

# Trevor Pearce

Home | Introduction | Interviews | Resources

## Tasks

### PITCH AND HARMONIC CONSIDERATIONS

#### TASK 1

Choose an instrument to play through as many of these modes as you can, to get a feel for them. Listen to their unique sound qualities.

#### TASK 2

Choose two contrasting modes from those presented and carefully study their intervallic formation. With an instrument of your own choice, use each of these modes to improvise a solo melodic line taking into account different regions within the mode, and any unique intervallic component of interest. Aim for a contrasting mood in each improvisation. Use these ideas to write down a melodic passage of 8 to 10 bars length.

#### TASK 3

Using the two modes you have chosen, study their harmonic possibilities and create an array of chords made up of the following:

- Create a sequence of six differing triadic chords (chords made up of superimposed major or minor thirds). Consider using higher order chordal units such as 7ths, 9ths, 11ths or 13ths.
- Create a sequence of six differing chords using superimposed intervals other than major or minor 3rds such as 4ths, 5ths, octaves or 9ths.
- Using the harmonies derived in a) and b) above, create a sequence of 6 chords using added notes to vary chordal density and colour. Try adding for example, a major 2nd or a 4th or a 6th to the chord and listen to how it changes the nature of the chord

#### TASK 4

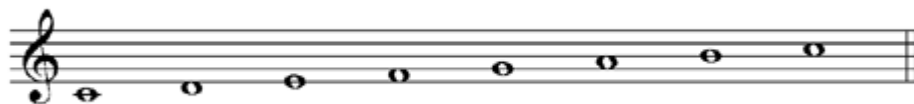
Harmonise the melodic ideas from Task 2 with chords chosen from the array created in Task 3. Use either a piano/keyboard, a piano and one other instrument or a small mixed ensemble (maximum of four players).

# MODES AND SCALES

The modes below have been transposed onto a common fundamental pitch of C to highlight their unique intervallic content. They may be transposed onto any of the twelve chromatic pitches.

The following church modes evolved from those used extensively in Medieval music.

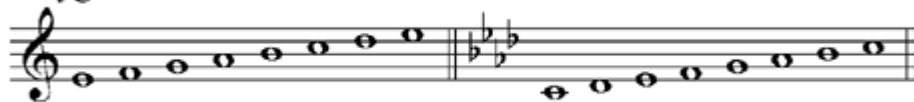
Ionian



Dorian



Phrygian



Lydian



Mixolydian



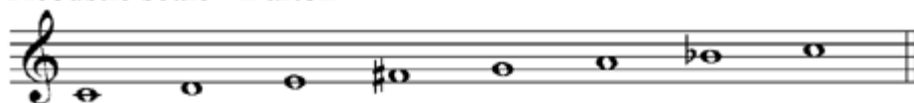
Acolian



Locrian



Acoustic scale - Bartok



The pentatonic or five note mode occurs in some western folk music and in much music from Asia.

### Pentatonic



Other forms of pentatonic mode are the Hirajoshi from Japan and the Pelog from Indonesia:

### Hirajoshi

### Pelog



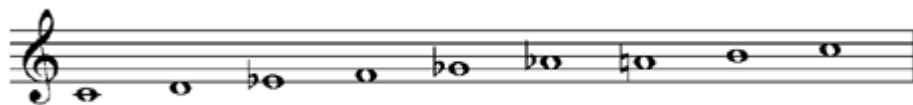
The whole tone scale, made up entirely of whole tones (no semitones) has two forms:

### Whole tone



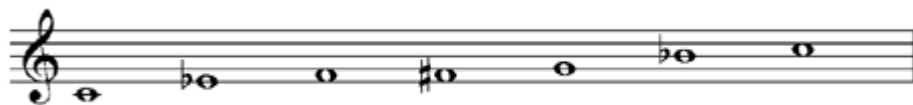
The octatonic scale is made up of a succession of tone, semitone, tone, semitone...

### Octatonic



The 'blues' scale has the following formation:

### Blues scale



Each mode or scale above may be explored to generate unique melodic and harmonic constructions.

Also see HSC Online Tutorial 'Composing with fixed scales' by Dr Diana Blom.

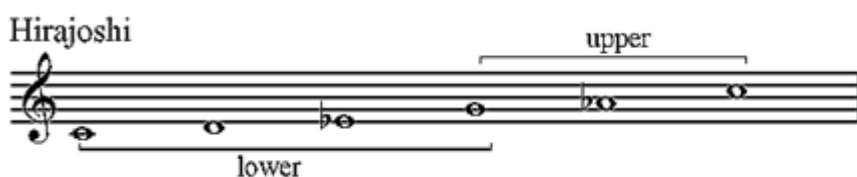
When composing with modal formations it can be helpful to limit the exploration to a discrete region within the mode, subsequently introducing pitches from the remaining region of the mode as with the following example which subdivides the Phrygian mode into upper and lower regions:

Example 1. Phrygian mode with upper and lower regions



In this case the composition might work with the lower region in the opening phrases accentuating the minor 2nd to establish the mode. Subsequent phrases might then expand into the upper range for contrasting interest. A similar process is shown in example 2 using the hirajoshi mode

Example 2. Hirajoshi mode with upper and lower regions.



© State of New South Wales through the Department of Education and Training, 2009. This work may be freely reproduced and distributed for personal, educational or government purposes. Permission must be received from the Department for all other uses. Licensed Under NEALS



## MOTIVIC DEVELOPMENT

### TASK 5

Compose a 10 bar passage for solo clarinet which consists of an antecedent phrase (call) complemented by a consequent phrase (response)

From an original motif, four basic versions can be derived:

- a) the original itself
- b) the retrograde (original played backwards)
- c) the inversion (original inverted or turned upside down)
- d) the retrograde of inversion (the inversion played backwards).

This is illustrated in Example 4

### TASK 6

Using the motivic phrase you composed in Task 5, derive its retrograde, inversion and retrograde inversion forms. Be prepared to make creative adaptations if the nature of the intervals in a mode doesn't allow for exact inversions (eg. in Pelog, Hirajoshi and Blues scales)

Once this process is complete these four versions of the motif can be drawn on freely to form the basis of larger phrases within sections of the composition.

### TASK 7

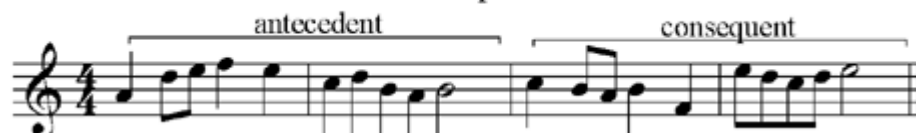
Compose a 24 bar section of a piece by drawing from the motivic ideas generated so far. Be selective rather than trying to use every version. You may want to structure the passage to enhance overall cohesion eg ABA, (8+8+8 bars) where 'A' is a variant of the opening phrase 'A'. You may also consider other processes to work with the motif such as fragmenting it into smaller units, contracting or extending it, adding new material or repeating parts of the phrase.

# MOTIVIC DEVELOPMENT

A motivic phrase can be developed by forming the idea into two parts or shorter phrases known as an antecedent and consequent, (or call and response or a question and answer) as shown in Example 3 below.

Example 3: motif showing antecedent/consequent construction

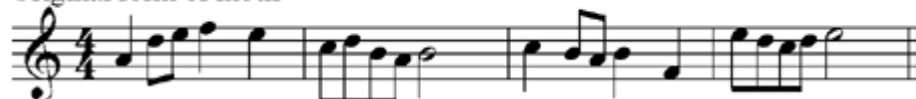
## Motif with antecedent and consequent



Example 4:

## Four versions of motif

### Original form of motif



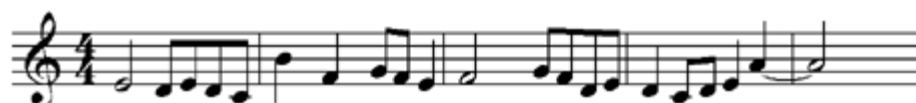
### Retrograde form



### Inversion form which can be exact or approximate depending on how you want it to sound



### Retrograde inversion form



© State of New South Wales through the Department of Education and Training, 2009. This work may be freely reproduced and distributed for personal, educational or government purposes. Permission must be received from the Department for all other uses. Licensed Under NEALS



## RHYTHMIC PROCESSES

### TASK 8

Compose five contrasting rhythmic ideas selectively drawing upon the above techniques. Up to 2-3 bars should be sufficient. Notate them purely as rhythmic ideas- don't worry too much about pitch for this. This is part of the pre-compositional process and will give you a short catalogue of rhythmic possibilities to draw upon when you come to begin writing your piece.

### TASK 9

Consider what type of rhythmic gestures might relate to your underlying compositional idea.

Choose three which you think might effectively complement or contrast and notate your interpretation of their rhythmic structure. They may be 1 or 2 bar cells or a 3-4 bar rhythmic idea.

The rhythms devised in tasks 9 and/or 10 can then be adapted to form the basis of:

- the motivic ideas
- chordal sequences as events in themselves or to accompany the motivic idea
- layers which can generate more complex rhythmic textures.

### TASK 10

Devise a form plan with approximate durations within the relevant time limit that will form the basis of your first draft. Try to relate this to your underlying compositional idea and to the materials you have been working with in Phase 1 - Pre-Composition

# RHYTHMIC PROCESSES

## 1) ADDITIVE RHYTHMS

These add differing metrical structures together to create a more unpredictable element to the rhythmic flow of a passage. This can occur as a regular pattern such as 2/4, 2/4, 3/4 (e.g. Stravinsky Three Pieces for String Quartet Movt. 1) or as an irregular pattern, as in the following example:

4/4, 4/4, 4/4, 5/4, 4/4, 4/4, 4/4, 3/4, 4/4 and so on.

In this sequence the 5/4 bar adds a pulse unpredictably while the 3/4 bar loses a pulse. This affects the regularity of the metre and creates rhythmic uncertainty. More complex additive rhythms can be used such as 4/4, 4/4, 3/8, 4/4, 7/8, 4/4, 3/4, 4/4 and so on, where the constantly changing metres creates great flexibility. This technique should be used carefully as it creates greater difficulty for the performers and for synchronising the ensemble.

## 2) DIVISIVE RHYTHMS.

This technique subdivides the bar into a non-conventional grouping of the pulses to create differing patterns of accentuation. For example, consider the 4/4 metre instead as 8/8, or eight semiquavers and reconfigure the grouping as follows.

$\frac{4}{4} \left( \frac{8}{8} \right)$    
or  
 $\frac{4}{4}$

In his Fifth String Quartet, Bartok uses divisive rhythms in Movement 3 (Scherzo) which create a dance-like accentual pattern to generate rhythmic drive:

Scherzo (4+3+2)  
 $\frac{9}{8}$    
Trio (3+2+2+3)  
 $\frac{10}{8}$

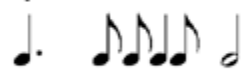


---


### 3) AUGMENTATION/DIMINUTION OF A RHYTHMIC CELL.

A rhythmic cell is a small rhythmic grouping which may be manipulated in various ways. In Example 7 the rhythmic cell is augmented by doubling the rhythmic values and undergoes diminution by halving the rhythmic values.


rhythmic cell



augmentation



diminution



In each case the identity of the rhythmic cell is maintained. Such a technique used carefully can provide rhythmic unity to a section or movement of a work.

---

### 4) SYMMETRICAL RHYTHMS

These rhythmic formations are constructed so that they are symmetrical around a central point (axis of symmetry).

Symmetrical rhythm

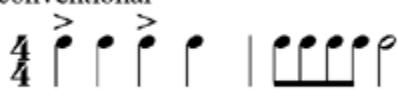


---


### 5) SYNCOPATION

This involves displacing the normal accentual pattern by placing an accent on a pulse other than the conventional strong beat of the bar.

conventional



syncopated



\* = displaced accent

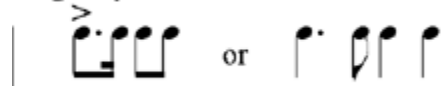
Syncopation can be used to create a jazz influence or a “swung” feel, or to generate more rhythmic variety and interest as opposed to a ‘straight’ 4/4 or 3/4 feel.

## 6) RHYTHMIC OSTINATO

This technique involves the creation of a rhythmic pattern stretching over 1, 2 or sometimes more bars which is then used as a repeated sequence to form an underlying layer in a passage.

The tango rhythm and its alternate form are examples of a single bar ostinato.

tango rhythm



alternate form



2 bar ostinato



## RHYTHMIC GESTURE

You may prefer to approach these rhythmic formulas in a more expressive way. Using this method enables you to be more improvisational in the development of rhythmic material. With this technique the idea is to respond to a particular gesture or mood using rhythm as the vehicle to generate ideas. For example a response to the musical idea of 'agitato' (agitated) might involve shorter, more irregular attacks; a factory-like mechanical gesture might involve the repetition of a cell to convey the regularity of a production line, or a serene mood might have sustained lines layered with freer attack rhythms tied over the bar lines to de-emphasise pulse.

agitated (*agitato*)



mechanical (*meccanica*)



serene



This approach enables the composer to directly link up with the compositional idea and to improvise with it using rhythmic processes. A wide range of gestures may be drawn upon often from listening to the world around us and capturing the rhythm such as birdsong, steps on the pavement, trains, people talking or dance. Usually only two or three are sufficient to work with, develop or transform so it's important to be selective and relate them to the compositional idea. In general, try not to cram too many conflicting ideas into a short space of time- rather do more with fewer, select ideas.

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Education and Training, 2009. This work may be freely reproduced and distributed for personal, educational or government purposes. Permission must be received from the Department for all other uses. Licensed Under NEALS



[http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/creativearts/assets/music/composers\\_reveal/trevor\\_pearce/tasks.html](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/creativearts/assets/music/composers_reveal/trevor_pearce/tasks.html)

[http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/creativearts/assets/music/composers\\_reveal/trevor\\_pearce/tasks.html](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/creativearts/assets/music/composers_reveal/trevor_pearce/tasks.html)