

# Music Department

# N5

## Understanding Music

### Listening Concepts



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Understanding Music

Page | 2



This booklet covers ALL musical concepts required for NQ NATIONAL 5 LEVEL. Use it in class and at home for continued revision.

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

[jm-education.com](http://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!**



MELODY / HARMONY	RHYTHM / TEMPO	TEXTURE / STRUCTURE / FORM	TIMBRE	STYLES
Atonal / Cluster	Rutabo	Strophic	Piccolo, oboe, bassoon	Symphony
Perfect Cadence	Ritardando	Binary/AB	(French) horn, tuba	Gospel
Imperfect Cadence	Moderato	Rondo	Viola	Classical
Inverted Pedal	Cross Rhythms	Alberti Bass	Castanets, bongo drums	Pibroch
Chromatic	Compound Time	Walking Bass	hi-hat cymbals	Celtic Rock
Whole-tone scale	6/8 9/8 12/8	Ground Bass	Clarsach	Bothy Ballad
Grace note		Homophonic	Bodhran	Waulking Song
Glissando		Polyphonic	Sitar, tabla	Gaelic Psalm
Modulation		Contrapuntal	Arco	Aria
Contrary Motion		Coda	Pizzicato	Chorus
Trill			Con sordino	Minimalist
Syllabic			Flutter-tonguing	Indian
Melismatic			Rolls	
Counter melody			Reverb	
Decant			Mezzo-soprano	
Pitch Bend			Baritone	
Tone / Semitone			A cappella	

### New concepts for NATIONAL 5 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:-

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

The melody can move in patterns:-

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

The melody / harmony can be measured in distance

<b>SEMITONE</b>	The shortest distance in music - half a tone C to C# or B to Bb, etc	
<b>TONE</b>	An interval of 2 semitones, eg from C to D or F to G etc	<input type="checkbox"/>

**BROKEN CHORD /  
ARPEGGIO**

Notes of the chord played separately

**OCTAVE**

The distance of eight notes

Page | 5

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



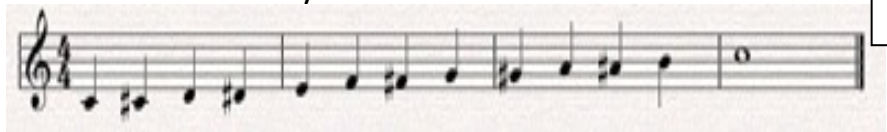
**PITCH BEND**

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:-

**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 20<sup>th</sup> Century music and sometimes sounds strange to the ear.



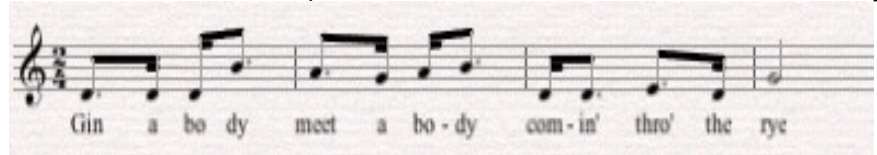
**ATONAL / CLUSTER**

Music based on no particular key. Sounds dissonant and is hard to listen to. Very popular in 20<sup>th</sup> Cent. when a group of notes, which clash, are played together.

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

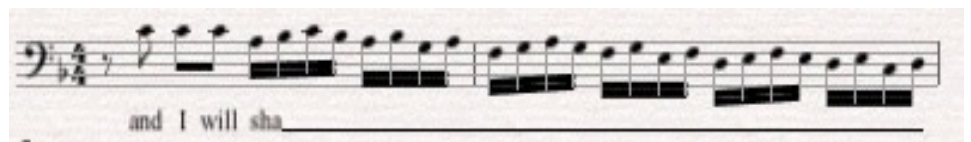
**SYLLABIC**

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

Page | 7

**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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

**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

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.



**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



**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 falls into 2 areas:-

<b>SIMPLE TIME</b>	Music with 2, 3 or 4 beats in the bar. Each beat is usually 1 crotchet	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>COMPOUND TIME</b>	Each beat is divided into groups of 3 pulses 6/8, 9/8, 12/8	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tempo can be described as:-

<b>ADAGIO</b>	Slow	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ANDANTE</b>	At a walking pace	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>MODERATO</b>	At a moderate pace	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ALLEGRO</b>	Fast	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speed changes are described in the following way:-

<b>ACCELERANDO</b>	Music gets gradually faster	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>RALLENTANDO</b>	Music gets gradually slower	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>RITARDANDO</b>	Music starts to slow down	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>RUBATO</b>	The performer plays in a very free way and is able to pull the music about to suit the situation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>A TEMPO</b>	Music returns to the original speed	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Page | 10

**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

**ANACRUSIS**

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

**DRUM FILL**

A rhythmic decoration played on the drumkit

**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

**PAUSE**

The musical flow / rhythm is held up by a long note or silence

**ACCENT / ACCENTED**

Notes that are slightly stressed sounding louder than others.

**MARCH** Music with a strong steady pulse with two or four beats in the bar

**STRATHSPEY** A Scottish dance with four beats in the bar featuring dotted rhythms and a Scotch Snap

**REEL** A fast Scottish dance in simple time with two or four beats in the bar.

**WALTZ** A dance in simple time with three beats in the bar

**JIG** A fast Scottish dance in compound time

# 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:-

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

These categories are either:-

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

Music is constructed in the following ways

- |                        |   |                          |
|------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <b>SOLO</b>            | Single line / performer   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>UNISON / OCTAVE</b> | Two or more parts performing the same named note at the same pitch or 8 notes apart                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>IMITATION</b>       | Musical idea played by one instrument / voice<br>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

**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

**STROPHIC**

Music / song with a recurring verse and Chorus

**CODA**

The concluding section at the end of a movement or section to give a final effect.

**CADENZA**

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

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

**GROUND BASS**

A theme repeated in the bass many times while the upper parts are varied

**ALBERTI BASS**

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



# Timbre

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

Voices are as follows:-

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

Concepts describing vocals are:-

<b>A CAPPELLA</b>	Unaccompanied singing	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BACKING VOCALS</b>	Singers who support the main singer usually by singing in harmony in the background	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sections of the Orchestra:-

<b>STRINGS</b>	Consisting : Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass and Harp	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>WOODWIND</b>	Consisting: Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Saxophone and Bassoon	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BRASS</b>	Consisting: Trumpet, Trombone, Horn and Tuba	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PERCUSSION</b>	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:-

<b>BOWING</b>	When strings are played with a bow	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ARCO</b>	Another word for Bowing	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PLUCKING</b>	Using fingers to pick the strings	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PIZZICATO</b>	Sound made by plucking the strings with fingers	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>STRUMMING</b>	Sound produced by drawing fingers or a plectrum across the strings	<input type="checkbox"/>

WOODWIND:-

<b>BLOWING</b>	Sound produced by blowing into or across the mouth piece	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>FLUTTER TONGUING</b>	A method of tonguing in which the player rolls the letter 'r'. It is particularly effective on flute but also used on brass	<input type="checkbox"/>



**BRASS:-**

**BLOWING**

Sound produced by blowing into or across the mouth piece

Page | 17

**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

**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.

**DISTORTION**

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

**REVERB**

An electronic effect which can give the impression of different hall acoustics

General instrumental concepts:-

**STACCATO** Short, crisp, detached notes

**LEGATO** Notes played smoothly

Dynamics:-

**PIANISSIMO** Very quiet / soft

**PIANO** Quiet / soft

**MEZZO-PIANO** Half quiet

**MEZZO-FORTE** Half loud

**FORTE** Loud

**FORTISSIMO** Very loud

**SFORZANDO** Suddenly 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.

<b>DRUMKIT</b>	Percussion instrument were tuned skins are hit with sticks	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>HARPSICHORD</b>	Early keyboard instrument where strings were plucked. Popular in the Baroque era.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PIANO</b>	Keyboard instrument where the sound is produced by hammers hitting sticks	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ORGAN</b>	A keyboard instrument usually found in churches - often more than 1 keyboard	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>RECORDER</b>	Early woodwind instrument sound produced by blowing - four types, descant, treble, tenor and bass	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PAN PIPES</b>	Pipes which are graded in size and bound together with the sound produced by blowing across the top of the pipes	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SITAR</b>	A string instrument from India. In addition to melody strings it has a drone and strings which vibrate with each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TABLA</b>	Two Indian drums tuned to different pitches and often used to accompany a sitar	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>CLARSACH</b>	Small Scottish Harp	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BODHRAN</b>	An Irish wooden drum used in folk music.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bands and ensembles:-		
<b>BRASS BAND</b>	A band containing brass instruments and percussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>STEEL BAND</b>	A West Indian band containing instruments made out of oil drums. Each drum is hammered into panels to make different pitches	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SCOTTISH DANCE BAND</b>	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

**FOLK GROUP**

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

# 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

**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.

**MUSICAL**

Popular musical play featuring vocals and orchestra

Instrumental styles:-

**CONCERTO** A work for solo instrument and orchestra

**SYMPHONY** A large work for orchestra in four movements

Scottish styles:-

**BOTHY BALLAD** Folk song with many verses telling a story of rural or farming / working life

**GAELIC PSALMS** Unaccompanied songs sung in gaelic. One member of the congregation starts and the rest follow

**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

**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

**PIBROCH** Classical (type) music for the solo bagpipe usually in variation form

20<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>th</sup> Century. Often played on the piano and featuring a strongly syncopated melody in the right hand against a steady vamp in the left hand

**SWING**

A jazz style started in the 1930's usually performed by Big Bands

**JAZZ**

Music from the early 20<sup>th</sup> C featuring syncopation and improvisation.

**MINIMALIST**

A 20<sup>th</sup> Century development where simple rhythmic and melodic figures are repeated with very slight changes each time

**INDIAN**

Music from India using instruments such as the sitar and tabla

**POP**

Popular music performed by a group of musicians. Usually music that has been in the charts

**ROCK**

Popular music with a steady driving beat

**ROCK 'N' ROLL**

1950's popular American music

**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.