

## **SONG Virtual Composition Project 2021 Ideas for Songwriting: Summary Handout**

This handout is designed to be read alongside our video: 'Ideas for Songwriting'. At the bottom of this handout you can find a reminder of your brief (i.e. what we are asking you to do).

Here are some top tips, as mentioned in the video, on how to go about writing your own song.

Whatever the musical style, text is the most important element in a song:

- You can start by finding a text you like or you can write some musical ideas and then find or write a text to match
- Your text can be about anything! Fruit, cutlery, people, places, current affairs...
- Use a **short amount of text - a few words, or even sounds** can be more than enough
- Remember that if you are using someone else's text, it needs to be **out of copyright** (*see the brief for full details about this*)
- You can experiment with **deconstructing your text** during the song: break the words down into smaller chunks, or even individual sounds from the words

Remember the balance between singer and accompanying instruments:

- You **don't need to have everyone playing or singing all the time**: we need to be able to hear the vocalist and she will need a break during the song. You could explore one or more instrumental only sections and use the instruments in different combinations to accompany the singer
- You have **control over the volume of each person!** You can imagine the ensemble as a set up on a mixing desk - use volume markings such as loud or quiet to show us how you want the instruments and voice to balance in the mix of the piece. We sometimes call these volume markings '**dynamics**' - all that word means is the volume setting for each instrument at any given time

Examples of effective textures you could explore

- **Layers like a cake:**

BASE - sustained bass notes

FILLING - repetitive accompaniment pattern (or '**ostinato**') using shorter note values like quavers

TOPPING - simple vocal melody

ICING - additional / repeated melodies in the instruments (e.g. clarinet)

- **Pop-style repetitive 'riff' accompaniment and vocal melody**
- **Treating the instruments like other voices**, almost like a choir rather than a singer with an accompanying group

Examples of effective song structures you could explore

- A - B - A (the B section could be instrumental, or just contrasting material)
- Introduction: instrumental (A) - verse (B) - chorus (C) - verse (B) - chorus (C) - closing section: instrumental (D)
- Verse (A) - instrumental (B) - verse (A) - instrumental (B or C) etc.
- A - A1 - A2 - A3 (you could use the same material throughout, but add new features or change certain elements each time it repeats)

Remember that the singer and instrumentalists don't always have to do 'standard' things:

- You could experiment with **beatboxing**, or more **unusual vocal sounds**
- Try using the instruments in unusual ways e.g. **percussive sounds**

Remember that you can explore music and text from any culture

Remember that you don't have to use 'standard' musical notation (see the brief for more details on this)

And a final reminder of some really useful things to include on your music, however you are presenting it:

- a **title** at the top of the piece
- a **speed (tempo)** or **metronome marking**
- an **expression marking** to give us an idea of the character of your piece (e.g. lively, sad, mysteriously, aggressively)
- **volume (dynamic)** markings during the piece for each member
- **articulation** markings during the piece for each member i.e. how you want us to play the notes (e.g. short, long, accented) - *there are many more details on this in our individual videos and handouts*

---

## **Composition Brief - what and how should I compose?**

### **Duration of your piece:**

- max. 3 minutes

### **Instrumentation:**

- voice (soprano) + at least two of the instruments (harp / clarinet / double bass) *i.e. no duos, and no purely instrumental pieces*

### **Text:**

- we encourage the use of a very small amount of text - a few words / phrases is more than enough, and you could even just use vocal sounds ('oo' or 'ah')
- we encourage you to use your own text / words if possible

- if you're using text that isn't yours, you must make sure it is out of copyright (that means that 70 years has passed since the death of the author(s)) - *if this is not adhered to, we won't be able to publish the final video recording of the piece on the Online Song Gallery*
- you are very welcome to use text or words in any language! But if you use words in any language other than English, German, French or Spanish, please create an audio recording of the text being spoken very slowly, in addition to a translation into phonetic sounds, and ask your teacher to include these with your submission

**Presentation of the music - what your teacher needs to send us for both the DRAFT and FINAL deadlines so that we can work on and record your music:**

- a full score
- individual parts for the instruments, including (if applicable) a transposed clarinet part - *if in doubt, notation software should do this for you automatically*
- as long as the music is easily readable, you can present your music in any way you like e.g. you don't have to use computer software, we warmly accept tidily handwritten music
- **graphic scores, or scores in other forms of non-traditional notation, are also warmly accepted**

Notation should NOT be a barrier to anyone taking part in this project. We are very happy to receive music in a variety of formats - just ask your teacher to check with us if you have any questions about how to create and present your work.