

Vocabulary list for Music Fundamentals

This list is to help you study for the first exam. These are the words and concepts from our Music Fundamentals lectures (lectures 1-6) that I will ask you about on the exam. Please refer to your class notes and the textbook (Module 1) for more information.

- Music: sound that has been organized by human beings for cultural expression.
- Four Properties of sound:
 - Pitch – how high or low the sound is. Controlled by the frequency of the sound wave.
 - Dynamic – how loud or soft the sound is. Controlled by the amplitude (intensity) of the sound wave.
 - Duration – how long the sound lasts.
 - Timbre – “tone color” – what is making the sound?
- Note: a symbol for sound.
- Rest: a symbol for silence.
- Staff: five horizontal lines, used to show the pitch of notes.
- Clef: assigns a letter of the musical alphabet (A-B-C-D-E-F-G) to each line and space of the staff.
- Forte (f): a dynamic marking meaning “loud.”
- Piano (p): a dynamic marking meaning “soft.”
- Crescendo (cresc): a dynamic marking meaning “gradually get louder.”
- Decrescendo (decresc) or Diminuendo (dim): a dynamic marking meaning “gradually get softer.”
- Seven elements of musical style: melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, timbre, form, context.
 - Melody: the tune – the part of the music that you remember. A series of notes/pitches of different lengths arranged in a pattern.
 - Step: moving to the next note in the alphabet (ex. A-B). A small change in pitch
 - Leap: skipping notes in the alphabet (ex. A-D). A larger change in pitch.
 - Scale – stepwise motion all the way through the musical alphabet. A fundamental unit of melody.
 - Phrase: musical punctuation within a melody, organizes the melody into recognizable statements.
 - Cadence: the end of a phrase. Some cadences are strong/final, some are weak/incomplete.
 - Example: “I woke up, and went to school.” The first phrase is weak, giving you the sense that more is needed. The second phrase has a strong ending. Music works the same way.
 - Motive: a small fragment of a melody. Not enough music to survive on its own, it can be combined and repeated to create a melody.
 - Harmony: all of the other sounds that go along with (accompany) the melody. Creates the “setting” or “environment” for the melody.

- Chord – the basic unit of harmony. A group of 3 or more notes that sound at the same time.
- Consonance (adj. consonant) – a group of sounds that fit together in a pleasant way.
- Dissonance (adj. dissonant): a group of sounds that clash with each other and do not sound pleasant.
- Tonality (Key): the choice of one note to serve as the root or most important note of a piece of music, and a “quality” that sets the mood of the piece.
 - Since 1600, the two types of musical quality are Major and minor. Music in Major keys can sound happy, noble, triumphant or energetic. Music in minor keys can sound sad, angry, evil, tired or tragic.
- Rhythm: patterns of long and short note values. Adds variety to the music.
 - Beat/Pulse/Tempo: a measurement of speed in music. A beat is a standard length of time that reoccurs constantly and steadily, controlling how fast the music is played.
 - Meter: the repeated pattern of strong and weak beats in the music. Most music is in either duple, triple, or quadruple meter.
 - Measure: visually organizes written music according to the meter. Each measure contains exactly the number of beats in the meter (2, 3, or 4).
- Timbre: see above. The choice of what instruments to use has a big effect on how the music sounds and feels to the listener. Playing the same music twice with different instruments adds variety to the music.
- Texture: how the different layers of the music (“voices”) relate to each other.
 - Voice: an independent line of the music. Could involve more than one musician who are doing the same thing. A voice could be melodic or harmonic.
 - Monophonic texture: “One Voice” - either a melody by itself, or a group of players all playing the same thing.
 - Polyphonic texture: “Many Voices” – more than one voice, each performing an independent line. Each voice is equally important.
 - Homophonic texture: “Same Voice” – a melody (most important) accompanied by other voices that support it and provide harmony.
- Form: the larger-scale structure and organization of music, like paragraphs and chapters in writing. The pattern of different sections, themes, melodies, etc. that make up a piece.
 - Theme: a melody that reoccurs throughout a piece. It can be changed (transformed) but will still be recognizable. A theme can represent an idea, a mood, a person or event (but doesn’t have to).
 - Each section of the form will be very different in some way, and may have its own themes.
 - Most common form in classical music: ABA (A section, followed by B section with new mood and material, followed by a return of the original A section).
- Context: What cultural/social/historical factors influenced this music?