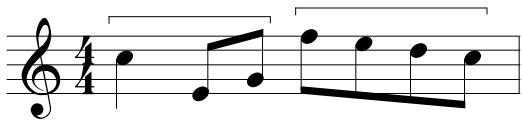
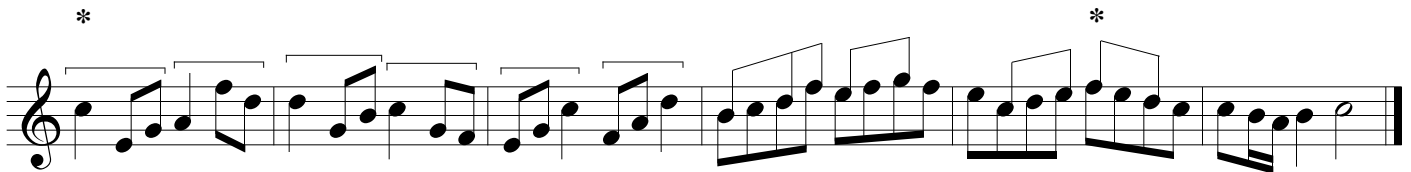


The Motive

Definition - The motive is a short rhythmic and/or melodic idea that is usually presented in a characteristic and impressive manner at the beginning of a composition. A motive's rhythms and/or intervals serve to form a shape or contour that is memorable. The purpose of a motive is to provide "unity, relationship, coherence, logic, comprehensibility, and fluency to a musical fabric."¹ A motive must be repeated. While repetition produces motivic identity and clarity, it also produces monotony. Therefore, variation or change must be introduced. It is important that the variation of a motive take a course that is coherent and logical. While processing a motive through variation, one should be sure that relationships form between adjacent statements of a motive. If the characteristics of a motive are changed too drastically, "unity, relationship, coherence, logic, comprehensibility, and fluency" will be lost to variety. While varying a motive, the more-important features of a motive must be preserved while the less-important features may be changed. The compositional objective should determine the important features. In the following measure, the relationship between the two bracketed ideas is not clear. The lack of relationship between these two ideas creates a sense of variety.

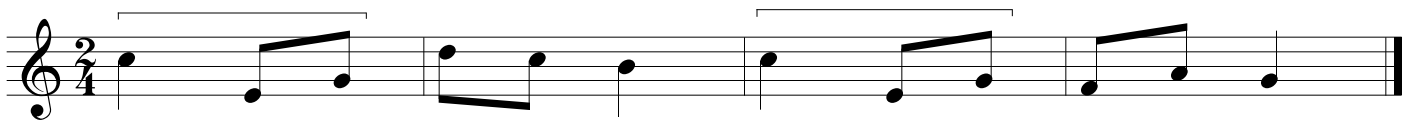


The relationship between the two ideas above is made clear by the following development:

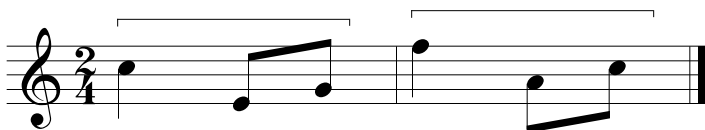


A motive's rhythm, intervals, shape/contour, and harmonic implication may all be subject to variation. Some techniques of motivic development and variation are included below:

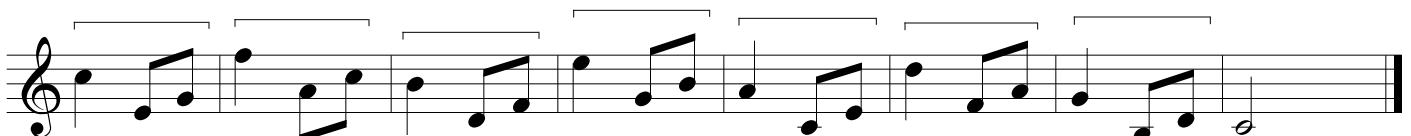
(1) **Repetition** - The simple, exact repetition of a motive at the original pitch level, with the original rhythm.



(2) **Transposition** - The simple pitch transposition of a motive.



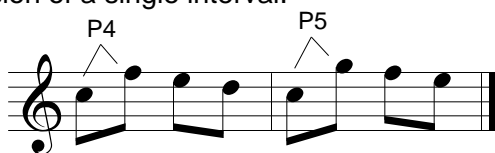
(3) **Sequence** - Occurs when the transposition of a motive is carried out over a longer period of time.



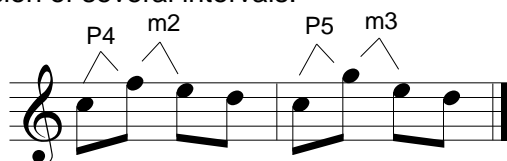
¹ Schoenberg, Arnold. *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1967, p.8.

(4) **Intervallic Compression and Expansion** - The intervallic succession of the motive is altered. Four types:

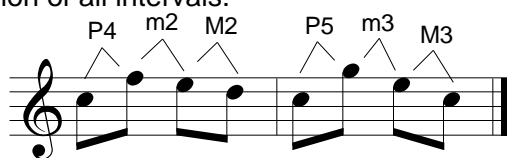
(a) Intervallic expansion of a single interval.



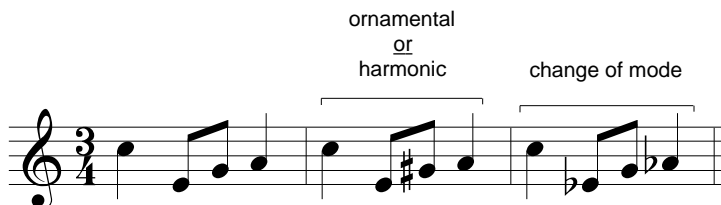
(b) Intervallic expansion of several intervals.



(c) Intervallic expansion of all intervals.

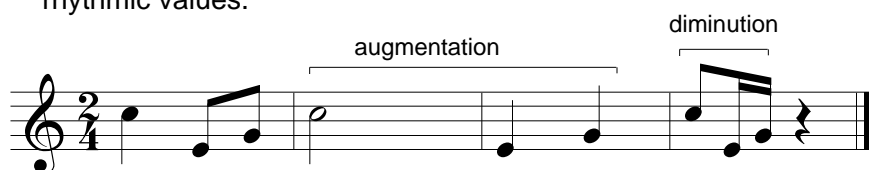


(d) Intervallic compression/expansion as a tonal ornament (chromaticism), harmonic function, or change of mode.

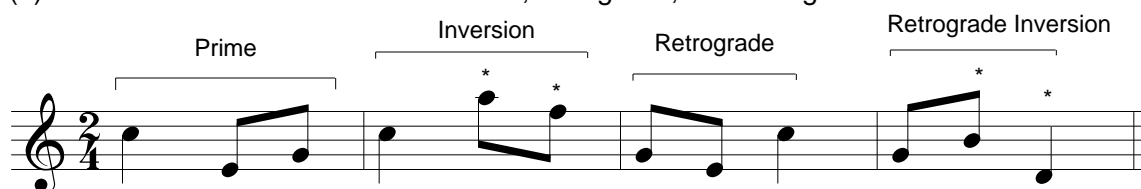


The above examples apply to expansion only; compression simply makes the intervals smaller.

(5) **Augmentation/Diminution of Rhythmic Values** - Involves the exact doubling or halving of a motive's rhythmic values.

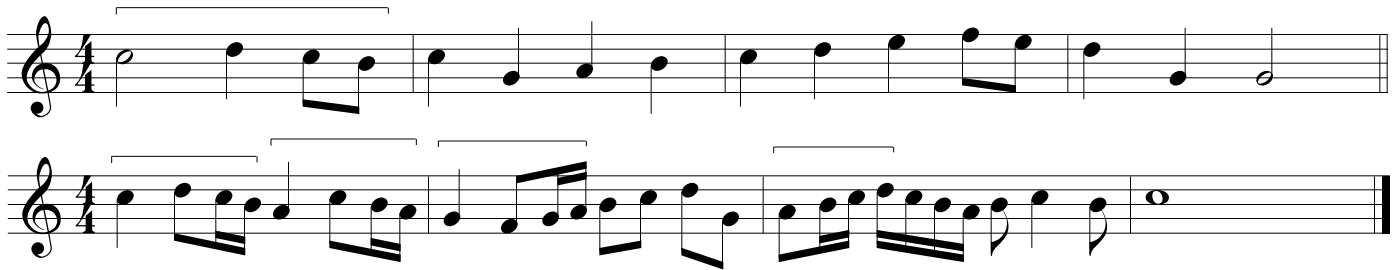


(6) **Mirror Forms** of a Motive - Inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion.



* Frequently, tonal adjustments are made to inversion and other mirror forms in order for the tonal and harmonic requirements of music of the 18th and 19th centuries to be fulfilled. Tonal motivic transformations, where intervals are altered so that all notes are diatonic, are by far more frequent than real motivic transformations, where the intervallic succession is kept intact.

(7) **Fragmentation** - Involves extracting a motive from a theme and concentrating development on it.



(8) **Filling in of Pitch** - Filling in a previous intervallic structure that was disjunct, making it completely or nearly conjunct.



(9) **Subtraction** - Removal or, at times, substitution of a pitch or rhythm. There are two main approaches:

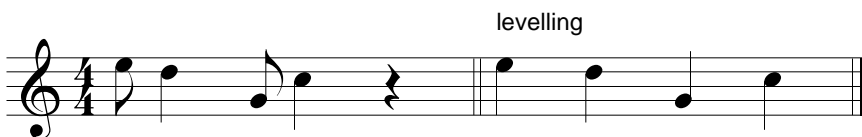
(a) **Reduction** - A motive is reduced to its most essential elements.



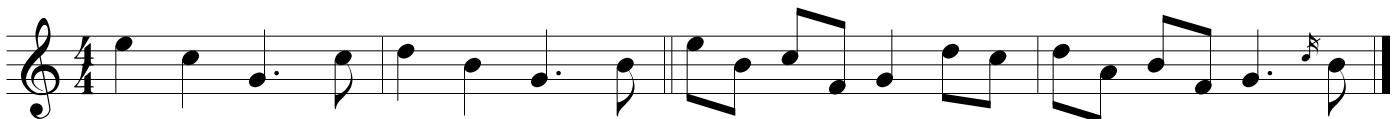
(b) **Simplification** - A small portion of a motive is simplified.



(10) **Levelling of the Rhythmic Values** - The rhythmic values of a motive are converted to equal values.



(11) **Ornamentation** - Trills, turns, mordents, or "free" material are applied to the basic outline of a motive. The fundamental pitches of the motive must appear in their original metric position.



(12) **Octave Transfer/Displacement** - A pitch, several pitches, or an entire motive may be transposed up or down by an octave. The result may be a conjunct motive becoming disjunct or a disjunct motive becoming conjunct.

