

## **The ‘infinity spiral’ gesture: listening, exchanging, and links to the arpeggiation involved in instrumental material**

Most of the gestures employed in Harmony Signing require that the pitches performed correspond to the director’s intentions. Some, however, are not specifically ‘heard’ by independent listeners, except indirectly, such as the ‘tonicising sign’, which is silently invoked so that performers understand in which key and mode the music will proceed. A gesture that exists to help train the ear and develop sensitive response to the acoustic nature at that moment of the social musical interaction, but would seldom be employed in performance, is the ‘infinity spiral’, so called because it invites freedom of range and rhythm as its purpose: an invitation to explore.

The gesture, also known as the *Quixote* after the wandering Spanish knight from Cervantes’s novel, consists of indicating that the chord signed by the left hand should be sustained, and requires the signer to make a slowly repeating circle motion in the right hand, with the index finger point outwards (see **Videos 2, 12 and 75**). In response to the *Quixote*, performers should visit as many pitches as possible of the prevailing chord that they can move to and from while contributing in tune to the signed chord in a balanced manner. It is best to do this in slow motion, and performers should be encouraged to hear and contribute to it as a form of exchange, listening both to what notes others are performing and also to the intervallic relationships between them. It is useful in two specific contexts:

- 1) To develop an aural impression of the interaction of different instrumental sounds performing across a wide range and the timbral and textural consequences;
- 2) To provide a ‘safety net’ that can be applied while signing progressions in which performers are heard by the signer as having moved to wrong notes. It should alert everyone to the need to listen to one another with greater focus and sensitivity to correct the mistake and practice locating the right voice-leading pathway to the pitches required for the chord being signed.