

Concepts of Music



Duration

Refers to the speed of a piece of music as well as the length and organisation of notes and rests.

Key terms include: tempo, rhythm, Lento, Andante, Moderato, Allegro, Presto, syncopation, ostinato, backbeat, polyrhythm.

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Pitch

Refers to highness and lowness of sound and their combinations.

Key terms include: melody, harmony, tonality, atonality, modes, dissonance, blues scale, sequence, modulation, theme, range, drone, pedal point, riff.

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Structure

Refers to the order of sections and ideas in a piece of music.

Key terms include: binary, ternary, rondo, theme and variations, strophic, 12 bar blues, repetition, imitation, call and response, verse/chorus form, sonata form.

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Texture

Refers to layers of sound.

Key terms include: monophonic, homophonic, heterophonic, polyphonic, unison, rhythmic unison, staggered entry.

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Tone Colour

Refers to varying types of sound production and using adjectives to describe quality of sound.

Key terms include: chordophone, idiophone, membranophone, aerophone, electrophone, roles of instruments, instrument families (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion) and types of ensembles.

Adjectives can include: dry, woody, hollow, mellow, bright, dull, icy, metallic, grating, resonant, shrill, breathy, airy.

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Dynamics

Refers to the volume (loudness/softness) of sound.
Key terms include: pianissimo, piano, mezzo piano,
mezzo forte, forte, fortissimo.

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Expressive techniques

Refers to the manipulation of the other concepts. For example, crescendo manipulates dynamics, accelerando manipulates duration and vibrato manipulates tone colour.

Key terms include: crescendo, decrescendo, accelerando, ritardando, rubato, legato, staccato, glissando, double stopping, falsetto, vibrato, muting, pizzicato.