

Sestina Music presents



Exploring Monteverdi



SESTINA
MUSIC

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KEY



Music



Activity



Materials needed



Musical concepts



Definition



Watch on YouTube



Supporting materials



Design by
27graphique.com

Exploring Monteverdi was devised by Anne McCambridge, Clare Hadwen and Sarah Richmond for Sestina Music with support from Exitex Ltd. and the Foyle Foundation.



FOYLE FOUNDATION

EXPLORING MONTEVERDI

In this programme, we will explore the music of the Italian composer, Claudio Monteverdi, including his first surviving **opera**, *L'Orfeo*, and one of his most famous **madrigals**, *Zefiro Torna*. Through Monteverdi's music, we will learn about four important musical forms:

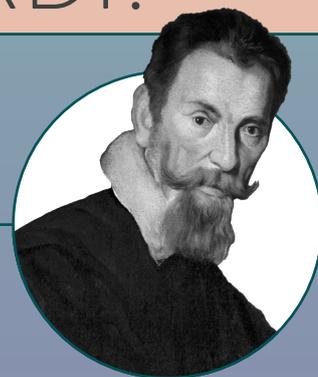
1. Toccata
2. Ritornello
3. Aria
4. Ostinato

WHO WAS MONTEVERDI?

Monteverdi was an Italian composer of the late Renaissance, born in Cremona in 1567. He learned about music by singing in the cathedral choir and studying with the director. His first job was in the court of Mantua and then as Maestro di Cappella at Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice. He is famous for composing madrigals like 'Zefiro Torna' and for being one of the first composers to write what we would now call Opera. *L'Orfeo*, written in 1607, is his oldest surviving operatic work.

L'Orfeo

Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* is based on the Greek legend of Orpheus and his descent into the Underworld, as he attempts to bring his bride, Euridice back from the dead.



Claudio Monteverdi
1567 – 1643

1

TOCCATA



Toccata
The term Toccata often refers to a virtuosic keyboard piece, but from the late 14th through to the late 18th century, it also referred to an exciting processional fanfare for trumpets and drums, which was often played at important state occasions.



Toccata from Monteverdi's L'Orfeo
L'Orfeo opens with a toccata which heralds the arrival of the Duke of Mantua. It is dramatic and startling, and calls the audience to attention with the quick scale-like passages.



Learn about the structure and rhythmic patterns of the **Toccata** through **body percussion**.



- We will learn about the **structure** and **rhythmic patterns** of the toccata through the performance of its rhythmic elements, using body percussion.
- We will learn the rhythmic values of Ta, Ta-di and Ta-ka-di-mi, and you will learn how to recognise these rhythmic patterns aurally, kinesthetically and through stick notation.



Watch Part 1 on YouTube





1. Here are some of the rhythm patterns we will use:







ta di ta ta di ta ta ta ka di mi ta ta ka di mi






ta mi ta mi ta mi ta mi ta



2. Here is a score for the whole Toccata



ta ka di mi ta mi ta mi ta mi ta mi ta ta di ta ta di ta
 ta di ta ta di ta ta di ta ta di ta ta ta ta ka di mi ta ta ka di mi ta
 ta ka di mi ta ta ka di mi ta ta ta ta ta ta di ta ta ta di ta
 ta ta di ta ta ta ka di mi ta ta ka di mi ta ta ka di mi ta ta

2

ARIA



Aria
An aria is a song in an opera which is sung by one character and reflects upon their point of view in the story.



Via Ricorda O Boschi Ombrosi
from Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*

In this **aria** Orfeo sings about how unhappy he was before he met Euridice, and how his life has changed for the better since knowing her.



Learn about **changing metre** by singing an Italian aria with movement.



Watch Part 2 on YouTube



- In this aria, there are 2 musical ideas: a new instrumental **ritornello** which alternates with **solo verses** sung by Orfeo.
- We will learn the repeated refrain (ritornello) which is highlighted in bold. First we will learn how to pronounce the text, and then we will learn the melody before putting this together with the movement.
- We will learn about **changing metre**, and how to move a **hemiola pattern** within the music.





1. Hemiola

A hemiola is a rhythmic pattern where 2 groups of 3 sounds alternate with 3 groups of 2 sounds.

There are two small patterns of three which alternate with one big pattern three, lasting for the same length of time.

1 - 2 - 3 4 - 5 - 6 1 - 2 3 - 4 5 - 6

One of the most famous examples of the hemiola can be found in West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein in the song 'America'.

1 - 2 - 3 4 - 5 - 6 1 - 2 3 - 4 5 - 6
I want to be in A - me - ri - ca

Our pattern works in the same way - but with an upbeat.

5 - 6 | 1 - 2 - 3 4 - 5 - 6 1 - 2 3 - 4 5 - 6
Vissi già me sto e do len te, Vis-si

1 - 2 - 3 4 - 5 - 6 1 - 2 3 - 4
già me sto e do len te



2. Text and translation

Via Ricorda O Boschi Ombrosi

Shady woods, do you remember?

RITORNELLO

Vissi già mesto e dolente

Once I lived in sadness and in sorrow

Vissi già mesto e dolente

Once I lived in sadness and in sorrow

*Or gioisco, e quegli affani
Che sofferti ho per tant'anni
Fan piú caro il ben presente*

Now I rejoice, and the woes
I suffered for so many years
Makes my happiness all the more precious

*Vissi già mesto e dolente,
Vissi già mesto e dolente*

Once I lived in sadness and in sorrow
Once I lived in sadness and in sorrow

RITORNELLO

*Sol per te bella Euridice
Sol per te bella Euridice*

For you alone beautiful Euridice
For you alone beautiful Euridice

*Benedico il mio tormento
Dopo'l duol viè piú contento
Dopo'l mal viè piú felice*

I bless my torments
We are more content after sorrow
And happier after misfortune

RITORNELLO

*Sol per te bella Euridice
Sol per te bella Euridice*

For you alone beautiful Euridice
For you alone beautiful Euridice

Text:

Alessandro Striggio Jr.

Translation:

Nico Castel

3

RITORNELLO

**Ritornello**

A recurring musical idea or refrain that is heard between contrasting sections.

**Ritornello from Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo***

The ritornello in *L'Orfeo* is a recurring musical passage that happens between scenes in the opera. The passage we will be working with has four musical **phrases** that act like a musical conversation.



Learn about phrasing and structure through **movement**.



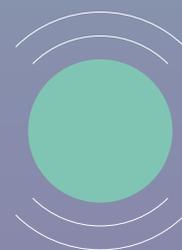
Watch Part 3 on YouTube



A juggling scarf or small bouncing ball.



- We will learn about **phrasing** by using scarves or balls.
- The passage we will work with has four musical phrases. In the first phrase we hear a musical fact, which is **interrupted** and contradicted by the second phrase, which is in turn interrupted by a clarifying third phrase. The final interrupting phrase is a **resolution** of the musical conversation.





- In the video, the four phrases are demonstrated by three people passing a scarf between them, 'interrupting' each phrase by taking the scarf from the person next to them. Each person 'paints a rainbow' with their scarf before it's stolen by the next person, before the scarf finally makes its way home to the first person.
- You could also perform this activity solo by using a small ball to 'paint' the phrases, and bouncing the ball on the interruptions.



4

OSTINATO



Ostinato

A short musical or rhythmic idea that is repeated constantly throughout a piece.



Zefiro Torna by Monteverdi

Monteverdi wrote many books of **madrigals** and *Zefiro Torna* is one of the most famous of these. The text in this duet describes the western wind, and provides a beautiful ending to our story.



Watch Part 4 on YouTube



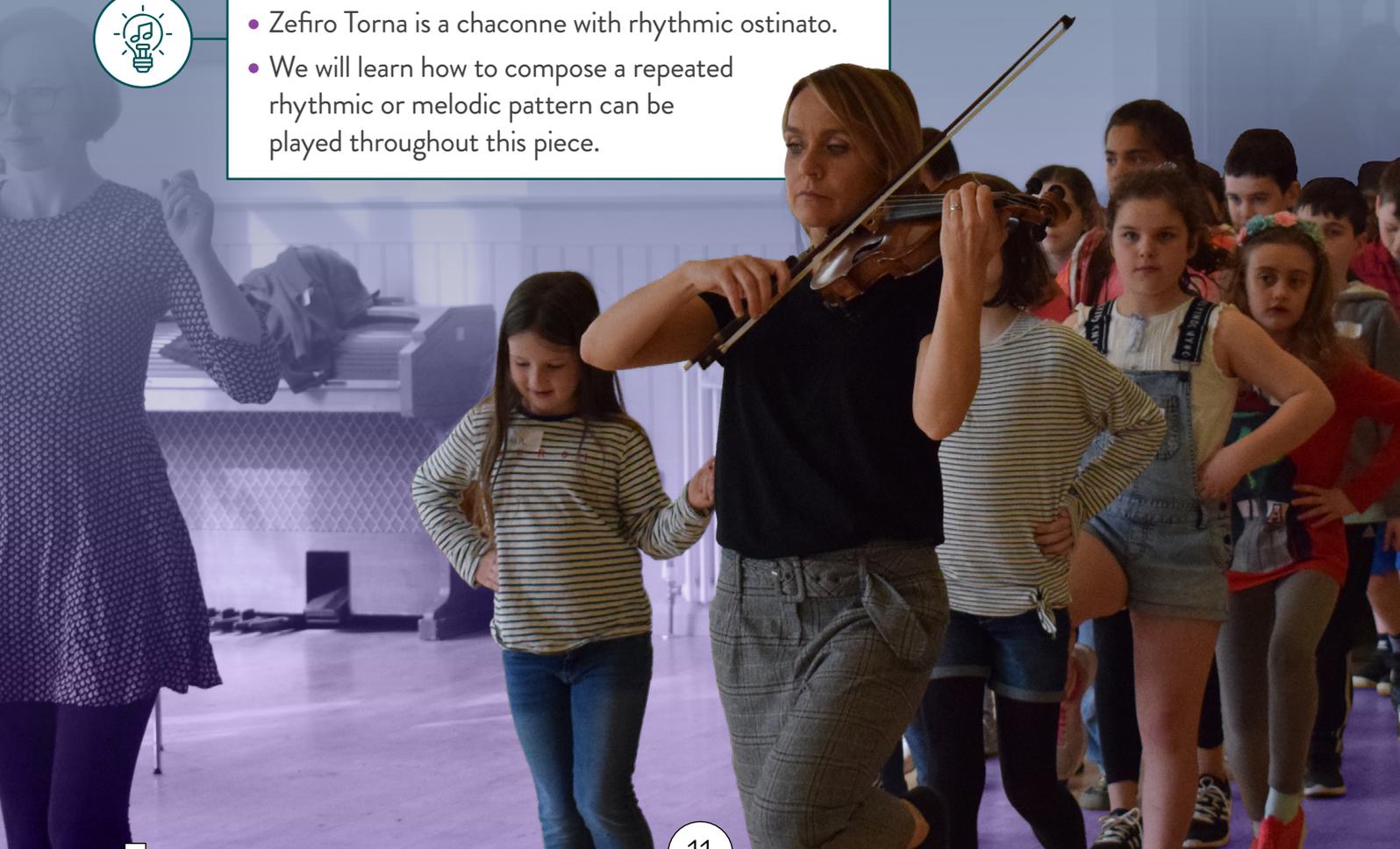
Learn about **ostinato** by playing along with a madrigal by Monteverdi.



Anything that makes a sound! Chime bars, a saucepan and wooden spoon or any musical instrument!



- Zefiro Torna is a chaconne with rhythmic ostinato.
- We will learn how to compose a repeated rhythmic or melodic pattern can be played throughout this piece.





1. Hints for composing your ostinato

- This six beat chaconne/rhythmic ostinato can be performed on whatever instruments you happen to have to hand.
- Keep a steady beat in triple time (3 beats in a bar).
- If you are playing on a tuned instrument (an instrument which plays a pitch) like chime bars or recorder, choose the notes C E G for your invented ostinato so that they fit with the melody line.
- In performance you will hear the two part vocal variations on top.



2. Other important musical terms

Duet

A piece of music sung by two intertwining voices, singing together in harmony.

Madrigal

A part song for several voices popular in the Renaissance era.

Chaconne

A fiery secular dance in triple time (3 beats per bar). It originated in Spain around 1600 and spread throughout Europe. It uses variation of a melody, often in a major key over a repeated ostinato pattern.



3. Score for Monteverdi's Ostinato idea

ta di ta ta di di ta
 - - - (syn - co - pa) -



4. Text and translation of *Zefiro torna*

Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti
l'aer fa grato e' il piè discioglie a l'onde
e, mormorando tra le verdi fronde,
fa danzar al bel suon su'l prato i fiori.

Inghirlandato il crin Fillide e Clori
note temprando amor care e gioconde;
e da monti e da valli ime e profonde
raddoppian l'armonia gli antri canori.

Sorge più vaga in ciel l'aurora, e'l sole,
sparge più luci d'or; più puro argento
fregia di Teti il bel ceruleo manto.

Sol io, per selve abbandonate e sole,
l'ardor di due begli occhi e'l mio tormento,
come vuol mia ventura, hor piango hor canto.

Zephyr returns, and with sweet accents
enchants the air and ruffles the waves,
and murmuring among the green leaves
makes the flowers dance to his sweet sound.

With garlanded hair, Phyllis and Chloris
sing love-songs, dear and joyful to them,
and through the mountains and valleys, high
and low, the echoing caves redouble their music.

Dawn rises more glorious in the sky
and the sun pours down the brightest gold,
embellishing with purer silver the sky-blue
mantle of Thetis.

Alone I wander through lonely and deserted
woods; of the ardour of two lovely eyes,
and of my torment, as my fortune decrees,
I by turns weep and sing.

Text:
Ottavio Rinuccini

Translation:
James Halliday