

Elements of music



Duration

Refers to the lengths of sounds and silences in music.

Key terms include – beat, tempo, metre, note and rest values, rhythm and rhythmic devices.

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Pitch

Refers to the relative highness and lowness of sounds.

Key terms include – melody, harmony, higher and lower, definite and indefinite, contour, steps, leaps and repeated notes, tonality, chord progressions, scales, pitch devices, methods of notation.

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Structure

Refers to the design or form in music. It refers to how a composition is constructed in sections or parts.

Macrostructures – verse/chorus form, binary, cyclic, strophic, multi-movement.

Microstructures – riff, phrase, motif, ostinato, sequence, head, colotomy.

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Texture

Refers to the way layers of sound are combined in a piece of music.

Key terms include – thick or thin, identification of the layers of sound, roles of the layers of sound such as melodic, harmonic or rhythmic, types of texture such as monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic, textural devices.

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Performing media and timbre

Performing media – the instruments/voices/sound sources used in a piece of music.

Timbre – the distinctive quality of a sound that enables the sound sources to be identified.

Performing media and sound sources – voices, instruments, electronic, natural.

Sound production methods – blowing, plucking, scraping, strumming, shaking, electronic manipulation.

Timbral descriptions – nasal, metallic, dry, woody, hollow, mellow, bright, dull, resonant, shrill, breathy.

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Dynamics and expression

Dynamics – the volume of sound.

Expression – the musical detail that articulates a style or interpretation of a style.

Dynamics and gradations – pianissimo, piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, forte, fortissimo, crescendo, diminuendo, niente, sforzando.

Articulations – legato, accent, tenuto, marcato, portato.

Expressive techniques – pizzicato, slap, palm muting, flutter-tonguing.

Electronic manipulation techniques – distortion, delay, looping, compression, sustain.

Expressive directions – rubato, dolce, smoothly, vocal ad lib, groove ad lib.