

COMPOSITION PROJECT #3

(melodic variations)

1. **Composition**—Using the original melody from project #2 as a model, create a set of five variations for a *solo monophonic instrument* of your choosing (preferably selected from the list of instruments represented in class). Each of these variations will utilize one of the following pitch systems:
 - a. modal (choose one: dorian, phrygian, lydian, mixolydian, locrian)
 - b. pentatonic (anhemitonic—i.e. “black key”—variety)
 - c. whole-tone
 - d. octatonic
 - e. a scale or mode of your own design (explain in the attached analysis)

2. **Pre-compositional work**—On a sheet of manuscript paper, sketch out a transcription of the original melody for each of the pitch environments listed above. Once you have done this, you may then develop your variations by applying the following processes:
 - a. ornamentation (neighbor tones, trills, pitch bends, etc.)
 - b. rhythmic alterations (including augmentation/diminution)
 - c. change in tempo
 - d. contrasts in musical “character” (resulting from a combination of other factors)

These changes should be explored freely, but not to the degree of sacrificing the essential qualities of the original melody—this is the very basis of variation technique.

3. Keeping in mind that the primary purpose of this project is to *explore the melodic possibilities inherent to each distinct scale/mode*, you must *strictly* adhere to the given pitch environment within each variation; play or sing the melodies after you have composed them to ensure that they clearly establish the unique sound quality of each scale/mode. Do not attempt to “modulate” or incorporate pitches outside of the collection, as this will only obscure the distinctive sound quality of each.
4. Because these melodies are to be composed for a *specific instrument*, issues such as range, technical limitations (e.g., register breaks, string changes, fingerings), dynamic characteristics, etc. *must* be taken into consideration. A “cheat sheet” of instrumental/vocal ranges may be downloaded from the course website. If you are composing the work for an instrument other than your own, you are expected to consult an experienced performer of the given instrument for guidance.
5. Once you have worked out each of the variations, make a final copy of the collection, beginning each variation on a new system. ***On the staff above each variation, write out the pitches of the scale/mode that you are using and label it with the correct name.*** Make sure that the melody in each variation uses *only* those pitches indicated!
6. **Analysis/commentary**—In the attached analysis, discuss how each of the five variations compares with the original, considering the following questions:
 - a. How does the quality of the melody change with each new pitch environment?
 - b. What are the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each scale/mode?
 - c. What alterations did you make to the original melody in order to enhance the distinct characteristics of each scale/mode?
 - Be prepared to discuss the project in class on **Friday, September 28** and to read the works in class on **Friday, October 5**.
 - The project (including *commentary* and *pre-compositional sketches*) and *a copy of the original melody* are due in class on **Wednesday, October 10**.