

Music Department

N4

Understanding Music

Listening Concepts



Name _____

Understanding Music

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This booklet covers ALL musical concepts required for NQ NATIONAL 4 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



MELODY / HARMONY	RHYTHM / TEMPO	TEXTURE / STRUCTURE / FORM	TIMBRE	STYLES
Major / Minor	Syncopation	Canon	Brass Band	Baroque
Drone	Scotch Snap	Ternary / ABA	Wind Band	Ragtime
Broken Chord / Arpeggio	Strathspey	Verse and chorus	Violin, Cello, Double Bass	Romantic
Change Of Key	Jig	Middle 8	Harp	Swing
Pedal	Simple Time	Theme and variation	Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone	Concerto
Scale	2/4 3/4 4/4	Cadenza	Pan Pipes, Recorder	Opera
Pentatonic Scale	Compound Time	Imitation	Trumpet, trombone	Scots Ballad
Octave	Anacrusis		Timpani	Mouth Music
Vamp	Simple Time		Snare Drum, Bass Drum	Reggae
Scat Singing	Andante		Cymbals, triangle	African Music
Ornament	Accelerando		Tambourine, guiro	Rapping
	Rallentando		Xylophone, Glockenspiel	
	A tempo		Harpsichord	
	Dotted rhythms		Bass Guitar	
			Distortion	
			Muted	
			Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass	
			Backing Vocals	

New concepts for NATIONAL 4 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 can be measured in distance:-

The melody / harmony can be measured in distance

BROKEN CHORD / ARPEGGIO	Notes of the chord played separately	<input type="checkbox"/>
OCTAVE	The distance of eight notes	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Melodies can be played using different scales:-

PENTATONIC SCALE

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



Vocals can be performed as:-

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

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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.

PEDAL

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

Harmony changes in the following way:-

CHANGE OF KEY

Moving from one key to another

DRONE

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

Rhythm / Tempo

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

Rhythm:-

SIMPLE TIME

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

Tempo can be described as:-

ADAGIO

Slow

ANDANTE

At a walking pace

ALLEGRO

Fast

Speed changes are described in the following way:-

ACCELERANDO

Music gets gradually faster

RALLENTANDO

Music gets gradually slower

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

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
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DOTTED RHYTHMS	Long notes followed by short notes and vice versa giving a jolty effect	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANACRUSIS	Notes which appear before the first strong beat of the bar. Almost like a very short lead-in.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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"/>
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

Music is either:-

ACCOMPANIED One or more instruments / voices support the main melody

UNACCOMPANIED The melody is not supported by any other instruments or voices

Music is constructed in the following ways

SOLO Single line / performer

UNISON / OCTAVE Two or more parts performing the same named note at the same pitch or 8 notes apart

IMITATION Musical idea played by one instrument / voice
And then repeated exactly the same way by another instrument / voice

HARMONY Two or more parts performing different notes at the same time

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

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OSTINATO / RIFF

A short musical pattern repeated many times

TERNARY / ABA

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

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

CADENZA

A show-off passage in a Concerto where the soloist performs a solo passage showing how well they play the instrument.

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"/>
ALTO	The lowest female voice	<input type="checkbox"/>
TENOR	A high adult male voice	<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:-

BACKING VOCALS	Singers who support the main singer usually by singing in harmony in the background	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Sections of the Orchestra:-

STRINGS	Consisting : Violin, Cello, Double Bass and Harp	<input type="checkbox"/>
WOODWIND	Consisting: Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone	<input type="checkbox"/>
BRASS	Consisting: Trumpet, Trombone	<input type="checkbox"/>
PERCUSSION	Consisting: Tuned - Glockenspiel, Xylophone	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Consisting : Untuned - Drumkit, Timpani, Snare Drum, Triangle, Tambourine, Guiro, Triangle	<input type="checkbox"/>

Each section has concepts associated with them:-

STRINGS:-

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BOWING

When strings are played with a bow

PLUCKING

Using fingers to pick the strings

STRUMMING

Sound produced by drawing fingers or a plectrum across the strings

WOODWIND:-

BLOWING

Sound produced by blowing into or across the mouth piece

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

PERCUSSION:-

STRIKING

Sound is produced by hitting an instrument

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:-

DISTORTION

An electronic effect used in rock music to colour the sound of the electric guitar

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General instrumental concepts:-

STACCATO

Short, crisp, detached notes

LEGATO

Notes played smoothly

Dynamics:-

PIANO

Quiet / soft

MEZZO-PIANO

Half quiet

MEZZO-FORTE

Half loud

FORTE

Loud

CRESCENDO

Getting louder

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
ORGAN	A keyboard instrument usually found in churches - often more than 1 keyboard	<input type="checkbox"/>
RECORDER	Early woodwind instrument sound produced by blowing - four types, descant, treble, tenor and bass	<input type="checkbox"/>
PAN PIPES	Pipes which are graded in size and bound together with the sound produced by blowing across the top of the pipes	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Bands and ensembles:-		
BRASS BAND	A band containing brass instruments and percussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEEL BAND	A West Indian band containing instruments made out of oil drums. Each drum is hammered into panels to make different pitches	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCOTTISH DANCE BAND	A band containing fiddle, accordion, piano and drums	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIND BAND	A band containing woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. Usually intended for performance in a Concert Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>
FOLK GROUP	A group of instrumentalists and singers performing songs from a particular country	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

Instrumental styles:-

CONCERTO

A work for solo instrument and orchestra

Scottish styles:-

MOUTH MUSIC

Gaelic nonsense words sung in imitation of the sound of bagpipes as an accompaniment to dancing

SCOTS BALLAD

A slow Scottish song telling a story

20th 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

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"/>
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"/>
LATIN AMERICAN	Dance music from South America featuring percussion instruments and lively off-beat dance rhythms.	<input type="checkbox"/>
REGGAE	Originates from Jamaica with strong off-beat rhythms and a dominant strong bass line. Can feature singers	<input type="checkbox"/>
AFRICAN MUSIC	Music from Africa featuring voices and/or African Drums.	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAPPING	Rhyming lyrics that are spoken and performed in time to a beat	<input type="checkbox"/>