

B. DIATONIC INTERVALS

Often when describing how far apart two notes are, we want to be more precise than just "a fifth" or "a third". We can give a little more detail by saying whether it is a major or minor interval.

If you compare any major and minor scale on the same key-note, you will notice that in the minor scale the third and sixth are a semitone lower than those of the major scale. So we call from D to F sharp a major third, and from D to F natural a minor third. We also refer to the interval from D to B natural as a major sixth, and the interval from D to B flat as a minor sixth. The fourth and fifth notes are the same in major and minor scales, and fourths and fifths are known as "perfect" intervals. The unison (such as when two parts are playing the same note) and the octave are also known as perfect intervals.

Just as minor thirds and sixths are a semitone below major thirds and sixths, so minor seconds and sevenths are a semitone below major seconds and sevenths (even though they don't appear in the minor scale.) So D to E and D to C# are major intervals, and D to E flat and D to C natural are minor intervals, even though E flat and C natural don't appear in the harmonic minor scale.

To sum up: unisons, fourths, fifths and octaves are perfect;
seconds, thirds, sixths and sevenths can be major or minor.

1. Here are the major and minor intervals. If you can, play them, and notice the difference in sound.

Major 2nd Minor 3rd Major 3rd Minor 6th Major 6th Minor 7th Major 7th

2. Here are the perfect intervals. Fill in the gaps:

Perfect Perfect 5th octave

3. Write any accidentals needed to make these the correct intervals:

Major 3rd Major 7th Minor 3rd Perfect 4th Minor 7th Major 6th Perfect 5th Minor 6th

4. Write above each B flat another note which is the correct interval above it:

Minor 3rd Major 6th Perfect 5th Major 2nd Minor 6th Major 7th Perfect 4th Minor 7th

5. Name these intervals. (Notice the key signatures in the last four.)

6. Imagine you are a singer trying to pitch her voice to sing this melody. You have to work out the intervals covered in the awkward leaps. Under the staff write the interval between the notes in each box. Intervals are always counted from the lower note, so if the second note is lower than the first, count UP from the second note. Remember to take note of the key signature.