

Example 16-5 Diatonic melody with chromatic embellishing notes

This melody clearly begins and ends in the key of G major, and the four chromatic notes are immediately obvious: the A# in measure 1 is an unaccented lower neighbour tone; the C# in measure 2 is an accented passing tone; the E \flat in measure 3 is also a passing tone but is unaccented; and the A# in measure 4 is an accented lower neighbour note. Each decorates an important scale degree in the major key: the A# decorates the third both times it occurs, and the C# and E \flat are chromatic inflections emphasizing motion to the dominant.

Hearing such embellishments is a matter of distinguishing the following:

- semitone motion up or down where it does not normally exist
- decoration of a particular scale degree in a key
- the altered note itself

In a major key, several notes may be inflected up or down, and their contexts are well defined. However, there are fewer options in a minor key because conditions already exist for either the natural or raised sixth and seventh steps. Moreover, while some chromatic variants are common, especially the raised fourth degree decorating the fifth (#4–5 in both major and minor keys), others like $\flat 2-1$ (Phrygian inflection) and $\flat 5-4$ are relatively rare. **Figure 16-1** provides a summary of the potential raised and lowered notes in major and minor keys.

Major ascending	#1-2	#2-3	#4-5	#5-6	#6-7
Major descending	$\flat 7-6$	$\flat 6-5$	#4-4*	$\flat 3-2$	$\flat 2-1^*$
Minor ascending	#1-2*	#3-4	#4-5		
Minor descending	$\flat 5-4^*$	#3- $\flat 3$	$\flat 2-1^*$		

Figure 16-1 Common chromatic note functions in major and minor keys²

Spelling of chromaticism is important because it defines the melodic function of the altered note. The A# in **Example 16-5** is required because it is a neighbour to the B. It would be incorrect to use B \flat because the lowered note would need to fall to A.

Exercises

1. Your instructor will play two melodic dictations using chromatic embellishments. Remember when transcribing these melodies to consider the function of the chromaticism and notate the gestures correctly. In the case of quickly changing notes, do not forget that you may occasionally need to put notes back to their original diatonic form using more accidentals!

Melodic Dictation 16-1



A major

Melodic Dictation 16-2



F# minor

(Continued)