Music two

Moving on with Composition

Level HE5 - 60 CATS

Open College of the Arts

Michael Young Arts Centre

Redbrook Business Park

Wilthorpe Road

Barnsley S75 1JN

Telephone: 0800 731 2116

E-mail: enquiries@oca-uk.com

www.weareoca.com

www.oca-uk.com

This course was written and illustrated by Patric Standford.

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Cover image: *A still life with musical instruments,* Ferdinand Wagner 1927

Contents

Times suggested here are only a guideline: you may want to spend a lot more. Research and writing time, time for listening, reflecting and logging your learning are included.

Approximate time in hours

Before you start

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Welcome to *Music 2 Moving on with Composition*. Your OCA *student handbook* should be able to answer most questions about this and all other OCA courses, so keep it to hand as you work through this course.

Course overview

Music 2 Moving on with Composition develops the craft of composing with a series of projects designed to focus on specific challenges in musical composition. First you will put some harmonic processes to the test, and try out imaginative re-working of harmonic outlines based on the work of well-known composers. You'll then apply these harmonic explorations to support vocal lines, from folk origins and from your own original word setting. Voices performing together in small groups or as a choir might provide an opportunity for you to find performers for the pieces you write within your local community, or perhaps in a choir or vocal ensemble with which you perform.

You'll study string and later brass instruments as an adjunct to the wind instruments explored in the Music 1 Composing Music projects. Over a series of projects you'll put these instrument together in various small groupings and eventually in the conventional small orchestra, all designed to provoke your imagination and ingenuity – both essentials in the development of the composer's craftsmanship.

Distinguished composers of the past have confined themselves to just a few media, or perhaps even just one. Chopin didn't write symphonies, nor Brahms opera, nor Wagner string quartets, because these composers devoted themselves to what they did best. They were all prolific, but did not do everything. This course aims for breadth and completeness but it also recognises that you are on a journey to developing your own special interest. You may want to compose for choirs, folk groups, guitar, jazz orchestras or community opera groups, or something completely different, but to get there, it is first necessary for any composer to be aware of how processes work and what performers can do. In Music 2 Moving on with Composition you'll explore techniques, idioms and styles over the broadest field so that your eventual choices are made from useful experience. This is a vital precursor to more ambitious and perhaps professional work, providing a good foundation from which your confidence can flourish.

Course aims

The course aims to help you:

- understand and use complex rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas in your own compositions

- understand and use various accompaniment styles and contrapuntal techniques

- broaden your understanding of composition and scoring choral music, understand the techniques of composing for orchestral instruments

- learn about the evolution of styles of music, and reflect critically on this in your learning.

Learning outcomes

By the time you've completed this course, you'll be able to:

- demonstrate complex rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas by using them in your own compositions using various accompaniment styles and contrapuntal techniques

- demonstrate an understanding of the ranges and techniques of composing for orchestral instruments,

- compose pieces for orchestra analysing and drawing inspiration from the scores and performances of the works of other composers

- demonstrate an extended knowledge of the evolution and styles of music in a critical review and reflect this in your compositions.

The critical review accounts for 10% of your final mark if you decide to have your work on this course formally assessed.

Even if you do not intend to submit for assessment, it is useful to take ownership of these outcomes to aid your learning and use them as a means of self assessment. You can check your progress against the learning outcomes in your learning log, when you review your progress against each assignment.

Your tutor

Your tutor is your main point of contact with OCA. Before you start work, make sure that you're clear about your tuition arrangements. The OCA system is explained in some detail in your *Student handbook.*

If you haven't already done so, please write a paragraph or two about your experience to date. Add background information about anything that you think may be relevant for your tutor to know about you (your profile) – for example your experience of writing so far, your reasons for starting this course and what you hope to achieve from it.

Email or post your profile to your tutor as soon as possible. This will help him or her to understand how best to support you during the course. Arrange with your tutor how you'll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This will usually be by email or phone.

It will be helpful for your tutor to see some of the work that you produce in between assignments. For example, you could attach files or scanned pages of your project or exercise work, and your learning log, and email them to your tutor. Or you could post your learning log as an online blog in the OCA website so that your tutor can see how your work is developing. It's particularly important that your tutor sees regular evidence of your development if you're planning to have your work on this course formally assessed.

Make sure that you label any work that you send to your tutor with your name, student number and the assignment number. Your tutor will get back to you as soon as possible after receiving your assignment but this may take a little time. Continue with the course while you're waiting.

Formal assessment

Read the section on assessment in your *student handbook* at an early stage in the course. Your *assessment and how to get qualified* study guide gives more detailed information about assessment and accreditation. For assessment you'll need to submit a cross-section of the work you've done on the course:

- the five assignments, which may be in revised form, selected by you and agreed with your tutor

- related projects and sketches to each submitted assignment and its original version (if revised)

- your learning log (to include listening, reading and research) and any other relevant papers

- a 2,000 word critical review on a composer or compositional technique.

Only work done during the course should be submitted to your tutor or for formal assessment.

Keeping a learning log

Your learning log is an integral part of this and every other OCA course. For music courses, the learning log will also be log of your listening, reading and research. If you're new to OCA courses, read your *keeping sketchbooks and learning logs* study guide for further information.

It is vitally important for music composition to have a solid experience of music through its major developments: from Medieval music, through the Renaissance and the Baroque, during which opera and church music rose to a peak in the 17th century, to the repertoires of the Classical, Romantic and Modern period. There is so much to hear, and so much that can be learnt from listening to music and when possible following a copy of the musical score. Make use of the listening lists and bear in mind this is only a small selection of the huge range available to explore on the internet and in music libraries.

Spotify

You will need access to Spotify, a free music streaming service available to Microsoft and Mac users, providing a huge range of music by arrangement with leading world record labels. You first need to download the free Spotify software from the Spotify website, then you can search for the suggested listening pieces and either listen to the whole piece or short extracts.

Almost all the suggested listening pieces are available on Spotify. Alternatively, you may be able to buy some pieces quite cheaply from Amazon or Itunes, or borrow them from a music library.

Petrucci Music Library

You can download many scores in the public domain from the Petrucci Music Library website. Follow the scores of the pieces you choose to listen to whenever you can.

Your listening should include both recorded music and live performances, and you should actively seek out music that is unfamiliar to you – whether or not the experience results in you *liking* what you hear! The purpose is to know what is out there, to have knowledge of the wider context in which you are creating music, to consider how your work may be influenced by and link to the work of other composers, and to be aware of how experienced audiences will hear your own work and what they will compare it to. Make detailed comments as you are listening, because you may forget your initial reactions – when later you come to the same piece again you may discover your reactions are quite changed. Your own commentaries on heard experiences will help both you and your tutor see how you are progressing with your learning.

After any session of listening or concert visit, make a note of page number or index words that you may want to use for future reference.

Reading about the history of music and the development of musical techniques over time will deepen your appreciation of music from other periods, and its influences on contemporary composers. Use the recommended reading and resources listed on the OCA student site oca-student.com. Always read articles and books with a note pad available so you can jot useful ideas as you go; it's often hard to go back to find a choice phrase, comment or paragraph if you don't note it down at the time.

Use your learning and listening log to record your progress through the course. Your log should contain:

- your notes on the projects, exercises and assignments (i.e. your reasoning behind your approach to this work)

- details of your further reading and research (on music history, theory, techniques, composers, etc.) – make notes on any books, encyclopaedias, journal articles, or websites that you refer to

- ideas for composition projects and any other compositions that you work on during the course – these provide evidence of your creativity, even if you decide not to use them for project or assignment work

- full details of all your listening, including concerts, recordings, programmes, and your reactions to and reflections on the pieces that you hear

- your tutor's reports on assignments and your reactions to these.

Keep your learning and listening log up to date and in good order. You'll need to send extracts from your log to your tutor as part of your course work, and if you choose formal assessment, your learning log will be reviewed as part of the assessment process. Carefully documented research notes and reflections will be invaluable to you during your preparations for your critical review.

Music theory

For *Music 2 Moving on with Composition* you need a basic grounding in music theory. The *AB Guide to Music Theory Part 2* by Eric Taylor, published by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music provides essential theory for the course. It is designed to prepare the student's vocal or instrumental performance through Grades 6, 7 and 8 of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, and prepares for the instrumental Diploma examination that follows.

As well as an essential guide for performers it's also an important support to composers. Being familiar with the practical issues discussed by Taylor in Part 2 will ensure you fully understand the needs of the musicians who will eventually play your music.

The relevant chapters are flagged up at the start of each part of the course, and you should read and revise this material before starting each group of projects. If you are not familiar with the theory in the AB Guide Part 2, take time to get to grips with it thoroughly before you start the course. Discuss this with your tutor if you need more information.

You should already be familiar with Part 1 of *Taylor's guide* or an equivalent guide to music theory; Part 2 continues from Part 1, starting at Chapter 14.

Notation software

You will need a music software package so that you can write and listen to your own work and email your software files to your tutor, who can also send you back suggested revisions.

You will need *Sibelius* to access the notation files that are provided with this course on CD. This is the best and most widely used professional and student programme. It is available for either PCs or Macs.

Sibelius may be expensive but it's worth the investment if you aim to continue composing. Other packages include:

- Score Writer
- Finale
- Allegro
- Noteworthy Composer
- Overture and Cakewalk

New software comes on the market all the time, so do some research on the web and find out more about which package is likely to suit you best. There are also free notation programmes that you can download from the internet. Also ask your tutor for advice and make sure that your software is compatible with theirs.

Planning ahead

This Level 2 course represents 600 hours of learning time. Allow around 20% of this time for reflection and development of your learning, listening and research log. The course should take about 12 months to complete if you spend around 12 hours each week on it.

As with all OCA courses, these course materials are intended to be used flexibly. Do keep your tutor fully informed about your progress. You'll need to allow extra time if you decide to have your work formally assessed.

Music 2 Moving on with Composition is divided into five parts, corresponding to the five course assignments. Each part of the course addresses a different issue or topic and is separated into projects designed to tackle the topic in bite-sized chunks. As well as information and advice, each project offers exercises to develop your composing. The exercises slowly build up and feed into the assignments that you'll send to your tutor.

From the beginning of the course, you should regularly collect research material and make notes in your learning log to help you understand your own work in relation to that of other composers. This process will also help you decide on a suitable subject for the written element which you'll submit as part of Assignment Five.

There's more information about this towards the end of Part Four; take some time to read this now. You might also find it helpful to quickly skim through the course now to look for potential ideas. Start to put together some ideas for your critical review as soon as possible and send your proposal(s) to your tutor by the mid-point of the course at the latest.

Managing your time

Each part of the course should take on average 120 hours to complete, including time for listening, reading and reflection as well as practical work. You'll need to decide how to divide this time in a way that works effectively for you.

The time you spend on each part of the course will depend on how quickly you work, the time available to you, how easy or hard you find each exercise, and how quickly you want to complete the course. Don't worry if you take more or less time than suggested provided that you're not getting too bogged down in a particular part of the course and that your tutor is happy with the work you're producing. If it helps, draft a rough study plan and revisit this at the end of each part. The course structure is intended to be flexible, but it's always useful to bear deadlines in mind.

Reading

You'll find a suggested further reading list on the OCA student website.

Referencing your reading

Whenever you read something that you might want to refer to in your projects and assignments, get into the habit of taking down the full reference to the book, article, website or piece of music straight away. You must fully reference any other work that you draw on if you plan to go for formal assessment. To do this you should use the Harvard system of referencing – there is a guide to referencing using the Harvard system on the OCA website. Getting down the full reference at the time will save you the frustration of having to hunt for the details of a half-remembered reference long after the event – and ensure that you don't inadvertently plagiarise someone else's work.

Assessment criteria

Here are the assessment criteria for this course. These are central to the assessment process for this course, so if you are going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, please make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of each criterion. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria - in other words - do a self assessment, and see how you think you would do. Notes down your findings of each assignment you've completed in your learning log, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

Assessment criteria points

- **Technical presentation**. Clarity of scores and orderly presentation; good command of appropriate software; accuracy of notation; understanding and application of graphic publishing conventions.

- **Compositional skills**. Evidence of craftsmanship in manipulating material; structural cohesion; exploration of ideas; appropriate and correct use of performance resources.

- **Creativity.** Exploration and inventiveness toward developing an individual voice; original ideas and experimental adventurousness.

- **Stylistic awareness.** Evidence of listening and reading, research, critical thinking and reflection; development of responses to exploratory enquiry and analysis.

Music 2

Part one
Harmony with words

Cafe singer, Edgar Degas 1879

Introduction

For Part One, you will need to be familiar with the theory covered in these Chapters of *The AB Guide to Music Theory – Part 2* by Eric Taylor:

15: Non-harmony notes

16: More about tonal harmony

17: Chromatic chords

More about harmony in circles

The fundamental progress of more traditional harmonic events tend to move in circles and it's useful for the composer to be aware of them.

Most listeners recognise the expected course of harmonic progressions, even if they are not technically equipped to explain why. They may not even be interested in the explanation. That is their privilege. It is the composer who should know how to plot the route. The listener should be able to follow with delight, feeling confident that the composer's invention sounds right – even if it takes a little time to warm to a fresh musical personality.

Below is a chord progression circle and brief explanatory summary of this progression. (This was covered in Level 1.)
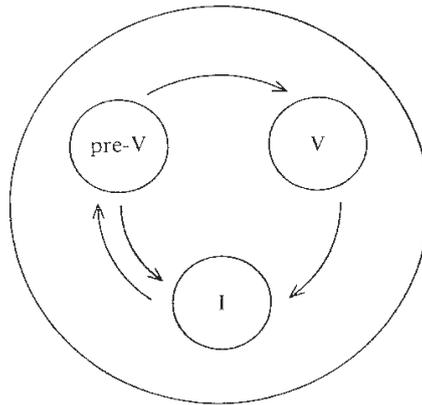
The **pre-V** chords are most frequently **IV** (the triad built on the 4th scale degree) or **II** (that on the 2nd degree), less often **III** – though effective used sparingly.

These chords lead to **V** which is frequently fortified with a 7th **(V^7)**, 9th **(V^9)**, 11th **(V^{11})** or 13th **(V^{13})**, all of which serve the dominant function. A triad built on the 7th degree of the scale **(VII)** is, in fact the upper three notes of the dominant 7th – so it too might just qualify for membership of the **V** group.

Chord **V** then wants to move to **I** - although **VI^7** can easily substitute for **I**. This is a useful substitution as it serves to 'interrupt' or delay the cyclic movement of the chords which is then obliged to continue around the circle, entering again the **pre-V** group to join again the harmonic roundabout. **VI^7** is occasionally used to replace (or embellish) **I** at the end of a piece – in 1st inversion it is the jazzy 'added 6th' chord.

The circular diagram shows a 'backward' flow from one of the **pre-V** group; when it is felt appropriate, chord **IV** can move directly back to **I**, forming a Plagal cadence - often called the Amen cadence – a more sedate but just as final a resting place at the end of a piece (this was the basis of the final assignment at Level 1).

Experimenting

We may now subject this resource of chords to some colourful experiments.

If we build triads on each degree of the diatonic major scale using only the notes of that scale, there will be three major triads, three minor, and one diminished. The minor triads can all be changed to major by raising their 3rds a semitone. This note might then take on the role of a 'leading note' and want to rise a further semitone to become the root of the next chord. If a 7th has been added to the triad, then the function is like that of a 'dominant' 7th, but as it is not in the home key it would be called a 'secondary' 7th. The home key's dominant 7th does not have to have its authority undermined – unless the composer intends to use the secondary 7th as a means of subverting that authority! These alterations can be very colourful.

Example 1

The major triads **I, IV** and **V** can all be given minor 3^{rds}. Perhaps **IV** is the most successfully adaptable to minor (in major keys) and major (in minor keys). Altering **I** is a challenge to the home key itself, and the flattened 3rd of **V** takes away its dominance and might be used to move the key, maybe to **IV** as a new home key – stronger if adding the new dominant below the triad.

And remember the usefulness of first inversions of the chords to provide a wider choice of bass notes (Example 2).

Example 2

A 7th placed above any of the triads can be either minor (the combination of major triad and minor 7th is the dominant formula), or major which is an attractive jazzy colour. Using successions of 7ths is attractive, but the challenge is to make them sound fresh. This device (as in Example 3) can be overused!

Example 3

Project 1: **Colouring harmony**

The movement of melodic lines, whether prominently above the texture or discreetly hidden within it, is described as being either in similar or contrary motion. It is often very effective to create a contrary motion, especially between a bass line and the rest of the voices. The movement of notes step by step in a melody is conjunct motion; leaping around between notes is disjunct motion. Parallel motion is when two or more parts keep the same intervals between them and move together.

For this project, your task is to compose a group of four contrasting short episodes that explore colourful ways of moving around the circle of **pre-V**, **V** and **I** chords. Note that many of the chromatically altered notes move only a short distance to their next resting place. 'Conjunct motion' of the lines is preferable when richer chromatic movement is employed.

Another way of exploring harmony is to borrow the skeleton of another composer's work. Reducing a short piece you know well (or one you would like to know better) to its basic harmonic framework allows you to discover more about how harmony is used in the hands of an imaginative composer. It may be that the harmony is quite ingenious; it may also be that the underlying framework is surprisingly simple, but has been used to underpin a series of very inventive and appealing melodic or contrapuntal ideas.

For instance, this simple little minuet from Bach's *Anna Magdalena Notebook:*

Example 4

can be reduced to this harmonic skeleton:

Example 5
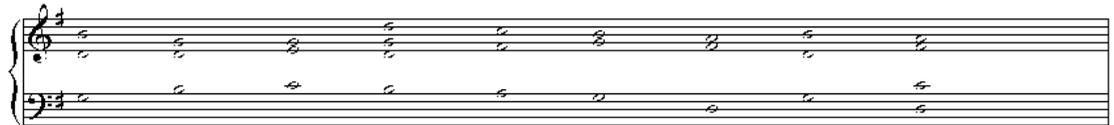
With a change of costume and hair-style (tempo, key and time-signature) and some gentle cosmetic uplift to update its personality, a quite different little piano piece could emerge:

Example 6

In this context, listen to the inspired extemporizations on Bach by Jacques Loussier and more recently the clever elaborations of music by Purcell, Grieg, Fauré and Ravel by the David Rees-Williams Trio.

As a musical youth unable to afford lessons, Elgar taught himself most from the books in his father's music shop. In order to learn about classical symphonic form, he reduced the first movement of Mozart's *Symphony No 40* in G minor to a harmonic outline and built from it his own his own symphonic movement. Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* deliberately follows the classical format quite strictly, although he is being more adventurous harmonically than any of his models.

Project 2: **Reviving skeletons**

The fourth concerto in Vivaldi's Four Seasons is a picture of Winter. Its first 8 bars can be represented with this progression of chords:

Example 7

For this project, there are two tasks. First, create your own transformation of this harmonic progression into something quite new and far from Vivaldi. Be as liberal as you like.

Second, find and transform a piece of your own choice in a similar way. You only need 12 or 16 bars – although if inspiration should carry you along further, do follow it!

You may have several ideas of your own, but if suggestions are needed the following may be helpful:

- Schubert: *Impromptus Op 142 Nos 2 and 3*

- Elgar: *Salut d'amour*

- Eric Coates: *By the sleepy lagoon*

- George Gershwin: *Summertime*

- Irving Berlin: *Say it with music*

You can download some of these scores from the Petrucci Music Library website, or a good music library may have piano copies.

Project 3: **Accompaniments**

At the turn of the last century, there was great enthusiasm for folk-song and collectors in many parts of Europe set out to discover the simple and hidden delights of their national heritage. These songs were usually sung unaccompanied but enthusiastic collectors who wished to bring these folksongs into the drawing room recital chose to give them the respectability of piano accompaniments. These were not always appropriate. It took time to realise that the songs did not always fall into regular patterns of time or key.

The accepted major and minor key system was not always suitable for modal melodies. But at best, piano accompaniments allowed many trained singers and their audiences to enjoy a traditional musical heritage.

The best accompaniments acknowledge the simplicity of the original songs. A preliminary plan should give a few chords to provide a suitable support for the melody, as in Example 8.

Example 8

That may well be enough for a soloist or a children's singing group. The beginnings of a piano accompaniment could remain quite simple. Adding a regular rhythmic pattern that works as a counterbalance (or counterpoint) to the tune's own regular phrasing can be an attractive feature:

Example 9

A brief introduction might also be invented – both to anticipate the melody and discreetly help the singer by establishing the key:

Example 10

Arrangers and composers enjoyed applying more elaborate additions in the style of art-songs. The introduction could anticipate a prominent feature of the accompaniment's rhythmic pattern, as in Example 11:

Example 11

But care should be taken not to allow the accompaniment to dominate - accompaniments should know their place!

Setting an accompaniment 'pattern' in place is often preferable to allowing it simply to wander aimlessly around the harmonic skeleton or framework you have decided upon – not necessarily a rigid pattern, but one that maintains an overall consistency.

It is accompanying, supporting – not trying to take over from the song. Folk-song arrangements at their best have simple and imaginative accompaniments. Some try to illustrate the words. All should allow the simple beauty of the song to shine through.

Research point

*Cecil Sharp began a major collection of English folk-dances in 1899 and folk-songs around 1903. He also travelled with Maud Karpeles through North America during 1914-16 collecting Appalachian mountain songs. Other composers who made folk-song arrangements include **Vaughan Williams**, **Holst, E.J.Moeran, George Butterworth** and **Percy Grainger**. Even **Benjamin Britten** – not known to be a folk enthusiast – made two volumes of British folk-song arrangements with very skilful piano accompaniment.*

Look up some examples of folk-song arrangements by one of these composers, or find out about other composers who arranged folk songs and choose one that particularly interests you. Make notes in your learning log on the composer's particular approach to accompaniment for the arrangements that you study.

Exercise

Either using one of the following folk-songs (Examples 12a to 12d below), or one of your own choosing, compose an arrangement for voice and piano.

Don't forget to invent one or two bars of suitable introduction, and a short coda to complete the piece.

Coda is the Italian term used in musical structures for a closing section or 'end piece'. It means literally a tail, an end or a queue. Fare la coda means to queue up! In classical times it grew from being simply 'a few bars to finish' into a major closing section of a symphonic movement. In light and popular music now it retains its original meaning.

Example 12a

'Treue liebe (a Thuringian folksong)
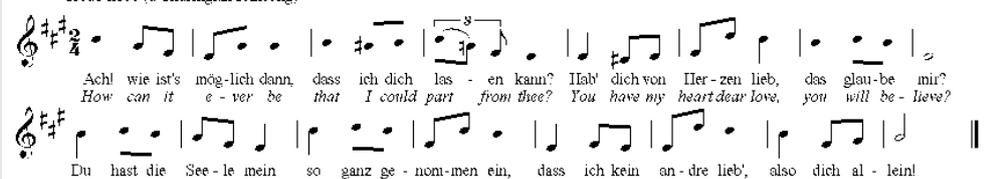
Ach! wie ist's mög-lich dann, dass ich dich las - en kann? Hab' dich von Her - zen lieb, das glau-be mir?
How can it e - ver be that I could part from thee? You have my heart dear love, you will be - lieve?

Du hast die See - le mein so ganz ge - nom-men ein, dass ich kein an - dre lieb', also dich al - lein!
You have my ve - ry soul sto - len to make your own, no o - ther can I love but you a - lone!

Wär' ich ein Vögelein, bald wollt' ich bei dir sein,
Scheut' Falk und Habicht nicht, flog schnell zu dir.
Schoss mich ein Jäger tot, fiel ich in deinen Schoss:
Säh'st du mich traurig an, gern stürb' ich dann.

If I was just a bird, straight to your arms I'd fly,
Falcon or hawk would stay my flight to thee!
Then with a dying call into your arms I'd fall,
And if you wept for me, happy I'd die.

## Example 12b

'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill' (Yorkshire)
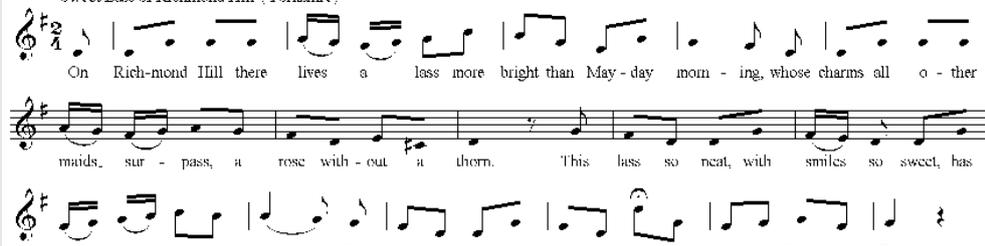
On Rich-mond Hill there lives a lass more bright than May-day morn - ing, whose charms all o - ther

maids sur - pass, a rose with-out a thorn. This lass so neat, with smiles so sweet, has

won my right good will, I'd crown re - sign to call her mine, sweet lass of Rich-mond Hill

Ye zephyrs gay that fan the air, and wanton through the grove,
O whisper to my charming fair, I die for her I love.
How happy will the shepherd be who calls this nymph his own!
O may her choice be fix'd on me - mine fix'd on her alone!

Example 12c

Vyssa lulla (A Swedish lullaby)
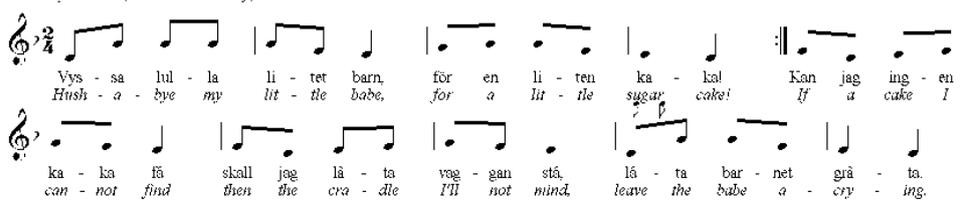
Vys - sa lul - la li - tet barn, för en li - ten ka - ka!
Hush - a - bye my lit - tle babe, for a lit - tle sugar cake!

Kan jag ing - en
If a cake I

ka - ka få skall jag lå - ta vag - gan stå, lå - ta bar - net grå - ta.
can - not find then the cra - dle I'll not mind, leave the babe a - cry - ing.

[The verse is repeated until the child is asleep!]

Example 12d

Eibhlín a rúin (Eileen aroon - an Irish folksong)
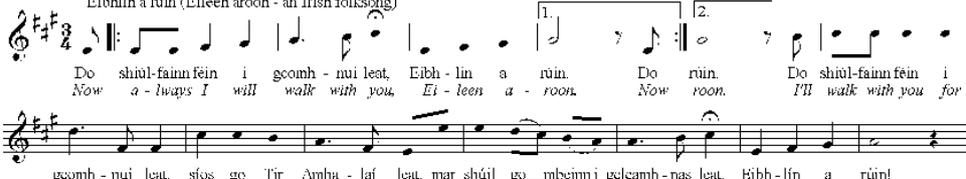
Do shiùl-fainn féin i gcomh - nui leat, Eibh - lin a rúin.
Now a - lways I will walk with you, Ei - leen a - roon.

Do rúin.
Now roon.

Do shiùl-fainn féin i
I'll walk with you for

gcomh - nui leat, síos go Tír Amha - laí leat, mar shúil go___mbeinn i gcleamh - nas leat, Eibh - lín a rúin!
e - ver-more far to the we - stern shores and hap - py as___ ne'er be-fore. Ei - leen a - roon.

Céad míle fáilte romhat, Eibhlín a rúin,
Céad míle fáilte romhat, fáilte 'gus fiche romhat,
Naoi gcéad míle fáilte romhat, Eibhlín a rúin.

So welcome now and evermore, Eileen aroon,
And welcome for the times untold and welcomes still in store
till life itself be o'er, Eileen aroon.

An additional verse is included in Examples 12a, b and d above to provide you with an opportunity for variation to the accompaniment. The Swedish lullaby is a perpetual repeat of the same verse, but that too can be treated with varied accompaniments.

Project 4: **Word setting**

Bringing words and music together is a double challenge. Adding words to the melody should not compromise the art of shaping melodic lines.

The most usual form of word setting is syllabic – in which almost every syllable of the text has its own note, as here:

Example 13

By yon bon-nie banks, and by yon bon-nie braes, where the sun shines bright on Loch Lo - mond,

Research point

Many of the most successful songs, especially those written for music hall and musicals, derive their tunes directly from the rhythm of the words. Look through vocal scores: Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, the lyrics of Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, Stephen Sondheim, and Irving Berlin and Cole Porter who both wrote their own tunes too, and Lionel Bart's Oliver. Make notes in your learning log on word settings you find most successful, with notes on the technical reasons.

Melismatic word setting gives groups of notes to text syllables. A predominantly melismatic style was at its most prolific well before the 15th and 16th centuries, especially in church plainchant:

Example 14

Viderunt Hemamuel
(Early 12th century organum – St. Martial School)

Vi – de – runt   He – ma – nu – – – – – – el.

Allowing a small amount of melismatic setting to balance a predominantly syllabic style will be most ideal for our purposes here.

Now look at the process of word setting by taking a poem to set to music. After selecting a suitable poem – and not every poem lends itself readily to musical setting – it may first be helpful to make a basic rhythmic transcription. I have chosen to illustrate an approach to word setting with the first verse of a poem by Thomas Hood (1799-1845).

Example 15

I remember, I remember

The house where I was born,

The little window where the sun

Came peeping in at morn;

He never came a wink too soon

Nor brought too long a day;

But now I often wish the night

Had borne my breath away.

A first attempt may produce a melodic wandering from tonic to dominant and back again (Example 15). Simply to follow the basic rhythmic framework may make it a drearily uninspired effort.

Example 16

I re-mem-ber, I re-mem-ber The house where I was born,___ The lit-tle win-dow where the sun Came pee-ping in at morn;___ He ne-ver came a wink too soon, Nor brought too long a day;___ But now I of-ten wish the night Had borne my breath a-way___

By applying some rhythmic flexibility to the phrasing, as in Example 17, the musical setting can give the words more expression.

Example 17

8

6

8 + 6

Placing accents and longer or shorter note values does much to add subtleties to an interpretation of the words. The second of the two versions in Example 18 deliberately begins the text on a strong rather than the weaker up beat (anacrusis) and introduces some expressive melismatic setting. It has been set in the *Phrygian* mode which pre-dates the major-minor system and allows a contrasting colour to the vocal line.

Example 18

Research point

Before the establishment of major and minor scales, the traditional modes were widely used, providing a wealth of colour to which we are now less sensitive as their use and effect are almost forgotten. They were evolved by the Greeks and have Greek names. Over a succession of eight notes ascending and descending, the tones and semitones would be in different places, thus giving each final resting place a distinctive effect. Plato felt that certain modes and the instruments that played in them had a harmful effect on listeners, especially the young who may be excited to debauchery by them!

As late as the 4ᵗʰ century St Jerome wrote that 'a Christian maiden should not even know what a lyre or a flute is like or to what use it is put'. Read Chapter 23 in Taylor on traditional modes.

Exercise

Find a poem that you think is suitable to be given a melodic setting. First, carry out a rhythmic transcription. Then follow the stages outlined above to introduce more expressive flexibility into the melodic line. This should be treated as an unaccompanied song, giving attention only to the marriage of words and melody.

Assignment 1:
A solo song with piano accompaniment

Select a suitable poem and set the words to a melody following the same process you tried out in Project 4. You may decide to use the setting you made for that Project. Using harmonic resources explored in the earlier projects, or possibly a 'skeleton' harmonic framework drawn from an existing composition, build up an accompaniment for piano using the same approach as in Project 3. Invent a 'pattern' for the accompaniment figurations. Provide for a short introduction to set the mood and tonality, and a short coda, both for the piano alone.

Reflection

Before you send this assignment to your tutor, take a look at the assessment criteria for this course, which will be used to mark your work when you get your work formally assessed. The assessment criteria are listed in the introduction to this course.

Review how you think you have done against the criteria and make notes in your learning log. Send these reflections, along with work, supporting studies and your learning log (or link to your blog).

Make sure that all work is labelled with your name, student number and assignment number and send it to your tutor. You don't need to wait until you've heard from your tutor before continuing with the course.