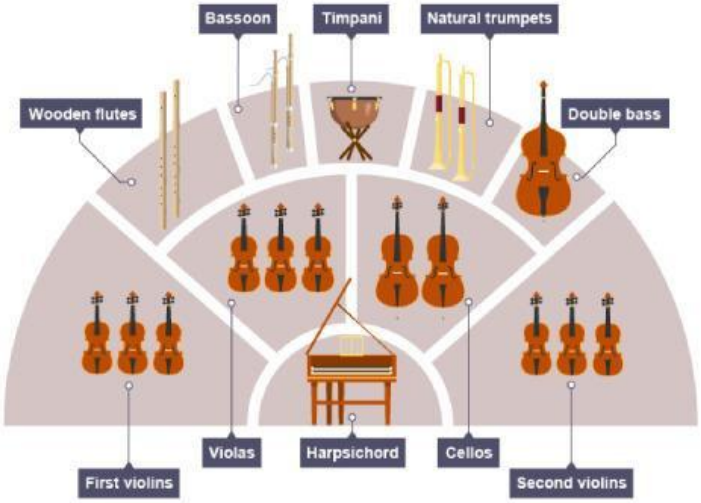
Concerto and Concerto grosso

Two important instrumental styles associated with Baroque music are:

- **Concerto Grosso** – this was exclusive to the Baroque period and did not continue in subsequent periods.
- **Solo Concerto** – this began in the Baroque period and has continued throughout the musical periods, right up to and including the 20th Century



Typical Baroque orchestra
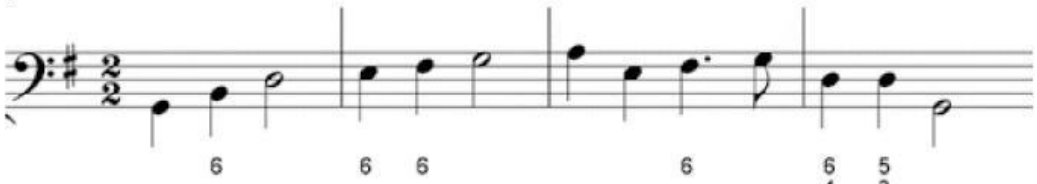
A **CONCERTO** is a large-scale composition for a **SOLOIST** (SOLO CONCERTO) or a group of **SOLOISTS** (CONCERTO GROSSO) accompanied by an **ORCHESTRA.**

The soloist(s) tend to lead the music but interacted and alternated with the instrumental backing, sometimes in a "musical dialogue", and sometimes playing with or alongside the larger ensemble **(TUTTI)** to provide contrast.

The **SOLO** part (or parts) are written to display the performers' technical ability and to "show off" – a **VIRTUOSO**. Concertos often contain a **CADENZA** section where the soloist (or soloists) play(s) alone (sometimes unaccompanied), and this is often the most technically demanding section of the entire movement.

Concertos have three **MOVEMENTS** contrasted by tempo – fast, slow, fast.

- In both a solo concerto and concerto grosso in the Baroque period there is a BASSO CONTINUO part played by HARPSICHORD along with either CELLO or BASSOON. The composer would write just the bass line and the harpsichord player would improvise chords over the bass line to fill out the harmonies.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

The Baroque Concerto Grosso

A **CONCERTO GROSSO** involves TWO **groups of performers**:

- The **CONCERTINO** (*little ensemble*), featuring a small group of solo instruments and performed by more experienced and technically accomplished performers. Solo instruments for the CONCERTINO group could be taken from the following: VIOLIN, CELLO, RECORDER, FLUTE, OBOE, BASSOON and TRUMPET.
- The **RIPIENO**, *(filling)*, which accompany the CONCERTINO soloists. The RIPIENO accompaniment was a small orchestra consisting mainly of strings and CONTINUO.

- All Baroque Concertos have a **BASSO CONTINUO** , played by the **HARPSICHORD** (or **ORGAN**) and **CELLO** *(sometimes bassoon).*
- The melodies in Baroque Concerto Grossi were normally long and flowing and use **SEQUENCES** and **IMITATION**. Baroque melodies were highly decorated (often by performers themselves in a performance) with **ORNAMENTS**
- The **TEXTURE** of Baroque Concerto Grossi was mainly **POLYPHONIC** where melodies interweave with each other, with some **HOMOPHONIC** sections for contrast.
- Baroque Concerto Grossi had **THREE MOVEMENTS** – usually fast – slow -fast
- The fast movements were often written in **RITORNELLO FORM** (meaning *"little return"*). This began with a **RIPIENO** section and features the main theme.
- Between appearances of this ritornello theme are contrasting sections of music called **EPISODES** which feature the soloists in the **CONCERTINO** group (accompanied by the **CONTINUO**) and this provides musical contrast within a **MOVEMENT**.
- The overall form and structure within each **MOVEMENT** was often: Ritornello, Episode 1, Ritornello, Episode 2, Ritornello etc.
- **TERRACED DYNAMICS** provided contrast between loud and soft sections

	Ritornello 1	Episode 1	Ritornello 2	Episode 2	Ritornello 3	Etc .....
CONCERTO GROSSO	Ripieno	Concertino	Ripieno	Concertino	Ripieno	
BASSO CONTINUO						

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Famous Baroque composers of Concerto Grossos include:


VIVALDI


HANDEL


J. S. BACH

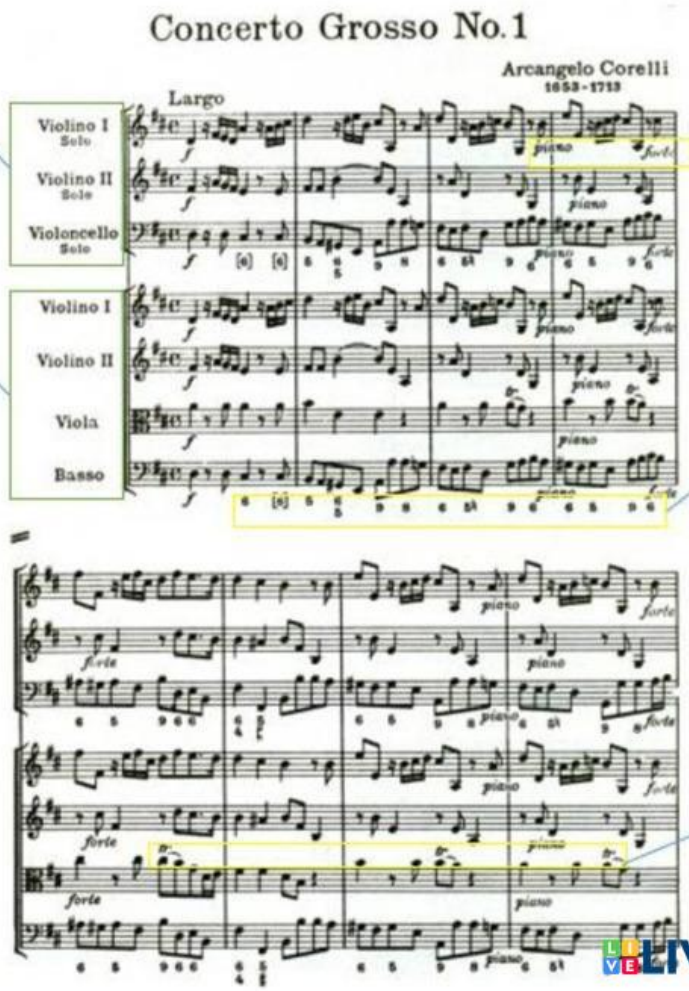

CORELLI

Baroque Composers and performers worked under a system of **PATRONAGE** – they worked for either aristocratic families in Europe and wealthy individuals at court, the church or the opera house. Baroque composers often received commissions (requests) from their patrons to write and perform music (including Concerto Grossi) in return for payment and continued support. While music was increasingly performed in public, this usually happened in either the church (where orchestral music as well as vocal music was played – including works such as Corelli's Concerto Grossi; Concertos, like sonatas and sinfonias, were played in church as "overtures" before Mass or at certain moments in the ceremony) the opera house or in the salons or courts of wealthy individuals with a small aristocratic audience (**CHAMBER MUSIC**).

- Listen to the largo from Corelli's Concerto Grosso No 1.

CONCERTANTE solo group of 2 Violins and Cello

RIPIENO group of 1st and 2nd Violins, Violas and **BASSO** = Continuo part for Harpsichord or Organ and Cello



TERRACED DYNAMICS

FIGURED BASS NOTATION

DECORATED MELODIES WITH ORNAMENTS *(trills)*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Brandenburg Concerti – CONCERO GROSSO

Between 1708-1721 Bach composed 6 concerti in the CONCERTO GROSSO style. They were dedicated to the nobleman Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg and so became known as the ***Brandenburg Concertos***. Each feature a RIPIENO group (strings), a CONCERTINO group (soloists) and BASSO CONTINUO.

In Brandenburg Concerto No 2 the following instruments are heard:

Ripieno:	***Strings***
Concertino:	***Trumpet. Recorder, Oboe, Violin.***
Continuo:	***Harpsichord & cello***

The trumpet used is a very high-pitched Baroque trumpet

The main **ritornello** theme is played by both **ripieno** and **concertino** groups:



In between playings of the **ritornello** theme the **episodes** are played by the **concertino** group in the flowing combinations:



Episode 1: ***Solo Violin With basso continuo (harpsichord & cello accomp)***

Episode 2: ***Oboe with solo violin playing the accomp.***

Episode 3: ***Recorder, with oboe playing the accomp.***

Episode 4: ***Trumpet with recorder playing the accomp***

LIVEWORKSHEETS

- Listen to the third movement of Brandenburg Concerto No 2 (from 8:36) and fill in the grid below with what you hear. Make sure you identify musical concepts and place them in the correct categories.

Melody/ Harmony	Rhythm/Tempo	Texture/Structure/Form	Timbre

- What makes the music clearly sound Baroque? Identify as many features as you can in relation to ***Melody/ Harmony, Texture, Timbre, Style*** etc.

The Baroque Solo Concerto

- The Baroque **SOLO CONCERTO** grew out of the Concerto Grosso in which a single solo instrument (such as **VIOLIN, CELLO, RECORDER, FLUTE, OBOE, BASSOON, TRUMPET** or **LUTE**), was pitted against the weight of the **STRING ORCHESTRA** which provided the **ACCOMPANIMENT** (together with the **CONTINUO**).
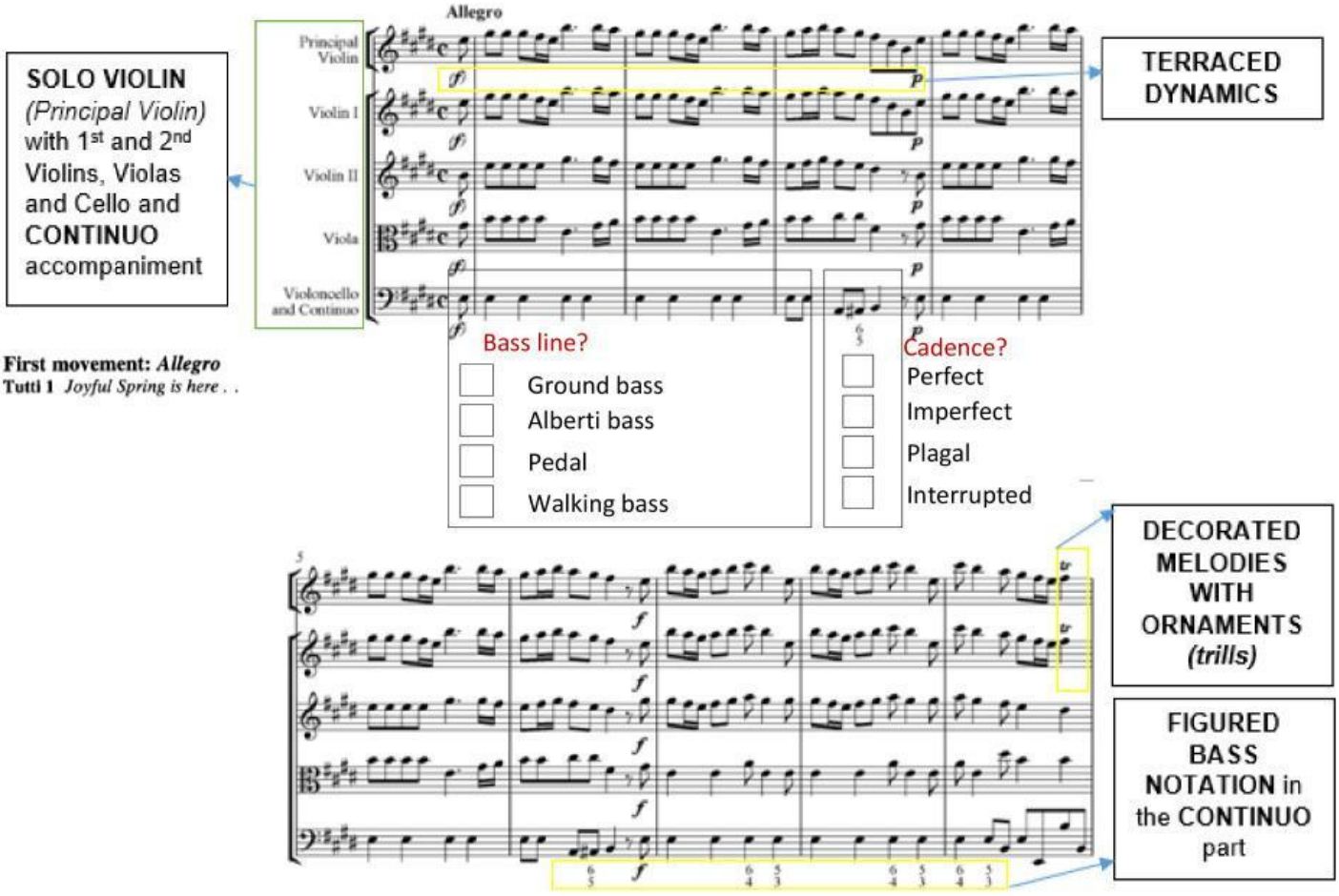
- The idea of contrast became stronger and composers often gave the soloist some difficult and technically demanding passages to play.
- Baroque Solo Concertos (like the Concerto Grosso) have **THREE MOVEMENTS** contrasted by tempo – fast, slow, fast – with a single mood or style within each movement and the fast movements were often written in **RITORNELLO** form.

	Ritornello 1	Episode 1	Ritornello 2	Episode 2	Ritornello 3	Etc .....
SOLO CONCERTO	TUTTI	SOLO	TUTTI	SOLO	TUTTI	

- Like Baroque Concerto Grossi, Baroque Solo Concertos also had long, flowing melodies decorated with **ORNAMENTS** and include **SEQUENCES** and **IMITATION**, a mainly **POLYPHONIC TEXTURE** (with some **HOMOPHONIC** sections for contrast) and **TERRACED DYNAMICS**, together with contrasting sections between solo passages accompanied by the **CONTINUO** and **TUTTI** passages where everyone plays together.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Opening of 1st Movement of "Spring" Solo Violin Concerto from "The Four Seasons" – Vivaldi



Describe the TEXTURE of the opening TUTTI
How does Vivaldi convey the feeling of 'joyful spring'? *(think tonality, melodic features, rhythm, tempo etc)*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Solo 1 *Birds merrily greet it with their happy songs.*

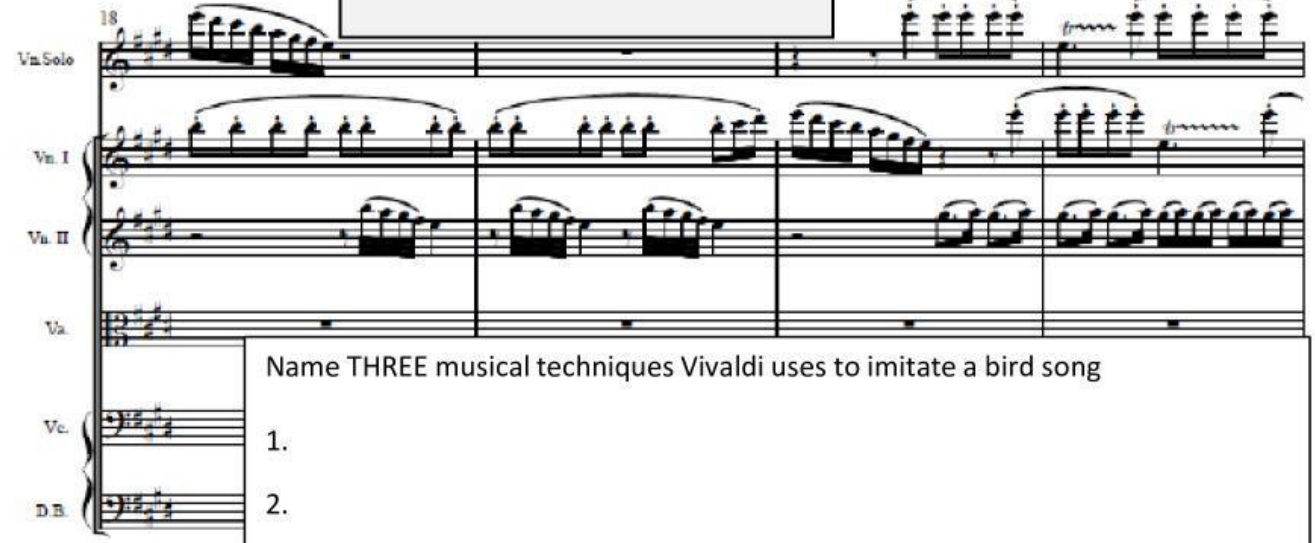
Episode 1

Name the ornament

What concept describes the violin 1 part here?



Describe the TEXTURE
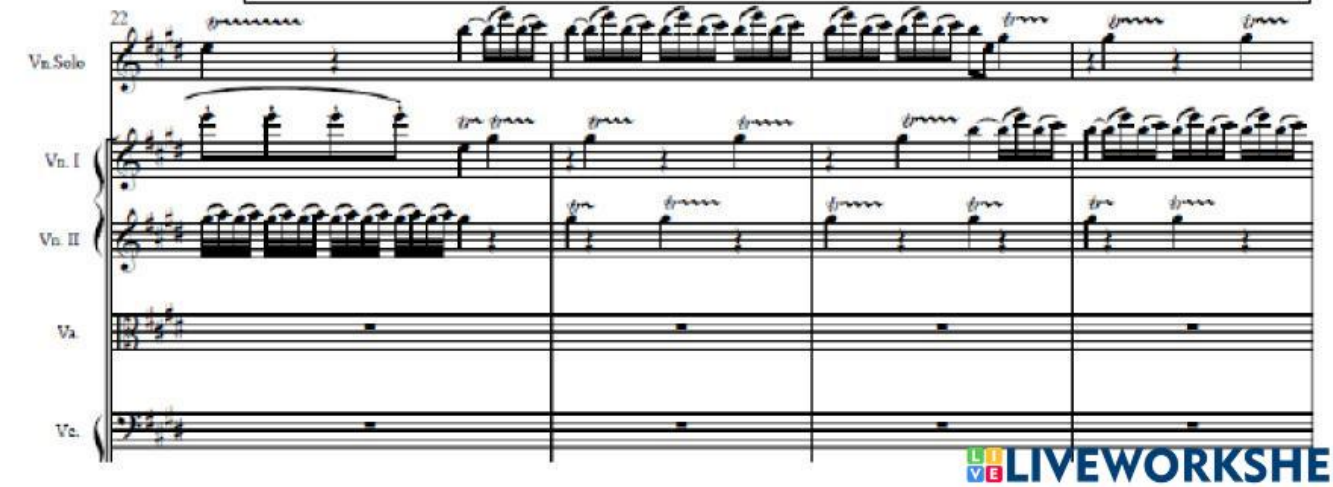


Name THREE musical techniques Vivaldi uses to imitate a bird song

1.
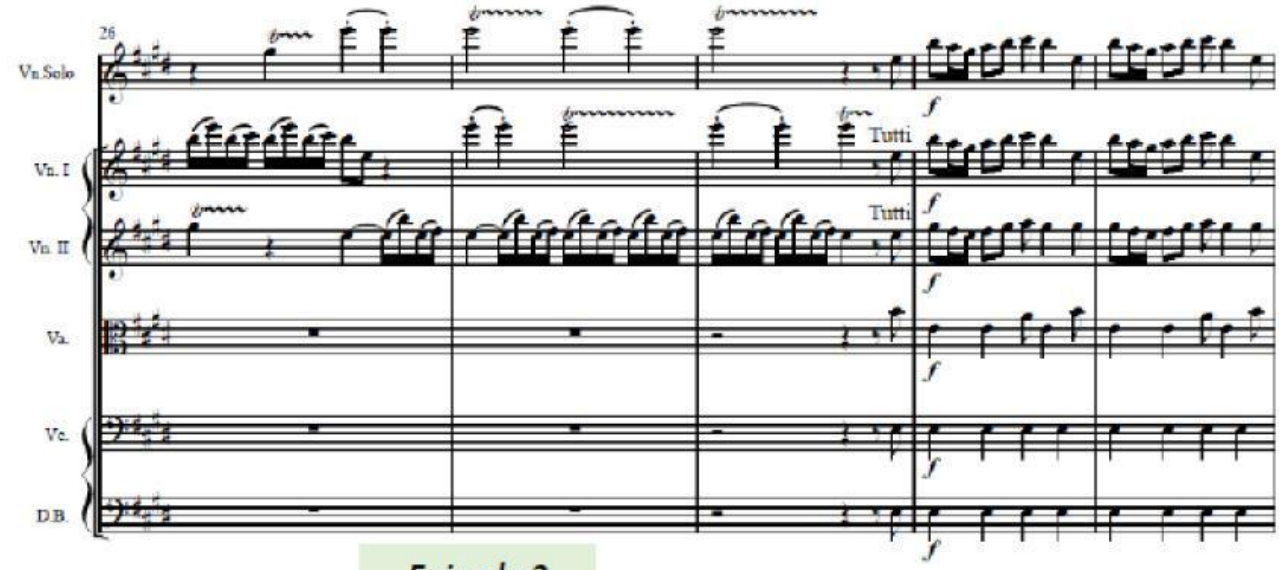
2.

3.

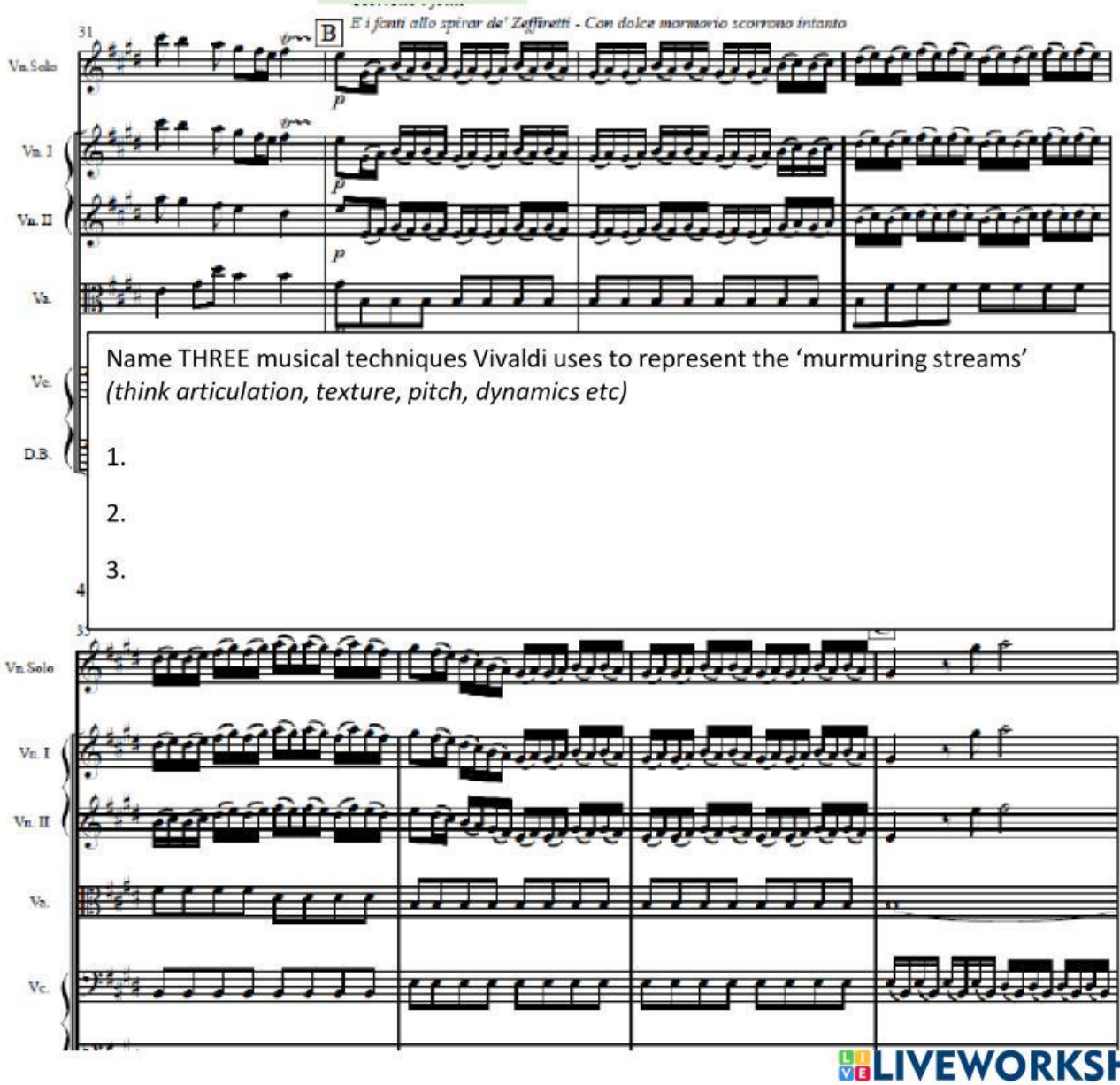


LIVEWORKSHEETS

Ritornello 2



Episode 2



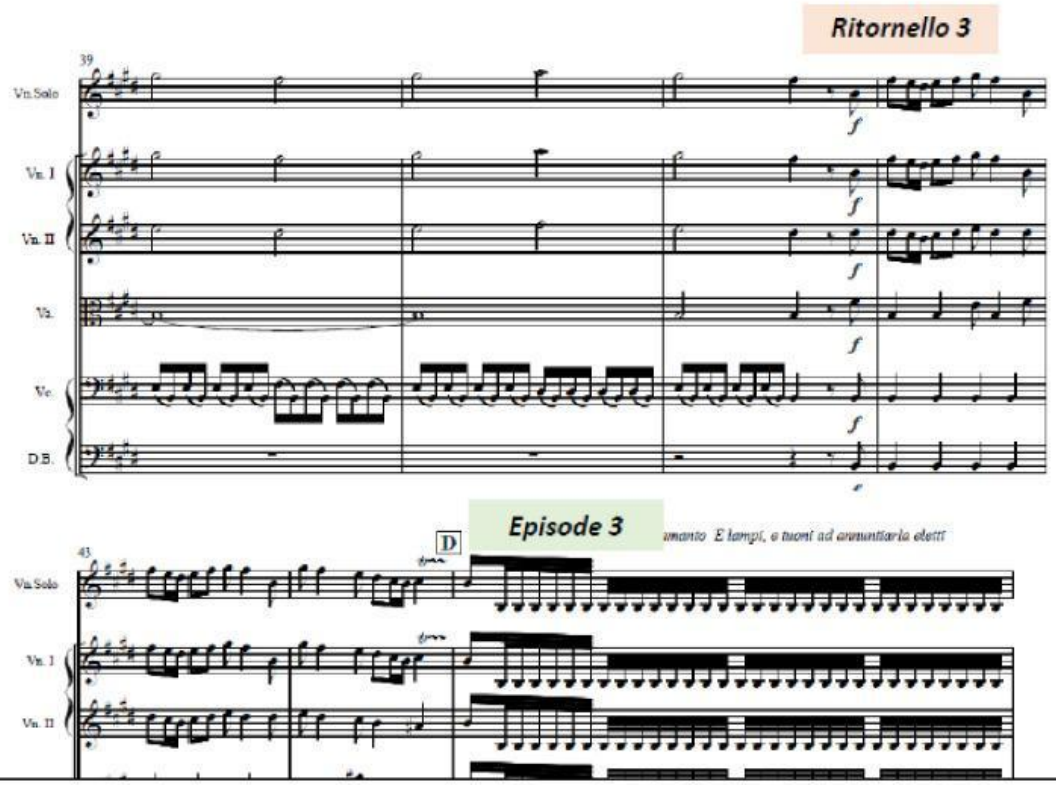
Name THREE musical techniques Vivaldi uses to represent the 'murmuring streams'
(think articulation, texture, pitch, dynamics etc)

1.

2.

3.

LIVEWORKSHEETS
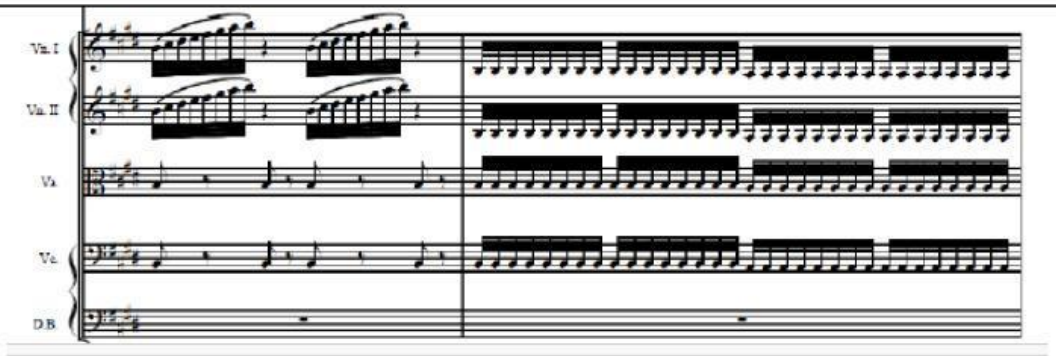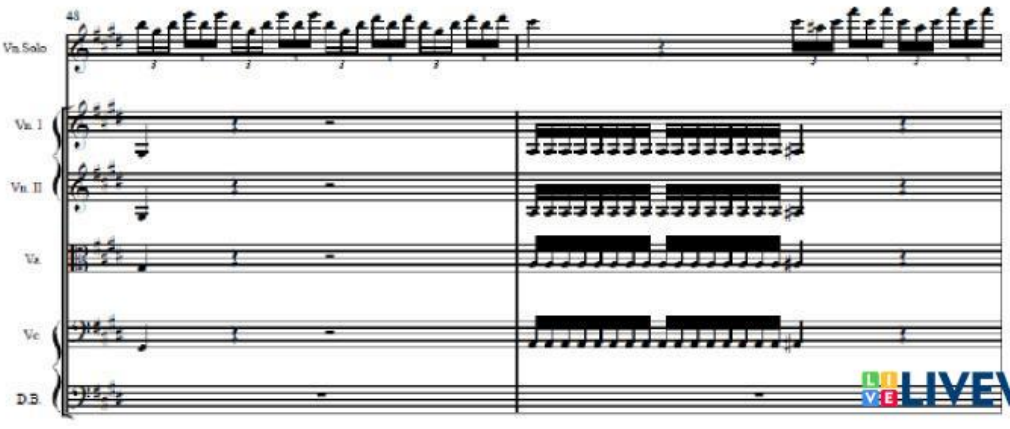


Name THREE musical techniques Vivaldi uses to represent the sound of 'a storm – thunder & lightning'

1.

2.

3.





LIVEWORKSHEETS