TEN PIECES
GET CREATIVE WITH
CLASSICAL MUSIC
BBC

Introduction – Hindustani Music

"I love the sound of the sitar. To me, it sounds like the way I imagine the universe sounds."

This is what the composer, Reena, says about the sitar in the introductory film. The sitar is the most popular instrument of the Hindustani music tradition, made particularly famous by Ravi and Anoushka Shankar.

Label the parts of the sitar, using the information below:
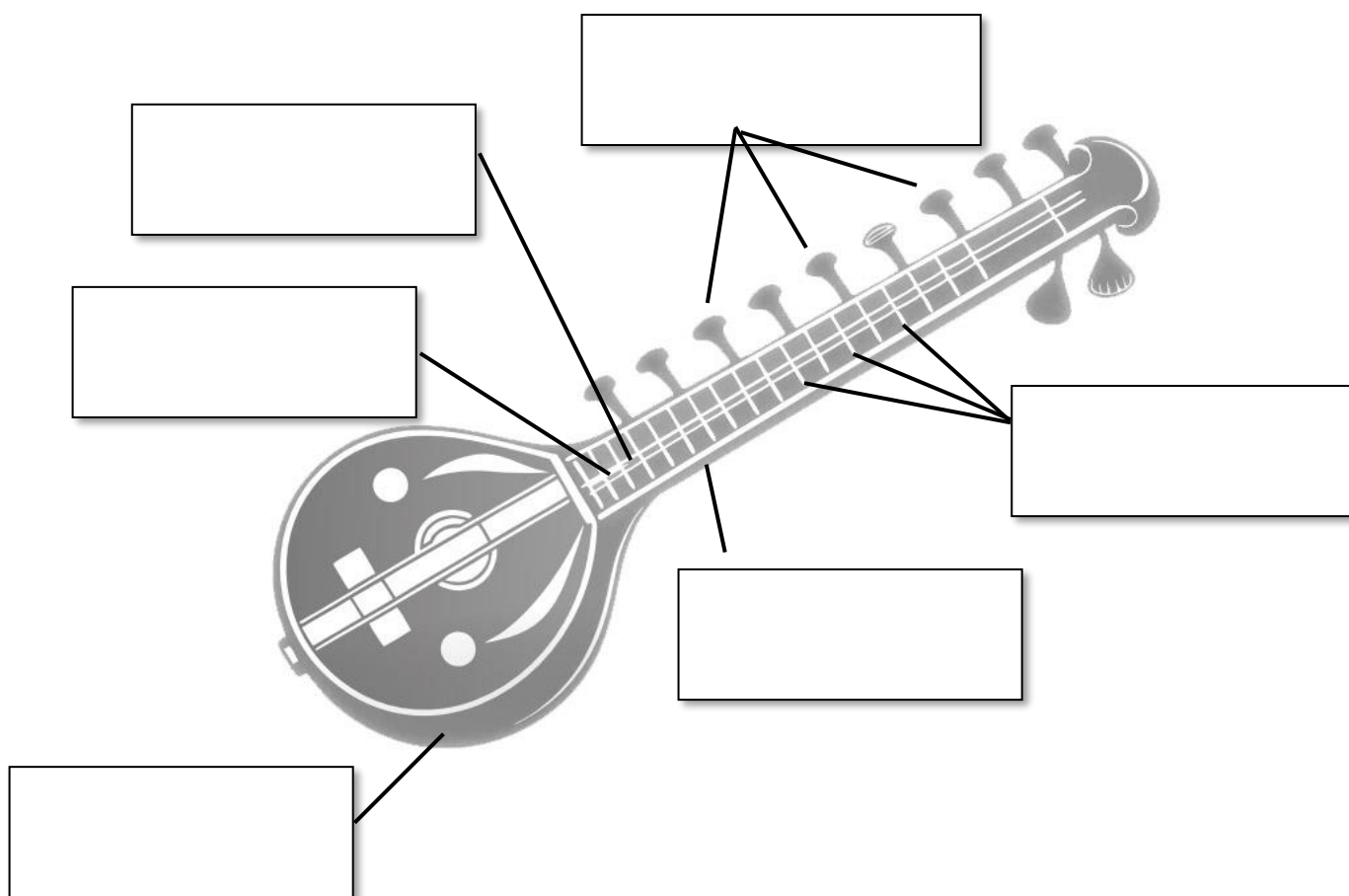
- **Tumba** (resonator): The large, rounded bottom part that amplifies the sound. There is sometimes an additional smaller tumba attached to the neck of the instrument.

- **Neck:** The long wooden part where the frets and strings are attached.

- **Frets**: Curved, movable metal bars on the neck used to change pitch.

- **Strings:** The main playing strings. There are usually 6-7 main strings.

- **Taraf:** (sympathetic strings) 11-13 strings located under the main playing strings. They are not played directly but vibrate sympathetically when the main strings are played.

- **Tuning Pegs:** Wooden pegs at the top for tuning the strings. The sympathetic strings are usually tuned to the notes of the raga, which for this piece is Raag Yaman.

Sun Sundar Sargam – words and music

Here are the lyrics (by Reena Bhansali) performed by the choir, along with a translation:

Sŭn sŭndar sargam sŭn	Listen to the beautiful melody
Sapnā pāne kā sapnā bŭn	Weave the dream of achieving your dream
Gāyegĭ dŭnĭyā terī dhŭn	The world will sing your song
Sŭn sŭndar sargam sŭn	Listen to the beautiful melody
Chŭp-chŭp the, tō gūnj ŭthe	If you are quiet, then the echoes will arise

Putting words to music takes a lot of skill and practice, but is a must for any aspiring musician, whether you are interested in rap, rock, or opera!

When writing for a choir, it is important to think about the **texture** of the music – how the voices interact with each other and form layers of sound. There are usually four groups of voices (called **soprano**, **alto**, **tenor**, **bass**), so there are four layers of sound to work with.

Here are some examples of how to create different **choral textures**, using the last line of the poem. Can you match each type of texture to the image?

Types of texture:

Solo / Unison – only one voice (**solo**) or one group of voices (**unison**) used

Chordal – all of the voices at the same time (but at different pitches)

Imitation – voices copying each other (mimicking)

Canon – voices overlapping (using the same words)

1. _____

If you are quiet, then the echoes will arise
If you are quiet, then the echoes will arise
If you are quiet, then the echoes will arise
If you are quiet, then the echoes will arise

2. _____

the echoes will arise
the echoes will arise
the echoes will arise
the echoes

echoes   echoes   echoes
echoes   echoes   echoes
if you are quiet
if you are quiet   if you are quiet

If you are quiet, then the echoes will arise

3. _____

4. _____

Write your version of these **choral textures**, using this line of lyrics:

"I'm lost in this desolate land of dreams"

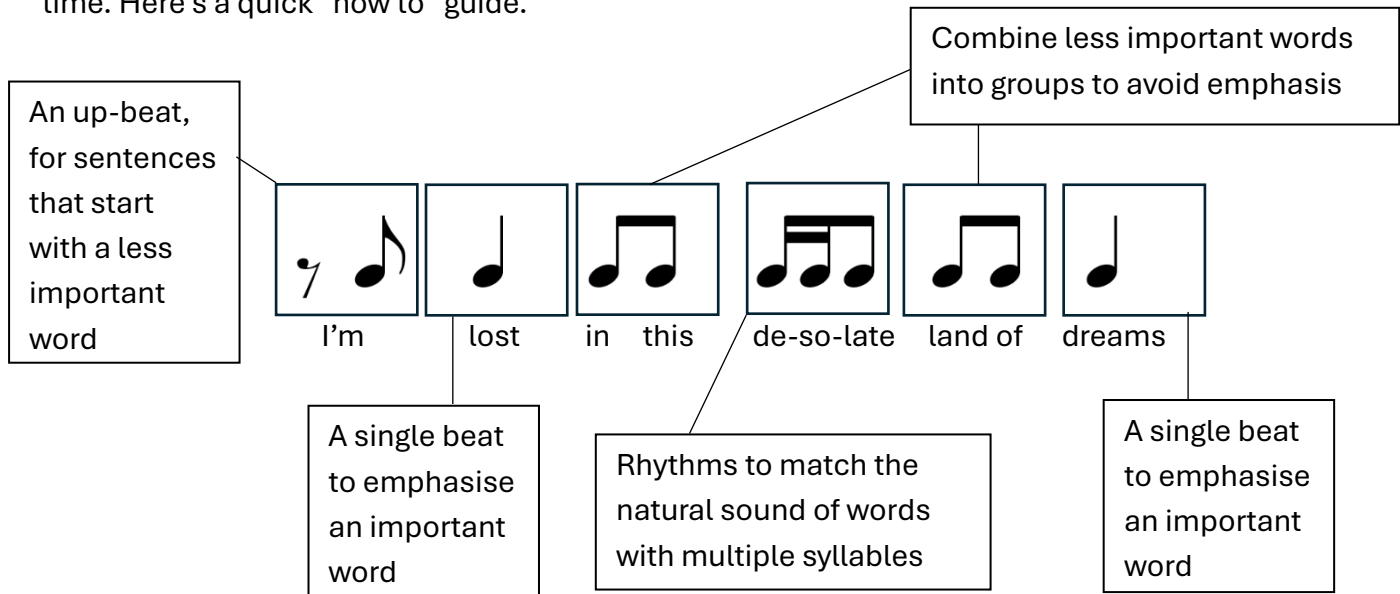**Solo / Unison** – this is a good way to introduce new words for the first time.

Chordal – this is a good way to emphasise something important, or to finish a choral piece.

Imitation – this is a good way to create a 'musical argument', to add action and excitement.

Canon – this is a good way to follow on from a solo or choral section before introducing new words.

Sun Sundar Sargam – adding rhythmic notation

Musical notation will allow singers to perform the words rhythmically, in whatever way the composer chooses. Notation is important if the composer wants the music to be performed the same way each time. Here's a quick "how to" guide.

Combine less important words into groups to avoid emphasis

An up-beat, for sentences that start with a less important word

I'm   lost   in   this   de-so-late   land of   dreams

A single beat to emphasise an important word

Rhythms to match the natural sound of words with multiple syllables

A single beat to emphasise an important word

Use the rhythms on the previous page to turn these lyrics into music. Draw appropriate rhythms in each box. You might already know more rhythms – in which case, get creative!

1.   I'm   falling   like a   spiralling   leaf

2.   Striding   into the   whispering   darkness

3.   If   only   we could   live in   forgotten   dreams

COMPOSING FOR VOICES

Extension Task 1:

- Write your own poem about dreams, or select an existing poem
- Set some or all of the lyrics to music by adding appropriate rhythms to the lines of lyrics

Extension Task 2:

- Choose choral textures to suit your lyrics
- You can repeat lines of lyrics as many times as you choose
- You do not need to use complete lines of lyrics, you can even take single words!

Extension Task 3:

If you would like your choral piece to be sung rather than spoken, add pitch using the notes of Raag Yaman and following these guidelines:

C# E F# G# B C# D   D C# B A G# F# E D
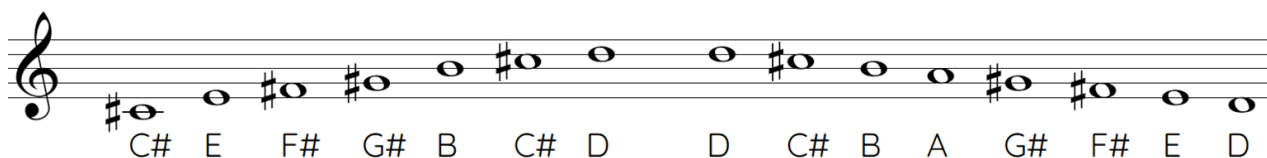
- **To make the music sound still, use the notes D and A**

These are the most important notes of the scale (sa and pa) and are used as the drone in Hindustani music.

- **To make the music more tense / exciting, use the rising scale (C# E F# G# B C# D)**

- **To make the music more calm / relaxed, use the falling scale (D C# B A G# F# E D)**

- **Don't forget to repeat your melodic shapes to make the music memorable / catchy!**