

Music Department

H

Understanding Music

Listening Concepts



Name _____



Understanding Music

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This booklet covers ALL musical concepts required for NQ HIGHER LEVEL. Use it in class and at home for continued revision.

In addition, a helpful website for home revision is:-

jm-education.com

also

A-Z of Music concepts - Musipedia

This is an important element of the course and is in the form of a written listening paper (May diet of exams).

It is worth **40 marks** and **35% of your total overall final grade.**

MELODY / HARMONY	RHYTHM / TEMPO	TEXTURE / STRUCTURE / FORM	TIMBRE / DYNAMICS	STYLES
				Page 3
Mode/modal	3 against 2	Through-Composed	Tremolando	Sonata
Relative major / minor	Time changes	Da Capo Aria	Harmonics	Oratoria
Interval	Irregular Time Sigs	Lied	Coloratura	Impressionist
Obbligato	Augmentation	Passacaglia	Ripieno	Musique concrete
Acciaccatura	Diminution	Concerto Grosso	Concertino	Plainchant
Mordent		Sonata Form	String quartet	Mass
Plagal Cadence		Exposition		String Quartets
Interrupted Cadence		Subject		Recitative
Tierce de Picardie		Basso Continuo		Chamber Music
Dominant 7th		Ritornello		Jazz Funk
Diminished 7th				Soul Music
Added 6th				
Harmonic Minor Scale				
Melodic Minor Scale				

New concepts for HIGHER LEVEL

Melody & Harmony

Words in this section describe what is happening in the melody or 'tune' and the different ways that notes are formed together to make harmony.

The melody can move in a variety of ways:-

ASCENDING	Moving in an upward direction	<input type="checkbox"/>
DESCENDING	Moving in a downward direction	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEPWISE	Moving by step to the note directly above or below	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEAPING	Jumping between high notes and low notes	<input type="checkbox"/>

The melody can move in patterns:-

REPETITION	Musical idea heard more than once in exactly the same way by exactly that same Instrument / voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
SEQUENCE	A pattern of notes repeated higher or lower	<input type="checkbox"/>
QUESTION	An opening phrase in a melody	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANSWER	Reply to an opening phrase or musical answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

The melody / harmony can be measured in distance

INTERVAL	The distance between 2 notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
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SEMITONE

The shortest distance in music - half a tone
C to C# or B to Bb, etc

TONE

An interval of 2 semitones, eg from
C to D or F to G etc

**BROKEN CHORD /
ARPEGGIO**

Notes of the chord played separately

OCTAVE

The distance of eight notes

The melody can be decorated in order to make it more interesting:-

IMPROVISATION

Music made up on the spot

ORNAMENT

A musical decoration in the melody line

GLISSANDO

Sliding rapidly up and down the notes

GRACE-NOTE

A type of ornament played quickly before
the note. Used mainly as a decoration

TRILL

A rapid repeated movement between
2 notes



MORDENT

An ornament.
Played as : the main note - the note above -
the main note again.

(inverted mordent - mordent)



ACCIACCATURA

An ornament which sounds like a 'crushed note'. The note is played very quickly on or before the note.



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PITCH BEND

Changing the pitch of a note by pushing a string upwards on a guitar or by using a control wheel on a keyboard. Gives a "wonky" effect.

Melodies can be played using different scales:-

MODE/MODAL

Usually refers to an early form of scale or in reference to a major mode (major key) or minor mode (minor key).



HARMONIC MINOR

Scale sharing the same key signature as its relative major but raises the 7th note by one semitone.



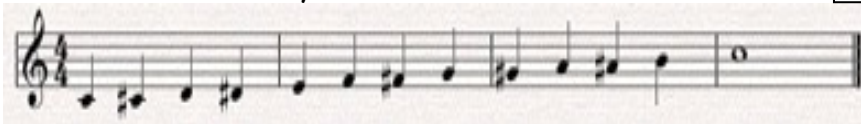
MELODIC MINOR

Scale sharing the same key signature as its relative major but raises the 6th and 7th notes by one semitone ascending and similarly lowers them when descending.



CHROMATIC

A scale built entirely on semitones



PENTATONIC SCALE

A scale based on 5 notes. Very popular in folk (Scottish) Music

WHOLE TONE SCALE

A scale built entirely on tones. Popular in 20th Century music and sometimes sounds strange to the ear.



ATONAL / CLUSTER

Music based on no particular key. Sounds dissonant and is hard to listen to. Very popular in 20th Cent.

RELATIVE MAJOR

A change from a minor key to the major key with the same signature. The major key is found 3 semitones higher - eg, D Minor to F Major

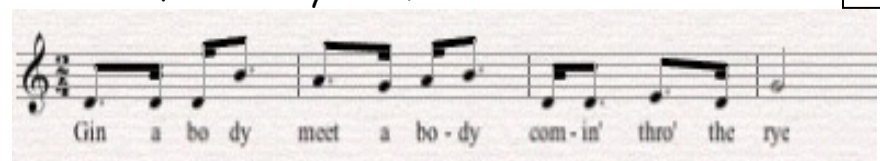
RELATIVE MINOR

A change from the major key to the minor key with the same key signature. The minor key is found 3 semitones lower - eg, C Major to A Minor

In vocal music we can describe the word setting of melodies as follows:-

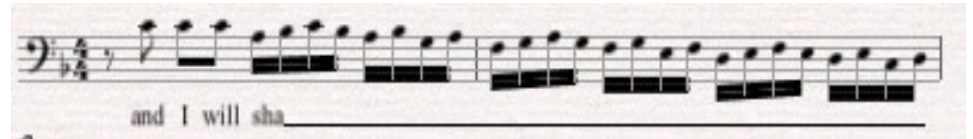
SYLLABIC

One note for each syllable.



MELISMATIC

Several notes sung to one syllable



SCAT SINGING

Nonsense words and sounds made up by a singer usually found in JAZZ music.

Harmony can be split into two areas of TONALITY:-

MAJOR

The music sounds in a major key - bright and happy sounding

MINOR

The music sounds in a minor key - sad and dull sounding

Melody / Harmony is built in the following way:-

CHORD

Two or more notes sounding together

CHORD CHANGE

Moving from 1 chord to a different chord

DISCORD

A chord in which certain notes clash producing an unpleasant sound. Popular in 20th Century music

VAMP

A rhythmic accompaniment with a bass note played on the strong beat and a chord played off the beat.

CONTRARY MOTION

Two parts moving in opposite directions
Eg one ascending, one descending

COUNTERMELODY

A melody played against the main melody

DESCANT

Another melody above the main tune, mainly in vocal music

OBBLIGATO

A prominent solo additional instrument part in a piece of music. Almost like an instrumental descant

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PEDAL

A note which is held or repeated continuously in the bass part while the harmony changes over it

INVERTED PEDAL

A note which is held or repeated continuously in the upper part while the harmony changes below it

Chords :-

DOMINANT 7th

Chord built upon the dominant (5th) note of the key which adds the 7th note above the root (the 7th note of the scale).

Eg - In the scale of F Major (C-E-G-Bb)



DIMINISHED 7th

A chord built from three Minor 3rd intervals one on top of the other. The interval between the lower note and the top note is a diminished 7th.



ADDED 6th *

Chord made up from a Major chord with the 6th note added to the top.

Sometimes gives a 'jazzy' effect!



Harmony changes in the following way:-

MODULATION

A change of key

CHANGE OF KEY

Moving from one key to another

Concepts affecting harmony are:-

PERFECT CADENCE

2 chords at the end of a phrase.

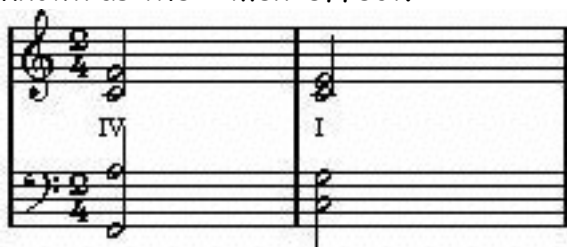
Chord V to chord I - the dominant to the tonic.



PLAGAL CADENCE

2 chords at the end of a phrase.

Chord IV to chord I. Sounds finished and is known as the 'Amen' effect.



IMPERFECT CADENCE

2 chords at the end of a phrase.

Chord I to chord V - the tonic to the dominant.

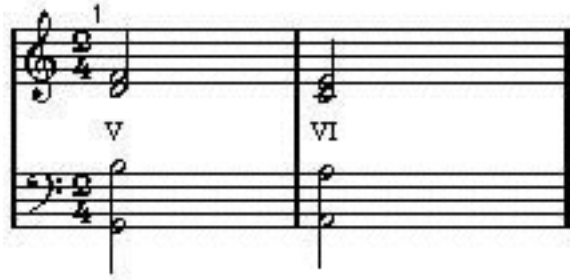
This cadence has an unfinished feel



INTERRUPTED CADENCE

2 chords at the end of a phrase.
Chord V to chord VI (minor chord). Known as the 'surprise' cadence as it interrupts the flow of the music. (always ends in a minor chord!)

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TIERCE DE PICARDIE

The final chord in a piece of music played in the minor key is changed to major

DRONE

One note held on or repeated in the bass.
Commonly found on a bagpipe.

RELATIVE MAJOR / MINOR

Each major key has a relative minor which shares the same key signature. If we picked a major key, such as C Major for example, to find its relative minor key we would move down three semitones, which would take us to A Minor.

Rhythm / Tempo

Words in this section describe what is happening in the rhythm and tempo

Rhythm falls into 2 areas:-

SIMPLE TIME

Music with 2, 3 or 4 beats in the bar.
Each beat is usually 1 crotchet

COMPOUND TIME

Each beat is divided into groups of
3 pulses 6/8, 9/8, 12/8

Tempo can be described as:-

ADAGIO

Slow

ANDANTE

At a walking pace

MODERATO

At a moderate pace

ALLEGRO

Fast

Speed changes are described in the following way:-

ACCELERANDO

Music gets gradually faster

RALLENTANDO

Music gets gradually slower

RITARDANDO

Music starts to slow down

RUBATO

The performer plays in a very
free way and is able to pull the music
about to suit the situation

A TEMPO

Music returns to the original speed

Rhythm effects can be described in the following way:-

ON THE BEAT

The main accents are on the beat

OFF THE BEAT

The main accents are on the weak beat or against the beat

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SYNCOPIATION

Accented notes playing off or against the beat. Same as above

SCOTCH SNAP

A rhythmic figure with a short accented note followed by a longer note. Mostly found in a Strathspey

CROSS RHYTHMS

Effect where 2 notes are played against 3

DOTTED RHYTHMS

Long notes followed by short notes and vice versa giving a jolty effect

TRIPLETS

Group of three notes played in the space of 1 beat

ANACRUSIS

Notes which appear before the first strong beat of the bar. Almost like a very short lead-in.

Concepts affecting the rhythm:-

3 AGAINST 2

One line or part playing quavers in groups of two while another part plays triplets.



DRUM FILL	A rhythmic decoration played on the drumkit	<input type="checkbox"/>
BEAT/PULSE	The basic pulse you hear in music. The pulse may be in groups of 2, 3 or 4 with an accent or stress on the first beat of each bar	<input type="checkbox"/>
PAUSE	The musical flow / rhythm is held up by a long note or silence	<input type="checkbox"/>
ACCENT / ACCENTED	Notes that are slightly stressed sounding louder than others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
AUGMENTATION	The note values are increased affecting the length of the notes. The music sounds slower when repeated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
DIMINUTION	The note values are decreased. The music sounds faster when repeated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
TIME CHANGES	Changes in time signature.	<input type="checkbox"/>
IRREGULAR TIME SIGNATURES	Regular time changes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
MARCH	Music with a strong steady pulse with two or four beats in the bar	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRATHSPEY	A Scottish dance with four beats in the bar featuring dotted rhythms and a Scotch Snap	<input type="checkbox"/>
REEL	A fast Scottish dance in simple time with two or four beats in the bar.	<input type="checkbox"/>
WALTZ	A dance in simple time with three beats in the bar	<input type="checkbox"/>
JIG	A fast Scottish dance in compound time	<input type="checkbox"/>

Texture / Structure / Form

Words in this section describe how a piece of music is put together or constructed

All music falls into one of these categories:-

POLYPHONIC	Texture consisting of two or more melodic lines which weave independently of each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONTRAPUNTAL	Similar to above	<input type="checkbox"/>
HOMOPHONIC	Texture where all the parts move together rhythmically - e.g. a Hymn Tune	<input type="checkbox"/>

These categories are either

ACCOMPANIED	One or more instruments / voices support the main melody	<input type="checkbox"/>
UNACCOMPANIED	The melody is not supported by any other instruments or voices	<input type="checkbox"/>

Music is constructed in the following ways

SOLO	Single line / performer	<input type="checkbox"/>
UNISON / OCTAVE	Two or more parts performing the same named note at the same pitch or 8 notes apart	<input type="checkbox"/>
IMITATION	Musical idea played by one instrument / voice And then repeated exactly the same way by another instrument / voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
HARMONY	Two or more parts performing different notes at the same time	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHORD

Two or more notes sounding together

Music is also constructed using different sections

REPETITION

A section repeated in exactly the same way by exactly the same instrument

OSTINATO / RIFF

A short musical pattern repeated many times

BINARY / AB

A form where the music is made up from 2 sections - **A & B**

TERNARY / ABA

A form where the music is made up from 3 sections - **A B A**

RONDO

A form in music where the first section comes back after each contrasting section
A B A C A D A E A etc

THEME AND VARIATIONS

A form in music where each section changes the main theme through speed, tonality, time signature or rhythm

ROUND

Each part sings or plays the melody entering one after the other

CANON

Strict imitation where one part sings or plays the melody with another part entering shortly afterwards with exactly the same melody

VERSE AND CHORUS

Popular form in many songs - the music of the verse is repeated (with different words) with a chorus, featuring different music, in between.

MIDDLE 8	Modulating 8 bars connecting 2 related sections	<input type="checkbox"/>
STROPHIC	Music / song with a recurring verse and Chorus	<input type="checkbox"/>
THROUGH - COMPOSED	Music / song that does not have a chorus or repeat	<input type="checkbox"/>
CODA	The concluding section at the end of a movement or section to give a final effect.	<input type="checkbox"/>
CADENZA	A show-off passage in a Concerto where the soloist performs a solo passage showing how well they play the instrument.	<input type="checkbox"/>
RITORNELLO	Returning passage. In a Concerto Grosso it is the main theme played by the orchestra.	<input type="checkbox"/>
SONATA FORM	Often describes the form of the first movements of sonatas, symphonies and overtures. Falls into 3 sections : Exposition - Development - Recapitulation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXPOSITION	The first section of a movement in Sonata Form or the first section of a Fugue.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Bass lines can be constructed in different ways

WALKING BASS	A moving bass line with notes of the same value. They usually move in step	<input type="checkbox"/>
GROUND BASS	A theme repeated in the bass many times while the upper parts are varied	<input type="checkbox"/>

ALBERTI BASS

Broken chords played in the left hand while the right hand plays the melody. Usually found only on piano



BASSO CONTINUO

Found in Baroque Music. Consists of a Bass Line usually played by cello, bass, viola or bassoon in addition to a keyboard part - harpsichord or organ. The players would fill in missing harmonies.

General forms:-

CONCERTO GROSSO

From the Baroque period, a concerto in which a group of soloists (concertino) is combined and contrasted with a larger group (ripieno).

DA CAPO ARIA

An aria in ternary form. The 3rd section is not written out but the instruction Da Capo (from the beginning) is given instead. The first section is repeated in a highly ornamented fashion.

LIED

From the Romantic period, music for solo voice and piano sung in German.

PASSACAGLIA

Originally a slow stately dance of the 17th century, this term now applies to a piece with a theme which is continually repeated.

TIMBRE

Words in this section describe instruments, ensembles and how they are used

Voices are as follows:-

SOPRANO	The highest range of female voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEZZO-SOPRANO	Female voice range lying between a soprano and alto	<input type="checkbox"/>
ALTO	The lowest female voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
TENOR	A high adult male voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
BARITONE	Male voice range lying between a tenor and a bass	<input type="checkbox"/>
BASS	The lowest male voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHOIR	A group of singers who perform together	<input type="checkbox"/>

Concepts describing vocals are:-

A CAPPELLA	Unaccompanied singing	<input type="checkbox"/>
BACKING VOCALS	Singers who support the main singer usually by singing in harmony in the background	<input type="checkbox"/>
COLORATURA	Term used to describe highly decorative, florid, vocal singing involving scales and ornaments. The singer would sometimes exceed their vocal range.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sections of the Orchestra:-

STRINGS	Consisting : Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass and Harp	<input type="checkbox"/>
WOODWIND	Consisting: Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Saxophone and Bassoon	<input type="checkbox"/>
BRASS	Consisting: Trumpet, Trombone, Horn and Tuba	<input type="checkbox"/>
PERCUSSION	Consisting: Tuned - Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Marimba, Metalophone etc	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Consisting : Untuned - Drumkit, Timpani, Triangle, Cymbals, Tambourine etc	<input type="checkbox"/>

Each section has concepts associated with them:-

STRINGS:-

BOWING	When strings are played with a bow	<input type="checkbox"/>
ARCO	Another word for Bowing	<input type="checkbox"/>
PLUCKING	Using fingers to pick the strings	<input type="checkbox"/>
PIZZICATO	Sound made by plucking the strings with fingers	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRUMMING	Sound produced by drawing fingers or a plectrum across the strings	<input type="checkbox"/>
TREMOLANDO	Trembling, quivering effect	<input type="checkbox"/>
HARMONICS	The high eerie like sounds produced on a bowed string instrument by lightly touching the string at certain points. On a guitar this will sound "bell like".	<input type="checkbox"/>

WOODWIND:-

BLOWING

Sound produced by blowing into or across the mouth piece

FLUTTER TONGUING

A method of tonguing in which the player rolls the letter 'r'. It is particularly effective on flute but also used on brass

BRASS:-

BLOWING

Sound produced by blowing into or across the mouth piece

MUTED

Using a device which reduces the volume or alters the sound of an instrument

CON SORDINO

Musical term for muted

PERCUSSION:-

STRIKING

Sound is produced by hitting an instrument

Groupings of Instruments:-

RIPIENO

The main, larger group of instruments in a Concerto Grosso. (Baroque Period)

CONCERTINO

The smaller, solo, group of players in a Concerto Grosso. (Baroque Period)

Scottish Instruments:-

ACCORDION

Instrument with a keyboard in which the sounds are produced by squeezing bellows with the arms

FIDDLE

Another name for the violin

Instrumental effects:-

ROLLS	A very fast repetition of a note on a percussion instrument like snare drum or timpani.	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISTORTION	An electronic effect used in rock music to colour the sound of the electric guitar	<input type="checkbox"/>
REVERB	An electronic effect which can give the impression of different hall acoustics	<input type="checkbox"/>
HARMONICS	Harmonics can be produced by a number of instruments. By lightly touching the string of a bowed stringed instrument at certain points for example, a high eerie sound is produced. On a guitar or harp these have a bell-like quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>

General instrumental concepts:-

STACCATO	Short, crisp, detached notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEGATO	Notes played smoothly	<input type="checkbox"/>

Dynamics:-

PIANISSIMO	Very quiet / soft	<input type="checkbox"/>
PIANO	Quiet / soft	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEZZO-PIANO	Half quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEZZO-FORTE	Half loud	<input type="checkbox"/>
FORTE	Loud	<input type="checkbox"/>
FORTISSIMO	Very loud	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

SFORZANDO

Suddenly loud

CRESCENDO

Getting louder

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DIMINUENDO

Getting quieter

Individual instruments:-

ELECTRIC GUITAR

Guitar which requires an amplifier to produce sound

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

A guitar which does not require an amplifier to produce the sound

BASS GUITAR

Four stringed guitar.

DRUMKIT

Percussion instrument were tuned skins are hit with sticks

HARPSICHORD

Early keyboard instrument where strings were plucked. Popular in the Baroque era.

PIANO

Keyboard instrument where the sound is produced by hammers hitting sticks

ORGAN

A keyboard instrument usually found in churches - often more than 1 keyboard

RECORDER

Early woodwind instrument sound produced by blowing - four types, descant, treble, tenor and bass

PAN PIPES

Pipes which are graded in size and bound together with the sound produced by blowing across the top of the pipes

SITAR

A string instrument from India. In addition to melody strings it has a drone and strings which vibrate with each other

TABLA

Two Indian drums tuned to different pitches and often used to accompany a sitar

CLARSACH

Small Scottish Harp

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BODHRAN

An Irish wooden drum used in folk music.

Bands and ensembles:-

BRASS BAND

A band containing brass instruments and percussion

STEEL BAND

A West Indian band containing instruments made out of oil drums. Each drum is hammered into panels to make different pitches

SCOTTISH DANCE BAND

A band containing fiddle, accordion, piano and drums

WIND BAND

A band containing woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. Usually intended for performance in a Concert Hall

FOLK GROUP

A group of instrumentalists and singers performing songs from a particular country

STRING QUARTET

A chamber music ensemble made up of 2 Violins, 1 Viola and 1 Cello

STYLES

Words in this section describe the original style of the music.

Musical periods:-

BAROQUE

Music written between 1600-1750. Popular composers were Bach and Handel

CLASSICAL

Music written between 1750-1810. Popular composers were Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven

ROMANTIC

Music written between 1810-1900. Popular composers were Chopin, Schubert and Tchaikovsky

Vocal styles:-

OPERA

A secular drama set to music featuring vocals with orchestral accompaniment

ORATORIO

A musical setting of a biblical story featuring vocals and orchestra.
No acting or staging

RECITATIVE

Vocal writing found in Opera, Oratorio and Cantata following the rhythm or speech. It is often half sung / half spoken in order to move on the story or plot

ARIA

A song found in an Opera, Oratorio and Cantata usually with orchestral accompaniment

CHORUS A group of singers with several voices to each part.
Used in Opera, Oratorio and Cantata

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PLAINCHANT Also known as Plainsong. Unaccompanied melody set to words of the Roman Catholic liturgy such as the Mass. Plainchants are Modal and have no regular metre.
Sung in Latin.

MASS From Renaissance period, a large scale sacred choral work featuring a Latin text and polyphonic texture. Usually performed a cappella. Listen for eg, Kyrie, Benedictus, Gloria, etc.

MUSICAL Popular musical play featuring vocals and orchestra

Instrumental styles:-

SONATA A work for solo piano or solo instrument and piano.

CONCERTO A work for solo instrument and orchestra

SYMPHONY A large work for orchestra in four movements

CHAMBER MUSIC Music written for a small instrumental ensemble with one player to a part .

Scottish styles:-

BOTHY BALLAD	Folk song with many verses telling a story of rural or farming / working life	<input type="checkbox"/>
GAELIC PSALMS	Unaccompanied songs sung in gaelic. One member of the congregation starts and the rest follow	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUTH MUSIC	Gaelic nonsense words sung in imitation of the sound of bagpipes as an accompaniment to dancing	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCOTS BALLAD	A slow Scottish song telling a story	<input type="checkbox"/>
WAULKING SONG	Gaelic work song sung by women. One woman leads and the others follow. The sound of the tweed being 'waulked' or hit against the work surface is heard in the background	<input type="checkbox"/>
PIBROCH	Classical music for the solo bagpipe usually in variation form	<input type="checkbox"/>
 20 th Century styles:-		
BLUES	Music written in 4/4 time and mostly patterned in a 12-bar structure and on a scale where some notes are flattened - the blues scale	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAGTIME	A style of dance music popular at the end of the 19 th Century. Often played on the piano and featuring a strongly syncopated melody in the right hand against a steady vamp in the left hand	<input type="checkbox"/>
SWING	A jazz style started in the 1930's usually performed by Big Bands	<input type="checkbox"/>

JAZZ	Music from the early 20th C featuring syncopation and improvisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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JAZZ FUNK	A combination of Jazz improvisation and the amplified instruments and character of rock.	<input type="checkbox"/>
IMPRESSIONIST	A term borrowed from painting in which musical ideas merge to create a rather blurred and vague outline. Debussy was an important composer of this style	<input type="checkbox"/>
MINIMALIST	A 20 th Century development where simple rhythmic and melodic figures are repeated with very slight changes each time	<input type="checkbox"/>
MUSIQUE CONCRETE	Recorded natural sounds which are transformed using simple editing techniques such as playing backwards, slowing or speeding.	<input type="checkbox"/>
INDIAN	Music from India using instruments such as the sitar and tabla	<input type="checkbox"/>
POP	Popular music performed by a group of musicians. Usually music that has been in the charts	<input type="checkbox"/>
ROCK	Popular music with a steady driving beat	<input type="checkbox"/>
ROCK 'N' ROLL	1950's popular American music	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOUL MUSIC	Afro-American popular music including elements of blues, gospel and conveying strong emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/>

LATIN AMERICAN

Dance music from South America featuring percussion instruments and lively off-beat dance rhythms.

REGGAE

Originates from Jamaica with strong off-beat rhythms and a dominant strong bass line. Can feature singers

AFRICAN MUSIC

Music from Africa featuring voices and/or African Drums.

RAPPING

Rhyming lyrics that are spoken and performed in time to a beat

CELTIC ROCK

A style of music that mixes Celtic folk music and rock together.

GOSPEL

Music written with religious lyrics, often in praise or thanksgiving to God usually performed by choirs or congregations.