

# Strategies for Melodic Dictation: FR 1 and FR 2

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## CHAPTER 19

**M**elodies—they're everywhere. We sing them in sight-singing exercises, we write them in part-writing exercises, we analyze them in phrase structure examples, and we have been performing them in bands, choirs, and orchestras for years. So why is melodic dictation so hard for students?

It is for one of two reasons:

1. **Melody memory.** You can't write down what you can't remember. That's where using a system of solfeggio or numbers helps. It identifies the pitch with a label or name the brain can remember.
2. **Notation breakdown.** If you can retain the melody and are able to sing it back but cannot correctly put the melody down on paper, the problem is notation; that is, a lack of understanding how the melody looks on paper. This skill also has two sides—pitch and rhythm. Some students understand what the pitches are but can't correctly write the rhythm *in the correct place* within the measure. Some students get the rhythms correct but miss the pitches by a step or a third.

For most students it is a combination of both. For some the anxiety is so great they fail to get much of anything written on the paper. We are going to look at this process, break it down step by step, and come up with a plan to maximize your potential for success with melodic dictation.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL MELODIC DICTATION

#### TIP

**1**

**If you can't get it all, get all that you can.**

Students lose points on the melodic dictation portion of the exam simply by struggling to get it *all*. They become frustrated and end up with nearly nothing. We, the teachers, evaluators, and readers, want you to demonstrate how much you know . . . it is *not* about knowing everything. Once again, start with a plan and work smart!

## TIP

## 2

## Use logic and plan ahead.

The music will tell you so much to help you prepare. I call it the **IF-THEN** method. What is given? The clef, the key signature, the time signature, the number of measures, and the first pitch are given. From that we can deduce the key, the probable last note, and a possible half cadence (V = *So* or *Ti* or *Re*) in the middle.

- **CLEF-CLEF-CLEF!** If you make the mistake of overlooking the clef, your entire melody could possibly be wrong (as in sight-singing). Write down the **KEY** in big letters somewhere on the paper. Just the physical act of connecting pencil to paper helps to focus.
- What pitches are connected to what solfege or numbers? Once again, write it down somewhere in the margin of the paper. Use your time to *prepare your brain* for what might occur—**ANTICIPATE**.

5̂	1̂	2̂	3̂	4̂	5̂	6̂	7̂	8̂
B $\flat$	E $\flat$	F	G	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	C	D	E $\flat$
<i>So</i>	<i>Do</i>	<i>Re</i>	<i>Mi</i>	<i>Fa</i>	<i>So</i>	<i>La</i>	<i>Ti</i>	<i>Do</i>

- The last note is always *Do* (1̂). *Pencil in that pitch* at the end of the last measure (could be high or low). *Anticipate* what is likely to happen and let your ear confirm it.
- Knowing the time signature will give you a clue to the **duration** of the last note. If the time signature is  $\frac{2}{4}$ , the last note is probably a half note; if  $\frac{3}{4}$ , the last note is a dotted half note; if  $\frac{4}{4}$ , the last note is probably a whole note. If the time signature is  $\frac{6}{8}$ , the probable last note is a dotted quarter note.
- Is there an **anacrusis**? If so, that usually tells you two things. Since an anacrusis is commonly *So* most often going to *Do*, the first note on the *downbeat* most likely will be *Do* (1̂). You must also consider the change in the durations in the last measure. If the time signature is  $\frac{4}{4}$  with a quarter-note anacrusis, the last measure will most probably have a dotted-half note. Make sure the anacrusis and the last measure equal a full measure.
- Are you in minor? That means **leading tone**. A melodic dictation example in minor will always have at least one leading tone that requires writing an accidental. Evaluators—whether that's your classroom teacher, the readers grading your exam, or the college professor assessing your skills for acceptance into a music school—will all want to know that you can:
  - recognize the various forms of minor when you *hear* them,
  - anticipate the use of the raised 7th scale degree, and
  - recognize the possible use of the melodic form of minor in an ascending pattern (almost always in the scale pattern *So-La-Ti-Do* instead of harmonic minor *So-Le-Ti-Do*). The use of *Te* from natural minor is also a common alteration particularly as a complementing descending pattern following melodic minor, as in the following example.



Write the name of the leading tone in BIG letters underneath the key signature to jog your memory when you begin to write in harmonic minor.

- Are you in compound meter? One of the examples will usually be in  $\frac{6}{8}$  time. If rhythm is problematic—use a *rhythm menu* (see Chapter 11). Plan ahead by thinking about and writing down what possible rhythms are going to be used. You can't write down every possible combination, but you can certainly *anticipate* the most often-used rhythms. Recognize, but don't write as part of the menu, other rhythms that are primarily variations of sixteenth-note subdivisions and dotted rhythms.

THE RHYTHM MENU

The diagram shows seven 1-beat rhythms in a row: a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, an eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, a quarter note followed by an eighth note, a quarter note followed by a sixteenth note followed by an eighth note, a quarter note followed by an eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, and a quarter note followed by an eighth note followed by a sixteenth note followed by an eighth note. Below the first three rhythms, a large curly bracket groups them under the text: 'OTHER COMMONLY-USED RHYTHMS (VARIATIONS ON 3 OF THE MAIN 7)'. Arrows point from the fourth, fifth, and sixth rhythms to their respective variations, which are shown as eighth-note patterns.

With the rhythm menu in place, much of the guesswork is gone; you have narrowed down the choices to these seven 1-beat rhythms. Just the process of writing the rhythm menu prepares your **brain** and your **ear** for what is possible *and* you know how to notate it. Are these seven the only compound rhythms used? No, of course not, but you are anticipating and preparing. Using a rhythm menu is a great tool, especially when you are practicing and building your skills for melodic dictation. When taking the AP Music Theory exam, remember your time limit, write only the part of the rhythm menu that helps you focus on the meter.

- What about the possibility of a chromatic note? It could occur—just like it could occur in harmonic dictation (FR 4), harmonizing the melody (FR 7), and sight-singing—**because the skills overlap**. From our study of chro-

matic harmony we have learned that the most common chromatic notes are  $\hat{4}$  (*Fi*),  $\hat{5}$  (*Si*), and sometimes  $\hat{1}$  (*Di*). By far the most common pattern is *Fa-Fi-So* or *So-Fi-So*.



## TIP

## 3

## How do melodies begin?

Many melodies have similar beginnings. We use this approach in harmonic dictation as well. The two most common beginnings of melodies are *Do-Re-Mi* and *Do-Mi-So* in both major and minor. A very common beginning in a minor key is *Do-Ti-Do* because that pattern requires the writing of an accidental.






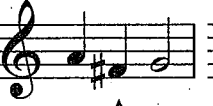






## TIP

## 4

## How do melodies end?

When a melody is coming to its conclusion, it is heading “home” to *Do* ( $\hat{1}$ ). Here are the commonly used endings in melodic dictation:

- *Mi-Re-Do* or *So-Fa-Mi-Re-Do*
- *Do-Ti-Do* or *Do-Re-Do*
- *Re-Ti-Do* or *Ti-Re-Do*
- *Fa-Ti-Do* (the tritone is created between *Fa* and *Ti* in both major and harmonic minor); also *So-Ti-Do* and *Mi-Ti-Do*.

	DIFFERENT IN MAJOR AND MINOR		IDENTICAL IN MAJOR AND HARMONIC MINOR		
GM:	 Mi Re Do	 So Fa Mi Re Do	 Do Re Do	 Re Ti Do	 Fa Ti Do
gm:	 Me Re Do	 So Fa Me Re Do			

Go back and review the Top Ten Melodic Patterns (Chapter 4).

### TIP

## 5

### What's in the middle?

Now the middle is not so easy. What can you expect?

Anticipate mostly stepwise motion with one or two skips or leaps. If there is a leap (more than a third) it is most often *going to Do* or *So* or *coming from Do* or *So*. Another common occurrence is a half cadence in the middle of the example. Because this is melody only, there is no harmony; but, melody implies harmony, particularly in specific places within the phrase. If a four-measure example ends on *Do* (1̂), that would imply a perfect authentic cadence. Most of the melodic dictation exercises are symmetrical, meaning balanced into two equal halves. Anticipate a weaker cadence (HC) somewhere near the end of the second measure to create an antecedent–consequent relationship within the melody. This cadence is generally *not* marked by significantly longer durations, but more by shape and contour of the line as well as pitches from the dominant triad (*So-Ti-Re*). Remember that half cadences don't always occur at the very end of the measure. Often the antecedent phrase will end with the HC and the next phrase will begin with an anacrusis. Think about the shape or contour of a melody. If the shape is flowing downward at the end of the first phrase, an anacrusis beginning the next phrase will normally start with an ascending movement.



In the last ten years, nineteen out of twenty melodic dictation exercises have implied an HC near the middle of the example and eighteen out of twenty followed the implied HC with an anacrusis leading into the next phrase; twenty out of twenty have ended on *Do* (1̂)!

To prepare for this, near the halfway point, write the names of the pitches above the measure that are *So-Ti-Re* (5-7-2̂), as a reminder of what you are anticipating. **Prepare** your brain for what might occur and let your ear confirm it.

## TIP

6

**Don't write until you have heard the entire example.**

I teach with this method because I find that if you start writing immediately upon hearing the first measure, your brain is no longer focused on the melody but on one measure or pattern. Use 100 percent of your attention to hear the melody through to the end, assigning solfege or numbers to the melodic patterns you are able to identify on the first hearing. **Try and sing the melody to yourself internally**, then write. Other teachers suggest that students should begin to write while the music is playing. Try both methods and identify your own strengths to determine which process to use. After the first hearing your goal should be to be able to write the first and last measures, and to have an idea of the shape or contour of the melody and the exact location of an implied HC. Other things to listen for are where *Do* or *So* occurs, or if rhythm is an easier element for you, “sketch” out rhythms and where they are located within the measure. The melody *will* come back to *Do*, usually more than once.

## TIP

7

**Don't be afraid to use the back door.**

You may be able to get the first two measures, draw a blank in the middle, but come back in toward the end. Perhaps you hear a *Ti-Do* ending but are not sure what comes before that. Does the melody approach the pattern *Ti-Do* from above *Ti* or below *Ti*? Think about the shape or line of the melody and what pitches that implies, and once again—listen for patterns. **Work backward** from what you know to find what you don't know.



This is two familiar patterns *So-La-Ti-Do* and *Re-Ti-Do* but rhythm may confuse.

*So* recurring from an earlier pattern helps identify the interval *So-Ti* at the end OR if you can identify *So-Ti* at the end—knowing that may help identify the earlier pattern.

**TIP****8****When you are done knowing—GUESS.**

If you have written notes in the spaces around the staff suggesting solfege or pitch numbers, and/or contour, and/or rhythm—GUESS. What looks like a viable melody? Does it match the shape and rhythm? You can even go back to the melodic dictation pages when you have finished other portions of the Free-Response section and fill in the blanks with educated guesses. When a reader sees a melodic dictation example with the first two notes written and then a completely blank staff—that's a signal that the student did not have a plan.

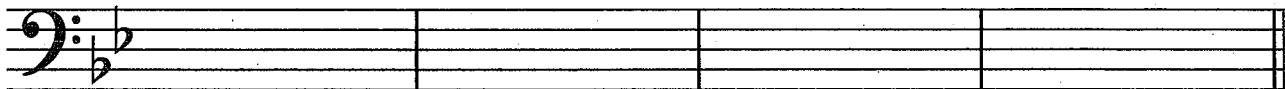
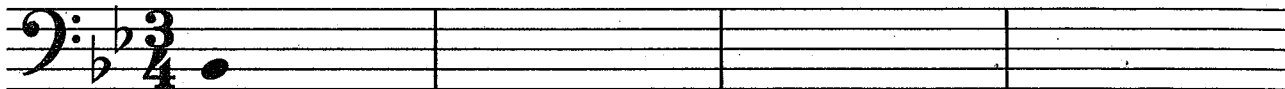
Hopefully you have been practicing your aural skills fundamentals with CD 1. Chapter 11, Aural Skills Part II, provides progressive exercises (fifteen two-measure examples in compound meter and eight three-measure examples in simple meter) in preparation for these sample exercises, which are similar in difficulty to what you may find on the AP Music Theory exam. After you have completed the progressive exercises, you are ready to practice for the exam with these sample questions.

## Practice Exercises

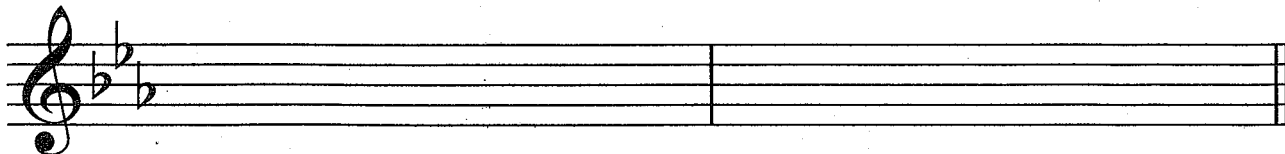
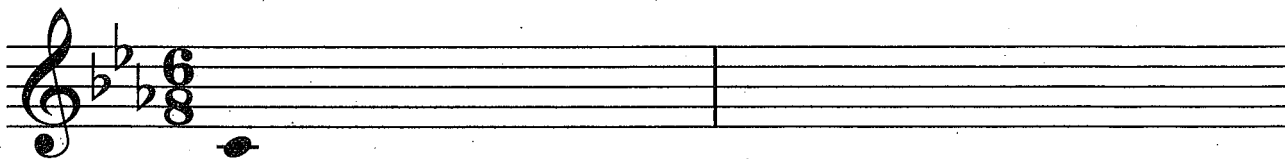


**Directions:** Here are twenty melodies for you to practice taking melodic dictation: ten examples in simple meter and ten in compound meter. Half the examples are in bass clef and half are in treble clef, as well as half in major and half in minor. Because this chapter is the last step in melodic dictation before taking the practice exams, these melodies are performed by instruments or voice just as they are on the AP Music Theory exam. And because this is *not* an exam unit, the aural prompts are recorded **only one time each**. Allow yourself **30 seconds** between each playing of the examples, and **play each track only four times**. Allowing yourself unlimited time to notate the example, or listening over and over to the same question will not prepare you for the AP Music Theory exam. Each question number will be announced, followed by one measure of tempo clicks and the example played once.

1. The melody will be performed on a piano.



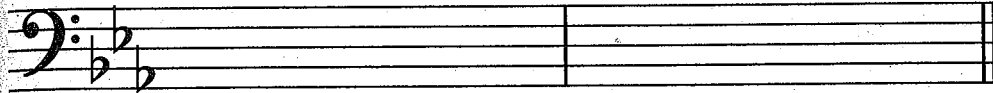
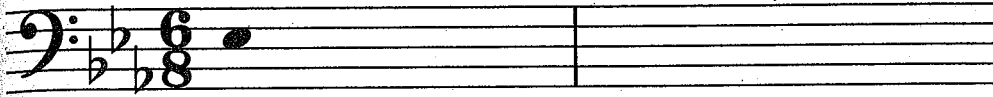
2. The melody will be performed by a soprano.



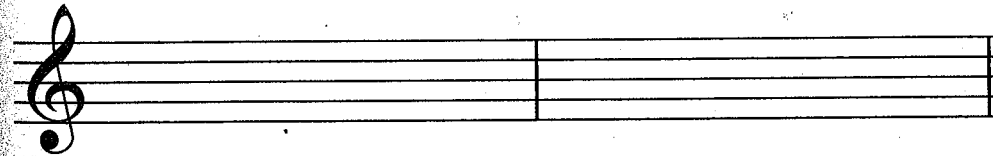




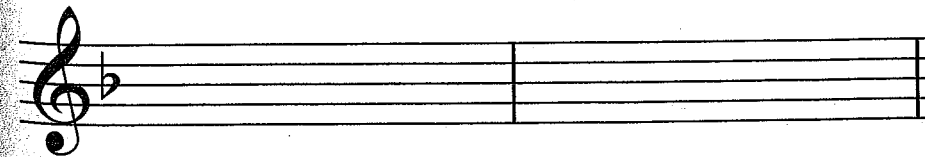
3. The melody will be performed by a bassoon.



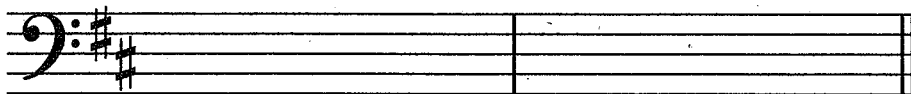
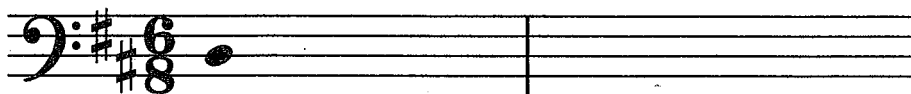
4. The melody will be performed by a flute.



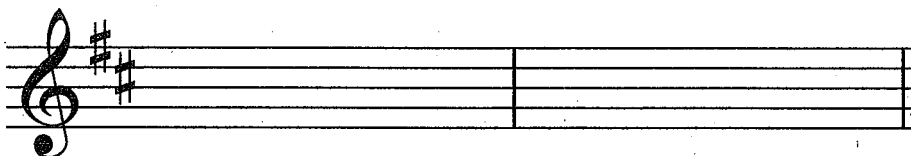
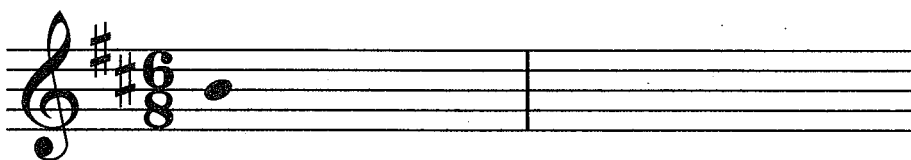
5. The melody will be performed by a violin.



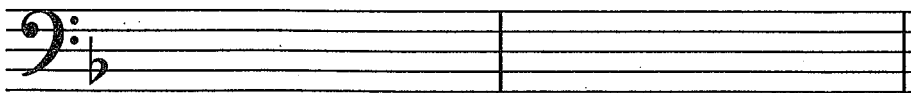
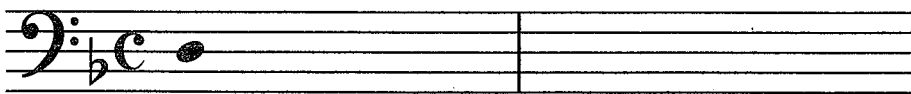
6. The melody will be performed by a euphonium.



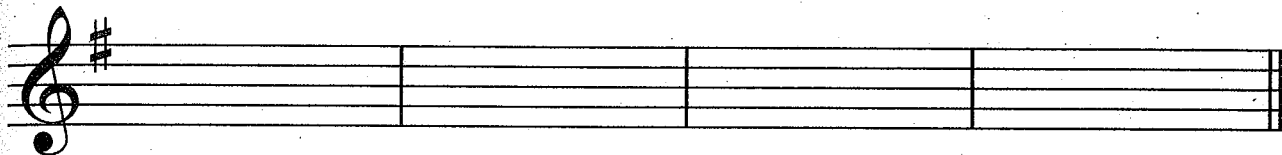
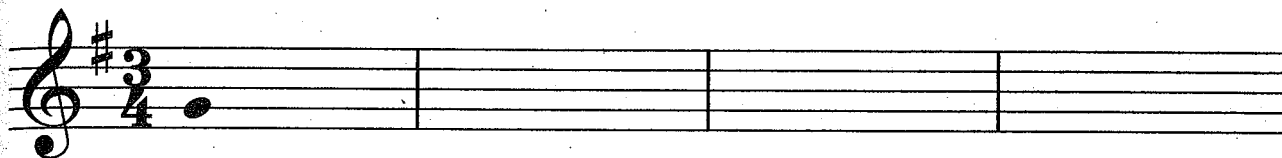
7. The melody will be performed by a flute.



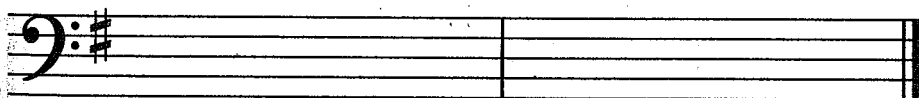
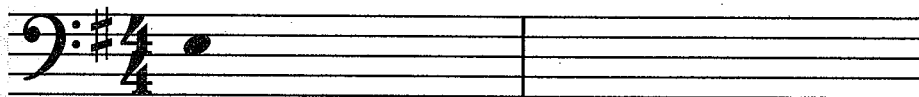
8. The melody will be performed by a bassoon.



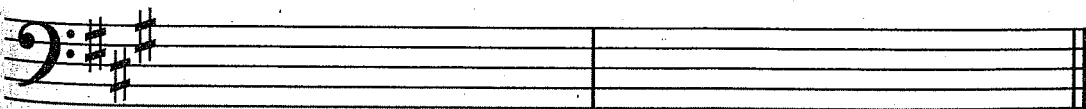
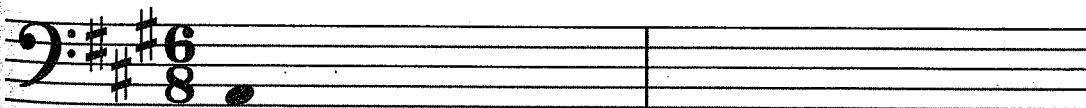
9. The melody will be performed by a flute.



10. The melody will be performed by a euphonium.

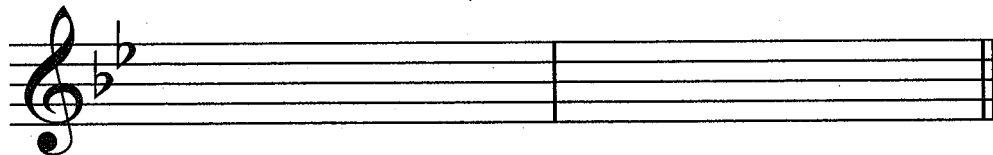
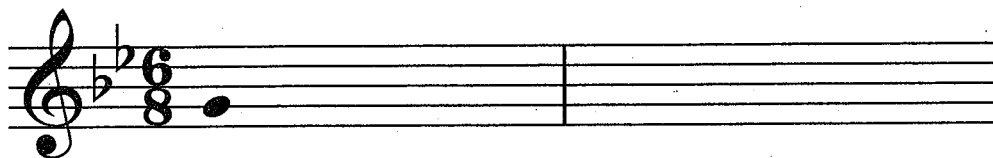


11. The melody will be performed by a trombone.

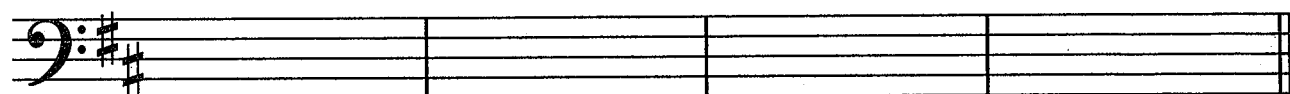




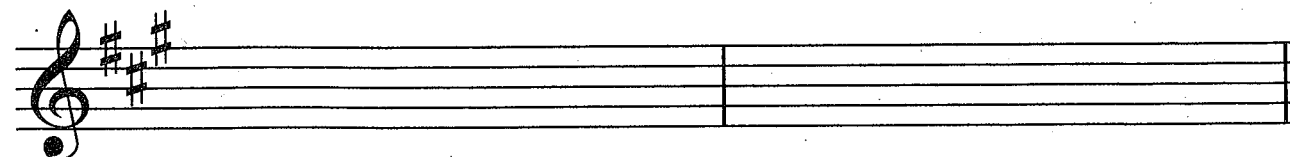
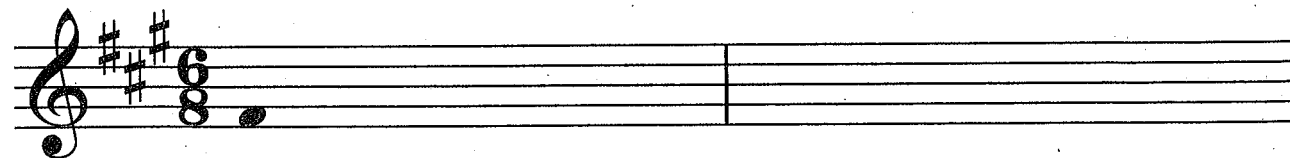
12. The melody will be performed by a violin.



13. The melody will be performed by a bassoon.

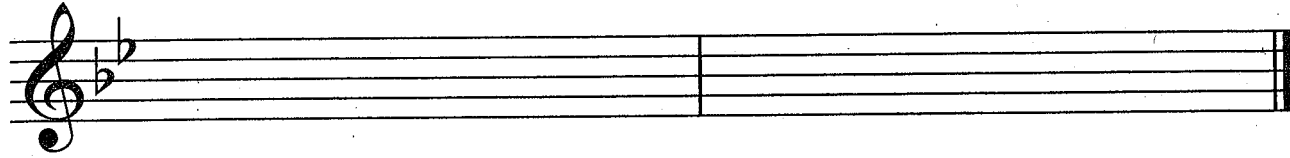
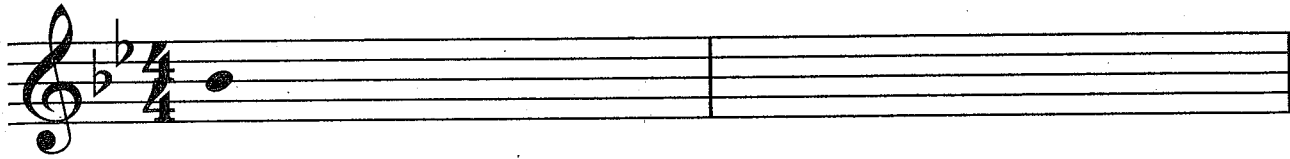


14. The melody will be performed by a flute.

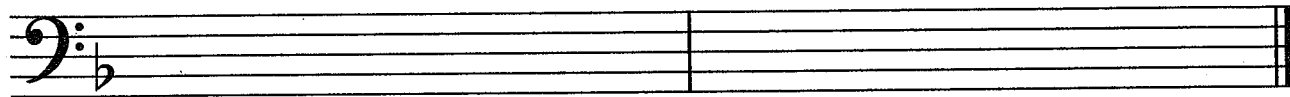
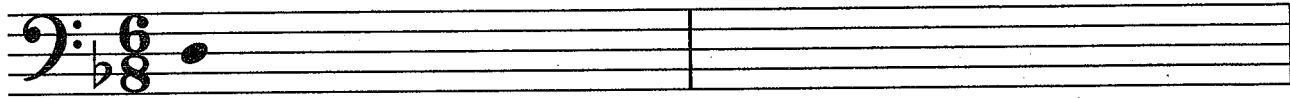




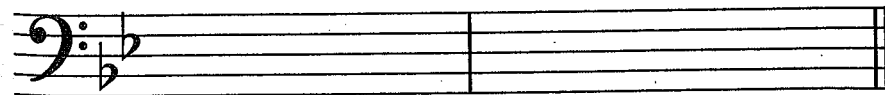
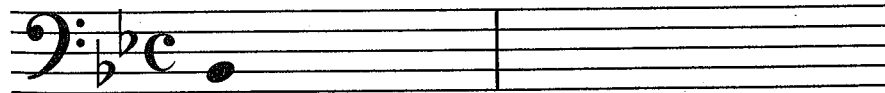
15. The melody will be performed by a flute.



16. The melody will be performed by a bassoon.

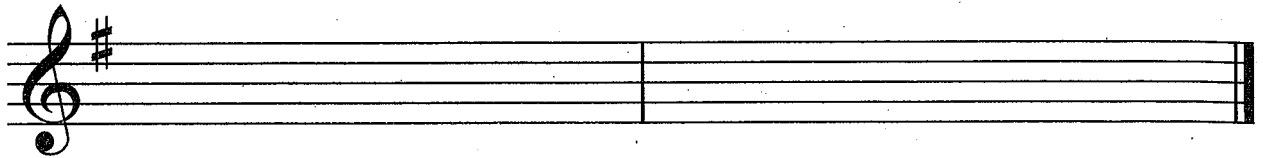
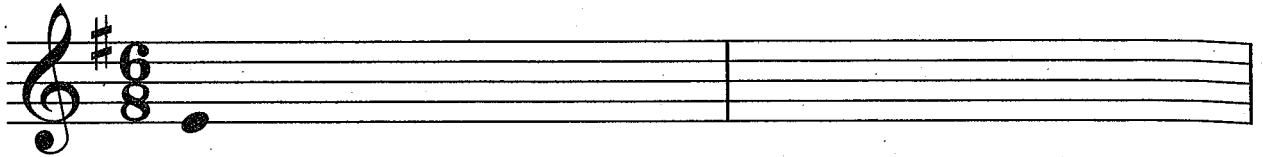


17. The melody will be performed by a bassoon.

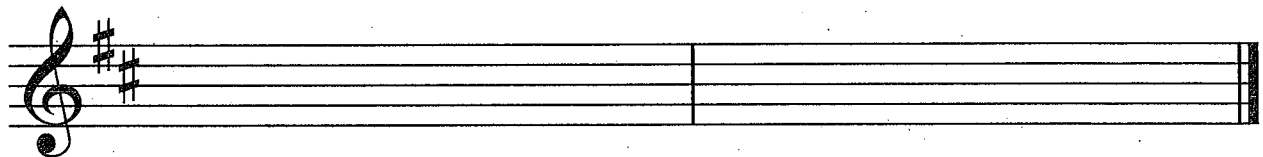
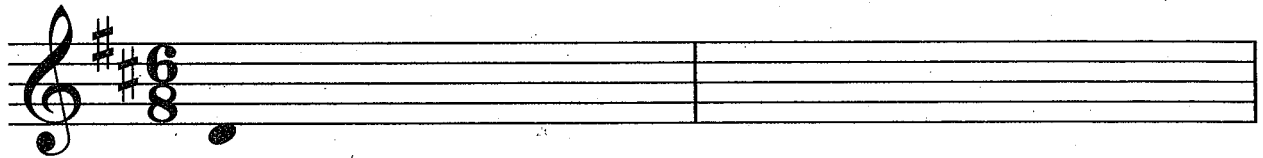




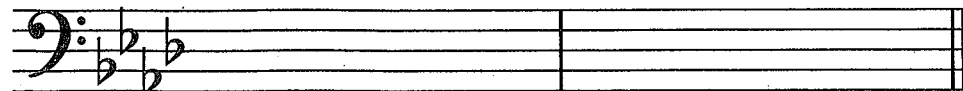
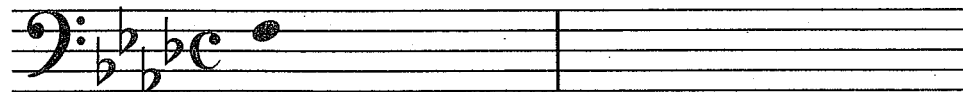
18. The melody will be performed by a trumpet.



19. The melody will be performed by a trumpet.

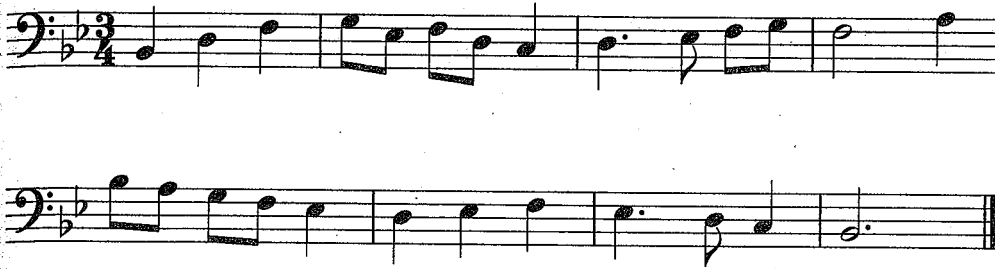


20. The melody will be performed by a bassoon.



## ANSWERS EXPLAINED

1. B $\flat$  Major



2. C minor



3. E $\flat$  Major



4. A minor



5. F Major



6. D Major



7. B minor



8. D minor



9. G Major



10. E minor



11. A Major





12. G minor



13. D Major



14. F# minor



15. Bb Major



16. D minor



Examples 12, 15, and 16, contain chromatic harmony. The accidental must be written correctly because there is implied harmony. Enharmonic spellings are not accepted. In example 16, the G# in measure 3 cannot be written as Ab.

17. B $\flat$  Major



18. E minor



19. D Major



20. F minor

