

The "Passing Tone": Unaccented Melodic Inharmonic

The "diatonic passing tone" is generally used to bridge an interval of a third. The passing tone usually resolves from a weak beat to a strong beat. (diatonic passing tone=belonging to the key of the chord)

C(I) C(I)

The passing tone occurs on the weak beat and bridges the interval of a third.

G7(V7) G7(V7)

Here, the passing tones occur on the weaker halves of the beats.

C(I) G7(V7) C(I)

The passing tone leads to the appoggiatura of the next chord.

C(I)

The passing tone is on the strong beat so it is similar to an appoggiatura but performs a passing function.

C(I)

Two passing tones can be used to bridge a fourth.

C(I) C(I)

A single passing tone can also bridge a fourth.

Generally, the passing tone, being an unaccented inharmonic, is not as expressive as the appoggiatura.

Notice that we can justify the concept of scale and chord relationships with the melodic inharmonics.

C(I)

The last two "bridging notes" could be thought of as "accented passing tones."

Too many passing tones can weaken the melody. Bass players commonly use passing tones in creating "walking bass" lines.

The object is to find a happy and interesting balance between scale step motion and chordal tone leaps.