

Appendix H

Musical Concepts

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Music is patterns of melody, rhythm, harmony, tempo/dynamics, and timbre combined to create repetition, variation and contrast. We use these patterns to create music and we respond emotionally and intellectually to our perceptions and interpretations of these patterns of music.

Duration

Beat - Music often has an underlying, recurring beat.

Accent - Beats may be accented or unaccented. Accented beats may occur at regular or irregular intervals.

Rhythm - Sounds may be long or short.

Syncopation - Rhythmic and melodic accents may or may not coincide with metric accents.

Rests - Music moves in time in longer and shorter durations which are often grouped together and which are punctuated by silences.

Metre - Metre is the organization and measurement of accented and unaccented beats in groups. These groups may be composed of two beats, three beats, or multiples or combinations of two's and three's.

Simple and Compound Meter - Each beat may be divided into two, three or more subdivisions.

Polymeter - Two or more different rhythms or meters may occur simultaneously.

Melody

Sound - Sounds are produced by vibration which may be regular or irregular. Regular vibrations have definite pitch.

Contour - Successive pitches may move higher or lower or stay the same.

Phrases - Successive pitches may be organized in patterns, which may be combined to create phrases and melodies.

Ostinato - A repeated rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic pattern may serve as the accompaniment to a musical work.

Interval - The distance between two musical pitches is an interval. Each interval has a distinctive sound regardless of the pitch on which it is built. Intervals may be sounded simultaneously or successively.

Scales The pitches of which music is created may be organized in specific ascending and descending patterns called scales.

Tonal Centre - Many melodies tend to establish a feeling of tonal centre or a sense of finality.

Harmony

Chords - Three or more pitches sounding simultaneously constitute a chord.

Triad - A given tone together with the 3rd and 5th above it constitutes a specific kind of chord called a triad. A triad or other chord may be built on any degree of a scale. Additional thirds may be added to triads producing 7th, 9th, 11th, and 13th chords. Any tone of a triad or other chord may be raised or lowered chromatically. Chords may be built on intervals other than the 3rd or may be composed of clusters or pitches or randomly related pitches.

Inversions - Triads may appear in root position or inversions.

Tonality - Certain harmonies and harmonic progressions tend to establish a feeling of tonal centre or tonic.

Cadence - Certain chord progressions tend to establish a sense of finality or to punctuate the flow of the music.

Modulation - The tonal centres may change within a given piece of music.

Polytonality - Two or more tonal centres may exist simultaneously.

Atonality - The feeling of tonal centre may be weak or non-existent.

Texture

Monophony - A melodic line may exist without harmonic support.

Homophony - A melody line may be supported by a harmonic accompaniment.

Polyphony - A piece of music may be created by means of two or more musical lines which exist simultaneously.

Canon - A piece of music may be created by imitation of a melody by succeeding voices at the same pitch level or at different pitch levels.

Form

Repetition -Basic structural units such as motives, themes.

Contrast phrases, periods, and sections may recur (intact or modified) to provide unity in music. Contrasting units may be used to provide variety. Unifying and contrasting units may be combined in various ways to form larger structural units.

Motives - Musical works often contain brief groupings of rhythmic or pitch patterns called motives. These motives may function as identifiable elements in musical compositions.

Themes - Musical works often contain melodies, which may function as identifiable themes.

Phrases and Periods/Sentences - A melody may be composed of two or more periods (sentences),each of which may be composed of two or more phrases.

Sections - Musical works often contain identifiable sections, each of which is composed of two or more periods and which collectively help to define the form of the work. Musical compositions may include introductions, codas and various types of transitional sections.

Form and structure may be discerned at various levels within and between themes, sections, and movements. Most traditional musical forms are based on imitation or on repetition and contrast. Music may also be through-composed, serial, or aleatoric.

Binary/Ternary - Many smaller musical works are binary or ternary in form. Binary and ternary structures are often incorporated in larger forms. Musical compositions may be categorized not only by form but also on other bases including medium (e.g., symphony, cantata), number of voices (e.g., trio, quartet), compositional technique (e.g., fugue, serial), function (e.g., prelude, intermezzo), genre (e.g., opera, mass).

Timbre

Tone Colour - Sounds may differ in timbre.

Factors Affecting Timbre - Differences in timbre are attributable to differences in overtone structure. Each sound source produces its own distinctive timbre depending on its size, shape and material. Tone quality is affected by a variety of factors relating to tone production including, for example, embouchure in playing wind instruments, bowing technique for playing string instruments, and placement of vowels and consonants when singing. Timbre provides an important source of unity and variety in music and serves as an important function in defining musical form. It may also play an important role in musical expression.

Dynamics

Dynamics - Sounds may differ in loudness. Changes in dynamics may occur suddenly or gradually.

Factors Affecting Dynamics - Dynamics and dynamic potential are affected by the shape, size, and material of the sound source and by the method of tone production.

Use of Dynamics - Dynamics play an important role in musical expression, provide an important source of unity and variety, and help in defining musical form.

Tempo

Tempo - Music may move relatively fast or slow in tempo. Changes in tempo may occur suddenly or gradually.

Uses of Tempo - Tempo plays an important role in musical expression, provides an important source of unity and variety, and helps in defining musical form.

Summarized from:

Edelstein, Stefan; Lois Choksy; Paul Lehman; Njall Sigurdsson; David Woods. *Creating Curriculum in Music*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1980.