    - For (natural) minor scales, the spacing is 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2
- Notes in scales are numbered by degrees: the first note is scale degree 1, the fourth is scale degree number 4, etc.
    - Scale degree 1 is also called the tonic, and degree 8 is the octave
- Intervals are named by their relation to a scale.
    - A major third is an interval of 4 half-steps, which is the distance between the first and third scale degree in a major scale.
    - Likewise, a perfect fifth is an interval of 7 half-steps: the distance between the first and third scale degree in a minor scale

Solfege

- Instead of just assigning each scale degree a number, we'll assign them names, too.
    - This makes them easier to sing and talk about - fewer numbers to throw around
- We'll be using the "moveable *do*" system, in which *do* is always the name of the first scale degree, instead of being fixed to a specific pitch.
- The notes are assigned the the following names:
    - Scale degrees 1-8: *do*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *so*, *la*, *ti*, *do*
    - Just like scale degrees, the solfege note names repeat after an octave

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Practice with solfege

Sing scales in solfege, up and down
Sing intervals in solfege
Play a game - guess the interval (fixed tonic)?

Circle of Fifths

On the piano - demonstrate that scales with additional sharps are separated by a fifth.