

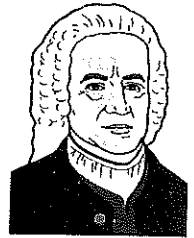
# J.S. Bach — Brandenburg Concerto No.5



The 3rd Movement of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No.5 in D Major is one of your set pieces. This concerto is one of six written by Bach for the Margrave of Brandenburg around 1721.

## J.S. Bach Came From a Family of Musicians

- 1) Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born in the Thuringia region of Germany. He was from a family of well-known performers and composers.
- 2) Bach wrote in all genres except opera. He is particularly known for instrumental music such as the Brandenburg Concertos and sacred choral music such as masses.
- 3) Bach is known for long, flowing, expressive melodies. He was skilled at writing contrapuntal music (see page 45), including fugues (see below).
- 4) Keyboard instruments such as the harpsichord and organ had major roles in many of Bach's works.



## Brandenburg Concerto No.5 is a Concerto Grosso

- 1) Brandenburg Concerto No.5 is an example of a concerto grosso — see page 81.
- 2) The concertino (small group of solo instruments) consists of a solo flute, solo violin and harpsichord.
- 3) The ripieno (larger accompanying group of instruments) is a string orchestra.
- 4) The continuo is played by the harpsichord (when it's not playing a solo part), cello and double bass.

### THE HARPSICHORD HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE

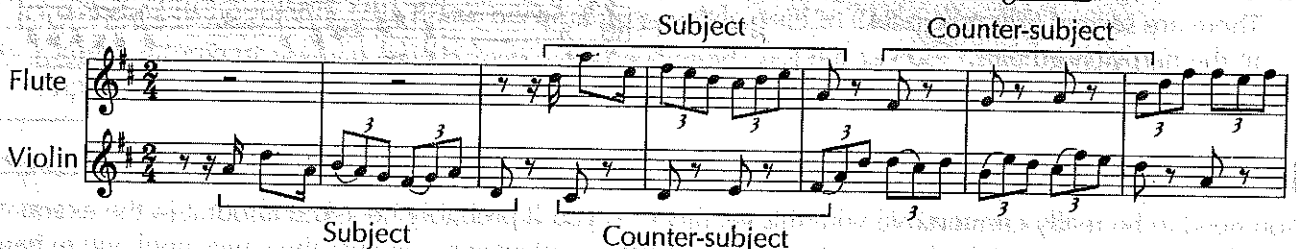
- The harpsichord's prominent solo role (as well as playing the continuo) is unusual for the period. The part is very complex at times, and is completely unaccompanied in bars 163-176.
- In some places the harpsichord player completes the harmony by realising the figured bass (see p.57).
- In Baroque music, the harpsichord player would sometimes direct the ensemble as well.

## The 3rd Movement is Both a Fugue and a Gigue

- 1) The 3rd Movement of the concerto is in the style of a gigue. A gigue is a 17th century dance with a steady beat and a lively tempo. They are often written in a compound metre such as  $\frac{6}{8}$ . The set piece has a time signature of  $\frac{2}{4}$  but the frequent use of triplets gives it a  $\frac{6}{8}$  'feel'.
- 2) The music is written as a fugue — the key features of a fugue are given below. The first 7 bars of the movement are shown at the bottom of the page to illustrate some of these features.

### KEY FEATURES OF A FUGUE

- The subject (main idea) is heard first on a solo instrument — in the set piece, it's the violin.
- Other parts or instruments play the subject, one after another, in imitation — here, the flute plays the subject next. This structure gives the music a largely polyphonic texture.
- The melodic line immediately following the subject is called the counter-subject (see below).
- Each part then continues with other contrasting melodic ideas, occasionally re-stating the subject, or variations of it. There is no set structure for how a fugue should develop.
- Often, when one part has fast moving notes, another will have slower moving notes — see bars 3-4.



The musical notation shows the first 7 bars of the 3rd movement in 2/4 time. The violin part (bottom staff) begins with the Subject (bars 1-3) and then the Counter-subject (bars 4-7). The flute part (top staff) enters in bar 2 with the Subject and then the Counter-subject in bar 4. Triplet markings are present in bars 3, 4, 5, and 6.



# J.S. Bach — Brandenburg Concerto No.5

Listen to the music as you're reading this page — you'll need to be able to spot the features that are mentioned. You'll probably need to hear it a few times through to pick up on them all.

## The 3rd Movement is in Ternary Form

- 1) The 3rd Movement has an ABA structure — the first section is repeated after a contrasting middle section. This is ternary form (see page 81). Section A is bars 1-78, section B is bars 79-233, and section A is then played again from bar 233 to the end.
- 2) Section A is in D major. The piece moves to the B minor (the relative minor) for section B, before returning to D major for the final section.
- 3) The main melodic section of the movement (bars 1-29) is repeated throughout the piece (in full or in part) with contrasting sections in between. This structure is known as ritornello.
- 4) The fugue starts in the concertino instruments and then passes to the ripieno at bar 29.
- 5) In some places, the harpsichord has a complex part — it plays quick semiquavers (e.g. from bar 42). The other parts are much simpler at these times, creating a light orchestral texture.

## Bach Used Various Musical Devices

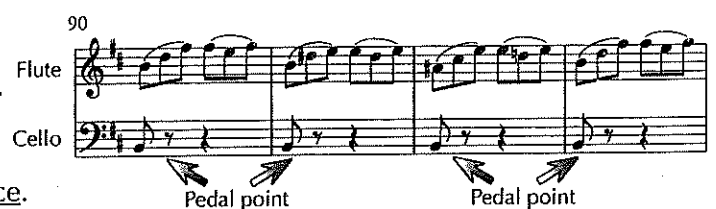
### 1) SEQUENCING

Bach uses sequences (see p.83) in this movement. This extract shows the flute and ripieno violin parts — the pattern is repeated in each bar, moving up a tone each time.



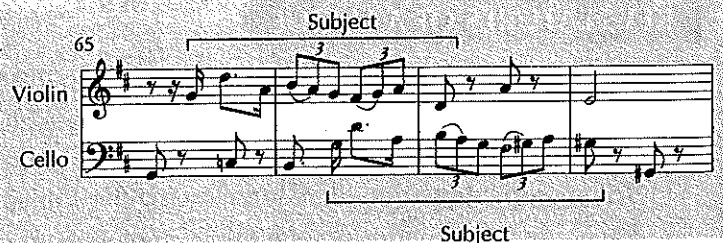
### 2) PEDAL POINT

A pedal point (or pedal note — see p.39) is used in bars 79-85, 90-95 and 100-106 — it's played by the viola, cello or double bass. This extract shows the flute and cello parts — the cello repeats the pedal note (B), while the melody changes in the flute, creating dissonance.



### 3) STRETTO

Stretto is when the fugue subject is overlapped — one instrument starts playing the subject before the previous one has finished. This builds up the intensity of the texture. It happens in the violin, viola and cello parts in bars 64-68.



### 4) TRILLS

There are several trills (see p.84) in the harpsichord part.



## Pedal as fast as you can...

You need to be really comfortable with this set piece — you'll probably be asked about it in the exam. So if hasn't all quite sunk in, listen to it a few more times and keep going over the pages until you're happy.



## Beethoven — Sonata Pathétique

The 1st Movement from Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor by Ludwig van Beethoven is one of your set pieces. It is known as 'Sonata Pathétique' — this doesn't mean 'pathetic' in the modern sense of the word, but refers to the emotional and passionate nature of the music.

### Beethoven was an Influential Composer

- 1) Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer who lived from 1770-1827.
- 2) He was a very significant composer in Western classical music — his music is famous for its drama, intensity and emotion.
- 3) He wrote music in many different forms — including orchestral music (especially symphonies), sonatas and string quartets.
- 4) Beethoven was important in developing musical styles — he moved from the stricter forms and harmonies of the Classical period to the freer forms and richer harmonies of the Romantic era.



### Beethoven Wrote Many Sonatas

- 1) Beethoven wrote sonatas for a range of solo instruments, such as piano, violin and cello.
- 2) He wrote the most for the piano — he composed 32 piano sonatas in total.
- 3) Beethoven was a skilled pianist himself, and his piano sonatas are considered to be some of his most expressive and powerful music.
- 4) Piano sonatas by earlier composers tended to follow the three-movement structure from p.91 — a first movement in sonata form, a second slower movement and a faster, lively third movement.
  - Sonata Pathétique follows this pattern of three movements.  
The 1st movement is quite unusual because of the very slow introduction, which returns briefly twice during the much faster main part of the movement. The introduction is just 10 bars long, but lasts about 1 minute 45 seconds.
  - The 2nd movement is a slow movement — its tempo is Adagio cantabile, meaning slow and songlike.
  - The 3rd movement is in rondo form and is marked Allegro (meaning quick). The main theme of this movement is very similar to theme B of the exposition of the 1st movement (see next page).

### The Set Piece is in Sonata Form

- 1) The 1st Movement of Sonata Pathétique is in sonata form. The table below shows where the three main sections of the sonata form appear in the piece — the exposition, development and recapitulation (see p.91).
- 2) The exposition is usually repeated (but in some recordings it isn't).

Section	Introduction	Exposition	Transition	Development	Recapitulation	Transition	Coda
Bars	1-10	11-134	135-138	139-196	197-296	297-300	301- end

- 3) There are variations in tempo throughout the movement — the introduction is marked Grave, meaning very slow and solemn but the other sections are Allegro di molto e con brio which means very fast and played with spirit. The 'transitions' are short four-bar references to the introduction, played at the same slow tempo, providing contrast with the main sections.
- 4) The piece ends with a coda which mirrors the start of the exposition.

# Beethoven — Sonata Pathétique



This sonata highlights the way in which Beethoven's career bridged the Classical and Romantic periods.

## Sonata Pathétique Shows How Music Was Developing

Beethoven's music in this sonata illustrates the transition from the Classical period to the richer harmonies and more dramatic, emotional style that were characteristic of the Romantic period. Many of these characteristics are seen in the introduction to the movement (bars 1 and 2 are shown):

- **Dissonance** — indicated with \* here.
- **Variation in dynamics** — across the movement the dynamics range from *pp* to *ff*, with sudden changes such as the *fp* (see p.19) in bar 1, and more gradual crescendos and diminuendos.
- **Dramatic chords** — there are slow, dotted homophonic chords in the opening bars.
- **Contrast** — this is created by the faster scales in bar 4 and bars 9-10.
- **Large pitch range** — in bars 8 and 9, the melody part (the highest notes) ranges from middle C in the first chord to a high E, 2½ octaves higher. The first chord of bar 9 (G7) spans nearly 4 octaves.
- **Chromatic motion** (see p.27) — parts of the harmony are chromatic (e.g. bar 4).



## The Exposition has Three Themes

The exposition (bars 11-134) is made up of three different musical ideas:

- **Theme A** — bars 11-50. This starts in the key of C minor. The theme consists of rising and falling music over a 'murky bass' — where notes an octave apart are played alternately (broken octaves).
- **Theme B** — bars 51-88. This theme starts in E♭ minor (see the C♭ accidental in bar 51). This is unusual — if a composer begins a piece in a minor key, they often move to the relative major key. With the first theme in C minor, the obvious key to move to would be E♭ major (the relative major) — but Beethoven chose E♭ minor instead.
- **Theme C** — bars 89-134. Beethoven now uses the relative major, starting this theme in E♭ major. A lot of the music is made up of broken chords. The bass part makes use of Alberti bass (see p.39) where chords are played as separate notes (e.g. in bars 105-109).



## The Themes are Used Throughout the Movement

The **DEVELOPMENT** (bars 139-196) is a variation on theme A of the exposition — this can be heard most clearly in the staccato parts. The murky bass continues to be used, and broken octaves are also used in the right-hand part (see bars 151-168). There are also references to the introduction — e.g. the melody in bars 142-143 mirrors the first phrase of bar 5. There are a number of modulations within the section.

In the **RECAPITULATION** (bars 197-296), each of the three exposition themes appears in turn. Theme A is in the same key as in the exposition (C minor). Themes B and C are in different keys — theme C is now also in C minor, which leads into a final reference to theme A at the end of the section. Theme A returns once more in the **CODA**, after which the piece concludes with *ff* chords and a perfect cadence.

## I'm feeling suddenly dynamic...

To see how Beethoven's sonata is 'modern' for the period, compare it with the 1st movement from an earlier Classical sonata such as Mozart's Piano Sonata in C major or Haydn's Piano Sonata in C major.

# Purcell — Music for a While

Now it's time for the first set work for this area of study — I bet you've been waiting for this music for a while (sorry, I couldn't resist). Anyway, here it is...

## Music for a While was Written for the Theatre

See p.80-84 for more on Baroque music.

- 1) Henry Purcell (1659-1695) was one of the most famous English composers of the Baroque period.
- 2) He wrote a wide range of music, including sacred choral music, chamber music, orchestral music and music for the theatre. His music for the theatre included both opera and incidental music (songs and instrumental pieces to be performed as part of a play).
- 3) Oedipus was a play by the English dramatist John Dryden — it was based on a story by the Greek writer Sophocles. Purcell wrote the incidental music for Oedipus.
- 4) 'Music for a While' is the second of four movements that Purcell wrote for Oedipus. It is sung by a priest who is attempting to summon the ghost of a dead king.

## Music for a While has a Ground Bass

- 1) This song is written for a singer with continuo. The song was originally written for a high male voice (a tenor or countertenor), but some later arrangements are written for a soprano.
- 2) The continuo is usually made up of two instruments — often the cello and the harpsichord, which read from the same bass part. The use and sound of the continuo is a key feature of Baroque music.
- 3) In this song, Purcell uses a ground bass (see p.57).

- Ground bass is a repeating melodic phrase in the bass part.
- In 'Music for a While', the ground bass is three bars long. This is a bit unusual (especially for a piece in  $\frac{4}{4}$ ) — you'd usually expect the ground bass to be 2, 4, or even 8 bars long.
- Purcell used ground bass many times in his compositions. One of his most well-known can be heard in the song 'When I am Laid in Earth' from his opera Dido and Aeneas.
- Here is the ground bass from 'Music for a While':



- 4) The ground bass is frequently chromatic — there is often a rise of a semitone between two consecutive notes (e.g. F# to G in the first bar, then G# to A a couple of notes later). The shape of the melody is generally ascending.
- 5) The ascending shape of the ground bass is contrasted with the descending shape of the voice part — this is known as contrary motion. There's more about the vocal part on the next page.
- 6) The ground bass changes in bar 14 — it no longer follows the pattern shown above. It resumes in bar 29, and then lasts till the end of the piece.
- 7) The quavers in the ground bass continue throughout the song — this is an example of a walking bass in Baroque music.

I think that's given you a thorough grounding in the bass part...

Have a look back at pages 85-86 on Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No.5 (and listen to the piece as well) — it also uses a continuo. Don't get confused by the fact that the ground bass is described as a walking bass — in jazz music, a walking bass is usually crotchets, but in Baroque music it was often quavers.





# Queen — Killer Queen

Now it's time for your second set work on vocal music — and it's very different to 'Music for a While'. However, it is still a piece for a solo vocal part with accompaniment — but in a different style.

## Queen are a British Rock Band

- 1) The band Queen was formed in 1970. They are a rock band (sometimes described as glam rock).
- 2) Queen had four members, who usually played the following roles:

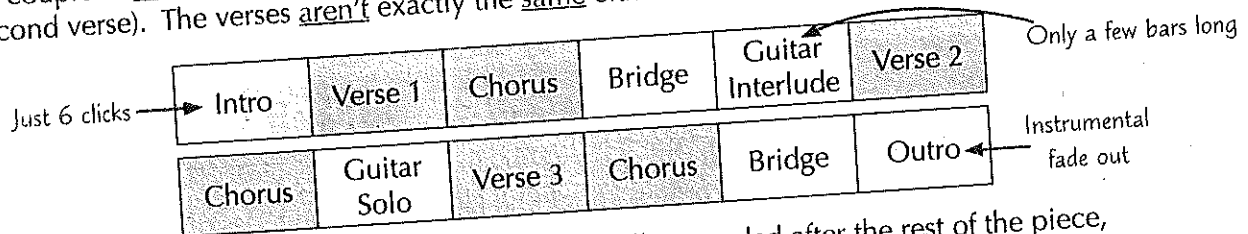
- Freddie Mercury — lead vocals, piano, backing vocals
- Brian May — lead guitar, backing vocals
- Roger Taylor — drums, backing vocals
- John Deacon — bass guitar

After Freddie Mercury's death in 1991, the other members of the band have continued to perform with guest singers doing the lead vocals.

- 3) The song 'Killer Queen' was written by Freddie Mercury. It comes from Queen's third album Sheer Heart Attack, which was released in 1974.
- 4) This album is different from Queen's previous two albums. The first two albums have more of the traditional rock band sound. Sheer Heart Attack is the album that uses the recording techniques of layering vocals and instruments — the band used these techniques regularly to achieve the distinctive Queen "sound".
- 5) Queen are hugely successful — they have sold millions of albums, had many Number 1 singles and performed in massive arenas. Their most famous hits include 'Bohemian Rhapsody', 'We Will Rock You' and 'Don't Stop Me Now' (as well as loads more).

## Killer Queen has a Verse-Chorus Structure

The structure of 'Killer Queen' is quite straightforward — it basically follows a verse-chorus structure, with a couple of variations (there are a couple of bridge sections, and a little guitar interlude before the second verse). The verses aren't exactly the same either. The structure looks like this:



The guitar solo is performed by Brian May. It was actually recorded after the rest of the piece, as May was ill when the song was recorded. The solo uses layering (see next page), so couldn't have been performed live in exactly the same way.

## The Song has Unusual Lyrics

- 1) The lyrics of 'Killer Queen' are a key feature of the song. They were written before the music and are very wordy, with lots of syllables. This means they dictate the rhythm of the melody — the note lengths are usually quite short in order to fit all the words in. Most of the song is syllabic.
- 2) The words themselves are quite unusual. The song mentions Marie Antoinette, Khrushchev and Kennedy (all famous historical figures). The subject of the song enjoys 'Moët et Chandon' (champagne) and 'caviar' and talks like a 'baroness', which creates an image of an upper-class, well-connected woman.
- 3) The chorus uses lots of explosive imagery — e.g. 'gunpowder', 'dynamite' and 'laser beam'.

## Another page bites the dust...

In case you're wondering, Khrushchev was the leader of the Soviet Union and Kennedy was President of the United States at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Nice little history lesson for you there!

# Queen — Killer Queen



'Killer Queen' has some interesting musical features that you need to know about.

## The Accompaniment Changes Throughout the Song

- 1) Unusually for a rock song, 'Killer Queen' doesn't start with an instrumental introduction — it starts with six clicks. The solo vocalist comes in alone on the last click, then the instrumentation builds up. The piano comes in first, followed by the guitar, drums and bass guitar, then finally the backing vocals.
- 2) The instrumentation varies a little in different verses — e.g. there's a bell and a more prominent guitar part in verse 2. For the first part of each chorus, the vocals are in four-part harmony with no solo line.
- 3) The backing vocals are in four-part harmony (another reason why the song couldn't be performed like this live — there's four-part harmony and a soloist, and there are only four members in Queen).
- 4) The backing vocals are a key feature of Queen songs, and help create their recognisable sound.

In 'Killer Queen', the backing vocals are different in each verse — they mainly sing 'oooh' and 'aaah', but sometimes echo the solo line (e.g. 'naturally' in verse 2) or complete it (e.g. 'drive you wild' in verse 3). In the choruses, they start by singing the main lyrics in harmony, but also add punctuating chords (the 'ba's under the solo vocal line). They sing in call and response with the soloist as well (e.g. 'anytime').

## The Song is in a Major Key

- 1) 'Killer Queen' is in E $\flat$  major — but verses 1 and 2 actually start on a C minor chord (the relative minor).
- 2) There is a mix of major and minor tonality throughout the piece because of a number of modulations.
- 3) The song is in  $\frac{12}{8}$  (compound quadruple time), but it changes to  $\frac{6}{8}$  (compound duple time) for one bar in each verse. The use of compound time gives it a swung feel.
- 4) It has a steady, rhythmic pulse, set up from the start by the opening clicks and continued by the rhythmic piano chords (playing a quaver on every beat of the bar at the start of the first two verses).

## Killer Queen Uses Different Effects

Layering has to be done in the studio — it couldn't be done in a live performance.

- 1) The song contains a lot of layering of both instruments and voices.

Layering means that one part is recorded onto another. If necessary, a third is recorded onto that, and so on until every part is recorded. This recording technique is called multi-tracking. Each part is recorded onto a different track and then played together. The separate tracks can then be altered in different ways to achieve the required sound.

- 2) Layering is used in the guitar solo — you can hear separate parts being played at the same time. This creates a 'bell effect' — notes are played one by one, and sustained to create a chord.
- 3) Layering is also used in the vocal parts (see above). Queen also famously used this technique in the vocal parts of 'Bohemian Rhapsody'.
- 4) Queen also use a flanger effect (see p.75) on the guitar and in the vocals (listen out for it when they sing 'laser beam' in the second chorus and 'wanna try' in the final bridge).
- 5) They also use the vocal technique of portamento (or glissando) — e.g. every time they sing 'Killer Queen'.
- 6) String-bending is used in the guitar solo — the pitch is changed by pushing the string across the fingerboard. Sliding is also used — the player moves between notes by sliding up or down the neck.

## GCSE Music — it'll absolutely drive you wild...

'Killer Queen' is a song (and a character) in the musical *WE WILL ROCK YOU*, based on the songs of Queen. There's more about musicals in Section 8 — including your study piece ('Defying Gravity' from *Wicked*).





## Wicked — Defying Gravity

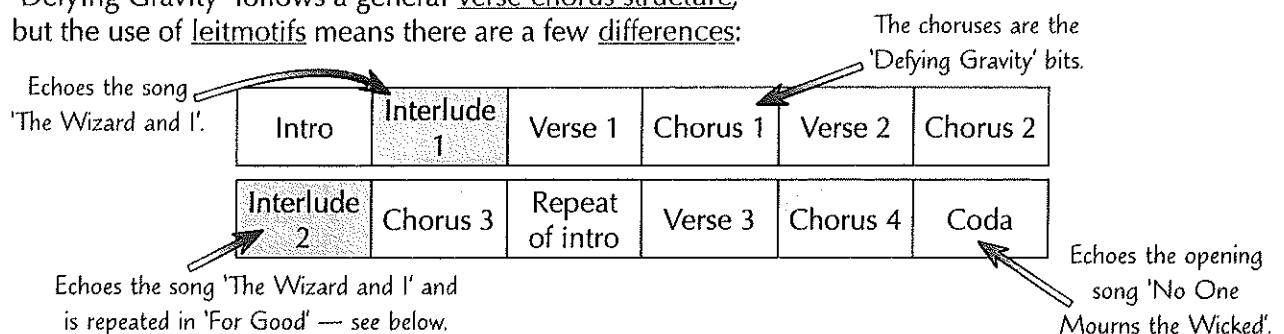
The musical *Wicked* tells the alternative story of the good and wicked witches from *The Wizard of Oz*.

### The Musical Was Written by Stephen Schwartz

- 1) The novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* was written by Gregory Maguire and published in 1995. Stephen Schwartz wrote the music and lyrics to adapt it into a musical, which premiered in 2003.
- 2) *Wicked* focuses on Elphaba (the Wicked Witch of the West) and Glinda (the Good). Despite their differences (and contrary to what you expect from *The Wizard of Oz*), they actually become friends. *Wicked* explores their relationship against the backdrop of the politics and corruption of Oz.
- 3) The song 'Defying Gravity' is the finale of the first act. Elphaba no longer wants to follow her dream of working with the Wizard of Oz, as she has just found out that he is plotting against his citizens. She is determined to fight the Wizard and Glinda tries to talk her out of it. Elphaba decides that she doesn't want to live by the rules and limits set by others anymore. The song comes to a climax in the final verse, where Elphaba casts a spell on a broomstick and flies above the stage.

### Schwartz uses Leitmotifs to Link the Songs Together

- 1) A leitmotif is a phrase or piece of music that represents a particular character, place or emotion. They're used a lot in film music (see p.124) but Schwartz uses them throughout *Wicked* — bits from other songs pop up in different places to link back to that part of the story (see below).
- 2) 'Defying Gravity' follows a general verse-chorus structure, but the use of leitmotifs means there are a few differences:



- 3) The accompaniment changes throughout the piece. Sometimes the same section is repeated with a different accompaniment — e.g. the intro section is repeated in the middle of the piece and again in the coda, but it has a completely different mood each time.

### The Song is Influenced by 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'

- 1) In 'Defying Gravity', the 'Unlimited' theme (Interlude 2) uses the first seven notes of the melody of 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow', a song written for the film *The Wizard of Oz*.
- 2) However, the two melodies sound completely different as they use different rhythms — 'Defying Gravity' uses some syncopation and a triplet, whereas 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' uses on-beat rhythms. They can be in different keys, but the intervals between the notes in each melody are the same (an octave leap between the first two notes, followed by a note one semitone down, and so on).
- 3) The theme appears as an interlude in several of the musical numbers — in 'The Wizard and I', Elphaba sings about her future being 'unlimited'. It is then used in 'Defying Gravity', and then again at the beginning of 'For Good' when Elphaba changes the lyric to 'I'm limited...'.
- 4) According to Schwartz, he included this as both a tribute to *The Wizard of Oz* and as an inside joke about copyright law — by using only 7 notes, he should be safe from any accusations of copying.

### Do some revision and you can be unlimited...

It's well worth having a listen to the whole *Wicked* soundtrack — it'll help you spot the leitmotifs used in 'Defying Gravity' and give you a better idea of how they're used. Plus, it's an excellent musical.

# Wicked — Defying Gravity



Now it's time to have a look at some of the other musical elements of 'Defying Gravity'.

## The Music Helps Convey the Meaning of the Lyrics

- 1) At the beginning of the piece, the lyrics are punctuated by chords. This emphasises Glinda's and Elphaba's frustration with each other.
- 2) In Elphaba's first verse, the metre is quite unclear — the orchestra will follow the singer at this point. This verse is accompanied by tremolo strings (see p.64). This reinforces the fact that Elphaba is feeling shaken — she has realised that the things she used to believe in are no longer true. Tremolo strings are also used at the end of the piece to add tension and drama.
- 3) As Elphaba sings 'close my eyes and leap', the melody also leaps (by a perfect fifth), reflecting the text. This is an example of word painting (see p.103). Another example of the music mimicking the lyrics is when the orchestra play ascending phrases as she sings 'look to the western sky'.
- 4) Almost all of the song is syllabic (one syllable per note — see p.103), and some parts of the choruses are disjunct (there are big jumps between notes). This makes the music feel more urgent.
- 5) As the song progresses, Elphaba holds the notes of the chorus for longer as she gains confidence in her actions. In verse 3 and chorus 4, the song reaches its climax and she sings in the higher register of her vocal range — this reflects the fact that she is flying (both literally and metaphorically).
- 6) The lyrics end as they start, with Glinda singing 'I hope you're happy'. However, these words are accompanied by dark minor chords, dramatic percussion and an echo of the song 'No One Mourns the Wicked' from the beginning of the show. This gives the audience an idea of what is to come — there are bad things on the horizon, and Elphaba probably won't be 'happy'.

## The Music is Very Dramatic

**HARMONY AND TONALITY:** The majority of the music is in D $\flat$  major with modulations to C $\flat$  major (the subdominant key) and unrelated keys including E major, B major and G major. This major tonality reinforces the fact that Elphaba is the heroine of the musical, even though she has been denounced as 'wicked'. The harmony uses suspended chords (chords with a second or fourth instead of a third) — the dissonance adds to the drama and hints that bad things are about to happen. Some chords only have the tonic and fifth (i.e. no thirds), which means that you can't tell if the chord is major or minor. This ambiguity reflects the fact that nothing is as it seems in Oz.

**RHYTHM AND METRE:** At the beginning, the time signature changes between  $\frac{3}{2}$  and  $\frac{2}{2}$  before settling into  $\frac{4}{4}$  (although it goes back into  $\frac{3}{2}$  when they sing 'I hope you're happy' for the second time). There are a variety of syncopated rhythms, and triplets are used in Glinda's part when she tells Elphaba she's having 'delusions of grandeur', which highlight their conflicting emotions. Ostinato patterns (see p.83) are used in the accompaniment in the choruses to add drama.

**TEXTURE:** The texture of the piece is mostly homophonic (see p.45) — the singers are accompanied by chords from the orchestra. Towards the end of the piece, there is polyphony between the lines sung by Elphaba, Glinda and the ensemble as the song reaches its dramatic conclusion.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** *Wicked* is written for a large pit orchestra. The music uses synthesizers, piano/keyboard, harp, guitar, bass guitar, brass (trumpets, trombones and French horns), strings (violins, viola and cello), woodwind (flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone and bassoon) and percussion. There is a big dramatic crescendo in the orchestra to lead into the final verse and chorus.

## Defying Gravity — don't try this at home...

Remember to always think about the effect of each musical feature you spot. It's good to be able to identify the different elements, but you'll get even more marks if you can say why the composer chose to use them.



## Star Wars: Episode IV — Main Title

OK, so the actual piece you have to study is the Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner from Star Wars: Episode IV — A New Hope by John Williams. However, that was far too long to fit in the title box sorry.

### John Williams Has Written Lots of Film Music

- 1) John Williams (born in 1932) is an American composer who has written music for a number of films. His film scores are some of the most recognisable ever written, and he has been nominated for (and won) many Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards and Grammy Awards for his music.
- 2) He frequently writes music for films directed by Steven Spielberg — including Jaws, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, the Indiana Jones films, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, Jurassic Park, Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan.
- 3) He also wrote music for all the Star Wars films (so far), Superman and the first three Harry Potter films (including the most famous bit, 'Hedwig's Theme').
- 4) The wide variety of films he writes for shows his versatility as a composer. He can write for dramatic action films (e.g. Indiana Jones), tense thrillers (Jaws), sci-fi films (E.T.), war films (Saving Private Ryan) and many more. The main theme for Schindler's List is beautiful and sad, and suits the film perfectly.
- 5) Williams is well-known for his use of leitmotifs (see p.124) — he uses them throughout his film scores to great effect. His music is frequently written for a large orchestra.

### Star Wars: Episode IV Was Released in 1977

- 1) Episode IV was actually the first Star Wars film to be made (although it wasn't called Episode IV until later). Episodes IV-VI were released between 1977 and 1983, followed by a prequel trilogy (episodes I-III) from 1999-2005. There's a third trilogy being made — Episode VII was released at the end of 2015.
- 2) The epic saga is a combination of sci-fi and fantasy (it's sometimes described as a 'space opera'). The films tell the story of the Rebel Alliance's battle against the evil Galactic Empire. In Episode IV, you meet Luke Skywalker and follow his journey as he learns about 'the Force' and becomes part of the Rebel Alliance.
- 3) Your set piece (Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner) is played over the opening credits of the film. The music accompanies scrolling text that sets the scene and explains what's happening. The rebel blockade runner is Princess Leia's spaceship, which you see after the credits have finished.

### Williams Uses Leitmotifs

Remember from p.124 that a leitmotif is a phrase of music that represents a particular character or place. It's a compositional technique that was used a lot in the Romantic period (see p.93) — Richard Wagner used it in his operas and Richard Strauss used it in many of his compositions, such as the opera Salome. A strong leitmotif for a character is important so that the listener can recognise it straight away.

- 1) The music of Star Wars uses many different leitmotifs throughout the whole soundtrack.
- 2) Characters such as Darth Vader and Princess Leia have their own leitmotifs, and 'the Force' has a leitmotif too.
- 3) This main theme represents the heroic, adventurous nature of the film. This is reflected by leaps of perfect 4ths, perfect 5ths and minor 7ths as well as soaring high notes.

### Form your own Rebel Alliance to protest about younger siblings...

If you've got some free time, sit down and watch some of the Star Wars films (I know there are a lot — you don't have to watch them all). Listen out for the leitmotifs and think about what effect they have. You could even pick a leitmotif and try and work out why it's appropriate for the character or place it represents.

# Star Wars: Episode IV — Main Title



Now you know all about *Star Wars* (what, you need more than a 2-sentence plot summary?), it's time to have a look at some of the musical features of the piece in a bit more detail.

## Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner Starts With a Fanfare

- 1) The piece starts in a steady  $\frac{4}{4}$  (marked 'maestoso', which means 'majestically') with a fanfare played by the brass and percussion. This grabs the audience's attention and establishes an optimistic, ceremonial feel — perfect for a film called 'A New Hope'. It is used to build excitement before the main theme begins and accompanies the words 'Star Wars' as they appear on screen.
- 2) The fanfare is loud — the first note is marked sfz (sforzando — strongly accented) and the rest of the fanfare is marcato ('marked', or accented). This makes it sound strong and powerful.
- 3) The rhythm of the fanfare is mainly triplets — they make the music sound energetic, even though the tempo is quite stately. It often moves in steps of perfect 4ths and 5ths, which sound heroic.
- 4) The trombones and trumpets play in canon for some of the fanfare (see p.46) — the trombones start, then the trumpets echo them one beat later. This gives the opening a polyphonic texture — it contrasts with the main theme, which is homophonic. In the final beat of the fanfare, the music slows down slightly and the brass play in unison to emphasise the start of the main theme.

## The Main Theme is a March

- 1) After the opening fanfare, the time signature changes to  $\frac{2}{2}$  but the beat stays the same — it just changes from 4 beats in a bar to 2 beats in a bar. It has a regular pulse and the accents are usually on the first beat of the bar, which are key features of a march.
- 2) This section is in ternary form (see p.81) — there's the main theme dominated by the brass instruments, a gentler string section, then the main theme returns again.
- 3) The trumpets play the main theme, accompanied by driving triplets in the lower brass, strings and percussion (although most of the orchestra plays the same rhythm in rich chords at the end of the first phrase). The woodwind and violins play soaring high notes which give the impression of flying through space. Later in the theme, they play rapid semiquavers, which gives the piece momentum.
- 4) In the middle section, the strings play the melody in unison, accompanied by woodwind triplets. In contrast to the brass melody, the strings play a mainly conjunct tune (though there are some leaps too).
- 5) The overall texture is homophonic — the main trumpet/string melody is accompanied by the rest of the orchestra. The size of the orchestra means that the texture is very thick, and the music is loud.
- 6) The music is in a major key, which is common for a march (though you can get some marches in minor keys). This sounds bright and optimistic, which emphasises the 'hope' of the title of the film.
- 7) This section of the music accompanies the scrolling text (see previous page).

## There's a Slower, Quieter Bit Then a Final Climax

- 1) As the scrolling text disappears, the music slows down and diminuendos as the screen goes black.
- 2) However, this moment of peace only lasts for a few seconds — as a pair of moons above a planet come into view, the music builds up again with a dramatic crescendo and booming percussion.
- 3) Low, minor chords with a driving triplet rhythm accompany two spaceships that come on screen, locked in battle. The music is tense — it slows down considerably and builds in intensity as the huge Imperial spaceship fills the screen. You then hear the leitmotif that represents the Empire in pursuit.
- 4) As the piece finishes, there are long, low, ominous-sounding notes — a sign of things to come.

I hope this page has given you A New Hope for your exam...

The title music is actually used in all of the *Star Wars* films, which makes it even more recognisable. However, in the other films, the second part of the music (the 'Rebel Blockade Runner' bit) is different.



## Afro Celt Sound System — Release

'Release' is from the album *Volume 2: Release* by Afro Celt Sound System. There are a couple of recordings of this song — I'm going to talk about the album version, which is over 7 minutes long.

### Afro Celt Sound System Fuse African and Irish Music

- 1) Afro Celt Sound System was formed in 1995 by three producers (Simon Emmerson, James McNally and Martin Russell) and vocalist Iarla O'Lionaird. The band also has a number of African and Irish musicians, as well as guest musicians (such as Sinéad O'Connor, who helped write 'Release').
- 2) They wanted to explore the connections between African and Irish music after Emmerson noticed similarities between traditional music from each place.
- 3) To create their unique sound, the band combines the following elements:
  - traditional Irish and African musical styles (e.g. an Irish air with an African drumbeat)
  - a mixture of Irish and African instruments (e.g. a tin whistle and a djembe drum)
  - an electronic dance beat to tie the music together
- 4) The song 'Release' was written to help the band cope with the tragic death of their keyboard player, Jo Bruce, who died in 1997. The lyrics (written by Sinéad O'Connor) reflect this.
- 5) 'Release' has a simple, mournful melody sung above a driving rhythm played on a combination of African and Irish percussion.

There are more details on these elements below.

### The Band Use African, Irish and Electric Instruments

'Release' uses a combination of the following instruments:

#### IRISH/CELTIC INSTRUMENTS

- Celtic harp
- Uilleann pipes (Irish bagpipes)
- Hurdy-gurdy (a string instrument with a keyboard)
- Bodhrán (a framed drum)
- Tin whistle and flute

#### ELECTRIC INSTRUMENTS

- Electric guitar
- Bass guitar
- Keyboard

#### AFRICAN INSTRUMENTS

- Djembe (a type of drum)
- Talking drum
- Kora (a string instrument)
- Balafon (a wooden xylophone)

See p.136-137 for more on these instruments.

#### VOCALISTS

- Female vocalist (Sinéad O'Connor, who sings in English)
- Male vocalist (Iarla O'Lionaird, who sings in Gaelic)
- African chanting

### The Song Has a Strophic Structure

- 1) 'Release' is strophic, so each verse uses the same melody (although there are some slight variations in later verses, such as extending the length of the notes — see next page). There are no choruses.
- 2) There is a long introduction before the verses start, and short instrumental links between the verses. There are also two instrumental solos, which provide contrast and variation. The song ends with an instrumental outro that fades out. There's more detail on this on the next page.

### My sound system consists of a cassette player and some tapes...

The term 'sound system' originated in 1950s Jamaica. DJs would load their sound equipment on the back of a truck and host street parties. The performance was a combination of live and recorded music.



# Afro Celt Sound System — Release



'Release' uses elements from traditional Irish and African music, and fuses them together to create a new sound. This page looks at these elements in a bit more detail.

## The Rhythm of 'Release' is Syncopated

The key features of 'Release' are:

- 1) **MELODY** The melody is based on a C minor pentatonic scale (see p.27). The vocal melody is quite simple — most of the tune repeats the same 2-bar phrase, which is conjunct and has a fairly small range (from the C above middle C to the B $\flat$  below).
- 2) **RHYTHM** The underlying pulse uses djembe drums and a bodhrán, and plays the same repeated rhythm throughout most of the piece. The other percussion instruments add to the rhythmic texture. Most of the drum parts are syncopated.
- 3) **TEXTURE** The texture is mostly homophonic, with instruments accompanying the simple sung melody. There is also a drone that is played through most of the piece. As it progresses, more instruments are added to the accompaniment. Some countermelodies come in during the instrumentals, making the texture richer and more polyphonic.
- 4) **TIMBRE** A variety of different timbres are used in the piece, created by instruments from the Celtic and African musical traditions, as well as some electronic instruments. The background drone also changes the timbre. See p.74 for more on timbre.
- 5) **TIME SIGNATURE & TEMPO** 'Release' is in a steady  $\frac{4}{4}$  all the way through. Although it is dance music, the piece moves at a fairly moderate speed of about 100 beats per minute.
- 6) **DYNAMICS** The piece begins quietly with a long introduction featuring just a few instruments. When the female vocalist comes in, she sings softly. Gradually more instruments are added (creating a natural crescendo) and the vocals get louder.

## Different Things Happen in Each Section

- 1) **INTRODUCTION** — there is a drone on the synthesiser, ad lib drum sounds and African chanting. The main drum rhythm enters and plays the riff above before the vocals begin. The intro is quite long.
- 2) **VERSE** — the female vocalist sings the main melody based on the opening phrase. The bass guitar begins to play a riff, and a flourish on the flute is heard. The music gets a bit louder.
- 3) **LINK** — instrumental link with another flute flourish.
- 4) **VERSE** — the male vocalist sings a similar melody in Gaelic. He repeats the final line three times, extending the notes.
- 5) **INSTRUMENTAL** — the Uilleann pipes improvise around the melody, and the tin whistle and flute are added. The djembe and bodhrán accompany, and the male vocalist comes back in.
- 6) **VERSE** — the female vocalist sings the last part of her verse in English, above the Uilleann pipes (this creates polyphony). The male vocalist repeats the last line three times in Gaelic, as he did before.
- 7) **LINK** — there is another instrumental link, with an ostinato played on the Celtic harp and balafon.
- 8) **INSTRUMENTAL** — the melody is played on the hurdy-gurdy with the female vocalist singing open vowel sounds above it.
- 9) **VERSE** — the female vocalist sings the last four lines of the verse again.
- 10) **OUTRO** — the ostinato pattern is played on the Celtic harp and balafon as the music fades out.

### Please release me from GCSE Music...

Make sure you can identify the elements that come from the different styles of music that have been fused together — you'll probably be asked about them in the exam (the Area of Study is called 'fusions' after all).



## Esperanza Spalding — Samba Em Preludio

'Samba Em Preludio' is the final track from the album *Esperanza*, released by Esperanza Spalding in 2008.

### Esperanza Spalding is an American Jazz Musician

- 1) Esperanza Spalding is a bassist — she plays acoustic and electric bass guitar, and double bass.
- 2) She is also a singer and songwriter, writing in English, Spanish and Portuguese.
- 3) She is best known as a jazz musician — she draws on international influences to create many different jazz styles, in particular Latin jazz, Cuban jazz and jazz fusion.
- 4) Spalding's version of Samba Em Preludio mixes elements of jazz and Latin American music, especially samba.


### 'Samba Em Preludio' is in Binary Form

- 1) 'Samba Em Preludio' is made up of 4 verses, sung in Portuguese. The lyrics express someone pinning for a lost love and begging for them to come back.
- 2) The piece has two distinct sections. Verses 1 and 2 make up the first section, and verses 3 and 4 make up the second section. Each section has its own unique features:

#### INTRO

The piece opens with an ad lib (improvised) solo on the bass guitar, featuring chords, arpeggios and harmonics — a technique used to make the string vibrate to produce a high, ringing note.

#### VERSES 1 and 2

- Spalding sings the first two verses quietly, slowly and in a free rhythm. She sings legato and in a low vocal range (or tessitura), accompanying herself on bass guitar.
- The melody is in B minor and is based on 7th chords in a descending sequence. The chords are broken — the notes are played one at a time, in a triplet rhythm.
- A 7th chord is a triad with a 7th note added — this gives quite a jazzy feel to these verses.
- The first and fourth chords of the verse are shown here:  To get from the first to the fourth, Spalding moves each note down stepwise.
- The first and fourth chords are the same — they're both a G major triad with a major 7th. The first chord is in first inversion, and the fourth chord is in root position.

#### VERSES 3 and 4

- A guitarist now joins in. The melody changes — it has a steady tempo and syncopated rhythm.
- The guitarist then plays a solo over the bass guitar and gentle guitar chords. The two guitar lines use layering — when performed live it won't sound quite the same as the album version. After the solo, verses 3 and 4 are repeated, while the bass guitar repeats the triplets from verses 1 and 2.

#### OUTRO

The last line of verse 4 is repeated 3 times — the piece then finishes with flourishes on both guitars.

### Desculpe, não falo português...


You don't need to speak Portuguese to tell that this is a sad piece of music. The minor key and low vocal range create a melancholy mood, and the long, drawn-out notes in verses 3 and 4 almost sound like crying.

## Esperanza Spalding — Samba Em Preludio

SET  
PIECE

'Samba Em Preludio' was written by two Brazilian musicians. Esperanza Spalding then took this music and added in her own jazz elements.

### 'Samba Em Preludio' means 'Samba in the Style of a Prelude'

- 1) The music for 'Samba Em Preludio' was composed by Brazilian guitarist Baden Powell, with lyrics by Vinicius de Moraes.
- 2) When de Moraes first heard the tune, it reminded him of Chopin's piano preludes. There are some similarities in style:
  - Chopin's preludes explore a particular mood.
  - They often have an improvised feel.
  - They can build on two (or more) different melodic ideas.
- 3) Samba is an up-tempo dance from Brazil that typically uses a syncopated rhythm (see p.110). 'Samba Em Preludio' is not up-tempo, but it does have samba rhythms in verses 3 and 4:
 
- 4) The dynamics of 'Samba Em Preludio' are very different to typical samba dynamics. Samba is carnival music, so it has to be loud. 'Samba Em Preludio' begins quietly with Spalding singing softly, accompanied by bass guitar. The dynamics stay quiet throughout the song.

### Latin American and Jazz Elements are Mixed Together

There are loads of different elements and ideas in 'Samba Em Preludio' that are taken from both Latin American music and jazz.

#### RHYTHM & TEMPO

In verses 1 and 2, the rhythm is free flowing, which is common in jazz. It then adopts a steady pulsing samba rhythm in verses 3 and 4. It is much slower than a typical samba piece, so it keeps the jazzy feel during this section.

#### INSTRUMENTS

- Guitars are often used in Latin American music, especially the nylon-stringed guitar that can be heard in this piece. Bass guitars are used in both jazz and Latin American music.
- Both instruments have a solo section, which again is a common feature of jazz. The piece opens with the bass guitar improvising. The nylon-stringed guitar has a long solo section in the middle of the piece, played in a Latin American style — techniques such as tremolo picking and fast arpeggios are used.

#### TEXTURE

The texture is polyphonic with vocal and instrument lines moving independently — the vocals and the bass guitar create an obvious contrapuntal texture. This is heard a lot in jazz and Latin American music. It is quite a light texture, as there are only two instruments in the first two verses. At verse 3 the guitar joins in to create a slightly denser texture.

#### HARMONY

Spalding sometimes sings notes that clash with the underlying chords, which creates dissonance. She also uses 7th chords. These are both common features of jazz.

### Salmon Em Preludio — my favourite Brazilian fish dish...

You could also argue that it has Baroque influences — there's counterpoint, it starts like a recitative, the first preludes were Baroque. Classical music still has many musical fingers in many musical pies...