

## AMBROSIAN BLOCKS

Before listening to the tunes that others have composed, open the Ambrosian file and listen to the blocks. Play with them a bit so you can appreciate the other players' comments and composed tunes.

To hear Keven's tune, open the AMB.KEVEN file and click on the KEVEN block. Glenn used the same blocks to make a very different tune. Slide the tempo all the way to the right (faster), open the AMB.GLENN file and click on GLENN. Keven was a music major; Glenn had no previous music instruction. Imagine how surprised the two students were to hear one another's compositions! Glenn called his composition an "African Drum Song." What makes the tunes so very different?

## LINZ'S COMPOSITION WITH THE AMBROSIAN BLOCKS

Linz composed a whole new song by editing the original Ambrosian blocks. To appreciate what and why Linz has done, begin by opening the Ambrosian file and listening again just to the Ambrosian blocks as they were given. Now click on LINZ and listen closely to her whole tune. You could probably hear that Linz has edited the blocks "...fixing them so they would work." This has changed the whole character of the blocks. With this in mind, read Linz's paper and actually play the blocks as given in the Ambrosian file (numbered 1-5), and then follow Linz as she continues her editing. Notice, particularly, that as a result of the editing changes Linz has made, she creates a tune that has a clear beat and clear phrase structure.

***[Comments to readers are inserted in bold.]***

### **Linz's Paper**

#### *First Impressions*

I analyzed possible positions and combinations that each block could fill. Block 3 seemed to make the only suitable ending, both blocks 2 and 4 would probably be middle blocks, and block 5 seemed to make a good beginning. I noticed how all the blocks shared the same tempo. By this I mean the duration between each of the notes was equal for all the notes in every tuneblock. This actually made the song seem very monotonous and boring. This feeling was strengthened by looking at the pitch contour where I saw that none of the blocks seemed to have any large jumps down or up. This constant stepwise movement had just become too boring for my ears.

*[Good listening in accounting for your general reaction to the blocks]*

#### Starting building the tune

I started with the combination of block 5 going to block 1. I noticed that block 1 sounded like it wanted to go somewhere but was stopped abruptly halfway there. I placed block 1 before block 5 and repeated block 1 because the repetition seemed to give it a sense of a half finished idea.

1 1 5

At this point I wanted to break up the monotony of the tempo, so I decided to modify block 1 so that the fifth note was held for the same amount of time as the first four notes combined (Block 1A). Immediately, this changed the character of the piece and placed an emphasis on the first note and fifth note of the block.

1A 1A 5

The long holding of the note also added to the anticipation I had of hearing something else. To answer the call of the repeated blocks, block 5 was a good start because it began the same as block 1 but instead of stopping halfway through, it continued forward and seemed to finally get somewhere.

### Going on

To find the continuation of the answer, I tried blocks 2 and 4 and they both sounded correct after block 5. I didn't like the way block 3 sounded because it felt like the ending of the piece and my song couldn't finish there because there had been no development yet. I decided to keep block 2 after block 5. Block 5 seemed to naturally divide into groups of 4 notes with the strong beat being on the 1st and 5th notes as it had in block 1.

To keep with this trend, I modified block 2 so that the final note would be the same duration as the first four notes combined (Block 2a).

1A 1A 5 2A

*Thus, you now feel regular meter--you have generated duple meter.*

### The form emerges

I was starting to get an idea of how I wanted the form of my piece to be. Block 1a is introduced as the start of something that we haven't figured out yet. It gets repeated again but it doesn't really get any further. Finally, with the addition of block 5, we get the movement of the piece into an actual idea. However, we throw in a second block which doesn't quite finish off the idea (block 2a). If we play block 5 again, we have an antecedent consequent phrase that needs to be completed.

1A 1A 5 2A 5

### Problems in making an ending

The final thing to do was complete the antecedent consequent phrase using the final two blocks. I still heard block 3 as the only block which seemed to conclude as an ending so I placed it at the end and put block 4 before it. The order of the song was now 1a 1a 5 2a 5 4 3.

1A 1A 5 2A 5 4 3

I didn't like having the note that is shared between blocks 4 & 3 being repeated four times because it was almost like a stop in the motion of the piece. I switched blocks 2 and 4 (again modifying block 4 so that the final note was the same duration as the four previous notes combined) but still had the problem of that same note being played 3 times.

To get rid of this problem, I tried repeating block 2 so that it would have more motion preceding the repeated note but this made that part of the song seem boring. I deleted the fifth note of the block so that there would be a constant upward and downward stepwise progression of notes without any repetition in the middle. This was my modification of block 2 (Block 2aa). My next song looked like this:

**1A 1A 5 4A 5 2AA 2AA 3**

I didn't like how each notes of the last part of the song ( 5 2aa 2aa 3) were played with exactly the same duration. I found that in order to keep the music going forward, I would have to "quicken" the tempo. To quicken, I mean to make the duration of time, before the next note is played, shorter.

I kept the repetition of block 2aa but changed the block so that the first two notes get played twice and "twice" as quick (block 2b). I decided to play block 2aa once and follow that with block 2b. I extended the last note of block 3 so that it would make a more convincing ending (Block 3a). By using 2aa 2b, I had the sense that just as I was about to get bored with the rhythm, there was a sudden quickening of the tempo that pushes the song forward to the end. I was left with the final song looking like this:

**1a 1a 5 2a 5 2aa 2b 3a [LINZ}**

### Analysis

There is a brief introduction followed by the antecedent phrase and a consequent phrase. In this case, the consequent phrase is longer than the antecedent phrase and made up of more blocks.

*(Linz: You have really traced your whole composition process and made clear what triggered your decisions and your specific changes. Your accounting for why, also goes very far into depth, but there is still more to discuss.)*