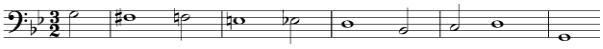
Music Techniques / Compositional devices -recommended listening

Compositional devices (music techniques) are musical ideas used by composers / arrangers to manipulate music to give a certain feel, sound like music from a specific period of time.

Some ways in which music can be manipulated include:

Music Techniques : Compositional Device	Recommended Listening
Ostinato – a persistent repeated phrase, chord pattern, or rhythm (repeated pattern of notes – usually occurs in the bass line) 	YouTube: **Pachelbel Rant** by Rob Paravonian (this is musically very funny… watch it!) Beethoven Symphony No 5 in C minor Op.67 Beethoven Egmont Overture Op.84
Contrary motion **Parallel motion** **Oblique Motion** 	Search through your library of music and see if you can identify any of these in duets / trios/ piano accompaniments Counter melody – is an excellent example of where these musical techniques can be used. (see recommended listening for Countermelody)
Ground Bass – a short motif in the bass which is constantly repeated 	Dido's Lament – Dido and Aeneas by Purcell (1689) Pachabel 's Canon in D (1686) YouTube: **Pachelbel Rant** by Rob Paravonian (this is musically very funny… watch it!)
Theme and Variation – a main theme that is varied in places (the basic structure of the original melody stays intact throughout though.) 	'Les Hommes pieusement, K455 by Mozart(1784) Beginner string students often play "variations on Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"

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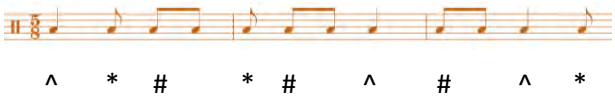
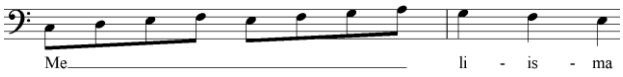
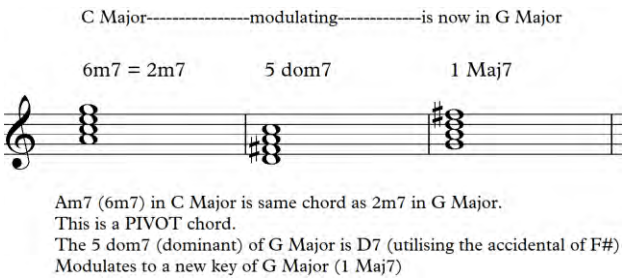
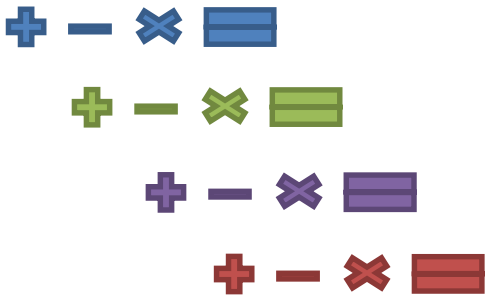
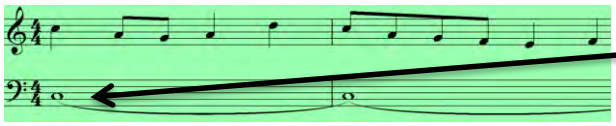
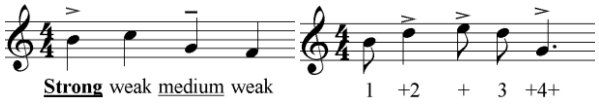
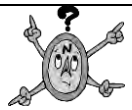
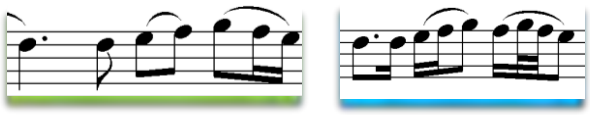
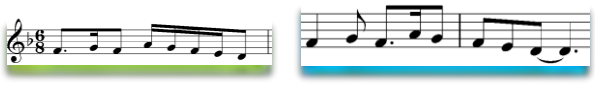
Rhythmic Shift  ^ * # * # ^ # ^ *	Peter Sculthorpe "Earth Cry"
Sequence – a more or less exact repetition of a passage at a higher or lower level of pitch 	Siciliana from Concerto in D by John Baston Caprice Anglais by Paul Harvey Fingal's Cave Overture (Hebrides Overture Opus 26) Felix Mendelssohn
Melisma – a group of notes sung to a single syllable. 	Handel's 'The Trumpet Shall Sound' (from The Messiah)
Monophony **Polyphony** **Homophony** 	A variety in **TEXURE** (the thickness or thinness of the music) is created by the use of these. <u>Monophony</u> – a single line of music. (Listen to Gregorian Chants/ Plainsong) <u>Polyphony</u> – 2 or more lines of music. (Listen to Bach and Handel Fugues) <u>Homophony</u> – (block chords) all parts of the music moving at same speed and in basically the same rhythm. (Listen to Barbershop Quartet / Church Chorales)
Modulation 	In particular, vocal songs that modulate up a tone (tonic – supertonic) several times throughout the piece, create a sense of building up to a high point. You might want to watch this YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp_zqRP9PMk "Livin' On A Prayer" – Bon Jovi – (here Bon Jovi has to sing really high but energetically to accommodate the modulation)

Imitation 	Imitation of a phrase previously stated by another…might have slight changes.
Fugue / Canon / Staggered entries 	Canon and Fugue is a type of imitation (is very strict with identical musical parts played with staggered entry) Children's Rounds – "Row Row Row your boat"
Pedal 	A sustained note (usually dominant or tonic) in the lowest part of musical texture
Syncopation 	Misplaced accent  Jazz in particular includes lots of syncopation
Diminution 	Shortening of the note values (perhaps with addition of extra notes) but basic melody remains the same in 2nd example. (Hint: if something is diminishing, it is becoming **less**)
Augmentation 	Lengthening of the note values (perhaps with addition of extra notes) but basic melody remains the same in 2nd example. (Hint: if something is augmenting, it is becoming **more**)
Counter melody (See Monophony / Polyphony)	Fantasia on the Dargarson – Holst 2nd Suite in F Scarborough fair / Canticle – Simon & Garfunkel Les Miserables – One More Day

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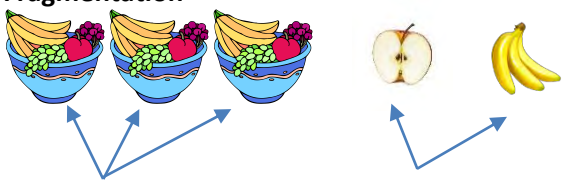
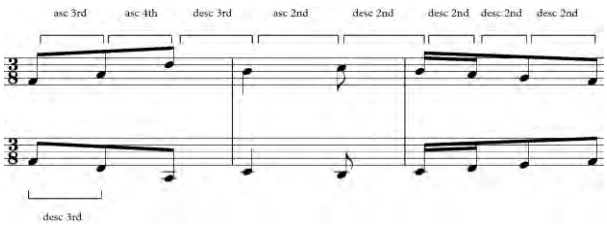
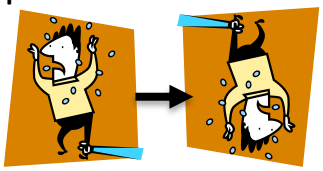
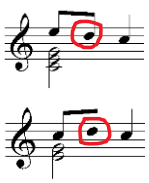
As a quick rule of thumb; **A counter melody should move when the main melody is stationary and vice versa**.	Invisible Touch - Genesis
Call and Response 	"Perdido" by Juan Tizol Watch this really short master class (in 2 parts) www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxg4AP1MKDk
Recapitulation 	The restatement of the main theme. Ternary form (A-B-A) is a perfect musical example of this occurring. Any Sonata will feature a recapitulation. The form of a Sonata is: Exposition – Development – Recapitulation (2 main themes) (1 theme is developed) (the main themes are restated)
Fragmentation  Main melody ……fragments of that melody	A melody is developed by using '**fragments**' of the originally stated melody. These can occur in other parts (i.e. a counter melody or a bass line / ostinato) and not only in the main melodic line.
Inversion 	To turn something upside-down – in a melody the intervals between each note are reversed. i.e. **up** a 3rd becomes **down** a 3rd; **up** a 2nd becomes **down** a 2nd…  12 Tone serialism uses prime order, retrograde order, inverted order and retrograde inversion
Passing Note - a note which forms a discord and is between 2 chordal notes **Auxilliary note** – a discordant note (a step above or below) that occurs between two repetitions of the same concordant note	

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