

AREA OF STUDY 4:

Fusions

Fusion is non-classical music that combines different styles – originally jazz and rock, but now almost any blend of contrasting musical traditions from around the world that merge to form something new.

Set work 1

Afro Celt Sound System: 'Release'
(from the album *Volume 2: Release*)

Context and resources

The group Afro Celt Sound System was formed in 1995 and its second album, *Volume 2: Release*, appeared in 1999. The title track, *Release*, is the first song on the album. The name of the group reveals the origins of its own style of fusion:

- **Afro** – specifically the sounds of West African music, represented in this song by:
 - a **kora** (a type of harp)
 - a **djembe** (a goblet-shaped drum)
 - a **talking drum** (which can seem to mimic the tone patterns of speech)
- **Celt** – specifically the sounds of Irish traditional music, represented in this song by:
 - **uilleann pipes** (Irish bagpipes with softer tone than the Scottish variety)
 - a **fiddle** (the folk musician's name for a violin)
 - an **accordion** (that has hand-operated bellows which blow metal reeds)
 - a **low whistle** (an instrument like a metal recorder)
 - a **bodhrán** (a hand-held drum played with a double-headed beater)
 - a **hurdy-gurdy** (a mechanical violin in which the strings are made to vibrate by a wheel turned by a cranked handle and with strings that sound accompanying **drones**)
- **Sound System** – specifically the sounds and techniques of modern electronic dance music, including:

- male and female vocals
- synthesiser and samples
- electric piano, drum machine
- shaker and tambourine
- various digital effects.

The first voice heard on the track (at 0:41) is that of the West African kora player, N'Faly Kouyaté, who recites a softly spoken introduction in Maninka, one of the languages of Guinea. Verses 1 and 3 are sung in English by the famous Irish singer-songwriter Sinéad O'Connor, who also wrote the lyrics of the song. The male vocalist for verse 2 is Iarla Ó Lionáird, who sings in Irish (his words are not printed in the Anthology). The three languages symbolise the triple roots of Afro Celt Sound System's style.

Metre, tempo and rhythm

- The opening section is in **free time**
- Moderately fast tempo in $\frac{4}{4}$ time from 0:48 (where the loops start)
- Rhythm is slightly **swung**
- Rhythms in the vocal melodies include **syncopation**
- The instrumental solos, and some of the instrumental loops, feature strings of rapid short notes, echoing the fast decorative style of much Irish folk music
- Triplets feature in the low whistle solo and the fiddle loops.
- Repeating loops create the effect of **ostinatos** or **riffs**.
- The figure 4 above the final rest in loops 13, 17, 24, 26 and 28 indicates that the rest lasts for four-bars.

Tonality and harmony

- The tonality is best described as **modal**. Without B \flat (the leading note of C minor) it cannot be described as being in the key of C minor, but it is anchored to C by **drones** and by repeating patterns based on a chord of C minor.
- The music has a slow harmonic pace ('static harmony') and is mainly diatonic.

Texture

Mainly **homophonic**, with an accompaniment featuring a **layered texture** created from the 28 loops printed in the Anthology.

Structure

The song is based on three verses, preceded by an **intro**, concluded by an **outro**, and with instrumental sections described as 'solos' and 'drum break

and build’ in the Anthology score. There are no choruses. The accompaniment is constructed from loops, built up in layers, only the first entries of which are generally shown in the table below. Sections consist of mainly eight-bar phrases. The terms in brackets refer to music examples in the Anthology score.

0:00	Intro	Synth drone, with electronic effects, panned left and right. Talking drum + softly spoken introduction in Maninka. Percussion loops 1-3 then female introductory phrases (fig.1) with synth (loop 4) and drums (loop 5).
1:38	Verse 1	Female vocal sung in English (fig.2). Three similar stanzas (labelled 1, 2 and 3 in the Anthology) accompanied by loops 6-10. Voice stops at 2:35: short break formed by loops 11-13.
2:55	Verse 2	Male vocal sung in Irish (fig.3). Loop 14 enters. Vocal phrases are similar to those of verse 1 but gradually rise higher in pitch. Fig.4 starts at 3:14. Double-stopped pattern on fiddle (loop 15) enters very quietly and bass drops out until the end of section.
3:51	Solos	Uilleann pipes solo (fig.5), later joined by whistle (octave higher). Synth (loop 16) and accordion (loop 17) join accompaniment. Low whistle solo (fig.6); bodhrán (loop 18) and synth strings (loop 10) are prominent in a generally lighter accompaniment. Hurdy-gurdy solo (loop 20) with synth pad (loop 21); talking drums, bodhrán and male vocal sample (loop 19) prominent in the mix.
4:55	Verse 3	Female vocal (repeat of fig. 2, stanzas 2 and 3 only), with synth (loop 22), while hurdy-gurdy and many other loops continue. Uilleann pipes (fig.5) added for stanza 3. Then male vocal (repeat of fig.4, second time only) with prominent fiddle part (loop 23); bass is silent; section ends with one bar of bodhrán and shaker.

5.51	Build	A long crescendo and thickening of texture. Drum break (loop 24) with bass (loop 12) and drum loops 1 and 2. Loops 25 and 26 (electric piano) added. Hurdy-gurdy (loop 27) replaces electric piano loops. Female vocalist adds isolated background notes (mainly on G, falling to C). Uilleann pipes (loop 28) added to mix.
6.59	Outro	Female vocal (repeat of fig. 2, stanza 3 – “Reach out and you’ll touch me...”) accompanied by drum, percussion, synth and fiddle loops (the last of which is particularly prominent in this section). Fade out, featuring electric piano loops 25 and 26.

Melody

- Mainly **modal** (Aeolian mode on C)
- Verse 1: just the 5 pitches of the **pentatonic minor** scale (C – E♭ – F – G – B♭)
- Repetitive: many **similar** two-bar phrases that fall from G to C
- Introductory vocal solo (fig.1) closely based on the falling melody of verse 1
- Male voice in verse 2 rises to a top C and has a wider range (a 10th, later extending to a 13th in loop 19)
- Vocal line has mainly **conjunct** movement (+ occasional small skips of a 3rd)
- Mostly **syllabic**, some parts spoken (whispered)
- Female vocal has a narrow **range** (6th) and low **tessitura**
- Some parts are **sampled**
- Use of **reverberation**
- Instrumental solos are more wide-ranging in pitch and include some disjunct movement, but they too emphasise G and C as the main notes of the mode.

Other points

A pad (in loops 4, 11 and 21) is a sustained synthesiser sound, often resembling strings, organ or voices. ‘Vox’ in loop 19 is Latin for voice, so ‘male vox’ means male vocalist.

The word ‘pickup’ in some of the loops shows where the loop starts – it indicates that the loop begins with an anacrusis.

Test yourself

1. Name **two** West African instruments that feature in the song *Release*.
2. Name **two** Irish folk instruments that feature in the song *Release*.
3. Name **two** electronic instruments that feature in the song *Release*.
4. What is meant by a loop in electronic dance music?
5. Explain the difference between the range and the tessitura of a vocal melody.
6. Describe the rhythm at the start of this song.
7. What is an outro?
8. Give an alternative technical term for each of the following:
 - a. riff
 - b. drone
 - c. stepwise
 - d. Aeolian mode
9. The first verse of *Release* is sung by Sinéad O'Connor. What other contribution did she make to this track?
10. The melody in the first stanza of *Release* uses a scale of five pitches. What is the name for a five-note scale?
11. In which language is the second verse of *Release*?
12. What is meant by a layered texture?
13. What type of sound is a pad?

Answers: See page 71

Set work 2

‘Samba Em Prelúdio’, performed by Esperanza Spalding (from the album *Esperanza*)

Context

Samba became popular during the 20th century as the national dance of Brazil, where its loud drumming and syncopated rhythms form an essential and exciting part of the carnival season. A more restrained version of samba is also known around the world as a competitive ballroom dance.

‘Samba Em Prelúdio’, written in 1962, is a **bossa nova**. Meaning ‘new trend’, it developed in the late 1950s as an alternative to the boisterous carnival samba. Bossa nova is slower and more lyrical than samba, with a focus on rich and complex harmonies borrowed from contemporary cool jazz. It became internationally famous when *The Girl from Ipanema*, a song by the Brazilian composer Antônio Carlos Jobim, became a hit in 1964.

‘Samba Em Prelúdio’ was composed by Roberto Baden Powell de Aquino (1937–2000), a virtuoso Brazilian guitarist and composer who had been encouraged to popularise *bossa nova* by Jobim. The title means ‘Samba in the form of a prelude’ (a prelude being a short piece written in the style of an improvisation).

The Portuguese lyrics, which were added after the music was composed, are by the Brazilian poet and playwright, Vinícius de Moraes, who two years later would write the original Portuguese lyrics to ‘The Girl from Ipanema’ for Jobim. They tell a sad story of lost love (*saudade* in bars 24–25 refers to a feeling of deep longing or melancholy that some think characteristic of Brazilian temperament). Portuguese is the language of Brazil.

The Anthology recording of ‘Samba Em Prelúdio’ was released in 2008 as the last track on Esperanza Spalding’s album *Esperanza*. Esperanza Spalding (born 1984) is an American singer and multi-instrumentalist, who plays acoustic bass guitar on this track, as well as singing the vocal line.

Resources

Female voice with a **low tessitura** (ranging from E below middle C upwards to G a 10th higher).

The **acoustic bass guitar** is a large version of the acoustic guitar. Its four strings are tuned to E, A, D and G (the same notes as the double bass and electric bass guitar). The part includes broken chords, scale patterns and **double stopping** (playing two notes at the same time) as well as ornaments such as the **mordent** in bar 1, the **harmonic** on the highest note in bar 3 and the **glissando** from the low F# that follows this note up towards D at the end of the bar.

An acoustic guitar joins the accompaniment in bar 23, where it plays chords and melodic fragments between the vocal phrases. The acoustic guitar also has a **virtuoso** solo in the middle of the song.

Structure

Note that at the end of bar 103 in the Anthology score, the direction **D.S. al Coda** (*Dal Segno al Coda*, meaning ‘from the sign to the coda’) is an instruction to go back to the X sign in bar 39 and repeat from there up to the end of bar 52, where the instruction ‘**to Coda** Φ ’ indicates a jump on to the coda sign (Φ) in bar 104.

The song includes two main melodies, labelled A and B in the table below. Each is immediately repeated in varied form (so the structure is AA¹ in bars 4–22 and BB¹ in bars 23–54). After a guitar solo in the middle of the song (bars 55–87) based on the chords of section B, the two melodies are heard together in counterpoint in bars 88–103.

Bars	Time	Section	Music
1–3	0:00	Intro	Solo in free tempo for acoustic bass guitar.
4–22	0:16	AA ¹	Verse 1. 8 bars (bars 4–11) with varied repeat in bars 12–18. Introduction to Bossa nova indication begins in bar 19 (1:10).
23–54	1:19	BB ¹	Verse 2 (different music). Acoustic guitar joins in. 16 bars (bars 23–38) with a varied repeat in bars 39–54.

55–87	2:24	Guitar solo	Guitar solo based on chords of section B. Only the first part of this solo (up to bar 69) is printed in the Anthology.
88–103	3:35	Repeats	Bass plays an augmented version of vocal melody A over which the voice sings verse 3 to a simplified version of melody B (bars 23–38). Acoustic guitar is silent. Followed by an exact repeat of B ¹ (bars 39–52), which is indicated by <i>Dal Segno</i> (explained opposite).
104–114	4:35	Coda	Based on melody of bars 50–53, sung twice more.

The bass in bars 88–103 is an augmented version of the vocal melody in bars 4–11 (i.e. note lengths are increased – mostly doubled):



Texture

The texture in bars 1–3 is **monophonic**, apart from the two double stops.

Much of the rest of the song is **homophonic** (melody and accompaniment) although the combination of two independent melodic lines in bars 88–103 is **contrapuntal**.

Tonality

The music is in the key of B minor. There are no modulations although there are many **chromatic** notes.

Harmony

Many of the chords are complex because *bossa nova* is based on the rich harmonic vocabulary of cool jazz. Plain triads in root position are rare and when they do occur, non-chord notes are freely mixed in.

Chord extensions (7ths, 9ths, 11ths and 13ths) are used, along with chromatic chords such as the diminished 7th (e.g. in bars 33 and 35) and the chords of C and F (which are both chromatic in the key of B minor) in bars 27 and 28. Notice that both chords also include extensions and chromatic alterations, typical of cool jazz.

An extended chord (often an 11th) is frequently used to end a jazz performance. Here, the final chord is labelled Bm^{13} (it is actually Bm^{11} because the 13th is $G\sharp$). The B in the bass is the tonic, but it soon dies away leaving a shimmering discord containing the 3rd, 7th, 9th, 11th and $\sharp 13$ th of the chord, deliberately avoiding any sense of finality.

Melody

The vocal melody in the A section is based on a four-note rising figure (shown in the first music example on page 53) that is varied throughout bars 4–17.

Each phrase spans a 7th (apart from the first, which spans a 6th) and the first or second note of each phrase falls by a step, creating a free, downward sequence. The falling sequence, low tessitura and minor key create a sad mood, designed to portray the melancholy lyrics. The melody in the A section moves mainly by leaps of between a 3rd and a 7th.

Melody B is almost entirely **conjunct**, with bars 31–34 being a repeat of bars 23–26 transposed up a 4th. Bars 34³–36² are repeated in descending sequence to form bars 36³–38².

The word setting throughout is syllabic.

The instrumental melodies have an improvisatory character. In the introduction the acoustic bass guitar part consists of **broken-chord** and scale-based figures. Notice how the unaccompanied pattern in bar 2 returns in bar 7, and is changed to a triplet rhythm in bar 15. The acoustic guitar solo in bars 55–87 is again based on scale and chord patterns, and shows the range and versatility of the instrument in its upper register. Note the guitarist's use of fingered **tremolo** at 2:53 and 3:25.

Metre, tempo and rhythm

The song is in simple quadruple time. The $\frac{5}{4}$ in bar 3 is just a way of expressing the free rhythm of the opening rather than a distinct change in metre. These first three bars have a thoughtful, improvisatory quality achieved through **rubato** – tiny fluctuations in tempo for expressive effect. There is not a strict sense of pulse in this opening, hence the direction ‘Free tempo’ in bar 1.

Because much of the musical detail is improvised, the transcription into notation inevitably makes the rhythm look complex with the frequent use of triplets and syncopation.

Another important rhythmic feature of *Samba em prelúdio* is the use of **cross rhythm**. This is when two rhythmic patterns that conflict with each other occur simultaneously:

The first musical example shows a 5/4 time signature. The treble staff has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and the bass staff has a triplet of eighth notes (G3, F3, E3). A green box highlights the triplets, and the text 'cross rhythm' is written below. The second musical example shows a 4/4 time signature. The treble staff has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and the bass staff has a triplet of eighth notes (G3, F3, E3). A green box highlights the triplets, and the text 'cross rhythm' is written below.

The direction ‘Bossa nova (in tempo)’ in bar 19 marks the start of the dance section of the song, with the *bossa nova*'s characteristic combination of gently syncopated and dotted rhythms.

Test yourself

1. What is the meaning of bossa nova?
2. Name **two** ways in which bossa nova differs from samba.
3. In what language are the lyrics of ‘Samba Em Prelúdio’?
4. Compare the acoustic bass guitar with an electric bass guitar by naming **one** similarity and **one** difference.
5. What does it mean to describe the guitar solo in the middle of ‘Samba Em Prelúdio’ as virtuoso?
6. What is a coda?
7. Complete the gaps in the following:
Dal segno al coda is an instruction to _____ the music from the X sign until the words ‘to coda’ and then _____ to the C sign for the coda.
8. What is another term for a coda?
9. Complete the following sentence:
 When a rhythm is augmented its notes become _____.
10. The highest note in bar 3 of the song is played as a harmonic. What is a harmonic?
11. In what key is ‘Samba Em Prelúdio’?
12. What do you notice about the vocal register of this song?
13. Complete the following sentence:
 ‘Samba Em Prelúdio’ is a fusion of Latin American music and _____.
14. What name is given to chords such as C^9 , Bm^{11} and Bm^{13} ?

Answers: See page 71

The elements of music

The following elements are the building blocks of every type of music – be it folk, pop, rock, jazz, classical or world music.

Because it is often necessary to refer to these elements in exams, you may find it helpful to remember **DR T SMITH**:

Dynamics

Rhythm (including metre and tempo)

Texture

Structure

Melody

Istrumentation (including voices or other resources)

Tonality

Harmony

Below are some of the things that could be discussed within each element.

Dynamics

Dynamics are the relative levels of quietness or loudness in music:

quieter						louder
<i>pianissimo</i>	<i>piano</i>	<i>mezzo-piano</i>	<i>mezzo-forte</i>	<i>forte</i>	<i>fortissimo</i>	
<i>pp</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>mp</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ff</i>	

Dynamics also include *crescendo* or *cresc.* (gradually get louder), *diminuendo* or *dim.* (gradually get quieter), and accents (extra emphasis given to some notes).

Just listing the dynamics in a piece will not gain marks. It is important to show how the dynamics are used. For example:

- Are changes to the dynamics frequent, sudden or gradual?
- Does a *crescendo* lead to a climax?
- Is a *diminuendo* used to make the music fade away at the end?
- Are different dynamic levels used to create contrasts, as in the **terraced dynamics** of much Baroque music?
- Are some notes accented for special emphasis?