

## Applications for Intervals

**Harmonic** intervals (when two notes sound at the same time) can be classified as *dissonant* or *consonant*.

- **Dissonant** harmonic intervals: are considered unstable and create the feeling that they need to resolve (i.e. move to a more consonant/stable interval).
  - 2nds, 4ths, 7ths, augmented/diminished intervals of any size
- **Consonant** harmonic intervals: are considered either fluid (better supporting a sense of comfortable motion), or very-stable/stationary (better supporting a sense of stasis, stopping or rest).
  - **Fluid:** 3rds, 6ths
  - **Stationary:** unisons, perfect 5ths, octaves

These various characteristics are useful for affecting the forward-moving, progress-oriented tendencies of Western music. Dissonance is used to push forward (resolve) into consonance. The song *Chopsticks* uses dissonance and consonance in this way. It begins with a dissonance (the 2nd) and unfolds towards a stationary consonance (the octave, on the tonic no less) via fluid consonances. The fulfilled “goal” of the music (the final octave) is a consonant, stable resting place.

• F up to G: 2nd  
• Dissonant  
• Wants to move/push

• E up to G: 3rd  
• Consonant  
• Fluid

• D up to B: 6th  
• Consonant  
• Fluid

• C to C: octave  
• Very consonant  
• Stationary

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**Melodic** intervals (where the notes sound consecutively) are not as sensitive to consonance or dissonance since the two notes are not heard simultaneously. But such intervals have a high melodic profile and can be used in compositions to help string ideas together and establish a sense of continuity as the music unfolds. The opening (and very recognizable) theme of Beethoven’s 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony relies mainly on melodic 3rds.

melodic 3rd

etc...