

## **Is It Acceptable for Composers To Borrow and/or Adapt Existing Music? Give Examples to Support Your Answer.**

Music has been stolen, borrowed and adapted for centuries! Some of the first examples of borrowing music dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and Choral and Church music! During the 13th Century there were many types of musicians. Apart from Monks and their plainsong style of music there were jongleurs, troubadours, trouveres, minnesingers and itinerant minstrels which all contributed to music of the day! Though these secular musicians did not engage in choral activity they did create a vocal tradition that was soon to "borrow" musical ideas from the church as the sacred motet transmogrified into the secular madrigal.

The madrigal appeared as the secular equivalent of the sacred motet in the late thirteenth century. The madrigal writers immediately adopted the style of having each part as an original composition rather than use an existing melody around which other parts could be structured. The secular words were taken from the works of esteemed poets as well as original verse written specifically for madrigal purposes. The quality of the words was deemed so important that they were able to stand as poetry of merit in their own right and were sometimes published as such. Petrarch (1304-1374) was one of the earliest poets to have his words used as the inspiration for madrigal setting. This form of borrowing is seen in our set pieces too. Palastrina took a plainsong hymn and used it in his Mass.

Another form of music borrowing is arranging! Arranging is where a composer takes an original piece of music and adapts it to his or her requirements. For example 'You are the Sunshine of My Life' was originally a 1970's popular piece of music. Frank Sinatra had it adapted to Swing music so that he could put his own twist on it. Jazz players do this as well, but taking someone else's music is not really composing so does that mean that people who arrange or borrow music are not composers? Well going back in history again, Bach is one of the most famous composers in the world today. His style of 'Bach harmony' is still widely used in classical music of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but no one has or would ever challenge that he wasn't a great influential composer. Even though Bach is seen like this he has also borrowed music in his day. In Bach's Cantatas there were Chorals and he would use tunes that people would know so that they could join in. His purpose in doing this was to get people to relate to the music though them knowing the tune of the Chorals.

Not just the classical, popular and jazz side of music uses the idea of arranging or borrowing, so does the music style of the 'Musicals.' Andrew Lloyd Webber is one of today's most influential Musical composers. He composed 'Cats,' 'Joseph and his technicoloured dreamcoat' and 'Phantom of the Opera' along with many more. In the 1970's Mr Webber created a series of variations on the theme of Pagnini. This became very famous in the world of Theatre and Dance. They are used throughout the world of Dance in Exhibitions and Competitions. Many people know them as composed by Mr Webber but the reality of it is that Mr Webber borrowed them from Pagnini.

This shows that in today's ever changing popular music style there is still room for the old melodies and chord patterns that are borrowed and arranged by 21<sup>st</sup> Century composers of today!