Thursday
Creating Harmonic Tension

Examples: *Spring Tide on the Tump* and *The Rat & the Raven*

Harmonic tension is created by the progression of chords selected by the composer.

Simple and Common Chord Progressions
A chord progression is a sequence of chord changes that has two usual characteristics: 1) it seeks to establish the key of the piece and 2) it makes use of relationships among the root tone of the chords. Occasionally a chord progress may attempt to contradict or contrast the key of the piece. This last characteristic is not often found in traditional or popular music.

The most common harmonic structure for traditional music employs three chords. These chords are the only three major chords available in any key. They are I, IV, and V.

Some typical patterns are:

I - IV - V - V. Dylan's song *Like a Rolling Stone*
I - I - IV - V. Rolling Stones *Get off of My Cloud*
I - IV - I - V *Wemoway*
I - IV - V - IV *Louie Louie*
I – IV – V – I Taking Blues
12 bar blues pattern: I - I - I – I | IV - IV - I – I | V - V - I - I

The diatonic scale, Ionian mode, also makes available the three, relative minor chord of I, IV and V. These chords are: vi, ii, iii.

There are many examples of these minor chords injected into the primary I-IV-V progress. Here are the chords for the rock-and-roll song by Procol Harem, A Whiter Shade of Pale: I-vi-IV-ii-V-iii-I-vi-iii-IV-ii-V-iii-V-I-vi-iii-IV-ii.

This chord progression is time tested, dating to the Baroque period. The harmonic support is largely created by an organ. The technique was inspired by J. S. Bach's "Sleepers, Wake!" and "Air on the G String.

VERSE

C Am
We skipped the light fandango
F Dm
and turned cartwheels 'cross the floor
G7 Em G7
I was feeling kind of sea sick

C Am Em
but the crowd called out for more
F Dm
the room was humming harder
G7 Em G7

As the ceiling flew away
C Am Em
When we called out for another drink
F Dm
the waiter brought a tray

CHORUS

G7 C
And so it was that later
F Dm
As the miller told his tale
G7 Em
That her face at first just ghostly
G7 C F C
Turned a whiter shade of pale

Beyond Basic Triads

Seventh Chords: Add the b7 to a triad to get the "seventh chord", e.g. G7= G B D F or add the seventh of the scale to get the "major seventh chord", e.g. Gmaj7= G B D F#.

Chord Extensions:
When a chord contains tones above the 7th, it is called an extended chord
Ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords are extended chords. These chords add tension and color to music. Very common in jazz. Uncommon in traditional music. 9th chords tend to appear in contemporary versions of traditional music.

Altered Chords: The fifth, ninth, eleventh and thirteenth may all be chromatically altered by accidentals. This is a very popular technique among contemporary singer-song writers.

Added Tone Chords: Tones that are not part of the basic triad or a 7th on the triad can be added to a chord. The most common examples are adding the 6th or adding the 9th, 11th or 13th WITHOUT including the 7th. The chords are written as using the word "add", e.g. Dadd9 = D F# A. These added tone chords can deliver wonderful color and tension.

Suspended Chords: The 3rd of a chord can be replaced by either the 2nd or the 4th tone. When this is done the chords are "suspended". For example Dsus4 is spelled D – G – A. And Dsus2 is spelled D – E- A. Suspended chords are often found in contemporary arrangements of traditional music. Generally they replace the V7 chord. So a basic progress such as I – IV – V might be D - G – A and could deliver more tension as D – G – Asus4.

V of V or Dominant of the Dominant: A common technique in 19th century traditional music is to move the chords through a progression toward the V chord, but the chord before that V chord will be the dominate chord of the V chord. That implies a key

change. For example the progression G – C – D - G could become G – C – A – D – G. The A chord is the dominate chord of D. But the A chord has a C# in it. So, there is a brief key change when this chord appears. A is the V chord of D. This change is sometimes called the V of V or dominant of dominant.

Use of Minor Chords in Harmonic Progressions
Compositions may develop from either melody or harmony. If the composition begins with melody, review the usual chord substitutions to create an interesting chord progress. Below is a table that shows the chord choices available for each potential melody tone in the key of "G".

Chord Substitution in the Key of G

If the Melody Tone is	Choose One of These Chords
G	**G** [G-B-D]
	C [C-E-G]
	Em [E-G-B]
A	**A** [A-C#-E]
	F#m [F#-A-C#]
	D [D-F#-A]
B	**Bm** [B-D-F#]
	G [G-B-D]
	Em [E-G-B]
C	**C** [C-E-G]
	Am [A-C-E]
	F#dim [F#-A-C]
D	**D** [D-F#-A]
	Bm [B-D-F#]
	G [G-B-D]
E	**Em** [E-G-B]
	C [C-E-G]
	Am [A-C-E]
F#	**F#dim** [F#-A-C]
	D [D-F#-A]
	Bm [B-D-F#]