



# Skylines

Most of us can't go very far at the moment but we can look out of our windows at the skylines around us or, notice the shapes of buildings and other features as we go for a walk in our neighbourhoods. Here is the skyline of Birmingham city centre:

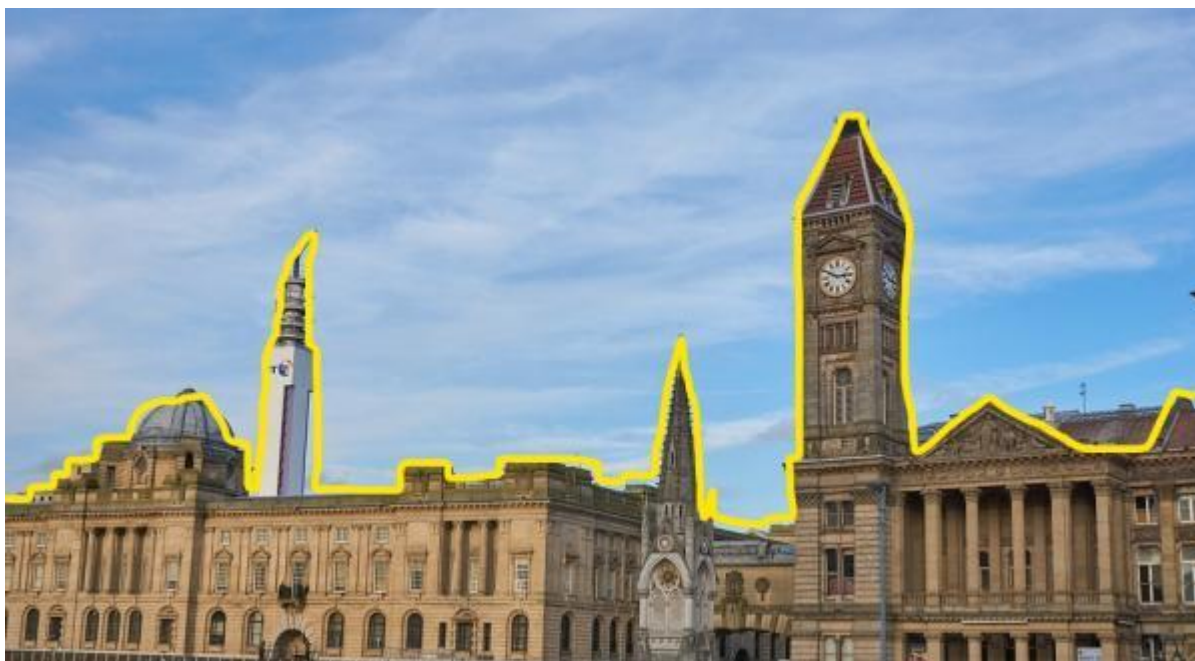


The first movement of *Music for a City* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfJx-gScGPs> by the American composer Aaron Copland is called *Skyline*. As you listen to the music, imagine the shapes of the buildings he might be describing. Copland also composed *Quiet City*. Listen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBAB8jHAhdw>. Does it reflect the quiet streets around your home?

Another composer interested in cities is Heiner Goebbels, who composed *Surrogate Cities* for mezzo-soprano singer, speaker, sampler and big orchestra. Here is a link (<https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/concert/1588>) to a video of Simon Rattle conducting this piece with the Berlin Philharmonic.

## Your turn!

Take photo of a skyline near you or find a skyline image you like. Now trace the skyline using the edit function on your phone, Ipad, computer or copy/trace it onto a new piece of paper. I've used the Birmingham city centre skyline which has lots of different heights and interesting shapes.



Can you **play the basic line** you have created so that it becomes a **melody**? The higher the line the **higher** the note, the lower line the **lower** the note. If the line is on a level, stay on the **same** note. Or maybe, your line is **going up or going down**. How can you play this? How **long** is each bit of your line? Try to **match** how long the line is with how long you play the note. If you want to, you could **notate** your melody. It might help to draw your shape onto manuscript paper.

Now try and **notice** some of the features of the buildings or landscape in your photo:

- Patterns of **windows** - how many? how big? And how are they grouped?
- **Chimneys, spires, domes** and **aerials**
- **Textures** of hedges, walls, fences, fields and woods
- **Decorations** on the top of or under roofs
- Interesting **patterns** of bricks, pillars or ? Are they regular or irregular?

How could **change** your melody to reflect these differences? Maybe....

- The **number** of windows and how they are **grouped** tells you how many times to play a note
- Chimneys and aerials become **accented high notes**.
- Your **sound** or how **loud** or **quiet** you play changes to show different textures and patterns
- You **zoom** into a particular feature or section

Create a final piece from your ideas. Please send any music you create to [learning@bcmg.org.uk](mailto:learning@bcmg.org.uk) and the image that inspired it.