

## Teaching guide: Area of study 6 – Contemporary traditional music

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This resource is a teaching guide for Area of study 6 (Contemporary traditional music) for our A-level Music specification (7272).

In the listening part of the exam students will be tested on their recognition of musical elements heard in unfamiliar music from this area of study.

In the essay part of the exam students will be required to answer **one** question, focusing on the work of **two** of the named artists. Students will always be able to choose which artists to write about, but they will usually be expected to make detailed reference to at least two contrasting examples of their work. The suggested listening list is exactly what it says; students and their teachers are encouraged to use the list as a starting point from which to build a small library of recordings which they know well and can recall and write about convincingly in the exam.

Familiarity with the styles of all the named artists is needed for the listening questions, but it is envisaged that detailed study of particular pieces could be limited to **three** artists in preparation for the essay section.

### Contemporary traditional music

This area of study is the most diverse, covering musicians from four continents and musical ideas that interweave influences from folk, classical, jazz and contemporary styles.

There is an exciting potential here for this area of study to allow a class of diverse music students to find a level playing field in which to explore together analytical and musicological approaches to repertoire that will very probably be new to all of them. The keen classical student will find *Bachian* influences in Piazzolla's *Tango nuevo* (compare the iconic '*Libertango*' to the first Prelude of 'the 48', for instance, or look at the final fugal movement of 'Five Tango Sensations'); the bass player will find riff-like '*kumbengo*' patterns in the kora music of Toumani Diabaté; the female vocalist will enjoy the Iberian pop influences in some of Mariza's *Fado*-based songs (for example '*Padoce de Céu Azul*' from *Mundo*); the music production enthusiast will find much to explore in Anoushka Shankar's albums *Breathing under water* and *Land of Gold*; and then there is the eclectic folk music of Bellowhead, surely with something for everyone.

This is an area of study with the potential to excite, fascinate and console all A-level music students; what a great way to stretch horizons – not just musical ones.

## Glossary

All course content for AoS1 (specification p.12–14) can be tested in all optional areas of study.

The list below includes terms found in the specification under Area of Study 6, arranged into musical elements, together with some examples.

### Melody

#### Raga

A raga is a set of pitches in Indian classical music that forms the basis for melodic improvisation. To some extent it is akin to a scale or melodic mode in western music; however, in Indian music there is greater focus on the aesthetic of each particular raga, the word being derived from Sanskrit with connotations of 'colour', 'passion' and 'delight'. There are also associations between a raga and the time of day or season that it should be used.

Both of the main classical traditions in Indian music – Hindustani in the north, and Carnatic in the south – use the raga theory. There are hundreds of ragas of which around 30 are in common use.

In Anoushka Shankar's track '[Puriya Dhanashri](#)' from her album *Anourag* the raga is heard early on in descent – in approximate transcription:



This pitch set relates to a family of North Indian ragas called *Raga Purvi* which have a serious, quiet and mystical quality. They are usually associated with evening.

#### Pitch-bend

Moving away from and then back to the original pitch of a note using a small scale glissando; typically a pitch-bend will cover a small interval (anywhere between microtones and minor thirds).

Pitch-bends are an integral part of the Sitar player's technique and can be both heard and seen in the clip listed above of Shankar's '*Puriya Dhanashri*'. They are also a feature of the tango *nuevo* style of Piazzolla's music, heard in the violin and bass parts. A clear example is in the following performance of '[Milonga del Angel](#)'.

Listen to how Fernando Lopez Paz on the violin bends the pitch at 3:25, starting beneath the high A' and only gradually bending it to true intonation, creating an almost painful yearning effect. In the jazz world, this could also be called a smear.

#### Kumbengo

An ostinato riff that provides the basis for improvised playing in the Malian tradition of kora music. In '[Salama](#)' from Toumani Daibaté's album *New Ancient Strings* the *kumbengo* pattern is heard consistently from 0:22. In simplified form, the pattern is as follows:



## Birimintingo

These are improvised solo runs played by the kora player over the *kumbengo* pattern. In 'Salama' above, the *birimintingo* playing is particularly intricate from 4:39.

## Structure and style

### Tango nuevo

Tango is a style of music and dance that belongs to the city of Buenos Aires (capital of Argentina) in much the same way as Waltz belongs to Vienna. Its origins lie in the late 19th century when the city became a major port with a largely immigrant, disproportionately male population. Here the dock workers would learn to dance the tango at brothels. The musical tradition was enhanced by the arrival of the bandoneon from Germany in 1910 and the recordings of tango canciones by the adored Carlos Gardel (1890–1935). In the 'Golden Age' (1935–1955) the *orquesta típica* (tango band) flourished throughout Buenos Aires, as typified by [this recording](#) of Juan d'Arienzo's flamboyant orchestra.

Tango nuevo was a new movement in tango that was led by virtuoso bandoneonist Astor Piazzolla. This was Tango to listen to rather than dance to, not unlike Bach's adoption of dance forms in the 18th century. Piazzolla brought influences from classical music (evidenced in [his Concerto for Bandoneon, Guitar and string orchestra](#), and his '[Four for Tango](#)' written for the Kronos Quartet) and jazz (try the [album](#) he made with jazz vibraphonist Gary Burton).

Among the '*nuevo*' features of tango *nuevo* are:

- increased use of syncopation, especially the 'clave' rhythm of 3+3+2
- doubling of melodic motifs and phrases in unusual intervals, particularly fourths and sevenths for an aggressive, dissonant effect
- enthusiastic exploration of advanced playing techniques, including percussive effects, glissandos, bowing behind the bridge, etc
- complicated polyphonic textures
- freedom to change to unrelated keys and not have to end in the same key as the piece begins.

For those who want to explore the world of tango further, since Piazzolla's tango *nuevo*, further developments have led to the influence of electronica in the work of groups such as *Bajofondo* and *Gotan Project*.

## Milonga

### *Milonga* is a tango word of multiple meanings:

- *Milonga* is both the place where tango is danced and an event held at such a venue. Both these are central to the essence of Tango as the traditional social culture of Buenos Aires: Tango is something to do, not just entertainment to watch or music to hear.
- [Milonga](#) is a specific sub-genre of Tango: a fast dance in 2/4 time; it can have the feel of an excited Habanera.
- Confusingly, the fast *milonga* described above was a development of the dance; the original use of the word was for a slow countryside song, still using the habanera rhythm in the accompaniment, but at a much slower tempo. From this

comes (perhaps) the most famous piece with 'Milonga' in the title, *Piazzolla's brooding Milonga del Angel*.

## Alap and other structural words in Indian music

The traditional slow and improvised section at the start of an Indian raga-based piece. It usually starts without a sense of metre as in [this track](#) from Anoushka Shankar's album *Anourag*.

A second segment of the alap has more sense of metre or momentum (in this case from 0:42) and is called the *Jor*. The fastest section at the end (starting here at 7:04) is called the *Jhala*.

## Mandé Music

*Mandé* is the name given to music from West Africa that has a long history going back to a time of the Malian Empire that prospered in the 13th–17th centuries around the River Niger. One of its finest buildings is the Great Mosque of *Djenne*:



Today the traditional *Mandé* music has fused with more contemporary influences from Afro-pop. Some of the old can be heard in the use of kora and balafon, common use of the Lydian mode (with the sharpened fourth) and the distinctive melodic flourishes on plucked string instruments (whether the old kora or the electric guitar). Samba rhythms are common and vocal lines are often doubled in thirds.

## Fado

As Tango is to Argentina, so *Fado* is to Portugal: it is the national musical style – a form of song that, whatever its story, is infused with a mournful, fateful quality captured by the Portuguese word 'saudade'.

The word '*Fado*' derives from the Latin *fatum* ('fate'). The origins of the tradition lie in early 19th century Lisbon (capital of Portugal) and influences from Brazil (which Portugal ruled until 1822). The first notable *Fado* singer was Maria Severa Onofriana

(1820–1846); a more recent champion was *Amália* Rodrigues (1920–1999) who was known as ‘Queen of *Fado*’.

*Fado* is usually strophic in structure and in a regular 4/4 metre. Its iconic melancholic sound comes from the common use of minor modes (typically Dorian) and slow tempo in the [Fado menor](#) sub-genre, though there are also *fados* with fast tempo and major keys called [Fado corrido](#).

*Fado* is traditionally accompanied by an ensemble of various guitars, including the distinctive Portuguese guitar.

### Fusion

Simply, the combining of influences from different traditions for creative gain.

In Toumani Diabaté’s two *Songhai* albums he collaborates with the Spanish flamenco group *Ketama* who themselves explored combinations of flamenco with salsa, reggae and funk. This makes for a fascinating fusion in tracks such as ‘[Jarabi](#)’ (from the first album):

In ‘[Boat to Nowhere](#)’ – the opening track on Anoushka Shankar’s album *Land of Gold* – there is a sitar (India), that utilises the clave rhythm of Latin music, and a classical cello melody that seems to be just a little influenced by Klezmer with its use of the augmented second.

### Verse and chorus

These are a standard pair of terms that are often found in strophic-structured folksongs. The verse usually carries more of the narrative. The structure can be clearly followed in Bellowhead’s ‘[Fakenham Fair](#)’ (from the album *Matachhin*), with the chorus beginning with the lyric ‘So I swing around like a merry-go-round’ and instrumental interludes before each subsequent verse.

### Song form

A name given to a structure where a song has four lines of equal length in the pattern AABA. This can be heard in ‘Fakenham Fair’ above. A common feature is having the melody as four 4-bar phrases, leading to an alternative name for this structure being 32-bar song form.

## Sonority (timbre)

### The instruments of Contemporary traditional music:

#### Piazzolla – bandoneon

The bandoneon is a button accordion or concertina with a square cross-section that was developed by Heinrich Band in Germany in the 1840s. The instrument – almost a painful whining timbre – is the iconic sound of Argentine Tango, in a model that has 38 buttons for the right hand (treble register) and 33 for the left hand (bass register). These buttons are arranged in a scrambled order (akin to the way the alphabet is organised on a QWERTY keyboard) with the added challenge that each button plays a different note when the bellows are pulled out or pushed in.

(If you come across a description of a bandoneon having diatonic tuning it is referring to this system of each button having two notes. Happily, the bandoneon can play chromatic music.)

For all this complexity, the instrument is very versatile: it can play lyrical melodies with a very wide dynamic range, sustain very quiet chords with a shimmering vibrato, and create aggressive stabbing sounds with fierce, very physical accents.



Piazzolla was a virtuoso bandoneonist.

[Listen to Piazzolla's explanation of the history and challenges of his instrument](#)

[Watch Piazzolla play his 'Otoño Porteño'](#)

Other common instruments in Piazzolla's music include the violin, double bass, piano and guitar. He was also interested in electronic instruments, forming his 'electronic octet' in 1976 which included electric piano, electric organ, and synthesiser. The more one explores, however, the more one realizes that he was a composer of great diversity and creativity, using a wide range of timbres across his oeuvre.

## Toumani Diabaté – kora

The kora originates with the *Mandé* people of West Africa (countries on the coast from Mauritania to Benin and inland to Chad) and in particular the Mandinka ethnic group who descended from the Mali Empire that flourished c1230–1670. There is evidence of harps in chronicles of 14th century Mali, and Scottish explorer Mungo Park mentions the kora in his book 'Travels in Interior Districts of Africa' of 1799.

The kora is fashioned from a large calabash cut in half and covered with cow hide to create the resonator, and a long wooden neck. This makes it part harp and part lute. The 21 strings are arranged in two sets; sometimes additional bass strings (up to four) are found.



Traditionally kora players are born into musical families called (in French) '*griot*' or (in Mandinka) '*jali*'. These people are almost like custodians of oral history and tell stories like our tradition of 'bard'. The instrument is played with both hands plucking the strings in polyrhythmic patterns (using the remaining fingers to secure the instrument by holding the hand posts on either side of the strings). Ostinato riffs ("Kumbengo") and improvised solo runs ("Birimintingo") are played at the same time by [skilled players](#).

Toumani Diabaté has collaborated with a wide range of other musicians, including his compatriot Ali Farka Toure (guitar) from the desert north of Mali, and even Björk. In his more traditional African repertoire, another instrument that is sometimes heard is the [Balafon](#) – a type of African xylophone.

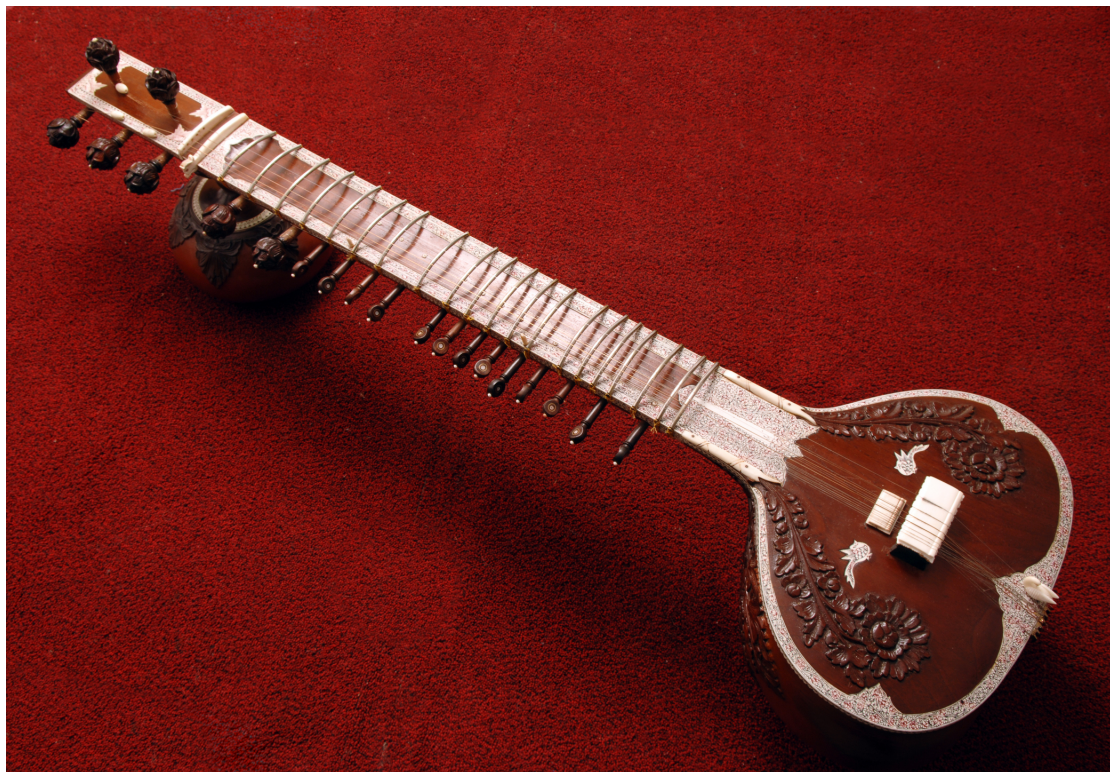
## Anoushka Shankar – sitar

The sitar is the most well-known of the specialist Indian instruments, brought to prominence in the Western world by Anoushka Shankar's father, Ravi Shankar, who

– among other notable projects – collaborated with the famous violinist [Yehudi Menuhin](#).

The sitar probably originates in Persia. The instrument developed over several centuries, before reaching the form familiar today in 18th century Hindustani music. There is a gourd-shaped resonating chamber and a long neck that has frets. The number of strings can vary between 18–21, 6 or 7 of which run over the frets (as on a guitar) including three (called the *chikaari*) that provide the drone. The frets are adjustable to allow for microtonal tunings.

The other strings are sympathetic strings which run under the frets and resonate in sympathy (according to the laws of physics) to enhance the timbre. (Other traditions also use sympathetic strings, including the Norwegian *Hardanger* fiddle).



Anoushka Shankar has followed the idea of fusion to collaborate with non-Indian musicians, especially in the album *Traveller*; however, elsewhere (especially in the album *Rise*) she uses other traditional Indian instruments, including:

- *Tanpura* – similar in shape to the sitar, but with no frets on the fingerboard. Its four strings are plucked in a cycle to provide a continuous drone effect.
- *Veena* – a variety of stringed instruments, part lute, part zither, used to play chords.
- *Bansuri* – a side-blown (horizontal) flute, traditionally made from bamboo.
- *Shehnai* – a double-reed wind instrument, something of an Indian equivalent to the oboe. It has a prominent flared bell at the end.
- *Duduk* – originating in Armenia, this is another double-reed instrument, but with a larger reed and more akin in sound (not shape) to the cor anglais.
- *Tabla* – a pair of hand drums. An important instrument in Hindustani classical music since the eighth century.



## Mariza – Fado

Of course, there is nothing especially unfamiliar to the sound of Mariza's singing, although there is something impassioned and raw about the timbre that suits the *saudade* mood of *Fado*.

Significant, however, is the instrumental ensemble accompanying her, and in particular the Portuguese guitar (in Portuguese *guitarra portuguesa*). This is a guitar of very distinctive shape and timbre. There are 12 steel strings (six courses of paired strings) and they are tuned using Preston tuners that are arranged in a fantail pattern at the top of the neck.



In *Fado* the Portuguese guitar is the sound of the instrumental break.

Being a folk style, the other guitars traditionally used are also specific variants:

- *Viola de fado* – very similar to the classical guitar with six strings. It is used to provide the basis of the harmony and rhythm of the *Fado* song.
- *Viola baixo* – essentially a type of bass guitar. Sometimes a double bass is used instead.

To help you hear the difference in timbres, [here](#) is an evocative duet for *Guitarra Portuguesa* and *Viola de Fado*.

## Bellowhead

The 11 members of Bellowhead play a remarkably diverse range of instruments, some familiar to any orchestral musician, others clearly more rooted in folk traditions. The overall effect is kaleidoscopic in tonal colour – one of the reasons for the verve of their arrangements and performances.

The full line-up was:

- Jon Boden: lead vocals, fiddle, tambourine, shaky egg, thunder tube, kazoo
- Pete Flood: percussion (everything from glockenspiel to coal scuttle) vocals
- Brendan Kelly: saxophone, bass clarinet, vocals
- Benji Kirkpatrick: guitar, bouzouki, mandolin, tenor banjo, vocals, kazoo
- Rachael McShane: cello, fiddle, kazoo, vocals

- Andy Mellon: trumpet, vocals
- Ed Neuhauser: sousaphone, helicon, tuba, vocals
- Paul Sartin: fiddle, oboe, slide whistle, kazoo, vocals
- John Spiers: melodeons, Anglo concertina, Clviola, kazoo, vocals, tambourine
- Sam Sweeney: fiddle, English bagpipes, kazoo, vocals, whistle
- Justin Thurgur: trombone, vocals.

## Specialist tango instrumental techniques

### Arrastre

This is a change in bow speed from slow to fast, (often coupled with a sliding left hand mini-glissando) that is most often heard on the double bass going into a downbeat.

### Chicharra

This highly distinctive sound is supposed to imitate a cricket or cicada in a percussive scratching sound that is made by bowing behind the bridge.

### Latigo

*Latigo* means 'whip' and is usually an upward glissando of increasing speed that imitates the sound of the whip.

### Sirena

This is a specific type of glissando that involves a slow descending slide whilst double stopping.

### Tambor

This means 'drum', yet traditional tango does not involve percussion instruments or drum kits. The violinist, instead, can imitate the effect through this specialist pizzicato technique.

### Golpe de Caja

Literally meaning 'hit the box' this term covers a wide range of percussive sounds that can be made by violinists, bass players and bandoneonists to add to the dark character of Tango.

A lot of these effects can be heard in Piazzolla's '[Buenos Aires Hora Cero](#)' which starts at 2:25 in [the following clip](#). Watch out for the pianist playing the piano strings inside the instrument (ie not using the keyboard).

## Introduction to the named artists

### Astor Piazzolla

Astor Piazzolla was born in *Mar del Plata*, Argentina in 1921, the son of immigrant Italian parents. Although part of his childhood was spent in New York – another city of immigrants – his father bought him a bandoneon from a pawn shop when Astor was 8. Together with listening to his father's records of Carlos Gardel and Bach, the influences were in place for him to become the master of Tango *nuevo*.

Returning to Argentina in 1936, *Piazzolla* was soon working as a Tango musician in Buenos Aires – both as a bandoneonist and an arranger – for the legendary bandleader Anibal Troilo. He studied composition with Alberto Ginastera (the most foremost composer in Argentina at the time) and then, in 1954, with the renowned composition teacher Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Initially Piazzolla only showed his teacher his classical compositions, but when Boulanger heard him playing Tango she identified an authentic and original composition voice. The teacher told the pupil to go home and concentrate on Tangos; Piazzolla returned to Argentina and pursued a highly successful career as the pre-eminent tango musician of his generation. As his work became increasingly original, with its influences from Bach and jazz, he was often seen as a controversial figure in the tango world of Buenos Aires; however, he was also developing a worldwide following.

Piazzolla's creativity was inextricably linked to his performing; some of his Tangos he recorded many times, each with different details of melodic decorations, instrumentation, tempo, etc. There were a number of different ensembles that he formed to pursue new directions in his composing: an octet in 1955 that took Tango into the realm of chamber music, his first quintet in 1960 with the classic combo of bandoneon, violin, guitar, piano and string bass, a group called *Conjunto 9* in 1970, an electronic octet in 1975, and his second quintet in 1978 – possibly his finest group. His last ensemble was *Sexteto Nuevo Tango* in 1989. In addition to all the performance-led compositions that were inspired by these groups, Piazzolla also composed an operetta (*María de Buenos Aires*), works for symphony orchestra including *Cuatro Estaciones Porteños* and several concertos, and numerous film scores. He worked with renowned musicians of diverse styles, including the jazz vibraphonist Gary Burton and classical cellist Mstislav Rostropovich for whom he wrote the *virtuoso Le Grand Tango*.

Piazzolla suffered a cerebral haemorrhage in 1990 and died two years later without regaining consciousness. Since his death his music has only increased in popularity. His style has been pursued further by (among others) Pablo Ziegler, Rodolfo Mederos and Osvaldo Golijov; meanwhile, his tangos have been arranged many times over, some of the most exciting versions being from the band *Escalandrum* in which the drummer is Daniel Piazzolla, Astor's grandson.

### Suggestions for listening and compositional tasks

'*Libertango*' and '*Milonga del Angel*' are a good introduction to the Piazzolla soundworld. '*Libertango*' has an infectious rhythmic momentum which sometimes includes the Latin 3+3+2 rhythmic pattern; '*Milonga del Angel*' captures the slow, sultry, lyrical mood that Piazzolla can do so well – listen out for the Habanera rhythm in the bass and the emotional pull of some unusual key relationships between sections.

There are possible corresponding compositional projects based on both pieces:

- Devise a figuration similar to b.1–2 of '*Libertango*' that decorates a tonic chord of your choice; then extend the piece by maintaining the pattern of the figuration in a strict manner whilst changing to a different chord for b.3–4. Then extend the

chord progression, attempting to incorporate chromaticism (a descending chromatic bass line can be very effective). In addition to the Piazzolla model, you may wish to remind yourself of the first Prelude from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

- Compose a piece for a melodic instrument of your choice plus piano accompaniment. The piano part should use the Habanera pattern present in *'Milonga del Angel'* in the LH with simple triads in the RH; try to utilise some long note values in the melodic writing for the solo instrument as well as bars in which there is more rhythmic activity.

*'Knife Fight'* from the album *The Rough Dancer and the Cyclical Night* is a two minute musical snapshot of a street fight that conveys an intense sense of violence through relentless and unforgiving use of dissonance in the upper textures.

It is built from eight sections:

1	Starts 0"	8 bars	Built over rising bass riff starting on D followed by two stabs (with <i>latigo</i> in the violin). Main melodic motif in all other instruments
2	0:14	8 bars	Similar passage based on G followed by two stabs
3	0:28	8 bars	Bass riff starting on D with new tremolo piano cluster chords rising chromatically followed by two stabs whilst bandoneon and violin continue original melodic shapes
4	0:42	8 bars	Similar passage based on G followed by two stabs
5	0:54	6 bars	Melodic material with additional rhythmic development in melody and descending bass riff followed by rising piano glissando
6	1:04	6 bars	Similar passage followed by rising piano glissando
7	1:14	8 bars	A return to the opening bass riff on D. At 1:22 the violin begins a <i>sirena</i> effect
8	1:25	to end	The music gradually slows and gets quieter under continued <i>sirena</i> effects on the violin.  The piece ends with three detached D <sup>11</sup> (or C/D) chords – like the final spasms of the victim of this knife fight

The main bass riff is a classic tango 'walking bass' pattern.

Meanwhile, the Latin rhythm of the melodic material provides an eager cross-rhythm, which gains further urgency.

These ingredients can be the basis of many a Tango-inspired compositional project, not necessarily as dissonant as *Piazzolla's 'Knife Fight'*. The walking bass pattern can build tension which can be untethered with a circle of fifths pattern at a well-chosen juncture.

Tango-etude no.1 for solo violin

(recommended recording: *Gidon Kremer Tracing Astor*)

Piazzolla wrote six of these tango-etudes for solo violin. The first has a most distinctive opening that skillfully combines a number of elements:

- A melodic line that simultaneously implies harmony as in Bach's revered pieces for unaccompanied violin.
- A rising chromatic line in the opening 8 bars (on the downbeat of bars 1, 3, 5 and 7).
- Syncopation of a Latin rhythm that is an elaboration of the cross-rhythms used in 'Knife Fight'.
- Quintuplet turn figures that are momentarily *Mahlerian*.
- An implied circle of fifths pattern in the sequence from b.9 and beyond.
- A flat-side chromaticism in b.8 heading towards D minor, balanced by a sharp-side use of V of V in b.15–16.

There is a highly skilled sense of patterns in this melodic line that is handling a variety of approaches to contour, harmony and rhythm simultaneously. After studying it carefully, there could be much to be gained from attempting to compose one's own study for an unaccompanied melodic instrument.

Piazzolla was a composer who had a fecund response to very diverse musical influences. Other works that are recommended for study include *Adios noniño*, *Escualo*, and *Oblivion*.

### Toumani Diabaté

Toumani Diabaté was born in Mali in 1965 into a griot family of musicians. His father Sidike Diabaté, played the kora – indeed, the family oral tradition holds that 70 generations of his family have been musicians. His cousin, Sona Jobarteh, is the first female kora player to have come from a griot family.

Toumani's first recordings were made in 1987, initially with his father, and then by himself on the album *Kaira* which was recorded in London. More significant was the 1999 release of *New Ancient Strings* – an album of traditional kora music played by Toumani and Ballaké Sissoko. One review of the album described the music as 'rooted in the timeless classical tradition of Mali that was once, during the pre-colonial era, played at the courts of kings and emperors; but it is reworked to the contemporary styles that are currently in favour in Bamako, the hot-house of many of West Africa's finest musicians'.

Another collaboration with the Malian guitarist Ali Farka Touré led to a Grammy award in 2006 for their album *In the Heart of the Moon*. Also in 2006, Diabaté released the album *Boulevard de Indépendance* (named after a landmark in the Malian capital, Bamako) with his own Symmetric Orchestra comprising griot musicians playing a range of traditional instruments including kora, balafon, djembe and bolombatto (a combined string instrument/rattle).

In addition to his traditional music, Toumani Diabaté has also worked with musicians from other backgrounds including the Icelandic musician Björk on her 2007 album *Volta*, the flamenco group Ketama, and American jazz trombonist Roswell Rudd.

Diabaté now has an international profile and travels the world. He played at the Glastonbury Festival in 2007, and has returned to the UK in 2010 and 2014. His son, Sidike Jr is not only following the griot tradition and playing the kora like his father, but is also a hiphop artist.

## Suggestions for listening and compositional tasks

'*Bi Lamban*' from *New Ancient Strings* is an excellent introduction to the sound of the kora and its mesmerizing weaving of *birimintingo* and *kumbengo* patterns. The *kumbengo* patterns are built around F as a tonic, but vary from emphasizing G or D as a note of secondary importance; occasional inflections to E disguise any potential for rigid predictability. This could be a beneficial example for any composer who prefers to work from the bass line upwards in their work.

'*Jarabi*' from the 1988 album *Songhai* is an attractive mix of *Mandé* and *Flamenco* influences with an overall Dorian colour (E minor but with Cs).

'*Kala*' is a five minute track from the album *In the Heart of the Moon* – Diabaté's collaboration with guitarist Ali Farka Touré. After a short unmetrical intro on the guitar, the kora first plays the tonic F at 0:10, informing the listener that the B<sup>a</sup>s already heard belong to a Lydian mode context.

The main riff is largely sustained by the guitar as follows:



At times the pattern is duplicated an octave lower on the kora, but with a more 'straight' rhythm, leading to a heterophonic effect.

There is much to enjoy in the *birimintingo* improvisations. Though the underpinning *kumbengo* has limited variation, the subtle changes of dynamic, register and energy in the melodic ideas keeps the piece always engaging. Some short passages where some chordal strumming is used instead of melodic lines articulates the overall sense of structure.

It will be good aural training to listen out for the bright sharpened fourths (B<sup>a</sup>s) in the melodic lines; there are also some B<sup>n</sup>'s that are more subtly woven into the inner lines that help to maintain the sense of F as the tonic.

It is not uncommon for student composers to be trapped by the scales they have learned to play, which for many musicians will be only major and minor tonal scales. The bright colour of the Lydian mode here is a reminder that other options are available. In western heptatonic scales, there is a 'colour chart' from bright to dark of six modes known to medieval musicians that give the composer more options. These depend on how high in the scale the two semitones appear – the higher, the brighter the musical results will sound; the lower, the darker the music becomes:

Mode name	Semitone between:		Description
Lydian	4–5 and 7–8		Extra bright major with a sharpened fourth
Ionian	3–4 and 7–8		Familiar as major scale

Mixolydian	3–4 and 6–7		More mellow major with flattened seventh
Dorian	2–3 and 6–7		A brighter minor with a raised sixth
Aeolian	2–3 and 5–6		Familiar as the melodic minor in descent
Phrygian	1–2 and 5–6		Extra dark minor with a flattened second

Having listened to some of the Lydian–infused Mandé music, why not ask students to write a Lydian melody, and then contrast this with a second melody (or middle section) based on a Dorian or Phrygian mode.

'[Al vaiven de mi caretta](#)' is a track from an extraordinary album *Afrocubism* recorded for World Circuit in Madrid in 2010. The album is a fascinating fusion of musicians from Mali and Cuba, showing just how close the musical traditions are (the slave trade is part of this history). Even the singing styles of Cuban Eliades Ochoa and Malian Kasse Madi Diabaté are closely matched despite the difference of language.

In addition to the singers, there is a fascinating mix of instrumentation with the Cuban guitar and double bass providing a canvas on which Toumani Diabaté's kora and the balafon of *Fode Lassana Diabaté* paint different timbral colours.

Another album that is full of fascinating fusion is *Kulanjan* which Toumani Diabaté made with American blues artist Taj Mahal in 1999. The *New Statesman* described it as 'a rousing set of eclectic grooves, calling on ragtime, barrelhouse blues and even rock'n'roll', and it even won an endorsement from Barack Obama.

## Anoushka Shankar

Anoushka Shankar is a British-born (1981) Indian musician whose father, Ravi Shankar, was a world famous sitar player in the second half of the 20th century. Anoushka followed her father's example and gave her first public performance on the sitar aged 13 in New Delhi. She is also half-sister to the singer Norah Jones.

At the age of 15, Anoushka played on her father's album *Chants of India* – a collection of Hindu prayers set to music that was produced by George Harrison (of Beatles fame). She then signed her first exclusive recording contract with EMI aged 16. Her first album, *Anoushka*, was released in 1998, and is a collection of classical Indian sitar music.

Each piece (there are five on the album, the longest 20 minutes in duration) is based on a scale or raga. Each starts with a slow alap section, characterised by fluid rhythms. The tabla then introduces a sense of pulse and metre. Gradually the tempo increases, and with it the virtuosity of Anoushka's playing.

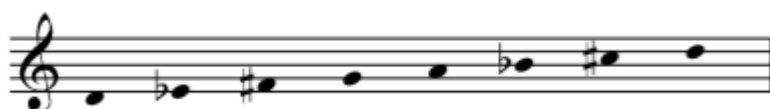
Shankar released a second album of classical sitar music in 2000, called *Anourag*, with six further raga-based pieces. Her third album, *Live at the Carnegie Hall*, was released in 2001 and won a Grammy for Best Contemporary World Music. A busy period of touring and performing followed that led her to explore new paths for her Indian musical roots in a more global context. A sense of musical fusions underpins this, and has led to five fascinating and individual albums:

- *Rise* (2005) which uses a wide range of Indian instruments as well as the Armenian duduk and African djembe.
- *Breathing Under Water* (2007) in collaboration with Indian/American music producer Karsh Kale – a mix of classical sitar and electronica beats and melodies.
- *Traveller* (2011) – an exploration of connections between Indian sitar music and Spanish flamenco.
- *Traces of You* (2013) produced partly in collaboration with Anoushka's half-sister, Norah Jones, after their father's death.
- *Land of Gold* (2016) – a concept album in response to the Syrian migrant crisis that combines sitar with classical instruments (notably Caroline Dale on cello), the new Swiss instrument called the Hang (played by Manu Delago) and the music production skills of Matt Robertson.

In addition to being a creative musician, Anoushka Shankar continues to be an important performer, championing her father's three concertos for sitar and orchestra, and working in conjunction with other classical musicians including violinist Joshua Bell.

### Suggestions for listening and compositional tasks

It is a good idea to start by exploring Anoushka's earlier releases that illustrate her Indian roots. 'Swarna Jayanti' is a sitar solo (the tabla enters at 2:35) which appears on the album *Anourag* was written to celebrate the 50th anniversary of India's independence and builds from a tranquil start to quite a frenzied finish. By contrast, 'Prayer in Passing' (from *Rise*) has a dreamy, hypnotic quality and is interesting for being based on a symmetric raga:



Symmetry is a fascinating concept to explore in composition – a whole new way to approach musical creativity, not just in terms of melodic contour, but also spacing of chords and rhythms. For students who are also opting for Area of Study 7, this links to Messiaen. A significant compositional project could be developed by exploring these ideas further.

'The Sun Won't Set' is the opening track from Shankar's 2013 album *Traces of You* and features Norah Jones. The album was released less than a year after the death of Anoushka's father, Ravi Shankar. 'Ravi' is Sanskrit for 'sun' – so this opening ballad is of particular significance.

The track features Norah Jones (vocals), Nitin Sawhney (guitar), Anoushka Shankar (sitar) and Pirashanna Thevarajah (ghatam). The ghatam is an Indian percussion instrument – a clay pot the pitch of which can be altered with water or plasticine. It is [played by hand](#).



The song has a simple character, but offers considerable charm and consolation. There are two contrasting ideas built on simple bass riffs – the first uses a conjunct rising bass line on beats 1 and 3 of D → E → F → G, whilst the second only has bass notes on the downbeats (so sounding like a slower harmonic rhythm and last four bars rather than two) in the pattern D → B<sup>♭</sup> → F → C.

The structure is as follows:

0:00	Intro	Riff 1x3	Attractive guitar figuration and an early pitch bend on sitar at 0:06; the ghatam joins in from 0:10
0:21	Refrain	Riff 1x4	Gentle accompaniment with discreet guitar and sitar and background effects on ghatam
0:47	Verse 1	Riff 2x2	Mainly guitar accompaniment, though some mid-register sitar moments
1:13	Refrain	Riff 1x4	More of a sitar countermelody, especially between vocal phrases. Including wonderful triplet crotchets at 1:19
1:39	Verse 2	Riff 2x2	Similar to previous verse with the sitar rising higher in second half of verse
2:06	Refrain	Riff 1x4	Some lower register shapes as countermelody in the sitar. A little more activity on the ghatam leading into the instrumental
2:30	Instrumental	Riff 2x2	A chance to focus the ears more on the sitar melody
2:56	Refrain	Riff 1x4	Returning to a more gentle conclusion
3:22	Outro	Riff 1x1	A short section coming to rest on a D minor chord

Although the song has a beautiful simplicity, we have already seen significant differences between the two bass riffs. The vocal melody for the refrain is built from an almost naïve shape that only covers a range of a minor third:

Yet this is a case of less is more, and allows for greater stretch of the melodic compass in the verse (in both directions: up to G and down to C) whilst still having the simplicity of a range of only a perfect fifth.

There are great ideas for composers of pop songs to think through: bass riffs of different contour, harmonic rhythm and length, and careful planning of melody shape and range.

Anoushka Shankar's most recent album *Land of Gold* is a powerful work from the wailing high shehnai in 'Secret Heart' through the sampling and looping of spoken lyrics in 'Jump in (cross the line)' to the clearly Indian opening to the final track 'Reunion' which includes some poignant piano playing, agile string bass, and the Girls for Equality choir from Rhyl Primary School, Camden.

## Mariza

Mariza was born Marisa dos Reis Nunes in 1973 in Mozambique – one of Portugal's former colonies in Africa. Her father was Portuguese, and when she was three the family moved to Lisbon, capital of Portugal.

The most famous Fado singer in Portugal at that time was Amália Rodrigues. When she died in 1999, Mariza was invited to perform a tribute. It was broadcast around the country. This led to her first album of Fado repertoire, *Fado em Mim*, which was a huge success – over 100,000 copies were sold. Her career has continued to flourish. Subsequent albums have ranged from the traditional approach of *Fado Tradicional* (2010) to songs influenced by African, Flamenco and Latin sounds (the latter influenced by another former Portuguese colony – Brazil) in *Concerto em Lisboa* (2007).

Mariza now has an international profile and has sung in top music venues including New York's Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House and London's Barbican and Royal Albert Hall. She is the '*fadista*' (Fado singer) of her generation.

### Suggestions for listening and compositional tasks

For an introduction to the two contrasting flavours of Fado, a good place to start is listening to '*Loucura*' and '*Oiça lá ó senhor vinho*' both from *Fado em mim*. The first is a very soulful *Fado menor*, full of *saudade*, opening with a melody on the Portuguese guitar and a very characteristic bass line throughout (listen for the chromatic moments); the second, a song to wine, is a faster major key *Fado corrido*.

Composers can find much to practise from these examples: verse structure, chord progressions, starting a second half to the verse from chord IV (as in '*Loucura*'), and handling texture with distinctive character to the three strands: melody, bass line, inner accompaniment.

'*Beijo de saudade*' from *Terra*, whilst having much of the mood of Fado ('*saudade*' is, after all, present in the title to the song) also has some other colours, including the Portuguese guitar played by Javier Limón and some discreet drumming. The vocals are also shared between Mariza herself and Tito Paris a singer from the Cape Verde islands – another territory of the Lusophone world.

The song has a soulful introduction constructed from the progression  $i-III-ii-V^7$  ( $Gm - B^{\flat} - A^{dim} - D^7$ ). A muted trumpet plays over the third and fourth playings of this pattern before the singing starts.

At 0:31 Mariza enters with the first verse of 6 lines.

Verse 2 follows immediately from 1:16 with Tito Paris singing.

At 1:53 there is a second section beginning from chord V; the singers now alternate.

From 2:32 there is an extended instrumental section based on the harmony of the verse. Initially this is focused on the muted trumpet; the Portuguese guitar then takes the solo forwards before the two instruments are heard in imitative dialogue from 3:00.

At 3:10 the singers return with the music of the second section, somewhat adjusted. This includes a gorgeous circle of fifths pattern at 3:28 of  $F - B^{\flat} - E^{\flat} - A^{dim} - D^7 - Gm$ .

At the very end both singers sing together (in unison) for the only time in the track.

One of the skills here that can be embraced by composers is the handling of diatonic harmony in a minor key. There are some beautiful touches to note:

- The use of chord ii – which is a diminished chord in a minor tonal context. The song uses it in root position in the introduction, but it is used in first inversion elsewhere which is a harmonic colour of some subtlety; this includes at the start of line 3 of the verse where it successfully sounds mid-verse.
- The use of chord V7 as the starting point for the second section (eg 1:53).
- The richness of the major chord VI in a minor key and its attractive colour late on in the track (3:30) when it is heard for the first time.

Mariza's two most recent albums illustrate the range of both her work and this Area of Study. In 2010 she released *Fado tradicional* – 12 *Fado* songs accompanied by the classic trio of guitars that is utterly Portuguese; her 2015 album *Mundo* embraces a wider range of musical influences from *Fado* and Tango to Pop music.

## Bellowhead

Bellowhead is an English group of musicians who have explored and re-cast English folk music, including songs, jigs and shanties, with enormous verve and imagination. Their 11-piece band includes vocalist, strings and brass sections, and plenty of percussion (in this case almost accurately described as the kitchenware department). Between the 11 players, the band plays over 20 instruments.

The band's first appearance was at the Oxford Folk Festival in 2004; their debut album, *Burlesque*, released in 2006, is an eclectic mix of music from the Napoleonic Wars, the American minstrel movement and sea shanties from Britain's nautical tradition. Their second album, *Matachin*, was released in 2008; also that year they played at the Proms in London. When *Hedonism*, their third album, appeared in 2010 it became the best-selling independently-released folk album of all time.

A diverse range of work has come their way, including recording the theme tune for the spin-off to the famous radio programme *The Archers* called *Ambridge Extra* and playing for the opening of the restored Cardigan Castle in 2015. They have played in many of the UK's main concert halls, including Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, and toured Europe.

In late 2015 Bellowhead started their farewell tour, after a decision by Jon Boden to leave the band. Their last concert was in Oxford – where it all began – on 1 May 2016. The album of the tour was released in April 2016.

## Suggestions for listening and compositional tasks

'*Sloe Gin*' from the band's first album *Burlesque*, is a good way to get a first taste of the Bellowhead soundscape – an instrumental number that is a mix of traditional English folk dance tunes arranged with an infectious sense of energy. Listen out, in particular, for the concertina. There is a marked increase in spirit for the final section with percussion more to the fore.

'*New York Girls*' from *Hedonism* is a good example of Bellowhead's treatment of a narrative ballad with a strophic verse-refrain structure in which the story is not just told by the lyrics, but also by the inventiveness of the arrangement.

'*Roll the Woodpile Down*' from *Broadside* is a great 'feel good' song. After a short passage of double-stopped folk fiddle at the start, much of the arrangement uses a rich instrumental texture, built on a strong sousaphone bass line. There are some fabulous syncopated moments of homophony and, towards the end, a full choral sound is used.

So much of composing is about finding a balance between the familiar and contrast. If every aspect of music is always familiar (the unchanging drum pattern, the

endlessly repetitive simple chord pattern, the harmonic rhythm, the melodic shape, the instrumental, the way the texture is organized, the dynamic, the register, the articulation, etc) the result is soon a tedious experience for the listener who is engaging with the piece. Likewise, if everything changes the whole while, there is never any sense of structure and the audience is soon confused; this too leads to listener boredom.

In many styles it can be a good idea to repeat passages of music. This is most obviously the case in a song where the lyrics suggest a strophic treatment, but also in a classical ternary form or a piece for jazz combo built on the 12-bar blues. Bellowhead's music is a great model for how repetition of sections in a piece can be both familiar and contrasting through imaginative changes of instrumentation, texture, register and dynamic.

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Raga Puriya Dhanashri

Traditional

Arranged by Ravi Shankar

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Salama

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Swarna Jayanti

Traditional

Arranged by Ravi Shankar

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