

# Music Department

# N4

## Understanding Music

### Listening Concepts



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Understanding Music

Page | 2



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](http://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:-

<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 can be measured in distance:-

The melody / harmony can be measured in distance

<b>BROKEN CHORD / ARPEGGIO</b>	Notes of the chord played separately	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>OCTAVE</b>	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

Page | 6

**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.

**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

**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

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

<b>REPETITION</b>	A section repeated in exactly the same way by exactly the same instrument	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>OSTINATO / RIFF</b>	A short musical pattern repeated many times	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TERNARY / ABA</b>	A form where the music is made up from 3 sections - <b>A B A</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>THEME AND VARIATIONS</b>	A form in music where each section changes the main theme through speed, tonality, time signature or rhythm	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ROUND</b>	Each part sings or plays the melody entering one after the other	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>CANON</b>	Strict imitation where one part sings or plays the melody with another part entering shortly afterwards with exactly the same melody	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>VERSE AND CHORUS</b>	Popular form in many songs - the music of the verse is repeated (with different words) with a chorus, featuring different music, in between.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>MIDDLE 8</b>	Modulating 8 bars connecting 2 related sections	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>CADENZA</b>	A show-off passage in a Concerto where the soloist performs a solo passage showing how well they play the instrument.	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

Page | 12

**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

Page | 13

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 where tuned skins are hit with sticks

**HARPSICHORD**

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

<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"/>
 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"/>
<b>WIND BAND</b>	A band containing woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. Usually intended for performance in a Concert Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>FOLK GROUP</b>	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

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

<b>RAGTIME</b>	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	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SWING</b>	A jazz style started in the 1930's usually performed by Big Bands	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>JAZZ</b>	Music from the early 20th C featuring syncopation and improvisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>POP</b>	Popular music performed by a group of musicians. Usually music that has been in the charts	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ROCK</b>	Popular music with a steady driving beat	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>ROCK 'N' ROLL</b>	1950's popular American music	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>LATIN AMERICAN</b>	Dance music from South America featuring percussion instruments and lively off-beat dance rhythms.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>REGGAE</b>	Originates from Jamaica with strong off-beat rhythms and a dominant strong bass line. Can feature singers	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>AFRICAN MUSIC</b>	Music from Africa featuring voices and/or African Drums.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>RAPPING</b>	Rhyming lyrics that are spoken and performed in time to a beat	<input type="checkbox"/>