Melody and Harmony Relationships in Minor Keys
Ted Greene — 1976-03-05

In the Baroque period there were, as you know, three types of minor scales used: NATURAL, HARMONIC and MELODIC. When a Baroque composer (such as Bach, Handel, Scarlatti or Vivaldi) wrote a piece of music in a minor key, he did not stick to one of the three types exclusively, but rather, mixed them up according to what kind of chords he wanted to imply or use in his harmony. The following is a list of the conventional melody and harmony relationships of the time.

But first a few general guidelines:

1. In the MELODIC minor scale, the R6th was rarely, if ever used without the R7th. [R=Raised].

2. In the HARMONIC minor scale, the 6th was usually not followed with the R7th or vice versa, except in dominant harmony (as you will see below).

3. If you have already learned somewhere that the melodic minor is supposed to ascend in one form and descend in another, I’m sorry to say this but it’s simply not true. There are many examples in the music of Bach, for instance, of the R6th and R7th being used in a descending melody (see example page). There are reasons, that seemed to be logical, for the theory of 2 different forms of melodic minors, but composers didn’t abide by this reasoning, as a casual study of their works shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHORD</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
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</table>
| i     | *Melodic* minor for ascending and descending (more rare) melodies.  
      | *Harmonic* minor for ascending and descending melodies.  
      | *Natural* minor for descending melodies only.  
| i7    | *Natural* minor for ascending and descending melodies.  
| ii°, iiø7 | Natural and Harmonic, or Natural with a raised 3rd.  
| ii, ii7 | Melodic, Melodic with a raised 3rd, or II Melodic Minor  
| III, III7 | Natural  
| (III+, III7+) | Melodic and Harmonic  
| iv, iv7, iv6 | Harmonic and Natural, also on iv: iv Melodic, Harmonic and Natural, also on iv7: iv7 Natural, also on iv6: iv Melodic.  
| IV, IV7 | Melodic.  

(from here on down, assume that a given scale is used both ascending & descending).
V, V7 : Melodic and Harmonic (with 6th to R7th [or vice versa] sometimes).

V7b9 : Harmonic (with 6th to R7th [or vice versa] sometimes).

VI, VI7 : Harmonic and Natural.

Rvi°, Rviø7 : Melodic.

VII, VII7 : Natural.

Rvii° : Melodic and Harmonic (with 6th to R7th [or vice versa] sometimes).

Rviiø7 : Harmonic (with 6th to R7th [or vice versa] sometimes).

(Rviiø7) : Melodic.

I : Picardy Scale (1 2 3 4 5 b6 b7 8) or think of it as the iv Melodic minor, centering in the V region (Ⅰ/2 cadence in iv Melodic minor).

Actually the ideal (but most time-consuming) way to know this material is to think of a different scale for each different chord, these scales all having the same letter name as the roots of the chords they are being used for. The advantage of this way is that in the long run, it is less confusing (this will become clear later). But for now, the above guides will probably prove helpful.

There are more “exotic” chords used in Baroque harmony, but the melody and harmony relationships of these will come later, chromatic tones will also be discussed.
Examples of Melody & Harmony Relationships in Minor Keys

1. Am B♭ C Dm
   - MELODIC MINOR
   - etc.

2. J.S. BACH (1st Violin Sonata)
   - EXCERPT
   - MELODIC MINOR
   - WHY NOT placed here?

3. J.S. BACH (1st Lute Suite)
   - EXCERPT ALLEMANNE
   - MELODIC MINOR

4. GIGUE
   - EXCERPT
   - MELODIC MINOR

5. G.F. HANDEL (7th Suite)
   - EXCERPT ALLEGRO
   - MELODIC MINOR
   - D HARMONIC MINOR (7th to 6th)
   - What chord is implied here?

6. TOCATA EXCERPT
   - MELODIC MINOR
   - etc.

7. MINUET EXCERPT
   - MELODIC MINOR
   - Try F♯ and see what you think.
   - etc.

8. GIGUE EXCERPT
   - MELODIC MINOR
   - etc.

9. Am
   - Desc. use of Melodic Minor on I

10. Dm (Melodic Minor on iv)
    - E MELODIC MINOR
    - etc.

11. E7
    - Am
    - etc.

12. AM
    - MELODIC MINOR
MELODY and HARMONY RELATIONSHIPS in MINOR KEYS

In the Baroque period, there were, as you know, three types of minor scales used: NARURAL, HARMONIC and MELODIC. When a Baroque composer (such as Bach, Handel, Scarlatti or Vivaldi) wrote a piece of music in a minor key, he did not stick to one of the three types exclusively, but rather mixed them up according to what kind of chords he wanted to imply or use in his HARMONY. The following is a list of the conventional melody and harmony relationships of the time.

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DIATONIC HARMONY

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<td></td>
<td>HARMONIC only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NATURAL only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>MELODIC and HARMONIC, or NATURAL with a raised 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11, 17</td>
<td>MELODIC, MELODIC with a raised 3rd, or MELODIC MINOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, VII</td>
<td>NATURAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, VI, V7</td>
<td>HARMONIC and NATURAL; also on IV: IV MELO., NAT. and NAT.; also on IV: IV NAT. and MELODIC</td>
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Actually, the ideal (but most time-consuming) way to know this material is to think of it as the IV MELODIC minor centering in the V region (cadence) in IV MELODIC.

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<td>(Picardy)</td>
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EXAMPLES OF MELODY + HARMONY RELATIONSHIPS IN MINOR KEYS

1. Amin 30° C Dim (Dm) Am 30° C+  f MELODIC MINOR 7

2. INSTRUMENT IN BARRIQUE PERIOD

3. J.S. BACH (1st VIOLIN SONATA) EXCERPT

4. G.F. HANDEL SUITE ALLEGRO EXCERPT

5. HARMONIC MINOR (RTA 64)

6. WHAT COMES IS IMAGINED HERE?

7. MINOR EXCEPT

8. MEL. MINOR FT GIGUE EXCERPT

9. GIGUE EXCERPT

10. USE OF MEL. MINOR ON

11. MELODIC MINOR