

The Basic Elements of Music



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INTRODUCTION

Music. It has been proven to release stress, raise the spirit, and change people's mood. For example, if people listen to a cheerful song people get cheerful. If people listen to a sad song people get sad. This is music. But what makes music? Things that compose music are called the elements of music. In this book you will be able to learn about the Basic Elements of Music. These elements are called rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, and texture.

From the Motion Picture "LOVE STORY"
(Where Do I Begin)

LOVE STORY

Note:

Throughout this book you will see each element being compared to a fragment of the song Love Story (Where Do I Begin) by Francis Lai. Hopefully this will make it easier to understand each element.

RHYTHM

What is rhythm?

Rhythm is the placement of sound in time. It is a pattern that is played over and over again in a piece of music. The rhythm in a song or in a fragment of a song is usually the same as the rest of the song.

Why is rhythm important?

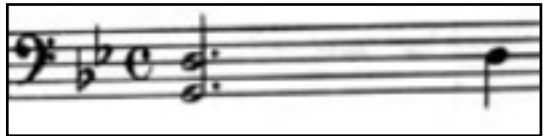
Rhythm is important because of the fact that if different rhythms are incorporated in the same song then the song would be confusing because it can go from a slow rhythm into a fast rhythm into a slow rhythm again.

How can you hear rhythm?

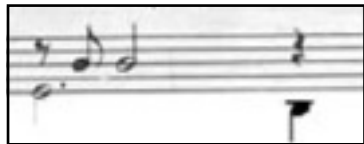
Rhythm can be heard in the Bass of a song. Bases usually show the rhythm of a song. That is why if a song has no base it would usually be hard to know when one part of a song starts and when another part ends.

*In the song Love Story
(Where Do I Begin)
Francis Lai repeated this
particular rhythm... (with
some variation of course)*

Pattern:



Variation:



Melody

What is Melody?

Melody is a series of notes that have similar pitch and durations that are played together to create a catchy tune. It is usually repeated throughout a certain song and becomes the highlight of a song.

Why is Melody important?

If a song has no melody, then it would not sound well and it would sound like different parts of different songs put together into one song. This wouldn't be good because then the certain song would be mixed up and a person wouldn't be able to enjoy it because the song wouldn't go on a continuous flow but it would be jumpy.

Example:



Pattern:



This is one of the many harmonies in this particular song. A harmony can be identified. This harmony is repeated.

If you compare the two parts of the song you can see the same pattern

Harmony

What is harmony?

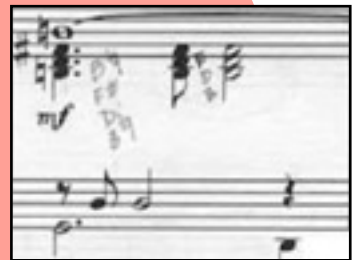
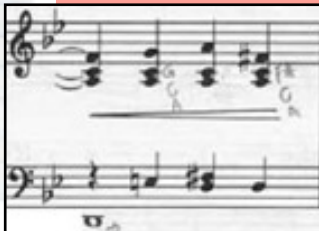
Harmony is when you hear more than one pitch being played at the same time. Harmony is not so simple. If you combine different pitches but those pitches don't sound well with each other, then it is not harmony. Notes must sound well accompanied with each other, so it creates a good harmony. Examples of good harmony are C, E, G and D, F, A.

Why is harmony important?

Without harmony, a song won't get the different pitches that it needs to create a song. Some parts of a song want the low notes being played the same time as the high notes, this can only be done with harmony. If a harmony doesn't sound right it would be un-pleasant to the ear and a person wouldn't like the song.

In Love Story
(Where Do I Begin)
you can see a lot
of different
harmonies.

Examples



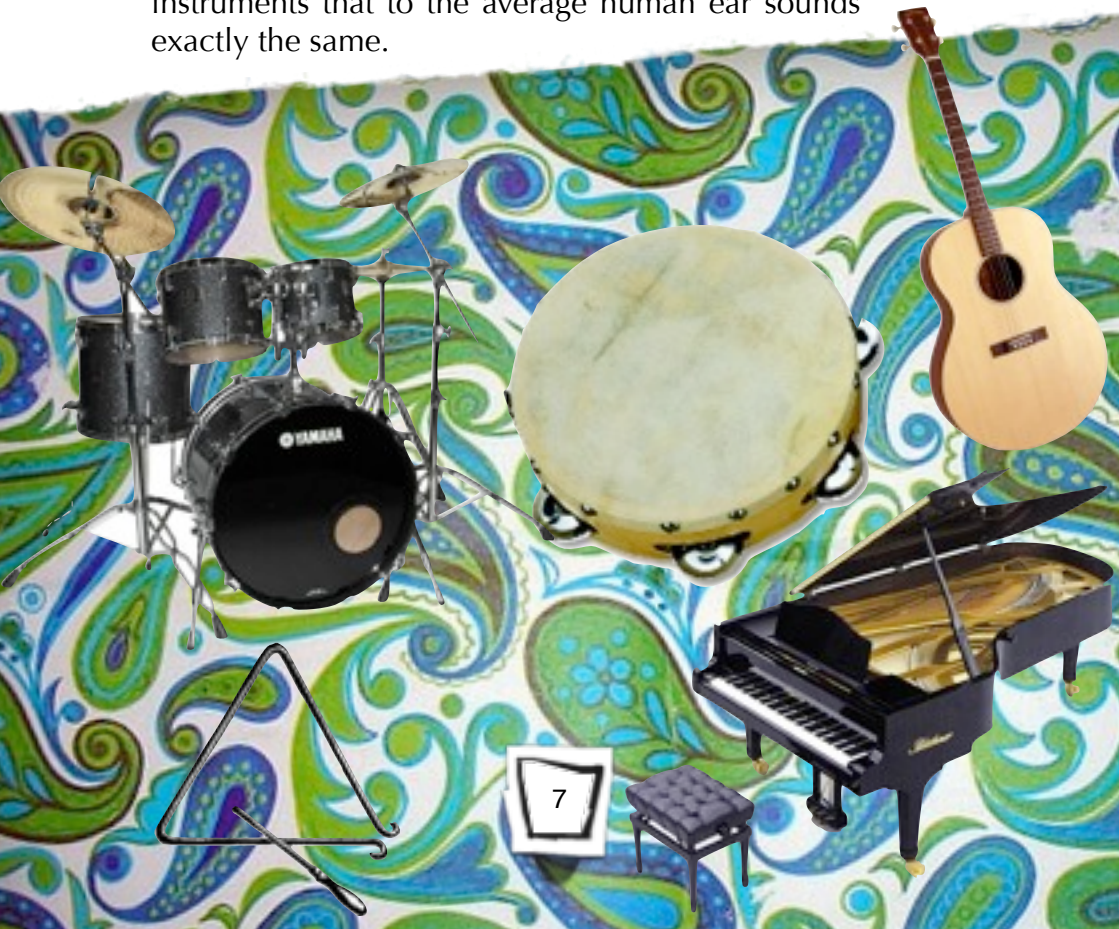
Timbre

What is Timbre?

Timbre (pronounced "TAM-ber") is the difference that you can hear between instruments. For example, if you hear a guitar and a piano being played at the same time, you will be able to hear the difference between those two instruments. This difference is called Timbre.

How do we create the skill to identify Timbre?

This skill can be developed by listening to various musical instruments. By doing this again and again a person will be able to identify the differences between musical instruments that to the average human ear sounds exactly the same.



Textures

What are Textures of Music?

The textures of music are the different divisions of a song. A song can have a thin (soprano) texture or a thick (bass) texture or a combination of both. The textures of music are a compilation of different pitches (either created by an instrument or a voice)

How do we find out the different textures in a song?

We can find this out by carefully listening and inspecting the song as it is being played. By doing this a person will be able to listen to the different pitches and find out the different textures in a song.



The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Slowly' and contains a melody line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The bottom staff also contains a melody line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. On the left side, the word 'Melody' is written in a blue, brush-like font, with a blue bracket pointing to the treble clef lines of both staves. The word 'Chord' is written in a red, brush-like font, with a red bracket pointing to the bass clef lines of both staves.



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