MUSIC IN THE ROUND

STUDENT RESOURCE PACK 2026-7

WECOMPOSE (KS3)

Version 1.0 November 2025

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WELCOME

Hello and thank you for being part of We Compose, a project run by Music in the Round.

This project is all about you making new music. Through taking part in this project, we hope that you'll broaden your understanding of different styles of music, you'll learn new tips and tricks for how composers create music, you'll discover things you didn't know about instruments you may be unfamiliar with, and most importantly we hope have loads of fun throughout all of this!

Before we begin, here is a set of guidelines that together make up your composition brief:

- Your challenge is to compose a brand-new, original piece for string quartet. That's 2 violins, a viola and a cello.
- Your piece can be up to 5 mins in length and be in any style you like.
- Your piece will be inspired by one of the four pieces of key repertoire 'Death & the Maiden' by Franz Schubert, Quartet No.8 by Dmitri Shostakovich, Strum by Jessie Montgomery or Tuggemo by Anna Meredith. You can refresh your memory of these four pieces in the performances by the Consone Quartet at musicintheround.co.uk/resources/string-quartet-repertoire-video-playlist or follow the link on the front of this pack to watch films about the techniques used by those composers that you might like to try out.
- Your new piece will be created in small groups.

Now, we're not leaving you in the lurch with this. You'll get support creating your piece from your teacher, a bank of videos and paper resources we've created (including this pack and the things we link to here), and also a professional composer who will come and visit you in your school.

Later in the school year once your pieces are complete, you'll attend a culmination day where your final piece will be workshopped with a professional string quartet, performed and recorded.

We can't wait to work with you and hear what you create. So, let's get started…

P.S. You may have already noticed that some of the words are this colour. That means they appear in the glossary at the back of this booklet which you will find on page 30.

Choose a piece of Key Repertoire that inspires you and use these pages to make notes it while you listen to the recording.

Composer:
Title:
Date of composition:
Instruments:

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

2. Describe the musical decisions the composer has made about the dynamics, harmony, melody etc in this piece, writing down your thoughts in each bubble. How does each musical decision convey the mood or feeling of the piece? (Write your ideas under each heading).



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?

PLANNING YOUR PIECE – CHOOSING YOUR INSPIRATION PIECE

The project will launch at a presented concert, where the String Quartet will perform all of the four key string quartet pieces. Following this, your group will need to decide which piece you will use as the inspiration for your own music before they start composing. To help with this, we suggest that you listen to the pieces again and answer the following questions:

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?

7. Circle or underline any words from this page you want to explore in your piece. What are the most important ones?

8. Are there any other techniques you want to use in your piece? Please write them here.

TEMPO

One of the first decisions you can make about your piece is what tempo (speed) it should be. Which one of these words suits the mood or energy of the piece you want to create? Or a different word of your own choosing? You can add this information to your score or Garageband/ Logic file.

adagio (slow) ♩ = 66-76
agitato (agitated)
andante (at a walking pace) ♩ = 76-108
animato (animated, lively)
allegro (fast) ♩ = 120-168
energico (energetic)
forza (force)
largo (slow) ♩ = 48-56
leggiero (light or nimble)
maestoso (majestically)
moderato ♩ = 108-120
pesante (heavy)
presto (fast) ♩ = 168-200
prestissimo (as fast as possible)
risoluto (bold, strong)
scherzando (playful, joking)
tranquillo (calm)
triste, tristamente (sad, sorrowful)

RHYTHM

Composers combine different rhythms to make patterns or phrases that help them express the mood of their piece

1. In your chosen tempo, have a go at creating a series of 2-bar rhythms (or 4-bar/ 8-bar rhythms if you feel a longer rhythmic statement would suit your piece better) that suit the mood or the energy of your piece. Each time, have a go at featuring:

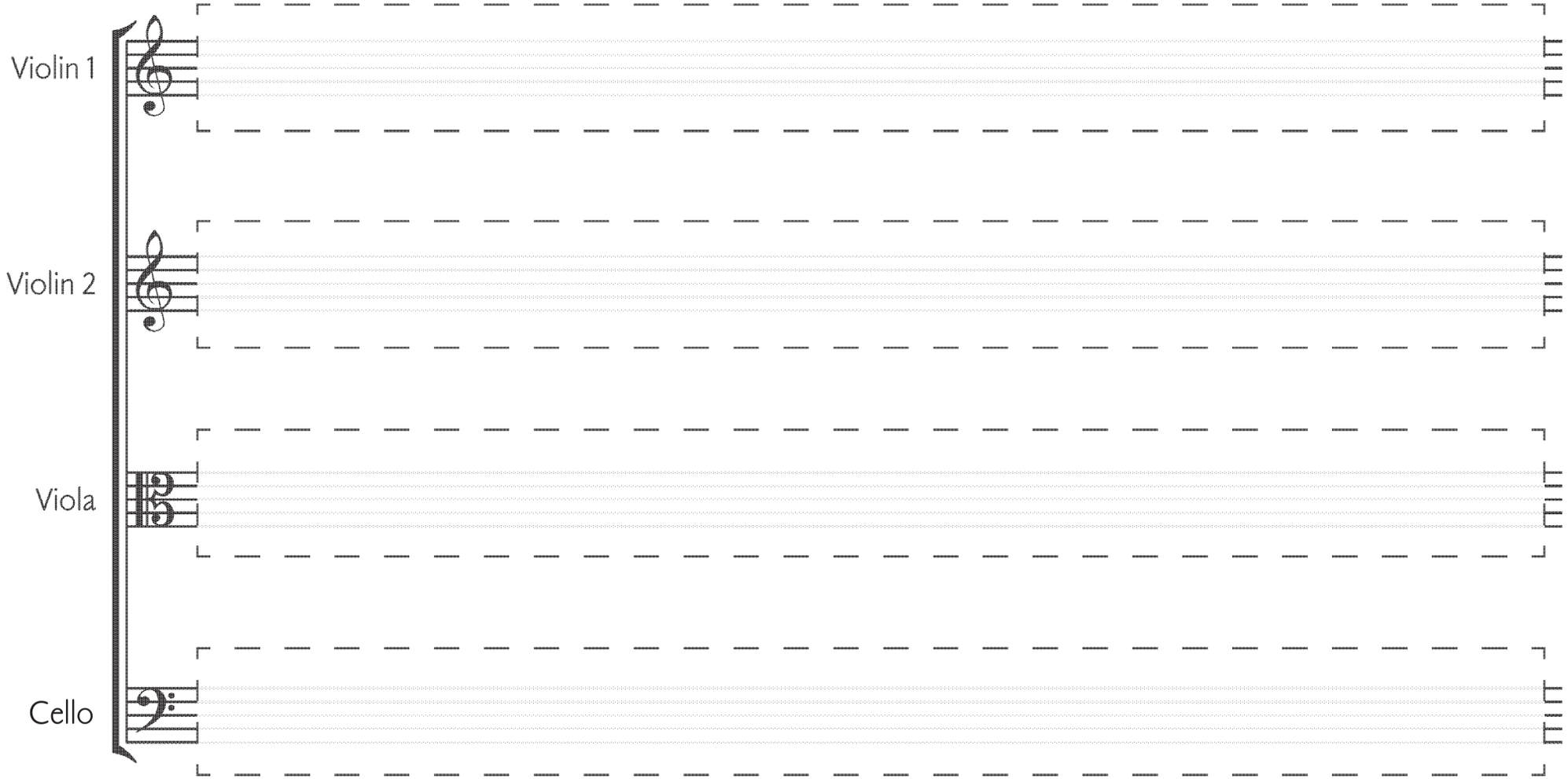
- a combination of quavers and semiquavers
- dotted rhythms
- triplets
- syncopated rhythms
- repeated rhythms
- a variety of different rhythms
- rests
- a combination of these

2. Which one(s) of your experiments suits your piece? Keep editing your rhythm until you have something that you like, or that suits the mood and energy of your piece.

3. Does this rhythm feel like something that would be good for a melody, a bass line, an inside texture, an ostinato, or something else? Choose which instrument in the quintet should play this rhythm, then notate it on the score (pto). You can add pitches later.

4. Consider these questions, and annotate your score accordingly:

- What word would you use to describe the character of this rhythm?
- How is this instrument playing this rhythm? Loudly/ softly? High in it's register/ low in it's register? If it's a string instrument is it pizzicato/ arco? Take a look at the Idiomatic Techniques pages, starting on p.15 for inspiration.
- What happens at the same time as this rhythm? Which other instruments are playing? What role do they have? Draw this in, or describe it in words.
- How many times do we hear this rhythm before a variation or something completely different?
- Remember to put your tempo marking at the top of the score.


Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello

CHOOSING A SCALE

Scales and **modes** are collections of pitches that composers often use when composing melodies. It's important that the choices you make about which scale or mode to use reflect the mood you want to create for the listener. To help with this, take a look at the table below which provides information on some different scales and modes, the pitches they use and the mood they can help create:

Scale	Example	Mood
Major	C major: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, (C)	Happy, uplifting
Minor	D 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
Aeolian Mode	C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, (C)	Melancholic, emotional. Used in rock an pop.
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
Phyrgian Mode	C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, (C)	Middle Eastern, Spanish, flamenco feel
Lydian Mode	C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, (C)	A more dreamy, exotic and futuristic feel

Tonal music...

...is written using a major or minor scale.

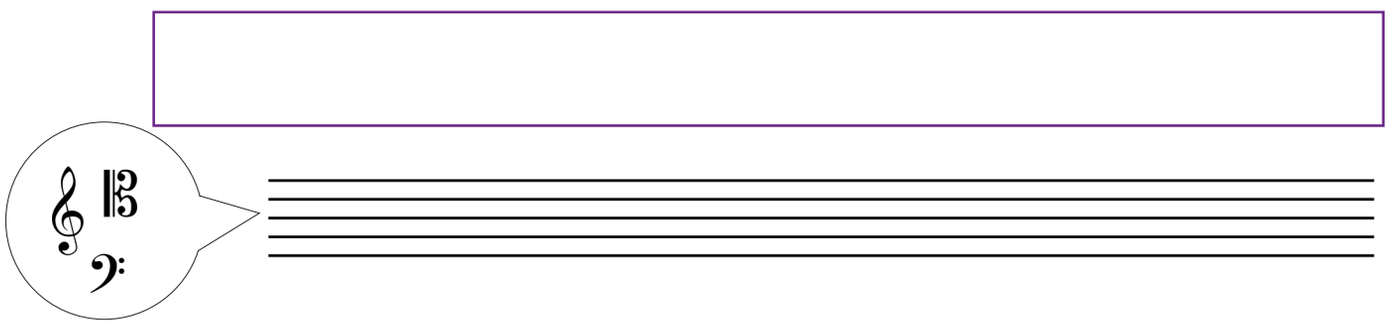
Modal music...

... is music written using a mode.

Atonal music...

...is music written outside of a particular scale or mode. Composers who write atonal music often choose their own set of pitches that they will use for the composition.

1. Write down the notes of your scale here:



2. Assign pitches from your chosen scale to one of the rhythms you notated in the previous activity.

HARMONY – BUILDING A PALETTE OF CHORDS

1. Write down each note in your chosen scale against the corresponding number in the 'Triad' column below. Example 1 shows one we started in C major.

2. Complete the 'Triad' column and write down the other letter names that make up the triad chord built from the starting note in each row. Example 2 shows some triads in C major.

   TIP: To build the triad, you take the note you have written in the grid, miss the next one in the scale out, take the next, miss the next one, and take the next.

	Triad
Tonic 1	
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 2	
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 3	
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 4	
Dominant 5	
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 6	
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 7	

Dissonance	
Dissonance	
Dissonance	

3. (Extension task) Create some dissonant chords for the 'dissonance' grid by either:
   - Choosing a note from your scale and counting up one jump on a keyboard - a semitone
   - Choosing a note from your scale and counting up six jumps on a keyboard - a tritone
   - Playing a triad from an unrelated scale, and combining it with a triad from your grid. TIP There is some advice on finding unrelated scales in the 'Closely related keys' section of this pack. Example 5 show some chords created the starting point of C major

4. (Extension task) Finish labelling each chord on the dotted lines. Use "How to label chords..." on page 27 to help you.

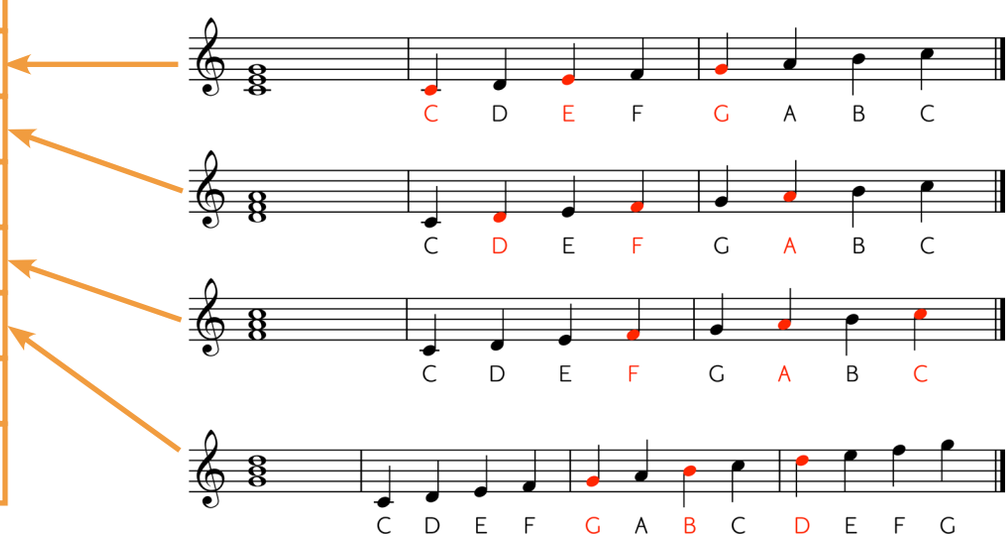
BUILDING A PALETTE OF CHORDS – EXAMPLES

Example 1 in C major - completing the grid with notes from your scale

	Triad
1	C
2	D
3	E

Example 2 in C major - building triads from notes in your grid

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



Example 3 in C major - creating dissonance from a starting point of C major

Dissonance	B, C
Dissonance	C, G#
Dissonance	D, F, A, B, D#, F#

HARMONY – CREATING HARMONIC PROGRESSIONS

1. Create some chord progressions by organising the triads from your grid into different orders. Your teacher can advise you on how many chords should be in each progression (4, 8 or another number).

Here's some prompts to pick and choose from after you've experimented yourself, too.

- Create a chord progression that starts on chord 1.
- Create a chord progression where the final chords is 5.
- Create a chord progression where the final chords are 5 and then 6.
- Create a chord progression where the final chords are 5 and then 1.
- Create a chord progression that includes chord 2.
- Create a variation on one of your progressions by changing one or more chords.
- Create a chord progression that sounds like a particular moment in your piece, e.g. tense, joyful, revelation, confrontation, etc.

Use this space to sketch out some progressions.

Your teacher can advise you how to write them out.

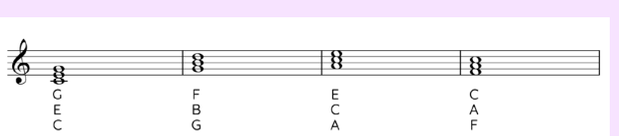
E.g. this progression can be written as 1 5 6 4

or C - G - Am - F

or I V vi IV

or G - D - E - C
E - B - C - A
C - G - A - F

or



INVERSIONS & VOICE LEADING

1. Choose at least two chord progressions that you like, or that suit the mood and energy of your piece. In pencil, write each progression out into a grid below, so that each triad fills a column. For example,

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

2. For each progression above, rearrange the notes in each column so that when you read across left to right, each row moves by as small a jump as possible. Aim that in two of the rows, the notes either stay the same or move by one step only. For example

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

Answering the following questions will help you make decisions about how your harmonic progressions will be arranged into the ensemble:

- Assign each row to a member of the ensemble. Take a look at the Idiomatic Techniques section to understand a bit more about the different roles of the ensemble.
- Decide how often the chord will change - quickly or slowly. Will this be once every bar, twice every bar, once every two bars, something else? Experiment and decide what suits the mood and energy of your piece.
- Give your accompaniment a rhythm. Perhaps this will come from your ideas on page 9, or perhaps you will create a new rhythm now.

You could notate these in the manuscript at the back of this pack, or directly into the computer.

IDIOMATIC TECHNIQUES

We have a variety of video resources. We recommend watching:

- Introducing the Instruments of a String Quartet musicintheround.co.uk/resources/composing-techniques-introducing-the-string-quartet/

There are other useful videos that you will find in the Student Resource Hub. You will find this from the QR code on the front of this pack.

A string quartet is made up of 2 violins, a viola and a cello.

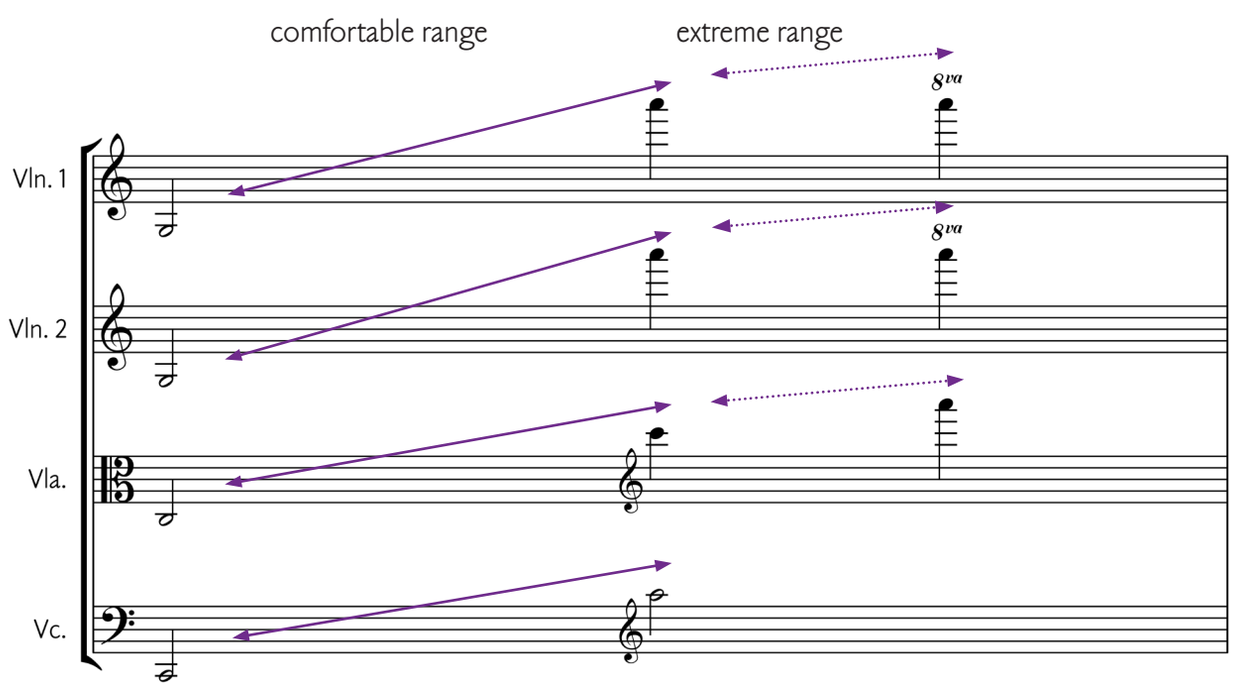
Writing for String Quartet

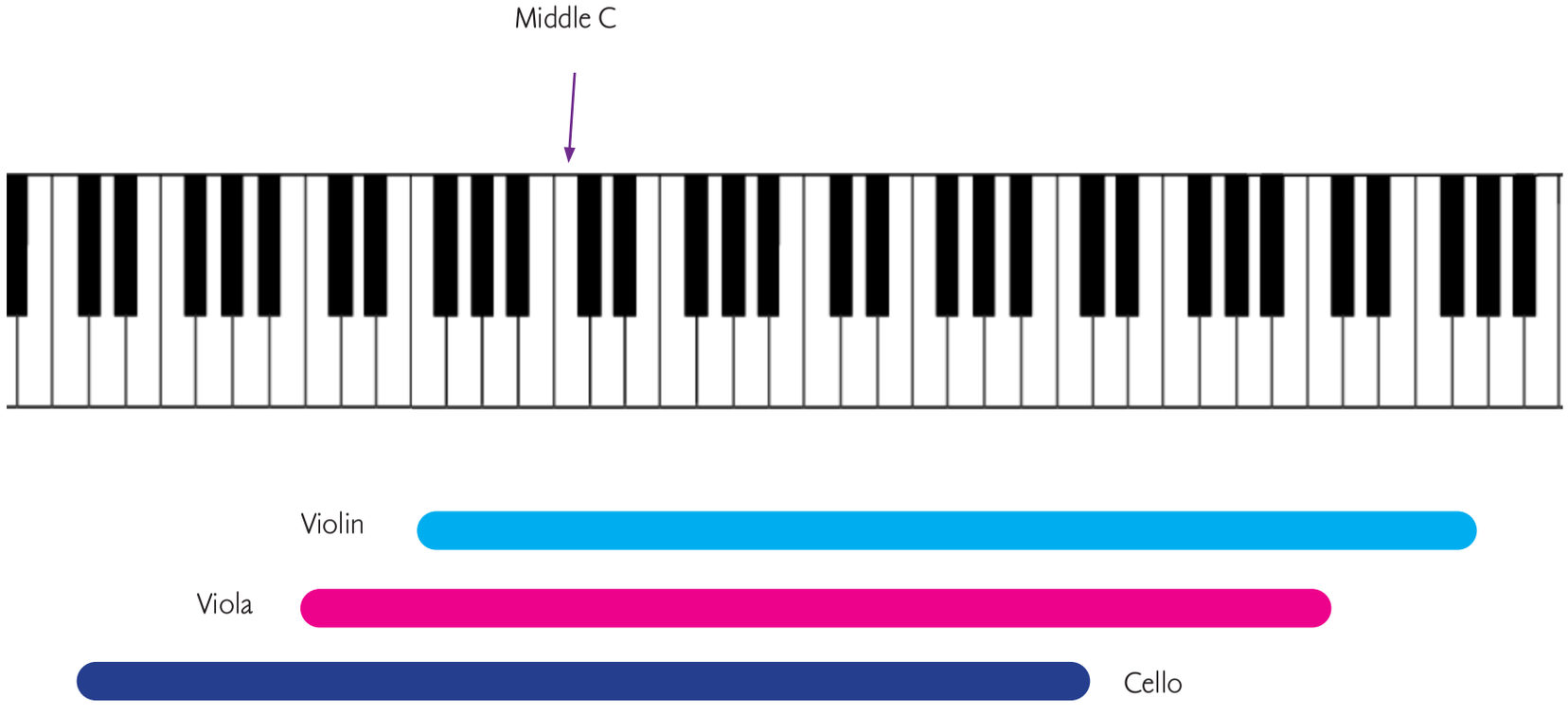
The string quartet covers a wide range of pitches from the cello being able to play very low, the violins being able to play very high, and the viola being the filling in the middle of this musical sandwich!

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.

Answering the following questions will help you write music that is particularly suited to this ensemble.

- Who will play the melodies?
- Who will play the bass lines?
- Do the melodies happen high/ low/ mid in the instruments' range?
- Are any chords spread out across the instruments?
- Will there be any pizzicato moments?
- Will the piece start loudly or quietly?
- Will all of the instruments start at the same time?




Middle C
Violin
Viola
Cello

MELODY

Once you've chosen a scale for your piece there are lots of ways you can start to compose a melody.

- You might improvise with different patterns from your chosen scale perhaps on your instrument or with your voice.
- Or, you could use a game or strategy to choose a limited set of pitches from your scale and arrange them into an order that you like.
- Or, if you have a particular idea for a rhythm you might try to apply different pitches from your scale to this rhythm to create a melody.
- Or, you could experiment with different jumps between the pitches in your scale. These are called melodic intervals and can help evoke a particular mood or energy for your piece. The table below might help you get started.
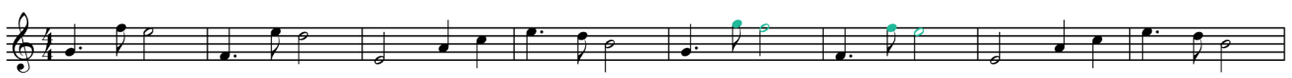
SEMITONES	NAME	CHARACTER	IN C	SONG EXAMPLE
0	Unison	Pure	C-C	Twin-kle, Twinkle, Little Star
1	Minor 2nd	Tense	C-C♯/D♭	*Jaws* theme
2	Major 2nd	Open	C-D	Frè-re Jacques
3	Augmented 2nd / Minor 3rd	Sad	C-D♯/E♭	I'm Bad (Michael Jackson)
4	Major 3rd	Happy	C-E	Oh, When the Saints
5	Perfect 4th	Strong	C-F	A-mazing Grace
6	Augmented 4th / Diminished 5th	Unsettling	C-F♯/G♭	*The Simpsons* theme
7	Perfect 5th	Powerful	C-G	Twin-kle, Twin-kle, Little Star
8	Augmented 5th / Minor 6th	Melancholy	C-G♯/A♭	Close Ev-ery Door to Me (Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat)
9	Major 6th	Bright	C-A	My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean
10	Minor 7th	Longing	C-B♭	Somewhere (West Side Story)
11	Major 7th	Tense	C-B	Take On Me *opening notes* (A-ha)
12	Octave	Complete	C-C[1]	Some-where Over the Rainbow

1. Write out some initial ideas for your melody using the manuscript at the back of this pack. These might be short statements or longer ideas made up of a few phrases, like different clauses in a long sentence. Your melody should start on a note from the tonic column in the Harmony grid you created on page 11.
2. Try out a few different endings for your melody, ending on notes from the dominant column and other chords in your Harmony grid. Which one do you like the most, and do you think your melody is 'complete', or does it need an answer (as if the first part was a question), or a subclause? Keep composing until you feel like you have a completed melody.
3. Create 4-8 variations on your melody in the manuscript at the back of this pack or on your computer. For each variation, choose one of a set of transformation techniques over the page (or as an extension, create a variation or two by combining techniques from different sets).
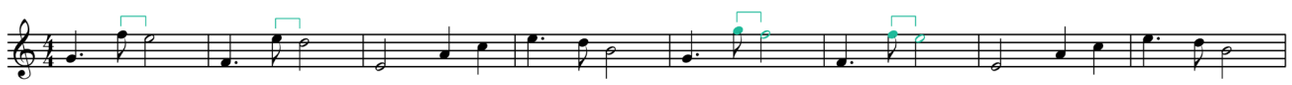
Transformation Techniques: Set One

- Alter the original melody by changing some of the intervals - perhaps making the distance between two of the notes bigger or smaller. Choose whether the following notes move too or not.
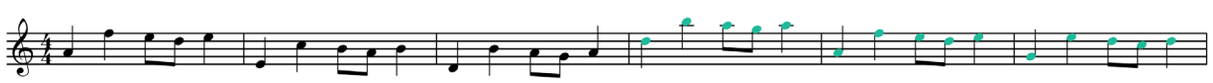
  Have a look at this example. A 4-bar melodic idea has been repeated, but on the 2nd time the intervals between the 1st and 2nd, and 4th and 5th notes are bigger - the melody is reaching upwards.



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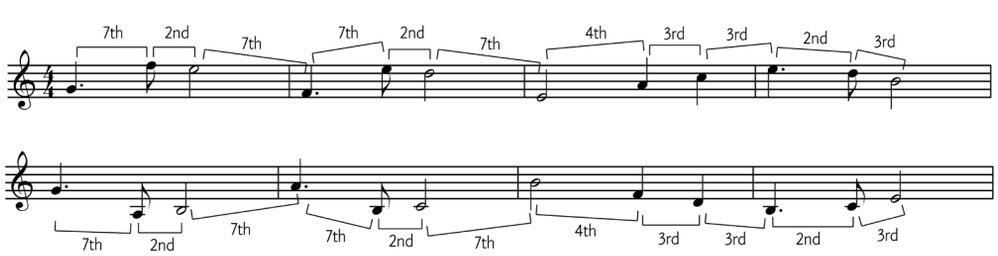


- Treat the melody as a sequence, repeating it but moving the whole melody up or down in pitch - how does this shift change the mood of the music?



- 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.

Transformation Techniques: 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.
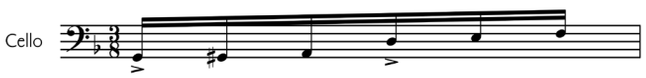


- Some or all of the melody could be played backwards (retrograde).
- You could use these two ideas in combination.

Transformation Techniques: 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
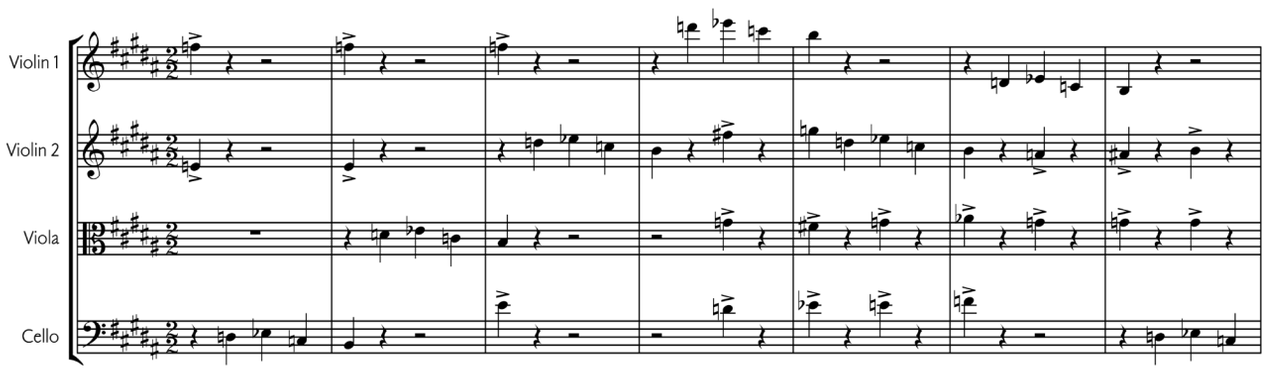


Anna Meredith, Tuggemo, Bar 36

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

Transformation Techniques: Set Four

- Put the whole melody into a different instument.
- 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.

Answering the following questions will help you decide how your melody will be arranged into the wider structure of your piece.

- The first time we hear the melody, does it build up or is it fully formed?
- Is the melody repeated exactly straight away, or will you immediately introduce a variation?
- How many versions of the melody will be one after the other before a new idea is introduced?
- What else could change in the texture if the melody is repeated exactly?
- In a structure of repeating melodies, melodic variations and change/ new ideas, will the harmonic progression repeat, be varied, or change?

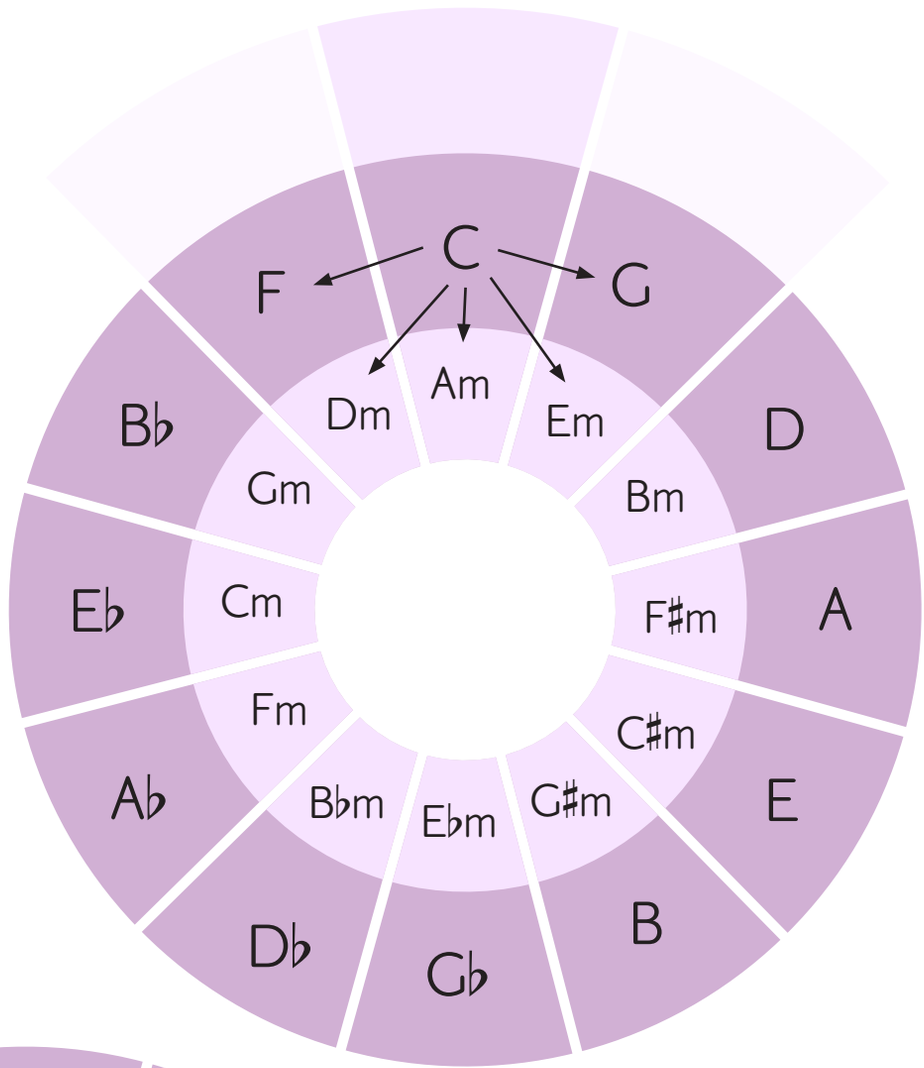
MODULATION & CLOSELY RELATED KEYS

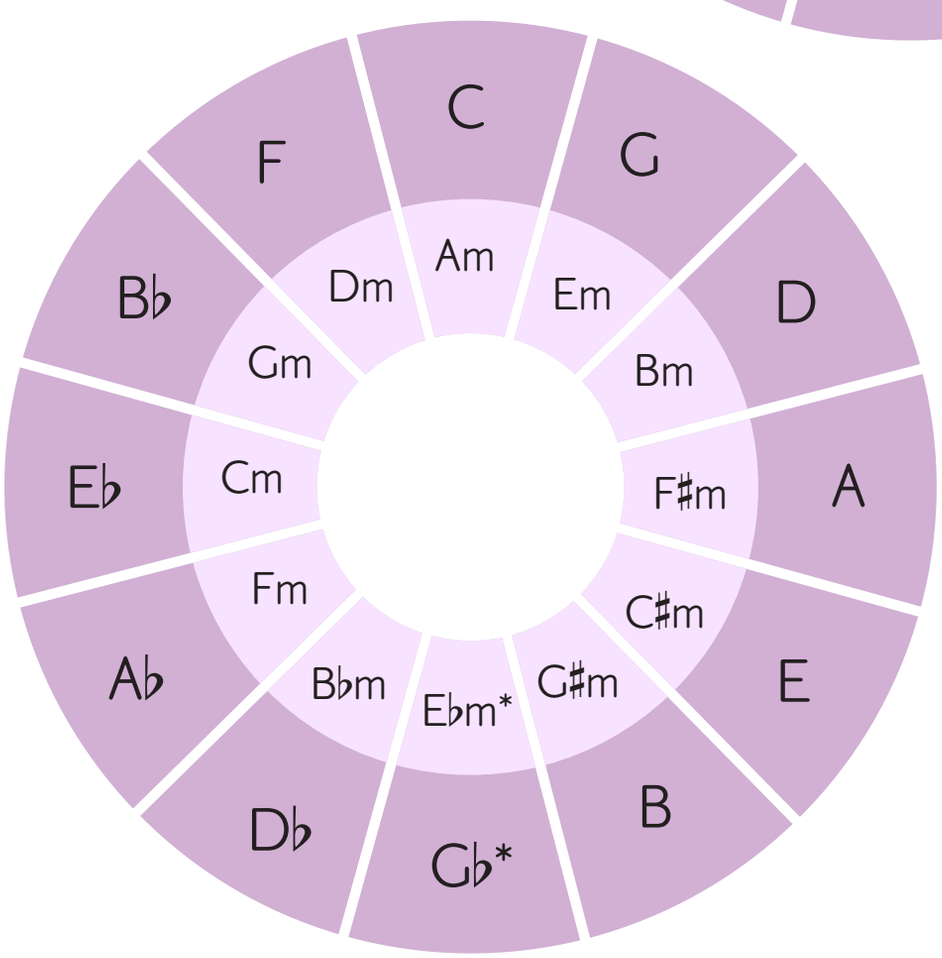
When composers modulate from their original key to a new key, they often modulate to a closely related key.

You can use a diagram called the circle of fifths to help you identify the 5 closely related keys to your original key.

The closely related keys are always next to, or diagonally adjacent to your original key.

So, if your original key is C major, the 5 closely related keys are F major, D minor, A minor, G major and E minor.





1. To find your closely related keys:

a) Circle your original key on the diagram

b) Draw arrows to the keys directly next to, or diagonally adjacent to, your original key.

2. Choose one of your five closely related keys that would like to modulate to.

a) Write the name of this key here:

b) Write the notes of it's scale here (don't forget about any sharps or flats!):

3. Write down the triads of your original key and your modulating key:

a) Write each note of the scale in the left column. Start from the first note of the scale and don't forget about any sharps or flats!
b) Write each triad in the right column
c) Write out the triads on the stave

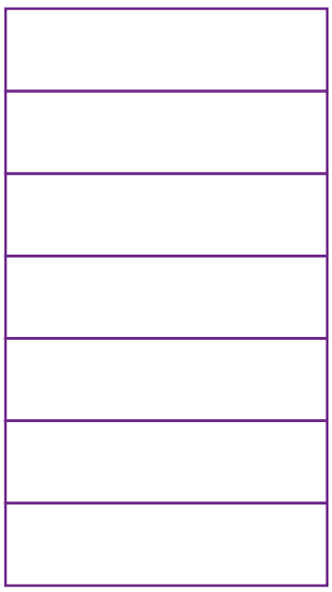
ORIGINAL KEY	

MODULATION KEY	

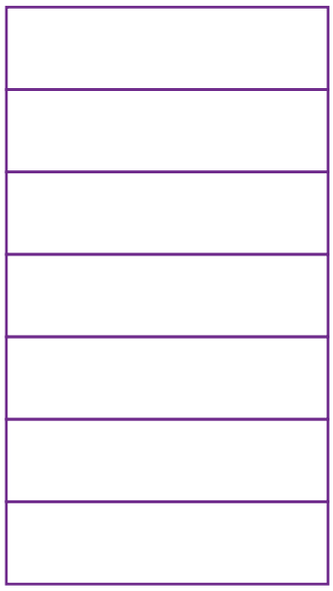
4. Identify the triads that are the same in the original key and the modulation key and write them in the PIVOT CHORDS table on the next page.
These are called pivot chords because you can use them to move fluidly between the two keys (as the chords belong to both keys).

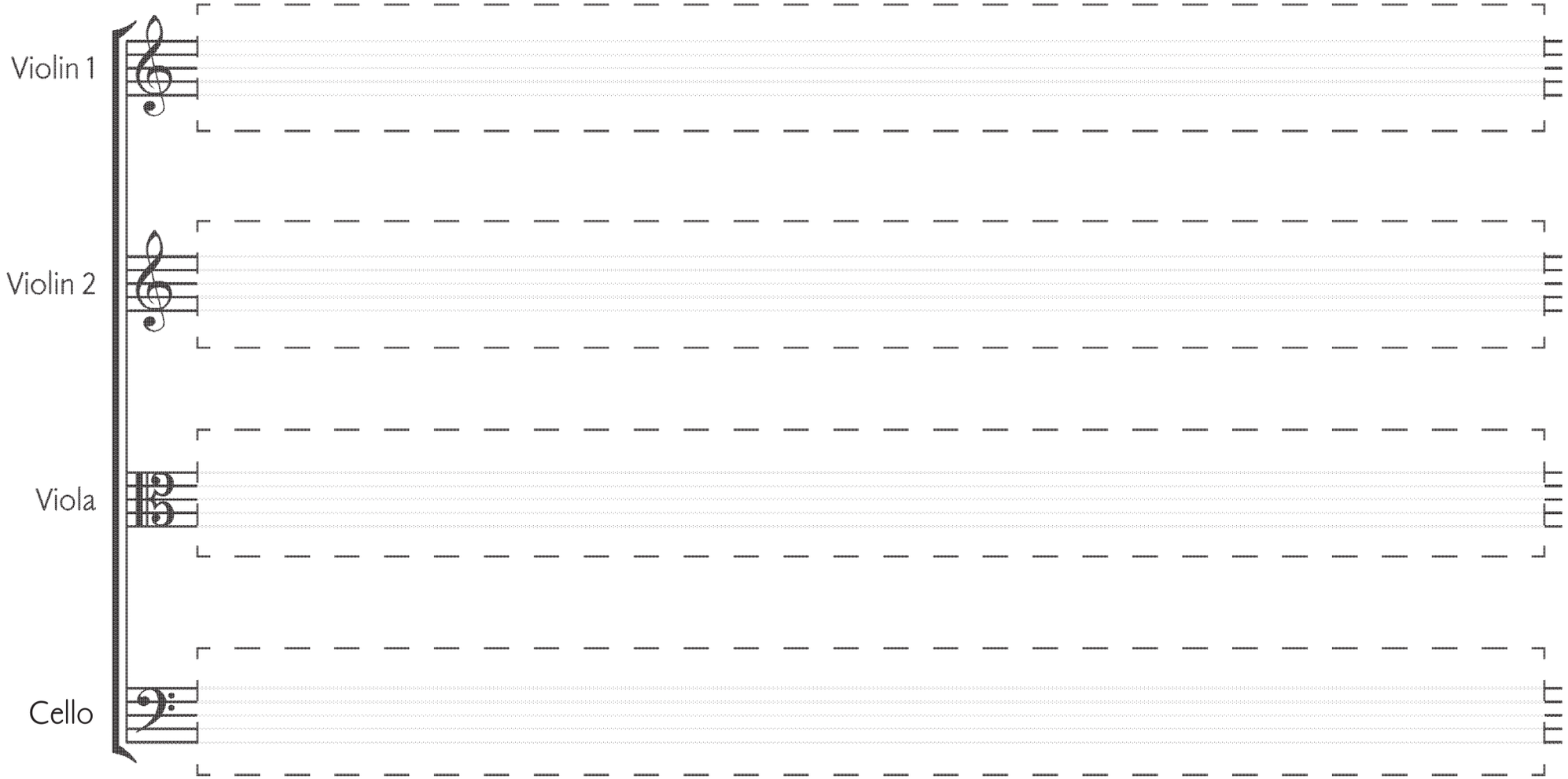
5. Identify the triads that only belong to the modulating key and write them in the MODULATING CHORDS table on the next page.
These are called modulating chords because they establish that we have moved away from the original key.

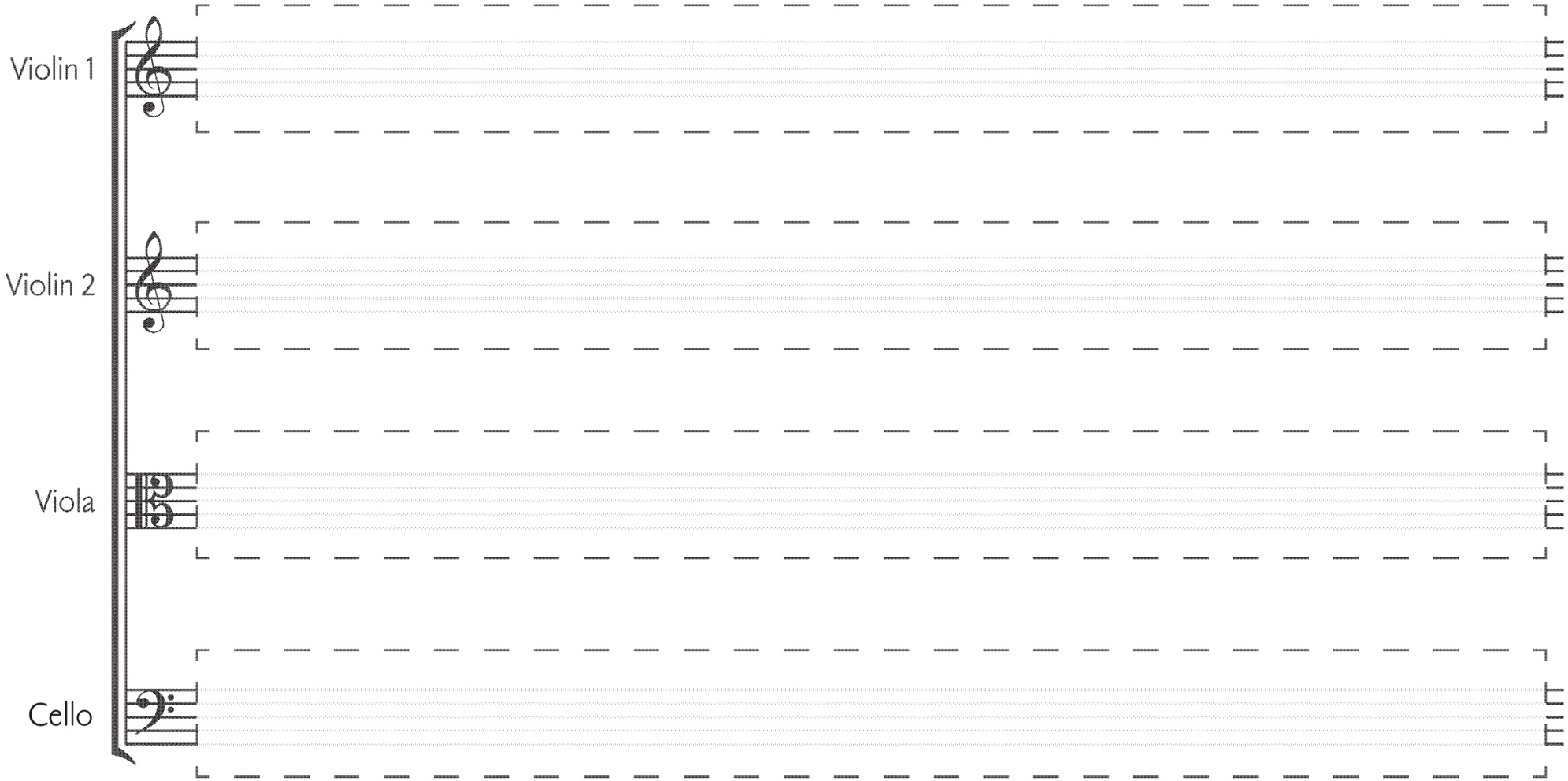
PIVOT CHORDS

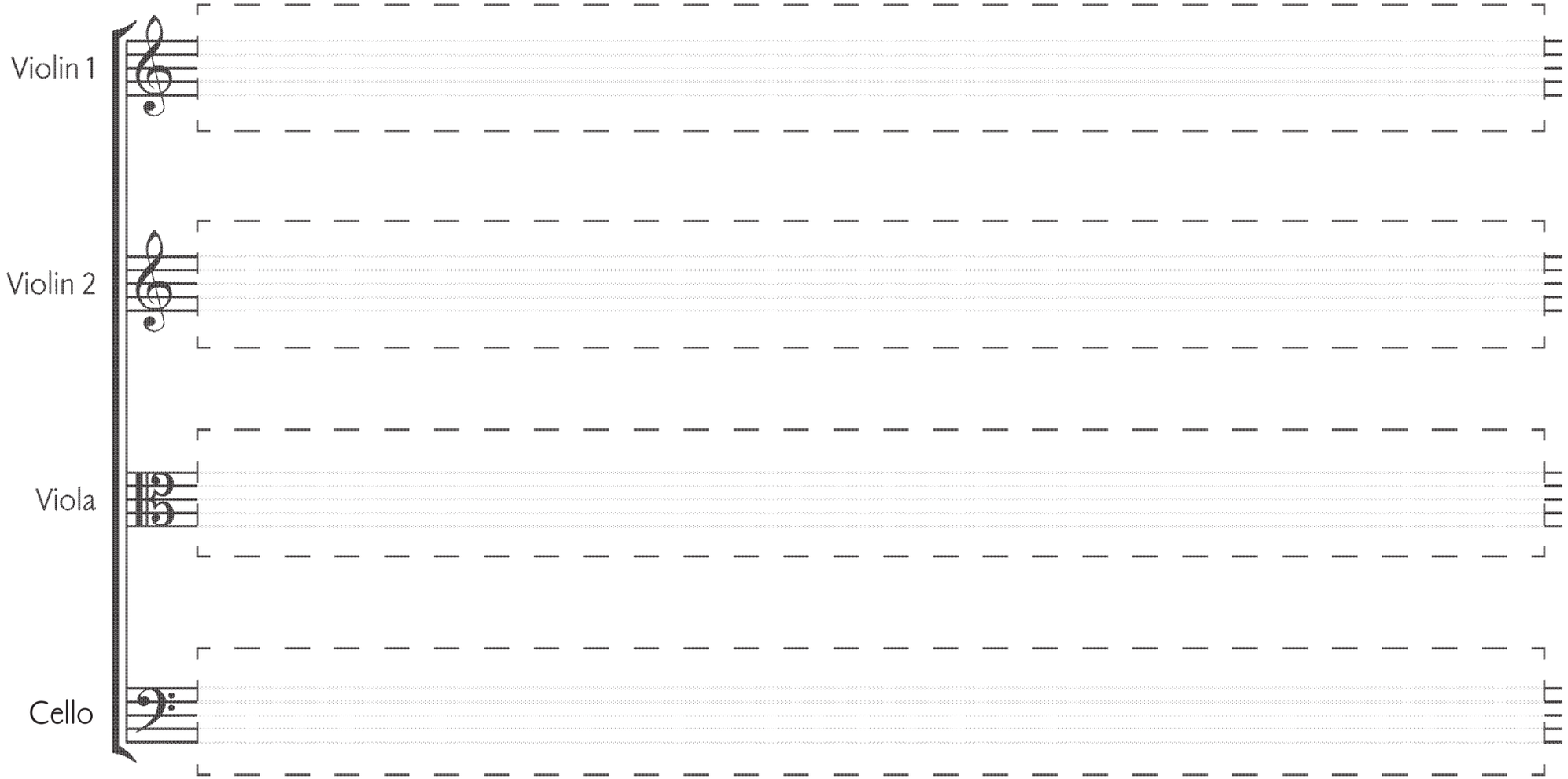


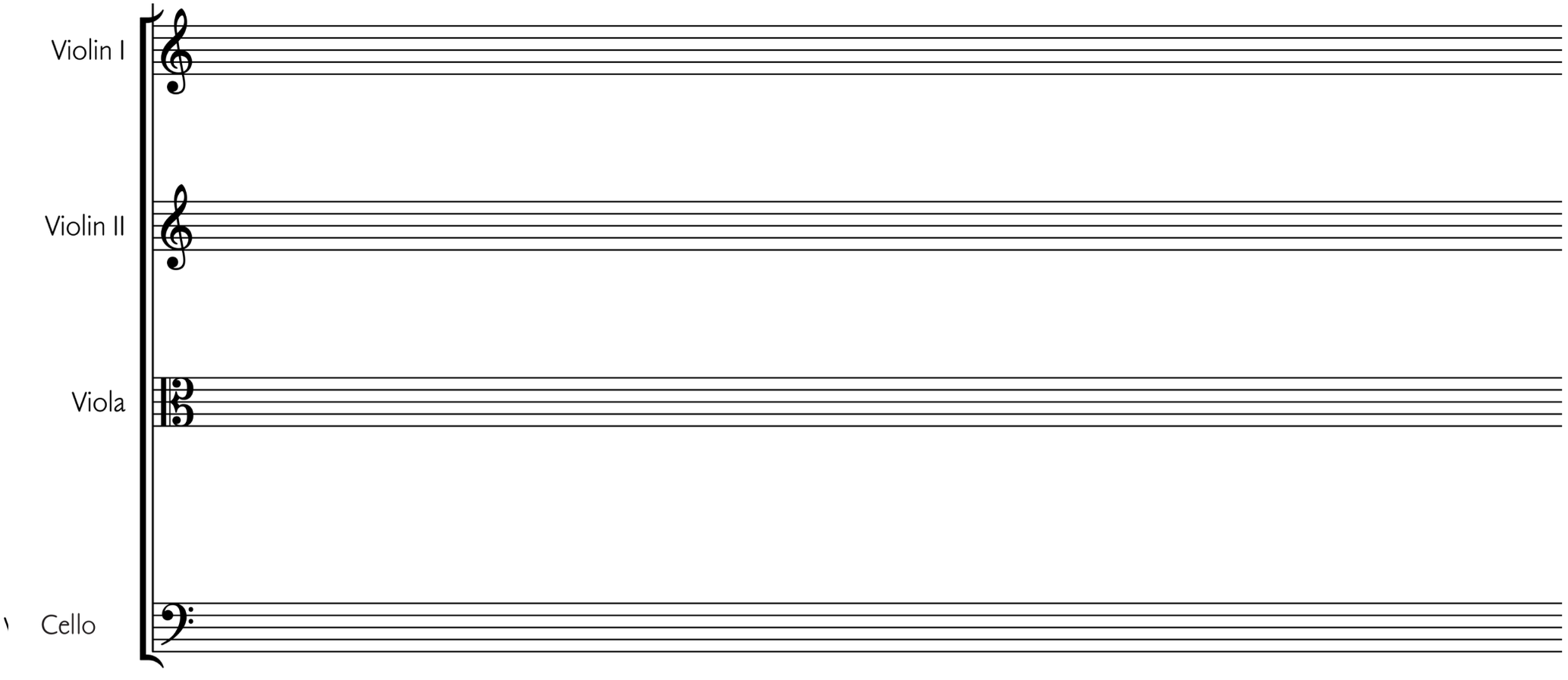
MODULATING CHORDS




Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello


Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello


Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello


Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello

CLASSICAL MUSIC NOTATION

Dynamics

Don't forget to tell the musicians how loud or quiet you want your music to be, particularly at the start of the piece and in any changes of mood or energy in your piece.
Use these common words and symbols:

pp pianissimo (very quiet)
p piano (quiet)
mp mezzo-piano ("half quiet")
mf mezzo-forte ("half loud")
f forte (loud)
ff fortissimo (very loud)
crescendo (get louder)
diminuendo (get softer)

Tempo words

Composers often use words at the start of their score to help musicians know what speed to play the piece at. Here's some tempo words you might want to use (but you can make up your own too):

adagio (slow)
agitato (agitated)
andante (at a walking pace)
animato (animated, lively)
allegro (fast)
energico (energetic)
forza (force)
leggiero (light or nimble)
maestoso (majestically)
pesante (heavy)
presto (fast)
prestissimo (as fast as possible)
risoluto (bold, strong)
scherzando (playful, joking)
tranquillo (calm)
triste, tristamente (sad, sorrowful)

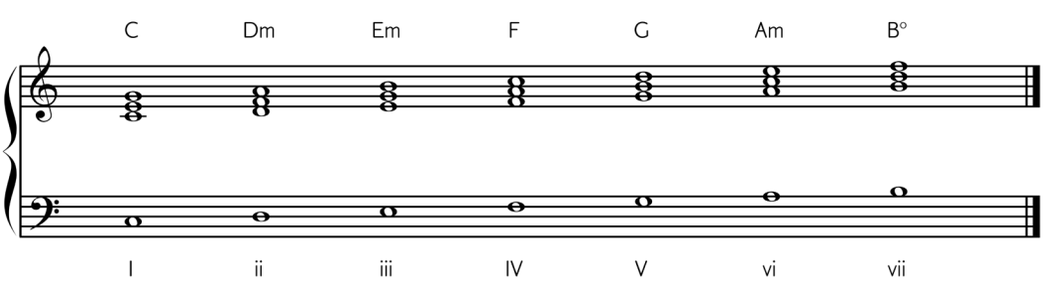
How to label chords...

Each note of the scale has a special name:

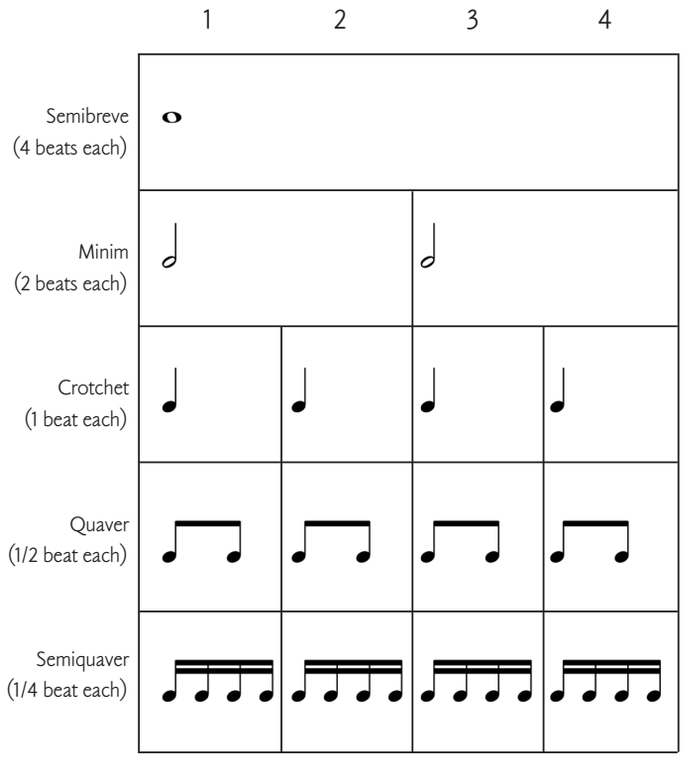
1st note	Tonic
2nd note	Supertonic
3rd note	Mediant
4th note	Subdominant
5th note	Dominant
6th note	Submediant
7th note	Leading note

These names are also used to label triads that are built from these notes (apart from the triad created from the 7th note which is called the subtonic). Use this information to label your chords on page 11.
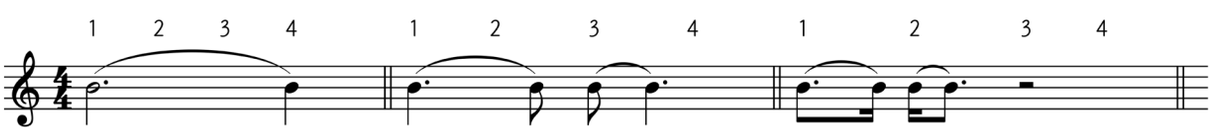
Sometimes composers use roman numerals to number their chords. For example a triad created from the 1st note of the scale is labelled as I or **i** and a triad created from the 3rd note of the scale is labelled **III** or **iii**. Composers use UPPERCASE ROMAN NUMBERALS (e.g. **I** or **III**) when the chord is a major triad, and lowercase roman numbers (e.g. **i or iii**) when the chord is a minor triad. Here's an example of how to label chords with roman numerals:



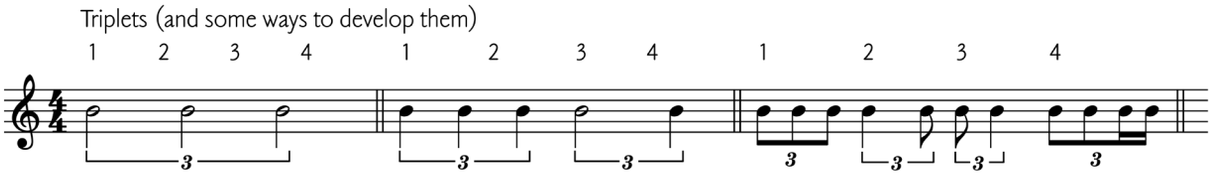
NOTATING RHYTHMS & RHYTHM EXAMPLES
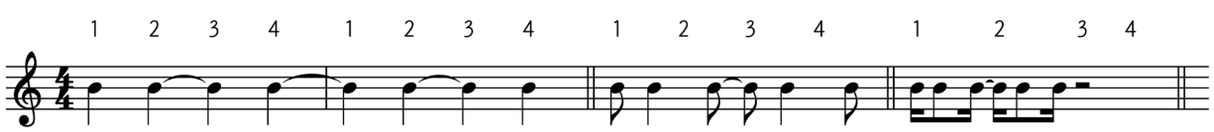


Dotted rhythms
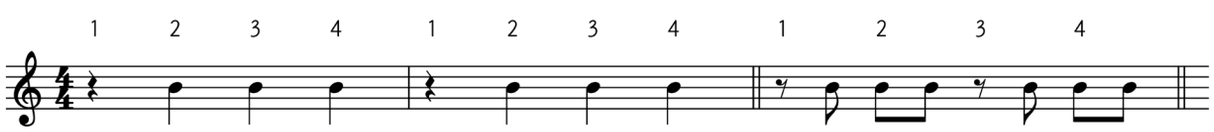


Triplets (and some ways to develop them)
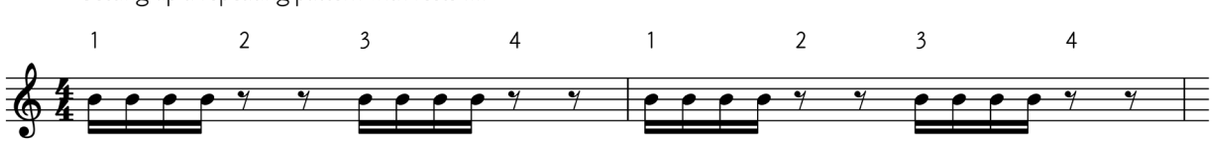


Syncopation
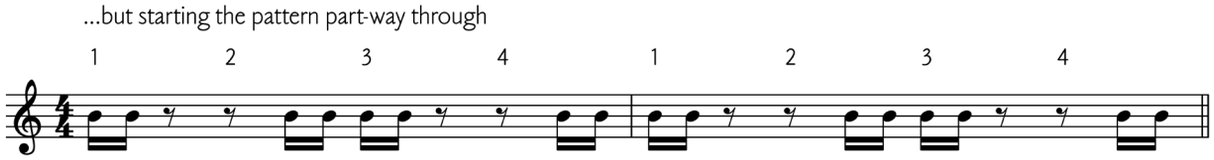


Setting up a repeating pattern with rests
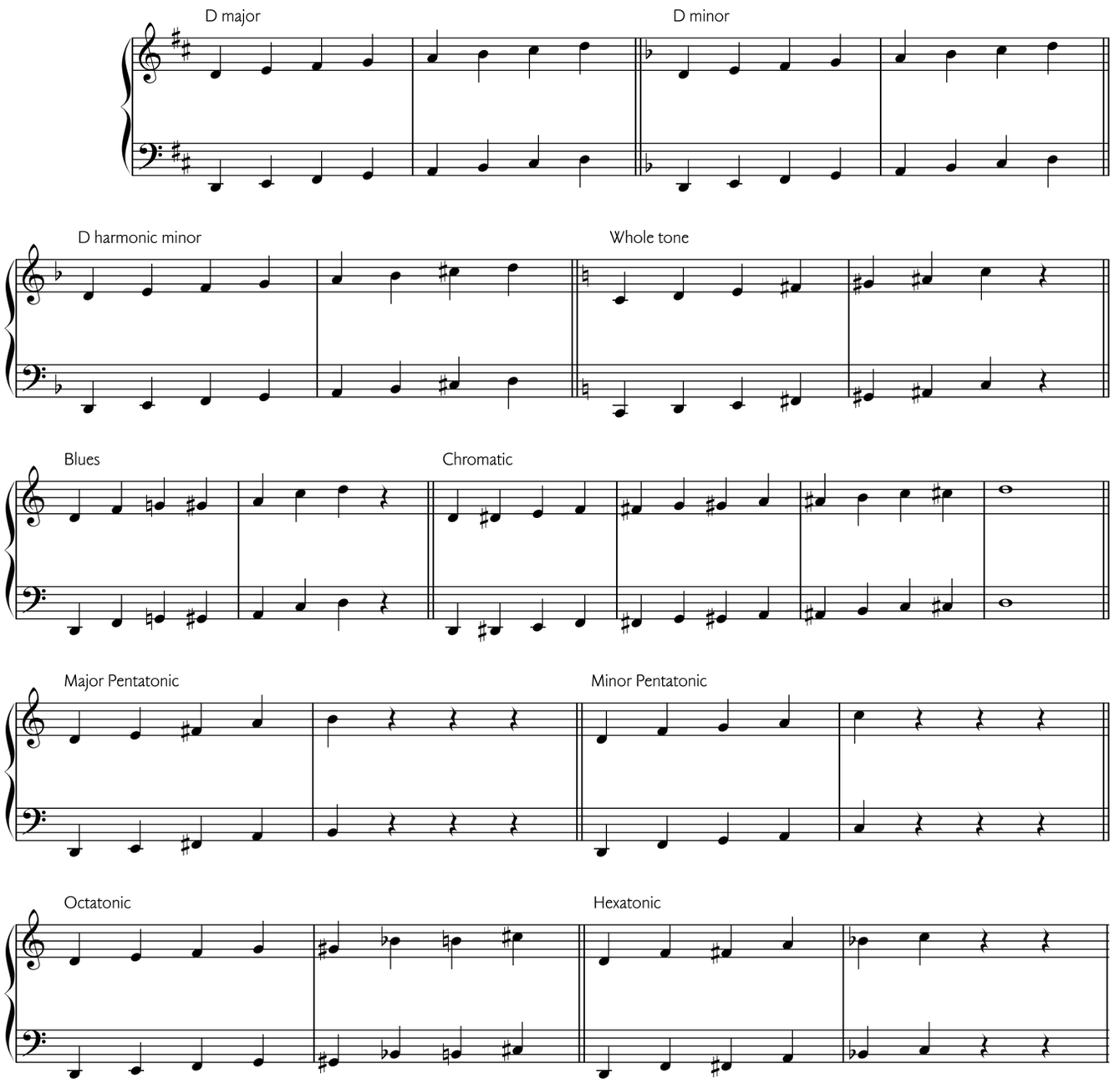


Setting up a repeating pattern with rests ....



...but starting the pattern part-way through



SCALES


D major
D minor
D harmonic minor
Whole tone
Blues
Chromatic
Major Pentatonic
Minor Pentatonic
Octatonic
Hexatonic

GLOSSARY

This glossary includes all the terms used in the Composing Inspiration and Composing Techniques videos, as well as some other common musical terms which you may find useful in creating your piece and describing it, as well as including some ideas you might like to try out.

ACCELERANDO
(shortened to accel.) An instruction to gradually increase the tempo, or speed, of the music.

ADAGIO
A tempo marking indicating a slow and stately pace (literally, "at ease").

ALLEGRO
A tempo marking indicating a fast, quick, and bright tempo.

ARCO
An instruction for a string instrument (like a violin) to play with the bow, creating a smooth, sustained sound.

ARPEGGIO
Playing the notes of a chord one after another in a sweeping motion, rather than simultaneously.

BHANGRA
A lively, upbeat style of music and dance that originated in the Punjab region of India, often featuring energetic drum rhythms.

CADENCE
A sequence of chords that brings a musical phrase to a point of rest, like a punctuation mark at the end of a sentence (e.g., a "full stop" or a "comma").

CALL AND RESPONSE
A musical conversation where one musician or group plays a phrase (the "call") and another musician or group answers with a direct response.

CEILIDH
(pronounced KAY-lee) A social event with traditional folk music, dancing, and storytelling, originating from Ireland and Scotland.

CELLS
In music, a cell is a very short musical idea, often just a few notes, that is used as a building block to create a larger piece.

CHORD
A group of notes played together simultaneously. Chords provide the harmony and foundation that support a melody, creating the emotional landscape of a piece of music.

CHORD PROGRESSION
A sequence of chords (groups of notes played together) that forms the foundation of a piece of music, creating a sense of movement and structure.

CHORDAL
A term describing music that is built on or features chords, where notes are played together simultaneously.

CHROMATIC

Moving by the smallest steps possible in Western music (semitones), often creating a rich, colourful, or tense sound.

CLARINET QUINTET
A standard chamber ensemble consisting of a clarinet plus a string quartet (two violins, a viola, and a cello).
COL LEGNO
(pronounced kol LEN-yo) An instruction for a string player to strike the strings with the wooden stick of the bow, rather than the hair, creating a percussive, rattling sound.

CONSONANCE
A combination of notes that sounds stable, pleasant, and harmonious to the ear.

COUNTER-MELODY
A secondary melody that is played simultaneously with the main melody, complementing it and adding depth to the music.

CRESCENDO
A gradual increase in the loudness of the music.

DIATONIC
Notes that belong to a standard major or minor scale, creating a familiar and harmonious sound.

DIMINUENDO
A gradual decrease in the loudness of the music.

DISSONANCE
A combination of notes that sounds tense, clashing, or unstable, often used to create drama that then resolves into consonance.

DOMINANT
The fifth note of a major or minor scale, and the chord built upon this note. It has a very strong pull toward the Tonic chord, creating a sense of tension that needs to resolve, which helps define the key of a piece.

DRONE
A sustained or continuously repeated note, providing a constant harmonic background for a melody (e.g., the sound of bagpipes).

DYNAMIC
Relating to how loud or soft the music is.

ENSEMBLE
A group of musicians who perform together.

FORTE
(shortened to ***f***) A dynamic marking meaning to play loudly or strongly.

GRIME
A style of electronic music that emerged from London, characterized by a fast, sharp beat and aggressive, rapid-fire lyrics.

HARMONY
The sound created when multiple notes are played at the same time, supporting and enriching the main melody.

HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE

A musical texture where one clear melody is supported by chordal accompaniment, and all parts generally move together in the same rhythm. (Compare with Polyphonic and Monophonic).

IMITATION
A technique where one musician or vocal part copies a musical phrase just played by another, creating an echoing effect.

INTERWEAVING
The layering of multiple independent melodies that fit together to create a complex musical texture, like threads in a fabric.

INVERSION
Changing the order of the notes in a chord, or flipping a melody upside down so it moves in the opposite direction.

KEY
The central set of notes that a piece of music is built on, which gives it a particular mood or feeling (e.g., a "happy" major key or a "sad" minor key).

LEADING NOTE
The seventh note of a major or minor scale. It is called "leading" because it lies just a semitone below the tonic and has a powerful tendency to resolve upwards to the tonic note, "leading" the music home.

LEGATO
An instruction to play notes smoothly and connected, with no silence between them.

MAJOR
A type of key or scale that is often described as sounding bright, happy, or triumphant. It is defined by a specific pattern of intervals between its notes.

MEDIANT
The third note of a major or minor scale. This note is crucial as it determines whether the scale and its key are major or minor, giving the music its characteristic happy or sad quality.

MELODY
A sequence of single notes that form the main, recognizable tune of a song.

MINOR
A type of key or scale that is often described as sounding sad, thoughtful, or mysterious. It is defined by a specific pattern of intervals, notably a minor third above the tonic.

MONOPHONIC TEXTURE
Music that has only a single melodic line with no harmony or accompaniment.

MOTIF
A short, recurring musical phrase or pattern that is significant to a piece, like a musical signature.

MOVEMENT
A self-contained section of a larger piece of music, like a chapter in a book.

MUSICOLOGIST
A scholar who studies music as a field of research, including its history, culture, and theory.

NOTEHEAD
The oval-shaped part of a written musical note.

OSTINATO
A short musical pattern (a rhythm or melody) that is repeated persistently throughout a section or whole piece of music.

PEDAL
A sustained or repeated note, usually in the lower part, that is held while the harmonies change above it.

PHRASE
A distinct musical unit, like a clause or sentence in language, that forms a complete musical thought. Phrases are often grouped together to form a melody.

PIANO
(shortened to ***p***) A dynamic marking meaning to play softly and quietly.

PITCH
How high or low a note sounds.

PIZZICATO
An instruction for a string player to pluck the strings with their finger instead of using the bow.

POLYPHONIC TEXTURE
Music that combines two or more independent melody lines at the same time. (Compare with Homophonic and Monophonic).

PRESTO
A tempo marking indicating a very fast speed.

PULSE
The steady, underlying beat in music that you naturally tap your foot to.

RAGA
A pattern of notes in Indian classical music used as a framework for improvisation and composition, often creating a specific mood or time of day.

RELATED KEY
A key that shares a strong musical connection with the original (or "home") key, typically because they have many of the same notes or chords in common. Modulating to a related key creates a smooth and natural sense of movement. The most common related keys are the Relative Major/Minor (which share the exact same key signature) and the Dominant (the key built on the fifth note of the scale).

RELATIVE MAJOR
The major key that shares the same key signature as a minor key. For example, C Major is the relative major of A Minor; both have no sharps or flats. The relative major is always a minor third above the tonic of the minor key.

RELATIVE MINOR
The minor key that shares the same key signature as a major key. For example, A Minor is the relative minor of C Major; both have no sharps or flats. The relative minor is always a minor third below the tonic of the major key.

RETROGRADE

A melody played backwards.

RHYTHM
The pattern of long and short sounds and silences in music that fits over the steady pulse.
RITARDANDO
(shortened to rit. or ritard.) An instruction to gradually slow down the tempo.

SCALE
A set of musical notes ordered by pitch, like a ladder of notes that a piece of music is based on.

SEMITONE
The smallest distance between two notes in Western music (e.g., from C to C# on a piano).

SEQUENCE
Repeating a melodic phrase at a higher or lower pitch.

STACCATO
An instruction to play notes in a short, sharp, and detached manner.

STRING QUARTET
A standard chamber ensemble consisting of two violins, a viola, and a cello. Also refers to a piece of music written for this group.

STRING TRIO
A chamber ensemble typically consisting of a violin, a viola, and a cello.

STRUCTURE
The overall plan or organization of a piece of music, such as its verse-chorus format.

SUBDOMINANT
The fourth note of a major or minor scale, and the chord built upon this note. It provides a harmonic movement away from the tonic, often acting as a stepping stone to the dominant chord.

SUBMEDIANT
The sixth note of a major or minor scale. It serves as the relative major's tonic in a minor key, and the relative minor's tonic in a major key, making it a pivotal note for modulations.

SUL PONTICELLO
An instruction for a string player to bow very near the bridge of the instrument, creating a thin, eerie sound.

SUL TASTO
(also called sulla tastiera) An instruction for a string player to bow over the fingerboard, far from the bridge, creating a soft, muted, and flutey sound.

SUPERTONIC
The second note of a major or minor scale. It often functions harmonically as a precursor to the dominant chord, helping to build tension in a progression.

TECHNO
A style of electronic dance music characterized by a repetitive, mechanical beat, often created with synthesizers and drum machines.

TEMPO

The speed of the music, how fast or slow the pulse is.

TEXTURE
A term describing how the different layers of sound in a piece of music interact, such as thin (a single melody) or thick (many instruments).

TIMBRE
(pronounced TAM-bre) The unique quality or "colour" of a sound that distinguishes one instrument or voice from another, even when they play the same note at the same volume (e.g., the difference between a trumpet and a violin playing the same C).

TONE (INTERVAL)
A distance between two notes equal to two semitones (or two frets on a guitar).

TONE (TECHNIQUE)
The sound quality or character of a musical note, produced by an instrument or voice. Also refers to a musician's control over the quality and color of their sound.

TONIC
The first and most important note of a major or minor scale, also called the "keynote." The chord built on this note is the Tonic Chord, which acts as the central point of rest and resolution in a piece of music, providing a sense of "home."

TRAP
A style of hip-hop music originating from the Southern US, characterized by crisp, rapid hi-hats, heavy bass, and layered synthesizers.

TREMOLO
The rapid repetition of a single note or the rapid alternation between two notes, creating a trembling or shimmering effect.

TRIAD
A chord consisting of three notes: a root note, a third, and a fifth. It is the most basic form of harmony in Western music.

TRITONE
An interval spanning three whole tones (or six semitones), creating one of the most dissonant and unstable sounds in Western music. Historically nicknamed "the devil in music" (diabolus in musica), it creates a powerful sense of tension that strongly demands resolution, making it crucial in dominant seventh chords and for creating musical drama.

UNISON
When multiple musicians or singers play or sing the same pitch or melody at the same time.

UNRELATED KEY (also called Distant Key)
A key that has a weak musical connection to the original (or "home") key, typically because they share very few of the same notes or chords. Modulating to an unrelated key creates a striking, dramatic, or surprising shift in the mood of the music.

WIND QUINTET
A standard chamber ensemble, also known as a woodwind quintet, typically consisting of a flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and French horn.

MUSIC IN THE ROUND

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