

## Solo Ballads

♪ **BALLADS** – tell stories, they have been around since at the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Back then a ballad was a long song with lots of verses that told a story. It's the type of thing that was sung by wandering mistrels.

♪ **POP/ROCK** – ballads still tell stories, they are often slow and sad and tell some kind of love story. Songwriters like to put a romantic or spooky twist right at the end to keep people listening.

You will hear ballads sung in many different styles – a rock ballad accompanied by heavy drums and amplified guitars e.g. a folk ballad played on a acoustic guitar.

Singer-songwriters are artists who write and sing their own material. They usually accompany themselves on either the guitar or piano and write a fair few ballads.

- Bob Dylan's most famous ballad is an anti-war song called 'Blowing in the Wind'.
- He sings a simple major scale, diatonic tune and plays a acoustic guitar.
- All the verses are the same music and the same last line.
- When the last line is repeated this works like a mini-chorus.

• Elton John's 'Candle in the Wind' is a love ballad about Marilyn Monroe.

- Her real name was Norma Jean.
- The first line goes 'Goodbye Norma Jean....'
- At Princess Diana's funeral he changed the words to 'Goodbye English Rose...'
- Elton accompanies most of his songs on the piano.
- His accompaniments combine rhythmic chords and snippets of tune, it stops things from getting boring.

• Sting always writes his own songs.

- He plays the bass guitar and also backed by his band.
- Sting's music takes a lot from soul and jazz.
- 'Seven Days' is a particularly jazzy ballad – its in 5/4 time and uses jazzy major seventh chords.
- Kate Bush bases the story of her ballad 'Wuthering Heights' on the book with the same name. She sings in a wailing, ghostly manner.

• Boy bands and Girl bands played a big part in 1990's pop.

- Bands like Take That, Boyzone, Westlife and Girls Aloud are all marketed at young teenagers. They rely on their image as much as the music to sell their CD's.

- **Emotional, slow ballads** are the perfect type of song to get the fans to fall in love with the band.
- Boy and girl bands often use:
- **Multitracking** in the chorus to **double up** voices and make the sound **fuller**.
- Repeated, pre-recorded **hooks**.
- Mostly **synthesised sounds**.

For my integrated assignment I have decided to compose music to be performed as a scene in a musical. The scene is as follows:

***Sophie bids farewell to Michael: he is to leave with his regiment the following morning.***

***He is going to a very dangerous part of the world and will be away for quite a long time.***

***She sings of her love for him, her sadness at their parting and her conviction that he will return safely to her.***

I have used Cubase VST 5 to compose this piece as I could easily record the vocal parts as audio files above the musical accompaniment.

The Piece is in the key of C minor. I decided a minor key would reflect Sophie's sadness and the way she longs for Michael's return.

The instrumentation used in the scene is based on a small pit orchestra and consist of 2 flutes, strings and rhythm section (piano, bass and drums).

Sophie is young, so her melody line would be in an alto voice.

Despite this being an intimate scene (and there would be nobody else around), I have also decided to use a chorus to high-light Sophie's thoughts as she sings to Michael.

The lyrics are below:

- Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*
1. Goodbye, it's time to go  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 You're leaving tomorrow  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 The war is calling  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 The world now needs a number one

- Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*
2. The time we've had, I wish that you would stay  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 The time we'll have when you're back one day  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 I wish tonight would just never end  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Fm9 Abmaj7/Bb*  
 Let time stand still while our hearts blend

*Ebmaj7 Abm(maj7)/Db*  
 Chorus: It's time to go  
*Ebmaj7 Abm(maj7)/Db*  
 I'll miss you so  
*Ebmaj7 Abm(maj7)/Db*  
 It's time to go  
*Ebmaj7 Abm(maj7)/Db*  
 I'll miss you so

#### Instrumental break

*The instrumental break is written as an improvised solo for alto saxophone. I have based the improvisation in the recording around the C minor blues scale (Concert pitch: C Eb F F# G Bb C) and added a few passing notes in to make the scale sound interesting. It is based on the chords of the 1<sup>st</sup> verse. The solo provides room for acting and dancing and gives the audience a break from the singing and time to enjoy the instrumental music.*

- Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*
3. Let time fly past while we're apart  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 It's not the end, it's just the start  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Dm7b9 G7*  
 When you return, my heart ache gone  
*Cm9 Am7b5 Abmaj7 Fm9 Abmaj7/Bb*  
 It's time to go.

The last line of the song ('It's time to go') allows the scene to return to it's original theme. This is where the story would continue with either more acting or an entr'act.

The piece ends on an Eb Major 7 chord. The major chord is to symbolize the hope felt by Sophie that Michael will return to her.

The drums play a rock rhythm which accents the off beat quaver of beat 3 performed by both the bass and keyboards. This drum rhythm happens throughout the piece.

The strings perform a legato introduction which creates the mood of the piece they continue throughout the piece playing an ostinato phrase behind the rhythm section.

There is a 4 bar flute riff, based on the Cm9 chord, repeated throughout each chorus, this changes to a descending Eb major scale which is performed in thirds in the chorus (ending on B and Eb which are the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> of the Ab minor (major7) chord)



The Chorus perform an off beat rhythm based on the chords of the chorus.

I think the piece has worked well as it uses instruments found in a pit orchestra. The piece is also in the style of a love song and therefore is appropriate to the scene. Using Cubase software allowed me to record the vocals and the backing in an effective and professional way.