



KING EDWARD VI COLLEGE
MUSIC

Year 12

Ten Composition Projects

Classical Style Composition	–	Projects 1-7
Twentieth Century	–	Projects 8-9
Musical Theatre	–	Project 10



Conventions of the Western Classical Tradition

The best Classical style compositions are:

- 1) **Characterful** (making good use of rhythm, dynamics and articulation to give the music life and shape)
- 2) **Idiomatic** (they use many stylistic fingerprints looted from the Western Classical repertoire, for example cadential progressions, circles of fifths, chromatic chords etc.)
- 3) **Technically sound** (they follow the conventional techniques of the Western Classical Tradition, in particular in their use of dissonance, texture and structure)

The following summarises some of the more detailed information available on the *WCT Composing Hub* on www.alevelmusic.com

Melody

- Melodies tend to begin with an idiomatic phrase structure. You should use the models outlined on the *WCT Composing Hub* under 'Phrase structures' (e.g. period and sentence)
- Melodies tend not to be too angular (i.e. lots of apparently arbitrary leaping) unless the composer is trying to achieve a specific effect – large leaps that are not balanced by a leap or steps in the opposite direction are quite rare
- Melodies tend not to contain too many augmented and diminished intervals, which can sound awkward

Dissonances (see 'dissonance treatment' on Checklist on *WCT Composing Hub*)

- Melodic (and accompanying) lines tend not to leap away from dissonant notes (with the exception of the *échappé*).
- Unaccented dissonances are nearly always approached by step
- It is quite common to include the seventh of a dominant seventh in an arpeggiation, but if the seventh is a passing note it is usually resolved by step

Harmony and Tonality (see 'Harmony' on *WCT Composing Hub*)

- Chords tend to be in root and first inversion with root positions at beginnings and ends of phrases. Second inversions are rare and mostly associated with the progression IC-V.
- Modulations are most often to closely related keys (dominant, subdominant and the three relatives)
- Augmented and diminished triads are used infrequently
- Cadences tend to follow standard models (such as **ii6 – V – I**) Cadences will be strong and more emphatic if:
 - they land on the first beat of the bar
 - they finish on the root note of the final chord
 - they are in root position
 - the arrival note lasts longer than previous rhythms / chords

Texture (see 'Textures' on *WCT Composing Hub*)

- Accompanying textures usually include the third of the chord (avoid textures that are unintentionally bare)
- In smaller scale textures, the root is the note most often doubled and the third least often
- When the melody is basically at the top of a texture, it is rare for an accompanying instrument or voice to cross above it.
- Unless a part is being doubled deliberately, two independent parts in a texture rarely move in parallel fifths or octaves (See 'voice-leading' on *WCT Composing Hub* for more detailed guidelines)

Presentation

Tempo indication
(either Italian or metronome mark)

Detailed dynamics on every instrument

Lots of **articulation** – a mixture of staccato (and tenutos etc) plus **SHORT** slurs

Simple rhythms but with distinctive features like the repeating dotted figure

Allegro moderato

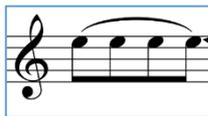
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

Simple textures that regularly change.

- Bar 1 staccato chords plus melody
- Higher and sparser with different articulation at bar 8
- Violins in thirds from bar 11.

Annotate your score – it helps both you and me understand what you are doing. Include **Roman numeral chord labels**, **section/subsection labels** and **post-it notes** pointing out chromatic chords and the other WCT fingerprints you ha

Avoid the following common presentational mistakes:



- Overlapping slurs (if a slurs overlap they are just the same as one long slur)
- Repeated notes under a slur – you need to add staccato marks as in bar 11 above
- Writing ties (on the keypad) instead of slurs (S on the main keyboard)
- Too many notes under one slur in the strings



- Dynamics for Sibelius rather than for players. Generally, you should mark instruments at the same overall dynamic (don't mark the viola FFF when it has the tune!)
- Dynamics in the wrong font
- Random rests!

Project 1 Eight-bar sentence

Example: Mozart Sonata KV309 in C, first movement

Presentation (four bars)

Bars 1-2 (basic idea)

Devise a two-bar basic idea that either sticks to a tonic chord OR starts on the tonic chord and then moves to V, ii or IV for the second bar. All the notes you use should either be from the chord(s) or a standard embellishment of one of chord notes. Label the embellishing notes that are NOT from the chord as follows:

- Unaccented passing note (UPN)
- Accented passing note (APN)
- Appoggiatura (Appog.)
- Arpeggio (Arp.)
- Auxiliary (Aux.)

Bars 3-4

Adapt the opening melodic idea bar so that it fits with new chords as shown in the table below:

<i>Bars 1-2</i>	<i>Bars 3-4</i>
I	V or IV
I – V or ii or IV	V or V – I

Fragmentation (two bars)

Bars 5-6

Adapt a motivic idea from the presentation for bar 5 and then sequence it down in bar 6. Use the harmonies outlined in the table below (note you need to have the same number of harmonies in each bar):

Sequences	
I (V – I)	vi (iii – vi)
I6	vii6

Cadence (two bars)

Bars 7-8

Write a generic perfect or imperfect cadence to finish your phrase off.

Use the chord sequence: **ii6 I6/4 V I**

Project 2 Eight-bar period

Example: Haydn Piano Sonata, Hob IX No. 20/8, first movement

The musical score is in 3/4 time and consists of eight bars. The first four bars are labeled 'Antecedent (4 bars)' and the last four bars are labeled 'Consequent (4 bars)'. The antecedent is divided into two parts: 'Basic melodic idea' (bars 1-2) and 'Contrasting idea ending on V' (bars 3-4). The consequent is also divided into two parts: 'Repetition of mel. idea' (bars 5-6) and 'Contrasting idea ending on I' (bars 7-8). Below the staff, Roman numerals indicate the chord progressions: F: I, V⁶, I, vi, V for the antecedent; and I, V⁶, I, V, I for the consequent.

Antecedent (four bars)

Bars 1-2 (basic idea)

As in project 1

Bars 3-4 (imperfect cadence)

Write a *new idea* that ends in a generic imperfect cadence (ii-V or I-V or I⁶/4-V etc.)

Consequent (four bars)

Bars 5-6 (basic idea)

Exact repeat of basic idea from first two bars

Bars 7-8 (perfect cadence)

Adapt the imperfect cadence idea so that it ends on a perfect cadence either at the end of bar 8 or onto the first beat of bar 9

String quartet textures for Projects 1 & 2

- Step 1: write the melody in the first violin with the roots of the relevant chords in the cello part (with Roman numerals below)
- Step 2: eliminate any direct or strongly implied parallel fifths and octaves either by judicious use of first inversions and/or by adjusting the melody
- Step 3: adapt one of the Simple String Quartet Textures linked to from the WCT Composing Hub on www.alevelmusic.com. The best choices to begin with are the oom-cha texture of Model 1 and the parallel motion in violins from Model 2.

Extensions: composers tend to use two or three different textures in an eight-bar phrase so try using any combination of the following:

- Model 1
- Model 2
- Model 3
- Full octave unison in all four parts

Project 3 Rounded binary

This project must:

- be for string quartet
- be in a major key
- be in 4/4 time
- have a tempo indication (MM 100 is not allowed!)
- include dynamics (contrast and shaping)
- use articulation (in particular short slurs and staccato adds character)
- use SIMPLE textures that are taken from the String Quartet models from the WCT Hub
- have a rhythmically interesting feature (but not too interesting – be careful not to be too syncopated or go against the grouping of time signature)
- label all the harmonies using Roman Numerals and figured bass

A Section (8 bars)	Bars 1-8 (sentence) An 8-bar sentence (see Project 1) that ends on an IMPERFECT cadence (i.e. I-V or even better ii6-I6/4-V). Put repeat marks at the end of this section.
BA' Section (12 bars)	<p>Bars 9-12 (circle of fifths – see model below) A circle of fifths with two chords per bar (I-IV vii-iii vi-ii V), Remember that after the first bar each subsequent bar should be an EXACT sequence but you need to change the last half of the final bar so that it leads nicely into the last section from V. Either adapt your previous work OR write something new.</p> <p>Bars 13-20 (repeat of opening period) Adapt the A section idea so that it leads into a PERFECT cadence (you must use chord ii and/or a cadential I6/4 as part of your cadence). Your final cadence should land cleanly on the first beat of the last (eighth) bar of the phrase (or you can if you wish extend so it ends on the first beat of the ninth and final bar). Put repeat marks at the end of this section</p>

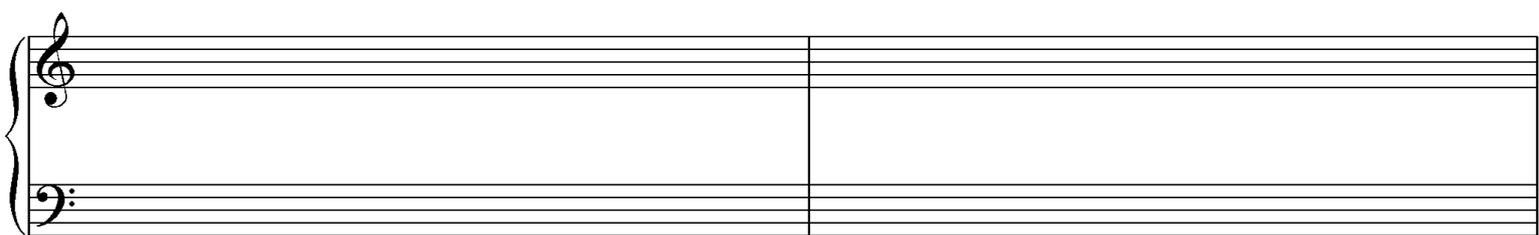
Circle of fifths model: Mozart Piano Sonata in C major, K545

Use Roman numerals to label the chords in the boxes in the key of G major.

Write a melody based on the same harmonic progression transposed to the major key chosen for this project.

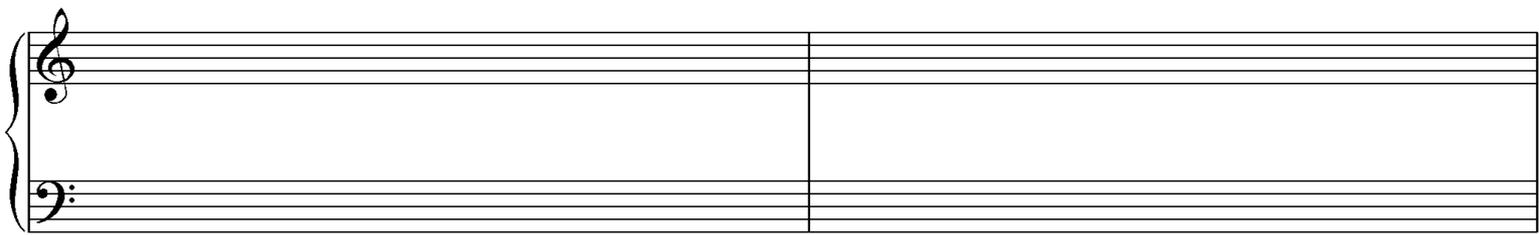
- 1) Write in chord labels
- 2) Write bass notes of the chords
- 3) Write the first bar
- 4) Sequence this bar as indicated for the next two bars
- 5) Adapt the final sequence so that it stays on the dominant

1 bar idea sequence down a step



I (tonic)

sequence down another step adapted sequence that stays on dominant



V (dominant)

Project 4 Minuet arrangement exercises

The task is to arrange the following minuet for orchestra, copying the orchestration and textures of three Classical examples. In other words, you use the exact melody, rhythm and harmony of the Haydn below, but use the Stamitz, Filtz and Haydn examples as orchestration models.

Haydn Minuet (Hob. IX: 20/8)

Piano



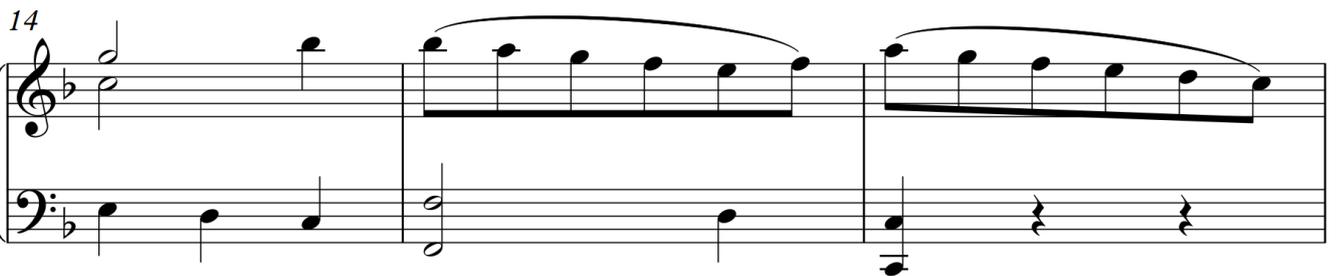
7

Pno.



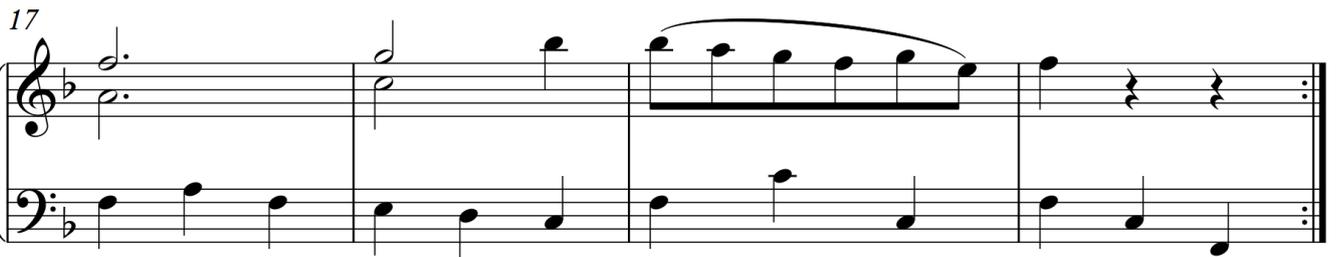
14

Pno.



17

Pno.



Arrangement 1: Stamitz, Symphony op. 5

Menuetto.



VI. 1

VI. 2

Vc / Cb

Cont.
Kb

Describe the roles of the different instruments (i.e. melody, bass line or harmonic filling) and doublings (where instruments are playing the same) in this extract:

Arrangement 2: Filtz, Sinfonie Periodique No. 2

MENUETT.



2 Corni in A.

Flauto I^{mo} Solo.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Basso.

Klavierauszug.

for pia for pia for

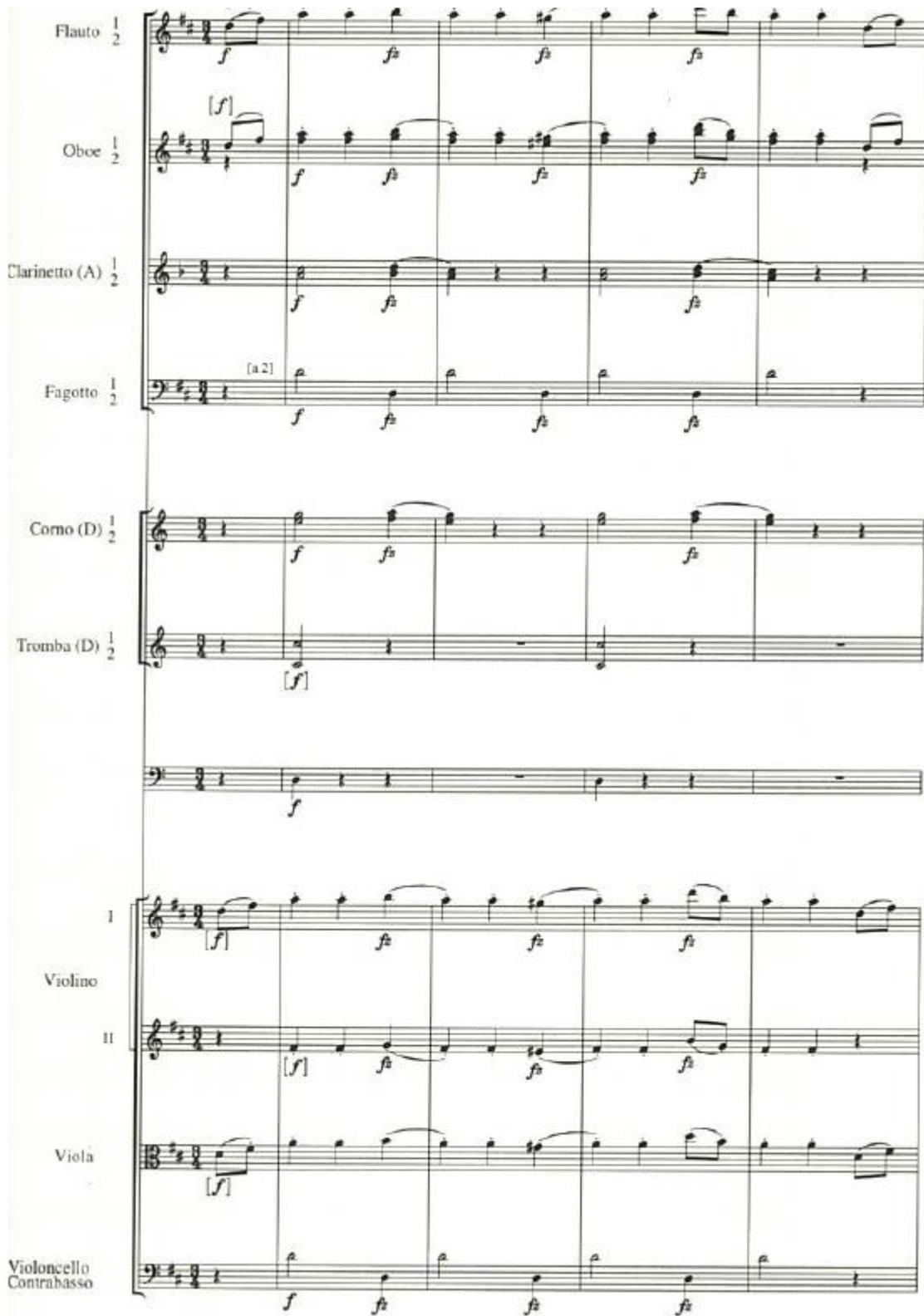
for pia for pia for

for pia for pia

for pia for pia

Describe the roles of the different instruments (i.e. melody, bass line or harmonic filling) and doublings (where instruments are playing the same) in this extract:

Arrangement 3: Haydn, Symphony 104



This musical score extract shows the first five measures of a section from Haydn's Symphony 104. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Flauto 1/2:** Plays a melodic line starting on G4, moving stepwise up to B4, then down to G4, with dynamics *f* and *ff*.
- Oboe 1/2:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G4 and moving up to B4, with dynamics *f* and *ff*.
- Clarinetto (A) 1/2:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G3 and moving up to B3, with dynamics *f* and *ff*.
- Fagotto 1/2:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G2 and moving up to B2, with dynamics *f* and *ff*. Includes a fingering marking [a2].
- Corno (D) 1/2:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G3 and moving up to B3, with dynamics *f* and *ff*.
- Tromba (D) 1/2:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G2 and moving up to B2, with dynamics *f* and *ff*. Includes a fingering marking [f].
- Violino I:** Plays a melodic line starting on G4, moving stepwise up to B4, then down to G4, with dynamics *f* and *ff*. Includes a fingering marking [f].
- Violino II:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G3 and moving up to B3, with dynamics *f* and *ff*. Includes a fingering marking [f].
- Viola:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G3 and moving up to B3, with dynamics *f* and *ff*. Includes a fingering marking [f].
- Violoncello Contrabbasso:** Provides harmonic support with chords, starting on G2 and moving up to B2, with dynamics *f* and *ff*.

Describe the roles of the different instruments (i.e. melody, bass line or harmonic filling) and doublings (where instruments are playing the same) in this extract:

Project 5 Minuet

This project must:

- be for string quartet
- be in a major key
- be in 3/4 time
- have a tempo indication (MM 100 is not allowed!)
- include dynamics (contrast and shaping)
- use articulation (in particular short slurs and staccato adds character)
- use SIMPLE textures that are taken from the String Quartet models from the WCT Hub
- have a rhythmically interesting feature (but not too interesting – be careful not to be too syncopated or go against the grouping of time signature)
- label all the harmonies using Roman Numerals and figured bass
- follow the rounded binary outline in the table below

A	1-8	modulating period to the dominant (via secondary dominant) [repeat marks at the end of bar 8]
B	9	One bar continuing on the tonic chord of the dominant arrived at in bar 8
	10-13	Part circle of fifths in original key: iii – vi – ii – V
	14	augmented sixth onto ...
	15-18	Dominant pedal
A'	19-26	As bars 1-8 but staying in the tonic

A section (8 bars)

Bars 1-8 (modulating period)

Write an eight-bar period that follows the structure outlined below (see Project 2).

Antecedent Phrase				Consequent Phrase			
Basic idea		Imperfect cadence		Basic idea		Perfect cadence in the dominant	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

However, unlike Project 2 this period needs to modulate to the dominant by the end. You should use one of the following harmonic structures in the last three bars:

	6	7	8
<i>Tonic key</i>	[whatever!]	I	
<i>Dominant key</i>		s.d. of ii	ii V I

	6	7	8
<i>Tonic key</i>	I		
<i>Dominant key</i>		s.d. of ii	ii V I

B Section part 1 (6 bars)

Bar 9

This bar kicks off the B section but it is better to write bars 10-13 first and then come back to this one. Bar 9 should continue the same harmony as bar 8 (chord I in the dominant key), using a motif related to something from the opening eight bars to lead smoothly into bar 10

Bars 10-13 (circle of fifths)

This is a part circle of fifths (see Project 3) running from **iii-vi-ii-V**. Use one chord per bar. Melodically, you should write a two-bar idea in 10-11 that you then sequence down in 12-13. The idea can either be based on the beginning or provide a (little) bit of contrast.

Bar 14 (augmented sixth)

The first part of the B section ends with an augmented sixth chord that will resolve onto the dominant of the home key.

Augmented sixths resolve outwards by semitone onto the root of the next chord (see WCT Fingerprints on www.alevelmusic.com).

B Section part 2 (4 bars)

Bars 15-18 (dominant pedal)

These four bars create a little dominant tension onto the reprise. You should have a held note or repeated note pedal in the cello part on the dominant *of the home key*. You should use at least a few of the features outlined in the dominant pedals section of WCT Fingerprints on www.alevelmusic.com.

A reprise (8 bars)

Bars 19-26 (non-modulating period)

These final eight bars, which round off the B section, should be as close to the first eight bars as possible, but with the modulation removed so it just stays in the home key.

Optional extensions:

- re-orchestrate the minuet for 'a 8' early Classical orchestra (strings plus two horns and two flutes or oboes)
 - write a contrasting Trio in a different key that follows a similar template
-

Some typical minuets that contain at least some of these features are:

- Haydn nos 4 & 8 from 12 Minuets (Hob. IX)
- Trio from Mozart, Symphony in G major, No. 15
- Minuet from Filtz, Sinfonie Periodique No. 2
- Minuet and Trio from Haydn Symphony No. 104.

Project 6 Sonata Form

This starting point of this project is the first movement of Haydn 104. The brief is to write a piece in sonata form for a small orchestra that is modelled on some of the main features of this work.

Your composition must:

- be in a nice brisk 2/4 or 2/2 (the compound phrase structure is too cumbersome in 4/4)
- be written for an 'a 8' ensemble: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello and Bass (playing the same thing), 2 horns (on the same line) and 2 oboes or flutes PLUS timpani. You may add other woodwind and brass if you wish at a later stage.
- be in a standard major key (no more than three sharps or two flats)
- stick to the same tempo throughout

This is the whole structure, but we will not be writing it in this order - see the instructions on the next page. It is vital, however, that you understand how it all fits together right from the beginning

Exposition	<i>S1</i>	16-bar period (strings only)
	<i>'tonic noise'</i>	Tonic tutti continuation with the emphasis on energetic repetitions of simple gestures
	<i>Transition 1</i>	Moves from tonic to dominant via pivot like Haydn 104 Tonic: I – V6 Dom.: I6 – vii6 – I
	<i>Transition 2</i>	Dominant pedal (dominant OF dominant key)
	<i>S2</i>	Same as S1 but transposed up a fifth / down a fourth
	<i>Codetta</i>	Same as final coda but transposed up a fifth / down a fourth (can be changed / cut down a little to make it a bit less final)
Development	<i>LINK</i>	Modified repetition of some element of codetta including pivot to new key
	<i>Dev 1</i>	Circle of fifths in a related minor key
	<i>LINK</i>	Modulation incorporating parallel motion (i.e. 3rds or 6ths)
	<i>Dev 2</i>	Antiphonal texture (chords in middle of texture with melody alternating above in treble instruments and below in bass instruments)
	<i>LINK</i>	Modulation incorporating parallel motion (i.e. 3rds or 6ths) or a modified idea from before including a pivot to the new key
	<i>Dev 3</i>	Dominant pedal (dominant of original tonic)
Recapitulation	<i>S1</i>	As exposition (just copy and paste)
	<i>Tonic noise</i>	
	<i>Transition 1</i>	As exposition but changed so it does NOT modulate
	<i>Transition 2</i>	As exposition but now dominant pedal of tonic (rather than of dominant)
	<i>S2</i>	Same as S1 in exposition (BUT would be nice to vary it a bit compared to last time)
	<i>Coda</i>	Some cadential ideas to round off the movement

Write the piece as a series of sketches as follows. Keep them in ONE Sibelius file, referring to the overall structure so they are in the right order. Leave a few bars rest between each one until it is time to join everything up.

16-bar period (beginning of Exposition)

Complete at 16-bar compound period (like the Haydn) for strings only. Remember to use the WCT Composing Hub to get ideas for textures, check your harmonic progressions make sense etc.

Structure is as follows:

- 4-bar basic idea (go back and read the advice on basic idea on ALM and remember that the DYNAMICS AND ARTICULATION are a vital part of the music)
- 4-bar cadential idea ending on an imperfect cadence. These four bars must include some parallel motion in the form of either parallel thirds or sixths OR falling first inversion chords before the cadence
- Exact repeat of bars 1-4
- Modified repeat of bars 5-8 this time ending on V that will make a perfect cadence with the beginning of your tonic noise

Tonic Noise (second section of Exposition)

Write eight or more bars of 'tonic noise' as specified below:

- It must have a tonic pedal and some suitable chords with/against it (list of chords [here](#))
- You should also include at least a few of:
 - tutti tonic chords
 - short, repetitive phrases
 - some octave unison
 - rising thirds against the pedal
 - repeated notes rather than held pedal
- Start and end on the tonic chord
- It is all about gesture and energy rather than writing a nice tune

Development sketches

(for the moment these should just be standalone ideas with bars rests separating them)

SKETCH 1 (circle of fifths – a bit like b. 150)

Write a circle of fifths based on a fragment of your 16-bar idea. You must:

- write it in a closely related major or minor key to your tonic
- write a melodic idea that spans TWO chords (i.e. I – IV) then sequence this idea down by step to create the circle of fifths
- in a minor key circle of fifths you should not raise the seventh in III (and you can decide whether to or not for vii)
- If you want you can add some secondary dominants and/or start with an introductory few bars (a bit like b. 145)

SKETCH 2 (antiphony – like bb. 131-136)

This must:

- Be in another minor key
- Create a two-bar idea based on a motif from your main melody
- Hold a chord or repeated chords in the middle of the texture
- the melody should alternate between an upper instrument above and a lower instrument below (it can overlap like the Haydn or not)
- you can end with a chromatic chord into another key if you like

SKETCH 3 (dominant pedal to go at end of development)

Write a dominant pedal to go at the end of the development which will lead back into the recapitulation. You must use some of the chords recommended for dominant pedals on ALM. Really carefully check that you are getting the harmony right and writing things that fit with it!

Coda (last section of movement)

Write a coda to go at the end of the movement in the original tonic. See [quick guide to codas](#) on the WCT Fingerprints page (also use the end of Haydn 104 as a model).

Transition and S2 (in Exposition after 'tonic noise')

- 6-8 bar passage that follows the pivot chord progression from the Haydn (see in table above). Use new or adapted material that follows on directly from tonic noise without a break.
- 6 or more bars of dominant pedal **in the new key** (use chords outlined in WCT Fingerprints) which will lead into your second subject (i.e. if you are going from D in S1 to A in S2 your dominant pedal must be E)
- Copy and paste your first subject after this transition and then transpose it into the dominant. You need to check it is OK in terms of register and adjust where necessary.



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Tonic D: I V6

Dominant A: I6 vii6 I

Pivot chord

Finishing off (mostly copy and paste)

- Rewrite your Coda so it can work as a Codetta in the dominant at the end of the Exposition
- Copy and paste the following from the Exposition into the Recapitulation (before your Coda).
 - **S1** – keep the same
 - **Tonic noise** – keep the same
 - **Transition** – change as much as you like so it stays in the tonic. The pedal in the second part needs now to be the dominant of the original tonic.
 - **S2** – transpose into the tonic. You may also want to change the texture / add embellishment etc. to create some variety.
- Write the LINK sections in the development, following the instructions in the structure table. These should be short and simple.

Final checklist

- LABEL EACH SECTION CLEARLY ON THE SCORE
- Check for rogue dissonances – listen to your piece really carefully nice and loud. If something does not sound right, it probably isn't!
- Make sure your cello and bass parts are the same throughout (it is not idiomatic for them to be different)
- Make sure you have a variety of textures that are idiomatic (i.e. based on ones on ALM)
- Make sure you have dynamics and articulation throughout

Project 7 Rondo

Write a short Rondo **in a major key** for string quartet. It must follow the outline below and include at least one example of each of the WCT Style Features listed overleaf. The basic structural model is a shortened version of the finale from Haydn's Symphony No. 2, one that can also be found in countless other Rondo movements. *The piece should be at least TWO MINUTES in length.*

A	<p>Opening idea using a standard phrase structure. Choose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period or sentence (8 bars). THEN a written-out repeat but with second half modified so it cadences with a perfect cadence in the dominant <p>NOTE: your final cadence must use ii6, I6/4 or both as part of the progression</p>
B	ca. 12-16 bars including a modified fragment of theme and ending with a dominant pedal (this must be at least four bars and include the dissonant harmonies suggested on ALM)
A'	As A but final four bars is a cadential idea ending in a perfect cadence in the tonic
C	At least 24 bars that provide thematic, textural and tonal contrast. It is recommended that you go into the tonic minor for this section (it would be good to modulate to a related key as well) and finish on the dominant so it leads naturally back into the tonic major for the next section.
<p>* optional extension *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A'' (modified version of A modulating to a new key) ○ D (new contrasting section following on in new key and staying there or modulating further before returning to prepare for A return) 	
A	It is permitted to copy and paste this as before but simply add a coda on the end. HOWEVER, the highest scoring compositions will make small changes of texture in the A sections and add to and/or take away from and/or modify the B section.
B	
A'	

Make sure you use the WCT COMPOSITION HUB

to help you get started on writing a good theme, using appropriate harmonies, etc.

(<https://alevelmusic.com/alevelcompositionhelp/wct-composing-hub/>)

Under Phrase Structures you can find a range of Rondo themes to which you can listen and analyse

You must include ALL TEN of the following fingerprints in your composition

WCT Fingerprints (see notes on www.alevelmusic.com)

1. Common cadences: ii6 – V – I cadence
 2. Common cadences: Cadential 6/4 (perfect or imperfect)
 3. Circle of fifths (at least partial)
 4. AND another harmonic sequence (see those listed on ALM)
 5. Passage based on parallel motion (best to have a short passage that is ONLY based on parallel motion i.e. sixths or thirds)
 6. Octave unison (ALL parts)
 7. Tonic and/or dominant pedal
 8. Augmented sixth (works particularly well onto the dominant)
 9. Diminished seventh
 10. Pivot chord modulation
-

Writing for the standard Classical Orchestra

Must include:

- Violin I and II, viola, Cello and Bass (usually these will play the same part)
- Two horns, two oboes and/or flutes
NOTE: woodwind invariably come in pairs, written on the same staff. You need not write separate parts for both all the time as sometimes they will double (write 'a 2') or one will play a solo line (write 'a 1' or 'solo')

Will often also include:

- Two clarinets
- Bassoon(s)
- Trumpet(s)
- Trombone(s)
- Timpani (plus triangle, cymbal, snare drum, bass drum)

Pieces that get high marks will:

- be meticulous about following the conventions of the WCT (see conventions and melody-writing tips on www.alevelmusic.com)
- use the features listed above
- have simple but characterful melodies that include lots of **dynamics and articulation**
- include a variety of simple but effective textures

Project 8

Octatonic Scale

Background

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) has a distinctive musical style which has its roots in folk music. His compositions range from the aggressively energetic to slow and austere, creating a unique twentieth-century take on the folk music that inspired him.

His music is very contrapuntal and based on a range of folk and synthetic scales. He wrote a large number of pieces for beginners that explore his musical language in a relatively simple context, which is very useful both for understanding his more complex compositions and also for finding ideas that you can use.

Project

Try using segments of octatonic and/or whole tone scales (see below), concentrating on contrapuntal writing rather than harmony. Don't worry too much about dissonance, try imitation at different intervals (i.e. starting a fifth apart or a second apart etc.) and using different segments and see how it works out.

When Bartok uses imitation the new part is often in inversion, contrary motion or retrograde (backwards) in relation to the original. Bartok sometimes increases or decreases the note lengths as well (augmentation and diminution).

Song of the Harvest (violin duet)

Like many of Bartok's compositions, this simple duet is quite systematic in the way it is written, exploring the octatonic scale (see below) and also various different contrapuntal textures.

Inspiration: counterpoint based on octatonic scale

Bartok is interested in this piece in exploring the way in which the octatonic scale divides into two identical four-note segments (or tetrachords) marked W and X in this octatonic scale on D#:



Bartok often explores symmetrical patterns such as this and in the Harvest Song, he gives each violin one of the tetrachords as in this opening idea (A):

Violin duet score for the opening of 'Song of the Harvest'. The music is in G major (three sharps) and 3/4 time. The tempo is 'Lento' with a quarter note equal to 58 beats. The first violin (Vl 1) starts with a tetrachord 'A' (D#, E, F#, G) and the second violin (Vl 2) starts with a tetrachord 'W' (A, B, C, D#). The score includes dynamics like 'p' and 'poco rit.' and ends with a double bar line.

In the next section (**B**) Bartok uses a different octatonic scale starting on G#, again giving one tetrachord to each of the violins. Rather than the freer contrapuntal writing of the A section, Bartok uses strict imitation in this section, imitating at the interval of a tritone to keep within the octatonic scale. This is the beginning of the B section, which continues on the next line.

Notice how Bartok is not really worrying too much about the harmony, concentrating more on line. He lets the imitation take care of the harmonic details and the relationship between the two tetrachords take care of the overall harmonic effect.

The image shows musical notation for the beginning of section B. The top staff displays two tetrachords, Y and Z, on a single line. The bottom staff shows the beginning of section B for two violins. The first violin part starts with a melodic line, and the second violin part starts with a similar line, illustrating strict imitation. The tempo is marked 'Più mosso, parlando, ♩. 88'. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

The table below shows how the whole duet works (see score in this booklet), including the initial A and B sections shown above. Note how Bartok finishes the duet with the more 'natural' Dorian mode, which resolves the tensions of the octatonic scale with its two tetrachords a tritone apart.

A	1-5	Octatonic scale on D#	Free counterpoint
B	6-15	Octatonic scale on G#	Imitation at distance of a bar
A'	16-20	Octatonic scale on B	First violin plays inversion of second violin part from beginning and second violin plays inversion of first violin part from the beginning
B'	21-29	Octatonic scale on A	Same idea as b. 6 but imitation is two beats closer
A	30-33	Ab Dorian mode	As opening

Another approach is to write in a more harmonic style as in the Debussy 'Nuages' set work. If you choose this you need to use ONE of the scales from the three below and base your melody on the scale and your harmonies on the triadic material below. You can of course write dissonant harmonies as well.

C diminished seventh

D diminished seventh

This musical example shows the C diminished seventh scale in the upper staff, with notes C, Bb, Ab, Gb, Fb, Eb, and Db. The lower staff displays the corresponding triadic material for each note of the scale, with lines connecting the notes to their respective triads. The triads are: C (C, Eb, Gb), Bb (Bb, Db, Fb), Ab (Ab, Cb, Eb), Gb (Gb, Ab, Cb), Fb (Fb, Ab, Cb), Eb (Eb, Gb, Ab), and Db (Db, Fb, Ab).

C# diminished seventh

D# diminished seventh

This musical example shows the C# diminished seventh scale in the upper staff, with notes C#, B, A, G, F, E, and D. The lower staff displays the corresponding triadic material for each note of the scale, with lines connecting the notes to their respective triads. The triads are: C# (C#, E, G), B (B, D, F), A (A, C, E), G (G, B, D), F (F, A, C), E (E, G, B), and D (D, F, A).

D diminished seventh

E diminished seventh

This musical example shows the D diminished seventh scale in the upper staff, with notes D, C, B, Ab, G, F, and Eb. The lower staff displays the corresponding triadic material for each note of the scale, with lines connecting the notes to their respective triads. The triads are: D (D, F, Ab), C (C, Eb, Gb), B (B, Db, Fb), Ab (Ab, Cb, Eb), G (G, Ab, Cb), F (F, Ab, Cb), and Eb (Eb, Gb, Ab).

Project 9

Whole-tone and Pentatonic Scales

Background

Debussy (1862-1918) was in many ways a radical composer; in other words, he made fundamental and far-reaching changes in his approach to composing music. He is often labelled 'impressionist' – a term derived from painting, in which outlines are blurred and delicate shades of colour are used. By analogy this is a fair description of much of Debussy's music: outlines are blurred because he avoids clear-cut rhythms and melodies, and his harmonies are rich (using dense, complex chords) and vague, creating a 'wash' of sound. Thus his music sounded very different from his late romantic contemporaries', and laid the foundation for many developments in 20th century music.

Project

Play around with pentatonic and whole-tone scales to create a gentle but colourful atmosphere. If you are basing an extended section on pentatonic scales, you will probably want to expand the collection as Debussy does in *Pagodes* or you risk the music becoming too static. Similarly, it is very difficult to keep the music interesting if you only use a single whole-tone scale for a very extended period

PENTATONIC

'Pagodes' from *Estampes*

Inspiration: melody and harmony based on pentatonic scale

The first four bars of this atmospheric piece are based on a B pentatonic (five-note) scale, using only the notes B, C#, D#, F# and G#. The following two bars however, expand this, by keeping the pentatonic idea in the right hand but adding a minor seventh (A natural) to the chord in the left hand:

The image shows the first four bars of the piano piece 'Pagodes' from Debussy's 'Estampes'. The score is written for piano and is in 4/4 time. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked 'Modérément animé' and the dynamics are 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'm.d.' (mezzo-dolce). The first two bars feature a pentatonic melody in the right hand (B, C#, D#, F#, G#) over a double pedal in the left hand (B, C#). The last two bars expand the harmony by adding a minor seventh (A natural) to the left hand chord. The score includes performance instructions such as 'déliatement et presque sans nuances', 'a Tempo', and 'Rit.' (ritardando). Fingerings and pedaling are indicated throughout.

In the next phrase Debussy keeps the pentatonic material in the right hand again but expands the harmony again first by adding a fourth (E) against the double pedal in the left

hand and by introducing a flowing melody in the middle of the texture. In these two bars we now have all the seven notes of a diatonic scale of B major present. In the following phrase (the last two bars below) Debussy returns again to purely pentatonic harmony.

‘The Sunken Cathedral’ from *Preludes*

The beginning of this evocative prelude also uses a pentatonic scale, this time building up chains of open fifths over a pedal. Whereas in Pagode we still have a clear sense of melody, the opening of this portrayal of a cathedral under the ocean is primarily to do with colour, piano texture and atmosphere.

WHOLE TONE

'Sails' from *Preludes*

This extract is taken from Debussy's prelude *Voiles* (sails). If you listen to the example or play it, you will hear how the whole tone scale creates an ambiguous wash of sound quite unlike traditional harmony.



'Whole tone' from *Mikrokosmos*

Inspiration: counterpoint based on whole-tone scale

In this piano piece, which is part of a series written for students, Bartok explores the whole-tone scale in a similar contrapuntal fashion. Where Debussy and other composers quite often use one of the two whole-tone scales to create an ambiguous harmonic wash, Bartok combines segments of both scales to create a very different effect. In the first three sections of this piece, he develops the piece as follows:

- **A** - first introduces whole tone scale one (WT1) before shadowing the same melody in thirds in bar 7 using WT2.
- **B** - introduces a new melodic idea, again in thirds and with WT1 in right hand and WT2 in left
- **A'** – back to the original melody but this time using imitation and with WT1 in both hands.

WT1

WT2



Bartok continues in a similar vein for the rest of the piece (see folder). See if you can work out what he is doing in each section.

Project 10

Musical Theatre – 32-bar song form

Brief: Write a 32-bar song form verse with SIMPLE piano accompaniment (following the models in the source book). It must follow the **basic structure** set out below and use at least a couple of the **stylistic features**. You can use one of the sets of words at the end of this brief OR find/write your own.

Before you start you must listen to at least the following, but listening to them all would be even better!

- 1) **1. Over the Rainbow.** Notice the slow moving relatively simple harmonies and how they are ‘jazzed up’. In particular:
 - The hint at the subdominant (Bb to make it F major) in the second and third bar of the 32 “... (rain)bow way (up) ...”
 - The vi-ii-V-I at the end of the first eight (“I heard of once in a lullaby”). Note how each chord is made into a secondary dominant and decorated with added notes (A major triad with added minor seventh and 9th on heard rather than simple A minor etc.)
- 2) **3. Surrey with the Fringe on Top.** Notice the middle 8 (starting in bar 33) which is a sequence. First four bars is in the subdominant (D major) and then it goes up a tone to be in the dominant (E major)
- 3) **7. Losing my Mind.** (in Ab)
 - Note the fantastic chord sequence in the A section. In bars 5-8 Sondheim uses rising chromatic voice leading (Eb-E-F-Gb) to first change chord I augmented and then change to chord vi and then finally into a I as V of IV (i.e. Ab dominant seventh chord)
 - Middle eight at 21 has a sequence

Basic Structure

A	<p>Two identical sets of 8 bars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-bar Antecedent (V) and 4-bar consequent (I) (‘People will say we’re in love’) • 8-bar phrase ending imperfect or tonicised V (‘Surrey with the fringe on top’, ‘Losing my mind’)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or you could have a more irregular pattern (‘Send in the Clowns’ is 9 bars, ‘I don’t know how to love him’ is 10 bars)
B	<p>4-bar (loose) sequence which must end on V to lead back A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Surrey with the fringe on top’: IV to V (both tonicised) • ‘Wonderful guy’: bvii – I • ‘Losing my mind’: iii – ii (linked by secondary dominant vi in between and then at the end leads to V to link back to A) <p>OR modulating circle of fifths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘People will say we’re in love’: IV – bvii (tonicised) – iii – vi – ii (V expected but not in this example!)
A’	Modified version of A (should be very similar but needs to end on I)

Stylistic Features to include

<i>ii-V-I cadences</i>	Virtually all phrases end with this progression – so should yours.
<i>Added note chords</i>	Add in an 7 th , 9 th , 6 th and even 11 th and 13 th . You will find that the more you will probably need to miss out notes lower down the chord and/or voice them carefully. An added flattened 7 th or 9 th can also be very effective (like bar 9 of ‘Over the rainbow’).
<i>Chromatic alterations</i>	Sharpened/flattened thirds, secondary dominants, Flattened fifths, augmented chords etc. Sometimes these are just for colour () and sometimes (as in ‘Losing my mind’) they help form chromatic lines within the voice-leading
<i>Tonicisation of the subdominant</i>	Hinting at or briefly moving to the subdominant is always really nice (see bar 6-7 of ‘Over the rainbow’ and ‘Losing my mind’)
<i>Pedals</i>	‘Send in the Clowns’ has virtually all of the A section over a double pedal.

Notes

- Simple accompaniments like ‘oom cha’ (‘People will say we’re in love’) and chordal (‘Losing my mind’) are fine. Don’t write complex piano parts that obscure the harmony and melody.
- root position chords are the most common
- harmonic rhythm is often slow until cadences
- End of middle 8 (bar 24) is almost always a dominant back onto the return of A.
- whimsical (i.e. less functional) harmonies are nice but work best in the middle of A. You need clear cadences at the end of lines and sequences etc. in the B section require relatively normal harmony
- melodies tend to repeat and modify motifs and even short phrases within the sections
- it is very common to extend the last A section to give it more finality

Option 1

A Sometimes, I see you a face in a crowd
Walking through my dreams, calling out loud
A Sometimes I hold you but only in my dreams
I wake up and you're gone like the moon beams
B Sometimes I forget, you are gone away
I wake in the sunshine to a cold and crying day
A Sometimes I follow, down the stony way
Following your footsteps, Never go away

Option 2

A He who laughs last laughs longest
He who laughs last laughs long
A But I'm not the one who's laughing
Since you left me on my own
B We used to laugh in the sunshine
We used to laugh in the rain
A But I'm not the one who's laughing
I'm the one who's in pain

Extensions: add the introductory verse, turn it into a duet, orchestrate, make the last A less regular