MELODY

Melody
A succession of single tones or pitches perceived as a unity.

Pitch
The highness or lowness of a tone, depending on the frequency (rate of vibration). Also, a musical sound.

Interval
The distance and relationship between two pitches.

Range
The distance between the lowest and highest tones of a melody, an instrument, or a voice. This span can be generally described as narrow, medium, or wide in range.

Shape
The shape of a melody is determined by the direction a melody takes as it turns upward or downward or remains static. On a line graph, a melody might be charted as an ascending line, a wave, or a static line.

RHYTHM

Rhythm
The element of time in music. (Since music is an art that exists solely in time, rhythm controls ultimately all the relationships within a musical work.)

Beat
Regular pulsation; a basic unit of length in musical time.

Accent
Emphasis on a note, so that it is louder or longer than another.

Meter
The grouping of beats into larger, regular patterns, notated as measures. The two basic meters are duple (two beats) and triple (three beats); quadruple (four beats) is the most common. In simple meters, such as duple, triple, and quadruple, each beat subdivides into two; in compound meters, such as sextuple, each beat divides into three.

Measure
A rhythmic group or metrical unit that contains a fixed number of beats, divided on the musical staff by bar lines. Also known as Bar.

HARMONY

Harmony
The simultaneous combination of notes and the ensuing relationships of intervals and chords; the vertical relationship of combined notes. Not all musics of the world rely on harmony for interest, but it is central to most Western music.

Chord
Simultaneous combination of tones (typically three or more) that constitute a single block of harmony.

Scale
A series of tones or pitches in ascending or descending order. Scale tones are often assigned numbers (1-8) or syllables (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do).

Dissonance
A combination of tones that sounds discordant and unstable, in need of resolution.

Consonance
A concordant, harmonious combination of tones that provides a sense of relaxation and stability in music.

TEXTURE

Texture
The interweaving of melodic (horizontal) and harmonic (vertical) elements in the musical fabric. Texture is generally described as monophonic (single line), heterophonic (elaboration on a single line), homophonic (single line with accompaniment), or polyphonic (many voices).

Monophonic
Single-line texture, or melody without accompaniment.

Homophonic
Texture with a principal melody and accompanying harmony; as distinct from polyphony.

Polyphonic
Occurs when two or more melodic lines combine into a multi-voiced texture, as distinct from monophonic.

Heterophonic
Texture in which two or more voices (parts) elaborate the same melody simultaneously; often the result of improvisation.

FORM

Form
The structure or shape of a musical work, based on repetition, contrast, and variation; the organizing principle of music. Binary and ternary are basic forms, while more sophisticated forms include rondo, sonata-allegro, minuet and trio, theme and variations, ritornello, and fugue.

Repitition
Within a form, repetition fixes the material in our mind and satisfies our need for the familiar; it provides unity to a form.

Contrast
Within a form, contrast sustains our interest and feeds our love of change.

Variation
A formal principle in which some aspects of the music are altered but still recognizable.

Theme
A melodic idea used as a basic building block in the construction of a composition. (The main theme of a fugue is called a "subject.")

TEMPO

Tempo
The rate of speed or pace of the musical pulse. Tempo markings are traditionally given in Italian.

(more below)

DYNAMICS

Dynamics
Designations for the relative loudness or quietness of music. The main dynamic terms are based on the Italian words for loud ("forte") and quiet ("piano"). These words can be modified by the prefix "mezzo" (medium) or the suffix "issimo" (more).

(more below)

TIMBRE

Timbre
The quality of a sound that distinguishes one voice or instrument from another. Also called "tone color".

Properties of Musical Sound
Musical sound can be said to have four properties: pitch, duration, volume, and timbre.

String family
The members of the string family include two types of instruments: bowed and plucked. The standard bowed string instruments, from highest to lowest, are: violin, viola, cello, and double bass. The harp and guitar are common plucked string instruments. String instruments often play special effects, including: trill, pizzicato, harmonic, and arpeggio. The bowed strings (violin, viola, cello, double bass) form the core of the orchestra.

Woodwind family
The woodwind family is less homogeneous in construction and sound production than the strings; it includes the piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, English horn, and bassoon. The saxophone is a more recent woodwind instrument that is frequently heard in jazz.
Brass family
The principal orchestral instruments of the brass family, from highest to lowest, are: trumpet, French horn, trombone, and tuba. Other brass instruments commonly used in concert and marching bands include cornet, and euphonium. These instruments all have cup-shaped mouthpieces attached to a length of metal tubing that flares into a bell at the end. A column of air is set vibrating by the tightly stretched lips of the player.

Percussion family
The many, varied percussion instruments fall into two basic categories: pitched (such as timpani and xylophone) and unpitched (snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine).

**PITCH NOTATION**

**Pitch**
The highness or lowness of a tone, depending on the frequency (rate of vibration). Also, a musical sound.

**Note**
The written symbol for a musical sound indicating its pitch and duration.

**Staff**
Five parallel lines separated by four spaces. One of the basic symbols of music notation.

**Clef**
A symbol placed at the left end of a staff to determine the relative pitch names and range of the notes on that staff. The Treble clef is used for pitches within the range of the female singing voices and the Bass clef for a lower group of pitches, within the range of the male singing voice.

**Grand Staff**
A combination of a treble staff and a bass staff.

**Accidentals**
Signs used to alter the pitch of a written note. A sharp before the note indicates the pitch a half step above; a flat indicates a half step below. A natural sign cancels a sharp or flat.

**RHYTHM NOTATION**

**Rhythm**
The element of time in music (Since music is an art that exists solely in time, rhythm controls ultimately all the relationships within a musical work.)

**Beat**
Regular pulsation; a basic unit of length in musical time.

**Measure**
A rhythmic group or metrical unit that contains a fixed number of beats, divided on the musical staff by bar lines. Also known as Bar.

**Bar Lines**
Vertical lines that separate measures.

**Meter**
The grouping of beats into larger, regular patterns, notated as measures. The two basic meters are duple (two beats) and triple (three beats); quadruple (four beats) is the most common. In simple meters, such as duple, triple, and quadruple, each beat subdivides into two; in compound meters, such as sextuple, each beat divides into three.

**Metric Rhythm**
Rhythm that has a strong sense of meter or beat.

**Dot**
A symbol that, when placed after a note, increases the note value by half.

**Tie**
A curved line used to connect successive notes of the same pitch together. When notes are tied, only one note is played with a length equal to the combined lengths of all the tied notes.

**Rest**
A symbol that indicate silence for a specified time in musical beats.

**Time Signature**
The symbol that indicates the metrical organization of a piece of music. It appears as two numbers written as in a fraction. The upper number indicates the number of beats in a measure; the lower shows which note value equals one beat.

**DYNAMICS NOTATION**

**Crescendo**
The dynamic effect of gradually growing louder.

**Decrescendo**
The dynamic effect of gradually growing softer.

**Forte**
The Italian term for “loud” (literally “strong”). This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “f”.

**Fortissimo**
The Italian term for ‘very loud” (literally ‘more strong”). This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “ff”.

**Mezzo-forte**
The Italian term for “moderately loud.” This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “mf”.

**Mezzo-piano**
The Italian term for “moderately quiet.” This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “mp”.

**Pianissimo**
The Italian term for “very quiet” (literally “more piano”). This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “pp”.

**Piano**
The Italian term for “quiet” (literally “small”). This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “p”.

**Storzando**
A sudden stress or accent on a single note or chord. This is indicated in a musical score by the marking “sf”.

**TEMPO NOTATION**

**Grave**
Tempo marking meaning solemn (very, very slow).

**Largo**
Tempo marking meaning broad (very slow).

**Adagio**
Tempo marking meaning quite slow.

**Andante**
Tempo marking meaning a walking pace.

**Moderato**
Tempo marking meaning moderate.

**Allegro**
Tempo marking meaning fast (cheerful).

**Vivace**
Tempo marking meaning lively.

**Presto**
Tempo marking meaning very fast.

**Ritardando**
Tempo marking meaning getting slower.

**Accelerando**
Tempo marking meaning getting faster.

**A tempo**
Tempo marking meaning in time or returning to the original pace.

**ARTICULATION NOTATION**

**Staccato**
An articulation mark which indicates that notes should be played short and detached . Marked as a dot above or below the note heads.

**Legato**
An articulation mark which indicates that notes should be played smooth and connected. Marked as a curved line above or below the notes that should be connected.