

Contemporary A Cappella Arranging in 10 Easy Steps

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I. Choose a song

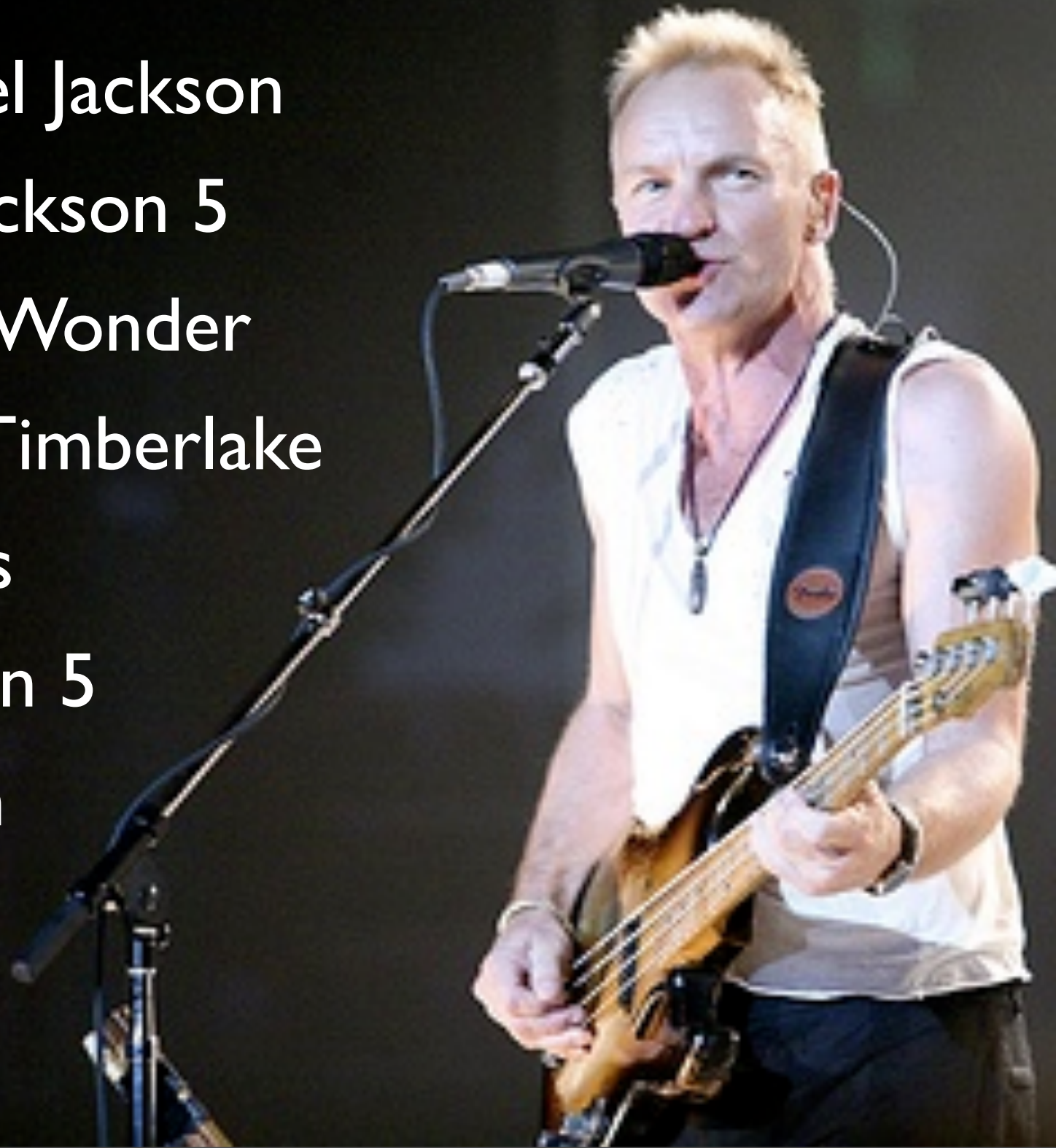
basic considerations

- 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

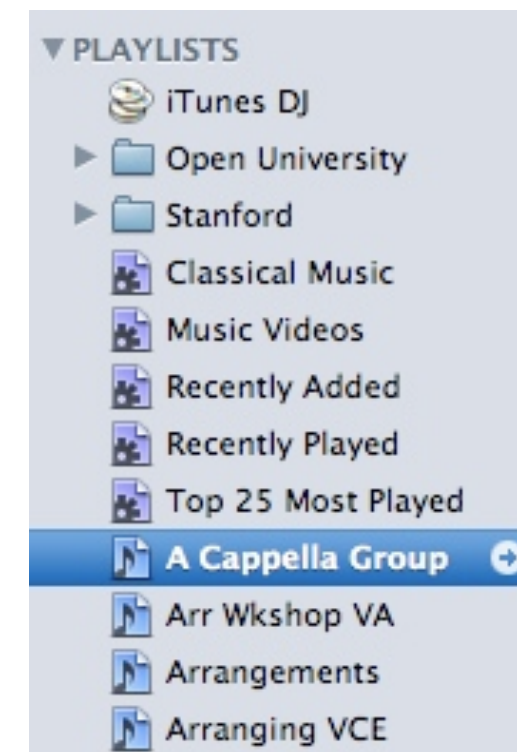


Got To Get You Into My Life:

- 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

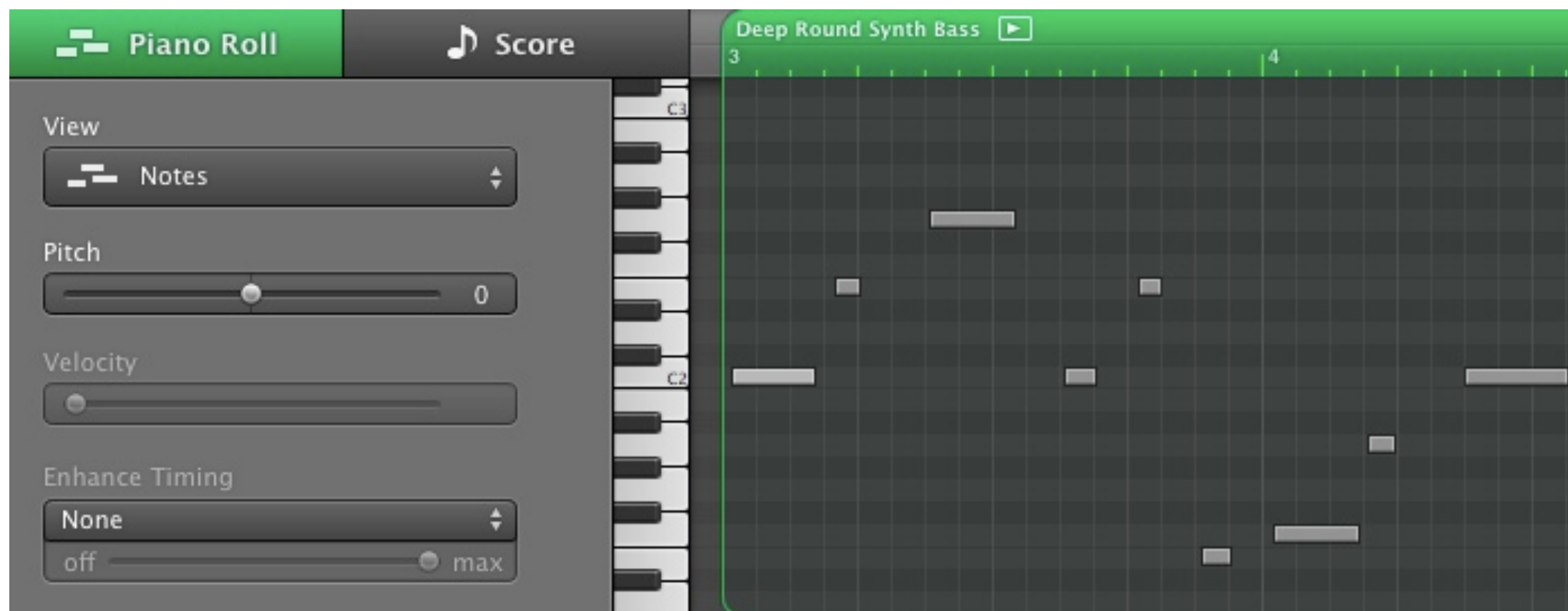
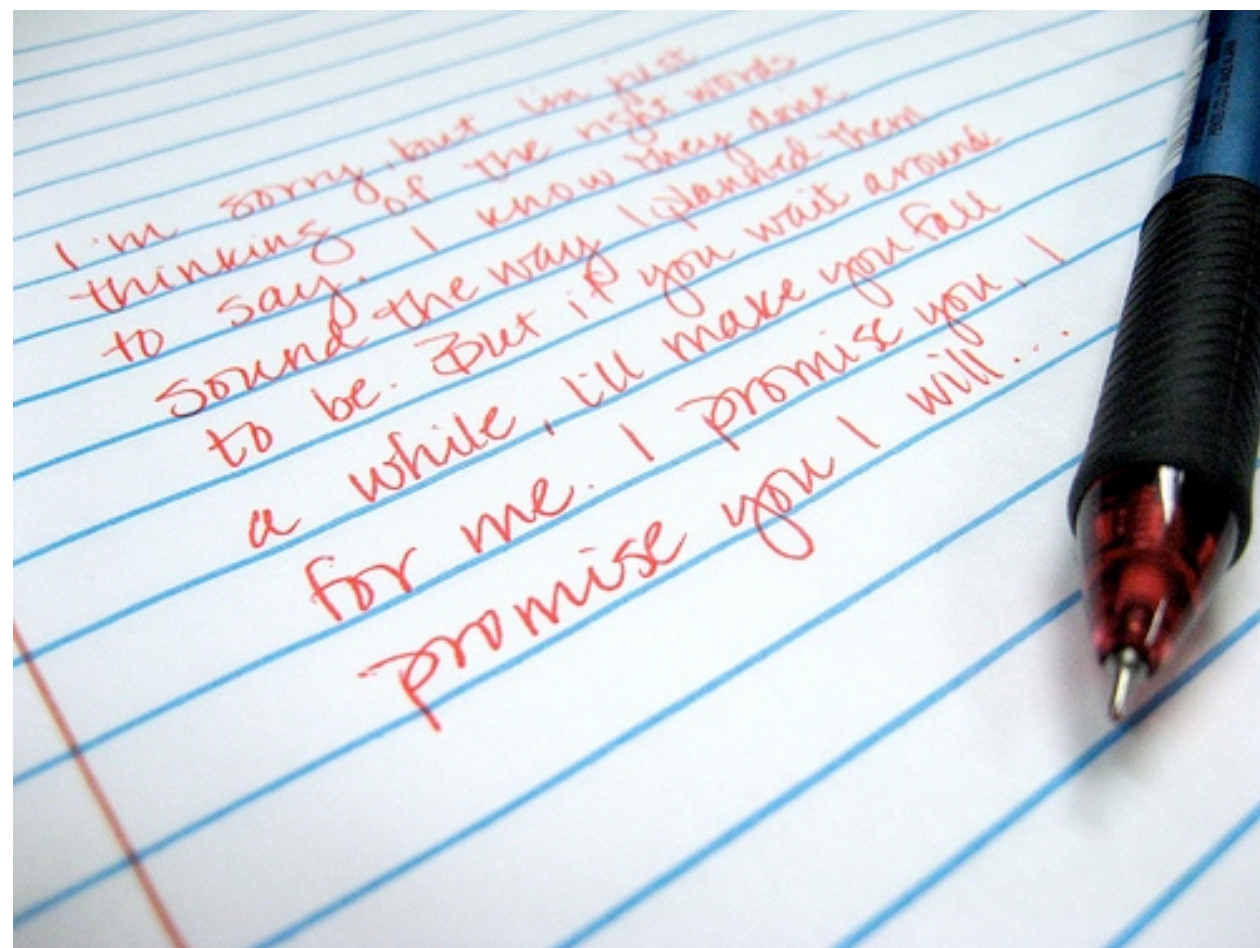
Gary Jules: Mad World



Jackson 5: I Want You Back

Sonos: I Want You Back

4. Gather materials



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

1.0 0.5 0.0 -0.5 -1.0

1.0 0.5 0.0 -0.5 -1.0

Summertime

Gershwin
arr. K. Wardrobe

$\text{♩} = 88$ *mp*

Solo

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

mp

Alto 1 & 2

Mm mm

6

Solo

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

Conga Groove 01 Conga Groove 01.1 Conga Groove 01.2

Deep Round Synth Bass

0.0 dB

Master Volume

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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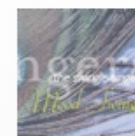


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Take 6





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