

J onathan
E dwards

Musician – Composer – Educator

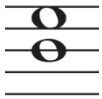
INTERVALS

Intervals

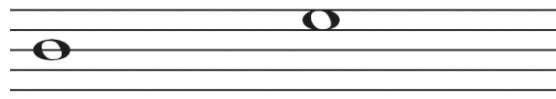
As atoms are the building blocks of matter, intervals are the building blocks of melody and harmony.

An interval, a word stolen from geometry, is the space between two notes.

Intervals can be either harmonic (played together) or melodic (played consecutively).



Harmonic



Melodic

When classifying intervals, two factors are important to consider:

The general eg: Third

The specific Major/Minor/Perfect/Diminished/Augmented

Combining the **general** and **specific** creates a fully descriptive name for the interval - eg: Major Third.

The general

The general name of an interval is found by counting how it appears on the staff:



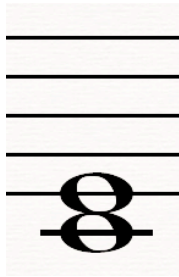
The specific

The specific type of interval is found by the quality of the interval in terms of sound –

Major/Minor/Perfect/Diminished/Augmented.

(i) – the difference between a Major and a Minor interval with the same general name is a semitone – the larger being the Major interval, the Minor the smaller:

Musical examples are notated in Treble Clef

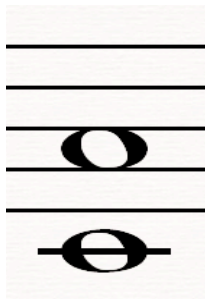


MAJOR



MINOR

(ii) – a major or a perfect interval made a semitone larger is an Augmented interval:



MAJOR SIXTH



AUGMENTED SIXTH

(iii) – a minor or perfect interval made a semitone smaller is a Diminished interval:



MINOR THIRD



DIMINISHED THIRD

Compound Intervals

An interval that spans over the range of an Octave is described as a *compound interval*. It is also common to refer to these notes as, for example, a Major 10th - which is also known as a Compound Major 3rd.

In jazz/pop/rock/folk etc music it is everyday to refer to 9, 11, 13 – which are respectively the 2nd, 4th and 6th degrees – this idea stems from describing compound intervals the full way (ie: Major 10th and not Compound Major 3rd) which is further developed through the application of modes. For example 11 could become #11 (eg: from Lydian) – see my notes on *Modes* at my Website.

Inversion of Intervals

Intervals are said to be *inverted* when the lower note is moved up an octave, or the upper note is moved down an octave. Thus the interval of C-E (a Major 3rd) when inverted becomes E-C (a Minor 6th).

NB – The two numbers representing the *general* name of the intervals when added together always total **nine**. ie: 3+6=9

The following results are found:

1. Unisons become octaves (& Vice Versa)
2. Seconds become sevenths (& Vice Versa)
3. Thirds become sixths (& Vice Versa)
4. Fourths become fifths (& Vice Versa)

Consonant and Dissonant Intervals

Intervals can either be **consonant** or **dissonant**.

Broadly speaking, **consonant** intervals sound stable and complete, eg:

Major 3rd, Minor 3rd, Perfect 4th, Perfect 5th, Major 6th Minor 6th and Perfect Octave.

Broadly speaking, **dissonant** intervals sound unstable and incomplete, eg:

Major 2nd, Minor 2nd, Augmented 4th, Diminished 5th, Minor 7th and Major 7th.

Enharmonic spelling

There is more than one way to write or **spell** every note of the keyboard, eg: F \sharp is the same pitch as G \flat . It is often a choice between staying true to the key or modal centre of the music, or making the music easier to read – therefore achieving the desired results quicker and more easily, freeing the musicians up to be more creative.



Measuring intervals by number of Semitones

Minor 2 nd	1 Semitone
Major 2 nd	2 Semitones
Minor 3 rd	3 Semitones
Major 3 rd	4 Semitones
Perfect 4 th	5 Semitones
Aug 4 th / Dim 5 th	6 Semitones
Perfect 5 th	7 Semitones
Minor 6 th	8 Semitones
Major 6 th	9 Semitones
Minor 7 th	10 Semitones
Major 7 th	11 Semitones
Perfect Octave	12 Semitones