

Test yourself

1. Name a hit by Queen, other than 'Killer Queen'.
2. Name the instrument that plays throughout most of 'Killer Queen' but that does not have a separate part shown in the Anthology score.
3. What is an anacrusis?
4. Complete this sentence: In $\frac{12}{8}$ time there are _____ dotted-crotchet beats per bar.
5. How are the x-headed notes (x) in the score of 'Killer Queen' performed?
6. What is the technical name for a vocal slide in pitch, such as that heard on the word 'queen' in this song?
7. The sign  in the score shows where the lead guitarist uses vibrato. What is vibrato?
8. Name the vocal technique used by Freddie Mercury to sing the highest notes in 'Killer Queen'.
9. What name can be used to describe the chord progression A - Dm - G⁷ - C?
10. What are vocables?
11. Why are the following described as parallel chords?



Answers: See page 70

AREA OF STUDY 3:

Music for stage and screen

Music and drama have been partners since ancient times and are still closely linked today. We know that music was heard in the mystery plays of medieval Europe and that song played an important part in the works of Shakespeare. Almost a century later, 'Music for a While' was one of many songs written by Purcell for inclusion in the plays of his day.

When Shakespeare was writing in the years around 1600, **opera** was invented in Italy – drama sung and acted on stage by professional singers accompanied by an orchestra. A lighter type of opera known as **operetta** ('little opera') developed in the late-19th century, in which spoken dialogue alternated with musical items, and this paved the way for the 20th-century **musical** – a play or film with music in a broadly popular style that generally includes some memorable hit songs.

Set work 1

Stephen Schwartz: 'Defying Gravity'
(from the musical *Wicked*)

Context, date and genre

One of the best-loved musical films of the 20th century was *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), based on the *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, an American children's novel of 1900 by L. Frank Baum.

In 1995, American author Gregory Maguire produced a fantasy novel entitled *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. It retells the original story from the point of view of the witches, Elphaba (The Wicked Witch of the West) and Glinda, who Maguire casts as The Good Witch of the North. It creates a back-story for many of the other characters in *Oz* and explores the nature of good and evil.

Maguire's novel was turned into the **book** (the spoken dialogue of a musical) by the American screenwriter Winnie Holzman to form the basis of *Wicked*, a musical first staged in the USA, in 2003. The **lyrics** (the words of the songs) and the music are by Stephen Schwartz (born 1948) whose other credits include the 1971 musical *Godspell* and the lyrics for Disney's animated musical film *Pocahontas* (1995).

'Defying Gravity' is the Act One **finale** (the last number in the first half of the show) in which Elphaba, who has discovered that the Wizard of Oz is a charlatan, vows to oppose his evil plans. The song describes how she wants to live life without limits, going against the rules that others have set for her. The song includes short duet sections with Glinda, **underscore** (music played under dialogue), and a short part for the chorus at the end. This composite format is sometimes called a **scena** ('scene'). The staging is highly dramatic, culminating in Elphaba flying into the air on her broomstick, accompanied by moving lights, smoke and wind effects as the citizens of Oz rush in, trying in vain to 'bring her down'.

Structure

The core of *Defying Gravity* is a song in verse-and-chorus form. In the table below, recitative is a type of vocal music that mimics the rhythms of speech.

Bar	Time	Section
1	0:04	Intro (<i>recitative for Glinda and Elphaba</i>): 'I hope you're happy...'
34 ²	1:17	Verse 1 (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'Something has changed within me, ...'
50 ²	1:51	Chorus (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'It's time to try defying gravity...' (<i>Glinda sings the link at bar 60</i>)
63 ²	2:10	Verse 2 (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'I'm through accepting limits...'
79 ²	2:35	Chorus (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'I'd sooner try defying gravity...' (<i>Glinda sings the link at bar 60</i>)
88	2:48	Bridge (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'Unlimited, together...' (+ <i>Glinda from bar 100</i>)
102 ³	3:27	Chorus (<i>Elphaba and Glinda</i>): 'Just you and I defying gravity...' (<i>orchestral build at end</i>)

115 ²	3:53	Varied reprise of intro (<i>Glinda, then both</i>): 'I hope you're happy...'
135 ²	4:32	Verse 3 (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'So if you care to find me' (<i>some parts 8ve higher than before</i>)
151 ²	4:58	Chorus (<i>Elphaba</i>): 'Tell them how I am defying gravity...'
161 ⁴	5:15	Coda (<i>Elphaba, then all</i>): 'And nobody in all of Oz...'

In the stage show, the finale is in D_h major, a semitone lower than the version in the Anthology, and there are additional passages of underscore.

Resources

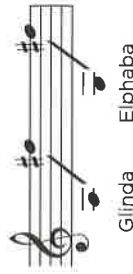
The accompaniment is scored by specialist orchestrator Bill Brohn for a relatively large pit band of 23 musicians. The four woodwind ('reed') players have to double on a variety of instruments (including piccolo, bass clarinet and cor anglais).

There are six brass, a harp, two electric guitars, three keyboard synths, used partly to bolster the four string parts (a full body of strings is used for recordings) and a wide range of percussion, including drum kit, timpani, glockenspiel (a tuned percussion instrument with metal bars struck by beaters) and tubular bells.

The excerpt in the Anthology is in the form of a **short score**, which shows the main band parts on just two staves. Points to note in the orchestration include:

- Electric guitar with **overdrive** (a type of distortion) in bars 11, 40 and 45
- Chordal writing for low brass contrasting with solo synth melody (bars 20–23)
- String **tremolo** (marked ) to create excitement (bars 34–36 and 162–165)
- Drum **fill** (bar 54) – a brief improvisation to fill the gap between vocal phrases
- Descending scales for bass clarinet (bars 89 and 91)
- Cymbal roll to announce the change of key (bar 122)
- **Tutti** (full band) for the climax at bar 135
- Synth and glockenspiel play a high-pitched **ostinato** as Elphaba sings of flying high (bars 152–160).

The two principal singers, Elphaba and Glinda, require the vocal ranges shown below for this number. In the other parts of the show, Glinda has higher notes than the F# shown below. The character requires a **soprano** vocal range. Elphaba is a **mezzo-soprano**, a voice lower in range than a soprano but not as low as an alto.



There is a small part for the chorus (labelled 'ensemble') in the final bars.

Commentary

The direction *colla voce* ('with the voice') in bar 1 indicates that the band must follow the rhythm of the singers, which is fairly free.

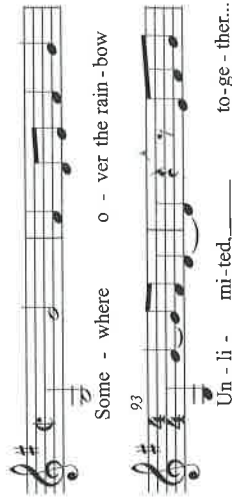
In the introduction (bars 1–31) Glinda confronts Elphaba in **recitative** initially punctuated by chromatic **stabs** (loud detached chords). Elphaba answers her taunts by sarcastically mimicking them a semitone lower (bar 9). Hints of the change that is about to occur in Elphaba are heard in the underscore of bars 20–24, where the syncopated introductory chords to her song are first heard, but the juxtaposition of two totally unrelated keys (B major followed by F major) creates an unsettling effect. Glinda's reassurance that Elphaba can still be with the wizard is accompanied by comforting sustained harmonies in F major.

Elphaba's realisation that 'Something has changed within me' is underpinned by another sudden change of key in bar 32, this time to D major, the main key of 'Defying Gravity'. The song itself begins after a two-bar introduction.

Elphaba asserts her desire to break free from expectations in a 16-bar verse characterised by a number of determined, wide leaps initially accompanied by a nervous **tremolo** from violins (bars 34–39). The tempo tightens to **Allegro** in bar 49 as she moves towards the chorus, which features more angular leaps in the vocal line, many of which are **triadic**. High above the vocal line, a repeating accompaniment pattern of three ascending quavers (printed in small type in the Anthology) cuts across the beat from bar 51 onwards.

The introductory chords from bars 32–3 return in bar 59 and are repeated as an accompaniment to Glinda's accusation in crotchet triplets that Elphaba is having delusions of grandeur, but Elphaba defiantly continues into her second verse, at a faster tempo and with firmly syncopated accompaniment.

After the second chorus, the tempo relaxes (**Moderato** in bar 88) and the key changes to G major. The melody in bars 93–94 quotes the first seven pitches of the song 'Over the Rainbow' from the 1939 musical film, 'The Wizard of Oz':



This 'unlimited' melody is a **leitmotif** that reflects Elphaba's growing confidence and that permeates the musical.

The *colla voce* direction in bar 99 marks a short passage of recitative in which Elphaba invites Glinda to join her and they begin the chorus together, starting at the end of bar 102, with just a little two-part singing before Elphaba finishes the chorus alone.

The introductory music from bar 32 returns in bars 111–114, this time leading to a recitative based on the chromatic chords of the opening bars of the scene. In a subtle change, Schwartz removes the word 'now' from the sarcastic 'I hope you're happy now', turning it into an affirmative 'I hope you're happy' as the friends wish each other well. The tempo returns to *Allegro* and the introductory syncopated motif to the verses is heard again in bars 129 and 132. The return of D major in bar 132 sees an exciting orchestral **build** (a *crescendo* on repeated quavers) during which the castle guards break in, only to see Elphaba soar above them on her broom as she launches into her triumphant final verse (starting at bar 135). Parts of this verse are sung an octave higher than previously.

The **coda** ('And nobody in all of Oz') begins quietly and at a slower pace (**Andante** in Bar 162) but quickly crescendos into the final bars. Elphaba rises to her top note (F# on 'me' in bar 167) and from bar 169 to the end the people of Oz rush in and join with the guards in singing 'Look at her! She's wicked! Get her!'.

Texture

After some brief **monophonic** passages at the start, the texture is mainly melody and accompaniment. Schwartz included the simplest type of duet writing in which the two characters mainly sing either alternately or together in **unison** (e.g. bars 101–109).

There are just a couple of passages of very easy two-part vocal writing (e.g. parallel 3rds in bars 125–128), plus a brief contrapuntal section in the final bars. **Ostinato** figures occur in bars 80–87, 88–97, 103–109 and 152–159.

Tonality

The main parts of the song (verses and choruses) are in D major, with a section in G major in bars 88–100.

Chromatic writing at the start and in bars 115–131 creates areas of ambiguous tonality.

Harmony

The **harmony** includes root position triads and **sus chords**, in which the 3rd of the chord is replaced by either a 2nd above the root (sus²) or a 4th (sus⁴). For example, the chord in bar 60 is Gsus² (G–A–D), whereas a chord of G would be G–B–D.

There is an inner **pedal** on A in bars 162–167 followed by an inverted pedal on D, starting in bar 168.

Rhythm and melody

Recitative sections are in **free time** in which the speed is dictated by the singers. Elsewhere, there are many changes of tempo in the song, some associated with a 'rall.' (*rallentando*, meaning slowing down).

There is a minim beat ($\frac{3}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ time) until the $\frac{4}{4}$ in bar 88. $\frac{3}{2}$ returns in bar 115. Many vocal phrases start on a weak beat and the word setting is syllabic.

Syncopation plays an important role in the **rhythm** of 'Defying Gravity', particularly in the anticipation of strong beats by a quaver (a technique known as a **push** in pop music and jazz), as in bars 50–51:

Syncopation:

It's time to try - de - fy - ing gra - vi - ty,

Notice the **triadic** style of Elphaba's vocal line in this example – most of the notes come from a triad of D major (D–F[♯]–A). The long notes and wide leaps help to illustrate Elphaba's new-found confidence as the song unfolds. Intervals of a 4th and 5th feature prominently in the vocal line as Elphaba becomes increasingly sure of herself and even wider leaps appear as she becomes more determined, especially in bars 39–40 (a leap of an 11th) and bar 140 (a leap of a 12th).

The melody for 'try defying gravity' shown above is known as the **title hook** – in pop music, a hook is a melodic fragment designed to catch the ear of the listener, and is called the title hook when it includes the words of the song's title.

Test yourself

- What is the term for music played under dialogue in musicals and films?
- Give the meaning of the following directions:
 - colla voce*
 - rall.*
- Describe the accompaniment in the first three bars of 'Defying Gravity'.
- The vocal style at the start of 'Defying Gravity' is described as like recitative. What do you understand is meant by the term recitative?
- How does the vocal melody in bar 7 relate to bar 6? ____?
- How are the x-headed notes (x) in the score of 'Defying Gravity' performed?
- What type of effect is guitar overdrive?
- What is an ostinato?
- What is the approximate range of the two solo vocal parts in this song?
- Complete the following sentence:
The structure of 'Defying Gravity' is based on ____ and ____ form.
- Glinda and Elphaba sometimes sing in unison. What is meant by unison?
- What does the sign $\equiv$ above or below a note indicate?
- In musicals, woodwind players are often required to double. What does this mean?
- The end of the song include parts for 'Ensemble'. What is another name for this group of singers?
- What is the meaning of the ∞ symbol in the last few bars of the song?

Answers: See page 70