

Introduction

These worksheets draw from activities suggested in my Friday Afternoons Composing Guide [link below] They are suitable for students across KS 3-5, with appropriate teacher support.

Further student worksheets can easily be devised using some of the other Composing Guide activities. Teachers and students may then want to go further and explore some of the other techniques used by Jonathan Dove in his collection of Friday Afternoons songs.

<http://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/share/david-ashworth-composers-guide-2016-songs>

David Ashworth, 2017

Friday Afternoons

Composing worksheet 1

Extending Chords to add Interest

Listen to the piano accompaniment at the beginning of 'Legend'. You can access the recording here: <http://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/songbank>

Notice how Dove adds an 'extra' note to the E major chord on the final two semiquavers. This is to add a little variation and interest to a repeated chord pattern:



*What are the notes in an E major triad?
What extra note is being added here?*

Write a 16 bar chord progression in any key – then experiment with adding some non-chord notes to *some* of the repetitions of the chords. Make sure that playing these extended chords is physically possible. Here are some possibilities, shown in standard and tab notation:

Add an interesting rhythm pattern to your chord progression. Here is an example you might find helpful:

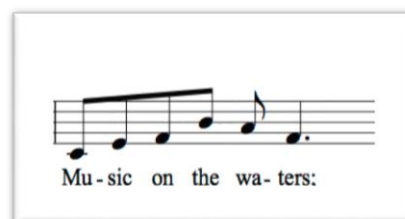
Friday Afternoons

Composing worksheet 2

Creating accompaniments from overlapping patterns

Listen to some of the vocal backing parts in 'Music on the Water'. You can access the recording here: <http://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/songbank>

Notice how short fragments from the main vocal melody have been extracted and overlapped to give a richer texture to an arrangement.



For this composing activity, you will **create a basic song** or an instrumental piece. It should have a main melody, a bass line and some sort of chordal part played on a keyboard or guitar. Ideally, it should be a piece where the chords are largely static or change very slowly.

Experiment by taking a short extract from your main melody line [just a few notes] and overlapping, by playing as a round at a distance of one or two beats. Repeat the fragment and the overlapping part a few times. When you have found one that sounds effective, find ways of including it in your piece as an extra vocal or instrumental layer.

Friday Afternoons

Composing worksheet 3

Getting 'Creative' with Chords

Listen to the piano chord vamp played by the left hand in 'Legend'. You can access the score and recording here: <http://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/songbank>

Although the chord parts are quite simple and repetitive, Dove makes them more interesting by:

- Using an interesting rhythm pattern – in this case, three quavers followed by a held sustained chord
- Working with 'unusual' chord progressions – instead of the usual diatonic chord progressions, the first tonic chord [D5] is played over 30 bars and is then followed by a chord a third above [F5]. Next comes a chord a third below the tonic [B5]. These chords contain only roots and 5ths so are harmonically ambiguous - neither major or minor. They are also easy to play on guitars, where they are often referred to as 'power chords'. The example shown here is the chord G5.



Write a chordal accompaniment for a piece which makes use of the procedures outlined above. The intervals between chords in the progression should be either major or minor thirds. So for example, in the key of C major, possibilities include:

Ascending chord progressions:

C	E \flat	G
C	E	G \sharp

Descending chord progressions:

C	A	F \sharp
C	A \flat	F

Finally **devise an interesting rhythm pattern** for your progression.

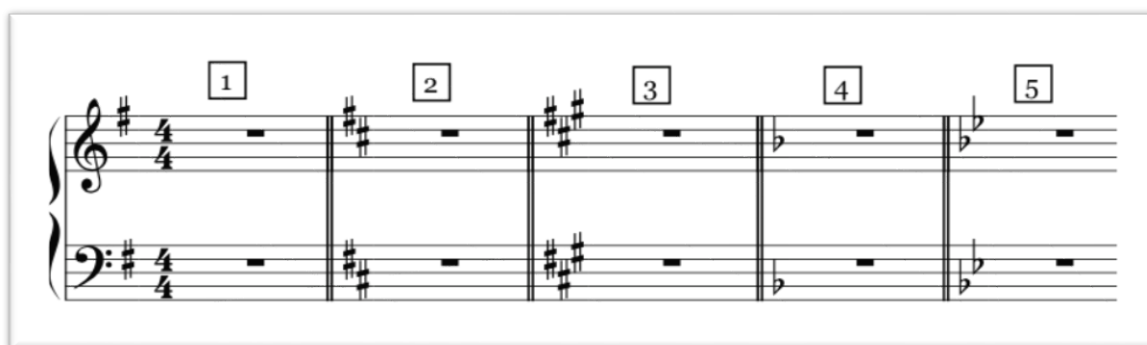
Friday Afternoons

Composing worksheet 4

Making modal music

Listen to 'Mad Moon' and take a look at the score. You can access them here: <http://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/songbank>

Notice that although the key signature of three sharps suggest the key of A major, most of the song sits on top of a chord of E major. Indeed, many of the phrases begin and end on notes from an E chord. What Dove is doing here is writing in a mixolydian mode. This can be thought of as an E major scale with a flattened 7th note – in this case G natural instead of G sharp. So instead of having four sharp notes, the song only uses three – hence the use of the three sharp key signature of A major.



Choose one of the above key signatures and write a piece in the mixolydian or Dorian mode. Use this chart to help you:

Label	Mixolydian – root note	Dorian – root note
1	D	A
2	A	E
3	E	B
4	C	G
5	F	C

Guidance on writing effective modal pieces

Let's consider writing a piece in A mixolydian. So, as the chart above indicates, we will be using a key signature of two sharps which will automatically give us the flattened 7th note we require – G natural.

Make sure that the melody makes it clear that the root or home note is A. So many of your melodic phrases are likely to begin or end on the note A. Also stress the use of the dominant note of E. The mixolydian note is the G natural so give this note quite a lot of prominence. Otherwise there is a danger that the piece is more likely to sound as though it is in A major.

The chords/harmonies you are working with are likely to be built on triads from this key signature. They are:

A major, B minor, C major, D major, E minor, F#dim, G major.

The important chords are the tonic and dominant – A major and E minor. However, make sure you use the ‘mixolydian’ chords [those containing the G natural]. These are C major and G major.