MUSIC IN THE ROUND

WECOMPOSE KS3 RESOURCE PACK

2025-2026

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About this project

Welcome and thank you for being part of Music in The Round's 'We Compose' project for 2025/2026!

This project from Music in the Round introduces KS3 students from all music backgrounds to composition through extensive resources and visits from professional musicians and composers. Students will be supported by emerging and professional composers to create their own music which will be performed by one of our partnered professional String Quartets at the end of the project in a culmination concert at a local venue.

As a teacher, you will learn new ideas for teaching composition including ideas for supporting students at different ability levels (including non-instrumentalists). Your students will learn new creative and composition skills. They will experience working with professional musicians and will be supported to create music they are interested in writing, and to take ownership of their own creative voices.

The Commission Brief (KS3)

In groups of 4, your student's commission is to compose a brand-new piece of music for String Quartet. Each piece can be up to 5 minutes in length and be written in any style that the students like.

We'd like your piece to be inspired in some way by one of our 4 key string quartet pieces. These are 'Death & The Maiden' by Franz Schubert, 'String Quartet No.8' by Dmitri Shostakovich, 'Strum' by Jessie Montgomery and 'Tuggemo' by Anna Meredith. We explain some ideas on how to go about this in this pack and with a series of short films that can be easily accessed using the QR codes throughout. Our team of composers will then support you and your students to translate these ideas into pieces of music for string quartet. The Quartet will also launch the project with a presented concert, where they will perform all four of the pieces.

Timeline of the project

October 2025 Teachers' INSET session

Led by Patrick Bailey, Ellen Sargen and John Webb, this one-day training session brings teachers together for a practical workshop on teaching composition with KS3. Expect new ideas that will help you engage students of mixed abilities.

November 2025 Introductory concert

The Consone Quartet or Phaedra Ensemble will perform a concert for your students, introducing them to the instruments and key repertoire.

November 2025 - March 2026 Workshops with composers

Your school will be partnered with one of our WeCompose professional composers. Over the course of three in-school visits, they will support your students to write pieces for string quartet. In between visits, we expect your students will keep working on their compositions in class.

April 2026 Deadline for scores

Send us your scores, DAW files, or other materials (as agreed with your composer) and we will make these up into a set of parts for the Quartet to play from.

May-July 2026 Culmination day

At the end of the project, the Quartet will workshop then perform your students' compositions in a

Planning the project – checklist

After the INSET session

Please fill in the online Student Composer Diary with the students' first names and any accessibility requirements. This is an important tool for the project to run successfully. Please request this in an alternative format if needed.

After the Introductory Concert

We recommend spending at least two more lessons as a class getting familiar with the Key Repertoire:

- Use our Listening Guide (page 6) to revisit the Key Repertoire pieces and challenge each group to choose their Inspiration Piece, and importantly, which features/ characteristics they will take from it.
- Watch our Short Films about each of the Key Repertoire pieces and challenge each group to decide how they will be inspired by their chosen piece. Students should not feel restricted by only choosing one piece, and may feel inspired by different elements across the pieces. Remember that you and the students can come back to these films to help them at any time in the project.

Before the first composer visit

- Ask each student to fill out the 'Initial Questionnaire' in their 'Student Composer Diary' (online).
- Have a go at the 'Experimenting with musical ideas' activity (page 9 - this could be used as a lesson starter)
- Choose a route into the composition process (see below) and aim to have spent a lesson on one of these activities. You could choose one route for the whole class, or set each group off on their own route (which may be informed by the Inspiration Piece). Whichever route you choose, students can use the 'Student Resource Pack' to help them keep track of the decisions they make.

Start with melodies/ ostinatos, page 10

Start with rhythm & texture, page 30

Start with harmony, page 20

Before the second composer visit

By the second visit, aim that all groups have developed their initial ideas in some way. This could mean:

- Groups have developed their melodic ideas and have used techniques to develop these - they have several phrases completed (page 16 for ideas for developing your melody)
- Or, groups have developed their melodic ideas by harmonising them (necessarily starting to think about texture too). See page 20 for these activities.
- Or, groups have developed their melodic ideas by organising them into the quartet texture (perhaps starting to think about harmony too). See page 30 for activities.

- Groups have created melodies from their harmonic progressions. See page 15 for these activities.
- Groups have planned the harmonic progression for a large portion of their piece (necessarily thinking about structure and form). See page 20 for activities.
- Groups have organised their harmonic ideas into the quartet texture. See page 30 for activities.

Before the third composer visit

Aim that all groups are well underway with developing their melodic, harmonic and textural ideas. All sections should be roughly sketched out.

After the third composer visit

Set a realistic end point for each composition and support the students to reach this point. If that means that their piece only uses two or three instruments, rather than the full quartet, that is fine. If that means the students have one short but fully developed section of music, that is fine. Support students to write idiomatically for the string quartet using our 'Idiomatic Writing Tips' (page 27) - are the parts in the correct range for the instruments? Can the students write some dynamics, or indications about techniques? How do these additions enhance the mood/ energy of the piece? Does the piece reflect the mood and genre they are writing in? If they chose a title, does it still fit the piece?

At the score deadline

Send wecompose@musicintheround.co.uk and your composer your scores, or other materials (such as DAW files). If your compositions are still in sketches, please have agreed this in advance with your composer so that you can have come up with a plan for how the composer will make this into a set of parts for the quartet.

Please send any scores in mxml format, so we can open them in Musescore or Sibelius. Please send any DAW files with their midi and mp3 exports, in case we have different software to you! Guides will be supplied for this process.

Ensure the student names and titles are on the score and the file names.

Before the Culmination Event

Your students will get the most out of the event if you have spent a bit of time with our 'Before the Culmination Event' activity (page 40).

A top tip for working on this project with KS3

Although your students will be working in groups of 4, many of the activities can be done in pairs. This can be an effective way of working that means you can get lots of material develop quickly (rather than all four students all working on and developing the same material). Throughout this pack, we have given lots of advice for when to start activities in groups, when to switch to pair work, and how pair work can be brought back into the group composition by thinking through things like structure and texture.

Video resources linked in this pack

Introduction for KS3 students
Introducing the String Quartet
Repertoire video on Franz Schubert's String Quartet "Death & the Maiden"
Repertoire video on Dmitri Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 8
Repertoire video on Jessie Montgomery's Strum
Repertoire video on Anna Meredith's Tuggemo
Technique video on Melody
Technique video on Harmony

ACTIVITIES FOR LISTENING & INSPIRATION

Choosing your inspiration piece

The project will launch for your students with a presented concert, where the String Quartet will perform all of the four key string quartet pieces mentioned above. Following this, each student group will need to decide which piece they will use as the inspiration for their own music before they start composing. To help with this, we suggest that the students listen to the pieces again and ask themselves the questions below.

1. How did the music make you feel?

2. Were there any moments you particularly liked/disliked? Why?

3. What words would you use describe the following elements of music in the piece:
   - Melody
   - Rhythm
   - Dynamics
   - Tempo
   - Tonality/ mood
   - Texture
   - Form

4. How did these help express the mood or feeling in the music?

5. How were the different instruments used throughout the piece?

6. Did you notice any contrasting moments in the piece? How was this music different?

You can access all the 4 pieces here: www.musicintheround.co.uk/wecompose-2024-2025-key-stage-3-resource-hub

Try this with your class: resource

- You could ask students to use our Listening Guide for this activity (also found in the Student Resource Pack)
- You could even ask your students to fill out this worksheet on a piece of their choice at home. Encourage your students to bring ideas they have heard in other music they like to their piece.

ACTION

Remember to ask your students to fill out the 'Initial Questionnaire' in their Student Composer Diary before the first composer visit.

Your name:

Composer:
Title:
Date of composition:
Instruments:

Start in the circle below. As you listen, note down any words that you would use to describe the music.

Then, think about the seven elements of music in the coloured circles. How do each of these elements help express the mood, or feeling of the music? If you're stuck, start by mapping your words from the circle below onto the different elements.

1. What words would you use to describe this piece? Does it convey a particular mood or feeling? (Write your words below)

2. How do these elements (tonality/ tempo etc.) convey the mood or feeling of the piece? (Write your ideas under each heading)

Your name:

Composer: Title:
Date of composition: Instruments:

Start in the middle on the other side of the sheet. As you listen, note down any words that you would use to describe each of the eight elements of music in the coloured circles.

Work your way out. How do each of the features you note down help express the mood, or feeling of the music? You can then come back to this side and note down anything that feels important to you under each of these headings.

What can you discover about the context of this piece?

What inspired it? What circumstances was it written in? What pieces was it written to be similar -- or different -- to?

How were the different instruments used within this piece?

What do you like about this piece?

Try to be as specific as possible

What do you dislike about this piece?

It's OK not to like it! Try to be as specific as possible

Did you notice any contrasting moments in the piece?

Overall, how does this music make you feel?

When you are composing, what could you take from this piece?

STARTER ACTIVITY – Experimenting with musical ideas

The following short exercise is designed to get your students composing in their groups and to create short musical ideas which can be developed on.

Step 1:

Assuming your student groups have chosen their 'inspiration piece', ask them to think of as many words as they can that relate to the piece they have chosen, and write them down. For example, this could be how the music makes them feel, what it reminds them of, or any particular characteristics of the music. For example, here's a collection of words we thought of when listening to 'Tuggemo' by Anna Meredith:

sighing swarm direction hypnotic

repetitive layers glissando dancing

uplifting club people movement

beat weave flying electronic

Step 2:

In their groups and using whatever instruments are available (including their bodies/voices), ask the students to combine two words (e.g. electronic swarm) then create a short musical idea to describe them. This could be one musical idea that everybody in the group plays together, for example a melody or rhythm. Or it could be multiple parts that come together to create one idea.

When composing to describe their word, encourage each group to think about whether their musical idea ought to:

- Be fast or slow
- Be piano or forte (quiet or loud)
- Use regular or irregular rhythms
- Use long notes or short notes
- Be high or low in pitch
- Use notes that are close together or far apart (in harmony or melody)
- Have one part or multiple parts layered together

Step 3:

Extend this activity by asking each group to change one or two parameters from the list above (e.g. tempo, rhythmic content etc.). What does it sound like now? Do they like it?

Step 4:

Challenge your students to document their ideas on paper* or on software (notation software or DAW). If your students like both versions they created (between steps 3 and 4), ask them to write both down. Students can use these ideas as a starting point for their composition, or use them as reference points later in the process when they are developing their pieces.

*The Student Resource pack might be helpful for students here.

Try this with your class: peer learning

Activities

- Once the groups have composed their musical ideas and are able to perform them, write down each groups' selected words on the board so that everyone in the class can see them. However, it's important that the groups don't know whose word is whose.
- Ask each group to perform their musical idea, while the rest of the class listen and try and match each pair of words to a group's performance. Share the results and allow the students time to feedback on their decisions.

ACTIVITIES FOR MELODY AND PHRASING

Video resource: Composing Melody
There are a few examples of how to compose and develop a melody on the short film that accompanies this resource:
https://musicintheround.co.uk/resources/writing-melody/

Below are a few more activities for you to try with your class to support them in composing melodies.

Here's a few short activities you can try with your class which will result in them composing a melody. In all of these activities, it's important to remember how you want the audience to feel when listening to your music as the choices you make will affect this.

IDEA ONE: Creating Melodies Using Words

Step 1:

Ask each group to listen to their chosen 'inspiration piece' from the four key string quartet pieces. After they've done this, ask them to write down any single words or short phrases that spring to mind when listening. For example, this could be how the piece made them feel; what they imagined when they listened; describing the music etc. Here is a list of words we made after listening to the 2nd movement of 'Death & The Maiden' by Franz Schubert:

sad funeral minor hope hymn

strings fleeing light & dark gets more intense

escape rest talking pleading nervous

variation conversation peace death

Step 2:

Now ask each group to choose a word from the list they have created and think of a few new words that are associated with each one. For example, words associated with 'sad' could be 'cry', 'tears' or 'pain'. Repeat this exercise for each word in the original list so create one word bank. For example:

sad funeral minor hope hymn

strings fleeing light & dark gets more intense

escape rest talking pleading nervous

variation conversation peace death maiden

tears cry pain believe church

tired major bright
black

future calm hands pray sing

heart run tunnel silence
end

Step 3:

Ask each group to create a sentence using only the words from their word bank and some connecting words (e.g. 'and', 'a', 'to', 'for', 'with' etc.)

You could put a restriction on the word count and say that the final sentence can be a maximum of 9 words. For example, using words from the bank above:

A maiden fleeing the hands of death

Pleading and praying for a brighter future

Major and minor, light and dark conversations

Step 4:

Ask each group to think about the tempo of the melody they want to compose. Remind students to think about the mood they're trying to create through their music - what tempo does that mood suggest? For example, do they want a fast, frantic melody (like in the 2nd movement of Shostakovich's Quartet No.8) or one that is slower, more melancholic (like the start of the 2nd movement of Schubert's 'Death & The Maiden'?

Teacher Tip:

Students often place every word or syllable on a crotchet or quaver in this exercise. Try to avoid this if possible and encourage your students to experiment with rests, long notes for different syllables and dotted rhythms. You can lead a quick clapping game to create these new variations, ensuring your students practice the versions they particularly like, so that they will remember them. Ask your students to clap variations on their rhythms that:

- contain silence or rests
- use syncopation
- use dotted rhythm(s)
- use triplets
- use semiquavers
- use minims
- etc...

Once the groups have agreed on a tempo, ask them to try saying their sentence in rhythm, over a pulse.

Step 5:

Once each group has decided on their rhythm, they now need to add pitches to the notes in order to create a melody. Again, it's important that the choices the students make reflect the mood they want to create for the listener. To help with this please see the table overleaf on page 13 which provides information on some different scales, the pitches they use and the mood they can help create.

NB You may find that students apply just one pitch to each of the syllables in their rhythmic sentence. It's also possible to apply more than one pitch to a syllable, especially for notes of longer durations.

Students should constantly reflect and edit their work until they have composed a melody they are happy with - this can be a process of trial and error!

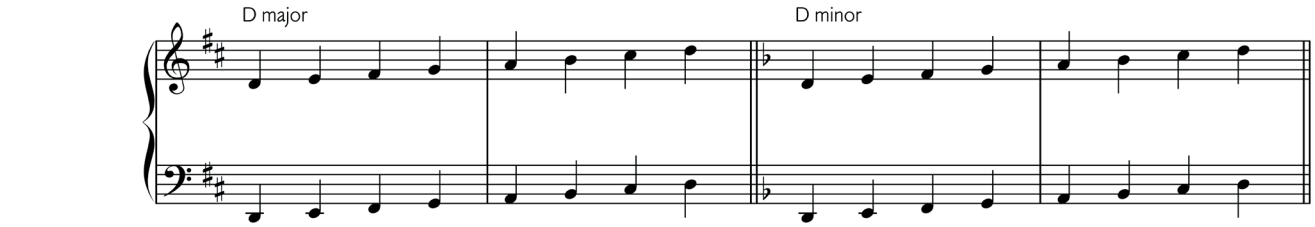
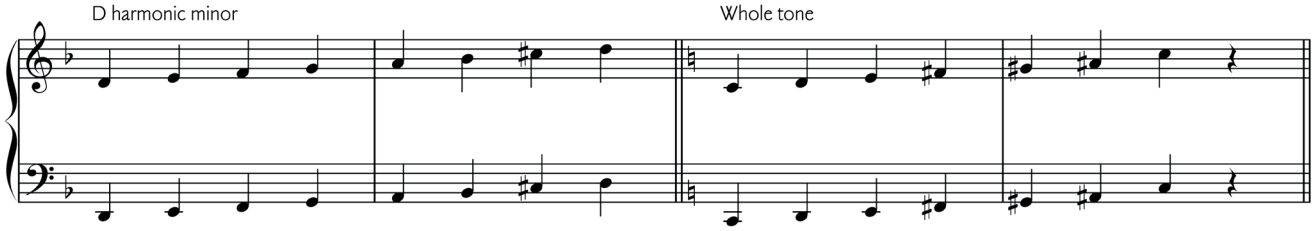
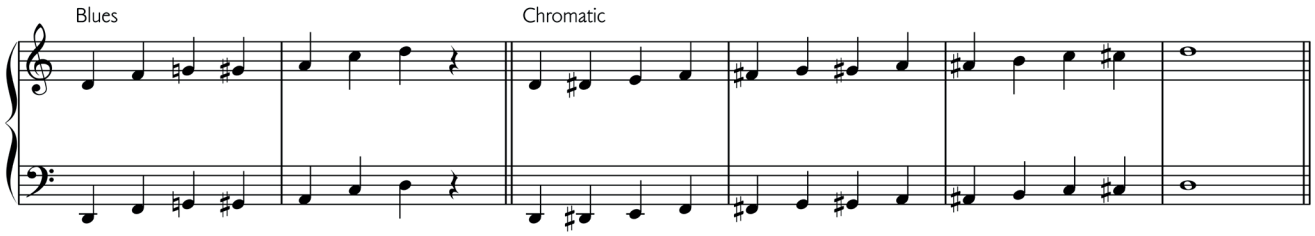
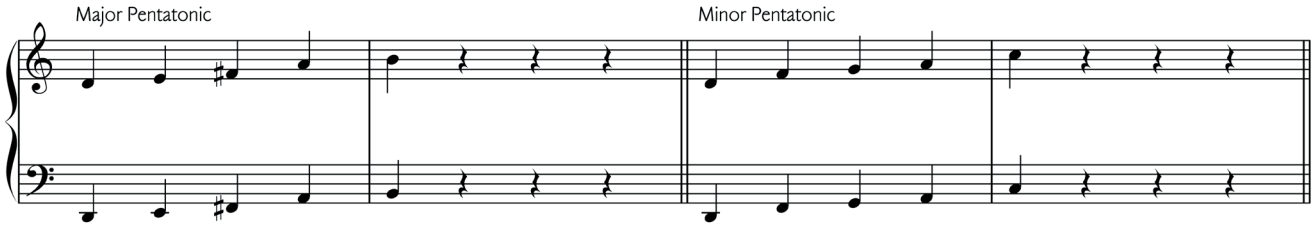
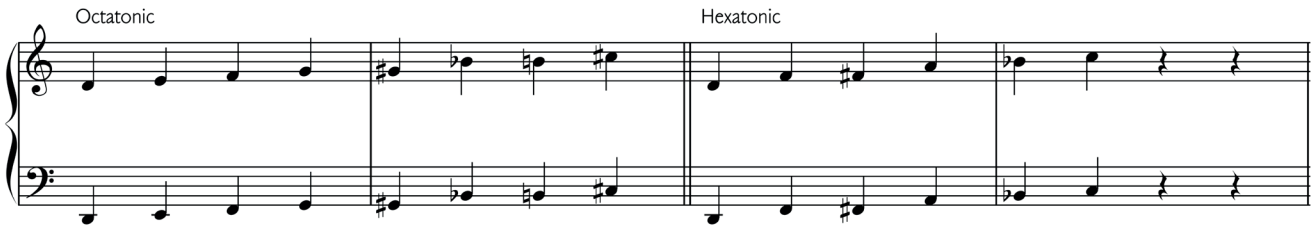
If your students are struggling...

- If your students are struggling to find rhythms they are happy with, ask them to identify one or two important words in their sentence, and give these a rhythmic character. Can they then incorporate these into a full sentence?
- Students can also use the important words their sentences to help them make decisions about which pitches to choose. Ask each student to start by playing their entire rhythm on one note. On the next play-through move up or down (to a note in the scale) on the first important word. Continue moving pitch on important words until students have a melody they are happy with.

Facilitate pair work

Activities

- You can generate lots of material quickly by asking the group to work as a whole to write their sentences and decide upon a scale. Each group can then split into pairs and to create different melodies from the same material. Different ideas might be organised into different sections later, used to develop a melody (phrase A and phrase B) or become a melody and counter-melody.

Scale	Example	Mood
Major	D major - D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#, (D)	Happy, uplifting
Minor	D natural minor - D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, (D)	Sad, more reflective
Harmonic Minor	D harmonic minor - D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C#, (D)	Scary, haunting
Whole Tone	C, D, E, F#, G#, A#	Dreamy
Blues	D, F, G, G#, A, C, (D)	Jazzy
Chromatic	All of the pitches!	Free-falling, exciting
Major Pentatonic	D, E, F#, A, B	Joyful, used a lot in folk music
Minor Pentatonic	D, E, F, A, C	Used in rock and folk music
Octatonic	D, E, F, G, G#, Bb, B, C#	Dark, mysterious
Hexatonic	D, F, F#, A, Bb, C	Spacious, elusive



If your students are playing these scales on transposing instruments, we have typed these at: www.musicintheround.co.uk/wecompose-2024-2025-key-stage-3-resource-hub

IDEA TWO: Clapping Phrases Into Melodies

Step 1:

Ask each group to decide upon a tempo for their piece, then clap the pulse as a steady beat. The tempo could be taken from the Inspiration Piece the group is using (e.g. Andante con molto (a walking pace with movement) from Death and the Maiden). Make sure the whole group are comfortable with clapping the pulse before moving onto Step 2.

Step 2:

Split each group into pairs and ask the students to label themselves player A and B. Over their steady pulse, player A claps a rhythm which fits within 8 counts. This rhythm could be inspired by their Inspiration piece - perhaps incorporating some of the rhythms from the piece, or perhaps they are inspired by the energy and mood of the piece to create new rhythms. Player A should experiment until they are happy and the pair should practice this rhythm until both can clap it over the steady pulse.

Player B now claps a different rhythm in response, again making sure that their rhythm fits within 8 counts and experimenting until the pair is happy with the call and response between them (NB call and response is a common technique used by composers, including some of the four key string quartet pieces).

Step 3:

Challenge each pair to document their ideas on paper* or on software (putting the rhythm on one pitch in a notation software or DAW). *The Student Resource Pack might be helpful here.

Step 4:

The groups now need to apply pitches to the rhythms they have just composed. You may want to limit the pitches to just 2 or 3 to begin with and then extend these parameters once the students are comfortable with the task. This can be done as a paper activity* or on software (notation software of DAW).

*Ask your students to try playing their melodies (or ask another student to play them), so they can hear what they have created and make any changes if necessary.

As mentioned in the previous exercise, it's important that the choices the students make reflect the mood they want to create for the listener. To help with this please see the table on page 15 which provides information on some different scales, the pitches they use and the mood they can help create. Students can experiment by applying the pitches from one of these scales to their rhythms.

Adapt this as a class starter...

As the teacher, you can decide a tempo and clap the steady pulse for the class to follow. Split the class into pairs where Player A claps a call over 8 counts, and then Player B claps a response over 8 counts. Keep repeating this activity then ask each pair to choose a call and response rhythm they particularly liked. Continue as above from Step 3.

Composing Melodies From Chords

Preparation (in advance or as a class)

In this activity students will work from chords to create melodies. We recommend that you have either already completed "ACTIVITIES FOR HARMONY" on page 20, or (if this is your starting point for the whole process) that you run a starter activity where you pick 4 chords from a common key as a class.

Step 1:

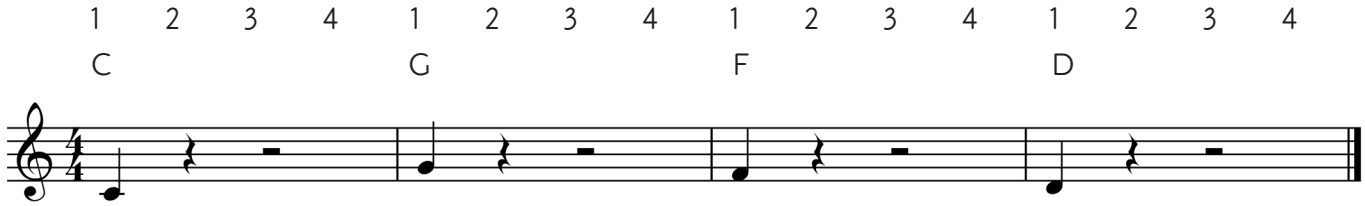
Pick 4 chords and ask each group to write down the single notes that make up those chords underneath. As always, the chords they choose should reflect the mood they want to create for their overall piece. For example:

Chord:	Am	C	F	G
Notes:	A, C, E	C, E, G	F, A, C	G, B, D

Step 2:

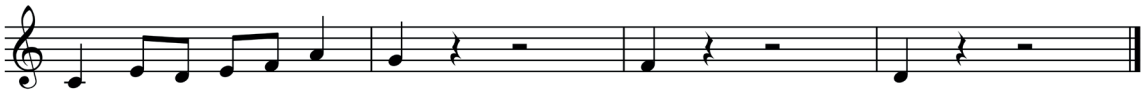
Ask groups to pick one note from each of their chords. For example using the chords above, we have chosen the notes C, G, F and D.

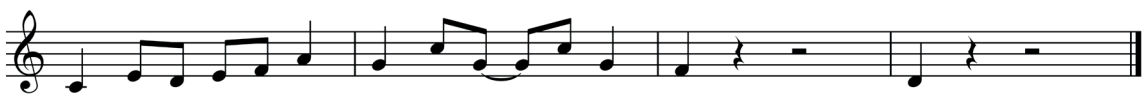
While continually counting 1, 2, 3, 4 over a steady pulse, ask each group to play (or write down) each of their chosen notes on the first beat. For example:

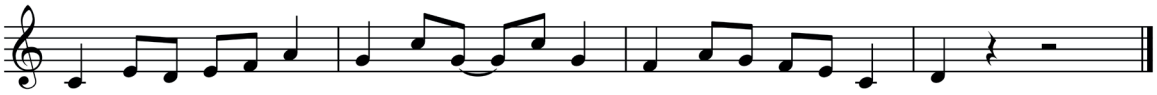


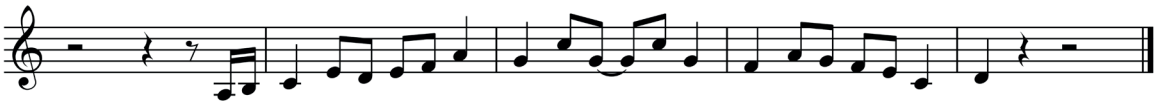
These will be the starting notes to the group's melody.

Step 3:

Ask each group to add some passing notes to get from their 1st note to their 2nd note. For example:

Step 4:

Now ask each group to add some passing notes to get from their 2nd note to their 3rd note. For example:

Step 5:

Lastly, ask each group to finish their melody off with some passing notes from their 3rd note to their 4th note. For example:

Step 6:

One final idea your class could try is to add an 'anacrusis' to their melodies. This is a one or a few notes that come just before the first beat at the start of your melody. For example:

Working effectively in groups/ pairs

Each group could work on this activity in pairs:

- For Step 2, ask each pair to choose their own set of notes from the chords they defined in Step 1. Then split each pair into Player A and Player B. Player A should create the passing notes for the first two bars, and Player B should create the passing notes for the final two bars (responding in some way to Player A).
- NB By tasking pairs to create melodies using different starting notes, you will create an opportunity for students to think about phrasing, structure or texture later, when they come to develop their pieces (i.e. what happens if these melodies are used one after the other, or in different sections (at different tempos perhaps), or if one melody is given to Violin 1, and the Viola plays the second melody an octave lower (at the same time or 1-2 bars later perhaps).

Further tips:

- Each group might want to try drawing contours graphically (using lines on paper) before experimenting on their instruments/ software.
- Remind your students that passing notes can reach higher or lower than the harmony notes and might even define the highest or lowest points in the phrase.

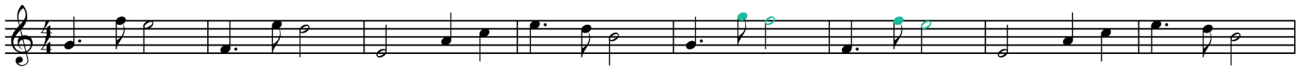
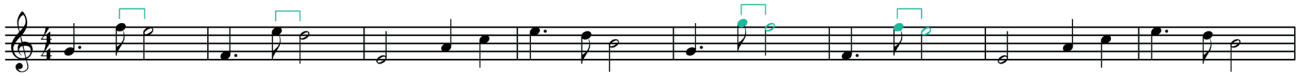
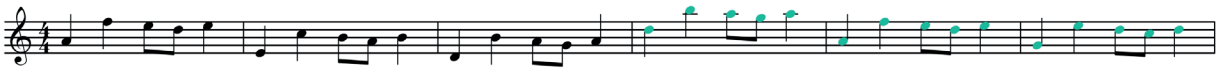
Developing your melody

Hopefully your students have now been able to compose a melody using some of the exercises above. This might be a long melody made up of several phrases or a short melodic idea.

Below are a list of examples that students can experiment with in order to develop their melody. These can be used to develop a single phrase (perhaps extending a short melodic idea like the one above into something longer), or to make new phrases and variations based on the original (which can be heard afterwards, or at a different moment in the piece).

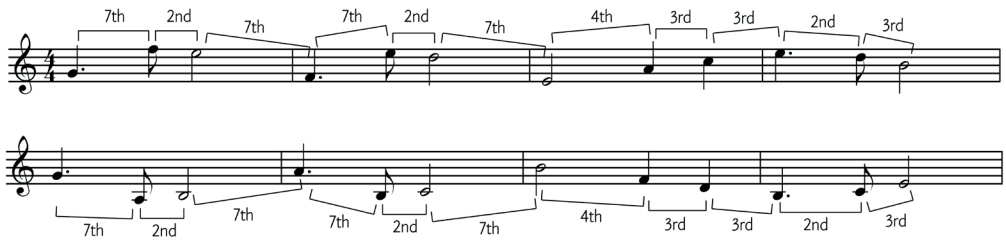
Set One

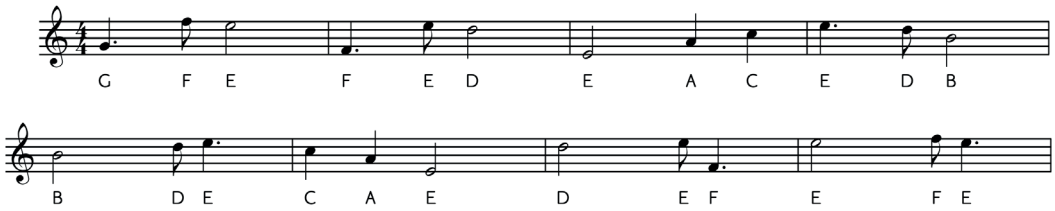
- Alter the original melody by changing some of the intervals - perhaps making the distance between two of the notes bigger or smaller. Students will then have to choose whether the following notes move too or not.

  Have a look at this example. A 4-bar melodic idea has been repeated, but on the 2nd time the intervals between the 1st and 2nd, and 4th and 5th notes are bigger - the melody is reaching upwards.

  The notes following this stretch have moved too, preserving the stepwise movement downwards, before it returns to the original.

- Treat the melody as a sequence, repeating it but moving the whole melody up or down in pitch - how does this shift change the mood of the music?

- Use these ideas in combination - sequence the melody first , then on the second time, change some of the intervals. You could also change the rhythm for the moment you have changed the intervals, making it even more obvious to the listener that something has changed.

Set Two

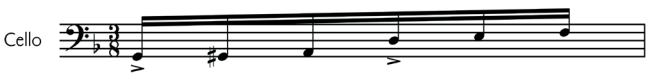
- You could invert some or all of the original melody. You could keep the rhythms the same (for a true inversion) or change them to create new material.



- Some or all of the melody could be played backwards (retrograde).

- You could use these two ideas in combination.

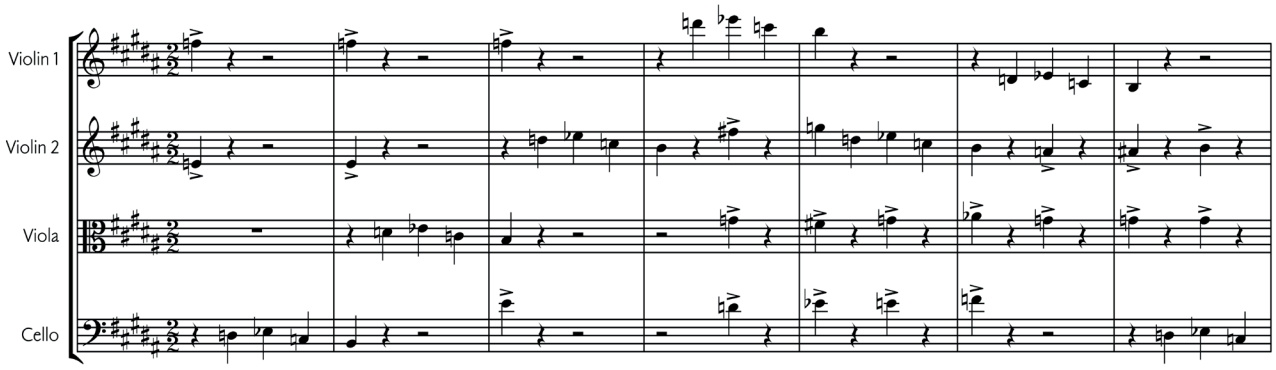
Set Three

- Add some additional notes into a motif or melodic phrase, perhaps in the middle or at the end.

Anna Meredith, Tuggemo, Bar 35

Anna Meredith, Tuggemo, Bar 36

- Alternatively, take some notes away from a motif or melodic phrase (perhaps turning a 6-note motif into a 4-note motif).

Set Four

- Put the whole melody into a different instrument.
- Imitate the melody in a different instrument.

Dmitri Shostakovich, Quartet No.8 in C minor, Movement 2, Bars 62-68

- Put the melody in a different octave.
- Play the melody using a different playing technique or using different articulation.
- Use these ideas in combination.

Collaborative decision making

If each group has generated lots of different monophonic ideas but hasn't thought about texture or structure, it might be time to think about if they could arrange or combine their ideas.

Preparation: Ensure that all of the work students have generated so far is accessible on 1 computer or listening device.

- Ask each group to listen to all of the material they have created so far. Are there any phrases or ideas that feel like beginnings, middles or ends of a phrase, the section, or piece?
- Could any of the material be arranged into a conversation between different members of the string quartet? (You could print out/photocopy any notation that has been created, then ask students to cut phrases out and arrange them on our texture sheet like the one below, or ask students to start arranging their ideas inside a DAW).
- Could any material be transformed through augmentation or diminution? Could it work as a counter melody or accompaniment?
- Is the material contrasting, and suited to an A and a B section?
- What is missing from the sketches created so far? What materials do the students need to develop their pieces now? Should the new material be similar or different to what they have already composed?
- Use the rest of the lesson to split into pairs. 1 pair could be responsible for starting these developments, and another pair could be responsible for combining the group's ideas into one notated score, graphic score, or DAW.

See Appendix for A4 printable version

Creating Contrast

Once your students have enough building blocks in place that their music has a distinctive character, you could use the listening guide to reflect on the musical features that give the music its character. Using this analysis, create a word bank or a list of words that describe the section. Then, challenge your students to write down (in another list or word bank) how they could contrast each of these features. Ask them to plan a contrasting section - which features do they want to stay the same, and which do they want to contrast.

Preparation

Our Video Resource: Harmony & Tonality in String Quartet music unpacks some of the vocabulary and theory in this section.

In this activity students will create harmonic progressions. Before starting this activity, each group needs to have chosen a scale or key for their piece (you can also decide this for the class). We recommend that each group has spent some time thinking about the mood of their piece, and chosen a key/ scale that is suitable.

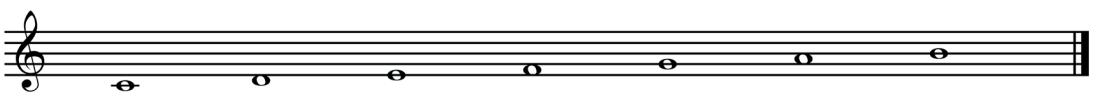
Composing and extending progressions

The video discusses consonant and dissonant harmony. Consonant harmonies have a more pleasing sound to the ear, where chords relate to a specific key or tonal centre. Dissonant harmonies have a harsher, clashing sound made up of chords that don't relate to a specific key. One way to create chords that produces a consonant sounding harmony is by triads that are related to a specific scale or mode.

Step 1:

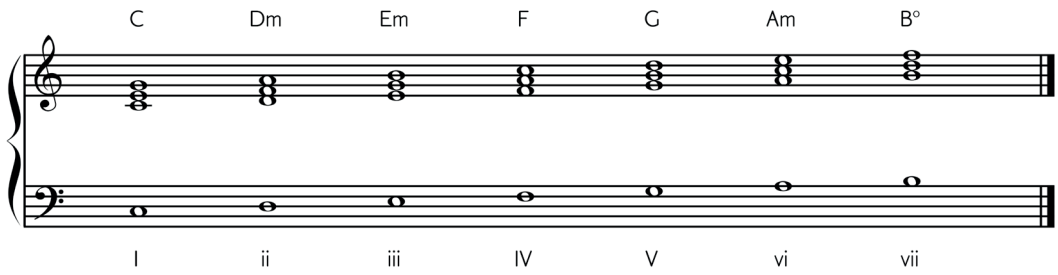
First, make sure your students know what the key of their piece is. Write the numbers 1-7 in the left column of a grid. Next to each number, write the corresponding note for that scale, like this example in C major:

1	C
2	D
3	E
4	F
5	G
6	A
7	B

Students could also notate their scale on manuscript paper, or input it into notation software:

Step 2:

Now ask your students to build triads for each note in the scale and write them in the grid. Students could also note this on manuscript paper, and some students might be able to name the triads using chord symbols. There is support for labelling chords on page 16 of this pack.

1	C, E, G
2	D, F, A
3	E, G, B
4	F, A, C
5	G, B, D
6	A, C, E
7	B, D, F

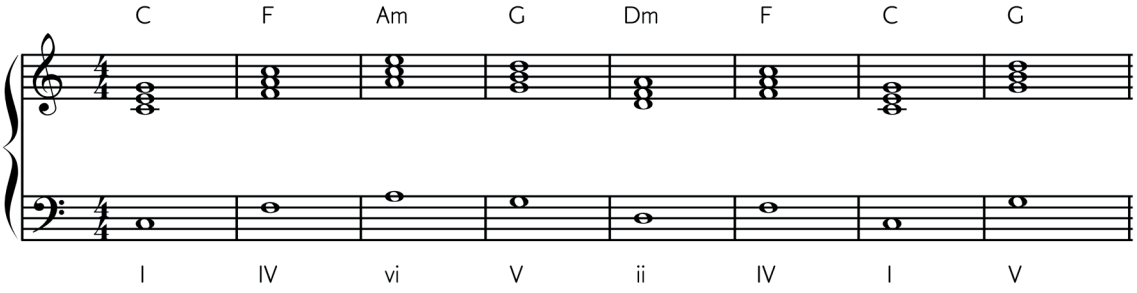


Additional resources

There is a template for students to complete this activity in the Student Resource Pack. If you need to save some lesson time, you may find giving students a copy of our Common Major/ Minor scales sheet which you'll find in the Resource Hub linked from the front of this pack.

Step 3:

Treating the grid like a painter treats a palette of paint, ask your students to organise their triads into chord progressions. Challenge each student to create 4-8 progressions each, documenting these in their Student Composer Pack.



There isn't a rule on the order in which the chords should go, it's about experimenting, and the composer using their

ears to decide what they like the sound of. Some prompts however, might help in the classroom, including:

- Create a chord progression with 4 chords that starts on chord 1.
- Create a chord progression with 4 chords that ends on chord 5.
- Create a chord progression that ends on chord 6.
- Create a chord progression that includes chord 7 and chord 1.
- Create a chord progression that includes chord 2.
- Create a chord progression with 4 chords where no chords are repeated.
- Create a chord progression with 4 chords that sounds sombre/heroic/excited/hopeful/peaceful etc.

Step 4:

It is important to move the notes in the chord around to 're-voice' it. What this means is that instead of playing a triad in the order written above, we might move certain notes up or down an octave to ensure the music sounds smooth and doesn't jump around all the time.

To do this, ask your students to write their chord progressions in a new grid, like this:

G	C	E	D
E	A	C	B
C	F	A	G

Now get them to rearrange the notes in each triad so that the middle row only repeats notes, or moves by a step, like this:

G	C	C	B
E	F	E	D
C	A	A	G

Finally, choose either the top or bottom row and apply the same process, keeping the middle row as they've just made it, like this:

C	C	C	B
E	F	E	D
G	A	A	G

Step 7:

Once students have created a chord progression they are happy with, they now need to think about how this will be arranged or the clarinet quintet, assigning each row to an instrument. **By the end of this activity, students should aim to have individual instruments (particularly the inner parts) contain as few jumps as possible. Our 'Writing for String Quartet' video has some advice on this.** Next, students can think about the accompaniment rhythm - are the instruments holding long sustained notes, or applying a rhythm to them? Take a look at the 'Texture' section on page 43 for more guidance on this.

Teacher Tip:

Another way to facilitate this activity by asking students to write out their triads on post-it notes (1 note per post it). Then, ask them to rearrange the triads so that the inner parts can only stay on the same note or move by one step.

A note on harmonic planning

Encourage students to refer back to their Composition Plan. Can they compose a harmonic progression that expresses the mood in each section of their composition? Students may need further techniques to achieve this, including those documented below.

If your students are struggling...

If your students are struggling to understand the theory behind chords (including building and extending triads), but you would like them to use their ears to make decisions about harmonic progressions, we have found this activity successful in previous years:

Step 1:

In the student's DAW or notation software, the teacher enters the triads built from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degrees of the students' chosen scale. Make sure to set up any key signatures in file before handing it over. E.g.

Step 2:

Ask the students to "continue the pattern" you started on their computer to create a total of 7 chords. They will now have a set of triads in their key.

Step 3:

Ask the students to make progressions of 4 or 8 chords by listening to different combinations on the computer one after the other, then copying and pasting these chords into a new order.
NB This method can be used for 7th and added 9th chords, too.

Suspensions

Step 1:

Once each group is equipped with chords 1 to 7 of their chosen scale, challenge them to create at least two progressions from the options in front of them. Limit this activity in whatever way is suitable, i.e. specifying how many chords should be in the progression, or specifying the start/end chords (you can define the cadences implied in this way). It is important that your students experiment with different progressions and that they can hear the different options (i.e. by playing themselves, listening back through a DAW or notation software, or someone else plays them their options).

Step 2:

Challenge each group to create a moment of drama or tension in one of their progressions. Ask each group to choose a progression. Next, in any of the middle chords (not the first or last chord in the progression) challenge each group to add a note to an existing triad.

This note could:

- be a step higher or a step lower than one of the notes in the chord
- be a step higher or a step lower than one of the notes in the following chord
- belong to the scale or be a note from outside the scale

Remind your students to experiment with different sounds until they find something that they feel fits with a particular mood or expression they want to create in their piece. Remember to play through the progression as a whole.

Improvising harmony

Step 1:

For this activity, your students will need to have composed some melodies already. It will work well with the 16-beat melodies composed in the 'Clapping Phrases Into Melodies' exercise on page 14. In their student groups, one musician will play their chosen melody.

Step 2:

Another student in the group will compose a drone for this melody. To do this, they should choose just one note from the melody that they like the sound of when played along with the melody. Encourage the students to experiment with different notes for the drone and ask them to consider how these different notes change the mood of the overall sound. This can be an organic way for students who are interested in composing dissonant harmonies to experiment.

Step 3:

Once the students have found a drone they are happy with, ask them to move to another pitch at some point during the melody. Experiment and practice playing this along with the melody.

Step 4:

After moving to their second pitch, students can make one of three choices:

- Stay on this new pitch for the duration of the melody
- Move back to their original pitch (students must decide when this should happen)
- Make a further move to another new pitch
- Experiment and practice playing this along with the melody.

Step 5:

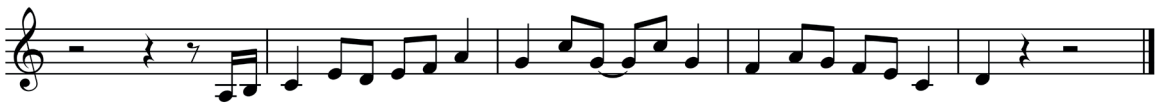
Now try adding more students to the ensemble with each new musician added to the ensemble following steps 2-4.

Tips:

1. Students can decide whether the combination of notes they use creates a consonant harmony (using pitches from within the same scale) or dissonant (using pitches from outside of their scale).
2. The students ought to experiment with making note changes at different points in the melody. How does this change the mood of the music? You could give the students 5 minutes to come up with 3 different harmonic progressions for their melodies. Limit the students to one-note harmonies at this point.

Developing Harmony From A Melody

Step 1:

Ask your students to choose one of their melodies (perhaps from one of the exercises on pages 12-16). For example:

If you students' melodies are rooted in a major or minor scale, they can compose a consonant sounding harmony. One way of doing this is to look at the first note in each bar of the melody. For example using the above melody, the notes would be C, G, F and D.

Step 2:

Now ask the students to compose a series of triads that include the chosen notes from their melody. For example:

Chosen Note:	C	G	F	D
Name of triad:	Am	G	F	Dm
Notes in triad:	A, C, E	G, B, D	F, A, C	D, F, A

Step 3:

If your students want to add some more harmonic colour to a consonant melody they have composed, they could try editing their progression in the following ways:

- Suspend one (or more) of their chords into the next bar for a couple of beats.
- Suspend a note from one chord into the beginning of the next chord
- Change one (or more) of their chords so that it is built from the note above the melody note (e.g. if the chosen melody note is C, build a triad on D: DFA). This melody note will become the 7th in the chord.
- Find a drone on one pitch that can be held underneath the entire phrase.
- A combination of the above

Remember to experiment and if they don't like it, change it!

Step 4:

Once a student has decided on the harmonic progression they can now consider the role of each instrument in the quartet. For example, the notes from a triad don't all have to just be long notes, they could be applied to a rhythm etc.

More on dissonance...

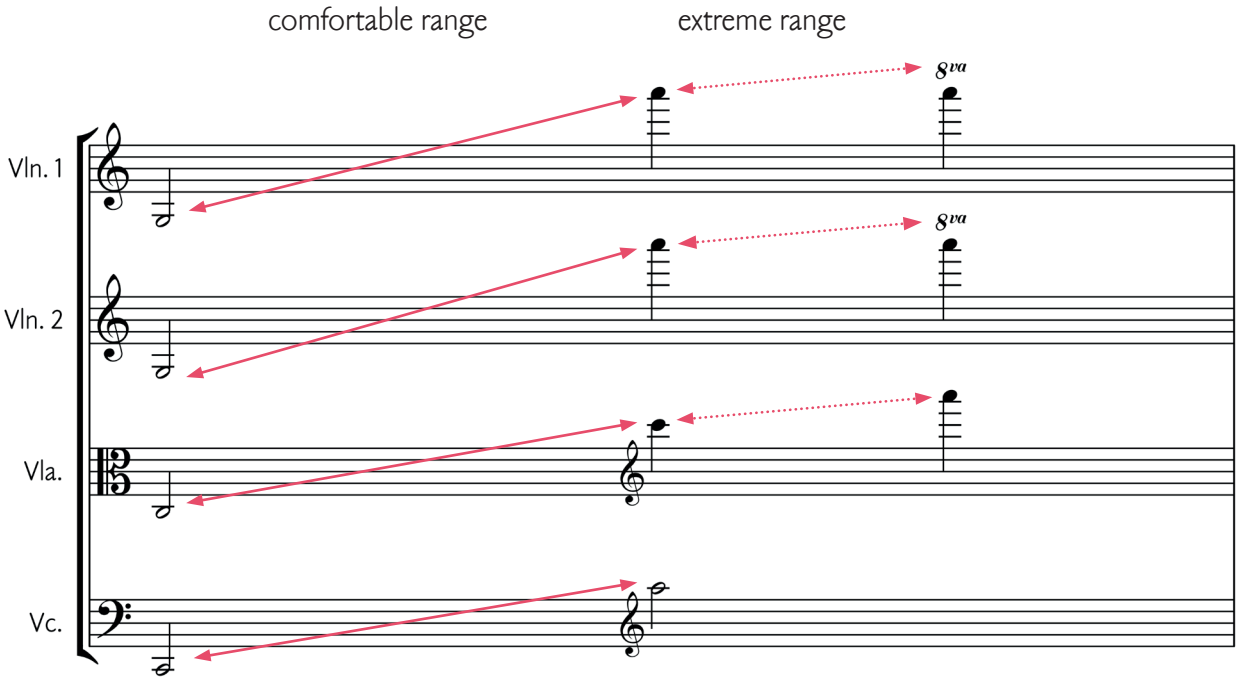
To create a dissonant sounding harmony, the combination of notes a student chooses must not relate to a specific scale. This music sounds very different to the consonant harmonies in the activity above and gives a much more uneasy feeling. The choices the student makes for the notes in a chord should depend on the overall mood they are trying to portray.

If your students want a piece with lots of dissonance, why not encourage them to write in chromatic harmony by choosing their own pitch set.

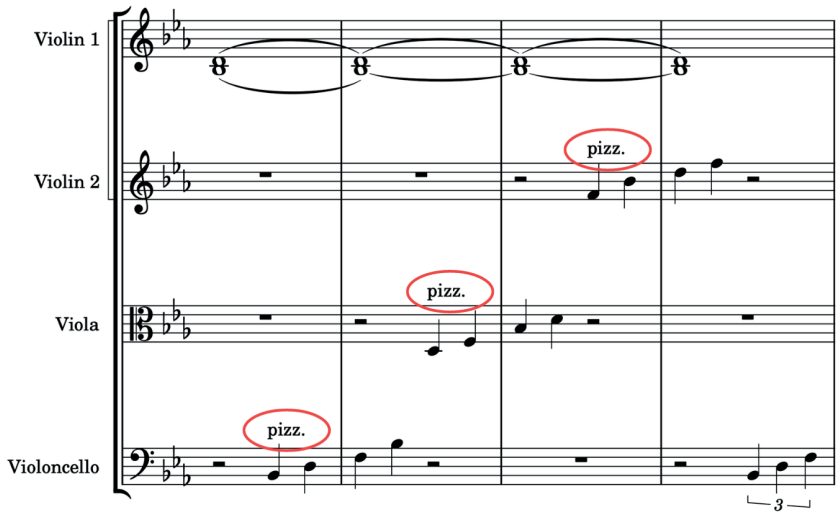
IDIOMATIC WRITING TIPS

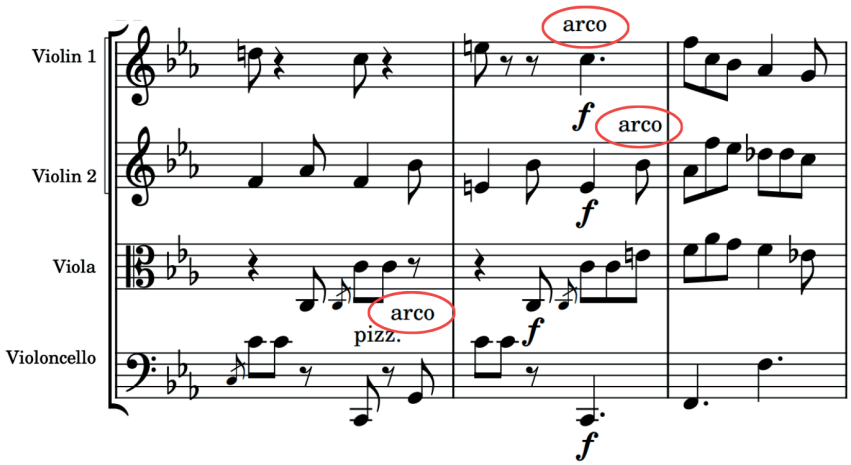
Exploring A String Quartet

A string quartet is made up of 2 violins, a viola and a cello. Together they cover a wide range of pitches from the cello being able to play very low, the violins being able to play very high, and the viola being the filling in the middle of this musical sandwich!



There are things that all the instruments in a string quartet can do for example they can all play the strings with a bow (arco), or by plucking the strings with their fingers (pizzicato). Remember, each of the instruments in a string quartet has a unique sound quality and the decisions you make for how each of the instruments are used will affect the overall mood of the music.

Pizzicato example:

excerpt from BEETHOVEN Ludvig Van, String Quartet in E-flat Major Op.74 "Harp", First movement (Poco adagio – Allegro), bars 125-128

Arco example:

excerpt from MENDELSSOHN Fanny, String Quartet in E-flat Major HelH227, Second movement (Allegretto), bars 14-16

The role(s) of each instrument in a string quartet often change as a piece develops, and could include any of the Following ideas:

- Playing a melody
- Playing a counter melody
- Providing harmonic accompaniment
- Providing a more rhythmic accompaniment
- Playing a motif
- Playing a bass line
- Playing extended techniques to provide certain effects

All of these roles contribute to the overall texture of the music. When we create music, we combine, mix and layer sounds together. Texture is the word we use to describe the way we do this. Different musical textures can depend on:

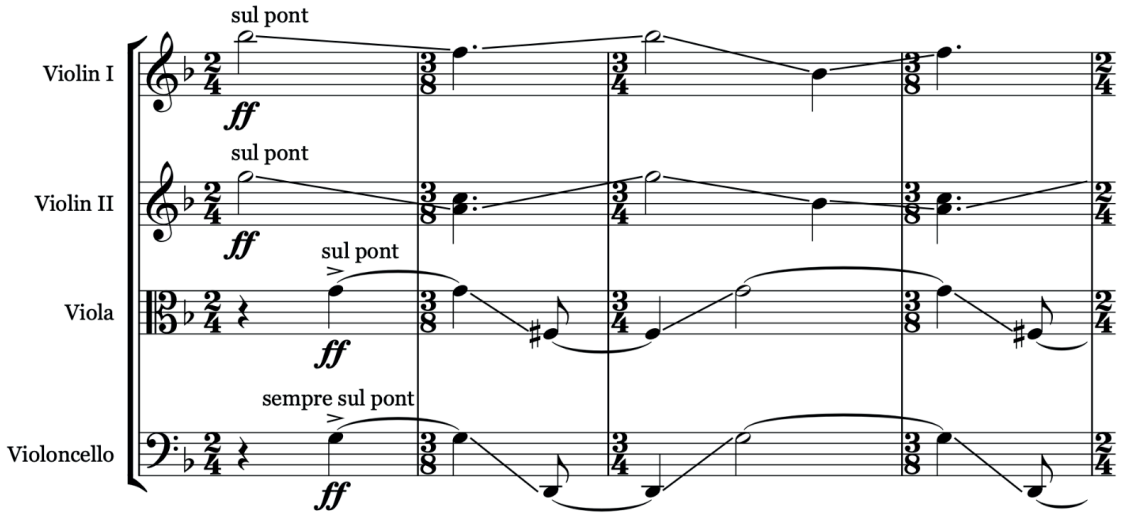
- How many instruments are playing at a particular time
- The timbre of the instruments that are playing
- What the instruments are actually playing

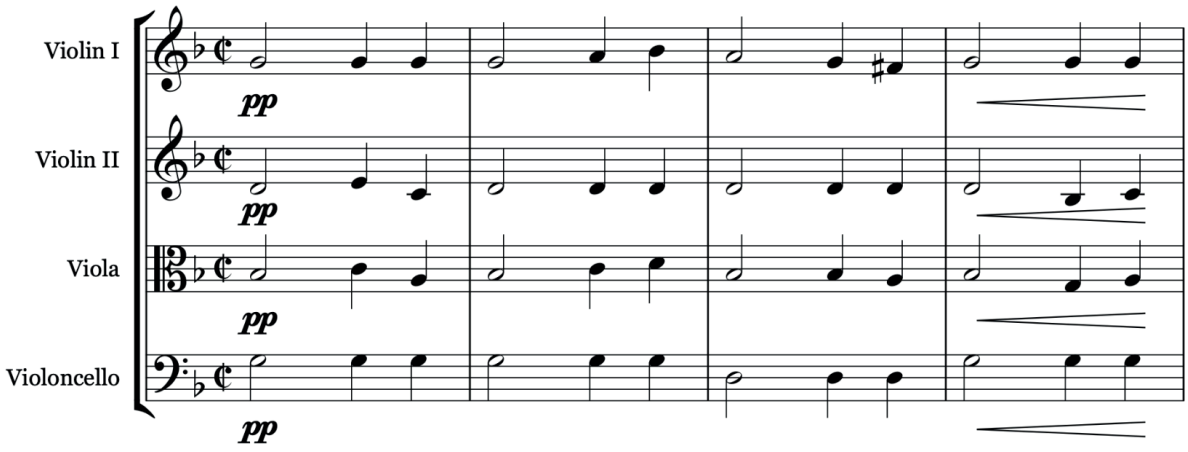
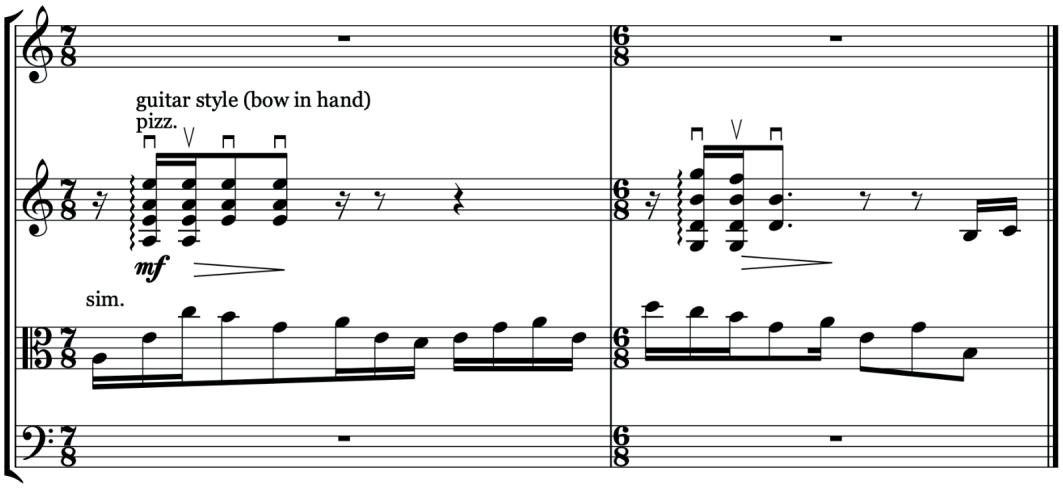
Try this!

Learning objectives: identify / analyse

Task: match each label to the correct texture:

- Homophonic texture
- Polyphonic texture
- Melody and accompaniment



excerpt from MEREDITH, Anna, 'Tuggemo', bars 89-92

excerpt from SCHUBERT, Franz. 'Death and the Maiden', Movement Two (Andante con moto) bars 1-4

excerpt from MONTGOMERY, Jessie. 'Strum', bars 3-4

TEXTURE: COMPOSING FOR STRING QUINTET

Watch our video on composing for Clarinet Quintet to get familiar with the ways you can think about texture within this ensemble.

Students should always refer back to their Composition Plan when deciding how their musical ideas should be arranged into the clarinet quintet texture. This will help them decide what kind of textures they are interested in. They can start making these decisions right at the start of the composition process and we recommend the following class activity for getting started:

Step 1

Assuming the students have started their planning process, ask them to choose one section of their piece (perhaps the opening) and think of as many words as they can that relate to that section, then write them down. For example, this could be how they want to listener to feel, or any particular characteristics of the music. E.g. here's some words about a piece we want to write:

sighing swarm direction hypnotic

repetitive layers glissando dancing

uplifting club people movement

beat weave flying electronic

Step 2

Inspired by these words, choose a tempo and metre - clap this out or set up a metronome in your DAW/ notation software.

Step 3

Either clapping out loud, or inputting midi into the computer using a keyboard (for this Step, choose 1 note to play only), devise a 2-bar rhythm inspired by your word bank. Keep experimenting until you have something that reflects the mood and energy you want to create.

Step 4

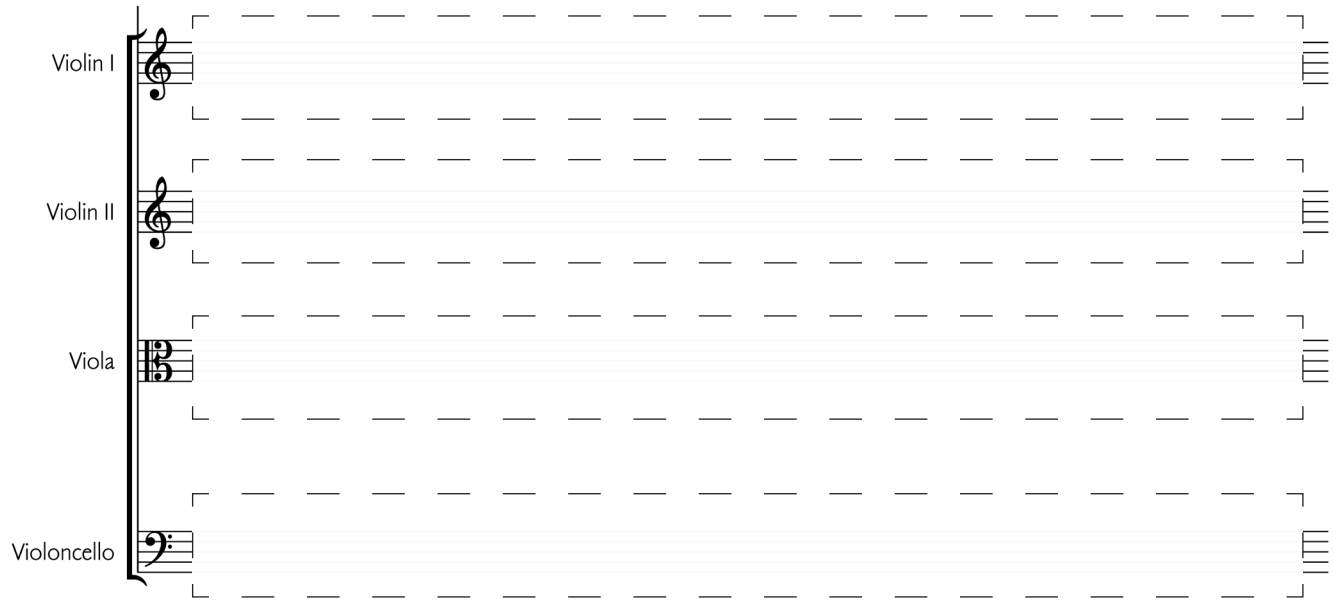
Ask your students the following questions:

- Which instrument plays this rhythm?
- Does it have a particular role - e.g. is it suited to a melody or bass line? Perhaps it's part of a denser, more complicated texture?
- How many bars does the same instrument play this rhythm for? A whole phrase? Longer?
- What happens at the same time as this rhythm? Which other instruments are playing? What role do they have?
- How is this instrument playing this rhythm? Loudly/ softly? High in it's register/ low in it's register? Pizzicato/ arco?

While considering these questions, students can draw their ideas for texture (graphically or using music notation) onto this template (which is also enlarged in the Student Resource Pack, as well as given in full stave notation) or copy and paste/ move things around in the DAW/ notation software. Students may want to devise other rhythms as they answer some of the questions, and make sure they annotate decisions around playing technique.

Teacher Tip:

Use our Composition Cards to aid conversations about musical elements. These give some prompts for thinking through different choices composers can make about texture and the way different ideas interact, harmony, and some initial ways ideas might map onto different instruments.



Step 5

Give your students the following texture words, and ask them to label their work with any appropriate terms.

- Monophonic texture
- Harmonic texture
- Polyphonic texture
- Melody and accompaniment
- Solo
- Soli (two or three instruments play the solo line)
- Accompaniment
- Polyrhythms

Step 6

Assign pitches to each rhythm based on the scale/mode/pitch set you have chosen. Continue to compose out the texture using the activities below.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEXTURE

Experimenting with different textures can make music more interesting to listen to. In the following exercises we shall explore some different types of texture including practical example for your students.

Composing Monophonic Textures

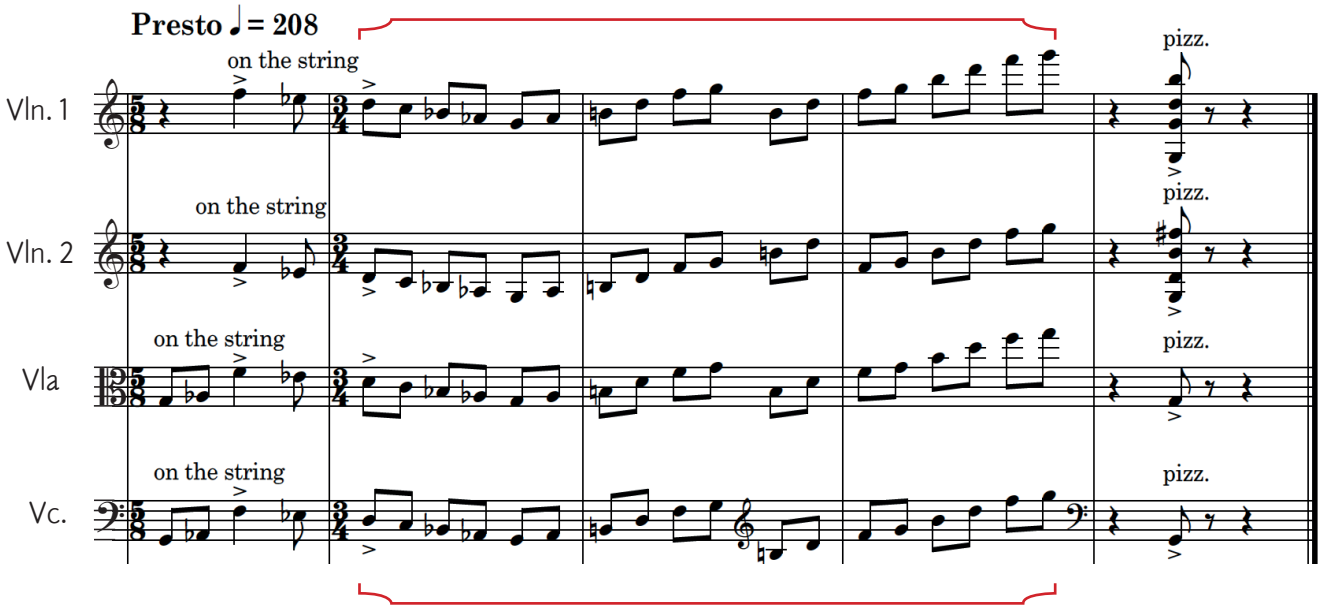
A monophonic texture is one single melody played by all instruments in unison/at the same time. A monophonic texture has no harmonic or rhythmic accompaniment, it's just one melody.

Step 1:

Ask your student groups to pick a memorable tune or emotive musical moment in something they have already composed.

Step 2:

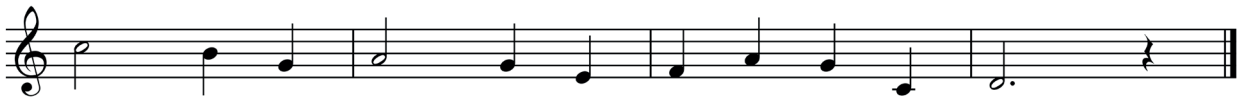
Distribute this melody to all instruments in the string quartet. The melody can be played in different octaves, this is still a monophonic texture.

Jessie Montgomery uses a monophonic texture at the end of Strum to give the piece a distinctive ending:

excerpt from MONTGOMERY, Jessie, 'Strum' bars 262-266.

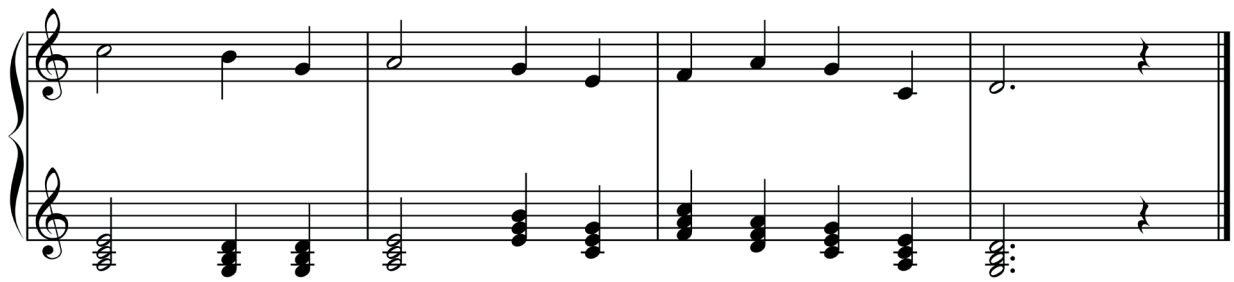
Composing Homophonic Textures

In a homophonic texture, the instruments play different notes that move together at the same time. The combination of notes played together at any time creates a chord, and homophonic textures are based on chords moving together at the same speed. So, to create homophonic textures in your music, you need to have a melody and then build harmonic accompaniments that complement it.

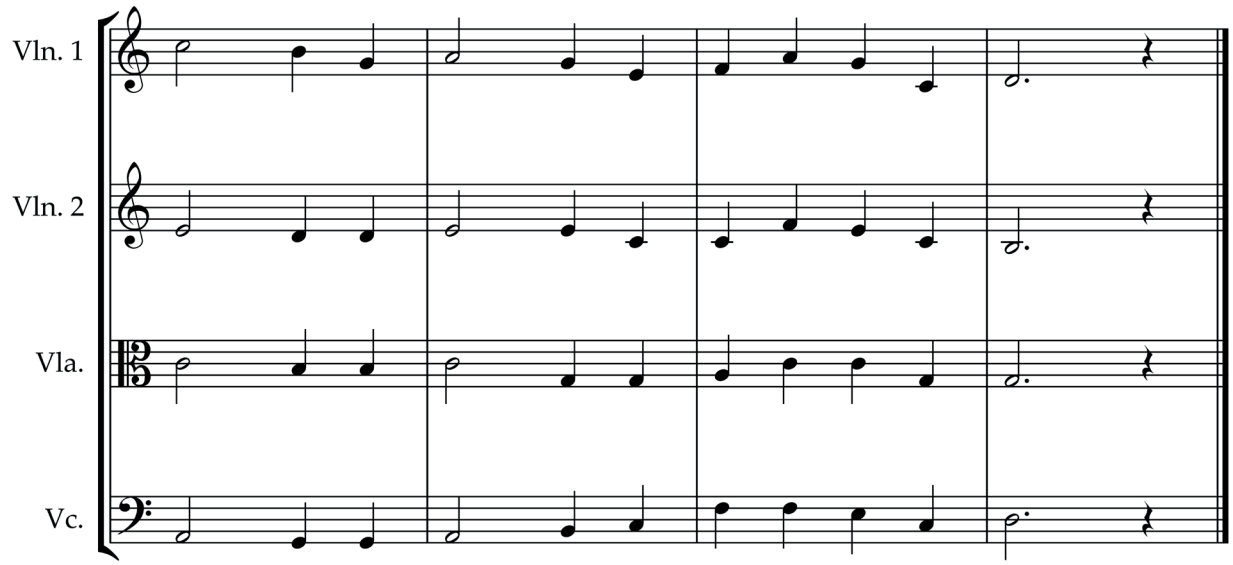
Step 1:

Choose one of the melodies you have already composed and give this part to the first violin. For example:

Step 2:

Now experiment by adding accompanying notes to each note in the melody, to build the harmony. One way of doing this is to compose triads to accompany each note in the melody. For example:



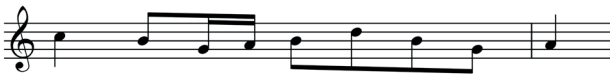
Step 3:

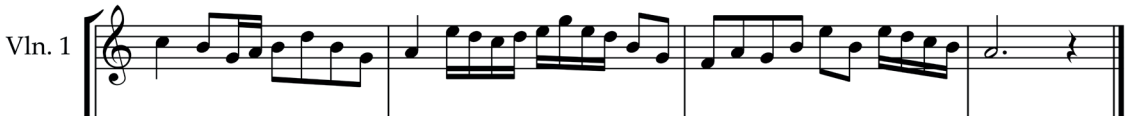
Distribute these accompanying notes to the rest of the instruments in the quartet. The instruments don't have to play these notes at the octaves written above, in fact encourage the students to experiment with the different ranges of the instruments in the quartet. For example:

As you can see, the first violin plays the melody, but the other instruments play different notes that help build the harmony.

Composing Polyphonic Textures

In polyphonic music, each of the instruments has a melodic line which is equally important. The notes constantly weave in between one another. Follow these steps to compose a short section of polyphonic music:

Step 1:

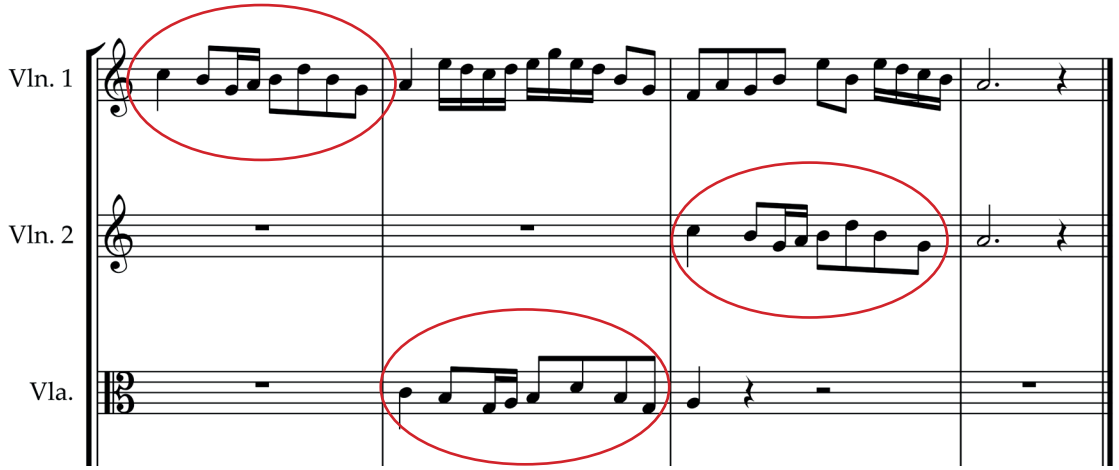
Ask your student groups to compose a short 1 or 2 bar melody. You could use the 'Composing Melodies Using Words' exercise above to do this. Here's an example:

Step 2:

Develop this short melody into a 4 bar melodic passage for one of the instruments in the quartet. You could use composition techniques explained in the 'Developing Your Melodies' exercise above to do this. For example:

Step 3:

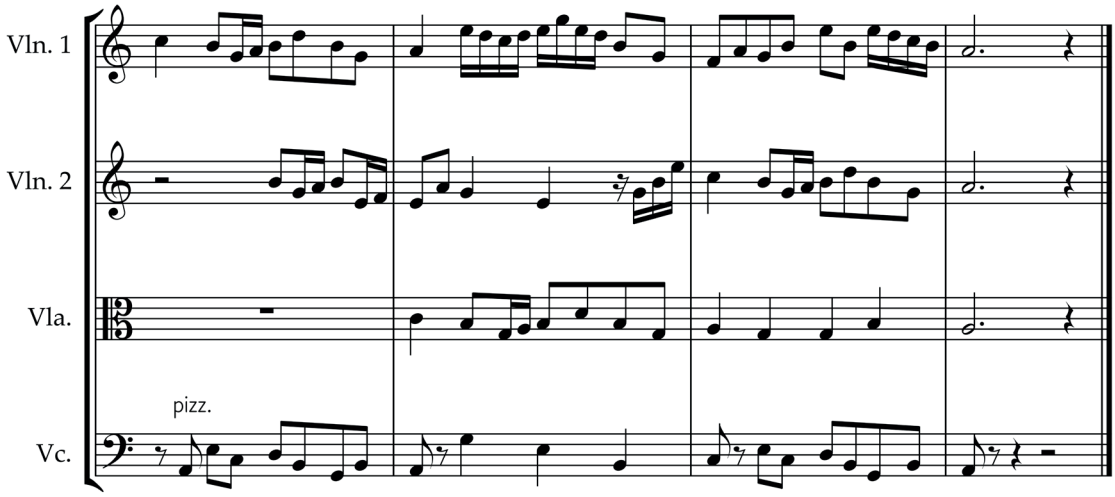
To create polyphonic textures, we need to have two or more independent melodies being played at the same time. However, they can't be two random melodies together, it's important that they work together harmonically. A little trick composers often use in polyphonic music is imitation. This is where one instrument copies something that has just been played by another instrument.

To make the music more interesting, the imitations can have slight changes. For example, they could:

- Be played in a different octave.
- Have ornamentation to create a fancy, decorated version of the original melody.
- Use the same pitches as the original melody, but use notes that are different durations.

Ask your students to experiment using imitation in one or more of the other instrument parts based on something in the 4 bar melodic passage they composed in the previous step. For example:

Students may find that in order for the imitations to work harmonically, they may need to change some of the pitches in the original melody.

Step 4:

Now the students need to fill in the gaps, making sure that each instrument has their own melodic line independent of one another. No single melody should take over the overall sound. For example:

Try this with your class

Learning objectives: to transform/ to evaluate

Activities

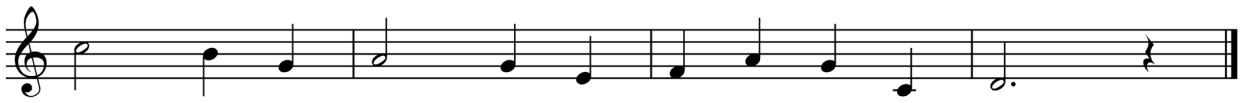
This activity will work best in a DAW or notation software.

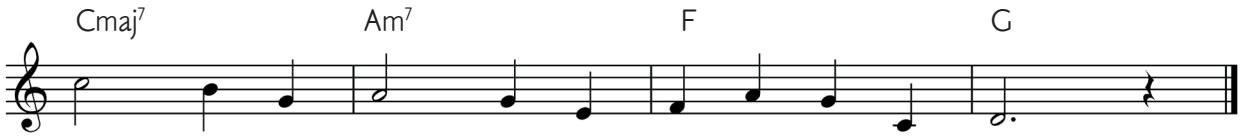
- Support the group to copy one bar of their original melody, and paste it into a different instrument 1 or 2 bars later. NB many KS3 students do not know how to use copy and paste functions on these softwares, so they may need some help with this.
- Ask the whole group to listen back to this. Do they like it? Are there any crunches or clashes in the harmony that they do not like? Make changes based on this evaluation.
- (Optional) Repeat this process into a third/ fourth instrument.
- When asking students to 'fill in the gaps', support them to use the skills they learned in 'Creating Harmony from a Melody' (page 25). First ask students to fill in the gaps by writing harmony notes in minims or crotchets, then start to think about passing notes between these points. The passing notes may use similar rhythms to the original melodies.
- When listening back as a group, each pair could be responsible for 'listening out' for something different in the music. One pair could be responsible for listening to whether the 'mood' or 'emotion' is in keeping with their ideas for the piece and another pair could be responsible for listening to whether the independent lines are balanced well (no line should take over).

Melody & Accompaniment

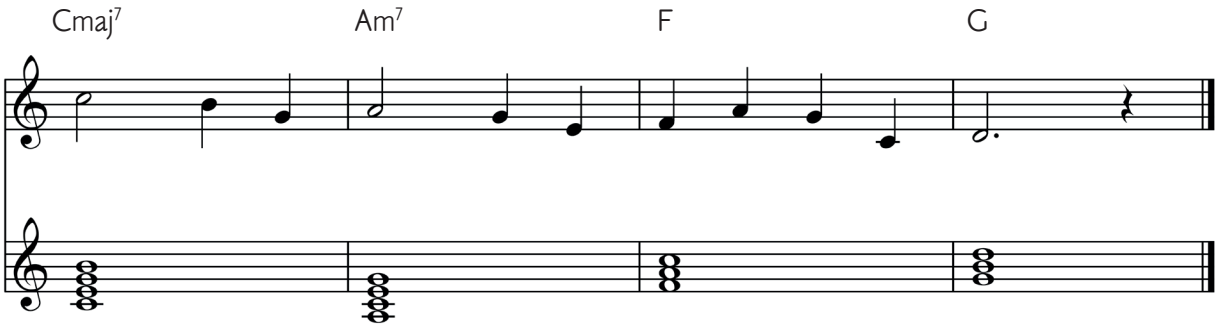
This type of texture is when you can clearly tell which instrument or instruments are playing the melody and which are playing the accompaniment.

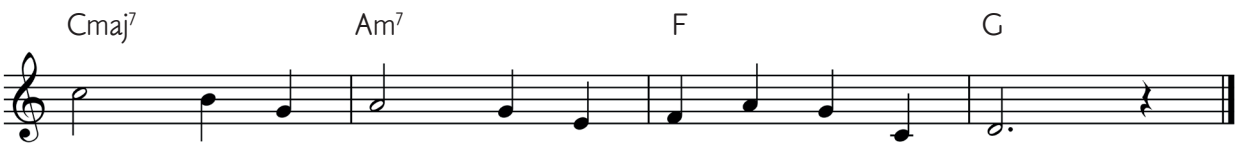
Step 1:

Ask your students to choose one of the melodies they have already composed and give this part to the first violin. For example:

Step 2:

Students now need to create a chord or harmonic progression to accompany this melody. You can use the 'Creating Harmony From A Melody' exercise above to do this. In my example below, I have written chords above the melody to indicate where I want the changes:

Step 3:

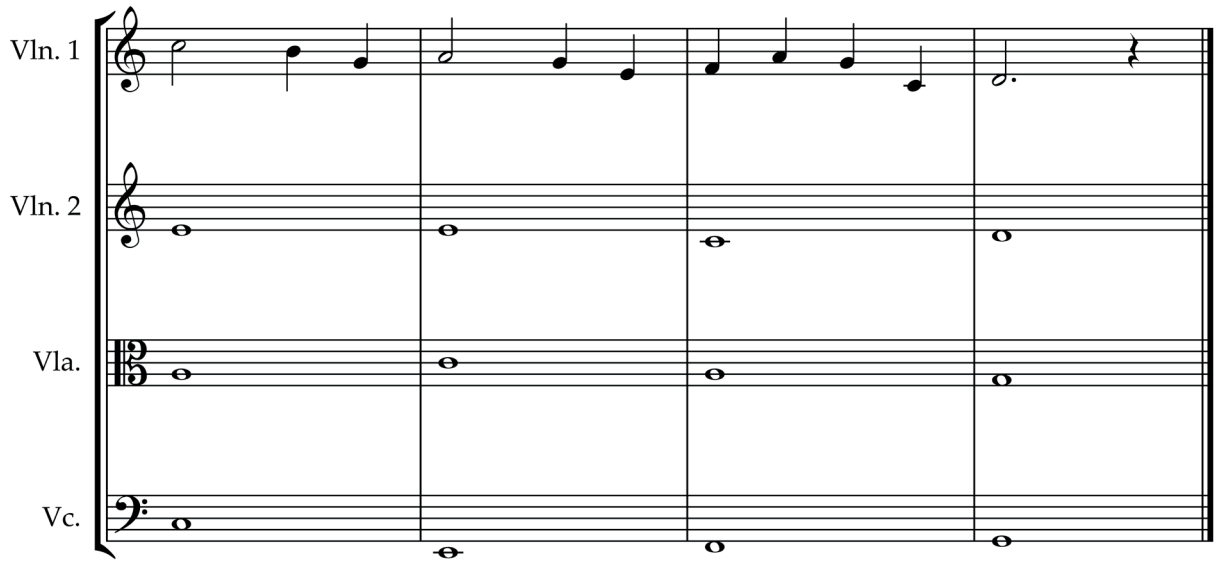
Students should write down the notes that make up the chords they have chosen (either in notation or letters). For example:



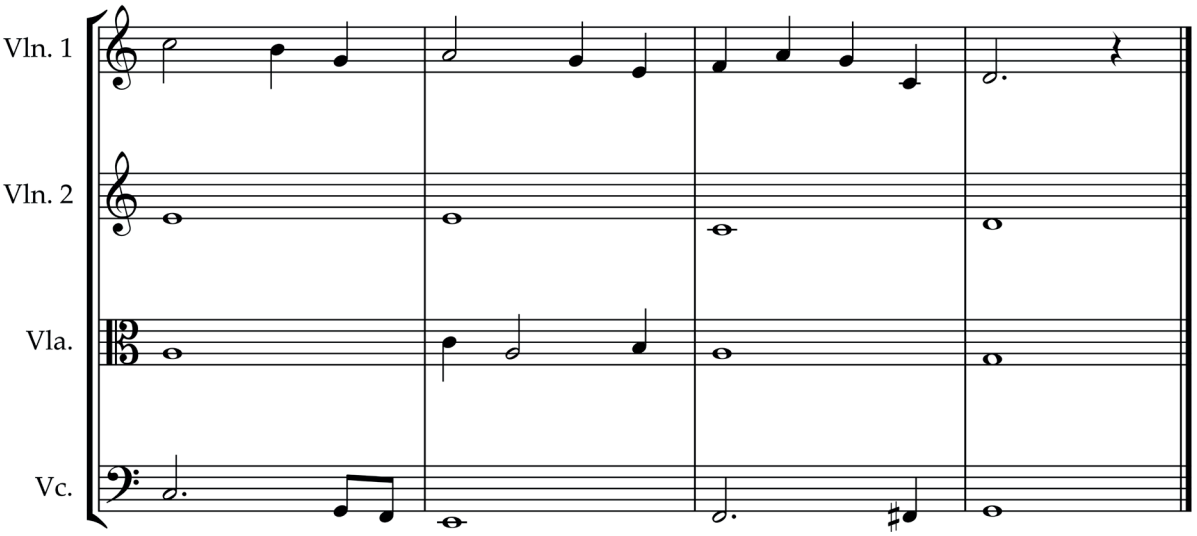
OR

B	G	C	D
G	E	A	B
E	C	F	G
C	A		

Step 4:

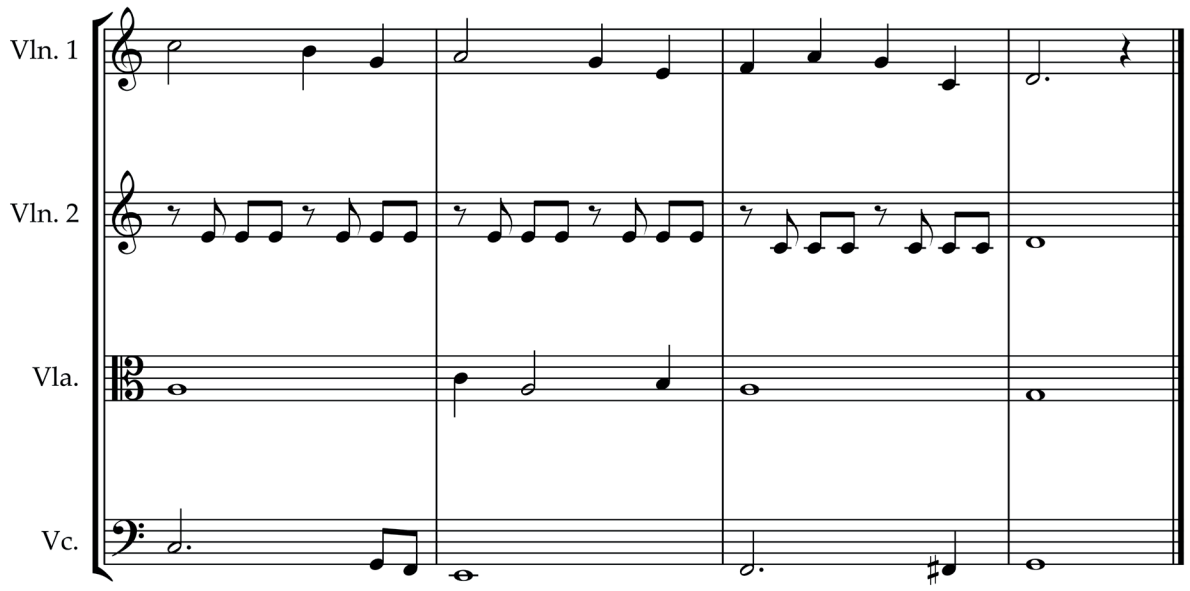
The students now need to distribute those notes between the instruments in the string quartet. Before they have a go at doing this, remind the students that the instruments can play these notes at any octave and that each instrument doesn't always have to pay the same note in the chord. For example, the cello doesn't always have to play the bottom note of the chord. Here is a very simple version of example of a melody and accompaniment texture:



Step 5:

To make the music more interesting, the notes in the accompanying parts can move at different times. For example, you could create passing notes as an instrument moves from one note to the next. Or you could add more notes from the chord to help reinforce the harmony. For example:

Step 6:

Another thing students could try, is applying rhythms to the notes from the chord. In the below example, I've put

some rhythms in the 2nd violin part, but they are still playing the note from the chord.

Notice that in all of the above examples in the melody and accompaniment steps, they are different to a homophonic texture because the accompanying chords are not moving at the same time as the melody.

Step 7:

Some final thoughts for the students to experiment with are:

- Dynamics: which parts ought to be louder than the others? Do the dynamics change within a part?
- Articulation: how would you like the musicians to play these parts, for example staccato or legato?
- How are the instruments playing their part, for example with the bow (arco) or plucked (pizzicato)?

Try this with your class

Learning objectives: to document/ to apply

When students are working through their ideas about harmony on a notation software or DAW, it can be helpful to have an additional piano line in the digital score, so that students can keep track of the chords/ harmonies they hope to use, before applying these to the different instruments in the string quartet.

ACTIVITIES FOR STRUCTURE AND FORM

The students should be thinking about the form of their composition throughout the process. Planning this in advance can help the students to make decisions about 'what happens next' in their music.

Students might want to consider classical forms such as Binary, Ternary, Rondo

Or, students might be inspired by structures in pop songs. The phrase structure in pop songs often follows an AB pattern (e.g. ABAB). This could become a verse, which is arranged into verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus.

Or, students might be inspired by the forms in the Key Repertoire.

Something to consider: If your groups have generated lots of disparate material in pairs, consider whether it might be useful to support them to arrange some of this material in line with the structure they have in mind. For example, perhaps one pair's material could be used to create a new section of the piece (or, perhaps it could be used to develop an existing section by offering a new phrase, or a counter melody).

Try this with your class

Learning objectives: to analyse

Schubert's Death and the Maiden (Movement 2) has a very clear theme and variation form. Challenge your students to map the forms of the other pieces of Key Repertoire.

- Listen to Shostakovich String Quartet No. 8 (Movement 2)
- Ask your students how many themes they think are introduced throughout the movement.
- Map these out like a storyboard on the board or on paper, asking students to identify and label any repetition.
- If there is a change in the material (or a new theme is introduced), ask your students to name one or two ways in which it has changed.
- Repeat this process for the other pieces of Key Repertoire.
- Your students could use these structures for their own pieces.

Try this with your class

Learning objectives: to apply/ to develop

Why not ask your students to map their ideas onto the structures, forms and textures of our Inspiration pieces? As a class, analyse the three ideas Jessie Montgomery uses in the opening 14 bars of 'Strum'. Use our 'Montgomery structure' resource to help.

- Over two or three lessons, ask the students to arrange some existing melodies they have composed into the four parts of a string quartet, guided by the structure Jessie Montgomery uses. Through this activity, your students will develop polyphonic textures. They will harmonise their ideas and develop melodic counterpoint through these exercises.

Resources Appendix B [Montgomery-structure, page 41]

BEFORE THE CULMINATION EVENT

During the culmination event, your students will have the chance to workshop their pieces with the String Quartet before they are premiered in a concert later in the day.

This is a chance for your students to engage in a dialogue with the players about how their music is interpreted. Once your students have listened to their piece played by the quartet, they might have ideas about dynamics, articulation and tempo. This is a chance for your students to make some final decisions about their music before it is played in the concert.

Your students will get the most out of this experience if they are prepared to talk about the dynamics, articulation and tempo they imagined for their pieces.

Try this with your class

Learning objectives: to reflect

- On an A3 piece of paper, ask each group to map out the structure of their piece.
- Ask each group to annotate this structure with words that describe the music. First encourage the students to use their own words.
- Then, choose keywords from below to put on the board (in English is fine!). Ask the students whether any of these words describe their music? If so, ask the groups to add these words to the page (and if any keywords match the words the students have already written, encourage them to pair these words on the page. (Don't erase anything though!)
- Make sure you bring these A3 sheets to the culmination event - the students can use them in the composer workshop to help them talk about their pieces with the musicians.

Resources
Keywords (see below).

Keywords	accented	maestoso (majestically)
	agitato (agitated)	pesante (heavy)
pianissimo	andante (slow)	prestissimo (as fast as possible)
piano	animato (animated, lively)	risoluto (bold, strong)
mezzo piano	detached	scherzando (playful, joking)
mezzo forte	energico (energetic)	semplice (simple, plain)
forte	forza (force)	tranquillo (calm)
fortissimo	legato (smooth)	triste, tristamente (sad,
	leggiero (light or nimble)	sorrowful)

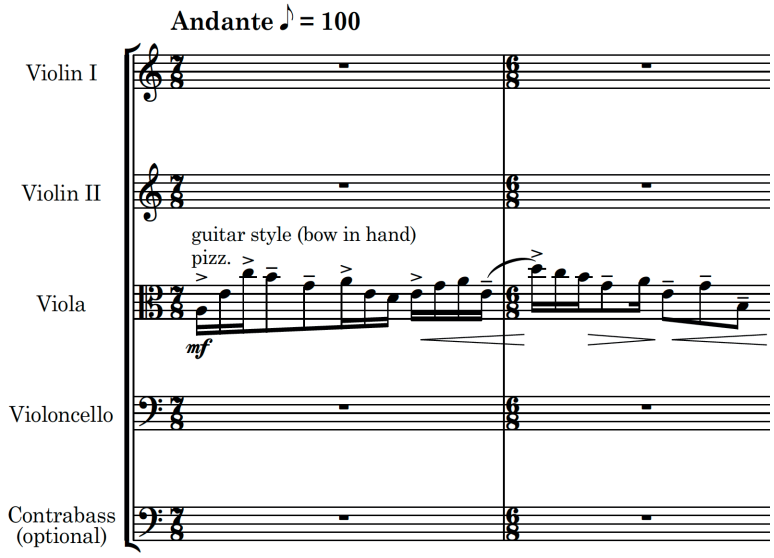
APPENDIX A 'MONTGOMERY STRUCTURE'

APPENDIX A – MONTGOMERY STRUCTURE

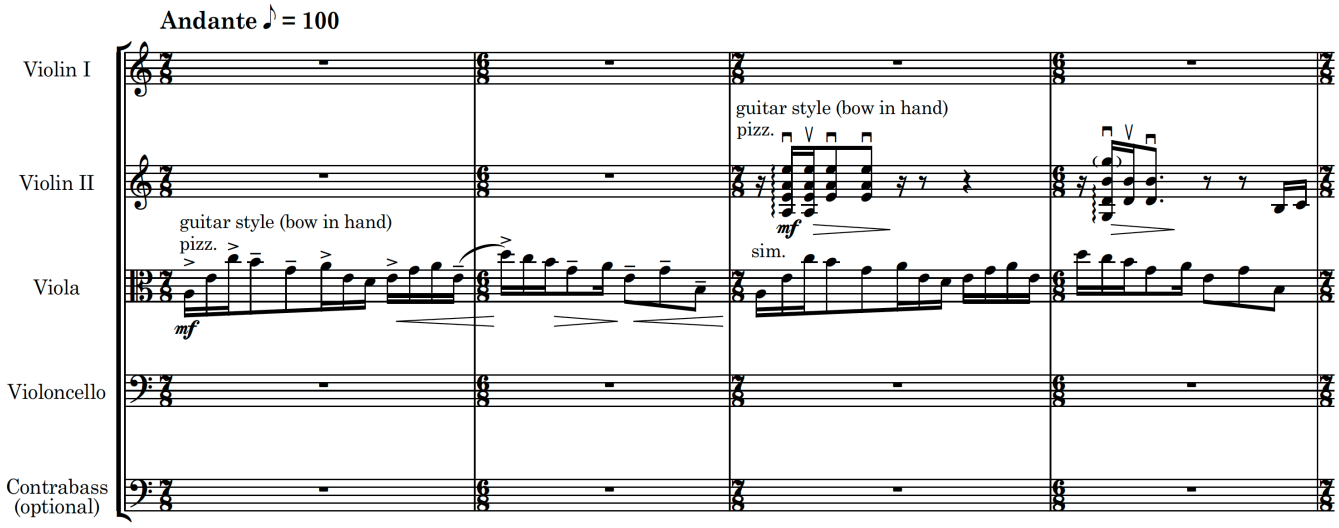
Jessie Montgomery develops the opening 14 bars of Strum using the techniques below. If your students have developed some melodic ideas but need some support with developing them, why not challenge the group to use similar structural devices and techniques to Jessie?

Step 1

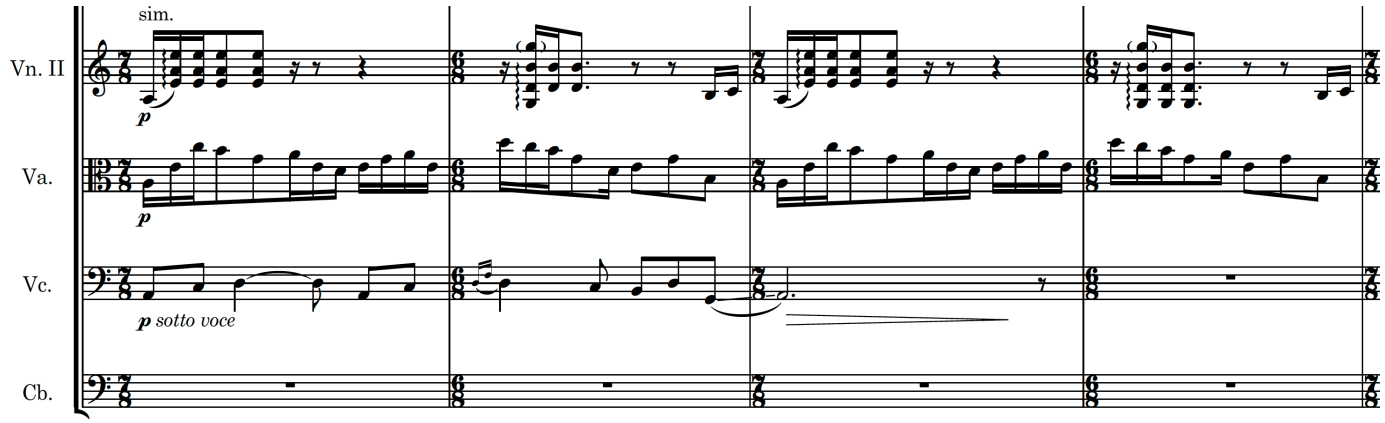
Jessie Montgomery has developed a 2 bar phrase that she gives to the viola in the opening bars. This is introduced as a solo part.

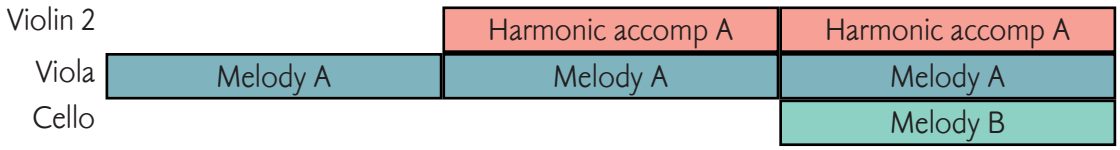


Step 2

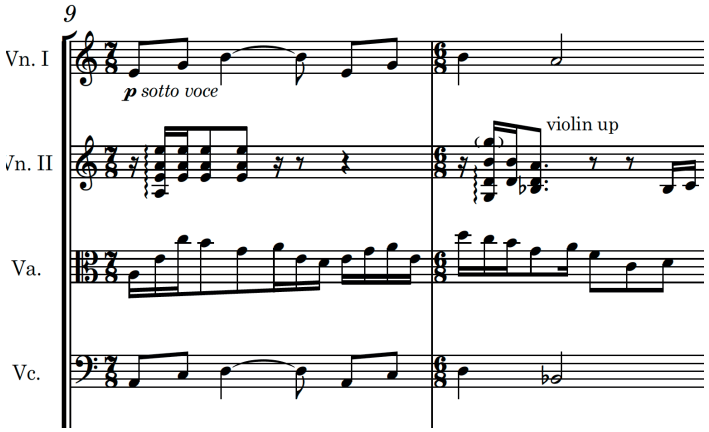
Jessie Montgomery repeats this phrase in the viola exactly, but on the second time it is heard, she develops some harmonic accompaniment in Violin 2.

Challenge your students to use repetition and a Melody and Accompaniment texture to develop their music like Jessie. Use the "Creating Harmony From A Melody" on page ?? to help with writing a part for Violin 2.

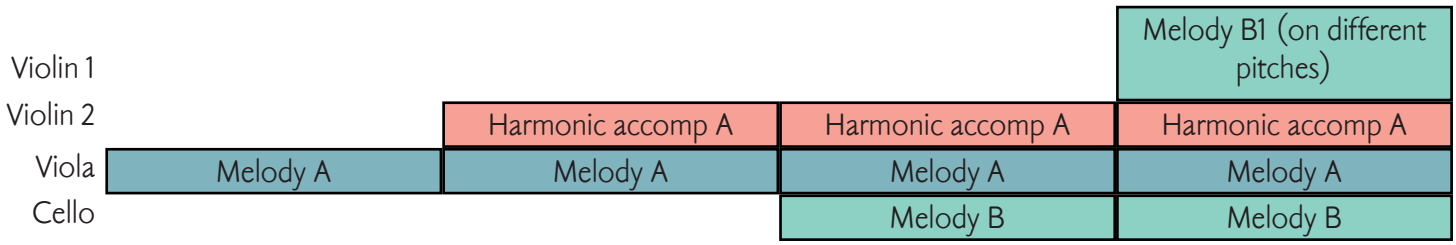
Step 3

Jessie repeats the viola phrase again (this is the third time we have heard it). She also repeats the Violin 2 material. Over this, she layers some new material for the cello. This material is a new, slower melody using quavers and crotchets rather than semiquavers and quavers.

Could your students write a new melody for the cello? They will need to pick melody notes that fit with the harmony they have created between the Viola and Violin 2. Use the "Composing Melodies From Chords" on page ?? to help.

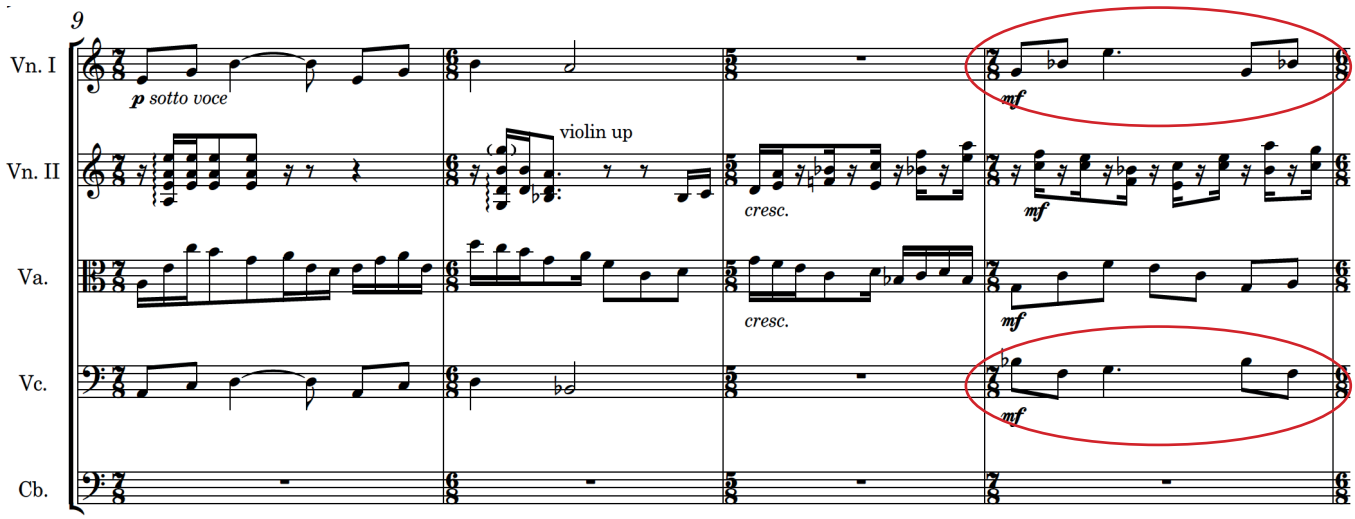
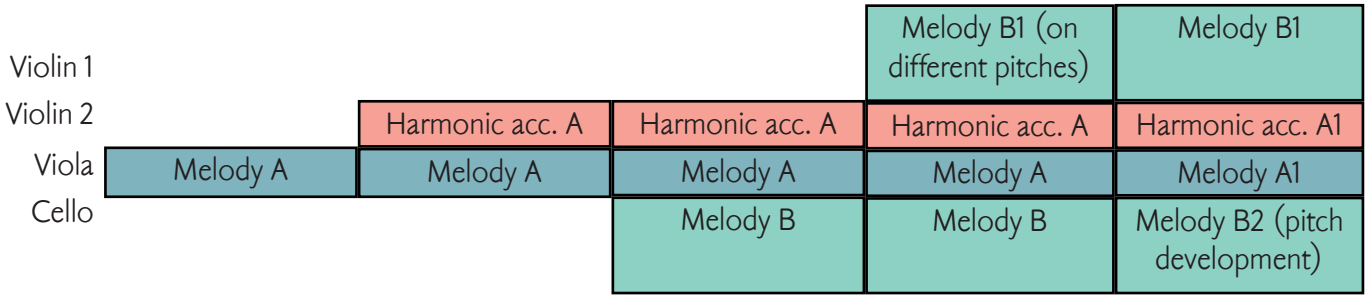


Step 4

Jessie repeats this Cello melody exactly too. Again, it is layered with the same material in the Viola and Violin 2 that we have heard before. This time though, Jessie has harmonised the Cello melody - Violin 1 plays the exact same rhythms at the same time, but on different pitches.

Could your students create material for Violin 1 in the same way? By this point, students will have made some decisions about harmony, so they can choose notes for Violin 1 that support these previous decisions.



Step 5

The third time we hear the cello melody, Jessie uses several techniques that start to move the music to a new place after all of that repetition. The harmony changes and Jessie starts to develop countermelodies between Violin 1 and Cello. She gives them both the same melodic rhythm we have heard previously, but instead of one part being a straightforward harmonisation of the other, she chooses harmony notes for the Cello that will create opposite (or contrary) motion between these two parts.



Can your students change the harmony notes in the Violin 1 or Cello in similar ways? Again, they will use pitches that support the harmonic decisions they have already made. At this point it feels like something is about to happen in the music - ask your students what they think should happen next.

MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Contact details

If you'd like to be in touch with us about the contents of this pack or the project in general, please email us at wecompose@musicintheround.co.uk or call our office on 0114 2814660.

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Further resources

All of the resources for this project can be found at musicintheround.co.uk/wecompose-2024-2025-key-stage-3-resource-hub or on our website www.musicintheround.co.uk.

To browse further resources relating to KS3 (or other Key Stages) please go to our website www.musicintheround.co.uk

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