

Composition Workshop

Assignment #6: Composing a melody with text

While it might seem obvious, the most important thing about composing a melody with text (words) is that it is singable. It should suite the voice and feel comfortable to sing. Text-based melodies for the most part should be simple; containing mostly stepwise motion, not too many short (fast) note values, and a few carefully placed, not too big leaps. Stronger syllables usually go with stronger beats and a few melismas can be included. A melisma is a single syllable of text sung over multiple consecutively changing notes. Most importantly, there must be moments of relaxation (or rests) where the singer can breathe.

Assignment

Compose a melody based on one or more of the Mitt Romney quotations below. If you don't like any of them, you can pick another "text" (just be sure to give credit to the author).

Limit the composition to a motif or two so that you can continue to practice variation techniques. But also really try to sing the piece to yourself as you put it together so that it always remains "vocal" in style.

As far as a simple structure is concerned, you can start and end it on the same note and have a middle point that climaxes on a high note.

You can either notate it, or just sing into a recorder, or come up with some combination of both.

"Corporations are people, my friend... of course they are. Everything corporations earn ultimately goes to the people. Where do you think it goes? Whose pockets? Whose pockets? People's pockets. Human beings, my friend."
—Mitt Romney to a heckler at the Iowa State Fair who suggested that taxes should be raised on corporations as part of balancing the budget (August 2011)

"I'm not concerned about the very poor. We have a safety net there." —Mitt Romney (January 2012)

"I believe in an America where millions of Americans believe in an America that's the America millions of Americans believe in. That's the America I love."
—Mitt Romney (January 2012)

"I'm not familiar precisely with what I said, but I'll stand by what I said, whatever it was." —Mitt Romney (May 17, 2012)

Supplemental Assignment (make it instrumental)

Since many of you already have experience composing for the voice, the top assignment might be fun, but perhaps not challenging. If you want to do supplemental work, do the following:

- Compose/record the assignment as outlined above
- Then make a second version that is fit for an instrument (any instrument of your choice)
- This will **not** be sung, thus removing many of the constraints placed on vocal melodies
- Your alternative version should feature characteristics of the instrument that go beyond the capabilities of a voice (such as fast runs, large leaps, simultaneous notes, occasional chords)
- The point of this approach is to instrumentally embellish the original voice part so that the tune is still recognizable, but appropriate according to the capabilities and particulars of the instrument