

Rob's Piano Room - Module 5 - PDF
The Anacrusis, and Non-chord Tones on the Beat

Main points

A melody does not always have to start on beat one of the first bar. A note (or notes) that lead into the first strong beat are referred to as an anacrusis, which may be a single or multiple notes. These are commonly called pick up note(s)

It is also possible for a melody to start after the first main beat

Anacrusis can be chord tones, non-chord tones, or a mixture

Up to now, we have been playing all of our non-chord tones on the strong beats, All of our non-chord tone devices (passing tones, neighbours, approaches, surrounds, appoggiaturas) may be played so that the non chord tones are on the main beats, often putting the resolution to the chord tone on weaker beats.

If we think of our chord tones as our 'safe' notes, and our non-chord tones as our 'colour' notes, we can see why placing the more colourful notes on stronger beats gives us much more of a colourful effect than when they are not accented

In order to behave in they ways we have studied so far, they still need to resolve to the intended chord tones.

Exercises (We will stay in C for the first few modules, if you are able to try other keys, feel free)

Ex.1 Play through our progressions, with a time signature. Experiment with melodies that start on, before and after the first strong beat. When experimenting with starting before the beat (i.e. using the anacrusis) experiment with single notes, as well as various multiple note possibilities.

Ex 2. Experiment with each type of non-chord tone, finding ways to adjust your rhythms so that the non-chord tones end up on the stronger beats. Notice the added colour this gives them. Or, go through the examples below, and use them as models to create your own examples. Try this on the I chord, and then with our progressions found in modules 2 and 3. Obviously, in order to even have stronger and weaker beats, we will have to be in the context of a time signature.

A musical score in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting on the first beat with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4 and B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a dotted quarter note G4, an eighth note F4, a quarter note E4, and a half note D4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line starting on the first beat with a quarter note G2, followed by eighth notes A2 and B2, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a dotted quarter note G2, and eighth notes F2 and E2.

Melody starting on the beat

A musical score in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting with a quarter note G4 (anacrusis) on the first beat, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, and a half note E4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line starting on the first beat with a quarter note G2, followed by eighth notes A2 and B2, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a dotted quarter note G2, and eighth notes F2 and E2.

Melody starting before the beat (one note anacrusis)

A musical score in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting with two eighth notes G4 and A4 (anacrusis) on the first beat, followed by quarter notes B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, and a half note E4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line starting on the first beat with a quarter note G2, followed by eighth notes A2 and B2, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a dotted quarter note G2, and eighth notes F2 and E2.

Melody starting before the beat (two note anacrusis)

A musical score in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting with three eighth notes G4, A4, and B4 (anacrusis) on the first beat, followed by quarter notes C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, and a half note F3. The bass clef staff shows a bass line starting on the first beat with a quarter note G2, followed by eighth notes A2 and B2, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a dotted quarter note G2, and eighth notes F2 and E2.

Melody starting before the beat (three note anacrusis)

A musical score in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting on the second beat with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, and a half note E4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line starting on the first beat with a quarter note G2, followed by eighth notes A2 and B2, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a dotted quarter note G2, and eighth notes F2 and E2.

Melody starting after the beat

