Oratorio

An **ORATORIO** is a large-scale sacred work for SATB chorus, soloists and orchestra, sung in ENGLISH. Oratorios are based on religious stories, often taken from the bible. Like an opera, an oratorio features **recitatives** and **arias** for the soloists, and **choruses** for the choir to sing. However, whereas an opera would be acted out, with costumes and scenery, an oratorio would be performed with no costumes or scenery. Therefore, while an opera would be staged in an opera house or a theatre, and oratorio would be performed in a church or a concert hall.

Features of an Oratorio:

- Usually sung in **English**
- Religious
- Choruses
- Arias
- Recitatives
- Duet/Trio/Quartet
- Accompanied by orchestra *(including harpsichord continuo in Baroque only)*

The Oratorio started in the Baroque period but has continued throughout the musical periods from Baroque through to Twentieth Century, usually with orchestral accompaniment.
The most famous oratorio is Handel's *Messiah, which is composed for SATB chorus, 4 soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and a Baroque orchestra consisting of strings, woodwind and trumpets.*

CHORUS

The term CHORUS can be used to describe a group of singers (e.g. choir) or the music performed by a group of singers. SATB is used to describe a chorus of mixed voices – Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

The Hallelujah Chorus features a particular CADENCE very prominently. Listen to the last bars and identify the cadence that you hear.

☐ Perfect ☐ Imperfect ☐ Plagal ☐ Interrupted

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Hallelujah Chorus - TEXTURE

You have already watched a video which went through the textures in the Hallelujah Chorus. Listen to the music again and name the following textures where they appear in the text Write in the space provided:

U (UNISON) **H (HOMOPHONIC)** **P (POLYPHONIC)**

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, ☐

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, ☐

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, ☐

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, ☐

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, ☐

For the Lord God/ Hallelujah … ☐

The kingdom of this world is become ☐

The kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and of his Christ; ☐

And he shall reign forever and ever … ☐

In the last line, name the Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass voices in the order in which they enter:

Name the composer

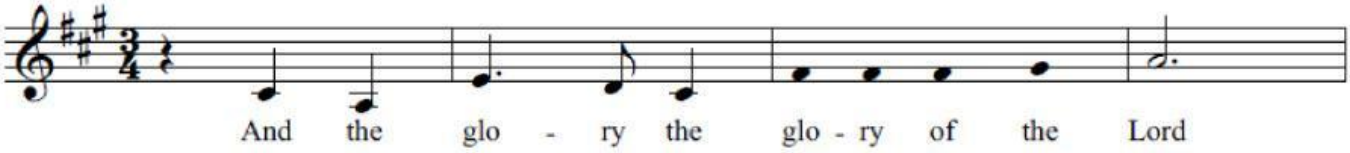
This is a chorus from an ORATORIO. What is an oratorio?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Chorus – And the Glory of the Lord

The whole of "And the Glory of the Lord" is built around four main MOTIFS. A MOTIF is a short distinctive melodic or rhythmic idea and is used as the basis for longer passages of music. Listen to the opening of the movement. The orchestral introduction is followed by motif 1 and then is joined by motif 2. Follow these and complete the listening tasks below.

Motif 1

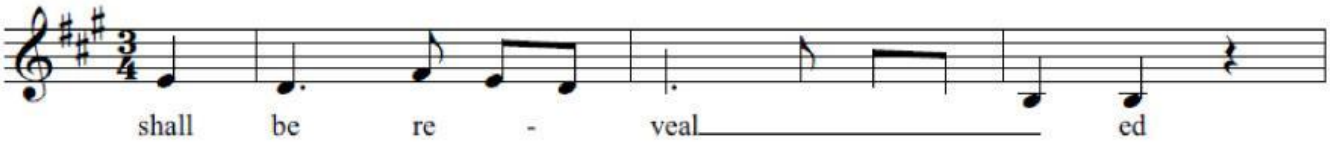


Name the voices singing this _____

Describe the word setting Syllabic ☐ Melismatic ☐

Add stems to the notes above 'glory of the Lord' to make the correct rhythm.

Motif 2



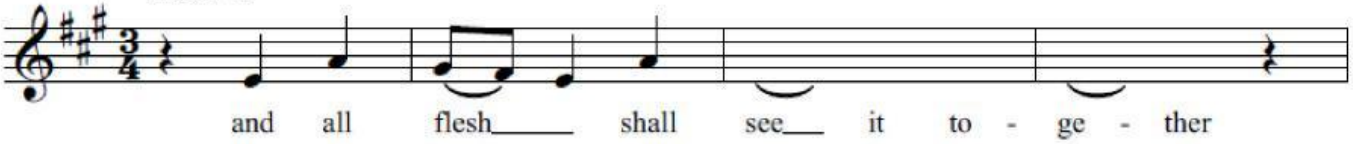
Name the RHYTHMIC feature on 'shall' _____ ☐

Describe the word setting on 'revealed' Syllabic Melismatic ☐

Add the missing notes to the stems above 'vealed'.

What MELODIC feature is heard at 'be revealed'?

Motif 3

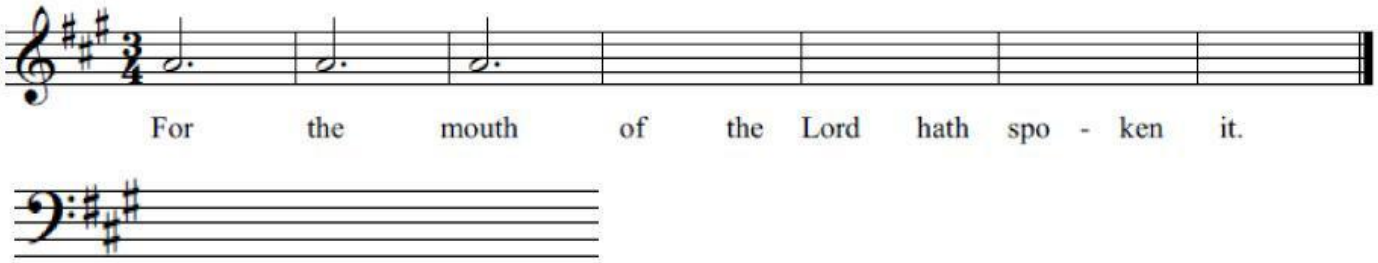


What voices first sing this motif?

Add notes and rhythms above the words 'see it together'.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Motif 4



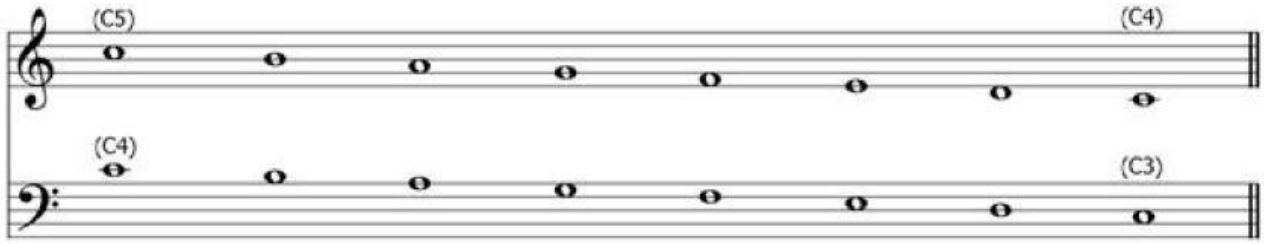
What TWO voices first sing this motif?

Add notes and rhythms above the words 'of the Lord hath spoken it'.

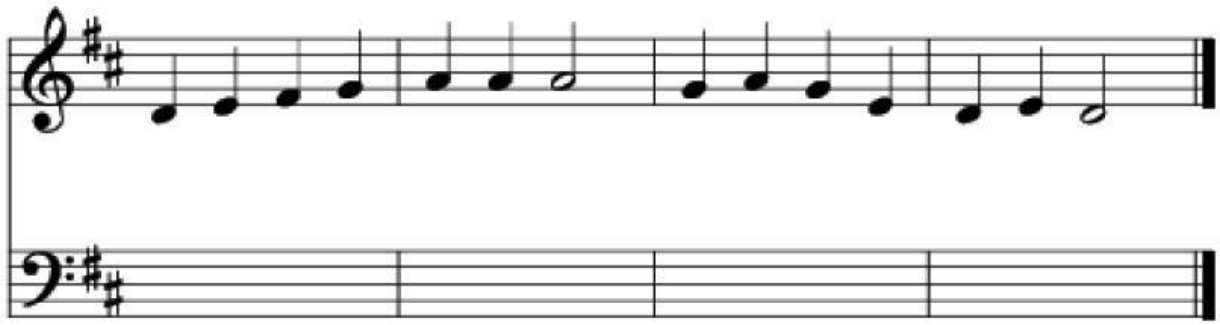
Transpose the first 3 notes DOWN an OCTAVE into the bass clef and write in the manuscript above. *Have a look at the information below for transposition.*

Transposition Examples

Here is the scale of C major in the treble clef, transposed **at the octave and to the bass clef**:



Transpose the following down one octave from the treble clef to the bass clef.



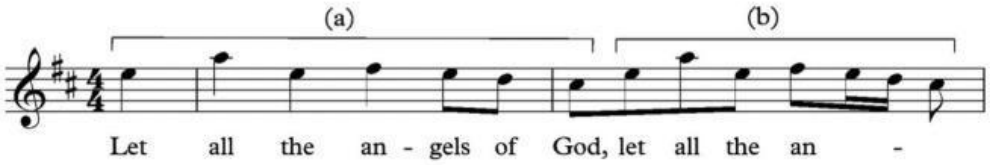
LIVEWORKSHEETS

Chorus – Let all the angels of God

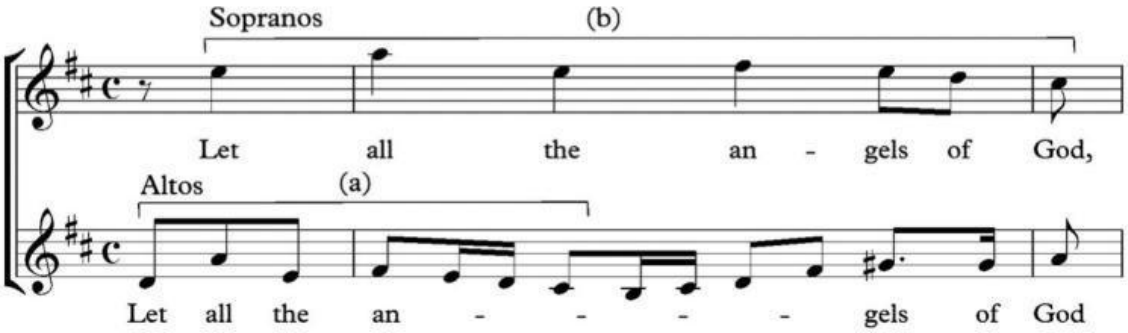
Describe the TEXTURE of line 1	
What is the TONALITY?	
Name the cadence at the end of the 1st phrase	
Describe the TEXTURE after line 1 and name the order in which the voices enter (e.g. SATB)	

Augmentation/ Diminution

The first seven notes in the soprano part (a) are repeated (b) but with the note lengths being half the original value. This shortening of the note values is called DIMINUTION



If you look more closely at the very opening of this section, you'll see that first seven notes of the soprano part (b) are double the value of the first seven notes in the alto part. This lengthening of the note values is called AUGMENTATION. Both augmentation and diminution occur frequently in this movement.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

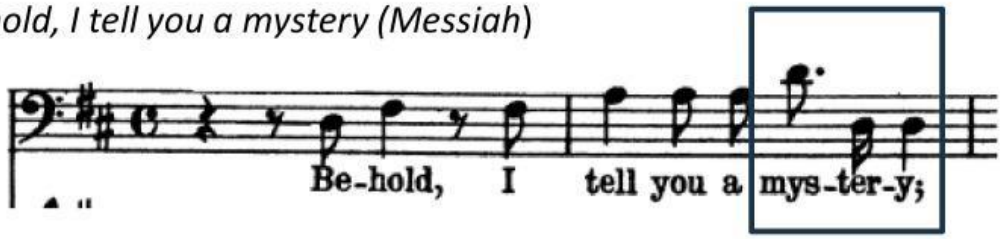
RECITATIVE

This is a SOLO VOCAL piece where the music follows the natural rhythm of speech. It is therefore **SYLLABIC.** It is used in OPERAS and ORATORIOS to move the story or plot on and usually leads into an ARIA or CHORUS

e.g. *Unto which of the angels* (Messiah)

Name the solo voice	
Name the cadence at the end	
What is the TONALITY?	
Describe the accompaniment	

e.g. *Behold, I tell you a mystery (Messiah)*



Name the solo voice	
What is the TONALITY?	
What interval is heard on the word 'mystery' in the first phrase?	
Name the cadence at the end	

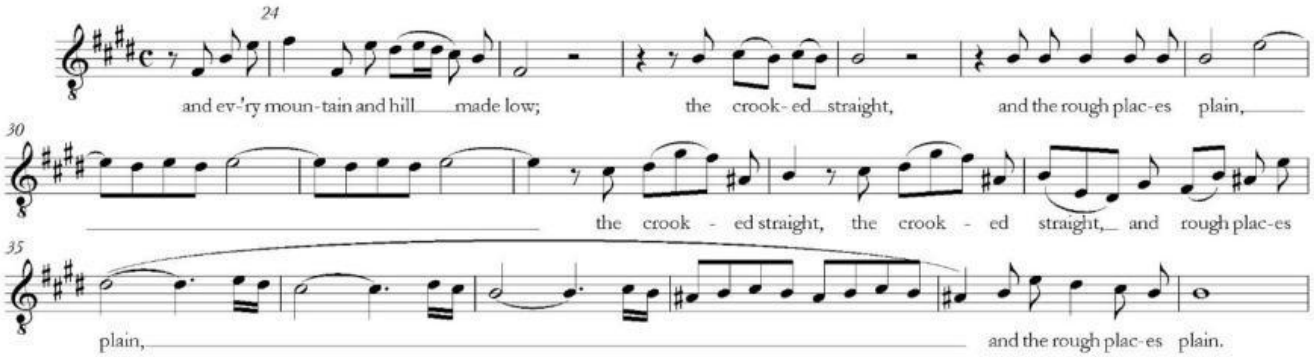
LIVEWORKSHEETS

ARIA/DA CAPO ARIA

An ARIA is a solo song with frequent use of MELISMAS, REPETITION, SEQUENCES and any other musical devices appropriate to the text setting.

Listen to the aria *'Every Valley',* which uses a musical technique called *Word Painting*, where music reflects the literal meaning of the words. The words are:

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight, and the rough places plain (Isaiah 40:4)



How does the music reflect the word 'mountain'?	
How does the music reflect the words 'made low'?	
How does the music reflect the words ' the crooked'	
What TWO melodic techniques are used on the word 'plain' in the 3rd line	Technique 1 Technique 2

Now listen again to *'Every Valley'* and comment on musical features below.

Melody/ Harmony	Rhythm/ Tempo	Texture/ Structure	Timbre *(Voice, instruments etc)*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

ARIA/DA CAPO ARIA

An aria in TERNARY FORM used in opera and oratorio is called a **DA CAPO ARIA**. The 3rd section was not written out and was often ornamented.

e.g. *The Trumpet shall sound* – listen to the whole of this to hear the DA CAPO.

This aria features a trumpet **OBBLIGATO** – a solo instrumental part that provides a prominent and important countermelody to the main vocal line.

Name the solo voice	
What is the TONALITY of the A section?	
Name three RHYTHMIC features you hear.	
Name the cadence at the end of the A section.	
What is the TONALITY of the middle section?	
Listen to the two cadences at 'and we shall be changed'. Name both.	Cadence 1 Cadence 2

Messiah Musical Forms and Voice Types Listening Quiz

Listen to six different musical extracts taken from Handel's Oratorio, "Messiah".
Choose the correct style and voice type for each extract.

	MUSICAL STYLES			VOICE TYPE(S)			
	Aria	Recitative	Chorus	S	A	T	B
Extract 1							
Extract 2							
Extract 3							
Extract 4							
Extract 5							
Extract 6							

LIVEWORKSHEETS