J. Arlen, "Over the Rainbow" (1938)

K. Billy Joel, "Piano Man" (1973)

Each example—whether written for voice or for instrument—is singable. The pitches follow one another in what seems to be a logical and goal-oriented flow. The intervals are mostly steps, and leaps are usually small. Large leaps are followed by change of direction. Notice also that large leaps often tend to be filled in, in effect retracing and completing a musical space that was left open. Such balance and the creation and dissipation of energy are important components of melody. These melodies are almost entirely diatonic, and they begin with a strong sense of key, always a member of the tonic triad and usually on $\hat{1}$. Most of the melodies end on $\hat{1}$; those that end on $\hat{2}$ or $\hat{5}$ will continue and eventually lead to $\hat{1}$. Their contours usually produce arches, often taking the form of an ascent followed by a descent; but sometimes, as in Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, an ascent follows a descent. Finally, even though all of the melodies share these basic characteristics, each one possesses a distinct character. Melodic uniqueness is accomplished via relationships between segments of the melody, most of which are formed from short rhythmic and melodic patterns called *motives*, a topic that we take up in later chapters.

For our first studies in melody writing, we will explore a few specific attributes shared by many melodies written in the tonal style. Further, we will focus exclusively on the pitch domain, without the stylistic elements of repeated rhythmic and melodic patterns that characterize individual melodies. Following are the general guidelines for melody writing that we will apply, at least for now. Our melodies will be very short, about 12–18 pitches. They will also be entirely diatonic (except for raising $\hat{7}$ to create a leading tone in minor) and will be unmetered, with no rhythmic profile. Refer to Example 3.21 for examples of each of the following points.

1. Begin your melody on a member of the tonic triad ($\hat{1}$– $\hat{3}$– $\hat{5}$) and end with either $\hat{2}$– $\hat{1}$ or $\hat{7}$– $\hat{1}$. The approach to the final pitch by step is called a **melodic cadence**.
2. Limit the range of your melody (the total span of pitches) to a tenth, and try to maintain a general tessitura (the comfortable, most used span) of about a sixth.
3. Move primarily by steps (called **conjunct motion**). You can also move with occasional skips (jumps of a third) or leaps (jumps of a fourth or more) to add interest. It is fine to use skips and leaps (called **disjunct motion**) if they fit any of the following constraints.
   a. They are generally confined to small intervals, such as thirds, although one or two larger leaps may be used if they are no larger than a minor sixth.
   b. They traverse consonant melodic intervals (for example, do not use dissonant leaps, such as a diminished fourth). Be aware that the augmented second between $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{7}$ in harmonic minor is a dissonance and therefore should be avoided.