

## Stylistic Composition 2017-18 | Assignment 1: Arvo Pärt

The assignment is to compose a:

- c.1-2 minute piece
- solo piano
- in the style of Arvo Pärt's *Für Alina* (1976).
- Use stylistically appropriate melodic and harmonic material
- Feature the tintinnabulation technique discussed in the seminars
- Must be typeset using software and submitted as a pdf file.

The criteria above are the things that you MUST do. However, although you are aiming to emulate the style of *Für Alina*, this does not mean that the tintinnabuli, melody, harmony, or processes need to be identical to this work. Instead, feel free to draw on any techniques from other pieces by Pärt we have covered in the class.

Things to consider when writing your assignment:

- General
  - Where on the piano are the two voices going to be? Which octave?
  - Make sure what you write does not exceed the range of the piano (check out a book such as Alfred Blatter's *Instrumentation/Orchestration* or Samuel Alder's *The Study of Orchestration* if you are not sure).
- Tintinnabulation
  - Think about the octaves the voices occur in – remember that the original doesn't keep the voices in the same octave so you don't have to.
  - What key is your piece in? How does this relate to the M- and T- voices?
  - Think about the type of tintinnabuli used:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> position
    - superior, inferior or alternating
    - See *De Profundis* (1981) for several different types of tintinnabuli.
  - Melodic voice (M-voice)
    - Moving mostly by step from or towards a central pitch.
    - Rarely composed freely (*Für Alina* is an exception).
  - Tintinnabuli voice (T-voice)
    - Sounds the notes of the tonic triad.
    - All of the tintinnabuli voices Pärt wrote at this point in his career used minor chords.
- Melody
  - Melodic voices are often modal - *Für Alina* uses the Aeolian mode on A, as does *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*.
    - Occasionally melodies will be created in a different mode (e.g. in the *Fratres* series).

Mode used in *Fratres* (cello version)



- Think carefully about what mode you use and make sure it doesn't undermine the style by causing too many uncharacteristic dissonances.
  - Melodies are often created from simple stepwise movement.
  - Melodies are often created using simple processes.
  - Melodies are often inspired by medieval plainchant.
  - Long durations or rests are often used to define the end of a phrase.
    - The first degree of the mode/tonic is also used to define phrase endings.
- Process
  - Arvo Pärt's work uses lots of simple numerical processes:
    - In *Für Alina* the length of each melody increases and decreases by one note each time:
      - Melody lengths: 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,3
      - An additive/subtractive process
    - In *Fratres* (cello version) (1982)
      - There is a 3-bar cycle of 7/9/11 – odd numbers
      - Two new notes are added in the middle of the melody in each bar.
      - The second phrase in each section is an inversion of the first.
      - The melody descends by a minor third each section.
    - In *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten* (1980)
      - The melody gradually lengthens by one note each time
      - Uses a mensural canon
      - Uses isorhythm technique.

Top voice of Violin II in *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten* (bar 2 onwards)

Pitch (color):