Beckfoot

Music	Topic: Igor Stravinsky – The Rite of Spring – Context, structure, sonority and melody	Year Group: 12/13

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1. Context and structure

1	**Igor Stravinsky**	Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky was a Russian-born composer, pianist, and conductor. He is widely considered one of the most important and influential composers of the 20th century. Taught by Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky's compositional career was notable for its stylistic diversity. He wrote in three main periods, 'Russian phase', 'Neo Classical phase' and 'Serialist phase'.
2	**Introduction**	Can be interpreted as a musical representation of the gradual awakening of the earth after the long Russian winter.
3	**The Augurs of Spring**	The celebration of spring begins in the hills. An old woman enters and begins to foretell the future.
4	**Ritual of Abduction**	Young girls arrive from the river, in single file. They begin the "Dance of the Abduction"
5	**Structure**	Build up using blocks of sound, internally organised as mosaics of sound. Can be seen as through-composed to match the action on stage.

2. Melody

1	Acciaccatura	A crushed note. E.g. Horn in figure 25.
2	Conjunct	Movement by step. E.g. figure 19 in the Bassoon
3	Ostinato	A rhythmic, melodic or harmonic pattern repeated many times in succession. E.g. Cor anglaise at figure 22.
4	Chromaticism	Notes that move by semitone. E.g. Figure 17 in the woodwind.
5	Mixolydian	A mode with all the white notes starting from G. E.g. opening woodwind figure in ritual of abduction.
6	Motif	A short distinctive melody or rhythm used in different ways to form longer passages of music. E.g. figure 27.
7	Ornamentation	Notes that decorate a melody. E.g. figure 25.

3. Sonority – How the instruments are used

1	**Con sordino**	Play with a mute. E.g. Cello at figure 10.
2	**Col legno**	Hit the strings with the wooden part of the bow. E.g. Viola at figure 24.
3	**Down bow**	Move point of contact to the tip of the bow on a string instrument. E.g. Strings at figure 13.
4	**Flutter tonguing**	An effect on a wind instrument to produce a fluttering sound. E.g. Bar 60 in the upper woodwind.
5	**Glissando**	Slide from one note to another. E.g. Violas figure 11.
6	**Pizzicato**	Pluck a string instrument. E.g. Violin 2 at figure 4.

4. Key vocabulary

1	**20th Century music**	Music that went in experimental directions.
2	**Folk Music**	Relating to a particular country, in this case Lithuania and Russia.
3	**Orchestra**	A large group of performers playing a variety of instruments. Stravinsky uses a very large orchestra for a ballet, with colourful sounds.
4	**Quintuple woodwind**	A woodwind section with five times the conventional amount.
5	**Tessitura**	The average range of a passage or voice.
6	**Diatonic**	Featuring the notes of one scale/mode. E.g. melody at 25.
7	**Fragmentary**	Featuring small sections of a longer tune or section of the work. E.g. figure 15.
8	**Harmonics**	A very high note on a string instrument produced by placing a finger on a string very lightly before plucking or bowing. E.g. double bass at figure 10.

Other points of interest: Why was the work so controversial? How can features of European folk music be seen in the work? How are instruments exploited? What is the relationship between music and dance?

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5. Texture

1	**Countermelody**	A secondary melody that is heard alongside the main one. E.g. figure 29 in trumpets and cello.
2	**Fragments**	A short segment of a melody that can be repeated and manipulated. E.g. Figure 29.
3	**Homophonic**	Melody and accompaniment. E.g. Augurs of Spring opening.
4	**Homorhythm**	A type of homophonic texture where all parts have the same rhythm. E.g. Figure 43.
5	**Monophonic**	A single line which can be played or sung by several people. E.g. intro on Bassoon.
6	**Polyphonic**	When 2 or more different lines play simultaneously. E.g. main texture in the intro.
7	**Tutti**	A passage where all instruments are playing. E.g. Figure 30 climax.

6. Harmony and Tonality

1	**Atonal**	Music that doesn't belong to a key. E.g. Woodwind chromatic scales in intro.
2	**Bitonality**	When two different keys are used at the same time. E.g. Augurs of spring opening.
3	**Diatonic**	Notes that belong to the current key. Opening bassoon melody diatonic in Aeolian mode.
4	**Dissonant**	Sounds that aren't pleasant when heard together. Often found in the piece, e.g. figure 11.
5	**Modal**	A type of scale with 7 notes that is neither major of minor. Commonly used in folk and jazz music. E.g. use of Aeolian mode.

7. Tempo, metre and rhythm

1	**Cross rhythms**	The effect produced when 2 conflicting rhythms are heard together e.g. figure 15.
2	**Free rhythms**	Rhythm does not fit regular pulse. E.g. Start of intro and augurs of spring.
3	**Polyrhythm**	Conflicting rhythms played together. E.g. Bar 64.
4	**Quintuplets**	5 notes in the time of 4. E.g. first three bars of The Augurs of Spring.
5	**Rubato**	Tiny fluctuations in tempo for expressive effect. E.g. opening of Augurs of Spring.
6	**Syncopation**	Emphasising beats of the bar that are normally unaccented. E.g. Figure 31 in Horn 4 and contrabassoon.
7	**Triplets**	3 notes in the time of 2. E.g. Bar 64 of the introduction when polyrhythm is happening.

8. Key vocabulary

1	**Homophonic chords**	Chord that move totally together, E.g. Start of The augurs of Spring.
2	**Complex polyphony**	Many contrasting and difficult parts layered on top of each other. E.g. figure 29.
3	**Two part texture**	Music with two parts. E.g. intro just after opening bassoon.
4	**Four part texture**	Music with four parts. E.g. piu mosso just after figure three.
5	**4/4**	Simple quadruple time.
6	**3/4**	Simple triple time
7	**2/4**	Simple duple time
8	**Compound triple time**	3 dotted beats in a bar. eg. 9/8 at start of ritual of abduction.
9	**Presto**	Very fast tempo. E.g. Ritual of abduction.

Wider listening: Stravinsky – The Firebird: Korsakov – Scheherazade: Bartok – Concerto for orchestra: Debussy – Prelude a l'apres midi d'un faune.