

## **Sing Out! Course Notes weeks 4-5**

NB I've numbered the pages continuously with the notes from weeks 1 – 3, so you should be able to put all the notes together and keep the contents pages at the front...

### Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>Harmony</b>	19
4.1	Intervals	19
4.2	Drones	19
4.3	Pick a note and wibble	19
4.4	Triads	20
<b>(5)</b>	<b>(Harmony continued)</b>	
5.1	Why do we need to wibble?	20
5.2	Three Chord Trick - theory	21
5.3	Three Chord Trick - practice	22
5.4	Instinctive rather than constructed harmony	22
5.5	What about the Minor?	23
	<b>More Warm Ups</b>	24
	<b>More Songs</b>	25
	The Pace-Egging Song (trad)	25
	Maria's Gone (trad. Appalachian)	25

## 4 Harmony

### 4.1 Intervals

A harmony is simply more than one pitch of note being sung at the same time. I don't believe that there are 'correct' and 'incorrect' harmonies – but some are more conventional than others.

Try singing the major scale and then (with another person or against an instrument) sing two notes together for each of the intervals. What you'll probably find is:

1&2 – very 'crunchy'/'clashy', lots of tension

1&3 – feels nice

1& 4 – feels nice

1&5 – feels nice

1&6 – starting to feel a little bit more tense / clashy

1&7 – VERY clashy, lots of tension

1&8 – feels fine, but it is basically the same note so not very rich as chord options go

### 4.2 Drones

The simplest form of harmony is to drone on one note. This may not be terribly exciting but allows you to start feeling what it is like singing something against the tune. While you're doing it, observe the places where it feels nice and satisfying, and the places where it feels crunchy and unsatisfying. Try using different notes from the song and observe the differences – in particular try the note that the song resolves to.

### 4.3 Pick a note and wibble

There are times when a single drone doesn't work – not only can it get a bit boring but there may be too many lengthy sections where it feels clashy/crunchy and therefore not very comfortable or satisfying. One alternative to a single drone is what I call my 'pick a note and wibble' technique – start off singing a drone, when it feels like it has stopped working, wibble sideways onto the next note of the scale (up or down) and then wibble back again when the second note also stops working. You can usually do the whole song with just those two notes – a simple, 2 note harmony.

*Which note to pick as your starting point?* Your best bet is to identify what the 'key' note of the song is (the '1' of the scale) which is usually the note that the song resolves to, and to pick either that note (the 1) or count up/down to the 5.

*Where to wibble to?* ONLY go one step up or down the scale – so if you start off on a 1, only wibble to the 2 and back to the 1, or the 7 and back to the 1. If you start on a 5, only wibble to the 4 or 6 and back.

## 4.4 Triads

A triad is your basic 3 note chord.

If you consider the notes of the scale labelled

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

then the triad is note 1, 3 and 5 sung/played together.

This forms a nice, full, rounded, satisfying sound. You can play around with different octaves (e.g. 3,5,8 or 5,1,3) which are known as different inversions of the chord and they do feel slightly different but essentially they are all the same chord.

If we sing the “One, One two one” exercise as a round, and consider WHY that works, we can see the patterns of which numbers go together:

<u>Voice</u> <b>1</b>	One	One, two	One	One, two	Three, two	One	One, two	Three, four	Three, two	One	One, two	Three, four	Five, four	Three, two	One
<u>Voice</u> <b>2</b>			One	One, two	One	One, two	Three, two	One	One, two	Three, four	Three, two	One	One, two	Three, four	Five, four
<u>Voice</u> <b>3</b>					One	One, two	One	One, two	Three, two	One	One, two	Three, four	Three, two	One	One, two

... so it is always the one, three and five that line up and go together – creating the triad.

In previous exercises of singing a drone, or the ‘pick a note and wibble’ method, if you get bored with the note that you are singing then you have the option to choose an alternative note from the same triad – this is one way to approach harmonising.

### 5.1 Why do we need to wibble?

You might already be familiar with the idea that a tune can have a set of chords that goes with it – especially if you are used to songs being accompanied by a guitar or piano. As we’ve seen, most songs have places where if you just stick on the notes from the original chord (i.e. the 1 3 5 triad of the key that the song is in), it doesn’t feel right. That is because at those points, the notes of the melody belong with a different chord (triad) from the one we started off on. So if you are used to improvising purely by ‘feel’ then instinctively you probably already have a sense of which points in any give tune need a different chord from the starting one, and may also have a feel for which notes or chords you want to move to, even if you’re not really analysing which notes you’re using or where they fit into which chord. But if you’re not used to doing this based on instinct, or feel stuck, then having some rules that can guide you as to *where* to move to when you move note can be helpful.

## 5.2 Three Chord Trick - theory

One of these rules is the 'Three Chord Trick' which is a rule that chord players such as guitarists can sometimes use to know which chords they could try to fit with a particular song. (NB so long as the song is in a major key!)

Think about our scale 1-8. Each of the notes in our scale has a chord (triad) associated with it.

The Three Chord Trick uses chords I, IV and V.

So, chord I is notes 1, 3 and 5 of the scale

Chord IV is notes 4, 6 and 8 (which is in fact the 1) of the scale.

Chord V is notes 5, 7 and 9 (which is in fact 2) of the scale.

If you were a guitarist, what that might mean is, if you were accompanying a tune in the key of G, you'd know that the three chords I(G), IV(C) and V(D) are good chords to use and most tunes in G can be accompanied just using a sequence of those three chords. Which chord to use at any given point depends on which notes the tune is using at the time. The same can be applied to harmonising – where the note that you are choosing to sing is part of the triad of one of those three chords.

Now, knowing that a particular note fits at a particular point doesn't necessarily give you enough information to know which chord you're being part of.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I	1		3		5				
IV	1			4		6		(8)	
V		2			5		7		(9)

This chart shows that some chords have notes in common with some other chords. It also demonstrates why the 'pick a note and wibble' method tends to work, especially if you start on the 1 or 5.

For example, if you sing a drone on the 1, then that will work against the tune in all the places that the I and IV chords fit – the only places you need to wibble will be where the V chord fits. And since in the pick a note and wibble method you only wibble one note up or down the scale, that means you'll be moving to a 2 or a 7, both of which are part of the V chord.

Alternatively if you sing a drone on the 5 that will work against the tune in all the places that the I and V chords fit, and wobbling one note up or down the scale takes you to a 4 or 6 both of which are part of the IV chord.

### 5.3 Three Chord Trick - practice

If you want to construct a harmony using the three chord trick then here are some steps that you can follow.

- 1) Write out the words of the tune
- 2) Identify the tonic – the ‘1’ of the scale. (Remember, the last note of tune often is a clue!)
- 3) Sing a scale starting on the 1, and also pick out & sing 1, 4 and 5 as notes.
- 4) Do the ‘pick a note and wibble’ starting on the 5 and wobbling down to the 4. That will show you the places where you might want chord IV. Mark these on the words. Put a dot in all the places you wobble back to the 5 – since you don’t know at this point whether the chord you want there is the I or the V.
- 5) Do the ‘pick a note and wibble’ starting on the 1 and wobbling up/down to the 2 or 7. That will show you the places where you might want chord V
- 6) All the other places (where you’ve marked a dot but haven’t written in a IV or V) will be a I chord.
- 7) Sing the words just using the 1, 4, 5 notes at the places you’ve identified.
- 8) Try that against the tune.
- 9) If that makes for a really dull sounding harmony (or if you actually end up singing the same notes as the tune especially at important moments, which are usually the places where the word you’re singing falls on one of the strong beats) then you can substitute an alternative note out of the same triad. For example, if the tune ends a line on note 5 and you’ve worked out that you want chord V at that point, you could choose to sing the 7 or 2 instead of the 5.

### 5.4 What about the Minor?

The major three chord trick doesn’t work quite the same in the minor key. As we’ve already said, the 6 and 7 notes of the scale tend to vary in minor keys and so there is not such a hard and fast set of rules with minors as with majors.

Instead of the I - IV - V chords, in lots of minor key tunes you can actually get away with using just two chords: I and IIV, and if you want to add a third chord it would often be the IV or VI.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I	1		3		5				
IIV		2		4			7		(9)
IV	1			4		6		(8)	
VI	1		3			6		(8)	

When you're singing the triads for these chords, should they be minor or major triads?

The answer actually depends on which minor scale the tune uses – i.e. which combination of sharp or flat 6 and 7 notes it uses. All the minor scales tend to have a flattened third, which means that the I chord is always a minor triad. But depending on the position of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> notes of the scale, the VII, IV and VI chords could each either be minor or major triads. You can work this out by identifying which scale the tune uses and then looking at the sizes of the intervals, or you can just go by feel.

### **5.5 Instinctive rather than constructed harmony**

What we've just done might seem rather technical – and rather 'painting by numbers'. I am not suggesting for a minute that this is the way you should approach harmony singing. Personally I think harmony is most fun when it is instinctive and just goes where 'feels' right. But a tool like the 3 chord trick can give you a useful starting point and can suggest some note options for any point where you feel a bit stuck and don't know what note to sing.

My suggested steps to be when harmonising to a song would be

1 – listen and try to identify 'key' note (i.e. note 1 of scale). Think about whether it is minor or major. Listen for clues – is there a note the tune keeps coming back to? Ends of lines, ends of verses and ends of choruses – do they also come back to one of these notes? If you hum a scale (major or minor) starting on that note, does that feel like it gives you the same collection of notes that the tune is using?

2 – when you have your key note, if it is major, hum the root notes for the I, IV and V chords. If it is minor, hum the I and IIV.

3 – then hum the triad for each of the chords.

4 – then just start singing – using whichever of the techniques we've already tried such as drones, pick a note and wibble, or three chord trick, plus just a healthy dose of trusting your instinct and giving it a go without over thinking too much – doesn't matter if occasionally you end up on the tune but if you get stuck with it try to go somewhere different.

5 – think about the 'shape' of the harmony you are constructing relative to the 'shape' of the tune. As the tune rises and falls, do you want your harmony to rise & fall in a parallel way, or contrast by descending as the tune ascends, or do you want your harmony to stay still while the tune moves? There is no right or wrong here!

6 – apply all of the other singing techniques as you go along – projection, breathing, tuning and tone control. Your harmony will sound better when it is sung more strongly and you will get a better feel for whether it works or not.

## **More Warm Ups**

Roll downs

One, one two one, one two three two one...etc. sung as a round, (or sung at the pace of a round), with attention to transitions in vocal tone.

### **The Pace-Egging Song (trad)**

*Here's one two three jolly lads all in one mind  
We are come a-pace-egging and I hope you'll prove kind  
And I hope you'll prove kind with your eggs and strong beer  
For we'll come no more nigh you until the next year*

1. And the first that comes in is Lord Nelson you'll see  
With a bunch of blue ribbons tied round by his knee  
And a star on his breast that like silver doth shine  
And I hope he remembers it's pace-egging time
2. And the next that comes in it is Lord Collingwood  
And he fought with Lord Nelson till he shed his blood  
And he's come from the sea old England to view  
And he's come a-pace-egging with all of his crew
3. The next that comes in is old Bessie Brownbags  
For fear of her money she wears her old rags  
She's gold and she's silver all laid up in store  
And she's come a-pace-egging in hopes to get more
4. And the last that comes in is Old Tossport you'll see  
He's a valiant old man in every degree  
He's a valiant old man and he wears a pigtail  
And all his delight is a-drinking strong ale
5. Come ladies and gentlemen sit by the fire  
Put your hands in your pockets and give us our desire  
Put your hands in your pockets and treat us all right  
If you give nowt, we'll take nowt, farewell and good night!

### **Maria's Gone (trad. Appalachian)**

*Morning's come and Maria's gone,  
Morning's come and Maria's gone,  
Morning's come and Maria's gone,  
And it's early in the morning*

1. Oh, she's gone and I can't go...
2. Never did I know her mind...
3. Trouble, trouble is my name...