

# STRUCTURE

## BASS LINES

### • ALBERTI BASS

**Broken chords played by the left hand** outlining harmonies whilst the right hand plays the melody. Typically, the notes are presented in the order *lowest, highest, middle, highest*. The broken chord pattern helps to create a smooth, sustained, flowing sound on the piano. It can also be heard as an accomp. pattern on other instruments.

Classical composers such as Haydn and Mozart used this technique extensively.

Allegro

*p*

Mozart's Piano sonata KV 545, movement I

This musical score shows a piano part with two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is Allegro. The dynamic is *p* (piano). The bass line consists of a continuous pattern of eighth-note pairs (Alberti bass), while the melody is played in the treble staff. The score is from Mozart's Piano sonata KV 545, movement I.

It gets its name from the 18th Century Italian composer, Domenico Alberti, who used it in many of his compositions.

Allegro

*mf*

Mozart's Piano sonata KV 545, movement 2

This musical score shows a piano part with two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is Allegro. The dynamic is *mf* (mezzo-forte). The bass line consists of a continuous pattern of eighth-note pairs (Alberti bass), while the melody is played in the treble staff. The score is from Mozart's Piano sonata KV 545, movement 2.

Andante.

*p dolce*

*legato*

Mozart's Piano sonata KV 545, movement 2

This musical score shows a piano part with two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is Andante. The dynamic is *p dolce* (pianissimo). The bass line consists of a continuous pattern of eighth-note pairs (Alberti bass), while the melody is played in the treble staff. The dynamic *legato* is indicated. The score is from Mozart's Piano sonata KV 545, movement 2.

Adagio.

*f*

*(1ma volta)*

*(2da volta) f*

Mozart's String Quartet KV 172, movement 2

This musical score shows a string quartet part with four staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the second staff is in alto clef, the third staff is in tenor clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is Adagio. The dynamic is *f* (fortissimo). The bass line consists of a continuous pattern of eighth-note pairs (Alberti bass), while the melody is played in the treble staff. The dynamic *f* is indicated for the second volta. The score is from Mozart's String Quartet KV 172, movement 2.

# STRUCTURE

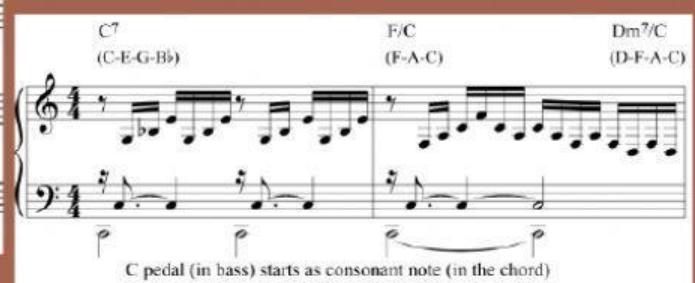
## BASS LINES

### • PEDAL

**PEDAL**, is short for ‘PEDAL POINT@. It is a note which is held on or is repeated continuously in the BASS while the harmony changes above.

e.g. opening of Also Sprach Zarathustra  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIPWOOFbwcQ>

e.g. Raindrop Prelude - Chopin



C7  
(C-E-G-B $\flat$ )

F/C  
(F-A-C)

Dm7/C  
(D-F-A-C)

C pedal (in bass) starts as consonant note (in the chord)

e.g. Bach Prelude in C major



G7  
(G-B-D-F)

C  
(C-E-G)

ped. pt.

ped. pt.

pedal point (in bass) is now a non-chord tone

# STRUCTURE

## BASS LINES

- **INVERTED PEDAL**

An **INVERTED PEDAL** is a pedal (ie a note that is held on or sounded continuously in the TOP PART instead of the bass

e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> movt Mozart Jupiter Symphony

The image shows a page from the musical score for the 1st movement of Mozart's Jupiter Symphony. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of ten staves. The staves are arranged from top to bottom: Flute 1, Flute 2, Oboe 1, Oboe 2, Clarinet 1, Clarinet 2, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, Bassoon 3, and Bass. The bassoon parts are highlighted with colored boxes. A red box highlights a sustained note in the bassoon 1 part, which is an inverted pedal. A blue box highlights a sustained note in the bassoon 2 part. A red box at the bottom highlights a sustained note in the bassoon 3 part. The bassoon 3 part is explicitly labeled 'Bass 3' at the beginning of the staff. The bassoon parts provide harmonic support, while the bassoon 3 part serves as the primary bass line.

e.g. *The Wizard and I* (Wicked)

e.g. *With or Without You* (U2)

# STRUCTURE

## BASS LINES

- **GROUND BASS**

This is a theme in the bass which is repeated many times while the upper parts are varied.

e.g. Monteverdi *Zefiro torna*

Listen to the music and fill two concepts for each category in the grid below:

	CONCEPT 1	CONCEPT 2
MELODY/HARMONY		
RHYTHM/TEMPO		
TEXTURE/ STRUCTURE		
TIMBRE		

e.g. Little Brown Jug – NB this is an example of SWING music



e.g. Time Lapse – Michael Nyman

# STRUCTURE

## BASS LINES

### • WALKING BASS

A moving bass line with notes usually of the same value. It often moves by step, but not always so. Features heavily in jazz/swing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGQN8vdwVrl>

e.g. In the Mood – this is an example of SWING music

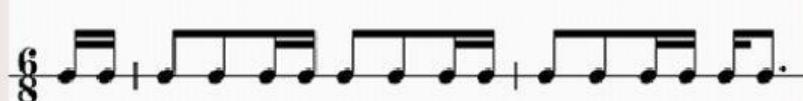
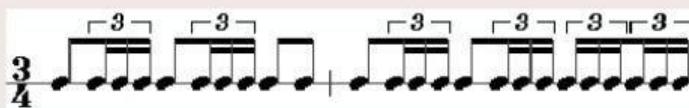


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td73Lhq8npc>

## • OSTINATO (*Rhythmic & Melodic*)

a short musical pattern repeated many times.

It can be purely **rhythmic** e.g. Ravel's Bolero , Holst – Mars, Pirates of the Caribbean



or it can be **melodic**.

e.g. Carillon – Bizet – Here the 3 note ostinato represents the pealing of bells



e.g. Carol of the Bells



## • RIFF

A Riff is a repeated phrase usually found in jazz and popular music. It is similar to an ostinato.

e.g. Smoke on the Water – Deep Purple



e.g. Listen to Black Sabbath's "The Iron Man"



e.g.. Listen to Day tripper – The Beatles



# QUIZ

For each of the following excerpts, choose the correct bass line or structural device from the following concepts:

ALBERTI BASS

GROUND BASS

INVERTED PEDAL

WALKING BASS

PEDAL

OSTINATO

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.