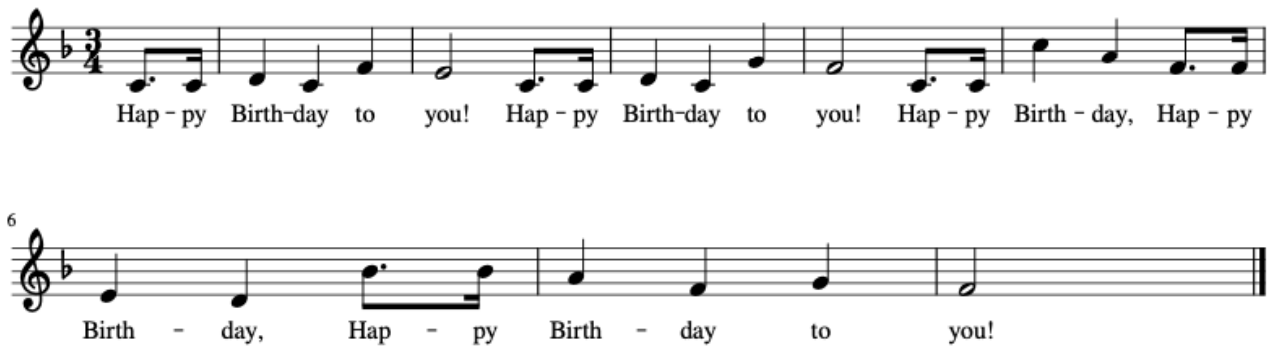


## 5. Happy Birthday



Pick a low-ish note and sing it together.

### A. Music Theory:

1. **Intervals:** Looking at the music, find the biggest jump between two next-door notes and then count the gap, starting with the bottom note as number 1.
  - [page 132 - numbering an interval](#)
  - [page 136 - quiz](#)

Discussion on calling an 8th an octave, and how it is written in shorthand - 8ve.

- [page 133 and 'learn more' button](#)

An octave interval has notes with the same letter name at the bottom and at the top, and the two degrees of the scale - 1 and 8 - also have the same letter name.

- [page 80 - degrees of the scale](#)

2. **Key:** The key is F Major (there is one flat in the key signature).
  - [page 102 - Major scales interactive](#)

What is the technical name of the degree of the scale on which the song starts? (dominant)

- [page 100 to 101 - technical names for the degrees of the scale](#)

What is the technical name of the degree of the scale on which the song ends? (tonic)

3. **Notation:** This song uses 4 different lengths of note: the dotted quaver / eighth note, the semiquaver / 16th note, the minim / half note and the crotchet / quarter note.
  - [pages 32 & 33 - notes, names and duration](#)
  - [page 41 - dotted notes](#)
4. **Time:** The song is in 3/4 time (there are 3 crotchet / quarter note beats in a bar) which is called 'simple triple'.
  - [page 170 - the pulse or beat](#)
  - [pages 196 to 197 - 'simple time' including 'simple triple' with an explanation of the key signature](#)

## B. Compositional elements:

- The triple time makes the music feel like a dance, and the first beat of the bar feels especially strong because it coincides ( on 5 out of the 6 possible occasions ) with one of the most important words - 'Birthday'.
  - [page 172 - the importance of the first beat of the bar](#)
- Dotted rhythms can be quite jolly or jaunty - this is a celebratory song, so using a dotted rhythm for the word 'Happy' is very appropriate and effective.
- The fact that the third appearance of the word 'Birthday' comes at the top of an octave jump adds more stress to its importance within the song. The sheer size of the jump would be enough by itself to emphasise both the note and the word.
- The repeat of the 'Happy Birthday' rhythm also gives those words extra emphasis.
- The tune has an **anacrusis** or **upbeat** (it starts before the first beat of the bar), and this pulls the listener even more into sensing the strength and importance that is generally given to the first beat of the bar.
- It is true that the word 'Happy' could be said to be equally as important as the word 'Birthday', but if the word 'Happy' comes on the first beat of the first bar, then on three occasions in the tune the most stressed word of the bar would be 'to'...



... and as the word 'to' is not at all important, and is therefore 'undeserving' of being positioned on the first beat of the bar, the better setting of the song has to be the one with the anacrusis.

- How many different one-bar rhythms are there in the normal version with an anacrusis ?
- How many different one-bar rhythms are there in the version without an anacrusis?
- The fact that the 6th bar (the third quarter of the song) finishes on the submediant tells the listener that the song is not yet finished.
- The final '2 1' ending is firm and decisive, finishing on the tonic.

A slight diversion....

'Lavender's blue' is in triple time and does not normally have an anacrusis:

5

Lav - en - der's blue dil - ly dil - ly, lav - en - der's green, when I am King dil - ly dil - ly, you shall be Queen.

See here the effect of adding one:

5

I am King dil - ly dil - ly, you shall be Queen.

- Again the main words or syllables that would normally be stressed or accented are now not so, according to the metre, and therefore the song sounds incredibly strange!
- Note that when a piece starts with an anacrusis, the last bar is not a full bar in terms of time. The partial final bar, together with the anacrusis part-bar, add up to one full bar.

### C. Musicianship:

- Look at the letter names of the notes in 'Happy Birthday' (options in both the treble and bass clef), and say them in the correct rhythm whilst clapping the beat.
- Sing the original song while clapping the first beat of the bar.
- Look at the other version of the song (without an anacrusis) and sing that whilst clapping the first beat of the bar.
- You could attempt all manner of variations on clapping on the beat, the offbeat, or just one beat or just one offbeat (for the more advanced student).
- As you clap the rhythm of the song (either version) try saying each beat in number form 1 - 2 - 3.
- Clap the rhythm of the song and say only one beat in number form, or two, and so on.
- Try singing the last note of the song at the same pitch as the preceding note (the supertonic / 2nd degree of the scale)
  - how does that feel?
  - does it sound right?
  - if not why not?
- This song does not fit well into a round - why not?
- Try marching to the song - why does triple time not suit a march?
- Sing the second version of 'Lavender's blue', which has the strange feel due to the use of an anacrusis. Be aware that the stress (that comes from the first beat of the bar) now appears in the wrong place and the whole song feels out of kilter.

## D. Broadening ideas:

Discussion of tempo

Q: How do we know how fast the composer wants us to go?

A: In this case we have no indication because there is no tempo marking, so ...

- sing the song more slowly then more quickly
- which has more energy?
- what is the purpose of the song?
- is it to bring joy and celebration, rather than to be quiet and reserved?
- so should it be quick and bouncy, or slow and sleepy?
- asking and answering questions like these will help a singer or instrumentalist to make an informed choice on a suitable speed for a song or piece.

Q: What note is used in a tempo marking? Discussion on 'the beat'.

Take two tempo markings: for instance:

- a) crotchet / quarter note = 60
- b) crotchet / quarter note = 140

In which tempo, a) or b), does the beat move more quickly or more slowly?

Q: On a metronome - if you don't have one to hand there are some great apps available - in which direction must the 'bucket' move to increase or decrease the speed of the beat.

Q: Apart from 'tempo' what else might affect the mood of a piece? More often than not it is a combination of the following ...

- Tonality: Major or Minor
- Dynamics: loud or soft - forte or piano etc.
- Articulation: smooth or detached - legato or staccato etc.
- Changes in the above: sudden or gradual

Find recordings (\*) of pieces that embody some of these traits so that you can listen to them and then discuss the differences.

### **\*Note well...**

It is best to decide upon any 'discussion' repertoire choices in advance, so that you are sure to be engaging with both suitable and appropriate content / lyrics / audio / visual material.