

## Definitions Of Concepts

### Note

A musical note is a single sound, consisting of a specific *pitch* (highness or lowness) and a specific *duration* (length of time), and often a specific *dynamic* (loudness).

### Beat

A beat is a frequent and consistent increment of time, often indicated by a recurring pulse. Beats are usually organised into groups of 4 (called *bars*), but may also be organised into combinations of groups of 2 or 3, depending on the style of music. The rate (or speed) at which beats occur is referred to as *tempo*, often indicated as a number of beats-per-minute (bpm; 120bpm equals 2 beats per second, for example).

### Rhythm

The organisation of notes with regard to their duration and the times at which they begin. Rhythm is structured according to an ongoing series of beats. Notes begin on particular beats, or on particular subdivisions of particular beats, and then remain sounding for a particular number of beats, or a particular number of subdivisions of a beat. Rhythm often forms a pattern that may be repeated, referred to as an *ostinato*. Musical terms used in the description of rhythm are:

- *Metre*, also referred to as *Time Signature* (basically, the number of beats that constitute a *bar*).
- Semibreve (a note with a duration of four beats)
- Minim (a note with a duration of two beats)
- Crotchet (a note with a duration of one beats)
- Quaver (a note with a duration of half a beat)
- Semiquaver (a note with a duration of a quarter of a beat)

### Melody

A sequence of single notes. A set of notes organised to sound consecutively, often to form a contour (a *phrase*, or "musical sentence"), or a pattern referred to as a *motif*. The notes comprising a melody may vary in their duration, allowing melody to also have attributes of rhythm.

### Harmony

Two or more notes sounding simultaneously. Three or more notes sounding simultaneously may be referred to as a *chord*. A harmony may sound subjectively pleasant (consonant) or unpleasant (dissonant). The kind of harmony sounded is usually the result of a specific *key signature* (*G Major*, for example) or *chord progression*. Harmony may also be formed from multiple melodies sounding together (*counterpoint*).

## Dynamics

Loudness and quietness of music, and the way in which it is varied. Dynamics may be in reference to the sound of a whole *ensemble* (group of instruments), or the sound of an individual *part* (voice or instrument) within an ensemble. Musical terms to describe dynamics are:

- pianissimo (*pp*, very quiet)
- piano (*p*, quiet)
- mezzo piano (*mp*, medium quiet)
- mezzo forte (*mf*, medium loud)
- forte (*f*, loud)
- fortissimo (*ff*, very loud)
- crescendo (*cresc*, become louder)
- decrescendo (*decresc*, become quieter).

## Tone

Also referred to as *timbre*. Can be thought of as the "character" of a particular voice or instrument, or that of a combination. It is what distinguishes one instrument from another. For example, a tenor saxophone and a trombone may sound similar notes at similar dynamics, but their tone, or timbre, is why they sound different. Musicians may alter the tone of their instruments with the use of mutes or electronic effects. The tone of a whole ensemble is the result of its *instrumentation* (combination of instruments).

## Form

The overall structure of a whole piece of music, from beginning to end, according to time (usually measured in numbers of *bars*). This can be divided into components called *sections*. Form refers to the order in which the sections occur, the duration of the sections, and whether any sections are repeated (which they usually are). Different sections may be referred to as "Section A", "Section B" and so forth, or labelled with terms such as *Introduction*, *Verse*, *Chorus*, *Bridge* and *Coda*. Some terms that may be used to describe form are *Binary* (two main sections, AB), *Ternary* (three main sections, ABA or ABC), and *Rondo* (ABACADAE etc.).

## Texture

The number of *parts* (voices or instruments) sounding simultaneously in any particular section of a piece of music, and the harmonic and rhythmic relationship between them. Often described as dense, sparse, thick, thin, complex or simple. Other terms to describe texture are *monophonic*, *polyphonic* and *homophonic*. Examples of different textures:

- One instrument playing one thing.
- Lots of instruments playing the same thing.
- Lots of instruments playing the same rhythm but on different pitches.
- Lots of instruments playing the same pitch but with different rhythms.
- Lots of instruments playing different rhythms with different pitches (different melodies).