



# Opera

Listen to two examples from Monteverdi's Orfeo. First, work out which excerpt is an example of Recitative and which is an Aria. Then, make some notes about the MELODY, HARMONY and RHYTHM in each extract, in the table.

|                     | Extract 1 – 'Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi' | Extract 2 – 'Tu se' motra' |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| RECITATIVE or ARIA? |                                           |                            |
| MELODY              |                                           |                            |
| HARMONY             |                                           |                            |
| RHYTHM              |                                           |                            |

Listen to an aria from Purcell's opera 'Dido and Aeneas' and fill in the grid below.

3 **Moderato**

Shake the cloud from off your brow. Fate your wish - es does al -

low; Em - pire grow - ing, Plea - sures flow - ing. For - tune

smiles and so should you. Shake the cloud from off your

brow, Shake the cloud from off your brow.

|                                                           |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Name the solo voice                                       |  |
| Describe the word setting                                 |  |
| Name two RHYTHMIC features                                |  |
| Describe the TONALITY of the opening and the end          |  |
| Describe the TEXTURE of the chorus that follows this aria |  |

# Ground bass

In the Baroque period, the GROUND BASS featured in many compositions as a way of structuring the music. The ground bass is a repeating pattern in the bass line. The bass line therefore does not change but the parts above the bass change and develop. Probably the most famous is Pachelbel's Canon.

Purcell used ground bass in many of his operas. Listen to the aria 'When I am laid in earth' from Dido and Aeneas. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTbRuwx77dY>

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| Describe the ground bass |
|                          |

**Largo** *Dido: p*

When I am

|                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What <b>CADENCE</b> is heard at the end of each repetition of the ground bass? |
|                                                                                |

7

laid, am laid in earth, may my wrongs cre - ate No

|                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|
| Name THREE features relating to RHYTHM & TEMPO |
| 1.                                             |
| 2.                                             |
| 3.                                             |

12 *mp*

trou - ble, no trou-ble in thy breast, When I am

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| Describe the TONALITY |
|                       |

17

laid, am laid in earth, may my wrongs cre - ate No

# Da Capo Aria in opera

The **ARIA** that Cleopatra sings in Handel's opera 'Julius Caesar' is an example of the **DA CAPO ARIA**. The literal meaning of the Italian term **DA CAPO** is 'from the head' or, as musicians might say today, 'from the top'. Commonly abbreviated to **D.C.**, it is an instruction at the end of a movement indicating that the whole or part of the first section is to be performed again.

The Italian word **FINE** ('finish') marks the point at which the repeat ends. The da capo sign was used as a convenient way of avoiding the labour of writing out the first section again. If the composer wanted the repeat of the first section to start later than the beginning of the piece e.g. after the instrumental ritornello, the starting-point was marked by a special sign (shown top right) and the shortened repeat was indicated by the Italian words **DAL SEGNO** ('from the sign') or **D.S.** at the end of the **B** section.

The literary text of a da capo aria was usually a poem set as 2 separate musical sections, **A** and **B**. Because the first section is repeated, the formal layout is often symbolised as **ABA**. Often the A section was repeated immediately so the structure was often **A A1 B A A1**.

Often the A section was interspersed with an **INSTUMENTAL RITORNELLO** sections as follows:

- An instrumental introduction or Ritornello (**R**) with a perfect cadence in the tonic key
- Full A section with modulation from the tonic to dominant, or in a minor key, the relative major was also a possibility)
- A further Ritornello in the new key, usually shorter than the first (**R1**)
- A second setting of the A section (**A1**), either in the tonic or moving quickly back to it
- A final statement of the Ritornello in the new tonic (**R2**)

The second section of a da capo aria (**B**) provided a **HARMONIC CONTRAST** by moving through several keys and was sometimes in a different **time signature** or **tempo**. In the return of the A section the singer was expected to vary it with **IMPROVISED ORNAMENTATION**. So, the formal layout of the da capo aria can be summarised as:

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <b>R A R1 A1 R2 B R A R1 A1 R2.</b> |
|-------------------------------------|

Listen to Cleopatra's aria in Act 3, Scene 7 'Da tempeste il legno infranto' (When the ship, broken by storms). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTomWjmC-CM>

Follow the music of the score on the following pages as you listen. The piece is in da capo aria form. As you listen a second time, map out its structure by writing

**R, A, R1, A1, R2** and **B** at appropriate places in the score. What musical characteristics distinguish the **B** section from its outer parts?

*Allegro.*

Violini unisoni.

CLEOPATRA.

Bassi.

5

9

14

19

24

29

Da tempe- ste il le- gno in fran- to,

sr poi sal- va giun- ge in por- to, non sà più che de- si- ar,

che de- si- ar,

da tempe- ste il le- gno in fran- to,

34 da tempe, se il le gno in fran- to, se poi sal- va gian- ge in pur- to,

39 non — sà più che de- — si- ar,

43 che de- si- ar, se poi

48 sal- va gian- ge in pur- to, non — sà più che de- si- ar,

53

58 non sà più che de- si- ar,

64

68 Co- sì il cor — tra pe- — ne e pian- to, (Fine.)

72 or — che trova il suo confor- to, torna l'a- — ni- ma be- ar,

77 tor- na l'a- ni- ma be- ar,

82 co- sì il cor — tra pe- ne e pian- to, or che tra- va il suo con- for-

87 to, torna l'a- ni- ma be- ar,

92 a be- ar,

96 tor- na l'a- ni- ma be- ar.

Da Capo.

# Mass

A large scale, sacred work sung in Latin for solo singers, chorus and orchestra.

A typical mass has 5 main sections:

- **Kyrie, eleison, Christe eleison** – *Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy*
- **Gloria in excelsis Deo** – *Glory to God in the highest*
- **Credo in unum deum** – *I believe in one God*
- **Sanctus, Hosanna, Benedictus** – *Holy, Hosanna, Blessed in he*
- **Agnus Dei** – *Lamb of God*

Listen to 'Kyrie' from Bach's Mass in B minor [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI3\\_-SpgR-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI3_-SpgR-s)

Watch it first then fill in any features you notice in the grid below.

| Melody/ Harmony | Rhythm/ Tempo | Texture/ Structure | Timbre |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|--------|
|                 |               |                    |        |

What musical features identify it as being from the Baroque period?

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

Now listen to 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zkx1vgl7RbU>

| Melody/ Harmony | Rhythm/ Tempo | Texture/ Structure | Timbre |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|--------|
|                 |               |                    |        |