

Music Theory I

Final Project: Music Theory in Practice

Harmony, Arranging, Performance & Reflection

Purpose:

Throughout this semester, you have studied the fundamentals of melody, harmony, voice leading, chord progressions, inversions, and notation. In this final project, you will bring these concepts together by preparing a complete arrangement from a given melody that could realistically be performed by musicians. Your goal is not simply to complete a theory exercise, but to demonstrate how music theory can inform practical musical decisions.

The project concludes with a live performance in which you will perform one part of your completed arrangement.

Project Overview:

You will receive an original melody written specifically for this project. Using the music theory concepts studied this semester, you will transform that melody into a complete performance-ready arrangement.

The project is completed in four parts.

Part 1 — Arrange Section A

Goal: Create a strong harmonic foundation for the first section of the melody.

Using the provided melody:

- Transpose the melody to a key of your choice.
- Write one harmony line (choose **Alto** or **Tenor**).
- Add chord symbols above the staff.
- Use chord inversions where appropriate.
- Apply the voice-leading principles studied this semester.

Submit:

- Notated Section A (approximately 8 measures)

Part 2 — Arrange Section B

Goal: Continue your arrangement while maintaining a consistent musical style and harmonic language.

Using the second section of the melody:

- Transpose the melody to the same key used in Part 1.
- Continue writing your chosen harmony line.
- Add chord symbols.
- Use inversions where appropriate.
- Continue applying good voice leading.

Submit:

- Notated Section B (approximately 8 measures)

Part 3 — Complete the Arrangement

Goal: Revise and combine your work into a polished, performance-ready arrangement.

Create a single, polished arrangement by doing the following:

- **Revise your arrangements from Parts 1 and 2** based on instructor feedback.
- Combine Sections A and B into a single arrangement.
- Compose a **2–4 measure introduction** that establishes the key and prepares the melody.
- Compose a **transition** between Sections A and B if you feel it improves the flow.
- Compose a **short ending or tag** that provides a satisfying conclusion.
- Prepare a clean, readable, performance-ready **score**.

Your final submission should include:

- Introduction
- Section A
- Transition (if used)
- Section B
- Ending/Tag
- Melody
- One harmony line (Alto or Tenor)
- Chord symbols
- Chord inversions
- Accurate notation

Part 4 — Performance & Reflection

Goal: Demonstrate your arrangement and reflect on the musical choices made throughout the project.

Performance

Present your arrangement during the final class.

Perform one part of your arrangement in a way that demonstrates its musical realization.

Examples include:

- accompanying the melody with chords
- singing or playing the harmony line
- performing the melody
- another instructor-approved realization

The goal is not to perform every musical part yourself, but to demonstrate that your arrangement is practical, musical, and performable.

Reflection

During the performances, complete the **Reflection & Listening Guide**.

Final Project Melody

Section A



Section B



Reflection & Listening Guide

Part 1 – Reflect on Your Own Arrangement

- What harmonic decisions are you most pleased with? Why?
- Why did you choose the chord progression you used?
- What did you do to make your harmony line smooth and musical?
- How does your introduction establish the key, style, or character of your arrangement?
- If you had another week to revise your arrangement, what would you improve?

Part 2 – Listen to Other Arrangements

As you listen, remember that each arrangement represents a different musical interpretation of the same melody. Listen for how different musical choices shape the overall musical experience.

Choose **three** classmates whose arrangements stood out to you and answer the following questions for each:

Arrangement 1

1. What musical idea stood out?
2. Why do you think it worked well?
3. Is there a musical idea you might incorporate into your own arranging?

Arrangement 2

1. What musical idea stood out?
2. Why do you think it worked well?
3. Is there a musical idea you might incorporate into your own arranging?

Arrangement 3

1. What musical idea stood out?
2. Why do you think it worked well?
3. Is there a musical idea you might incorporate into your own arranging?

Part 3 – Final Reflection

After hearing several different arrangements of the same melody:

- What surprised you most?
- How did different chord progressions change the character of the melody?
- Which arrangement did you find especially effective? What musical choices contributed to that effect?
- What did you learn about arranging that you could apply in future musical work?
- How has your understanding of music theory changed this semester? Give one specific example of how you applied a concept from class in this project.