Cambridge Assessment International Education

Areas of study – Paper 1

Cambridge IGCSE™ / IGCSE (9–1) Music 0410 / 0978

For examination from 2026

Cambridge Pathway

Contents

Introduction

Areas of study

Areas of study 1–3 cover repertoire of the western classical tradition and include 'focus works', enabling candidates to learn the skills of score reading and simple analysis. Candidates will apply their knowledge and understanding to extracts in the examination which will be related to the focus works in structure, genre or style.

Areas of study 4–7 include a wide variety of music from different cultures and extend the range of repertoire from the early twentieth century to the present day. Candidates will learn how musical features are combined and used to create music for distinct purposes and in different contexts.

Centres are encouraged to tailor their choice of listening to the school's context and candidates' interests.

Focus works

Candidates are expected to study each focus work listed for areas of study 1–3. These works have been selected to exemplify the features found in music of the focus area. Study of these works will enable candidates to answer questions on related works in the exam. The focus works will not be used in the exam.

Wider listening

Wider listening examples for areas of study 1–3 are intended to broaden candidates' listening experience within each area of study. Starting points in areas of study 4–7 are chosen to exemplify many of the main features of each style. Any listed examples are not prescribed or exhaustive and centres are encouraged to engage with each area of study in a way which appeals to their candidates, including through use of local and popular musical styles and examples.

The wider listening works are suggestions that may be used by teachers if they find them to be helpful, but they may be freely substituted with other pieces.

The set works and wider listening have been selected to include a range of pieces by both famous and lesser-known composers.

In areas of study 1–3, the suggested repertoire would allow teachers to explore the development of concertos, keyboard music, chamber music and the orchestra from the baroque to the romantic periods, if they wished to follow a linear approach, but there is no expectation that they should do so.

Syllabus

When planning your course, your starting point should be the syllabus. This contains information not only on the curriculum content but also the overall aims and assessment objectives. It gives details of the papers, the grade descriptions and additional information (such as the minimum marks needed for particular grades). It is most important that you become thoroughly familiar with all parts of the syllabus document.

School Support Hub

The School Support Hub provides a wide range of teaching and learning resources to help you and your learners to understand exactly what Cambridge expects of candidates in examinations and will help you to prepare your learners appropriately.

It is important to make sure that you have access to the School Support Hub. You can obtain a login from your Examinations Officer.

Area of study 1: Baroque music

The Baroque period in music spans 150 years, from the birth of opera and oratorio around 1600 to the death of JS Bach in 1750. It was a significant period of time in which there were many developments. The start of the Baroque period saw the orchestra begin to take shape with the string section at its centre, the widespread use of the major-minor key system and the increased importance of instrumental music. New structures and types of music introduced and developed by baroque composers included opera, oratorio and cantata, recitative and aria, suite, overture, trio sonata, concerto grosso, solo concerto, ritornello form, and fugue. Composers held the idea that a single 'affection' (musical mood or feeling) should persist throughout an entire piece or movement.

One of the main distinguishing features of baroque musical style is the inclusion of the basso continuo. Continuo players were given only the bass line of the music, which was played on an instrument such as a cello, double bass, or bassoon. But the composer expected another continuo player on a chord playing instrument – such as harpsichord, organ, or lute – to use their skill and musicianship to improvise chords, filling in the harmonies, and also decorating the musical texture. Composers often wrote figures below the notes, indicating the chords which were expected – and so such a bassline is called a 'figured bass'. The idea of an accompaniment played by continuo instruments was to persist throughout the baroque, and provide the basis for the harmonies, and the texture, of almost every type of piece.

The Concerto

A concerto is a work for soloist(s) accompanied by orchestra with the idea of contrast at the forefront. This includes contrast between solo and orchestral sections of music, the virtuosity of the soloist(s) compared with the more straightforward orchestral parts, the pitch of the soloists versus the orchestra and the changes of tempo in or between movements.

Baroque concertos have several movements, in a variety of forms. These can include ritornello form, binary form, ternary form or movements in dance form. Learners should study both the solo concerto and concerto grosso, alongside other forms of Baroque instrumental music.

Focus work: Vivaldi (1678–1741)

The Italian composer Vivaldi is most famous for his concertos, in which he established a standard three-movement form. He spent much of his working life at the *Ospedale della Pietà* in Venice (a convent, orphanage and school), composing music for the students there.

Vivaldi's set of solo concertos known as *The Four Seasons* were published in 1725, so were written at some point before then. They are part of a larger set called *The Contest of Harmony and Invention.* Each concerto in *The Four Seasons* is based on a poem, with Vivaldi supplying the line of the poem at the relevant point in the music.

Spring from *The Four Seasons*

As in all the concertos forming *The Four Seasons,* this is in three movements fast-slow-fast.

Instruments

Each concerto is scored for solo violin accompanied by string orchestra. In a concerto the orchestra may sometimes be referred to as the tutti. In the score the solo line appears at the top, followed by the two orchestral violin parts, then the viola (in the alto clef) and finally the bass and continuo line. This would have been played by several instruments, including cellos, probably double basses (sounding an octave lower) and also an instrument capable of playing chords over the printed bass line. In performance this part can be realised by a harpsichord, organ or plucked string instrument such as a theorbo. Numbers under the bass stave (known as figured bass) indicate the chords to be played. Together these instruments are known as the basso continuo (often simply 'continuo') and are an absolutely crucial part of any Baroque piece of music, not just concertos.

Learners should be aware that a range of instruments can be the basso continuo. They can explore this by listening to recordings of different pieces and even to different recordings of the same piece.

Baroque orchestral music sometimes included wind (flutes, oboes or bassoons), brass (trumpets or horns) or timpani, but in small numbers and always with the strings as the main part of the ensemble.

The solo violinist and the orchestra make use of a range of techniques, including tremolo (bar 44). There is also significant use of ornamentation, as frequently found in Baroque music; here it is used to suggest birdsong. In the final movement of 'Spring' the orchestral violins are muted (*con sordino*). Throughout the concerto the solo part is much more virtuosic than that of the orchestra and is generally at a higher pitch.

Movement 1 (Allegro)

Structure / form

As would be expected in a Baroque solo concerto first fast movement, the structure is ritornello form. This is when varied restatements of a ritornello theme, in different keys and scored for the full orchestra, alternate with episodes, in which the soloist often dominates playing new ideas. Vivaldi's ritornello statements usually get shorter during a movement, as repetitions of bars or even whole groups of bars are omitted. In this concerto Vivaldi combines the poems with ritornello form, so the constant elements of the poem are usually incorporated into the returning ritornello theme, while the episodes depict the changing elements. Vivaldi sets the first five lines of the poem in this movement.

Ritornello 1	bars 0 to 13^{3}
Episode 1	bars 13^{3} to 27^{3}
Ritornello 2	bars 27^{4} to 30^{1} (a shortened statement of the ritornello theme, taken from bars 6^{4} to 10^{1}.
Episode 2	bars 31 to 40^{3}
Ritornello 3	bars 40^{4} to 43 (a shortened statement, as in ritornello 2)
Episode 3	bars 44 to 55^{3}
Ritornello 4	bars 55^{4} to 58
Episode 4	bars 59 to 75 (this episode includes a tutti interruption, based on the first half of the ritornello theme. It also has many similarities to Episode 1, since both episodes refer to birdsong).
Ritornello 5	bars 76 to 82 (this is longer than ritornellos 2, 3 and 4, but still not as long as ritornello 1. It is the second half of ritornello 1, which is then repeated).

Tonality / keys

As with most Baroque works, Vivaldi modulates to a variety of keys in the movement, but all closely related to the tonic. The first movement is in E major, a bright, joyful key, appropriate for the happy arrival of spring.

The movement remains in E major for some time. Episode 2 ends on the dominant chord (B major), but the music has not really modulated at this point. However, the ritornello which immediately follows is in the dominant – the A sharps and perfect cadence in the dominant linking the ritornello and following episode show this.

At the end of Episode 3 the music modulates from the dominant (B major) to the relative minor (C# minor). Ritornello 4 and Episode 4 are both in the relative minor, but at the end of Episode 4 there is a modulation back to E major for the final ritornello.

The second movement of the concert is in the relative minor (C# minor) and the final movement returns to E major.

Harmony

Vivaldi's harmony is diatonic (using notes from the key) and functional (with chords having a specific role in moving the music forward). There is much use of tonic and dominant chords, with perfect and imperfect cadences.

The opening ritornello is very firmly based on the tonic chord, with a rhythmicised tonic pedal in the continuo. Bars 3 and 6 contain an imperfect cadence, while bars 9–10 and 12–13 form a perfect cadence.

Interestingly, Episode 1 is based entirely on the tonic chord, with no change of harmony.

When Episode 4 is accompanied by the continuo (unlike the corresponding section about birds in Episode 1), it is by a tonic pedal (C# as the music is in C# minor at this point) played by the cello (*Tasto solo* in the score means that the rest of the continuo do not play).

Melody

The ritornello sections have a memorable melody with a range of a 9th and making use of mostly stepwise movement or leaps of a third. The episodes are less 'melodic' using repeated notes, scales and arpeggios. The episodes also feature ornamentation, including inverted mordents and trills.

Although most melodic material is diatonic, there is ascending chromatic movement in the bass in Episode 3, helping the music to modulate from B major to C# minor.

Rhythm

This movement uses a wide range of note values, from the crotchets, quavers and occasional semiquavers in the ritornello, to the demisemiquavers, triplet semiquavers and dotted notes in the episodes. This is another way in which Vivaldi creates contrast between the sections.

Bar $7^{3\text{-}4}$ features syncopation, used frequently in the following bars.

Dynamics

Baroque composers often did not write dynamic markings into their scores. This was because they were either leading the performances and could tell the instrumentalists how to play or because musicians at the time knew the expected conventions. Baroque music is famous for using terraced dynamics, where there are sudden changes from loud to quiet or vice versa. There is an example of this right at the start of the movement, where Vivaldi marks the repeat of the opening material to be played piano, followed by a return to forte at the end of bar 6, etc.

Different performances will offer their own interpretation of the music, particularly with regard to dynamics and learners could compare the different versions.

Texture

Baroque music is often associated with polyphonic or contrapuntal textures and there are examples in this movement such as Episode 1. This also makes use of imitation, with the solo 1st violin imitating the soloist two bars later. However, the opening of the movement is homophonic. There are also moments of monophony, such as bars 47 and 50.

The episodes usually feature fewer instruments – just the three solo violins in Episode 1, three solo violins and cello in Episode 4. However, Episode 2 uses the whole orchestra (with the soloist doubling the 1st violin part) and e pisode alternates soloist and orchestra, before they come together.

Focus work: Handel 1685–1759

Born in Germany, Handel moved to England in 1712. He is known for works in a wide variety of genres including operas, oratorios and concertos. His works show both German and Italian influences.

Concerto Grosso

The Baroque concerto grosso preceded the solo concerto and contrasts a group of soloists (known as the concertino) with the accompanying ensemble (referred to as the ripieno or tutti). A concerto grosso usually has four or more movements, sometimes including fugal writing, ternary, binary and ritornello form.

Concerti Grossi in D major Op. 6 (HWV 319–330)

Handel's set of 12 concerti grossi were written to be played during performances of his oratorios and other larger works and incorporate a wide variety of musical styles in the different movements. The music was composed during the autumn of 1739, but as was common in the Baroque era, Handel reused some material from earlier works in the concertos. The concertos follow the model of Corelli.

Concerto Grosso in D major Op. 6, No. 5 (HWV 323)

Instruments

This concerto is scored for two oboes and bassoon (used only in some of the movements), solo 1st and 2nd violins and cello, strings and continuo. As in solo concertos, the soloists sometimes play with the ensemble and sometimes separately. Unlike Vivaldi's concerto, the solo lines are not particularly virtuosic, though the solo cello does play high enough to be notated in the tenor clef in some editions (in the *Largo* fourth movement).

Movement 1 (Larghetto e staccato)

This first movement was based on the opening movement of Handel's overture for the *Ode to St Cecilia's Day.* It is in the style of a Baroque French overture, incorporating the stereotypical features including a slow, majestic opening section, with dotted rhythms, followed by a faster main section in fugal style (here this is the second movement). In performances learners may notice that the dotted notes are played 'double dotted', as would have been done in the Baroque period. The notated dotted crotchet followed by a demisemiquaver rest also creates the idea of double dotting.

After an unusual monophonic opening from the concertino 1st violin, the two solo violinists play with the ripieno 1st violins while the solo cello doubles the bass line, giving a homophonic texture throughout. The movement features many scalic passages and from the tonic key of D major modulates to the dominant (A major) at bar 16. Some trills are notated; other ornaments may be added in performance. Bars 22–23 are a hemiola, where the notated two groups of three beats are felt as three groups of two beats. This was a common Baroque device in works in triple time in the bars immediately preceding a cadence. Bars 23–24 are a perfect cadence using the Ic-V-I progression and include an anticipation for the final note in the solo and 1st violins. Since the movement ends in A major, the pedal note heard in bars 19–21 is a dominant pedal (the note E).

Movement 2 (Allegro)

Texture

This movement is the expected second part of the French overture, in fugal style. The four-bar subject is introduced by the solo 1st ripieno 1st violins monophonically. At bar 5 the solo and ripieno 2nd violins enter with the answer (the music of the subject repeated a fourth lower in the dominant) while the 1st violins play a countersubject, creating a two-part polyphonic texture. At bar 9 the solo cello and violas have the subject again, sometimes in unison, sometimes an octave apart with the violins playing polyphonically and the continuo playing a simplified version of the subject.

At bar 15 the texture reduces to just soloists and continuo cello (*Tasto solo* indicates that the harpsichord does not play), taking bar 3 of the subject and playing it in imitation half a bar apart. This alternation of solo and tutti sections continues throughout the movement. At times the writing is more homophonic, with the violins playing in thirds over a bass line (e.g. bars 35–36).

Rhythm and tempo

The movement remains at the expected fast tempo throughout, which together with the fast-moving semiquavers and syncopation, drive the music forward.

Tonality and harmony

With the preceding movement ending in the dominant key of A major, this movement returns immediately to the tonic, but with frequent modulations to related keys, many to the dominant but also to E minor at bar 31, E major at bar 34 and B minor at bar 44.

The mainly polyphonic texture keeps the movement flowing, but there are frequent perfect cadences and an imperfect cadence in bar 14. The movement ends with the same Ic-V-I progression as the first movement.

There are examples of suspensions (e.g. 1st violin bars 18^4–20^2) and pedal notes (e.g. bar 14^4 onwards).

Melody

Much of the melodic material of the movement is derived from the opening four-bar subject., which involves a great deal of stepwise movement. Although the treble melodies do not really feature sequences, there is a descending sequence in the bass in bars 11–12. Ornamentation is not marked on the score and the fast tempo means that there is not always time to add it, but some performances may do so.

Movement 4 (Largo)

This slow movement includes the oboes and bassoon and alternates between solo and tutti passages. In tutti passages the 1st and 2nd oboe and 1st and 2nd solo violins double the 1st and 2nd ripieno violins. There are frequent examples of imitation (e.g. bars 1–2 between the solo violins, giving a polyphonic texture, but also homophonic and monophonic textures (e.g. bars 14^2–16^1). In this triple time movement, there are examples of hemiola before most cadences. The generally descending line in the violins (in contrary motion with the bass) adds to the air of sadness created by the slower tempo and the minor key (the relative minor of B minor) and the use of suspensions. Trills are frequently indicated.

At the end of the movement there is striking use of silence. The movement ends with a Phrygian cadence: an imperfect cadence where the bass descends by a semitone. The two chords involved are IVb–V. This was common in Baroque movements in a minor key and linked one movement and the next.

Movement 6 (Menuet – un poco larghetto)

It is thought that this movement was added to the concerto just before publication. It exhibits many typical features of a minuet: triple time, a moderately fast tempo and sections which are repeated (though there are more than frequently found in such movements). The wind are still present (both oboes doubling the 1st violins) and the key has returned to the tonic of D major. It is tutti throughout, with no separate parts for the concertino. Terraced dynamics are indicated in the score.

Key Baroque features

- The continuo
- Major and minor scales
- Ritornello form
- Terraced dynamics
- Pedal notes
- Suspensions
- Polyphonic/contrapuntal textures
- Ornamentation
- An orchestra with a basis of strings and continuo, sometimes with added flutes, oboes, trumpets, horns or timpani

The works above also provide excellent opportunities for looking at metre, tempo, harmony and tonality in general.

Wider listening

Corelli: *Concerto Grosso in G minor,* Op. 6 No. 8 'Christmas Concerto'

Like the Handel, this is a concerto grosso and was the kind of work Handel used as a model. Possibly composed in 1690, it was published in 1714 after Corelli's death. The numbering of movements varies (five or six), depending on how they are separated out. They are at a variety of speeds and exhibit many typical Baroque features including imitation and polyphonic textures, suspensions and the circle of fifths.

JS Bach: *Orchestral Suite* No. 3 *in D,* BWV 1068

This work is one of a set of four, which were called 'Overtures' by Bach. The instruments include oboes, trumpets and timpani, but these are not used in the famous second movement, often known as 'Air on a G string'. As the title 'suite' implies, it is a work in several movements: after an opening overture, with a slow section followed by faster, fugal music there are four dances.

Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre: *Suite in A minor,* No. 3 from *Pieces de Clavecin*

Published in 1687, this is one of four suites. No. 3 has a prelude followed by several dances. However, unlike the Bach suite above, this is for solo harpsichord. There are very frequent ornaments, and the opening Prelude is improvisatory in style. This work provides examples of music in binary form and another minuet (to compare with that by Handel).

Telemann: *Trio Sonata in F,* TWV 42: F1

This work emphasises the importance of the continuo in Baroque music: despite the title 'trio' and the three separate instrumental parts in the score, at least four instruments would be required to perform it. The slower second movement includes pedal notes, while the fast third movement has terraced dynamics marked at the end.

Area of study 2: Classical music

Although the term 'classical music' is used to refer to art music in general, in this context the classical period refers to music written between approximately 1750 and 1810. During this time the forms used in the Baroque period were developed, the size and range of instruments in the orchestra increased and the harpsichord gave way to the early piano.

Features typically found in music from the classical period include clear structure, elegant melodies with balanced phrases, a range of dynamics and frequently a homophonic texture.

Instrumental music became even more important than in the baroque period, with works including sonatas for one or two instruments, chamber music and music for orchestra.

Musicians and particularly composers were usually reliant on patronage from wealthy classes, either being employed as a member of the household staff (as Haydn was by the Esterhazys) or having a number of patrons commissioning works (as did Beethoven).

Chamber music

Instrumental music played by a small group of musicians, with just one performer on each part. The size of the ensemble could vary from a duet to a small orchestra. The works for these groups would usually be in three or four movements, essentially a sonata for an increased number of performers.

Focus work: Mozart (1756–1791)

Mozart, along with Haydn are probably the best-known classical composers. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Mozart spent most of his working life as a self-employed musician, writing works, giving performances and teaching to earn money. He composed in all genres, vocal music, concertos, symphonies, operas and chamber music. He embraced the capabilities of the new instruments that became available, in particular the fortepiano and the clarinet.

Quintet for piano and winds in E flat major, K. 452, movement 1 (Largo – Allegro moderato)

***Quintet for piano and winds in E flat major,* K. 452**

It is said that Mozart wrote to his father that this was 'the best work he had ever written' (though he may have claimed that for other works too.) The work was first performed in Vienna in April 1784, together with many other works by Mozart. He hoped the work would impress Prince Aloys Liechtenstein, but sadly the prince did not attend the concert.

The *Quintet* is in three movements, fast-slow-fast. The first movement is relatively short, whereas the final movement is long.

Movement 1 (Largo – Allegro moderato)

After a relatively long slow introduction, the Allegro moderato section of this movement is in sonata form. This important structure had become established in first and other movements of classical instrumental works, from solo piano sonatas to symphonies.

Instruments

Mozart's choice of instruments was quite unusual. Wind quintets (the four wind instruments here with an added flute) were more standard. Here the piano plays as an equal to the other four instruments together. Mozart passes his material around the ensemble, presenting instruments in pairs, threes and fours, in addition to the occasional solo moment (particularly for the piano) and a full tutti. The material is adapted as necessary, to suit the requirements of the different instruments. In general, wind instruments play shorter phrases, allowing the players time to breathe.

In this work the clarinet is in B flat, meaning that the notes sound a tone lower than written. The clarinet was a new instrument in the classical period and Mozart was keen to exploit its possibilities, using it in many of his works. The horn is in E flat, sounding a major sixth lower than written.

The piano has moments of cadenza-like material (improvised at the end of the introduction, notated in bars 103^{3} to 106). The wind also has their more virtuosic moments, such as the bassoon in bars 54 to 55.

Sonata form

Sonata form movements usually have:

- an exposition section, with a first subject in the tonic, a transition modulating to the dominant (or relative major if the work is in a minor key) and a second subject in the dominant (or relative major). The exposition is then repeated
- a development section, where themes from the exposition are developed (fragments of themes are manipulated and heard in a variety of keys)
- a recapitulation section, with the first subject in the tonic, a transition (which does not modulate) and the second subject in the tonic
- a coda.

The structure of this movement is as follows:

Introduction		Bars 1 to 20
Exposition	1st subject	Bars 21to 28
	Transition	Bars 29 to 42
	2nd subject	Bars 43 to 50^{2}
	Codetta	Bars 50^{3} to 65
Development		Bars 66 to 81
Recapitulation	1st subject	Bars 82 to 91
	Transition	Bars 92 to 95
	2nd subject	Bars 96 to 118^{2}
	Coda	Bars 118^{3} to 122

The transition in the exposition section modulates, whereas that in the recapitulation does not, resulting in a much shorter version the second time. The 1st subject in the recapitulation begins identically to the exposition, but the second phrase is extended. Mozart also sometimes changes how the material is shared between the instruments. The relatively short development begins by repeating the previous bar, followed by an ascending sequence of a fragment from the 1st subject, passing through various keys.

Tonality / keys

Classical composers often modulated more frequently than Baroque composers, but still to closely related keys. In the Quintet Mozart modulates to the dominant for the 2nd subject in the exposition, passes through various keys including G minor, A flat major, B flat minor, C minor and C major in the development, before returning to the tonic key for the recapitulation. All of these are closely related to the tonic key of E flat major. C major is reached via a change of mode from the preceding C minor.

Harmony

As in the baroque period, the harmony is diatonic, with great use of primary chords in root position and first inversion. The introduction ends with repeated dominant seventh chords, ready for the 1st subject in the tonic, while the transition in the exposition has piano arpeggio decoration of the dominant of the dominant (i.e. an F major chord), ready for the 2nd subject in the dominant. There are many examples of perfect cadences, including bars 60 to 61 (a perfect cadence in B flat major). The end of the development uses chords from a circle of fifths (bars 78 to 81), including a C minor chord in bar 79 which becomes a diminished chord with the addition of a G flat. The shorter transition in the recapitulation takes place over a dominant pedal in the left hand of the piano. There is a striking diminished seventh chord at the start of bar 7. The harmony in bar 18 is even more striking – a diminished seventh chord over the horns pedal note.

Melody

Melodies are motivic, meaning that they are built from short fragments. Often these are passed between instruments, such as in bars 7 to 9, where four descending notes move from the piano to the clarinet and horn and then to the oboe and bassoon or from bar 15, where a motif based on a turn ornament is passed around. Melodic shapes often use scalic or broken chord outlines. There are also sequences, such as at the start of the development. Melodies are sometimes decorated with ornaments (trills in the oboe and piano in bars 23 and 24, turns in the piano in bar 45 and mordents in the piano in bars 66 and 67). There is occasional chromaticism in the melodies, such as in bars 44 and 45. The typical classical use of balanced phrases can be seen in the 1st subject, which is built from two-bar phrases. The 2nd subject begins with clear antecedent and consequent phrases.

Rhythm

This movement uses a wide range of note values, from minims to demisemiquavers. In bars 13 and 14 there are dotted rhythms, reminiscent of a baroque French overture. The 1st subject has prominent syncopation, as do bars 54 to 57. The first two of these bars are particularly striking as the syncopation is played against the horn's quavers. Mozart also introduces triplets from bar 29, increasing the excitement and momentum. These are first heard in the bassoon in bar 54 and are later taken up by the piano followed by other instruments (from bar 107). The players sometimes enter off the beat, such as the wind in bar 60 and the full ensemble in bars 66 and 67.

Dynamics

Mozart gives some very precise dynamic markings, often with large contrasts in a short space of time, such as bars 5 to 7. These help to create frequent changes of mood. There are also examples of crescendo markings (bars 81 and 112 to 113).

Texture

Classical music is most frequently associated with a homophonic texture and there are many examples in this movement, including the first seven bars of the introduction. However, there are also examples of polyphonic writing, including imitation (bars 10 to 12), where melodies or fragments are passed between the instruments. The musical dialogue often heard between the instruments is a crucial element of chamber music writing. Throughout the movement the instruments continually change roles from accompanying, to playing melodic material. However, the piano is the only instrument to play completely alone. There are examples of playing in (compound) sixths and octaves, such as at bar 27 where the piano LH and RH are in octaves, a compound sixth apart, while the clarinet and bassoon double the RH and LH respectively.

A piano accompaniment texture closely associated with the classical period is the Alberti bass. This is a specific broken triad shape, where the lowest note, highest note, middle note and highest note are played in that order. Though the piano in this work plays many broken chord patterns, there are no extended passages of Alberti bass, just occasional examples, e.g. bar 51 at the start of the second beat of the bar.

Wider listening

Haydn: *Piano Trio No. 39 in G*, Hob. XV:25 'Gypsy'

Mozart: *String Quartet No. 17 in B flat*, K. 458 'The Hunt'

Mozart: *9 Variations on a Minuet by Duport*, K.573

Haydn: *Symphony No. 95 in C minor*, Hob. I:95

Beethoven: *Piano Concerto No. 1 in C*, Op. 15

Area of study 3: Romantic music

During the nineteenth century, described in music history as the Romantic period, the social changes that followed the French Revolution led to a gradual reduction in the aristocratic patronage which had provided a livelihood for many musicians in the Baroque and Classical periods.

Composers increasingly worked for themselves, depending for an income on the performance and publication of their work. This led to an increasing individuality of style, with greater freedom in musical structure alongside a more intense and personal expression of emotion.

Melodies became lyrical and song-like; harmonies were richer with a range of chromatic chords, and there were more adventurous modulations.

The texture of the music, whilst still largely homophonic, was often extremely full and dense, and the orchestra increased in size, allowing composers a far wider range of pitch, volume, and timbre.

The piano was improved and developed, and vast numbers of pieces were written.

There were rapid advancements in performing technique, especially among pianists and violinists, and virtuoso performers such as Liszt and Paganini were adored by audiences.

There was enormous variety in the types of composition written during this period, ranging from solo piano pieces, songs and chamber music to huge works requiring a very large number of musicians, such as the orchestral works of Berlioz, Mahler, and Richard Strauss.

Focus work: Smetana: *Vltava* from *Ma Vlast*

This movement is often known by its German title, *Die Moldau*.

Nationalism

A growing interest in folklore led to an exploration of legends and songs which seemed to speak of a way of life that was more in tune with the natural world and far removed from the increasingly industrialised society that was rapidly emerging. That in turn led to the notion of a nation and its people being significant both in personal and in political terms. This spirit of nationalism was to spread through much of Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century; composers whose works explored nationalist ideals include Liszt (Hungary), Chopin (Poland) and a group known as 'The Five' – Balakirev, Cui, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin (Russia).

Bedrich Smetana (1824–1884) was born towards the end of a long period during which his native country, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), had been ruled as part of the Habsburg Empire. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Czech language and traditional Czech culture had been suppressed; the most significant Bohemian composers had worked in Germany or Austria and the culture of Bohemia's capital city, Prague, was almost wholly Germanic.

During the nineteenth century there was a gradual movement towards restoring the distinctive language and culture of Bohemia, in which Smetana played a highly significant role. He began to draw on Czech history and legends for the subject matter of his nationalist compositions, which included the cycle of six symphonic poems entitled *Má vlast* (My homeland), written between 1872 and 1879. Some of them are concerned with episodes in Bohemian history or legend, while others evoke specific aspects of the countryside and the life of the people. From the time of their first performance, they became an important symbol of Czech independence and to this day they have a unique place in the hearts and affections of the Czech people.

The orchestra

The orchestra in the nineteenth century underwent significant change compared to the classical orchestra of the eighteenth century. These changes were closely tied to the evolving compositional styles and the increasing demands of Romantic composers who sought to expand the expressive capabilities of the orchestra.

Classical orchestras typically had pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, along with natural horns, natural trumpets, and a pair of timpani. In the Romantic period, the addition of instruments such as the piccolo, *cor anglais*, bass clarinet, and contrabassoon, provided a broader range of pitch and tone colour in the wind section. The invention of the valve allowed greater chromatic flexibility in the brass section which grew considerably, typically numbering two or three trumpets, four horns, three trombones and a tuba. Composers also incorporated a wider variety of percussion instruments to enhance the dramatic effects in their compositions.

The string section remained the core of the orchestra, but the number of players increased to balance the greater weight of sound in the other sections, in particular the brass. Cello and double bass parts became increasingly independent of each other, with the cello often being called upon to play lyrically in its upper register. One or more harps could also be found.

Vltava uses a large orchestra, typical of the late nineteenth century, consisting of

- 1 piccolo
- 2 flutes
- 2 oboes
- 2 clarinets
- 2 bassoons
- 4 horns
- 2 trumpets
- 3 trombones
- 1 tuba
- timpani (kettledrums)
- percussion
- strings
- 1 harp.

Many of the instruments in the romantic orchestra are transposing, and candidates should be taught how to write small fragments for some of the most common transposing instruments (trumpets in B flat, clarinets in B flat and A, horns in F and E flat) at sounding pitch. Although *Vltava* itself will not be tested in the examination, it can provide good practice in learning about transposition as it includes many of these instruments.

Programme music

In addition to its significance as an example of nationalism in music, *Vltava* is a good example of programme music (music that describes something or tells a story). Smetana himself provided a guide to the content of the music:

‘The composition describes the course of the river Vltava, starting with its two sources (the Cold and the Warm Vltava), the joining of both streams into one, gradually flowing with increasing breadth through fields and woods, through landscapes where a farmer's wedding is celebrated, and the round dance of the nymphs in the night's moonshine. On the nearby cliffs proud castles, mansions and ruins rise up. The Vltava swirls through the St John’s Rapids and flows in a broad stream as far as Prague. The Vyšehrad appears, and finally the river disappears as it flows majestically into the Elbe.’

(The Vyšehrad is a ruined medieval castle, built on a rock high above the river just outside Prague; in the struggle for Czech nationalism, it was seen as an important symbol of Czech independence.) In addition to the programme given above, Smetana placed several headings in the score which define the exact descriptive content of the music.

Harmony and tonality

The music of the nineteenth century remained overwhelmingly tonal, but with a more flexible approach to key relationships than was found in the classical era, dominated by its tonic-dominant hierarchy. In particular modulations to keys a third apart (a tertiary relationship) were often used by Romantic composers. Harmonic sequences remained strongly functional in the main, but increasingly coloured by the use of rich, chromatic harmony. This wider harmonic palate can be seen throughout Vlatava; in particular there are extended passages with diminished seventh chords.

Structure

Vltava is a symphonic poem, a form of music first found during the Romantic period. Symphonic poems and tone poems (there is no significant difference between the two) are orchestral works which are usually written in one single continuous movement and are generally programmatic. The other common type of single movement orchestral work found at this time is the concert overture, a piece written to be heard at the start of a concert (rather than being the overture to an opera). However, it should be noted that the practice of performing popular operatic overtures as stand-alone concert pieces became established during the nineteenth century. Sonata form remained the most common structure for the first movement of symphonies but was not always used in symphonic poems; structures here were often more sectional, especially if responding directly to the programmatic content. Nonetheless, some composers were able to reconcile programme music with sonata form (e.g. Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*).

Commentary

1st Section (bars 1–79):

The first source of the Vltava (bars 1–15)

The flutes play semiquavers to represent the flowing water of the first source of the Vltava, accompanied by pizzicato violins. The tonality is E minor, but there are prominent C and D naturals in the melodic writing which uses the melodic minor scale.

The second source (bars 16–35)

The flutes are now joined by the clarinets, representing the second source of the river; they often play in contrary motion to the flutes. The pizzicato accompaniment continues, with the addition of a dominant pedal in the violas from bar 24.

With the entry of arco strings in bar 36 the music appears to represent 'the joining of both streams into one' (although Smetana does not specifically mark this moment into the score). The flute and clarinet music from bars 1–35 becomes the accompaniment to the main river theme, which begins at bar 39[6]. This is a typically romantic legato and lyrical melody, with mainly stepwise movement. In the section from bars 55–79 the music briefly modulates, passing through G major (bar 59), E minor (bar 63), B major (bar 65) and E major (bar 73). However, this is just for chromatic interest – the perfect cadence at the end of the phrase as the music repeats returns to E minor.

2nd Section (bars 80–238)

Forest: hunting (bars 80–117)

An interrupted cadence takes the music abruptly into C major at the start of this section. Horn calls imitate the sound of hunting horns; they are doubled by the woodwind, and the trumpets occasionally imitate the horns. The swirling semiquaver accompaniment continues in the strings.

Farmer's Wedding (bars 118–180)

Although it is not marked as such, this section is a Polka***,*** a folk dance of Bohemian origin. The tonality is G major. The music modulates to D major (the dominant) at bar 137, with a decorated version of the Polka theme; it returns to the tonic at bar 146. From bar 150 the Polka gradually dies away, first growing quieter, then fragmenting until only the bass note is left.

Moonlight: nymphs' dance (bars 181–238):

Muted strings (con sordini) play sustained slow-moving chords; the tonality is initially A flat major,

modulating to C minor at bar 201 and back to A flat major at bar 211. Underneath the string chords, the flutes resume a variation of the music they played at the beginning of the piece. From bar 211 the brass gradually become more prominent, and the music becomes more agitated, suggesting 'on the nearby cliffs proud castles, mansions and ruins rise up'. The music passes through E flat minor at bar 226 and then B major at bar 229; the dominant pedal which starts here forms a link to the next section.

3rd Section (bars 239–332):

The dominant pedal resolves to the tonic E minor, and the main river theme returns – bars 239–270 are an exact repeat of bars 48–79.

St John's Rapids (bars 271–332):

This begins with another interrupted cadence, but with the addition of a prominent A sharp which immediately underlines the chromatic nature of the harmony in this passage. The agitated character is created by overlapping rising scales in strings, repeated chords in the horns and trumpets, and high woodwind writing from bar 287. Diminished sevenths are heard frequently (e.g. bars 279–286 and 297–307), and the music reaches a climax, marked *fff*, at 321.

4th Section (bars 333–427):

The Vltava flows in a broad stream (bars 333–358)

The main river theme returns, but this time in E major.

Vyšehrad Motif (bars 359–373)

The ruined castle of *Vyšehrad* is portrayed by a theme from Smetana's opera *Libuše*, which also forms the main theme of the first symphonic poem in *Má Vlast (Vyšehrad)*. Here it forms a great climax, as the river Vltava flows past the castle.

A coda begins in bar 374, and from bar 413 the diminuendo shows the river disappearing as it 'flows majestically into the Elbe'.

Wider listening

Mendelssohn: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* overture, Op. 21

Emilie Mayer: *Faust overture*, Op. 46

Borodin: *String Quartet No. 2 in D*

Clara Schumann: *Piano Concerto in A minor*, Op. 7

Chopin: *Étude in E*, Op 10. No 3

Area of study 4: Music and words

In this area of study, candidates may be asked questions relating to:

- how musical features can be used to enhance the meaning of the words in art song and music for choirs
- the common processes and structures found in popular song and songs from musicals.

They will not be expected to:

- identify any instruments which are not already found in other areas of study
- identify or name any specific composers or performers
- identify the time period of an extract
- identify any specific genres of popular music.

Focus area: Art song for solo voice

The tradition of writing solo songs which had been such an important part of the Romantic era (Schubert alone wrote more than 500) continued into the twentieth century and beyond with astonishing variety and creativity. Composers wrote individual songs and might also group a collection of songs (perhaps with a related theme or with words by the same poet) into 'song cycles' to be sung consecutively in a continuous performance. Most songs were written with piano accompaniment, but other instrumental combinations were also found, Benjamin Britten's Serenade for Tenor, horn and strings being a notable example. Some pieces, for example Richard Strauss's monumental Four Last Songs, were composed with full orchestral accompaniment.

In the early years of the twentieth century, composers in both England and America challenged the established romantic style. While both nations shared a focus on the emotional expression of the poetry, their approaches diverged. English composers like Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi and Roger Quilter favoured a pastoral lyricism, weaving a sense of national identity into their songs. Often looking to folk music for their inspiration, they set a wide range of poetry to music, including words by Shakespeare as well as the English Romantic poets. Their American counterparts explored a wider range of influences. Charles Ives incorporated dissonance and experimentation into his works, reflecting the burgeoning American spirit at the beginning of the new century, whilst Aaron Copland drew inspiration from jazz and folk idioms.

The second half of the century was dominated in England by the songs of Michael Tippett and in particular Benjamin Britten who wrote some two hundred songs, whilst Ned Rorem emerged as a leader of American art song composition. Art songs continue to be written into the twenty-first century; notable composers in the genre include Jonathan Dove, Libby Larsen, Ola Gjeilo and Nico Muhly.

Musical features

Composers of art song aim to enhance the text by writing music which captures its overall atmosphere, and they may also choose to highlight the meaning of individual words or phrases using a variety of techniques in a process known as 'word-painting'. For example, if the words refer to something rising, the composer might set that part to an ascending melodic line or interval. They might also extend certain words using the technique of melisma, in which one syllable of text is sung to many notes in the melody line. When the words are set with one syllable per note, this is described as syllabic.

Structurally, art songs tend to be composed either in strophic form, in which each verse of the poem is set to the same melody and accompaniment, or they can be through-composed, which means the music continually changes responding to the developing narrative in the text.

'Songs of Travel' (1901–1904) by Ralph Vaughan Williams is one of the finest examples of English art song repertoire. The cycle is a setting of poems by Robert Louis Stevenson, tracing the emotional journey of a restless wanderer, in which Vaughan Williams uses the piano as well as the vocal line to portray the meaning of the words. In the bold opening song, 'The vagabond', Vaughan Williams sets the words to a memorable

marching rhythm with a striding bass, reflecting the traveller's determination to keep going along the open road. The tender poem 'Let beauty awake' is matched with gentle, lyrical music, with a rippling arpeggio accompaniment in the piano; the large rising interval in the forte repetition of the phrase 'let beauty awake' is a striking moment of word painting. 'In dreams', in which the wanderer pauses to remember the girl he has left behind, has a melancholy feel, created through a persistent, uneasy off-beat rhythm in the piano and a chromatic vocal line. Pianissimo, wide-spaced arpeggiated piano chords are combined with an expansive melodic line to evoke the vast brilliance of the night sky in 'The infinite shining heavens', whilst 'Whither must I wander?' is set rather simply, appropriate to the poet's images of childhood and the security of home and family. 'Bright is the ring of words' begins with a forthright opening, but quickly shifts in mood to one of tenderness and regret, and the epilogue, 'I have trod the upward and downward slope', quotes from three of the earlier songs, ending with a pianissimo version of the bass line from 'The Vagabond'.

Focus area: Music for choirs

An incredible amount of music has been written for choirs since the beginning of the twentieth century, with most major composers contributing significantly to this body of repertoire. Pieces range from simple, unaccompanied works, to epic compositions using vast choral forces accompanied by large orchestras. Examples of such works include Schoenberg's 'Gurre-Lieder' (1903), Janáček's 'Glagolitic Mass' (1927) and Britten's 'War Requiem' (1962). As in previous centuries, much of this music was written for the church, but there was also an increasing amount of secular music composed to be performed in concerts. Some pieces used religious texts but were written as concert pieces, for example Stravinsky's 'Symphony of Psalms'. Extracts of music used in the examination may be taken from secular or sacred works.

Musical features

The range of musical styles in which composers wrote was vast, mirroring the wider musical landscape of the time. Much in the same way as art song, composers still aimed to ensure their music enhanced the meaning of the words. The use of multiple voices meant that composers had a wide variety of vocal textures they could exploit when setting the words.

Some pieces have a simple, four-part homophonic texture, using a standard SATB (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) choir arrangement. Many use more parts by dividing one or more of the vocal parts, for example to create first and second sopranos; this allows for a richer texture, especially when the divisions are extended to create eight (SSAATTBB) or more parts. Another favoured arrangement was that of the 'double choir', in which the voices are divided equally into two SATB choirs. In this case, composers would often use antiphonal textures, in which one choir responds to the other. Composers also continued to use polyphonic textures, especially but not exclusively in church music.

Jonathan Dove's song cycle 'The Passing of the Year' (2000) is a setting of seven texts for double choir with piano accompaniment. It contains a very wide variety of textures and techniques in its word setting and accompaniment. 'Invocation' sets the words over an ostinato piano accompaniment which uses polyrhythm (triplet quavers in the left hand against straight quavers in the right hand). The voices initially sing homophonically in eight parts, but then add to the polyrhythmic complexity by building up in layers, singing simultaneously with triplet crotchets, triplet quavers and straight quavers. The polyrhythmic texture continues but is even more complex in 'The narrow bud opens her beauties to the sun'. An example of word-painting can be found when the sopranos soar to a high A during the words 'the spirits of the air'. 'Answer July' again uses an ostinato piano accompaniment. Over this, the choir sing with both homophonic and antiphonal textures. 'Hot sun, cool fire' uses the technique of aleatoric writing, in which the singers are given the words and a defined pitch but instructed to individually repeat each phrase at their own tempo. At the same time, the piano plays contrary motion arpeggios, creating an inventive texture to support the melody line. 'Ah, Sun-flower!' is notable for setting the words as an eight-part canon, with each voice entering one bar after another, creating an incredible overlapping effect. The solemn words 'Adieu! farewell earth's bliss!' are matched with a minor key setting. Whilst one choir sings a constant hymn-like refrain, the other sings the words in a dramatic, declamatory style. The final movement, 'Ring out, wild bells' is an incredible setting of the wild and stormy words. There is word-painting throughout, with both the piano and the voices representing the ringing of church bells. There is wide variety in the choral textures, with four and eight-part harmony, canon, and antiphonal exchanges.

Focus area: Popular song and songs from musicals

In the context of this syllabus, ‘Popular Song’ refers to music with vocals that has gained widespread appeal, primarily from the 1990s onwards. These songs are typically designed for entertainment and emotional connection, often reflecting contemporary social trends and cultural shifts. ‘Songs from Musicals’ form a specific subset of popular music, representing vocal works from the Western tradition of musical theatre, including a wide range of styles and song types such as solos, duets, and ensemble numbers. Both popular song and songs from musicals share structural and musical features designed to resonate with a broad audience.

Musical features

Popular music often features songs with catchy melodies, using hooks and riffs that make the music memorable. A hook, usually a short, repeated musical phrase, grabs the listener's attention, while a riff, often played by instruments like the guitar or synthesizer, forms a recognizable musical motif. These melodic elements often recur throughout a song, helping listeners easily recall the music. In musicals, melodies may be linked to specific characters or plot points, reinforcing the narrative.

The structure of popular songs have evolved to include components such as the intro, verse, chorus, bridge (also known as the middle eight), and outro. The most common form is the ABABCB structure, which alternates between verses and choruses, with a bridge offering contrast before a final chorus. This form remains prevalent in modern pop, while songs from musicals may adopt varied structures depending on their dramatic needs. For instance, some songs may be through-composed, meaning they do not repeat sections, while others may use strophic form, where the same melody repeats with different lyrics.

Pop songs and songs from musicals are both known for using a consistent tempo throughout. Tempo is usually referred to in BPM (beats per minute) rather than using Italian terms typical in Western Art Music. Upbeat, energetic pop songs will use a fast tempo (120-140BPM), while pop ballads will be much slower (60-90BPM). This precise control over tempo helps set the mood and emotional tone of both pop songs and musical theatre numbers.

Pop music production

Technology plays a significant role in modern popular music production. Techniques like *overdubbing* (recording additional audio tracks over an existing track to enhance or add layers to a song), *multi-tracking* (capturing multiple audio tracks separately and playing them back together in synchronization), and *double-tracking* (recording the same part twice and layering both recordings to create a thicker and more textured sound) all feature heavily in pop music and allow artists to create rich, full productions.

Effects such as *chorus* (duplicating a sound and slightly altering the pitch and timing to create the impression of multiple instruments playing together), *reverb* (simulating the natural reflections of sound in a space, giving the impression of depth or ambiance), and *delay* (repeating a sound after a short time interval, creating an echo-like effect) are often used to enhance vocal or instrumental parts, adding depth and atmosphere. These tools allow for the creation of dense, polished recordings, which are a hallmark of contemporary pop music. In contrast, songs from musicals, while often recorded, are usually written with live performance in mind, where vocal clarity and instrumental balance is key. Effects may enhance certain moments in a musical production, however, this is often used sparingly.

Vocal techniques

In popular songs, various vocal techniques are used to convey emotion and stylistic identity. Rap, a form of rhythmic, spoken vocal delivery that emerged in the 1990s, has become a key element in many pop songs. A pop song can be entirely rapped, or it can feature in a small section of the song, such as during a verse or a middle eight. In pop music, artists may also employ vocal improvisation, slides, and other expressive techniques (such as melisma) to make their performances more dynamic. In musical theatre, vocal performance can vary greatly depending on the role, from classically trained voices to more contemporary, speech-like delivery depending on the style of the show. Some musicals now also feature entire sections of rap, such as Hamilton.

Instruments

The instruments used in popular songs typically include electric guitar, bass guitar, drums, and synthesizers. In some styles, acoustic instruments like piano and acoustic guitar are also prominent. Synthesizers and drum machines, which allow for programmed beats and electronic sounds, are especially prevalent in pop production. Songs from musicals, on the other hand, may use a more traditional orchestral setup but often incorporate contemporary instruments like guitars, keyboards, and electronic effects to match the style of the show.

Performance contexts

Live concerts and shows:
Popular music is often performed in live settings ranging from intimate venues to large stadiums. Since the 1990s, live concerts have become more elaborate, featuring complex lighting, massive sound systems, and intricate visual effects, including projections and other theatrical components. Musicals, meanwhile, are primarily performed in theatres, with the West End (London) and Broadway (New York) remaining iconic locations for large-scale productions. These performances may feature full orchestras or smaller bands, depending on the style of the musical. Many largescale musicals also feature incredible special effects, projected visuals, puppetry and automated sets.

Broadcast media and streaming:
From the early 1990s, public radio continued to be an important platform for the sharing of current pop music. Television shows, such as MTV, then created an entirely new space for sharing music videos by pop artists, amplifying their reach exponentially. Then, with the rise of the internet and digital streaming platforms came *YouTube*, *Spotify*, and *Apple Music*, allowing for global distribution and instantaneous access to pop songs from any device. Songs from musicals are generally still tied to live performances, with recordings and filmed versions of shows becoming increasingly popular through streaming services to help expand reach and popularity to a global audience.

Starting points:

Libby Larsen: *Chanting to Paradise*

Jonathan Dove: *The Passing of the Year*

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul: *A Million Dreams from The Greatest Showman*

Area of study 5: Music for dance

In this area of study, candidates may be asked questions relating to:

- the musical features of any of the dance styles
- the specifically identified instruments (bandoneon, cuatro, clavés), and instruments which can be found in other areas of study
- the use of music technology in EDM
- the social and/or performance contexts of the music.

They will not be expected to:

- identify any sub-genres within each focus area
- identify or name any performers or composers
- identify the time period of an extract.

Focus area: Tango

Tango is an urban music genre that began in the city of Buenos Aires in the late 1800s and has become the most representative music and dance form of Argentina today. The arrival of a large number of immigrants from Italy, Spain and Eastern Europe, as well as African slaves brought to Argentina, shaped the development of tango as the music and dance styles of these different traditions merged.

Instruments

Tango music may be purely instrumental, or it may include a vocalist. In the early stages of its development, the most common instruments were the guitar, flute, violin and bandoneon. The 1920s saw the appearance of solo performers and a larger orchestra, known as an *orquesta tipica*, which usually comprised a string section (violins, viola and cello), a bandoneon section (three or more bandoneons), and a rhythm section of piano and double bass. The *orquestas tipicas* were most popular during the 'Golden Age' of tango from the 1930s to the 1950s. More recently, tango music ensembles have tended to be smaller combinations of trios, quartets or sextets.

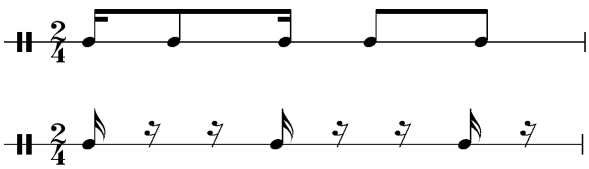
Bandoneon

The most distinctive instrument in a tango orchestra or band is the bandoneon, an accordion-like instrument with buttons rather than a keyboard. It has two hexagonal wooden manuals with buttons on either side of the bellows. A typical bandoneon has 71 buttons; 38 on the treble-range right hand side playing the melody and 33 on the bass-range left side. It is held between both hands and played by pushing and pulling the bellows to compress the air which passes through a series of metal reeds to produce the sound. Dynamic variations are achieved by squeezing or drawing the air through the instrument more quickly for greater volume or more slowly for softer volume.

Musical features

Rhythm

Tango music typically has a 2/4 or 4/4 metre, and the basis of early tango music was the habanera rhythm. Syncopated rhythms (*sincopa*) are a defining feature of Argentine tango, and two patterns in particular are commonly found, as shown in the example. These rhythms are typically found in the accompaniment, but they may also appear in the melody.



Although syncopated rhythm is a distinctive feature in tango, the marking of the beat is also important. This is known as playing 'marcado', which is Spanish for 'marked'. Marcado rhythm is the playing of notes on the beat in time, without syncopation. In 4/4 time, when all four beats are marked, this rhythm is known as 'marcado in four'. When only beats one and three are played, this rhythm is called 'marcado in two'. Both the marcado and syncopated rhythm are articulated in tango music to create the quintessential 'feel' of the genre. Many tango phrases also tend to begin with an anacrusis (upbeat). This pervasive upbeat to downbeat metrical feature may appear both in melodic and bass lines.

Melody, harmony and key

Tango is a genre which embodies passion but is also melancholic at the same time; as a result, melodies are often in two contrasting styles. The first is *ritmico* (rhythmic), in which two- and three-note groups in the melody are articulated by accents, short slurs, staccato, and ornaments such as turns and mordents. The second style is smooth flowing, legato and lyrical; the melody can often be performed in a loose, flexible and syncopated way, rather like the 'swing' in jazz. To express intensity in the music, glissando and portamento are often used, and the bandoneon frequently plays highly elaborated melodic lines.

Because of its melancholic nature, tango music is often dominated by minor keys; however, major key passages are used to provide contrast. The harmony, as with most popular music, uses basic chords and harmonic progressions, but these may be enriched with chromaticism.

Dynamics and articulation

Tango music sounds intense and dramatic, its dramatic intensity arising from the use of dynamics and articulation in the playing. Marcado rhythms are marked by short staccato phrases, which may be contrasted with legato, song-like passages. Sudden bursts of volume with strong chordal accompaniment and speeding up of tempo may contrast with soft and sultry slow passages.

Texture

The music is predominantly homophonic, consisting of a melody and accompaniment. Generally, the violins and bandoneons carry the melodic line while the piano and bass provide the harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. However, there are no strict rules; melody and accompaniment may cross over between instrumental groups and solos, and the bandoneon, for example, may fulfil a melodic, rhythmic or harmonic role. The violins may also assume an accompanying role as they balance and complement the bandoneons. The left-hand part of the piano and the bass typically double each other in the rhythm section, but the piano may also take on melodic and solo passages.

Structure

Tango music tends to have two or three primary sections, with musical phrases grouped into regular two, four or eight-bar segments. The sections are often played more than once; for example, a piece with just two sections may be performed with an A-B-A-B-A structure. If there are three sections, they may be played as A-B-A-C-A; however, a tango orchestra or ensemble may vary the order of the sections in performance. Repeated sections are usually different from the first by having different instrumentation, a change in the accompaniment, or by the melodic line being varied by the bandoneon. Sometimes an introduction, bridge or coda may be added to the structure.

Performance and social contexts

Initially, tango was associated with the lower-middle class bars, cafés, dance halls and clubs found in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. In the first decade of the twentieth century, tango spread to New York, Paris and other European cities, where the genre was well received. Following this, the high society in Buenos Aires began to embrace a cleaned-up, stylised version of the genre that became popular in urban Buenos Aires and other cities. From the 1930s, film and radio played an important role in spreading its popularity. Today, as a cosmopolitan and national art form of Argentina, tourists can hear tango in cafés and theatres, but it is also enjoyed by locals in neighbourhood courtyards.

Focus area: Salsa

Salsa is dance music that emerged in New York City between the 1950s and 1970s when waves of Puerto Rican, Cuban and Dominican immigrants arrived in the city. Discriminated against generally as Latino, these different groups of Spanish-speaking immigrants came together during the American civil rights movement to advance social justice and to affirm their own identity. Salsa music became a symbol of the pan-Latino ethnic identity.

The term ‘salsa’ literally means ‘hot sauce’. Dominican musician and bandleader Johnny Pacheco came up with the name in 1964 as a catchy and identifiable marketing label for the music when he founded his recording label Fania Records. Pacheco’s record label heralded the internationalisation of salsa music and fostered a line-up of musicians and singers such as Ray Barretto, Willie Colon, Bobby Valentin, and Celia Cruz. Known as the Fania All-Stars, they performed epic concerts in New York, North America, Latin America and beyond.

Instruments

A salsa ensemble typically includes vocals, Afro-Cuban percussion, piano, bass, trumpets, trombones, saxophone and *cuatro.* The size and number of players in the ensemble may range from 10 to 14 or more members.

Cuatro

The Puerto Rican *cuatro* is a small lute-like folk instrument. Its ten strings are arranged in pairs in five courses, and it is plucked like a guitar.

Clavés

Of Cuban origin, this consists of two cylindrical hardwood sticks, measuring from 20 to 30 cm in length and from 2 to 3 cm in diameter. To get a clear, crisp tone, one stick rests lightly on the fingertips of one hand with the cupped palm acting as a resonator, while the other stick (the striker) is held between the thumb and first two fingers.

A wide range of other percussion instruments is used in salsa music; they are listed here for the benefit of teachers, but candidates will not be expected to individually identify or describe them.

Bongos: a pair of small, single-headed drums with hardwood shells joined together horizontally by a piece of wood or metal bridge. They are struck with the hands and fingers.

Timbales: derived from European timpani, they are a pair of shallow, single-headed drums with a metal casing. Players use sticks to strike not only the heads but also the metal rims and sides of the instruments, adding distinctive timbres to salsa music’s rhythmic component.

Congas: conga drums have a tall, tapered or barrel-shaped shell made of wood or fibreglass. The drums are struck by the hands, and the pitch can be raised by applying pressure to the drumhead, from edge to centre, with the heel of the hand. They are used in sets of two to four drums of different sizes.

Cowbell: named after the bell used by herdsmen in Africa to keep track of their cows, the metal cowbell is held in one hand with the open part of the cowbell facing outward and hit by a stick with the other hand. To get different timbres, the cowbell may be hit on the main part of the metal body or nearer to the open mouth.

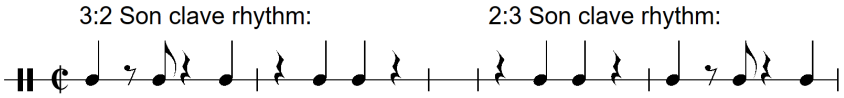
Maracas: a pair of rattle instruments traditionally made of dried calabash gourds or turtle shells filled with beans, beads or pebbles. Today, they may be made of many different materials such as wood or fibre. They are often played by the singer.

Güiro: an elongated percussion instrument made from a hollowed-out gourd, with raised notches cut on its side. It is played by rubbing a stick along the notches to produce long, short ratcheting sounds. Like the maracas, it is often played by the singer.

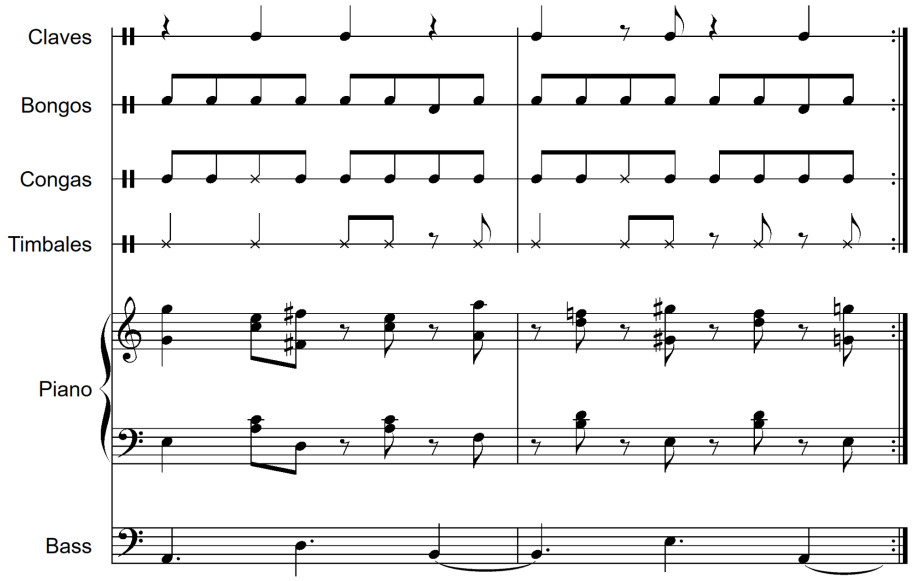
Musical features

Rhythm

The distinctive feel of salsa is structured around a two-bar rhythmic ostinato played by the clavé, known as *son* clavé. It determines the rhythmic patterns and relationships of all the other instruments in the band creating an interlocking polyrhythm. It can be felt either as a 'forward clave' 3:2 or 'reverse clave' 2:3 pattern, as shown.



The other rhythm instruments (e.g. bongos, congas and timbales) have their own parts and are played in relation to the clavé. The bass line has a distinctive anticipated bass pattern which emphasises off-beats rather than the downbeat stress. The piano also plays a distinctive two-bar rhythmic pattern, known as *montuno*. Pianists may use octave doublings and chord inversions to enrich the harmonic texture. A typical accompanying texture is shown here:



Harmony and key

Most salsa tunes feature simple four- or eight-bar harmonic progressions (e.g. I-V-V-I; I-IV-V-I; VI-II-V-I) with a single tonal centre, although extended jazz harmonies may be used at times. Both major and minor keys are used in salsa music.

Structure

Salsa music typically begins with an instrumental introduction. A verse, sung by a lead vocalist, is followed by a chorus. The chorus section features a call-and-response exchange between the lead vocalist and *coro* (chorus) singers, accompanied by a vamped two-, four- or eight-bar repeating harmonic progression. The chorus section is called *montuno* (but it should not be confused with the syncopated two-bar pattern played by the piano). The montuno section may also feature an instrumental section known as the *mambo*, which provides a brief respite for the singers; it can feature solo improvisation and flashy horn sections.

The verse and chorus may be repeated with various instrumental interludes.

Performance and social contexts

Salsa emerged in East Harlem, a neighbourhood of New York city, after World War II, when a wave of Puerto Ricans and other immigrants from Central and Latin America arrived. Salsa music was heard on the streets of Harlem, in barber shops and corner *bodegas* (grocery stores run by Puerto Rican immigrants). In the 1950s, the Afro-Cuban bands playing in mambo clubs began to incorporate other Latin elements into their music to create the unique sound that became salsa.

In the early days, when working-class Spanish-speaking immigrants had to fight for their rights, the lyrics of salsa recounted their hard lives and the harsh experiences of the New York Latino neighbourhoods. Strong rhythmic drive and prominent use of brass instruments giving the music a strident character reflected the violence and discontent the Latino communities experienced in the inner city.

By the 1980s, with the rise of middle-class Latinos in the United States and changes in socio-political environment, the sounds of salsa became more subdued and mellow. Salsa lyrics featured more romantic themes about love with more subdued percussion and brass parts.

As commercial recordings and production of salsa music launched by Fania Records heralded a new music and dance craze, salsa was performed everywhere from small clubs to large stadium and concert venues; the style became recognisable worldwide.

Focus area: EDM (Electronic Dance Music)

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s in clubs and dance halls in the United States and Europe. Early EDM drew on influences from disco, funk, and synth-pop, but quickly evolved into a range of subgenres such as house, techno, trance, dubstep, and more. Each subgenre takes on a distinct sound and atmosphere to encourage listeners to engage in free and expressive dancing. EDM is often defined by the use of electronic instruments (synthesisers and drum machines), repetitive driving rhythms, and the use of samples (snippets of existing recordings) in songs. EDM is now a global cultural movement with artists producing and performing music in almost every context, from small underground clubs to some of the world's biggest music festivals.

Instruments and production

Synthesisers

Synthesisers allow producers to generate a wide range of electronic sounds, from lush pads to sharp leads and punchy basslines. The Moog synthesiser is widely regarded as an important instrument in the development of the EDM sound.

Drum machines

Drum machines provide the driving rhythms, complex percussion patterns, and precise timing found in EDM. Some of the original drum machines that helped shape EDM were the Roland TR808 and the Yamaha DX7.

Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs)

DAWs are software platforms used by EDM producers to compose, arrange, mix, and master tracks. They provide a comprehensive suite of tools for recording and manipulating audio, MIDI sequencing, applying effects, and shaping the overall sound of a track. The transition from traditional hardware-based studios (synthesisers and drum machines) to computer-based production workflows has revolutionised the way EDM is created, allowing for greater flexibility, creativity and efficiency in the production process.

Candidates will not be expected to identify any specific synthesiser or drum machine.

Musical features

Rhythm

Four-to-the-Floor

Many EDM tracks feature a steady four-to-the-floor rhythm, where a kick drum hits on every beat of a 4/4 bar. This consistent kick pattern provides a solid foundation for dancing and creates a driving sense of momentum throughout the track.

Offbeat Rhythms

Offbeat rhythms, where sounds fall on the second quaver of the beat rather than the downbeat, are common in EDM. This rhythmic technique adds complexity and swing to the music, giving it a lively and dynamic feel.

Syncopated Percussion

EDM tracks often incorporate syncopated percussion elements such as shakers, hi-hats, claps, and snares. These percussive elements are often added in a staggered fashion, slowly building a thicker rhythmic texture.

Tempo

While there is flexibility in tempo within EDM, the sub-genre and artistic intention of the music generally determines the tempo range. For example:

- House, progressive house, and trance generally falls between 120 to 140 beats per minute (BPM)
- Dubstep, drum and bass, and techno may have tempos that range from around 140 to 175 BPM
- Downtempo, chillout, and ambient EDM often uses slower tempos of 100 to 120 BPM

Melodic hooks

Melodic hooks are catchy, memorable sequences of notes that serve as the focal point of a track. These melodies often feature repetitive motifs or phrases that are instantly recognisable and easy for listeners to recall. Melodic hooks are often performed or created using a synthesiser.

Builds and drops

Builds and drops are commonly found in EDM tracks, creating tension and release to enhance the overall impact and excitement of the music. Builds typically feature rising volume, an increase in texture, and increasing rhythmic complexity. The end of the build is often signalled by a pause and is then resolved through the drop, where powerful bass lines, drum fills, and dramatic sound effects are introduced to create euphoric moments that elevate the energy of the dancefloor.

Builds and drops are often used to determine the dynamics and structure of a piece. A typical EDM track structure might be:

Introduction

Build (Pre-Chorus)

Drop (Chorus)

Breakdown (Bridge)

Build (Pre-Chorus)

Drop (Chorus)

Outro

Effects

Effects play a crucial role in shaping the sound and atmosphere of an EDM track, adding depth, texture, and movement to the music. There are countless effects that an artist may use, but three of the most common are reverb, delay and filtering.

Reverb adds spaciousness and depth to sound sources and is used to create a sense of immersion and ambience, particularly on melodic elements like synths and vocals.

Delay creates echoes of the original sound, adding rhythmic interest and movement to the music; it can create complex rhythmic patterns and build tension.

Filtering involves selectively attenuating or boosting certain frequencies in a sound source. For example, low-pass filters are often used to help create the build and tension before a drop, while high-pass filters can be used to create moments of release and contrast.

Transmission of music

Early EDM producers learned through a combination of hands-on experimentation, mentorship and through 'recreating' tracks. This approach has continued to be an important and contextually rich method for EDM production today.

Hands-on experimentation is an important starting point for learning EDM and is often referred to as 'tinkering'. This is where a musician will acquire a piece of hardware or software and spend time testing buttons, dials and controls to see what they can make. Many EDM producers will also learn from a mentor, otherwise known as a 'significant other' – a friend, family member or YouTuber that 'teaches' through demonstrations, tutorials and the documentation of their workflow. The significant other does not necessarily need to be a formally trained teacher. EDM producers often aim to 'recreate' popular tracks using their particular setup of software and hardware. This shows respect for existing producers, but also provides space for individuality, ingenuity and creativity as a musician develops their own interpretation of the piece. This process often acts as an entry point into a particular community of practice, e.g. an online forum or music sharing site.

Performance contexts

DJ sets

DJ sets are one of the most popular forms of EDM performance. A DJ will perform by mixing and blending pre-recorded tracks together. Their aim is often to create a continuous flow of music to influence how the audience responds through movement and dance. Early DJ sets would be performed using analogue equipment such as turntables, vinyl records, mixers, and effects units. DJ equipment has since evolved to include digital controllers and a variety of software applications to improve efficiency and creative scope. Some common performance techniques used by DJs include adjusting tempo and pitch, applying effects including filters, delay and reverb, and controlling the seamless transition between songs. DJs might also incorporate elements of live remixing, scratching, and crowd interaction into their performances to further engage the audience.

Live production

Live production sets involve EDM artists producing and manipulating music in real time using electronic instruments, controllers, and software. Performers will trigger samples, play synthesisers and drum machines, create live loops, manipulate effects, and arrange and remix tracks 'on the fly'.

Live bands

Some EDM artists perform with live bands, combining electronic elements with live instrumentation such as guitars, drums, keyboards, and vocals. Live band performances bring a dynamic energy and human element to EDM, blending electronic and acoustic sounds to create a unique fusion of styles.

Starting points:

Piazzolla: *Libertango*

Hector Lavoe: *El Cantante*

F-777: *Viking Arena*

Area of study 6: Music for small ensemble

In this area of study, candidates may be asked questions relating to:

- the musical features of any of the styles
- the specifically identified instruments (*dizi, sheng, erhu, pipa, yangqin, ban, bangzi tambūrā, sitār, sarōd, sārangī, bānsurī, tablā, ud, violin, qanun, nay, riqq*)
- the transmission of the music
- the performance contexts of the music.

They will not be expected to:

- identify or name any performers
- identify the time period of an extract.

Focus area: Silk and bamboo ensembles

Traditionally, music ensembles have existed all over China; many of these are part of Chinese village societies or associations which provide their services as paid professionals performing for religious or social ceremonies such as weddings, celebrations and funerals. At the same time, music-making for pleasure has also existed. In the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, amateur music-making activities began to spread in urban areas; amateur musicians from well-to-do families and educated backgrounds would gather and play music for self-improvement and to entertain themselves.

In China, string and wind instrumental ensembles are known as *sizhu*, literally 'silk-and-bamboo', as they comprise instruments made from bamboo and instruments with silk strings. Two of the most common types of silk-and-bamboo ensemble can be found in the Jiangnan and Guangdong regions. Candidates should listen to music from both to understand the musical features they have in common, but they will only be expected to identify and/or describe the specific instruments listed below which are found in the *Jiangnan sizhu* ensemble.

Instruments

Melody instruments

Dizi

The *dizi* is a side-blown flute made from a piece of bamboo with six finger holes and a blowhole. Halfway between the finger holes and the blowhole is an extra hole which is covered by a thin membrane of bamboo skin. This membrane produces a buzzing tone colour and amplifies the volume. It is normally the leading instrument of the ensemble.

Sheng

The *sheng* is a mouth organ made up of fourteen to seventeen bamboo pipes of different lengths set in a small wind chamber. Each pipe has a reed made of metal or brass attached to the end of it. Sound is produced by exhaling and inhaling air through a wooden or metal blowpipe connected to the base and by closing the finger holes in the gap in selected pipes. It can produce two or more tones simultaneously, producing the harmony of a fourth, fifth or octaves.

Erhu

The *erhu* is a two-stringed, bowed fiddle. It has a round and long fretless pole mounted perpendicular to a small hexagonal-shape soundbox covered by snakeskin. Two silk strings (in modern day, steel or nylon strings) are fastened to the lower end of the pole and are passed over the face of the soundbox by means of a small bamboo bridge and then wound onto tuning pegs at the top. The bow rests between the two strings, and sound is produced by pushing or pulling the bow against the inner or outer string.

Pipa

The *pipa* is a plucked lute with four strings; it is made of wood and has frets on the neck and body of the instrument. Traditionally, silk strings were used but today, nylon-wrapped steel strings are used to make it sound more powerful; as a result, finger picks are attached to the right-hand fingers, which pluck the strings to produce sound. The left-hand presses on the frets to produce the desired pitch. In the *Jiangnan sizhu* style of playing, it elaborates the melody by using performance techniques such as tremolos, harmonics and glissandi.

Yangqin

The *yangqin* is a hammered dulcimer. It has two rows of bridges at the top, each supporting eight to twelve courses of metal strings (two strings per course) passing over each bridge. In the lower octave, each course has a single string. The strings are struck with two slender bamboo beaters covered with felt.

Percussion instruments

The percussion part in a *Jiangnan sizhu* ensemble is played by a single musician, who holds a wooden clapper (the *ban*) in the left hand while the right hand strikes a woodblock (the *bangzi*) with a stick. The *ban* marks the strong (and at times the medium strong) beat, with the *bangzi* playing the rest of the beats. Although the percussion part is not technically demanding, the percussionist plays an important role of controlling the tempo of a piece and signalling changes in tempo between sections. In the slow section in 4/4 time, the woodblock subdivides the weak beats into two, four or eight pulses in an improvisatory manner. As the tempo quickens, the rhythmic patterns in the woodblock becomes less dense; as the music progresses into a very fast tempo in the last section, the clapper and woodblock alternate in rapid succession.

Many other melody instruments can be found in *Jiangnan sizhu* or *Guangdong* music ensembles, but candidates will not be expected to identify or describe them.

Musical features

Scale / mode / melody

The Chinese scale system is heptatonic, having seven degrees in an octave. However, the majority of melodies are pentatonic, consisting of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th degrees of the scale. The 4th and 7th degrees are commonly used as leading or passing tones, which are essential for filling in the gaps and helping to elaborate the melody, particularly when the music is in a slow metre.

Performances of Chinese music are based on pre-existing melodies (known as *qupai* or ‘labeled melodies’) which form the basis for creating variations. These melodies are relatively brief, and most are in 2/4 metre. A typical method of transforming the labeled melody is by slowing down the metre to 4/4 time, then inserting more notes between the main melody notes. This results in more densely decorated versions of the original labeled melody. As the piece progresses and the tempo speeds up, the melody becomes less ornamented until it is stripped back to its original form.

Texture

Harmony in the Western sense does not traditionally exist in Chinese instrumental music. Rather, each instrument decorates the basic melodic outline in different ways according to the idiom and technique of each instrument, resulting in simultaneous variation of the same melody. This form of musical texture is known as heterophony. The ability to ornament the basic melody spontaneously is an important feature of Chinese music and is a highly regarded skill in the playing of *Jiangnan sizhu* and *Guangdong* music. Thus, for the musicians, the music is never played in the same way each time.

Metre, rhythm and tempo

Metrical structure in Chinese music is referred to as *banyan* ('beat and eyes'), *ban* (also the name of the clapper percussion instrument) being the strong beat of a measure and *yan* the subsidiary beats. In Chinese music, duple or quadruple metre is common; triple metre is rare. Sometimes, free tempo sections may introduce a piece or end a piece. In general, Chinese instrumental music tends to progress from slow to mid- to fast and really fast tempo. Slow to mid-tempo sections are often in 4/4; fast sections are in 2/4, and towards the end of a piece when the tempo really accelerates to a very fast tempo, the metre is in 1/4.

Transmission of music

Traditionally, oral/aural transmission was an important part of music learning and was usually passed on within the family. Amateur groups still tend not to use notation when they play, but with the introduction of music conservatoires, music learning has become more formalised, and students usually play from notated scores. Different forms of notation systems exist, including western staff notation, but cipher notation in which the numbers 1 to 7 are used to represent the degrees of the heptatonic scale is the most common way of writing music down.

Performance contexts

Jiangnan sizhu is usually performed by amateur musicians who play for recreation. Groups meet weekly in the teahouses and community centres dotted around the city of Shanghai. At any gathering, the number of players is not fixed; as few as two or as many as ten or more players may participate, but generally, only one of each instrument is played. If more players of a particular instrument turn up, the players will take it in turn to play. Today, groups may also be invited to play on the concert stage.

In the early twentieth century, *Guangdong* music was also played in teahouses by amateur musicians. However, it soon developed into a form of pure entertainment music by semi-professional or professional music bands. This music came to be played on radio, in dancehalls and on television. The music is also used in films and recorded commercially, particularly in Hong Kong. In places such as Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States, Cantonese music is often played by modern, larger Chinese orchestras.

Focus area: Hindustani classical music

India is a huge country with diverse languages, religions and sub-cultures, and an extensive range of musical traditions which include classical, folk, film, dance, theatre and religious music. The system of Classical Hindustani Music developed in the northern part of the country, particularly (although not exclusively) in the state of Rajasthan. In India, music has a close affinity with religion as it is believed that music originates as a divine manifestation and a gift from God – Nāda Brahmā ('sound as god').

Instruments

Drone instruments

The background sound of a drone is central to the texture of any performance. The drone instrument is the four-string lute known as the *tambūrā*. It has a long, unfretted neck with four or five strings tuned to the tonic and dominant of the scale (*rāga*). In performance, the *tambūrā* player sits behind the soloist and strums the strings in a fairly free rhythm. The sound of the drone has two important functions: firstly, the tonic pitch is of prime importance in the *rāga*, so the sounding of the tonic string on the *tambūrā* helps to provide the reference pitch for the entire performance. Secondly, the sound of the drone helps to create the ambience and mood of the music.

Melody Instruments

Sitār

The *sitār* has a long neck with moveable metal frets, and a main resonator. It has a varying number of strings but 17 is usual: three to four are playing strings, three to four are drone or rhythm strings, and the rest are sympathetic strings. The playing and drone strings are plucked with a plectrum; the sympathetic strings are almost never played but they vibrate whenever the corresponding note is sounded.

Sarōd

The *sarōd* has a wooden body covered with goatskin and a broad neck that has a fretless fingerboard covered in a smooth metal sheet upon which the player slides the cuticles of the left hand while the right hand plucks the strings with a plectrum. The sarōd has four to five main playing strings, four drone strings and approximately 15 sympathetic strings.

Sārangī

The *sārangī* is a fretless, bowed lute with three main playing strings, one drone string, and up to 40 sympathetic strings. It is held vertically, with the instrument resting on the lap. A bow is held with the right hand and the left hand plays stopped notes by sliding against the strings with the cuticles.

Bānsurī

The *bānsurī* is a flute made from bamboo. It has six or seven finger holes; it is keyless, so the player must master difficult whole and half-hole fingering techniques to play the microtones and slides that are commonly heard in performance.

Many performances will also include a vocalist.

Percussion instruments

Tablā

The *tablā* is a pair of drums comprising a smaller, higher-pitched right-hand drum – the *tablā* – and a bigger left-hand drum – the bayan. The heads of both drums are made of goatskin, with a circle of black tuning paste. The *tablā* player has the important role of keeping the time cycle (*tāla*), and may also at times play complicated cross-rhythms. Players learn the different sounds and strokes for each hand by reciting drum syllables known as *bōls*.

Musical features

Scale/mode/melody

The Indian scale has seven basic pitches, which are identified by syllables known as the *sargam*: sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa. Just as notes in a western scale can be made sharp or flat, pitches in the Indian scale can also be altered, with the exception of the notes sa (the tonic) and pa (the dominant), which are never altered as they are thought to be 'pure'. The tonic is relative and can be pitched anywhere; usually a vocalist or instrumentalist decides the pitch for sa.

Using these pitches, a *rāga* can be constructed. A *rāga* is a scale with five or more notes in ascending and descending format, but it is also the basis of Indian melody, comprising recurring melodic motifs and strong tonal centres. *Rāgas* have extra-musical associations such as mood, time of day or season of the year.

Time cycle

The concept of time in Hindustani music is *tāla*, in which cycles of beats (*mātras*) are divided into groups of short and long sections (*vibhags*). In the Hindustani music system, a large number of *tāla* exist, with the 16-beat tīntāl being the most common. The first beat (*sam*) is the most important in all metrical cycles and it is often played with emphasis to mark the beginning of the cycle. Instrumentalists must have a good knowledge of the structure of the different *tālas* so as to be able to come in on the first beat with the drummer.

Structure

In a Hindustani classical music performance, two aspects are always present: composition and improvisation. The central feature of a *rāga* performance is the fixed composition known as *gat*, but before this is heard, the soloist plays (or sings) a slow, non-metrical and freely improvised section known as the *alāp*. This allows them to define and explore the notes of the *rāga*. This section is accompanied only by a *tāmburā* drone. As the playing progresses, the music becomes more rhythmic and a pulse is felt (although there is still no fixed metre): this is the *jōr* section.

At the entry of the *tablā* which introduces the *tāla* metrical cycle, the fixed composition (gat) begins. From this point, the soloist elaborates the composition with ornamentations, melodic expansions and improvisation. The *tablā* keeps the time cycle going but at times may also improvise virtuosic rhythmic patterns as a display of

their skill. As the performance progresses, the soloist speeds up, climaxing with the repeated striking of the drone strings in between other pitches. This section, known as the *jhāla*, concludes the performance.

In some performances, the *jhāla* may be heard after the *jōr*.

Transmission of music

Indian classical music was historically transmitted via the guru-shishya (teacher-disciple) system or within the family from parent to child. In the old days, a student learned from only one guru and the relationship of a teacher-disciple was one of utter commitment on both sides: the student lived with the guru and took on the chores of the teacher's household, and equally the guru devoted much time on teaching and nurturing the student. Transmission was through oral and aural repetition and practice. In modern times the old traditions of the guru-shishya system are no longer as strong, and there are now many music schools where performance can be learned.

Performance contexts

In the past, classical music was heard only in courts and temples, but with the decline of the court by the end of the nineteenth century, the rising urban middle classes became the new patrons of classical music. From the twentieth century, classical music was heard more widely, especially in urban centres and cities.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, semi-private performances in people's houses (especially the teachers' houses) were common. With social change throughout India in modern times, however, performances of classical music began to take place in auditoriums and concert halls and were also broadcast on television and radio. This brought new changes to classical performances: larger venues meant that amplification was often necessary, and *rāga* performances were shortened so that concerts ended at fixed times. Increasing public exposure has brought worldwide fame to performers such as Ravi Shankar.

Focus area: Arab takht ensembles

Arabic music is a general term for the styles and genres of music of all the people who make up the Arab world today, which includes Turkey, Egypt, countries in the Arab peninsula (e.g. Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia) and many parts of North Africa (e.g. Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco). The most representative type of instrumental music found in the eastern Arab world is played by the takht ensemble. Traditionally, this is a small ensemble consisting of four melodic instruments and a percussion instrument; it can play on its own as instrumental music, or can be used to accompany singing or dancing. When vocals are added, there can be one male or female soloist and a group of three to six singers. In more recent times, the number of performers in the ensemble is not fixed; there could be more, or sometimes fewer, performers.

Instruments

Melody instruments

Ud (also spelled Oud)

The *ud* is a pear-shaped plucked lute which has a short, unfretted neck. It has five strings in double courses which are played with a plectrum held in the right hand. The main body of the instrument has a rounded back and a flat face.

Violin

Originally, an indigenous lute called the *kaman* was played in takht ensembles, but in the mid-nineteenth century it was replaced by the western violin.

Qanun (also spelled kanun)

The *qanun* is a zither that is placed either across the performer's lap or on a small table in front of the seated performer. It has 25 to 27 sets of strings stretched across the face of the instrument; each set of strings contain three strings tuned to the same note. The strings are plucked by a short plectrum attached to the index finger of each hand. Tiny levers allow the player to change the length and tune the strings. The instrument has a range of over three octaves.

Nay (also spelled Ney)

The *nay* is an end-blown flute made from a piece of hollow reed, which comes in different sizes. The *nay* has six holes on top and one thumbhole on the underside. The instrument is open at both ends; the player rests their lips on one end and blows across the rim (rather like blowing over a bottle) to produce the sound, holding it at an angle to the right side of the body.

Percussion instruments

Riqq

The *riqq* is a tambourine with five sets of cymbals mounted around the rim; the face of the tambourine is traditionally made from goat or fish skin and is mounted on a circular wooden frame.

Musical features

Scale/mode/melody

In Arabic music, a melodic mode is called a *maqam*. A *maqam* is built from a scalic system comprising 24 notes per octave. It includes all of the 12 semitones of Western music, but a further division into quarter steps gives it a total of 24 notes. The notes one-quarter step below the Western natural notes are called half-flats and the notes one-quarter step above the Western natural notes are known as half-sharps.

In performance, however, not all the 24 notes will be played. The fundamental scale usually consists of seven pitches to the octave, making it heptatonic. But the great variety of possible notes per octave provides scope for the great number of melodic modes that exist in Arabic music. Thus, a *maqam* will contain a specific choice of pitches, intervals, and specific melodic patterns which give the music its distinctive characteristics, moods and emotions. It is the basis upon which musical improvisations and compositions are carried out.

Rhythm

A rhythmic mode in Arabic music is called an *iqa*. There are many rhythmic modes; each consists of a succession of beats, with a unique structure, character and mood. The beats can be verbalised using mnemonic sounds; the first sound is *dumm*, the lowest sound possible on a drum, made when it is struck toward the centre of the drumhead. The second is *takk*, a short high-pitched sound played at the rim of the drum. Using these two sounds, a variety of drum rhythms can be spoken. One of the most widely used pattern in Arabic music is the *maqsum*, an 8-beat rhythm. The pattern is as follows (D = *dumm;* T = *takk;* – = *rest*):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
D T – T D – T –

In performance, the drummer is expected to ornament the basic rhythmic patterns by adding to the *takk* strokes. The drummer is able to freely vary any given rhythm by improvising on the basic structure.

Texture

In Arabic music, a single melodic line is presented in performance; this is the case whether there is one or many performers. Traditionally, there are no chords or harmony in this music. Melodies are performed using a variety of textures. The texture of monophony is common when there is a solo voice or solo instrument. Solos may also be accompanied by a melodic drone, or melodic or rhythmic ostinato patterns. A solo voice or instrument may also alternate with a responding group of instruments in a call and response section.

In ensemble performance, the texture of heterophony is common; multiple instrumentalists and singers perform a melody together, but each performer may play variations of the melody according to the idiom of their instrument. When one or more instruments accompany a solo voice, the instrumentalists may also spontaneously create simultaneous imitations of the vocalist's melodic line, resulting in rich heterophonic textures.

Structure

The repertoire of the takht ensemble is based around a suite form consisting of about 10 to 12 pieces based in the same *maqam* with different rhythmic modes. Most pieces begin with an *ud* improvisation, known as *taqsim*, to establish the mood and mode of a performance. Following the improvisation, short instrumental compositions and several pre-composed songs may follow. Improvisatory solos (*taqsim*) on other instruments may be added in between the compositions.

If there are vocals, an unmetred vocal improvisation known as *layali* could also be used. Its role is similar to that of the *taqsim* instrumental improvisation. In the *layali*, the singer improvises melodically by using combinations of *'ya layli* ('O my night') or *ya layl* ('O night'), or *layali* ('nights'). These words are sung more for their enchanting lyrical effect rather than their literal meaning.

Transmission of music

While earlier generations of musicians were often self-taught or had studied with one or more master musicians, the new generation of musicians are trained in music conservatories and music colleges, which were established at the end of the nineteenth century.

Performance contexts

During the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, performances of takht ensembles were hosted by the rich elite and local government officials in private homes or courts and palaces. These were exclusive events attended mostly by patrons and their families and friends, in contexts such as wedding parties, religious holidays and receptions of the elite and officials.

Public performances often took place in the open courtyards of a home, attracting audiences from surrounding neighbourhoods. Performances also took place in coffeehouses, but these were considered less prestigious and tended to be frowned upon due to the totally public nature of the event.

In the twentieth century, following the introduction of concert halls and opera houses by the Europeans, takht ensembles began to play in these venues. Radio, television and film also became the media through which art music was disseminated to a wide audience.

Starting points:

San Liu, as performed by the Chinese National Orchestra

Rāga khamāj, as performed by Ravi Shankar

Wasla en sabâ, as performed by Al-Kindî Ensemble

Area of study 7: Music for stage and screen

In this area of study, candidates may be asked questions relating to:

- how musical features can be used to highlight specific actions, and help to create different scenes or emotions.

They will not be expected to:

- identify any instruments which are not already found in other areas of study
- identify or name any specific composers
- identify the time period of an extract.

Focus area: Ballet music

Many of the most important and well-known compositions of the twentieth century were written for the ballet stage. Composers wrote in a wide range of styles, including modernism, impressionism, neo-classicism and minimalism. If appropriate to their class, teachers may use this focus area to teach an overview of twentieth century musical style, although this is not an expectation.

It was common for composers to arrange music from their full-length ballets into shorter orchestral ballet suites, which could be performed in concert without the choreography. This sometimes involved substantial re-orchestration, for example in Aaron Copland's orchestral suite from 'Appalachian Spring'. Repertoire from both full ballets and ballet suites may be explored in this focus area.

A key feature of ballet in the twentieth century was the importance of collaboration between composers and choreographers. There were different types of collaboration; sometimes the composer would create the music first, and the choreographer would then interpret it through dance, for example in 'The Rite of Spring' where Stravinsky's brutal music heavily influenced Nijinsky's ground-breaking choreography. In other instances, the choreographer might develop a concept for the ballet and its dance movements, with the composer then writing music that responded to it. Martha Graham's collaborations with Aaron Copland are prime examples of this approach. The most integrated approach involved both artists working together throughout the creative process, constantly refining the music and movement in tandem. This closer partnership allowed for a deeper connection between music and dance. The music was no longer just secondary to the dancing it had sometimes been in previous eras; it now became a vital part of the storytelling. As well as enhancing and highlighting specific moments of action on stage, the music could be used to show different characters' emotional expressions, create the overall mood for a scene, and help to set the ballet in a particular location, often by writing music inspired by local folk tunes or dances.

Instruments and ensembles

Modern ballet scores sometimes used vast orchestral resources to achieve the dramatic sounds which enhance the action on stage. Stravinsky's orchestra for 'The Rite of Spring' is very large indeed, with a typical performance often involving nearly a hundred players. In addition to a large string section, he extended the wind section to include a piccolo, three flutes, alto flute, four oboes, *cor anglais*, five clarinets (including the high E-flat and low bass clarinet), four bassoons and a contrabassoon. The weighty brass section features eight horns, five trumpets, three trombones and two tubas. Some of the players in both sections are also asked to double on other instruments, giving Stravinsky an even wider orchestral palette to draw from. The large and varied percussion section includes five timpani played by two players, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, crotales (antique cymbals), triangle, tambourine and guiro.

Not all scores were on this scale, however ballet orchestras are required to play in an orchestra pit, with the dancers occupying the stage above. Orchestra pits vary considerably in size, and composers commissioned to write ballet music for a particular venue had to take this into account. Aaron Copland's original orchestration for 'Appalachian Spring' used just thirteen instruments: a flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, four violins, two violas,

two cellos and a double bass. This was the largest number that could comfortably fit into the pit at the Library of Congress's Coolidge Auditorium (Washington DC) where the first performance took place.

Musical features

Stravinsky's 'Petrushka' (1911) is set during a bustling Shrovetide Fair in St. Petersburg and follows the story of a puppet who longs for love and freedom but is trapped by the controlling Showman. The musical style is a radical departure from earlier ballet scores, using dissonance, strong rhythms, and innovative orchestral techniques to depict the emotions and struggles of the puppets. The famous 'Petrushka chord' (a simultaneous sounding of C major and F sharp major triads to create extreme dissonance) is used as a recurring idea to represent the main character. Stravnsky also associates specific instruments with the different characters: a shrill clarinet portrays Petrushka's high-pitched voice and frantic emotions; the Ballerina's beauty and allure is represented by lush string writing; a booming bassoon embodies the deep voice and menacing personality of the Moor, and trumpet fanfares announce the presence and control of the Showman. Alongside the emotional dissonant passages, Stravinsky writes tonal melodic music based on Russian folk melodies to give the fairground a sense of place.

Stravinsky followed the success of 'Petrushka' with 'The Rite of Spring' (1913), which depicts a pagan ritual in prehistoric Russia; it begins with the awakening of spring and the adoration of the earth, and culminates in a sacrificial dance as an offering to the gods. The radical techniques found in Petrushka are taken to an even further extreme, and 'The Rite of Spring' caused a sensation at its first performance. Although Stravinsky doesn't entirely reject tonality in the work there is rarely any clear sense of key, and the use of harsh dissonance is even more prevalent here. There are many passages of bitonality and polytonality (where different keys are heard simultaneously). The work is rhythmically highly charged, and Stravinsky utilizes ostinato, polyrhythm and complex and constantly changing time signatures, particularly in the sacrificial dance, to create the brutal and primitive sounds for many of the tribal dances. However, once again there are references to folk songs which root the ballet in its Russian setting.

The score for 'Romeo and Juliet' (1935) by Sergei Prokofiev brilliantly captures the drama, passion, and tragedy of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers. Prokofiev uses leitmotifs (musical themes which are associated with specific characters and ideas) throughout the work to help listeners follow the story. He writes soaring melodies for the love scenes and harsher, dissonant passages for the moments of conflict between the warring Montagues and Capulets.

In contrast to the dissonant music of Stravinsky, Aaron Copland's music followed a tonal and melodic path, achieving great popularity. His lively ballet 'Rodeo' (1942) is a simple love story set against the backdrop of American ranch life. The sense of nationalism is clear, with the world of cowboys and cowgirls evoked through a score which is filled with American folk tunes. The famous 'Hoe-Down' celebrates the lively atmosphere of a rodeo dance, featuring fast tempos, driving rhythms, and prominent string and percussion sections to create a sense of joyous celebration. Copland followed the success of 'Rodeo' with another nationalist ballet two years later; 'Appalachian Spring' (1944) depicts the emotions of a young couple building a life together amidst the beauty of the Appalachian landscape. Again, the ballet incorporates elements of American folk music, most notably the Shaker hymn 'Simple Gifts'.

Focus area: Film music

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the film industry made various attempts at fusing silent motion pictures with sound and music. It was commonplace to find a live pianist, organist, or even a small instrumental ensemble in a movie theatre to help enhance the action on screen. Experiments in synchronising audio on discs with projectors worked with limited success, and it was only once inventors in Germany discovered how to record sound onto rolls of film that it was possible to make music an integral part of the motion pictures. 'Don Juan' (1926) was the first full-length feature to make use of this synchronised sound but was overshadowed by 'The Jazz Singer' (1927), famously known as the first 'part-talkie' – a feature that contained a balance of both dialogue and music.

Max Steiner's music for 'King Kong' (1933) was the first fully scored soundtrack for a feature-length motion picture, revolutionising music in cinema. Steiner reintroduced Richard Wagner's operatic idea of the *leitmotif*,

a musical phrase or idea associated with a specific character, scene, or emotion. Other elements from opera and musical theatre began to make their way into cinema, including the overture, a composition designed to introduce the major themes and melodies before they occur – the precursor for theme or title music. A well-established instance of this format can be found during the opening of 'The Wizard of Oz' (1939) where we hear selections of 'Over the Rainbow', 'Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead', and 'Come Out, Come' in seamless succession.

Composers traditionally conduct their ensembles in studios to the edited movie reel that contains a timecode to help the conductor match the music with the action on screen. This was originally done by magnetically recording the literal 'soundtrack' to the physical film reel. Nowadays composers work with sound engineers and music producers using professional software on computers, meaning coordination between audio and visuals is much more accurate, making the process much easier than it had been previously. More advanced musical notation software now includes internal timecodes for composers of film music, so that the music can be synchronised even before the musicians record in a studio.

Composing film music is a very complicated process and requires a lot of planning. The demands of major studios on composers are very high, and movies are made to tight, often unnegotiable deadlines, meaning, quite literally, that the music a composer writes can make or break the success of a movie. In preparation for this, lengthy discussions will take place between the director, producer, and the composer, long before a single note is written or initial idea generating takes place.

Instruments and ensembles

Composers look for a sound palette best suited to the action that happens on screen; they employ orchestras of varying sizes and will add or subtract instruments to suit the needs of the story. Many big-budget blockbusting hits have employed huge orchestras to help create loud and dynamic soundtracks, reflecting the spectacle of the action on the screen. Electronic synthesisers were commonly used in the sixties and seventies, often in combination with other instruments, either as a means of expanding the orchestral palette, or quite simply due to limitations of budget. The movies of John Carpenter (as director, composer, *and* performer) show how true fusion can be achieved between acoustic and electronic instruments. Electronic music alone can help achieve other-worldly atmospheres; notable examples can be found in the jarring Moog synthesiser music by Wendy Carlos from 'A Clockwork Orange' (1971) and 'The Shining' (1980), both directed by Stanley Kubrick.

Instruments can be used to evoke the themes presented. For example, movies with a military theme often employ brass instruments, as can be seen in 'The Great Escape' (1963), evoking the sound of military marching bands. Similarly, heroes may be represented by music written for horns. Romantic movies call for lush melodies written for violins or high cellos; if composers require poignancy, this is often done with a solo string instrument like in 'Schindler's List'. Certain instrumental combinations are used to portray the time a movie is set, for example by using saxophones, clarinets, or brass to conjure the diverse American music scene of the twenties and thirties.

Musical features

In the same way that an overture does in operas or musicals, the opening credit sequences in a film score often present the core melodic material, so it is important that composers craft music that is memorable for audiences. Melodies are written to represent the mood or subject of a movie: the tone of a movie score can be established through specific keys, using major or minor scales and tonality to represent binary emotions. Suspense and drama can be built up using diminished or augmented intervals, and the whole-tone scale is an often-used melodic device that is used to support flashbacks or dream sequences.

Characters often have their own attributed melodies, called *leitmotifs*, and there are countless examples of this in the film scores composed by John Williams.

Even simple things like the shape and contour of a melody helps to support the mood, with melodies that ascend implying positivity and those that descend implying negativity. Disjunct and dissonant intervals can be effective at creating tension or terror, whilst conjunct and consonant ones can provide relief from this.

Rhythm helps to drive the storyline along. The relentless, punctuated string chords in Bernard Hermann's score for the opening of 'Psycho' (1960) perfectly match the suspense required for the theme of the movie. Later, he

makes inspired use of rhythmic ostinatos and loops to help build tension and provide an exciting accompaniment to the melody lines. More recently, the opening of Alan Silvestri's score for 'The Avengers' (2012) uses syncopated ostinatos in brass and lower strings provide a perfect accompaniment for the soaring theme in the violins.

Rhythm may also be used to mirror the rhythm of the action on screen in a technique commonly known as 'Mickey Mousing'. The cadence of footfall or a sudden gesture could be represented by corresponding punctuation from the background music, often with comedic effect.

Focus area: Computer game music

Computer game music as we know it today has grown in tandem with the rapid development of our technology. Indeed, it may seem hard to imagine that these sounds first originated through simple manipulation of analogue oscillators in video games like 'Pong' to create beeps and buzzes, but nevertheless, this is where the history of this gameplay-enhancing music begins.

From here, the development in video games and the music that came with them was rapid, continuing with the *monophonic* descending basslines of 'Space Invaders' (1978), and the use of two-tone sounds to create simple homophonic repetitive loops. Software developers in Japan were putting more and more demands on computer game music, and companies gradually began to employ in-house composers to write original music. By the beginning of the eighties, it became possible to sample sounds, opening possibilities later for producing realistic-sounding tracks. As synthesizers began to dominate the popular music scene, correspondingly computers were being used to communicate with these instruments using Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI).

The swift development and manufacture of affordable home computers meant that games could played at home – gameplay for every budget. Rival companies fought for custom, and the big 8-bit mascots of the eighties and nineties, Mario and Sonia even had their very own theme tunes written for them.

With an eventual move towards CD-ROM-based technology, there was a huge development in the audio quality, and video games adopted a cinematic style, especially evident in Final Fantasy VII.

With the rise of even more powerful platforms and subsequent digital distribution, computer game music has reached new heights of sophistication. Full orchestral arrangements offer a real immersive atmosphere for the gamer in 'The Last of us' (2013), and electronic and neo-experimental soundscapes enhance the virtual, dystopian backdrops of 'Cyberpunk 2077' (2020).

Instruments

The sound world of computer game music is wide and varied. Synthesised, electronic sounds play a large part in this music and composers are always on the search for new timbres and sound colours to work with. The use of the orchestra and orchestral instruments (either real or synthesised) is not uncommon in computer game music, together with electronic pop and rock band instruments (drums, electric guitars). The way a composer selects and uses instruments depends on the nature and theme of the game, and, indeed, the audience that the game is aimed at.

Musical features

Music written for video games often shares characteristics with other musical styles, including popular and classical orchestral music. Tonality and mode are applied in ways that reflect what is happening in a video game, which has the effect of making the player feel that they are in control of what they are experiencing.

Melodies and melodic shapes may be angular or disjunct, and phrase structures are, often, irregular. *Leitmotifs* are often ascribed to character, place or emotion and mood, and most video game franchises will have their own distinctive title music or a melodic hook.

Composers have traditionally aimed to write music that is memorable and therefore most music written for video games is diatonic.

The rhythmic elements in this music are essential for helping shape the character of the music. Extensive use of repetition and rhythmic loops helps to maintain a constant mood during gameplay. Changes of tempo may occur as the player moves from one situation to another. Faster tempos are used for moments with a lot of action.

Style and other musical features

Computer game music draws influence from a whole range of different musical genres. Even in the early eighties, video games were inspired by Japanese culture, an influence that can even be felt in modern game music today. Original music may take influence from classical music, though formally not as strict in structure and scope, as with the *Gran Saga* Trilogy, and Koji Kondo's syncopated themes in the *Super Mario* franchise clearly borrowed from ragtime. Licensed video game titles of franchise tie-ins like *Star Wars* combine music from the movie soundtrack and original composition, generally arranged by an in-house software composer. Electronic Dance Music strongly influenced game music in the early nineties, and the best examples of this can be found in the music of Yuzo Koshiro with *Streets of Rage* (1991). The music of the *Grand Theft Auto* series uses both licensed, pre-existing pop music, whilst also employing composers to write an original soundtrack.

Functions of music in computer games

Music plays a crucial role in computer games, heightening emotional responses, whilst creating an immersive atmosphere for the player, enhancing gameplay, and fostering a deeper connection between the player and their virtual environment.

In the music for *Monkey Island 2*, Michael Land became a pioneer for what is now known as *adaptive* music – music that changes based on the players' interactivity with the gameplay. This is now a given part of most video game soundtracks. Changes in music can be made based on the actions a player makes in a game, changes in location, time of day, and even gameplay state.

Starting points:

Stravinsky: *The Rite of Spring*

John Williams: Star Wars

Yoko Shimomura: *Gran Saga soundtrack*

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