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Introduction

This workbook is designed to go hand in hand with the Music Composition 101 course located in the Art of Composing Academy. If you are reading this, and you are not a member, I suggest checking it out at:


As a general rule, I've found most of the problems that students face when completing these exercises go back to not completely following the instructions. For instance, writing non-functional chord progressions, not following the prescribed form, or not composing chord tone melodies when called for in the exercise. Remember, I am trying to teach specific skills in these exercises. These are not "concert pieces" and may sound a little boring. But they teach skills that will improve your "concert" composing. Stick to the instructions, and you will learn.

Exercise Format

The goal of this manual, along with the course, is to teach you the skill of checking your own work, and critiquing it. In order to facilitate this, each section has the following sections.

1. **Purpose.** This section gives a short, concise explanation of why you are doing the exercise. I want to make sure you understand the reason for learning and practicing specific skills, so you know how to apply them later on.
2. **Instructions.** Each section has detailed instructions, which supplement the videos.
3. **Tips for Complete This Exercise.** This section has additional information to make completing the exercise a little easier or more fruitful. These are not usually mandatory, but they are highly recommended.
4. **The Exercise.** Each section has the exercise sheets within it. You do not have to download them separately, although you can if you want. Under each video that has an exercise, you can find the separate exercise sheets there.
5. **Check Your Work.** Finally there is a check your work section. This gives step by step guidance on what to look for, including common mistakes other students make. There is also frequently an example from me. This goes hand in hand with the videos of me completing each exercise.

Exercise Labels

To try and head off confusion, each exercise is labeled as follows:

1. The first number is the module.
2. The second number is the lesson within that module.
3. The third number is the exercise within that lesson.
4. If it is a supplemental piano exercise, it has a “P” at the end.

For example, the exercise for “Module 3: Form Part 1 - The Continuation Phrase” is Exercise 3-4-1. Module 3, Lesson 4, Exercise 1.

Good luck, and have fun becoming a better composer.
Melody Part 1

Melody Part 1, is all about becoming comfortable with the act of composing. This section is not about getting deep into theory, although theory is covered. Instead, this section is about covering a simple way to start composing right now. What this means for you, is that you will finish this section, having composed several melodies, using simple techniques that are very effective.

You may feel some of these techniques are too simple, but I implore you to take them seriously, as they will become important later on in the course, and are another tool in your toolbox of composing techniques.

Analyze a Melody

   Melody for Analysis
   Check Your Work

Write a Chord Tone Melody

   Chord Tone Melody 1
   Chord Tone Melody 2
   Exercises 1-2-1: Check Your Work
   Exercises 1-2-2: Check Your Work

Melody Part 1: Exercise 1-3-1, 1-3-2

   Common Mistakes
   Exercises 1-3-1 - Melody with Non-Chord Tones 1
   Exercises 1-3-2 - Melody with Non-Chord Tones 2
   Exercises 1-3-1: Check Your Work
   Exercises 1-3-2: Check Your Work
Analyze a Melody

Purpose

The purpose of this worksheet is to help guide you through the process of melodic analysis, looking for ideas, concepts, and tools that you can use in your own composing.

Instructions

Go through the melody, and identify the following:
1. Identify variations and repetitions of a single idea.
2. Look for symmetrical rhythms.
3. In your own words, explain why this is a good melody.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

Think about this piece as a bunch of two measure chunks. Look at each two measure chunk and get a feel for the overall shape of the idea, and see how it relates to the other two measure idea. This melody is in small ternary form, which is covered later in the course. Try to notice generally what is and isn’t repeated.
Melody for Analysis

Symphony No. 9

Allegro assai \( \dot{=} 80 \)

Ludwig van Beethoven

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How to check your work (this applies to all lessons).

1. Go through each check your work step, one at a time.
2. Identify any mistakes based on that step.
3. Do not attempt to look for all of the steps at once, you will miss mistakes.
4. Use the examples as guides for checking your work.

Motive 1, highlighted in green, is used several times throughout the piece. In its original form, it is used twice. It is also repeated twice starting on the D. There is a repetition of the exact rhythm but with a different shape, starting on E, and the moving up to F# and down to D. In bar 13, it is repeated but the first note is anticipated, and then there is an added quarter note.

The figure in bar 4 is repeated in bar 8, the consequent phrase, but is transposed down a step, so that it ends on the 1st scale degree, giving it much more closure compared to bar 4.

Bars 10 and 11 transform the figure at bar 9, adding more surface rhythmic activity by the use of neighbor tones. It also ends the final transformed version on the E, the 2nd scale degree, leading back into the bar 12.

The rhythm in bars 12 and 13 is exactly symmetrical. Three slurred quarter notes, two tied quarter notes, and then three slurred quarter notes.
Write a Chord Tone Melody

Purpose

Show you a simple and powerful technique for composing a melodies quickly.

Using the given chord progressions, write a melody using only chord tones, within the melodic range specified.

This skill will be used throughout the course, even in the final composition projects.

Instructions

1. Look at the chords in the piano part, and identify the chord tones that are being used. Write those chord tones down in the space provided below the music. The first chord is done for you.
2. Using one of the chord tones, write a note in the blank staff above the piano part. You will notice there are two notes at the beginning of the system. Do not go above the top note or below the bottom note in your own melody.
3. For now, use only half notes, quarter notes, and 8th notes.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
2. Put aside any notion that a melody must be complicated to be acceptable or good. A simple melody is sometimes much more effective than a complex one. Don’t be afraid to use only half notes. But also, experiment with different rhythmic ideas.
3. When you write out the letters underneath in the boxes provided, put the chord in root position. Here is a list of all the root position chords in C major.

   ![Chord Positions](image)

   I ii iii IV V vi vii° I

4. Practice working quickly, but without error. Speed and accuracy are two skills you want to master.

Common Mistakes

1. Writing a non-chord tone. Remember, follow the instructions. There are supposed to be no non-chord tones in this exercise.
2. An illegible score. Practice making your score clear, logical, and easy to read. You want the music to jump off the page. Notice how clear my examples are. If you are writing this out in your own notation software, try and copy that format.
Chord Tone Melody 1

I  V  I  I  ii\(^6\)  V  I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord 1</th>
<th>Chord 2</th>
<th>Chord 3</th>
<th>Chord 4</th>
<th>Chord 5</th>
<th>Chord 6</th>
<th>Chord 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chord Tone Melody 2

I  V\(^6\)  IV\(^6\)  I\(^6\)  IV  V  I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord 1</th>
<th>Chord 2</th>
<th>Chord 3</th>
<th>Chord 4</th>
<th>Chord 5</th>
<th>Chord 6</th>
<th>Chord 7</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Exercises 1-2-1: Check Your Work**

This is an example of what your melody might look like. Notice that it uses only half notes, quarter notes, and 8th notes. Also notice, there are no non-chord tones. The rhythm is a little varied, but simplicity and clarity are the goal. Also, the range is between C4 and G5.

![Melody Example](image)

Chord 1 | Chord 2 | Chord 3 | Chord 4 | Chord 5 | Chord 6 | Chord 7  
---|---|---|---|---|---|---  
C E G | G B D | C E G | C E G | D F A | G B D | C E G

**Exercises 1-2-2: Check Your Work**

![Chord Progressions](image)

Chord 1 | Chord 2 | Chord 3 | Chord 4 | Chord 5 | Chord 6 | Chord 7  
---|---|---|---|---|---|---  
C E G | G B D | F A C | C E G | F A C | G B D | C E G

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Melody Part 1: Exercise 1-3-1, 1-3-2

Purpose

The purpose of this worksheet is to show you how to take a melody that you’ve created with chord tones, and then using the techniques of passing tones, and neighbor tones, make that melody more interesting and varied. With just three techniques, chord tones, passing tones, and neighbor tones, you can create a huge variety of melodies, with very little mental effort. This is not the only way to write a melody, but it is an effective way.

Instructions

1. Take the chord tone melodies that you created in worksheet 2, or create new melodies with the given progression.
2. Look between each pair of chord tones. Identify if the two chord tones are the same tone, or different tones.
3. If they are the same, you are able to put a neighbor tone between them.
4. If they are different, you are able to put passing tones between them.
5. Depending on the distance between the two notes, you may need to put several passing tones. To do this, you will have to shorten the length of the chord tone.
6. Requirements for this exercise:
   1. At least two neighbor tones.
   2. At least 4 passing tones.
   3. One bar with just chord tones, with no passing tones or neighbor tones.
7. There is no need to write the chord tones underneath, but you can do that if you prefer.
8. Stick to the same range as before, C to G.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
2. Start simple. Write a chord tone melody that is only half notes.
3. The smaller the range between two notes, the easier it will be to connect them. For instance, the distance between C and E is a 3rd. You only have to add one note between them to connect the two notes.
4. Before you decide on the rhythm of the notes, first find out how many notes are going to be required. Back to the example of C-D-E, if C were a half note, and E were a half note, we would place D between them. Depending on what note length we chose for D, we will have to shorten C by that amount. So if D is an 8th note, we will have to take away an 8th notes equivalent of time from C. That will make C, a dotted quarter note.
Common Mistakes

1. Writing a non-chord tone on a chord change. Start with the chord tone melody first. If you are writing a non-chord tone on a strong beat, like beats 1 or 3, then you are probably not starting with a chord tone melody.

2. Writing other kinds of non-chord tones. In this lesson, only use passing tones, which move by step, and neighbor tones, which move by step. If you have to leap at some point to get to the next chord tone, then back up, and add some more passing tones.

3. If you find that you are moving from a V chord to a I chord, and your passing tone is a leading tone (B), then it should resolve to the tonic (C). Likewise, if your passing tone is a 4th (F), it should resolve to the 3rd (E).

Exercises 1-3-1 - Melody with Non-Chord Tones 1

Exercises 1-3-2 - Melody with Non-Chord Tones 2
Exercises 1-3-1: Check Your Work

1. Look for non-chord tones on beats 1 and 3. Because of the change of harmony, this is not allowed. Each new harmony should have a chord tone above it in the melody.
2. Look for leaps. If the leap is from a chord tone to a chord tone, it is okay. If the leap is from a passing tone, to any other tone, it is incorrect.
3. Check the melody over the Cadential 6/4 cadence chords (bar 3). Remember, the first chord, even though it says V, actually has the notes C, E, G.
4. Check your tessitura (range). Even though the range is not printed like in Ex 1-2, you should still stick to the same guideline.

Exercises 1-3-2: Check Your Work
Harmony Part 1

Harmony Part 1 is your introduction to the world of harmony. Harmony, like everything else in composition is a vast subject. Many people will get bogged down in the details and eventually give up before they get to the good stuff. I want to make sure that doesn’t happen. So the goal of this section, is to get you to understand the basics quickly, so you can move onto what you really want to know - how to create chord progressions. Creating progressions is a skill that every composer must have. The good part it, it isn’t that complicated. You’ll see, as we move onto functional harmony in Harmony Part 2, how simple it actually is. But you need to have a solid framework to start with. Don’t worry if you don’t get everything perfect, that will come with time and practice. The goal is to be using these concepts quickly.

Beyond the exercises that deal with writing out and composition directly, there are also supplemental piano exercises that I highly recommend working through. These will serve you will in the long run. Take your time, and have fun.

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Harmony Part 1: Exercise 2-1-1

Purpose

The purpose of this worksheet is to solidify the concepts of intervals. An exercise like this uses brute force to ensure that you have a solid understanding of what each interval looks like over every possible note. You get out of this, what you put in. It may seem basic, but it is still important. If however, you are 100% comfortable with all your intervals, you can skip it, or only complete part of it.

Due to the nature of this exercise, there is no check your work section. You'll know if it makes sense or not.

Instructions

1. You are given a lower note, and you are to write out the specified interval above that note.
2. You are not in that key, it is only a lower note, so you must write in the correct accidental on the upper note.
3. There is a correct answer for every note.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
2. Remember, there are more than just single sharps and flats.
   1. You have double sharps.
   2. You have double flats.
   3. You even have triple sharps.
   4. And triple flats.
Harmony Part 1: Exercise 2-2-1

Purpose

The purpose of this worksheet is to make you familiar with the possible triads that can harmonize a single note in a specific key. It is easy to get tunnel vision, and view a given note as the tonic when harmonizing a melody. A simple exercise like this will help to break that habit.

Due to the nature of this exercise, there is no check your work section. You’ll know if it makes sense or not.

Instructions

1. You are given a starting note. Using only major or minor triads, you are to harmonize the note. This starting note is also the key signature. I am not writing in they key signature accidentals, so you must write them for each chord.
2. We are using the major key for this exercise.
3. In the 2nd bar for each line, write a triad, with the given note as the root.
4. In the 3rd bar for each line, write a triad with the given note as the third.
5. In the 4th bar for each line, write a triad with the given note as the fifth.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
2. Because we are using the major key, we know the first chord will be major, the 2nd chord will be minor, and the third chord major.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting note example</th>
<th>As the root</th>
<th>As the third</th>
<th>As the fifth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. You can also complete the supplemental piano exercises 2-2-1P, and 2-2-2P. They will reinforce what you learn here. See the table of contents for their page numbers.
Exercise 2-2-1 - Harmonizing with Triads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting note</th>
<th>As the root</th>
<th>As the third</th>
<th>As the Fifth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \text{Musical Staff} \]
Harmony Part 1: Exercise 2-3-1

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to make you very familiar with the dominant seventh chord in each key. Regardless of whether the key is major or minor, the dominant seventh is always a major chord. You must know the dominant seventh of each key. You don't want to have to think about it when you are composing, you want it to be automatic.

Due to the nature of this exercise, there is no check your work section. You’ll know if it makes sense or not.

Instructions

1. At the beginning of each line, you are given the key.
2. From this key, you must write the dominant seventh in root position, 1st inversion, 2nd inversion, and 3rd inversion.
3. Label the roman numerals below.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
Exercise 2-3-1 - Dominant 7th Chords

C

F

Bb

Eb

Ab

Db

F♯

B

E

A

D

G

C
Exercises 2-3-1: Check Your Work
Harmony Part 1: Exercise 2-4-1

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to open up the possibilities from a given four part chorale. If you are given a chord progression that has been harmonized (like a Bach chorale), you are able to use that to create interesting melodies and accompaniment. But you need to know the process. This exercise will take you through understanding the chord progression, turning into a simple keyboard style harmonization, and then using the progression to create a melody with interesting accompaniment.

Instructions

1. This exercise is split into several different parts. First, you have a chord progression that has been harmonized. Read through this progression, and try to identify how specific notes resolve, like the 3rds, and 7ths of each chord.
2. In bars 9-16, rewrite the progression in keyboard style. To do this, first, write out the bass line in the left hand part. Do not put any other notes other than the bass line here.
3. Next, in the right hand, write out the soprano line (the top note of each chord) of the chord progression.
4. To make it keyboard style, then write the triad underneath that top note. For instance, the first chord should look like this.

\[ \text{I} \]

5. For variation 1, you take the melody and write that out on top.
6. Take the bass line and the rest of the notes in the chord from the keyboard style, and then turn it into a simple accompaniment figure in 8th notes. It should look like this.

\[ \text{I} \]

7. For variation 2, add an Alberti bass line. This means you only play 1 note at a time in the left hand, but you hit all the same notes as before in variation 1.
8. Add non-chord tones the same way you did in melody part 1. It should look something like this.

\[ \text{I} \]
Exercise 2-4-1 - Basic Chord Progression No. 1

I V vi I
6
IV I
6
ii V
8

I vii
6
I
6
I
6
ii
6
V
8

5

I vii6
I6
I6
ii6
V6
7
I

9 Keyboard Style

13
Exercises 2-4-1: Check Your Work

**Keyboard Style**

1. Check the soprano line and bass line to ensure they match the original progression.
2. Ensure the spacing in the right hand is no more than an octave for every chord.
3. Ensure there is a 3rd in each chord. If there is no third, it is not a complete chord.

Your keyboard style progression should look exactly, or very close to this. Keyboard style is very handy for creating sketches. You can write a melody in a separate staff above it, and then write the keyboard style below. This gives you a great starting point for orchestrating in the future.
Variation 1

1. Check that the soprano line has not changed.
2. Check the first note in each left hand chord is the same as the bass line.
3. The remaining notes in the left hand, should be the same, or roughly the same as the keyboard style exercise, just down an octave. This also means there should be a 3rd and a Root in every chord.

The goal of this variation is to show you with just a few changes to the accompaniment, how much more drive and energy a piece of music can have, even if it has a simple melody.
Variation 2

1. The melody can have passing and neighbor tones. Ensure these are the only non-chord tones used.
2. Check that the first note in the left hand is the same as the original bass line. Also make sure it is the lowest note. This firmly establishes the inversion.
3. Ensure that each chord has a 3rd. This could be in the melody or in the accompaniment, but it must be there. Can you spot the missing third in this example? Everybody makes mistakes now and then.

The goal of this variation is to show you how adding a few notes to the melody, really changes the character of a piece. I also want to show the simple ways you can vary the accompaniment.
Form Part 1

Form Part 1 will open up a whole new world of possibility in your compositions. Form is more than just how a piece is put together - it is really about how music interacts with time. But in order to understand this deeper level of form, you need to master the basic elements of form. Things like basic ideas, repetition, fragmentation, and cadences. So Form Part 1, introduces these basic building blocks in an easy to digest manner.

Form Part 1: Exercise 3-2-1

Exercise 3-2-1 - Basic Ideas
Exercises 3-2-1: Check Your Work

Form Part 1: Exercise 3-3-1

Exercise 3-3-1 - Repetition
Exercises 3-3-1: Check Your Work

Form Part 1: Exercise 3-4-1

Exercise 3-4-1 - Complete Your Sentence
Exercises 3-4-1: Check Your Work
Form Part 1: Exercise 3-2-1

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is show you the power of two bars. At this point, you will just be composing two bar basic ideas. You will be forced to come up with a bunch of basic ideas that all sound different. This becomes a powerful tool for creating fresh themes, and breaking bad habits. If you tend to use the same rhythms, or the same kinds of melodic patterns over and over, this is the best way to change that.

Instructions

1. The harmonic progression used should feature tonic prolongation. This could be as simple as one chord - the tonic. Or it could be multiple chords.
2. The melody should be a chord tone based melody, with additional non-chord tones added.
3. The first motive should have somewhat of a melodic opening up. The closing motive should bring the melody back down, or at least to a point of rest.
4. There should be a minimum of two motives, although you can have more.
5. For now, don’t worry about the left hand figuration (accompaniment pattern), just write block chords. Right now, we are just focusing on the melody and how it fits with the harmony.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
2. Separate out the different aspects of the basic idea. One way is to compose the rhythm first, and then add the notes to it. This way, you end up having more interesting lines. You’ll find when you don’t have to think about multiple things at once, you are able to really get creative with the one thing you are focusing on.
3. Try and work on speed. This doesn’t mean sacrificing originality or quality, but try to have at least a steady pace of thinking up an idea, and then writing it down. Many people noodle too much without writing. Write first, ask questions later.
4. Remember, this is characteristic. That means it needs to be memorable, and unique. Think of your favorite melodies and try to figure out what you like about them. Use that to create your own basic ideas that use the same techniques.
5. Try starting on a different note of the triad. Start on 1 for the first basic idea, then 3 for the 2nd basic idea, and then 5 for the next.
6. Have a key feature for each basic idea. This could be a specific motive, or even a specific note duration, like 8th notes. Figure out what unifies the basic idea.
7. Use the basic idea harmonic patterns provided in Appendix A.
Harmony Part 2

In Harmony Part 2 we really get our hands dirty. This section should unravel a lot of the mysteries of creating logical sounding chord progressions, adding simple chromaticism (applied dominants), and modulating to closely related keys. First, we will look at functional harmony in depth, and then we'll use a very handy chart to start creating functional chord progressions. From there, we move onto minor keys. Once we've covered both major and minor, we are ready to modulate.

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Harmony Part 2: Exercise 4-1-1

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to practice creating functional chord progressions. Functional harmony is the basis for all classical, and the majority of romantic harmony. Learning this skill will allow you to create chord progressions from scratch that sound logical. This will setup a solid foundation for more complex chromatic harmony and modulation.

Instructions

1. Using the functional harmony chart, create a chord progression.
2. Each functional category is grouped, so tonic is blue, pre-dominant is green, and dominant is red.
3. To do create your progression, first pick your key. For now, we will pick a simple key like C major. In the box labeled “Chords”, write the actual letter name of the chord. For instance, “C”.
4. In the box labeled “Roman Numerals”, write the roman numeral. For instance, “I”. Roman numerals should have serifs, so “I” instead of “I”.
5. Starting on I (Tonic) and moving from left to right, pick chords on the chart.
6. You can only move from left to right, with a few exceptions.
   1. You can always move from V back to I or vi, or IV6. You will notice these each have lines that move from right to left. Basically, you can always move from left to right, but you can only move from right to left along the lines.
   2. You can move from vi back to I, however, moving back to I must be in 1st inversion, so I6. The progression I-vi-I6 is allowed, but I-vi-I is not.
7. In the bottom left hand of vi, IV, ii, and V, you will see the symbol “V/”. This is the symbol for an applied dominant. You can always add an applied dominant before any of these chords. This is a simple way to make your progression slightly chromatic, without having to modulate. Applied dominants do not need any special preparation.
8. The iii chord (mediant) is not considered functional. It can be used however. It tends to sound best, when moving to vi, or IV. It is also common after the viiº chord, especially in sequences.
9. The V chord can also be a V7 chord.
10. The V chord can be preceded by a I6/4. This can also be labeled a V6/4. Both labels are fine, however, if it is functioning specifically as a cadential 6/4, (an embellishment of V in a cadence), then it should be labeled as V6/4.
11. For your progression, you can go through the chart multiple times. See the video for details.

Tips For Completing This Exercise

1. Watch the exercise video in the lesson. This shows a detailed example of completing the exercise.
2. Start simple. Write a progression from left to right, without any additional applied dominants, mediant chords, or inversions. Once you are comfortable with that, then start to add more variety into your progression with the applied dominants, mediants, and inversions.
3. Try creating progressions that use all of the chords, and then some that leave out specific chords.
4. Memorize the chart, and try to make the progressions from memory.
Exercise 4-1-1 - Major Functional Chord Progressions

Chords: ____________________________
Roman Numerals: ___________________

Chords: ____________________________
Roman Numerals: ___________________

Chords: ____________________________
Roman Numerals: ___________________

Chords: ____________________________
Roman Numerals: ___________________
Exercise 4-1-1 - Check Your Work

1. Look specifically for these progressions, they are not allowed:
   1. IV - vi
   2. IV - I
   3. ii - IV
   4. viiº - ii
   5. V - ii
   6. ii-vi

2. Ensure that you end with a cadence.

3. If you have an applied dominant, make sure it goes to it’s tonic. So V/ii, must move to ii, and so on.

4. Compare your progressions with my progressions below.