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Upper Fifth Listening

*Ground Bass*



## Upper Fifth Listening: Ground Bass

- A ground bass (also known as a basso ostinato) is a repeated bass melody.
- Each repetition, the other parts play something different. *What topic does this remind you of?*
- *Worksheet question 1*



## Upper Fifth Listening: Ground Bass

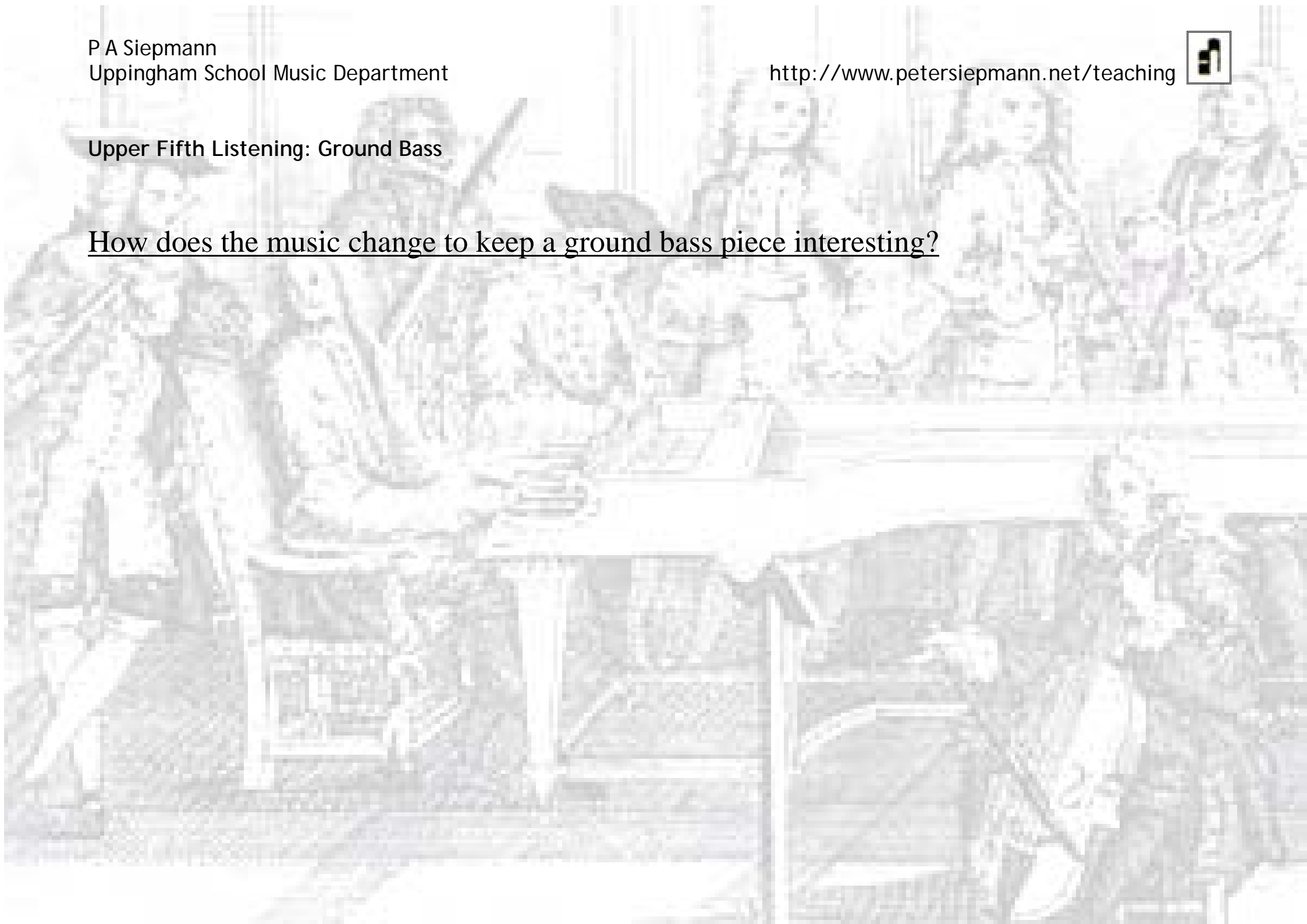
- A ground bass (also known as a basso ostinato) is a repeated bass melody.
- Each repetition, the other parts play something different. *What topic does this remind you of?*
- *Worksheet question 1*
- Ground basses were particularly popular in the Baroque period *When was that?*
  - o in the baroque period, the bass lines were
    - prominent
    - often played by the basso continuo
      - a bass instrument (e.g., cello) plus a harmony instrument (e.g. harpsichord, organ, lute)
      - harmony indicated by figures below the bass line called figured bass:

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: G2, A2, B-flat2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. Below the staff are the corresponding figured bass figures: 5/3, 6, 7/5# (with a sharp sign above the 5), 7/5# (with a sharp sign above the 5), 6/4+ (with a plus sign above the 4), 8, 7- (with a minus sign above the 7), 4/7, and #5/#3 (with a sharp sign above the 5).



## Upper Fifth Listening: Ground Bass

How does the music change to keep a ground bass piece interesting?





## Upper Fifth Listening: Ground Bass

### How does the music change to keep a ground bass piece interesting?

- adding/subtracting instruments/parts
- changing rhythms
  - e.g., doubling note values *technical term?*
  - e.g., halving note values *technical term?*
- changing melodies
  - e.g., add notes to decorate the melody
- changing harmonies
  - e.g., doubling a part in thirds
- changing key
  - e.g., dominant
  - e.g., relative major/minor

In general, as the piece progresses, the music tends to become more and more complex.

- *Worksheet question 2*
- *Worksheet question 3 (if time)*



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### Upper Fifth Listening: Ground Bass

- Rhinegold 4.3
- Recap.: How can the music change to keep a ground bass piece interesting?



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## Upper Fifth Listening: Ground Bass

### Other types of ground bass piece

#### - A Chaconne

- the ground bass is part of a repeating chord pattern
  - (remember that in a ‘normal’ ground bass piece, the chords can change over the top of the repeating bass line)
- an example of a Chaconne is the famous 16<sup>th</sup> century chord progression called *La Follia* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipTXKoZX7Qc>):

*a minor – E major – a minor – G major – C major – G major – d minor – E major*

#### - A Passacaglia

- the ground bass tends to be tuneful
- it can move through the parts (i.e., not always at the bottom)
- often with three beats in a bar (triple time)
- Rhinegold 4.1