

DR SMITH Definitions

Elements of Music

&

Listening and Appraising Support

DR SMITH Definitions

D

Dynamics - Volume in music e.g. Loud (Forte) &

Quiet (Piano).

Duration - The length of notes, how many beats they last for. Link this to the time signature and how many beats in the bar.

R

Rhythm - The effect created by combining a variety of notes with different durations. Consider syncopation, cross rhythms, polyrhythm's, duplets and triplets.

S

Structure - The overall plan of a piece of music

e.g Ternary ABA and Rondo ABACAD, verse/chorus.

M

Melody - The effect created by combining a

variety of notes of different pitches. Consider the movement e.g steps, skips, leaps.

Metre - The number of beats in a bar e.g 3/4, 6/8 consider regular and irregular time signatures e.g. 4/4, 5/4.

I

Instrumentation - The combination of

instruments that are used, consider articulation and timbre e.g staccato, legato, pizzicato.

T

Texture - The different layers in a piece of

Music e.g polyphonic, monophonic, thick, thin.

Tempo - The speed of the music e.g. fast (Allegro), Moderate (Andante), & slow (Lento / Largo).

Timbre - The tone quality of the music, the different sound made by the instruments used.

Tonality- The key of a piece of music e.g Major (happy), Minor (sad), atonal.

H

Harmony - How notes are combined to build up chords. Consider concords and discords.

Elements of Music – Music Vocabulary

Dynamics - Volume

Fortissimo (ff) – Very loud

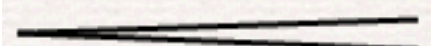
Forte (f) – Loud


Mezzo Forte (mf) – Moderately loud

Mezzo Piano (mp) – Moderately quiet

Piano (p) – Quiet

Pianissimo (pp) – Very quiet

Crescendo (Cresc.)  - Gradually getting louder

Diminuendo (Dim.)  - Gradually getting quieter

Subito/Fp – Loud then suddenly soft

Dynamics - Listening

Is the music loud or quiet?

Are the changes sudden or gradual?

Does the dynamic change often?

Is there use of either a sudden loud section or note, or complete silence?

Is the use of dynamics linked to the dramatic situation? If so, how does it enhance it?

Duration/Rhythm (length of notes etc.)

Note values e.g. crotchet, quaver

Pulse/beat

Triplets/duplets

Dotted rhythms

Cross Rhythms – Similar to polyrhythms but rather than just different rhythms playing, usually two different time signatures as well.

Polyrhythms – Two or more independent rhythms.

Syncopation – beats played on the weaker beats of the bar; jumpy rhythms.

Ostinato/Loop/Repetition – Repeated Patterns of music

Phrase length and shape (arch shape, spiky shape)

Phrase structure

How long a piece of music lasts.

Do the rhythms change as the piece progresses?

Time Signatures – Simple time e.g. 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4; Compound Time e.g. 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8 and irregular time e.g. 5/4, 7/4 or 9/4.

Duration/Rhythm - Listening

What rhythms can you hear?

Are there many rhythmic ideas or just a few?

Is the rhythm on the beat or is there syncopation?

Does the composer use several rhythmic ideas together? (This can overlap with consideration of texture).

Structure/Form

Binary - A B (a way of structuring a piece of music).

Ternary - A B A (a structuring mechanism of a piece of music).

Da Capo Aria – A B A (aria is a solo vocal piece. Da Capo means go back to the beginning. Popular during Baroque Period)

Minuet and Trio – A B A (popular during Classical Period)

Rondo - A B A C A D A etc.

Ritornello – A section that keeps returning (similar to rondo)

Arch-form – Sectional structure for a piece of music based on repetition.

Ground Bass – Repeated bassline.

Canon – Many melodies added one at a time (usually melodies upon a ground bass)

Theme and Variations – Subject followed by set of variations on the subject.

Indian Raga – Alap, Jhor, Jhala & Gat/Bandish

Aleatoric/indeterminacy/Chance – Music in which some or all of the performance is left to chance (Experimental Music).

Sonata – a piece played as opposed to singing.

Through composed – Music that changes regularly throughout (Bohemian Rhapsody – Queen).

Cyclic – repeated music.

Popular Song Structure

Intro

Verse (A)

Chorus (B)

Bridge

Middle Eight (C)

Outro/Coda

Strophic – Term used to describe Verse/Chorus structure

Structure/Form - Listening

What is the structure or form of the piece?

Do any of the sections within an individual piece repeat?

Are repetitions exact or varied?

What different dramatic effects are achieved?

What is the overall structure of the music?

In a comparison question – Do both versions use the same structure? Are both versions the same length or does one have a longer introduction, for example?

Melody/Pitch

Step – next door notes.

Hop/skip – notes that are a 3rd apart.

Leap – notes that are further apart than a 3rd.

Scalic – descending/ascending within a scale.

Interval – Distance between two notes.

Chromatic – notes that don't belong to a key.

Glissando – Rapid scalic movement on an instrument.

Ostinato – Repeated pattern.

Sequence – Repeated pattern at a higher or lower pitch.

Riff/motif – A short, repeated pattern, often in the bass part.

Imitation – A section of music that is imitated by another part or instrument.

Pitch Names (treble, bass & alto clef)

Sharp, flat and natural notes

Octave – The 8 diatonic notes between two notes of the same name.

Intervals – the distance between 2 notes.

Range of instruments

Diatonic key (major/minor)

Tonic – 1st degree of a scale

Subdominant – 4th degree of a scale

Dominant – 5th degree of a scale

Pentatonic – 5 note scale

Raga – Indian scale

Note Row/Basic Series – Serialism

Melody/Pitch - Listening

Is the melody stepwise or mostly in leaps (conjunct or disjunct)?

Does it cover a wide or narrow range of pitch?

Is it high-pitched or low-pitched?

How is it accompanied?

Is it diatonic or chromatic?

Is there a single melody or more than one (as in an ensemble or duet)?

Metre – Please see Duration/Rhythm

Instrumentation/Timbre/Articulation - Listening

What instruments are playing?

In which order do they enter?

What significance do they have?

What combinations of instruments are playing?

Are any special playing techniques being used?

How do the instruments help in the creation of mood, situation, period or place?

Texture

Monophonic - A single line of music. A single melody line with no harmonic accompaniment or accompanied by a drone or percussion instrument(s).

Homophonic – Melody with accompaniment. A melody line with a chordal accompaniment.

Polyphonic – Two or more melody lines that are heard at the same time. All melody lines are of equal importance.

Heterophonic – Two or more parts play a melody together but with some slight differences in pitch. This is common in Indian and Gamelan music.

Thick – Many sounds or instruments playing

Thin – Few sounds or instruments playing

Unison – More than one person singing the same part

Chorus – The whole cast of an opera or musical singing

Solo, two part, three part etc.

Duet, Trio, Quartet, Quintet etc.

Tutti – Everybody playing together

Descant/Counter Melody – A Second Melody playing alongside main melody.

Melody and Accompaniment

Texture - Listening

What type of texture is it?

Does the texture change throughout?

Are there just a few instruments playing or are there many?

Is it homophonic, polyphonic, 32-bar song, strophic etc.?

Tempo – Speed

Presto – Very fast

Allegro – Fast

Vivace – Fast, lively

Allegretto – Moderately quick, cheerful

Moderato – Moderate

Andante – At a moderate walking pace

Adagio – Slow

Lento – Broad, slow

Largo – Very slow

Grave – Very slow and serious

Accelerando (accel.) – Gradually getting faster

Rallentando (rall.) – Gradually getting slower

Ritardando (rit.) – Holding back, slower immediately

Rubato – At a flexible speed

Allergando – broadening out

Silence/Tacet – No sound at all

Pause () – Hold the note for longer than marked

A Tempo – Return to the original speed

Tempo/Speed - Listening

What is the tempo?

Does the tempo change?

What effect does changes in tempo have on the piece?

What is happening at the time of tempo changes?

Are there any periods of silence? Why?

Timbre – Please see Instrumentation, Timbre & Articulation

Tonality/Scales

Mode – Used before major/minor scales were invented. They are used to play folk songs such as Scarborough Fair and Drunken Sailor.

Major – Mainly used in happy, joyful and celebratory music.

Minor – Mainly used in sad, solemn, unhappy pieces.

Chromatic – Means colour and uses all twelve semitones within an octave. Used in Serialism.

Pentatonic – A 5 note scale. Used a lot in Scottish and Chinese/Japanese Music.

Whole-tone – Made up of only tones (no semitones). Popular in late 19th Century and early 20th Century by impressionist composers.

Harmony

Consonant – Notes that belong to a key/chord to produce nice harmonies

Dissonant – Notes that sound ‘wrong’ together

Cadences – These end phrases/sections of music:

(Closed) Perfect Cadence – V I

(Closed) Plagal Cadence – IV I

(Open) Imperfect Cadence – II or IV V

(Open) Interrupted Cadence – VVI

Modulation – Change of key

Transpose – Re-write a piece in a new key

Pedal – A sustained note, usually dominant or tonic:

Inverted Pedal (Played at a high pitch)

Inner Pedal (Played at a middle pitch)

Pedal (Played in the lowest bass part)

Drone – Usually a sustained part consisting of 2 notes (tonic and dominant).

Arpeggio/broken chords – Chords that are broken up.

Diatonic/Chromatic – characterise scales e.g. F sharp, B flat.

Passing note – A note that isn’t part of the chord.

Auxillary note – a note that falls between two adjacent notes of the same pitch.

Acciaccaturas – A grace note, played very fast.

Appoggiaturas – Similar to acciaccatura but played for longer.

Suspension – one or more notes temporarily held before resolving to a chord tune e.g. Gsus 4.

Tierce de Picardie - a major third in the final chord of a composition in a minor key.

Seventh chords – a chord consisting of a triad plus a note forming an interval of a seventh.

Added note chord – a triadic chord with an extra “added” note.

Harmony - Listening

What sort of harmony is being used?

Are there discords (chords that don’t sound ‘right’)?

Can you recognise any harmonic progressions e.g. cadences?

Does the composer modulate to a new key e.g. major to minor?

Are modulations sudden or gradual?