

Module 3

Planning a Composition: The first steps in preparing a composition, whether it be for a solo or group, involve gathering basic material. Later, with all this material in front of us, we can add, reject, include other ideas etc. using Graphic Scores to help. For now though, we can simply enjoy a musical 'brain-storming' session, making a list of some instrumental devices or techniques we would like to use (Section A); following this we collect separate thematic ideas based on a small Tone Row (Section B).

In this sheet I have used a violin as an instrumental example, preparing material for a group composition called *Dreams*.

Section A: The first four lines are technical ideas in which the violinist is interested and would like to include in the piece: **harmonics** (these could be used freely in effects, or as a thematic variation); **tremolandi**, played on the bridge (*sul pont*); **double-stops**, again we can be thinking of melodic variation; music played *expressivo* on the G string (***sul G***).

Section B: Below these are musical ideas based on a very economical Tone Row **No.1**. The reason for the Row being so short is to allow greater freedom in variation at this stage i.e. melodies in different styles and metres based on the Row, rather than an adaptation of a long melodic Row. Although I have incorporated the techniques listed above into the melodic material, this is more by chance than necessity as it is more important to gather ideas at this stage, than to link up with the technical suggestions.

It is important to understand that in working with a Note Row we are not necessarily looking to construct a mono-thematic work. Rather, by restricting the material in this way, we are able to concentrate on the processes of variation themselves without the additional distraction and pressure of melodic composition.

No.2 shows two notes taken from the end of the Note Row, played in a rocking, dreamy line as harmonics. The rocking idea is continued using the other note. **No.3** is a semi-quaver passage which swirls around the Note Row, touching the pitches only at certain points. Used as a starting point for passage-work, the idea could be continued indefinitely to bridge sections within the composition. **No.4** is loosely based around the three last notes of the Row and explores the material as double-stops, also with the possibility of a variation played *tremolo sul/pont* to give a weird and expressive effect. **No.5** takes inspiration from the violinist's wish to play an expressive theme on the G string, by reversing the order of notes in the Row and using them as the skeleton of the tune. Again, this line can be continued freely so that the Row itself is seen only as a starting point.