

The "Auxiliary Tone": Unaccented Melodic Inharmonic

The "Auxiliary Tone" is used to decorate a stationary note, usually on a weak beat or a fraction of a beat. Generally the Auxiliary Tone is a step above or below and returns to the principal note. Over use of auxiliary notes can produce a musical comedy. If that is the intention, everything is fine. If used in a solemn piece, it can become a musical disaster.

C(I)



In this instance, the note "D" is the auxiliary of the note "C". Notice that it occurs on the second half of the beat and also returns to the principal note.

C(I)



It is quite common for the auxiliary note to be a semi-tone below the principal note even if it means that the auxiliary has to be raised with an accidental.

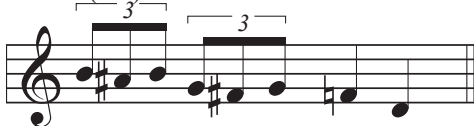
G7(V7)

C(I)



The lower auxiliary of a "rising" leading note is generally a full tone below. The note "B" is the leading note of the key of C and is resolving upward to the note C. Consequently, the best lower auxiliary for the note B is the note A. An "A#" would tend to diminish the leading quality of the note B.

G7(V7)



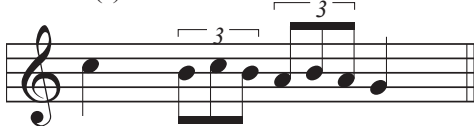
Notice that the note "B" is not rising so its lower auxiliary can be raised.

C(I) Am(vi) Am(vi) F(IV)



The auxiliary can decorate a note which is common to two different chords.

C(I)



The auxiliary tone can even decorate a non-chordal tone. In the first triplet, the "B" is a passing tone decorated with "C" as an auxiliary. In the second triplet, the note "A" is the appoggiatura to the note "G" and the note "B" is the auxiliary to the note "A". (More about passing tones and appoggiaturas in a later lesson)

C(I)

C(I)



A "double auxiliary" can be used. Notice that in this example, both auxiliary notes are used before returning to the principal note.

C(I)



The "lower unprepared auxiliary" is generally approached from above and usually rises to the the destination note.

Dm7(ii7)



The "upper unprepared auxiliary" is generally approached from below and falls a scale step to the destination note.