

Stylistic Composition

2017-18

Seminar 1 – 11 October 2017
Melody and Process in Arvo Pärt's Music

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Assignment 1: Arvo Pärt

Assignment 1

Compose a c.1-2 minute piece for solo piano in the style of Arvo Pärt's *Für Alina*.

The piece should use stylistically appropriate melodic and harmonic material, and feature the tintinnabulation technique discussed in the seminars.

The assignment should be typeset using notational software. It should be uploaded to Grade Centre by 11:59 pm on **Monday 6 November 2017**.

You should aim to submit a draft of this assignment in class on **Wednesday 25 October 2017** for formative feedback. If you have any queries regarding this assignment, contact david.pocknee@hud.ac.uk.

Allegretto

(For Elena)

ARVO PART
1976.

Спокойно, возвышенно, вслушиваясь

piano

p

Red.

Für Alina (1976)

- Recording:
 - <http://uhuddersfield.naxosmusiclibrary.com.libaccess.s.hud.ac.uk/stream.asp?s=68782%2Fhud12%2Fkx1749%5F001>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYXkunuzWeSM>

Tintinnabulation

- Two voices:
 - Melodic voice (M-voice)
 - modal
 - “moving mostly by step from or towards a central pitch (often the tonic)”
 - Rarely composed freely
 - Tintinnabuli voice (T-voice)
 - Tonal
 - “sounds the notes of the tonic triad”
 - Always a note in the triad (other than a unison or octave)

Tintinnabuli Possibilities



1st position, superior



2nd position, superior



1st position, inferior



2nd position, inferior

- 1st position, alternating
- 2nd position, alternating

Tintinnabuli Exercise

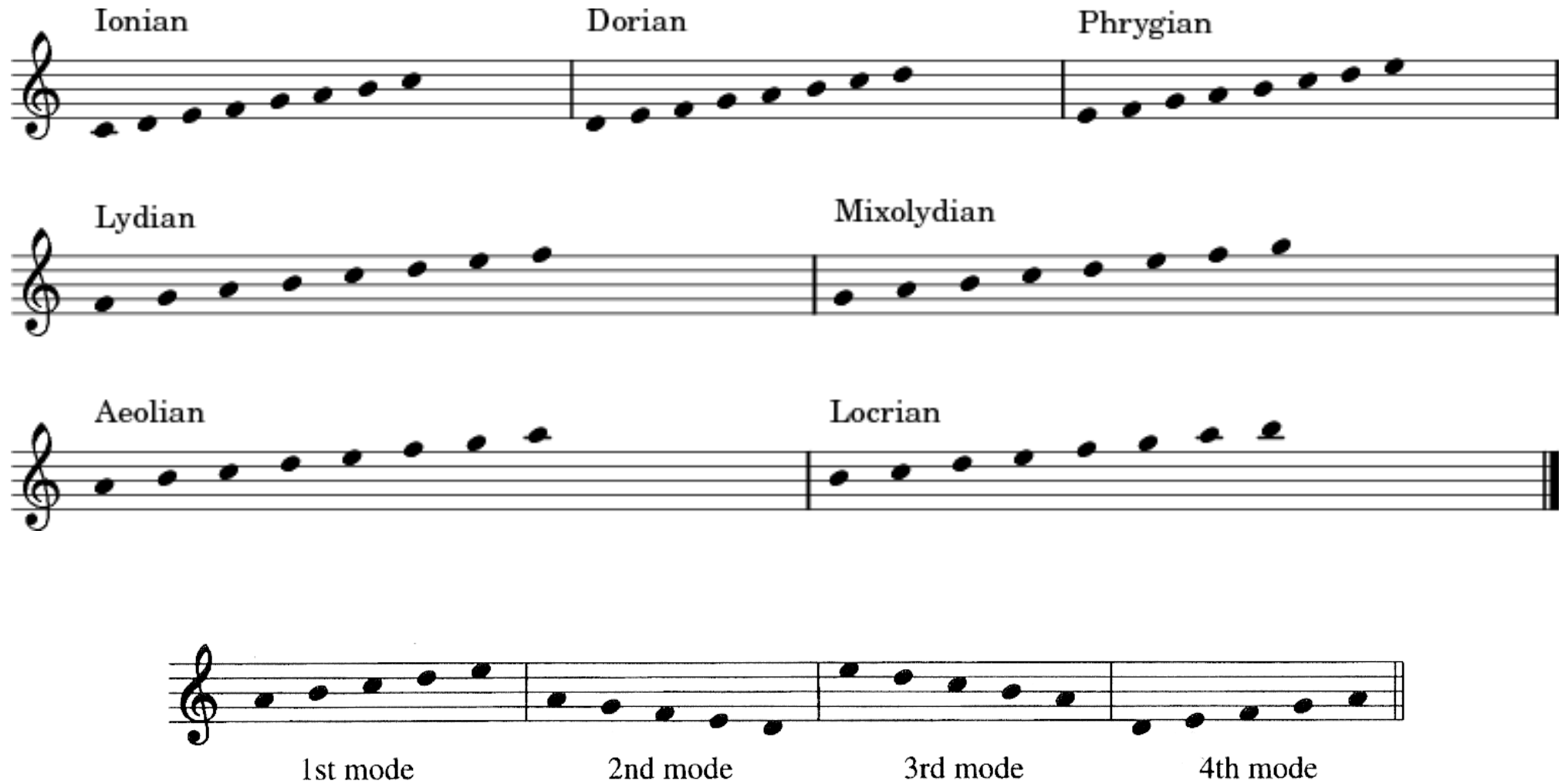
Melody

Ionian Dorian Phrygian

Lydian Mixolydian

Aeolian Locrian

1st mode 2nd mode 3rd mode 4th mode



Harmony and Melody in Fratres

Fratres (cello version):

<http://uhuddersfield.naxosmusiclibrary.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stream.asp?s=68782%2Fhud12%2F293158%5F07>

Album with many versions of *Fratres*:

<http://uhuddersfield.naxosmusiclibrary.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/catalogue/item.asp?cid=8.553750>

Organum:

<http://uhuddersfield.naxosmusiclibrary.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stream.asp?s=68782%2Fhud12%2Fee2595%5F001>

Processes In Fratres

- 7/9/11 bar lengths
- Repeated rhythmic series
- The second phrase in each section is an inverted version of the first phrase.
- Alternating positions?
- Scale down/Scale up
- The melody descends by a minor 3rd each section.
- Symmetrical scale?

Chord Sequence

The six-bar phrase:



Process

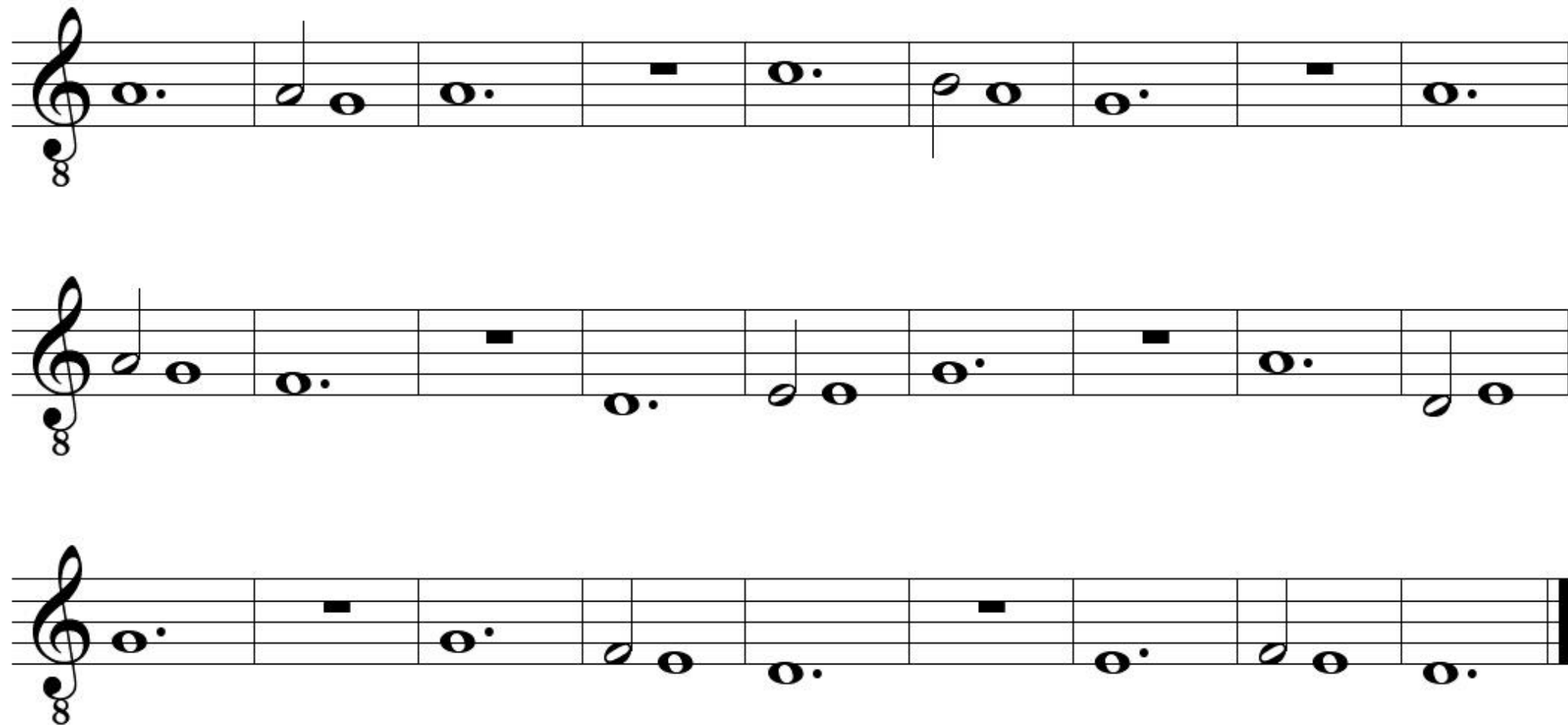
- *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*
<http://uhuddersfield.naxosmusiclibrary.com.libaccess.s.hud.ac.uk/stream.asp?s=68782%2Fhud12%2Frb7670%5F001>

Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten

- Additive process:
 - Melody gradually lengthens
- Mensural Canon
- Isorhythmic-esque process
 - Talea: rhythm
 - Color: pitch
 - Guillaume de Machaut – *Messe de Nostre Dame* (1360s?)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gEV42RKf6E&feature=youtu.be&t=3m25s>
 - Ensemble Organum recording

Isorhythm

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isorhythm#/media/File:TenMachautKyrie.jpg>



Typesetting Programs

- Sibelius
- Finale
- MuseScore (free)
 - <https://musescore.org/en>
- Lilypond (free)
 - <http://lilypond.org/>

All scores should be submitted as pdfs.

intervals in the harmonic series), and has little or no use for the triadic arpeggio. Where a triad occasionally occurs, it is usually by way of emphasizing the fifth, and only very rarely as a means of rising to the octave.)

There are many aspects of tintinnabuli music which lead people to think of it as 'modal': it does not modulate, and there is virtually no chromaticism; the harmony² is not 'functional'—it does not provide a structural sense of tension and release; and the constant triadic presence is suggestive of the drone that is frequently a feature of modal music. In truth, questions of tonality and modality are problematized by the confusions of terminology which already exist in music history. Pärt's tintinnabuli music is a new blend of tonal and modal forces. Its use of tempered tuning and its triadic emphasis categorically refute the idea that this music is neo-medieval. Equally, its tonal stasis sets it apart from conventional tonality, for the constant presence of the same triad neutralizes any functional capabilities of pitches outside it.)

Pärt seems to have felt that the powerful force exerted by tonality in its simplest triadic state (and not, that is to say, as a revival of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century functional tonality) was a musico-acoustic fact which he should no longer avoid, and that only by entering its world completely could he now create a music of essentials, a music of few notes, but great strength and purity. To proceed from a knowledge of Pärt's religious disposition (evinced by his choice of texts and his own comments on music) and to connect his perception of tonality to a perception of God is both to state the obvious and to risk too bald an interpretation. In this sense we may regard 'tonality', embodied in the constant presence of a major or minor triad, not as a symbol, but rather as a manifestation of God. Such a sacralizing view of music is neither unique nor eccentric; it has correspondences throughout music history, and is found in abundance in non-Western musics—moreover, without the self-consciousness forced upon it by a secular and materialistic society.

The basis of tintinnabuli style is a two-part texture (working always note against note), consisting of a 'melodic' voice³ moving mostly by step from or towards a central pitch (often, but not always, the tonic) and a 'tintinnabuli' voice sounding the notes of the

² The word 'harmony' is to be understood here in its most basic sense as the vertical aggregate of pitches at any given moment.

³ I use the word 'voice' here and elsewhere to denote a single musical line.

tonic⁴ triad. For brevity these will be referred to henceforth as the 'M-voice' and the 'T-voice'.)

The M-voice may be constructed in accordance with a textual pattern or a purely abstract musical procedure; very rarely is it composed freely. But however the M-voice is composed, the T-voice is fitted to it in a relationship that is never casual, but is ruled by a single principle which can function in various ways: the tintinnabuli note is always a note in the triad (other than a unison or octave) related in some specific and constant way to the melodic note. Once a particular relationship has been chosen, it is adhered to consistently.)

Before embarking on an exposition of tintinnabuli practices, it is important to stress that these are best regarded not as rules, but as guiding principles from which 'rules' can be deduced from piece to piece. In other words, the 'rules' may change, or at least evolve, but they emanate from the central principle of vertical and horizontal combination which lies at the heart of tintinnabuli composition.)

* Constructing the T-voice

Ex. 13a shows a sample of very basic tintinnabuli technique in which the T-voice is alternately the next triadic pitch above and then the next below the M-voice. In fact, the T-voice may be in one of two 'positions' relative to the M-voice; and it may either remain fixed above or below the M-voice, or it may alternate above and below. Thus we arrive at the following list of positions:

1. The T-voice provides that pitch in the triad which is nearest to the M-voice: '1st position'.
2. The T-voice pitch is the next but one in the triad: '2nd position'.

There are then theoretically three possible manners in which these T-voice positions may be applied:

Ex. 13a



⁴ It is important to state that words like 'tonic', 'dominant', and 'subdominant' are useful here as familiar pitch indicators, but do not carry the conventional meanings we associate with them when we talk about functional, or common-practice, tonality.

- Alternating above and below the M-voice: 'alternating'.
- Remaining above the M-voice: 'superior'.
- Remaining below the M-voice: 'inferior'.

In practice, the 1st position is frequently used in the alternating manner, whereas the 2nd position is normally used remaining superior or inferior.

In addition to this is the option of beginning an alternating sequence from either above or below; as tintinnabuli music is built on principles of symmetry, this is a small yet significant detail. Ex. 13b shows the application of some of these basic positions to a simple scale of A minor. Any T-voice can be transposed to a different octave. One such transposition gives the illusion of a third T-position. In Ex. 13c the superior T-voice provides the most distant triadic pitch within the octave from the M-voice; but it is in essence an octave transposition of the inferior (1st position) T-voice. Which way the ear actually registers this is a moot point.

Ex. 13b

Ex. 13b shows four staves of A minor scale in different positions. The first staff is labeled '1st position, superior' and shows the scale starting on A4. The second staff is labeled '2nd position, superior' and shows the scale starting on A5. The third staff is labeled '1st position, inferior' and shows the scale starting on A3. The fourth staff is labeled '2nd position, inferior' and shows the scale starting on A2.

Ex. 13c

Ex. 13c shows a single staff of A minor scale, which is an octave transposition of the inferior (1st position) T-voice from Ex. 13b.



Constructing the M-voice

Although the composition of the M-voice always comes first, it is much more variable from work to work, and may range from the most basic pattern of scales moving strictly by step, to varieties of reiterated pitches or variations on the scale pattern with small interval leaps and melodic turns. None the less, the range of possibilities for M-voice construction can be condensed into four basic patterns, which are quite simply scales ascending or descending, to or from a central pitch; this central pitch is often the tonic (i.e. the tonic of the tintinnabuli triad), but it may also be another pitch (normally one of the other pitches in the tintinnabuli triad). In speaking of the M-voice I will refer to its 'pitch centre', to distinguish it from the triadic tonic of the T-voice (e.g. the T-voice may use the notes of the A minor triad, while the M-voice may use C as its pitch centre).

I have designated these M-voice types 'modes', because they are indeed scalar models; the word 'mode' has accumulated so many different meanings, rhythmic as well as melodic, that one more will surely do no harm! The fact that this is abbreviated to M, which can be conflated with 'melodic', only strengthens the meaning of 'mode' as used here (just as T can be seen to imply both tintinnabuli and triadic).



Ex. 13d shows the four modes, or ways of moving by step from or towards a central pitch—in this example, the tonic in A minor. In maintaining a systematic balance, the natural relationships between these four modes are clearly important: modes 1 and 2 are often combined in creating a melodic phrase, as are modes 1 and 3; we similarly find 3 and 4 as a pair, or 2 and 4. Less likely is a combination of 1 and 4, or 2 and 3.

When we add to these basic models the possibilities of different kinds of M-voice (the use of reiterated pitches or a melodic line that is not purely by step), the use of different pitch centres for the M-voice, octave transposition, and tacets for either of the two voices (these will be discussed later, especially in Chapter 7 on *Passio*), the manifold subtleties of this fundamentally simple concept will become quickly apparent.

Ex. 13d

Ex. 13d shows four staves of A minor scale in different modes. The first staff is labeled '1st mode' and shows the scale starting on A4. The second staff is labeled '2nd mode' and shows the scale starting on A5. The third staff is labeled '3rd mode' and shows the scale starting on A3. The fourth staff is labeled '4th mode' and shows the scale starting on A2.