

Contemporary A Cappella Arranging in 10 Easy Steps

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I. Choose a song

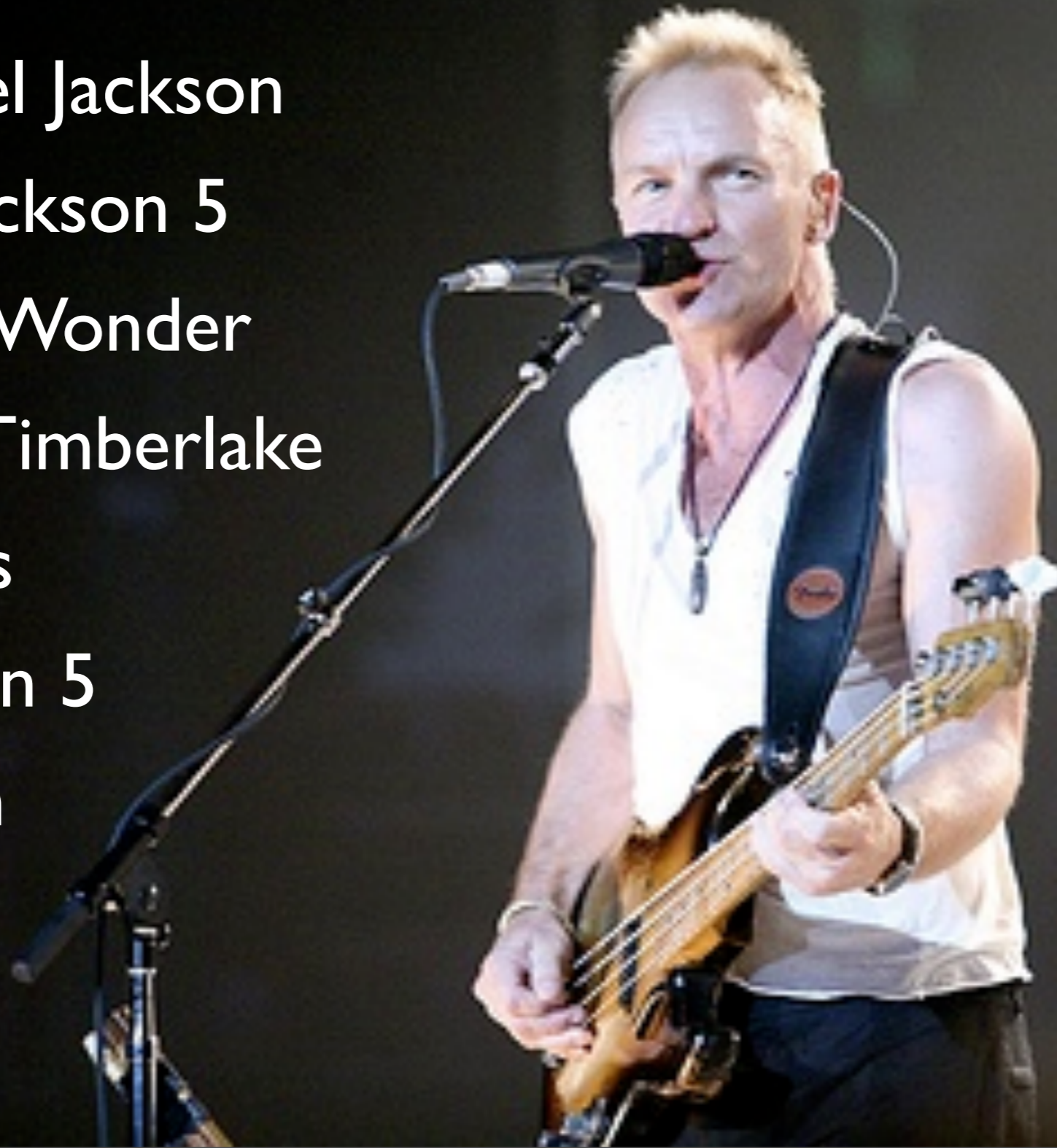
basic considerations

- Suitability for your group & soloist
- Try to choose something different!
- Choose a song you like



artists

- Sting
- Michael Jackson
- The Jackson 5
- Stevie Wonder
- Justin Timberlake
- Beatles
- Maroon 5
- Queen



public domain songs

- Traditional songs
- Hymns
- Folk songs



The Idea of North: Sweet Sweet Spirit

or an arrangement of....

-an arrangement

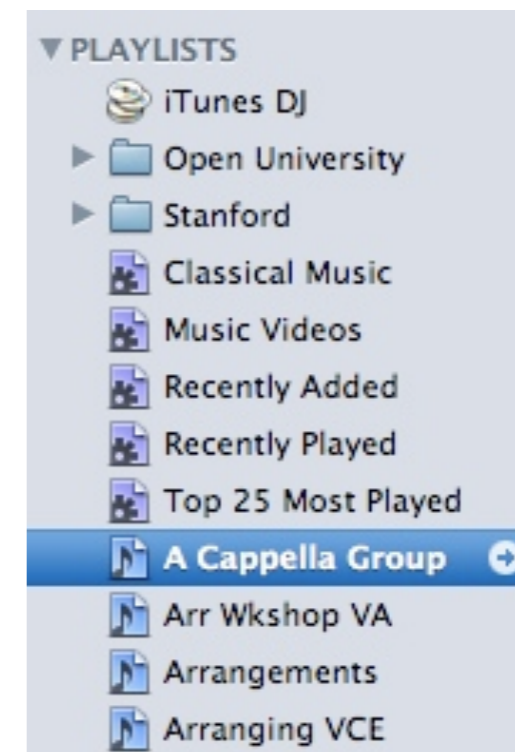


Got To Get You Into My Life:

- The Beatles
- Earth Wind and Fire
- Firedrill!

keeping track of ideas

- Make use of iTunes
- Playlist for each style, soloist or theme



2. Listen to the song....



....a lot

3. Decide basic parameters

overall decisions

- Number of parts
- Solo
- Song structure



musical style

- change key
- change tempo
- change “feeling”
- or remain faithful to the original?



Tears for Fears: Mad World

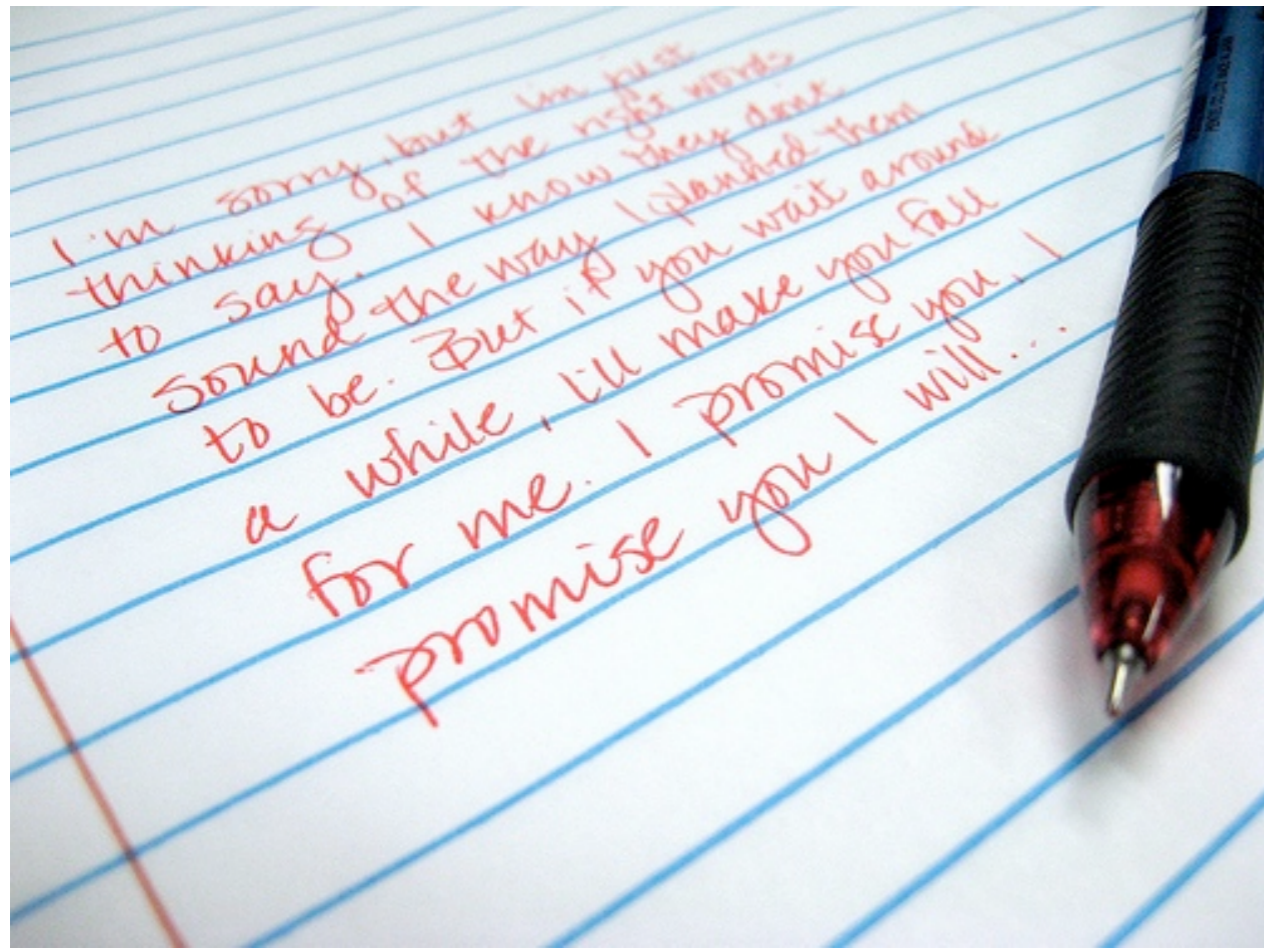
Gary Jules: Mad World



Jackson 5: I Want You Back

Sonos: I Want You Back

4. Gather materials



The image shows a screenshot of a digital piano roll interface. On the left, there is a control panel with the following settings:

- View:** Notes
- Pitch:** 0
- Velocity:** (slider)
- Enhance Timing:** None
- off** (slider) **max**

The main area displays a piano roll for a track named "Deep Round Synth Bass". The piano roll shows a sequence of notes on a grid, with a keyboard view visible on the left side of the piano roll area. The notes are represented by horizontal bars of varying lengths and positions, indicating pitch and duration. The piano roll is set to a 3/4 time signature, with measures 3 and 4 visible.

5. Consider how you'll "record" song and how group will learn song

Audacity File Edit View Transport Tracks Generate Effect Analyze

01 I Want Y
Stereo, 44100Hz
16-bit PCM

Mute Solo

L R

-15 15 30 45 1:00

Summertime

Gershwin
arr. K. Wardrobe

mp $\text{♩} = 88$

Solo

mp

Alto solo: Sum-mer - time and the liv-ing is ea - sy

Mm mm

Alto 1 & 2

Solo

6

fish... are jump-in'

A.

mm

GarageBand File Edit Track Control Share Window Help

GarageBand - The Lion Sleeps

Tracks

- Bongo
- Shaker
- Fingersty...ric Bass
- Percussion
- Pop Flute
- Clean Electric
- Electric Piano

1 3 4 5 6 7

Deep Round Synth Bass

Master Volume 0.0 dB

KEY C_{major} TEMPO 106 SIGNATURE 4/4

6. Get the melody down

melody

- Write out melody for entire song
- Provides structure/form to work with
- If writing/recording digitally, can move melody to an alternative part later



The Real Group: I'm With You

transcribing tips

- Find a quiet place
- Use headphones
- Learn playback shortcuts in iTunes
- Find CD player with responsive controls
- Technology can help: try Audacity



7. Create a strong baseline

melody + strong bassline

= good arrangement



The Real Group: I'm With You

8. Add interesting backing parts

backing parts

- Rhythmically interesting
- Different texture
- Imitate instruments
- Use words from melody
- Use imaginative syllables



The Real Group: I'm With You
SoCal VoCals: Falling Slowly
Firedrill!: My Yard

9. Make a good arrangement
outstanding

contrast

- Unison section into many parts
- Sparse arrangement vs full
- Contrasting texture
- Different tempos
- Add vocal percussion



Cluster: One Note Samba

10. Share your arrangement

notated arrangements

- print scores
- email PDF versions
- upload a playable/printable version to a website (Sibelius: Scorch; Finale: Finale Viewer)
- create audio file - backing track

MIDI sequencing

- print scores (sometimes...not so sophisticated)
- create audio file - backing track

audio recording

- create audio file - backing track

Other tips

MOUTH OFF!

...jin's and jodo's all over the place

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A banner for "The Acapodcast" featuring three iPods on a dark surface. The text "The Acapodcast" is in large white letters. Below it are navigation links: "Home", "About The Acapodcast", and "Contact the Host!".

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Logo for "CASA The Contemporary A Cappella Society" featuring stylized human figures. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: "Read", "Learn", "Listen", "Watch", "Sing", "Awards", and "Membership".

CASA

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Logo for "RARB THE RECORDED A CAPPELLA REVIEW BOARD" with the letters "RARB" in a stylized, swirling font.

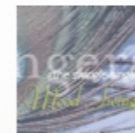
RARB

THE RECORDED A CAPPELLA REVIEW BOARD

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A Day Like This
New York Voices



Mood Swings
The Swingle Singers



A Cappella Vocal J...
Vox P



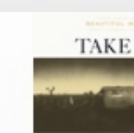
The Standard
"Take 6"



Boundless
Rajaton



25th Anniversary C...
The New York Voice...



Beautiful World
Take 6





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