UNIT I

# Fundamentals

*Unit I, the introductory unit in this book, covers the fundamentals of music and their standard terminology. We start right away with a piece of music, the Prelude to* The Valkyrie *by the nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner. Chapter 1 presents the most basic aspect of music, its organization in time or rhythm, and introduces important features of this organization: meter and tempo. Chapter 2 takes up other basic features of musical sound—pitch, dynamics, and tone color—and also the instruments of the modern orchestra. Then Chapters 3 and 4 delve into some additional complexities of pitch—scales, melody, harmony, and more—and explore how musicians use these to organize pieces of music. Chapter 5 carries the discussion one stage further, to include musical form and style.*

## Listening

*The basic activity that leads to the love of music and to its understanding is listening to particular pieces of music again and again. Such, at least, is the premise of this book. Its pages are filled mostly with discussions of musical compositions—symphonies, concertos, operas, and the like—that people have found more and more rewarding as they have listened to them repeatedly. These discussions are meant to introduce you to the contents of these works and their aesthetic qualities: what goes on in the music, and how it affects us.*

*The kind of hands-on knowledge of music necessary for a music professional—for a composer or a performer—is of no special use to you as a nonprofessional listener. But familiarity with musical concepts and musical terms can be useful, helping you grasp more clearly what you already hear in music. Analyzing things, pinpointing things, and even simply using the right names for things all make us more actively aware of them. Sometimes, too, this process of analyzing, pinpointing, and naming can actually assist listening. We become more alert to aspects of music when they have been pointed out. And greater awareness contributes to greater appreciation of music.*

CHAPTER 1

# Rhythm, Meter, and Tempo

Music is the art of sound in time. Its temporal aspect is the most basic place to start understanding music, and this aspect is summed up by the term **rhythm**.

> "Rhythm might be described as, to the world of sound, what light is to the world of sight. It shapes and gives new meaning."
>
> *Edith Sitwell, poet and critic, 1965*

## 1 Rhythm

In its broadest sense, rhythm refers to the general way music unfolds in time. The primacy of rhythm in the experience of music is taken for granted in our culture—and in most other cultures as well. Rhythm is the main driving force in music both popular and classical, music of all ages and all cultures.

In a more specific sense, "*a* rhythm" refers to the actual arrangement of durations—long and short notes—in a particular melody or some other musical passage. Of course, the term is also used in other contexts, about quarterbacks, poems, and even paintings. But no sport and no other art handles rhythm with as much precision and refinement as music.

### Beat and Accent

**Beats** provide the basic unit of measurement for time in music; if ordinary clock time is measured in seconds, musical time is measured in beats. When listening to a marching band or a rock band, to take two clear examples, we sense a regular recurrence of short pulses. These serve as a steady, vigorous background for other, more complicated rhythms that we discern at the same time. We can't help beating time to the music, dancing to it, waving a hand or tapping a foot. The simple pulse being signaled by waving, tapping, or dancing is the music's beat.

There is, however, an all-important difference between a clock ticking and a drum beating time. Mechanically produced ticks all sound exactly the same, but it is virtually impossible for people to beat time without making some beats more emphatic than others. This is called giving certain beats an **accent**. And accents are really what enable us to beat time, since the simplest way to do this is to alternate accented ("strong") and unaccented ("weak") beats in patterns such as ONE *two* | ONE *two* | ONE *two* . . . or ONE *two three* | ONE *two three* | ONE *two three*. . . . To beat time, then, is not only to measure time according to a regular pulse but also to organize it, at least into these simple two- and three-beat patterns.

▶ Access an interactive tutorial on rhythm, meter, and tempo in the e-book at **bedfordstmartins.com/listen**

## 2 Meter

Any recurring pattern of strong and weak beats, such as the ONE *two* and ONE *two three* we have referred to above, is called a **meter**. Meter is a strong/weak pattern repeated again and again.

Each occurrence of this repeated pattern, consisting of a principal strong beat and one or more weaker beats, is called a **measure**, or **bar**. In Western music there are only two basic kinds of meter: duple meter and triple meter.

In *duple meter* the beats are grouped in twos (ONE *two* | ONE *two*) or in fours (ONE *two* THREE *four* | ONE *two* THREE *four*). Duple meter is instantly familiar from marches — such as "Yankee Doodle" — which tend always to use duple meter in deference to the human anatomy (LEFT *right,* LEFT *right,* LEFT *right*):

| Yan-kee | doo-dle | came to | town . . . |
|---|---|---|---|
| ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* |

In *triple meter* the beats are grouped in threes (ONE *two three* | ONE *two three*). Our oldest national songs, "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," are in triple meter:

| Oh, | say | can | you | see . . . | My | coun- | try, | 'tis | | of thee . . . |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ONE | *two* | *three* | ONE | ONE | *two* | *three* | ONE | *two* | *three* |

Two other national songs, "America the Beautiful" and "God Bless America," are in duple meter.

Often the main beats of duple and triple meter are subdivided into quicker pulses. This usually happens by dividing the main beat into either twos or threes. When the main beats are divided in twos, the meter is called a **simple meter**. Dividing the main beats in threes creates **compound meters** with two or three main beats and six or nine quicker ones:

| ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* | *three* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ONE *two three* | *FOUR five six* | ONE *two three* | *FOUR five six* | *SEVEN eight nine* |

The round "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" is in compound duple meter. While the first voice is moving at a fast six-beat clip at the words "Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily," the second voice comes in pounding out the basic duple meter, "ROW, *row,* ROW":

*first voice:*

| Row, | row, | row your | boat | gently | down the | stream, | | Merrily, | merrily, | merrily, | merrily, |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 |
| ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* |

*second voice:*

| Row, | row, | row . . . | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ONE | *two* | ONE | *two* |

Meters with five beats, seven beats, and so on have never been used widely in Western music, though they are found frequently enough in some other musical cultures. It was an unusual tour de force for nineteenth-century composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to have featured quintuple meter, five beats to a bar, in his popular Sixth Symphony.

## Rhythm and Meter

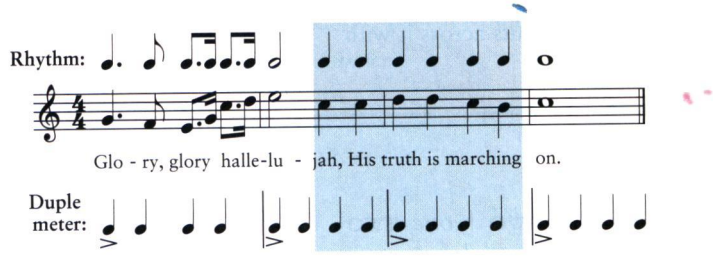
"The most exciting rhythms seem unexpected and complex, the most beautiful melodies simple and inevitable."

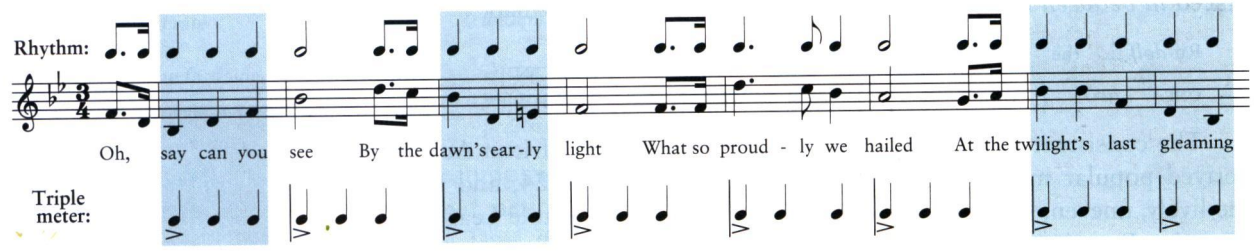
*W. H. Auden, poet, 1962*

*Rhythm* in the most general sense refers to the entire time aspect of music and, more specifically, *a* rhythm refers to the particular arrangements of long and short notes in a musical passage. In most Western music, duple or triple *meter* serves as the regular background against which we perceive music's actual rhythms.

As the rhythm first coincides with the meter, then cuts across it independently, then even contradicts it, all kinds of variety, tension, and excitement can result. Meter is background; rhythm is foreground.

Musical notation has developed a conventional system of signs (see Appendix B) to indicate relative durations, or long and short notes; combining various signs is the way of indicating rhythms. Following are examples of well-known tunes in duple and triple meters. Notice from the shading (even better, sing the tunes to yourself and *hear*) how the rhythm sometimes corresponds with the pulses of the meter and sometimes departs from them. The shading indicates passages of rhythm-meter correspondence:




The above examples should not be taken to imply that meter is always emphasized behind music's rhythms. Often the meter is not explicitly beaten out at all. It does not need to be, for the listener can almost always sense it under the surface. Naturally, meter is strongly stressed in music designed to stimulate regular body movements, such as marches, dances, and much popular music.

At the other extreme, there is *nonmetrical* music. In such music, the rhythms suggest no underlying pattern of strong and weak beats. For example, the meandering, nonmetrical rhythms of Gregorian chant contribute to the cool, otherworldly, and spiritual quality that devotees of this music cherish.

## Syncopation

One way of obtaining interesting, striking effects in music is to move the accents in a foreground *rhythm* away from their normal position on the beats of the background *meter.* This may seem counterintuitive, but it works. In **syncopation**,

## LISTENING EXERCISE 1

### Rhythm, Meter, and Syncopation

In Unit I of this book, we illustrate the concepts that are introduced with listening examples drawn from the Companion DVD. Follow the timings in these Listening Exercises, which are simplified versions of the Listening Charts provided for complete compositions later in the book. The charts are explained on page xxviii.

For samples of *duple, triple,* and *compound meters,* listen to the following tracks on the DVD.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10, 14 | Duple meter | Count ONE *two* \| ONE *two* . . . etc., for about half a minute. |
| 16 | Duple meter | Count ONE *two* THREE *four* \| ONE *two* THREE *four* . . . etc. |
| 12, 19 | Triple meter | Count ONE *two three* \| ONE *two three* . . . etc. |
| 17 | Compound meter | Count ONE *two three* FOUR *five six* \| ONE *two three* FOUR *five six* . . . etc. |

10 ***Syncopation:*** In Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," listen to the piano left hand, with its steady ONE *two* | ONE *two* beat in duple meter, while the right hand cuts across it with syncopations in almost every measure.

as it is called, accents can be displaced so they go *one* TWO | *one* TWO (*weak* STRONG | *weak* STRONG) instead of the normal ONE *two* | ONE *two* (STRONG *weak* | STRONG *weak*). Or syncopation can occur when an accent is placed *in between* beats ONE and *two,* as in this Christmas ballad:

Ru-***dolf*** — the red - nosed rein - deer _____

ONE *two* | ONE *two* | ONE *two* | ONE *two*

The consistent use of syncopation is the hallmark of African American–derived popular music, from ragtime to rap. See Chapter 24, and listen to the lively, uneven, *syncopated* rhythms of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" in Listening Exercise 1.

## 3 Tempo

Our discussion so far has referred to the *relative* duration of sounds—all beats are equal; some notes are twice as long as others, and so on—but nothing has been said yet about their *absolute* duration, in fractions of a second. The term for the speed of music is **tempo**; in metrical music, the tempo is the rate at which the basic, regular beats of the meter follow one another.

Tempo can be expressed exactly and measured by the **metronome**, a mechanical or electrical device that ticks out beats at any desired tempo. When composers give directions for tempo, however, they usually prefer approximate terms. Rather than freezing the music's speed by means of a metronome, they prefer to leave some latitude for different performers. Because all European music looked to Italy when this terminology first came into use, the conventional terms for tempo are Italian:

An early metronome owned by Beethoven; its inventor was a friend of his. A clockwork mechanism made the bar swing side to side, ticking at rates controlled by a movable weight.

## LISTENING EXERCISE 2

### Rhythm, Meter, and Tempo

DVD 11

A more advanced exercise: Our excerpt, from the middle of *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, for piano and orchestra, by Sergei Rachmaninov, consists of four continuous segments in different meters and tempos, here labeled A, B, C, and D. (If you note a family likeness among the segments, that is because they are all variations on a single theme. See page 174.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 0:00 | A | The piano starts in ***duple meter*** (ONE *two* \| ONE *two*). The loud orchestral interruptions are ***syncopated.*** (After the interruptions the meter is somewhat obscured, but it gets clearer.) |
| 0:33 | | Clear duple meter by this time; then the music comes to a stop. |
| 0:49 | B | No meter. The piano seems to be engaged in a meditative improvisation, as if it is dreaming up the music to come. |
| 1:45 | | Orchestral instruments suggest a slow ***duple meter***? Not for long. |
| 2:24 | C | Slow ***triple meter*** (ONE *two three* \| ONE *two three*) |
| 3:47 | | ***Ritardando*** (getting slower) |
| 3:56 | D | Fast ***triple meter,*** assertive (note one or two syncopated notes) |
| 4:26 | | Faster ***triple meter*** |

COMMON TEMPO INDICATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *adagio:* | slow |
| *andante:* | on the slow side, but not too slow |
| *moderato:* | moderate |
| *allegretto:* | on the fast side, but not too fast |
| *allegro:* | fast |
| *presto:* | very fast |

LESS COMMON TEMPO INDICATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *largo, lento, grave:* | slow, very slow |
| *larghetto:* | somewhat faster than *largo* |
| *andantino:* | somewhat faster than *andante* |
| *vivace, vivo:* | lively |
| *molto allegro:* | faster than *allegro* |
| *prestissimo:* | very fast indeed |

It's interesting that in their original meaning many of these Italian words refer not to speed itself but rather to a mood, action, or quality that can be associated with tempo only in a general way. Thus, *vivace* is close to our "vivacious," *allegro* means "cheerful," and *andante,* derived from the Italian word for "go," might be translated as "walking along steadily."

The most important terms to remember are those listed under "common tempo indications" above. Composers often use tempo indications alone as headings for major sections, called movements, in long works. People refer to the "Andante" of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, meaning a certain movement of the symphony (the second), which Beethoven specified should be played at an *andante* tempo.

CHAPTER 2

# Pitch, Dynamics, and Tone Color

If you have taken a course in physics, you know that sound is produced by vibrations that occur when objects are struck, plucked, stroked, or agitated in some other way. These vibrations are transmitted through the air and picked up by our ears.

For the production of sound in general, almost anything will do — the single rusted hinge on a creaky door as well as the great air masses of a thunderstorm. For the production of musical sounds, the usual objects are taut strings and membranes and columns of air enclosed in pipes of various kinds. These produce relatively simple vibrations, which translate into clearly focused or, as we say, "musical" sounds. Often the membranes are alive: They are called vocal cords.

Sound-producing vibrations are very fast; the range of sound that can be heard extends from around 20 to 20,000 cycles per second. The vibrations are also very small. To be heard, they often need to be *amplified*, either electronically or with the aid of something physical that echoes or *resonates* along with the vibrating body. In a guitar or violin, the resonator is the hollow box that the strings are stretched across.

Musical sounds can be high or low, loud or soft, and can take on different qualities depending on the materials used to produce them. The musical terms for these aspects of sound are pitch, dynamics, and tone color.

Natural objects can serve as resonators for musical instruments. Gourds are a favorite on two continents, used in Latin American maracas and the kalimba, an African "finger piano."

## 1 Pitch

The scientific term for the rate of sound vibration is **frequency**. On the level of perception, our ears respond differently to sounds of high and low frequencies, and to very fine gradations in between. Indeed, people speak about "high" and "low" sounds quite unselfconsciously, as though they know that the latter actually have a low frequency — relatively few cycles — and the former a high frequency.

The musical term for this quality of sound, which is recognized so instinctively, is **pitch.** Low pitches (low frequencies) result from *long* vibrating elements, high pitches from *short* ones — a trombone sounds lower than a flute.

Noises, with their complex, unfocused vibrations, do not have pitch. Your college chorus divides up high and low pitches among four different groups of voices: sopranos (high females), altos (low females), tenors (high males), and basses (low males).

The totality of musical sounds serves as a kind of quarry from which musicians of every age and every society carve the exact building blocks they want for their music. We hear this totality in the sliding scale of a siren, starting low and going higher and higher. But musicians never (or virtually never) use the full range of pitches. Instead they select a limited number of fixed pitches from the sound continuum. These pitches are calibrated scientifically (European-style orchestras these days tune to a pitch with a frequency of 440 cycles), given names (that pitch is labeled A), and collected in *scales*. Scales are discussed in Chapter 3.

## 2 Dynamics

In scientific terminology, *amplitude* is the level of strength of sound vibrations—more precisely, the amount of energy they contain and convey. As big guitar amplifiers attest, very small string vibrations can be amplified until the energy in the air transmitting them rattles the eardrums.

In musical terminology, the level of sound is called its **dynamics**. Musicians use subtle dynamic gradations from very soft to very loud, but they have never worked out a calibrated scale of dynamics, as they have for pitch. The terms

### LISTENING EXERCISE 3

DVD 12

#### Pitch and Dynamics

High and low ***pitch*** and loud and soft ***dynamics*** are heard so instinctively that they hardly need illustration. Listen, however, to the vivid way they are deployed in one of the most famous of classical compositions, the "Unfinished" Symphony by Franz Schubert. Symphonies usually consist of four separate big segments, called movements; musicologists are still baffled as to why Schubert wrote two superb movements for this work and started but never finished the rest.

| | | PITCH | DYNAMIC |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0:00 | Quiet and mysterious | Low range | *pp* |
| 0:15 | Rustling sounds | Middle range | |
| 0:22 | Wind instruments | High | |
| 0:35 | Single sharp accent | | *sf* |
| 0:47 | Gets louder | Higher instruments added | Long *crescendo,* leading to *f,* then *ff,* more accents |
| 1:07 | Sudden collapse | | *piano* followed by *diminuendo* |
| 1:15 | New tune | First low, then high | (Marked *pp* by Schubert, but usually played *p* or *mp*) |
| 1:52 | Cuts off sharply; big sound | | *ff,* more accents |
| | *(Similar pitch and dynamic effects for the rest of the excerpt)* | | |
| 3:07 | Sinking passage | Individual pitches, lower and lower | |
| 3:45 | Ominous | Lowest pitch of all | *pp* |

used are only approximate. Like the indications for tempo, the terms used for dynamics are in Italian.

The main categories are simply loud and soft, **forte** (pronounced fór-teh) and **piano**, which may be qualified by expanding to "very loud" or "very soft" and by adding the Italian word for "medium," **mezzo** (mét-so):

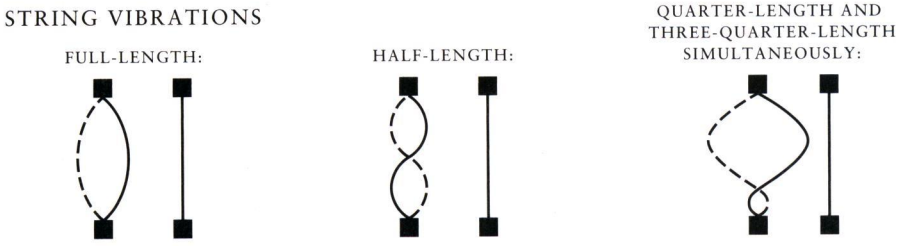
| *pianissimo* | *piano* | *mezzo piano* | *mezzo forte* | *forte* | *fortissimo* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *pp* | *p* | *mp* | *mf* | *f* | *ff* |
| very soft | soft | medium soft | medium loud | loud | very loud |

Changes in dynamics can be sudden (*subito*), or they can be gradual—a soft passage swells into a loud one (*crescendo,* "growing"), or a powerful blare fades into quietness (*decrescendo* or *diminuendo,* "diminishing").

## 3 Tone Color

At whatever pitch, and whether loud or soft, musical sounds differ in their general *quality,* depending on the instruments or voices that produce them. **Tone color** and **timbre** (tám-br) are the terms for this quality.

Tone color is produced in a more complex way (and a more astonishing way) than pitch and dynamics. Piano strings and other sound-producing bodies vibrate not only along their total length but also at the same time in half-lengths, quarters, eighths, and so on.




The diagrams above attempt to illustrate this. Musicians call these fractional vibrations **overtones**. They are much lower in amplitude than the main vibrations; for this reason, we hear overtones not as distinct pitches, but somehow as part of the string's basic or fundamental pitch. The amount and exact mixture of overtones are what give a sound its characteristic tone color. A flute has few overtones. A trumpet has many.

Musicians make no attempt to tally or describe tone colors; about the best one can do is apply imprecise adjectives such as *bright, warm, ringing, hollow,* or *brassy.* Yet tone color is surely the most easily recognized of all musical elements. Even people who cannot identify instruments by name can distinguish between the smooth, rich sound of violins playing together; the bright sound of trumpets; and the woody croaking of a bassoon.

The most distinctive tone color of all, however, belongs to the first, most beautiful, and most universal of all the sources of music—the human voice.

The singing voice, the most beautiful and universal of all sources of music: Renée Fleming, star of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, excels in an unusually wide variety of roles and is often heard singing popular standards.

CHAPTER 3

# Scales and Melody

As we noted in Chapter 2, music generally does not use the total continuous range of musical sounds. Instead, it draws on only a limited number of fixed pitches. These pitches can be assembled in a collection called a **scale**. In effect, a scale is the pool of pitches available for making music.

## 1 Scales

There are many different scales used in the musical cultures of the world. From them, musicians everywhere build an infinite array of melodies and other musical structures. If you sing to yourself the melody of one of your favorite songs, you will have employed the pitches of a scale. But how do scales—in particular the scales basic to Western art music—work?

### The Octave

Any two pitches will have a certain distance, or difference in highness and lowness, between them. Musicians call this distance an **interval**. Of the many different intervals used in music, one called the **octave** has a special character that makes it particularly important.

If successive pitches are sounded one after another—say, running from low to high up the white keys on a piano—there comes a point at which a pitch seems in some sense to "duplicate" an earlier pitch, but at a higher level. This new pitch does not sound identical to the old one, but somehow the two sounds are very similar. They blend extremely well; they almost seem to melt into each other. This is the octave.

What causes the phenomenon of octaves? Recall from Chapter 2 that when strings vibrate to produce sound, they vibrate not only along their full length but also in halves and other fractions (page 14). A vibrating string that is exactly half as long as another will *reinforce* the longer string's strongest overtone. This reinforcement causes the duplication effect of octaves.

As strings go, so go vocal cords: When men and women sing along together, they automatically sing in octaves, duplicating each other's singing an octave or two apart. If you ask them, they will say they are singing "the same song"—not many will think of adding "at different octave levels."

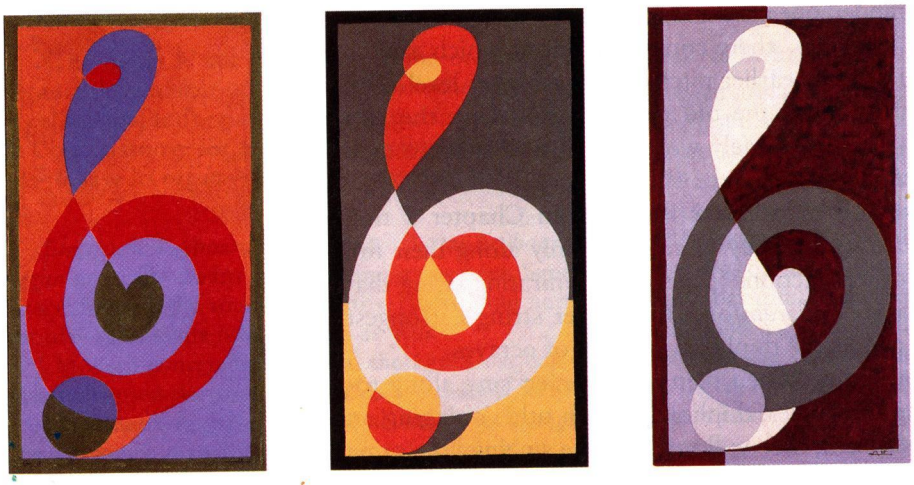
Choral singing, the route by which millions of people have come to know and love music

As a result of the phenomenon of octaves, the full continuous range of pitches that we can hear falls into a series of "duplicating" segments. We divide these octave segments into smaller intervals, thereby creating scales.

## The Diatonic Scale

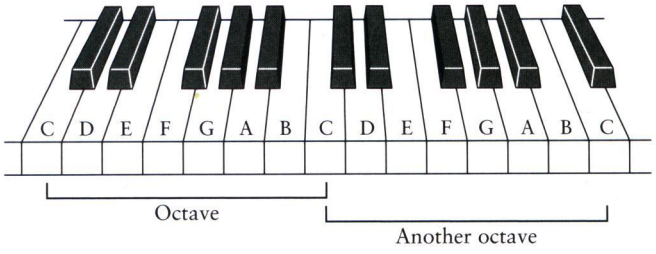
The scale originally used in Western music is a set of seven pitches within the octave, called the **diatonic scale**. Dating from ancient Greek times, the diatonic scale is still in use today. When the first of the seven pitches is repeated at a higher duplicating pitch, the total is eight—hence the name *octave,* meaning "eight span."

Anyone who knows the series *do re mi fa sol la ti do* is at home with the diatonic scale. You can count out the octave for yourself starting with the first



A pioneer of modern design, the German American painter Josef Albers (1888–1976) produced twenty-seven of these wonderful treble clefs, all in different color combinations.

*do* as *one* and ending with the second *do* as *eight*. The set of white keys on a keyboard plays this scale. Shown in the following diagram is a keyboard and diatonic scale notes running through two octaves. The scale notes (pitches) are marked with their conventional letter names. Because there are seven pitches, only the letters up to G are used before returning to A.




"Always remember that in listening to a piece of music you must hang on to the melodic line. It may disappear momentarily, withdrawn by the composer, in order to make its presence more powerfully felt when it reappears. But reappear it surely will."

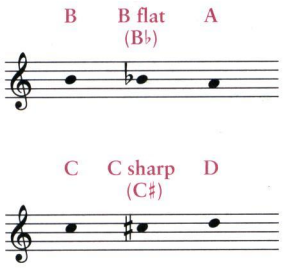
*From what is still one of the best books on music appreciation,* What to Listen for in Music *by composer Aaron Copland, 1939 (see page 347)*

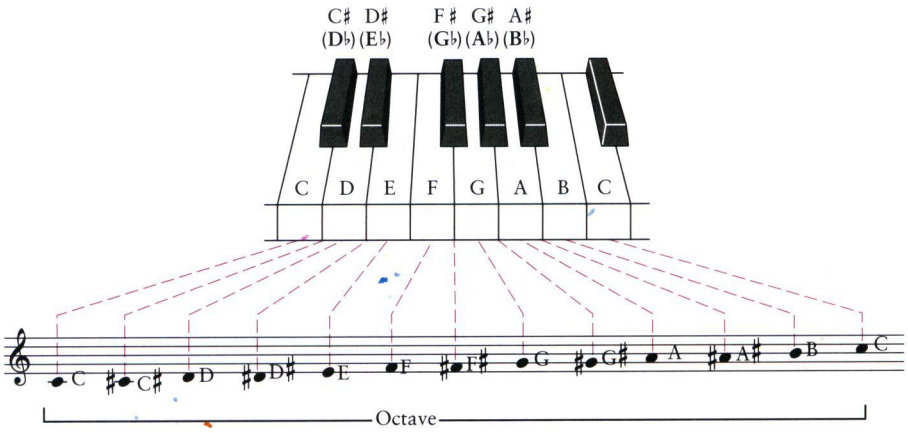
## The Chromatic Scale

The diatonic scale was the original, basic scale of Western music. At a later period, five more pitches were added between certain of the seven pitches of the diatonic scale, making a total of twelve. This is the **chromatic scale**, represented by the complete set of white and black keys on a keyboard.

The chromatic scale did not make the diatonic scale obsolete. For centuries Western composers used the chromatic scale freely while favoring the diatonic scale that is embedded in it. Keyboards reflect this practice, with their chromatic notes set back and thinner, and colored differently from the diatonic ones.

These five extra pitches caused a problem for musical notation. The pitches of the diatonic scale are indicated on the lines and spaces of the staff (see the following diagram); there are no positions in between, so no place for the new five pitches. To solve this problem, symbols such as those shown in the margin were introduced. B♭ stands for B **flat**, the pitch inserted between A and B; C♯ stands for C **sharp**, the pitch between C and D, and so on. (For more detail on the notation of pitches, see Appendix B.)



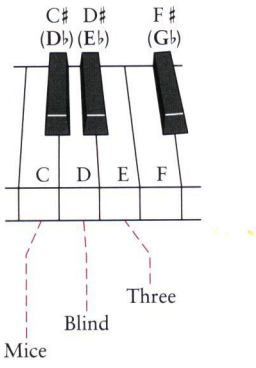

## Half Steps and Whole Steps

You learned before that the difference, or distance, between any two pitches is called the interval between them. There are many different intervals between the notes of the chromatic scale, depending on which two notes you choose, including the octave that encompasses them all.

For our purposes, there are only two additional interval types that need be considered:

The smallest interval is the **half step,** or semitone, which is the distance between any two successive notes of the chromatic scale. On a keyboard, a half step is the interval between the closest adjacent notes, white or black. The distance from E to F is a half step; so is the distance from C to C sharp (C♯), D to E flat (E♭), and so on.

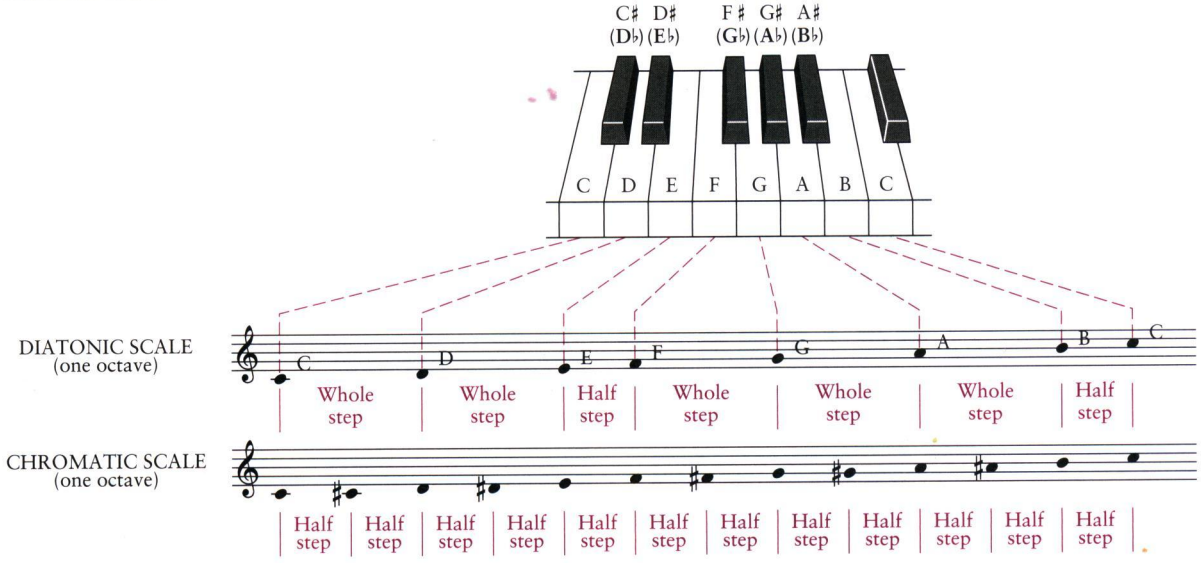
As the smallest interval in regular use, the half step is also the smallest that most people can "hear" easily and identify. Many tunes, such as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," end with two half steps, one half step going down and then the same one going up again ("His truth is *march-ing on*").




The **whole step,** or whole tone, is equivalent to two half steps: C to D, D to E, E to F♯, and so on. "Three Blind Mice" starts with two whole steps, going down.

The chromatic scale consists exclusively of half steps. The diatonic scale, instead, includes both half steps and whole steps. As you can see in the keyboard picture below, between B and C and between E and F of the diatonic scale, the interval is a half step—there is no black key separating the white keys. Between the other pairs of adjacent notes, however, the interval is twice as big—a whole step.

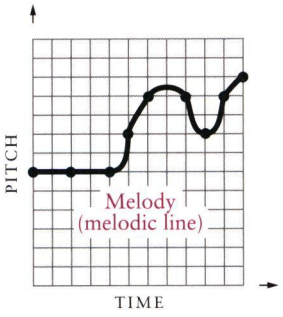
In this way the diatonic and chromatic scales differ in the intervals between their adjacent pitches. In the following diagram, the two scales are shown in music notation in order to highlight the differences in their interval structure. The mixing of half steps and whole steps is a defining feature of the diatonic scale.




## 2 Melody

A **melody** is an organized series of pitches. Melodies can be built from any scale. Think for a moment of pitch and time as the two coordinates of a musical graph (see the diagram on page 29). A series of single pitches played in a certain rhythm will appear as dots, high or low, on the pitch/time grid. If we connect them by a line, we get a picture of the melody's overall shape or contour. And

in fact, musicians commonly speak of "melodic line," or simply "line," in this connection.




Melodies come in an unlimited array of shapes, and they convey a huge variety of emotional characters. A melody in which each note is higher than the last can seem to soar; a low note can feel like a setback; a long series of repeated notes on the same pitch can seem to wait ominously. The listener develops a real interest in how the line of a satisfactory melody is going to come out.

Of all music's structures, melody is the one that moves people the most, that seems to evoke human sentiment most directly. Familiar melodies register simple qualities of feeling instantly and strongly. These qualities vary widely: strong and assertive — like a bugle call — in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," mournful in "Summertime" or "Yesterday," serene in "Amazing Grace," extroverted and cheerful in "Happy Birthday."

## Tunes

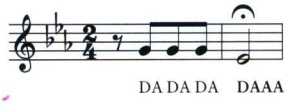
A simple, easily singable, catchy melody such as a folk song, or a Christmas carol, or many popular songs is a **tune**. A tune is a special kind of melody. *Melody* is a term that includes tunes, but also much else.

"The Star-Spangled Banner," which everyone knows, illustrates the general characteristics of tunes. See the box on page 30.

## Motives and Themes

Tunes are relatively short; longer pieces, such as symphonies, may have tunes embedded in them, but they also contain other musical material. Two terms are frequently encountered in connection with melody in longer pieces of music: **motive** and **theme**.

A *motive* is a distinctive fragment of melody, distinctive enough so that it will be easily recognized when it returns again and again within a long composition. Motives are shorter than tunes, shorter even than phrases of tunes; they can be as short as two notes. Probably the most famous motive in all music is the four-note DA-DA-DA-**DAAA** motive in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. It is heard literally hundreds of times in the symphony, sometimes up front and sometimes as a restless element in the background.




The second term, *theme*, is the most general term for the basic subject matter of longer pieces of music. *Theme* is another name for "topic": The themes or topics of an essay you might write are the main points you announce, repeat, develop, and hammer home. A composer treats musical themes in much the same way. The theme of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony consists of the brief DA-DA-DA-**DAAA** motive repeated over and over at different pitches — that is, played in *sequence*. The famous theme of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is a full tune, which we will hear several times on the DVD (see page 35).

## Characteristics of Tunes

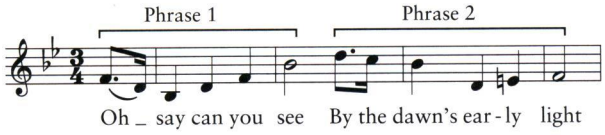
The best way to grasp the characteristics of tunes is by singing one you know, either out loud or in your head.

***Division into Phrases*** Tunes fall naturally into smaller sections, called **phrases**. This is, in fact, true of all melodies, but with tunes the division into phrases is particularly clear and sharp.

In tunes with words (that is, songs), phrases tend to coincide with poetic lines. Most lines in a song lyric end with a rhyming word and a punctuation mark such as a comma. These features clarify the musical phrase divisions:

And the rockets' red ***glare,***
The bombs bursting in ***air***

Singing a song requires breathing—and the natural tendency is to breathe at the end of phrases. You may not need to breathe after phrase 1 of our national anthem, but you'd better not wait any longer than phrase 2:




***Balance between Phrases*** In many tunes, all the phrases are two, four, or eight bars long. Blues tunes, for example, usually consist of three four-measure phrases, hence the term *twelve-bar blues.*

Most phrases of "The Star-Spangled Banner" are two measures long (see phrase 1 and phrase 2, above). But one phrase broadens out to four measures, with a fine effect: "Oh say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave." You don't want to breathe in the middle of this long phrase.

Other phrase lengths—three measures, five, and so on—can certainly occur in a tune and make for welcome contrast. For a good tune, the main requirement is that we sense a balance between the phrases, in terms of phrase lengths and in other terms, too, so that taken together the phrases add up to a well-proportioned whole.

***Parallelism and Contrast*** Balance between phrases can be strengthened by means of *parallelism.* For example, phrases can have the same notes but different words ("Oh, say can you see," "Whose broad stripes and bright stars"). Others have the same rhythm but different pitches ("Oh, say can you see," "By the dawn's early light").

Sometimes phrases have the same general melodic shape, but one phrase is slightly higher or lower than the other ("And the rockets' red glare," "The bombs bursting in air"). Such duplication of a phrase at two or more different pitch levels, called **sequence**, occurs frequently in music, and is a hallmark of certain musical styles.

Composers also take care to make some phrases *contrast* with their neighbors—one phrase short, another long, or one phrase low, another high (perhaps even *too* high, at "O'er the land of the *free*"). A tune with some parallel and some contrasting phrases will seem to have a satisfying coherence and yet will avoid monotony.

***Climax and Cadence*** A good tune has *form:* a clear, purposeful beginning, a feeling of action in the middle, and a firm sense of winding down at the end.

Many tunes have a distinct high point, or **climax**, which their earlier portions seem to be heading toward. Feelings rise as voices soar; a melodic high point is always an emotional high point. The climax of our national anthem emphasizes what was felt to be the really crucial word in it—"free." Patriot Francis Scott Key put that word in that place. (Key wrote the words of "The Star-Spangled Banner"—the words only, adapted to an older melody.)

Then the later part of the tune relaxes from this climax, until it reaches a solid stopping place at the end. Emotionally, this is a point of relaxation and satisfaction. In a less definite way, the music also stops at earlier points in the tune—or, if it does not fully stop, at least seems to pause. The term for these interim stopping or pausing places is **cadence**.

Composers can write cadences with all possible shades of solidity and finality. "And the home of the brave" is a very final-sounding cadence; "That our flag was still there" has an interim feeling. The art of making cadences is one of the most subtle and basic processes in musical composition.

## LISTENING EXERCISE 5

### Melody and Tune

DVD 13

***Division into phrases, parallelism*** and ***contrast*** between phrases, ***sequence, climax,*** and ***cadence:*** These are some characteristics of tunes that we have observed in "The Star-Spangled Banner." They are not just inert characteristics—they are what make the tune work, and they are present in tunes of all kinds. Our example is a song by George and Ira Gershwin from the Depression era, which was also the jazz era: "Who Cares?" from the musical comedy *Of Thee I Sing* (1932).

In "The Star-Spangled Banner" the *climax* matches the text perfectly at "free." Here "jubilee" makes a good match for the climax, and a melodic *sequence* fits the words "I care for you / you care for me" neatly. "Who cares?" comes at 0:57 on our recording by the great jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, after an introduction (called the *verse*) typical of such songs—a sort of subsidiary tune, with words that will not be repeated.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 0:12 | **Verse:** Let it rain and thunder . . . (eight more lines) | Includes a long ***sequence*** |
| 0:48 | | Tempo changes |
| 0:57 | **Tune:** Who cares if the sky cares to fall in the sea? | First phrase of the tune |
| | Who cares what banks fail in Yonkers? | ***Contrasting*** phrase |
| | Long as you've got a kiss that conquers. | ***Parallel*** phrase—starts like the preceding, ends higher |
| | Why should I care? Life is one long jubilee, | Threefold ***sequence*** ("Should I care / life is one / jubilee") |
| | | ***Climax*** on "jubilee" |
| | So long as I care for you and you care for me. | Free ***sequence*** ("I care for you"/"You care for me")—***cadence*** |
| 1:55 | **Tune** played by the jazz band, today's "big band" (with saxophone *breaks:* see page 382) | |

CHAPTER 4

# Harmony, Texture, Tonality, and Mode

A single melody is enough to qualify as music—sometimes, indeed, as great music. When people sing in the shower and when parents sing to their babies they are producing melody, and that is all, to everyone's full satisfaction. The same was true of the early Christian Church, whose music, Gregorian chant, consisted of more than two thousand different melodies—and melodies alone.

Today, however—and this is the outcome of a long and complicated historical development—it seems very natural to us to hear melodies together with other sounds. We are accustomed to hearing a folk singer singing and playing a guitar at the same time—*accompanying* herself on the guitar, as we say. In church, the congregation sings the hymns while the organist supplies the *accompaniment*.

Two concepts of basic importance in thinking about the way pitches sound together with each other are *harmony* and *texture*.

Melody and harmony: singer Joni Mitchell playing the Appalachian dulcimer

## 1 Harmony

The most general word musicians use to refer to the simultaneous sounding of different pitches is **harmony**. The folk singer's melody is said to be **harmonized**. She uses a number of standard groupings of simultaneous pitches that work well in combination. These groupings are called **chords**. The changing chords provide a sort of constantly shifting sound background for the melody. Any melody can be harmonized in different ways using different chords, and the overall effect of the music depends to a great extent on the nature of these chords, or the harmony in general.

In most of the music we hear, harmony is almost as basic and important an element as melody. And, like melody, harmony is a powerful stimulus to our emotional responses to music.

### Consonance and Dissonance

A pair of terms used in discussions of harmony is **consonance** and **dissonance**, meaning (roughly speaking) chords that sound at rest and those that sound tense, respectively. *Discord* is another term for dissonance. These qualities

depend on the kinds of intervals (see page 25) that are sounding simultaneously to make up these chords. Octaves are the most consonant of intervals. Half steps are the most dissonant, as you can hear by striking any two adjacent keys on a piano at the same time.

In everyday language, *discord* implies something unpleasant; discordant human relationships are to be avoided. But music does not avoid dissonance in its technical meaning, for a little discord supplies the subtle tensions that are essential to make music flow along. A dissonant chord leaves a feeling of expectation; it requires a consonant chord following it to complete the gesture and to make the music come to a point of stability. This is called *resolution;* the dissonance is said to be *resolved.* Without dissonance, music would be bland, like food without salt or spices.

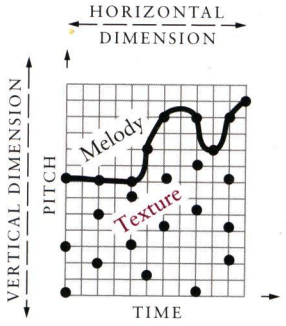
"Medicine, to produce health, must know disease; music, to produce harmony, must know discord."

*Plutarch, c. 46–120 C.E.*

## 2 Texture

**Texture** is the term used to refer to the way the various sounds and melodic lines occurring simultaneously in music interact or blend with one another. The word is adopted from textiles, where it refers to the weave of the various threads—loose or tight, even or mixed. A cloth such as tweed or denim, for instance, leaves the different threads clearly visible. In fine silk the weave is so tight and smooth that the threads can be impossible to detect.

Thinking again of the pitch/time graph on page 29, we can see that it is possible to plot more than one pitch for every time slot. Melody exists in the horizontal dimension, from left to right; texture in the vertical dimension, from top to bottom. For the moment, we leave the lower dots (below the melody) unconnected.

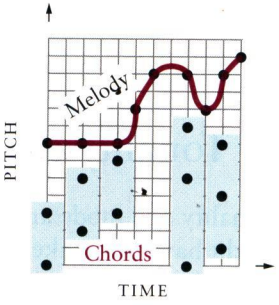



### Monophony

**Monophony** (mo-náh-fo-nee) is the term for the simplest texture, a single unaccompanied melody: Gregorian chant; singing in the shower; "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" before the second person comes in. Simple as this texture is, some very beautiful and sophisticated **monophonic** music has been composed, just as artists have done wonderful things with line drawings: See page 323.

### Homophony and Polyphony

When there is only one melody of real interest and it is combined with other, less prominent sounds, the texture is called **homophonic**. A harmonized melody is an example of homophonic texture; for instance, one person singing the tune of "Yesterday" while playing chords on a guitar. We might indicate a chord on the pitch/time graph by a vertical box enclosing the dots (see margin). Each box represents a chord; the sum of these boxes represents the harmony. **Homophony** can be thought of as a tight, smooth texture—like silk, among the textiles.



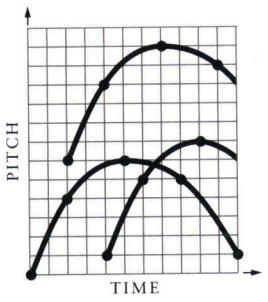

When two or more melodies are played or sung simultaneously, the texture is described as **polyphonic**. In **polyphony** (po-líf-o-nee), the melodies are felt to be independent and of approximately equal interest. The whole is more than the sum of the parts, however; the way the melodies play off against one another makes for the possibility of greater richness and interest than if they

were played singly. In the textile analogy, polyphony would be compared to a rough fabric in which the strands are all perceptible, such as a multicolored woolen blanket.

▶ Access an interactive tutorial on texture in the e-book at **bedfordstmartins.com/listen**

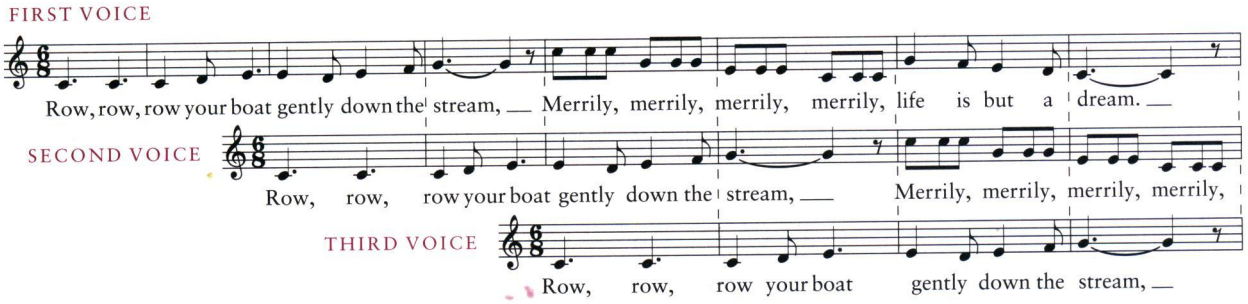
It's also important to recognize that polyphonic music automatically has harmony. For at every moment in time, on every beat, the multiple horizontal melodies create vertical chords; those chords make harmony. A word often used for polyphonic texture is **contrapuntal**, which comes from the word **counterpoint**, the technique of writing two or more melodies that fit together.

## Imitation

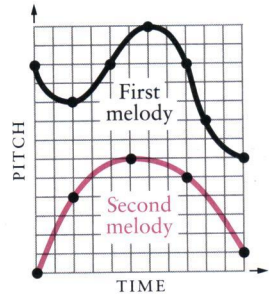



Polyphonic texture, like so many other musical elements, cannot be categorized with any precision. One useful and important distinction, however, is between *imitative polyphony* and *non-imitative polyphony*.

**Imitative polyphony** results when the various lines sounding together use the same or fairly similar melodies, with one coming in shortly after another. The simplest example of imitative polyphony is a round, such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or "Frère Jacques"; the richest kind is a fugue (see Chapter 10). In the following music example, you can see that each voice enters with the same notes but in staggered fashion; the second and third voices *imitate* the first:




**Non-imitative polyphony** occurs when the melodies are different from one another. An example that many will know is the typical texture of a New Orleans jazz band, with the trumpet playing the main tune flanked top and bottom by the clarinet and the trombone playing exhilarating melodies of their own.




# 3 Tonality and Mode

Tonality and mode are aspects of melody as well as harmony, and as such they might have been taken up earlier. We have deferred them till last because, even more than the other basic structures of music, they require careful explanation.

## Tonality

We start with a basic fact about melodies and tunes: Melodies nearly always give a sense of focusing around a single "home" pitch that feels more important than do all the other pitches of the scale. Usually this is ***do*** in the *do re mi fa sol la ti do* scale (C D E F G A B C). This pitch feels fundamental, and on it

## LISTENING EXERCISE 6

### Texture

DVD 14, 15

A famous passage from Beethoven furnishes a clear example of ***monophonic, polyphonic,*** and ***homophonic textures***—the initial presentation of the so-called Joy Theme in Symphony No. 9, the "Choral" Symphony. The theme, a tune known around the world, takes its name from the words set to it, an enthusiastic ode to the joy that comes from human freedom, companionship, and reverence for the deity. The words are sung by soloists and a chorus.

But before anyone sings, the theme is played several times by the orchestra, in a way that suggests that joy is emerging out of nothingness into its full realization. Beginning with utterly simple *monophony,* and growing successively higher and louder, it is enriched by *polyphony* and then reaches its grand climax in *homophony.*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | 0:00 | Joy Theme | Low register | ***Monophony:*** a single melodic line; cellos and double basses playing together, with no accompaniment whatsoever |
| | 0:49 | Theme | An octave higher | ***Polyphony, non-imitative:*** the theme with two lines of ***counterpoint,*** in low strings (cello) and a mellow wind instrument (bassoon) |
| | 1:36 | Theme | Two octaves higher | |
| | 2:21 | Theme | Three octaves higher | ***Homophony:*** full orchestra with trumpets prominent |

Our example of ***imitative polyphony*** comes from the *Symphony of Psalms,* another symphony with chorus, a major work by the twentieth-century composer Igor Stravinsky.

15 0:00 A slow, winding melody, unaccompanied, played by an oboe

0:25 The same melody enters in another instrument, a flute, as the oboe continues with new material; this produces two-part ***imitative counterpoint.***

0:58 Third entry, second flute plays in a lower register—three-part counterpoint

1:20 Fourth entry, second oboe—four-part counterpoint

the melody seems to come to rest most naturally. The other notes in the melody all sound close or distant, dissonant or consonant, in reference to the fundamental note, and some of them may actually seem to lean or lead toward it.

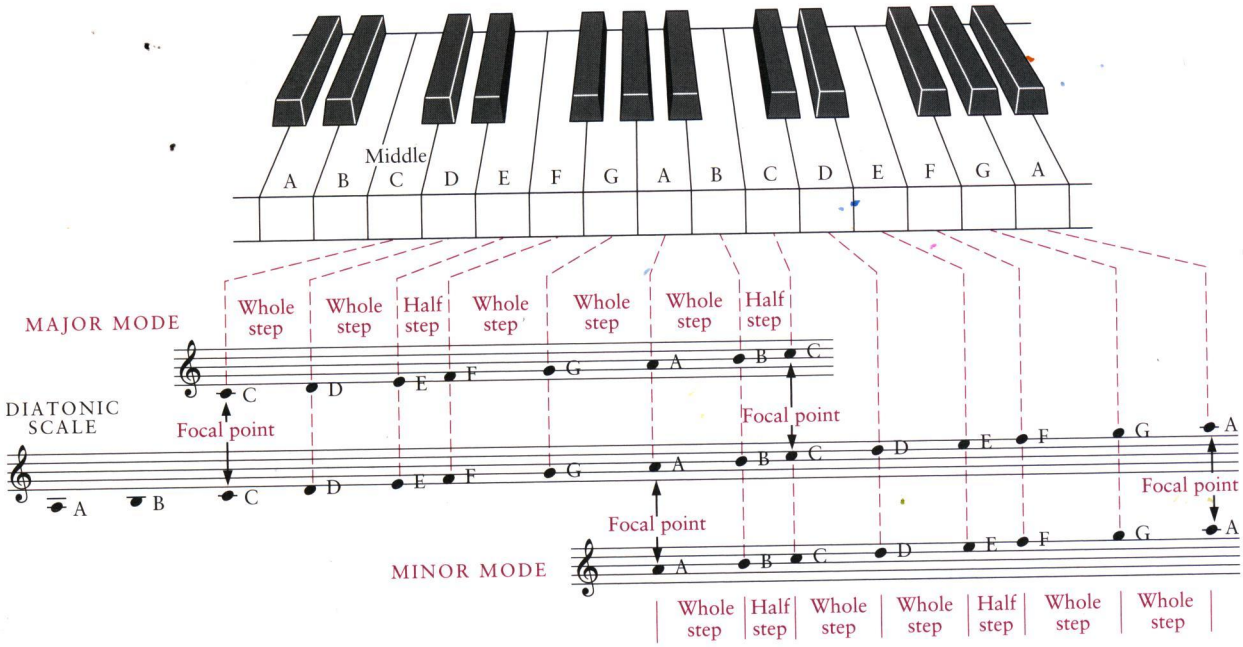
This homing instinct that we sense in melodies can be referred to in the broadest terms as the feeling of **tonality**. The music in question is described as **tonal**. The home pitch (*do*) is called the *tonic pitch,* or simply the **tonic**.

The easy way to identify the tonic is to sing the whole melody through, because the last note is almost invariably *it.* Thus "The Star-Spangled Banner" ends on its tonic, *do:* "and the home of the *brave.*" An entire piece of music, as well as just a short melody, can give this feeling of focusing on a home pitch and wanting to end there.

## Major and Minor Modes

Turn back to page 27 and the diagram for the diatonic scale, the basic scale of Western music. This diagram, of course, showed only a portion of a longer scale extending all the way up the octaves, from the lowest limits of hearing to the highest. Our portion, covering two octaves, started from C because most melodies are oriented around C (*do*), as we've just explained.

The following diagram shows another portion of the diatonic scale, starting on A (*la*), because another class of melodies in Western music is oriented around A, not C:




Look carefully at the diagram: Moving up through the octave from C to C, you encounter a different sequence of whole and half steps than you do moving from A to A. This difference gives melodies oriented around A a quality different from those oriented around C. The term for these different ways of centering or organizing the diatonic scale is **modality**; the different home pitches are said to determine the different **modes** of music. Music with the *do* (C) center is in the **major mode**. Music with the *la* (A) orientation is in the **minor mode**.

## Keys

Mode and key are concepts that are often confused. Let us see if we can clarify them.

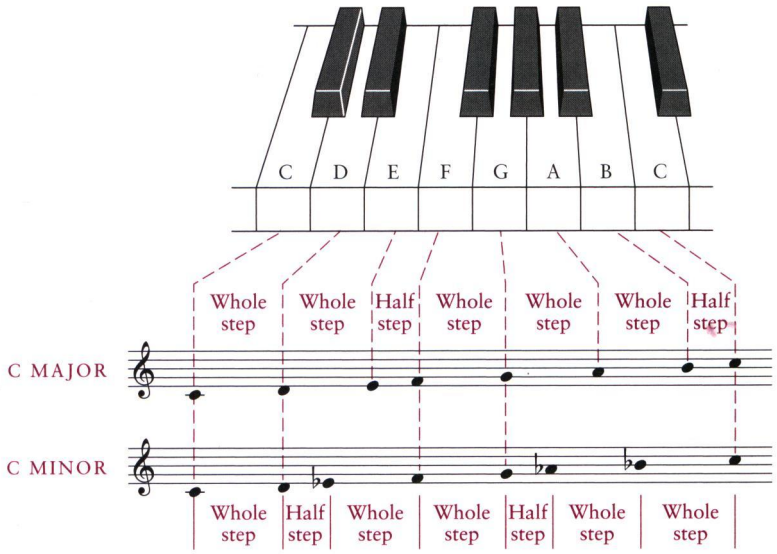
We have just seen how the two modes, the major with its tonic or home pitch on C and the minor on A, are derived from the diatonic scale. However, if you use all twelve notes of the *chromatic* scale, you can construct both the major and the minor modes starting from any note at all. Whichever note you choose as tonic, starting from there you can pick out the correct sequence of half steps and whole steps. This is because the chromatic scale includes *all* possible half steps and whole steps.

Thanks to the chromatic scale, then, major and minor modes can be constructed starting on any pitch. These different positions for the modes are called **keys**. If the major mode is positioned on C, the music is said to be in the key of C major, or just "in C"; positioned on D, the key is D major. Likewise we have the keys of C minor, D minor, and—as there are twelve pitches in the chromatic scale—a grand total of twenty-four different keys (twelve major and twelve minor).

## Listening for the Major and Minor Modes

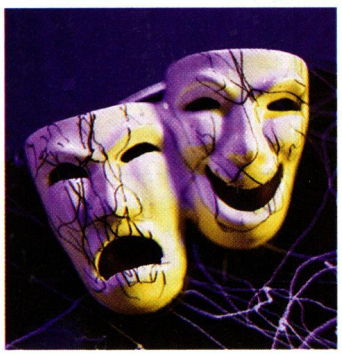
On paper, it is easiest to show the difference between major and minor if we compare a major and minor key that have the same tonic. So yet another diagram, below, compares C major with C minor. C minor is derived by duplicating, from C to C, the minor-mode arrangement of whole and half steps from A to A that we saw in the diagram on page 36.

▶ Access an interactive tutorial on the major and minor modes in the e-book at **bedfordstmartins.com/listen**




The difference between the modes is easy to see: Three of the scale degrees are lower in the minor (hence the term *minor,* of course). The arrangement of intervals is not the same when you sing up or down the scales, and this in turn makes a great difference in the feel of melodies built from these scales.

Easy to see—but *hearing* the difference is another matter. This comes easily to some listeners, less easily to others. As a result of the three lower scale degrees, music in the minor mode tends to sound more subdued, more clouded than music in the major. It is often said that major sounds cheerful and minor sounds sad, and this is true enough in a general way; but there are many exceptions, and in any case people can have different ideas about what constitutes sadness and cheerfulness in music.



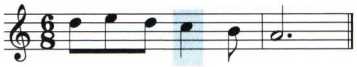
Is it right to represent the major and minor modes by comedy and tragedy masks? Yes, but only in a general sense—there are many nuances between these extremes.

Learning to distinguish the major and minor modes requires comparative listening. Listen especially for the third scale degree up from the tonic. "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" and "We Three Kings of Orient Are" are both in the minor mode. Singing them through, we can practice recognizing the characteristic minor-mode sound involving the third scale degree at the final cadence.

*Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho*

walls came tum-blin' down.

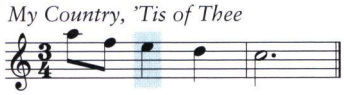
*We Three Kings*



fol-low-ing yon-der star.

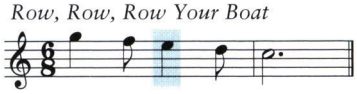
Compare this with the third note up from the tonic at the end of major-mode songs such as "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and many others. It sounds brighter, more positive.

*My Country, 'Tis of Thee*



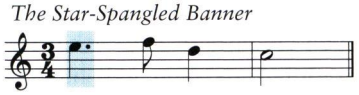
let — free-dom ring!

*Row, Row, Row Your Boat*



life is but a dream.

*The Star-Spangled Banner*



home of the brave.

## LISTENING EXERCISE 7

### Mode and Key

DVD 16, 17

Modality is probably most obvious when you hear a minor-mode melody (or phrase of melody) and then hear it with the mode changed to major. A short passage from the String Quartet in A Minor by Franz Schubert is a lovely illustration of this change.

16 0:00 *pp* A melancholy melody in the ***minor mode.*** Listen to the first violin above the rustling accompaniment in the lower string instruments.

0:47 The beginning of the melody returns, changed to the ***major mode.***

Listen to more of the Schubert quartet for a change in ***key:***

1:04 *ff* Agitated; back in the minor mode. Lower instruments alternate with the solo violin.

1:39 *p* A quiet cadence, still in the same key, but followed by ***modulation***

1:56 *p* Reaching a ***new key,*** for a new theme. This theme is in the major mode, calm and sunny.

For a series of ***modulations*** to several different keys, go to a passage from Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, the "Emperor" Concerto. Here the key changes stand out clearly because the modulations are carried out so brusquely—a Beethoven specialty.

17 0:00 Lively music for the piano, *f,* followed by a *f* response from the orchestra

0:28 Modulation (French horns)

***New key:*** Similar music for piano, but *pp,* followed by the same orchestral response, *f*

1:03 Similar modulation (French horns). The music seems to be searching for a place to settle.

***Another new key:*** piano, *p,* and orchestra, *f,* as before

1:36 The piano bursts in, *f,* in the same key but in the ***minor mode.*** It begins modulating to further new keys in a more complicated way than before.

## Listening for Keys and Modulation

The major and minor modes can be said to differ from one another intrinsically, for in each mode the pitches form their own special set of intervals and interval relationships. As we have seen, C major and C minor, while sharing the same central or tonic pitch, have their own individual arrangements of half- and whole-step intervals.

Different keys, however, merely entail the same set of intervals moved to a new position within the pitch continuum. This is a significant difference, but not an intrinsic one. First base is different from second base, but only because the same sort of bag has been put in a significant new place.

As for actually *hearing* keys—that is, recognizing the different keys—for some listeners this presents an even greater problem than hearing modality, though to others it comes more easily. The important thing is not to be able to identify keys in themselves, but rather to be able to hear when keys change. For changing the key of music changes its mood or the way it feels; generations of composers have used this resource for some of their most powerful effects. Such changes of key—that is, changes of the tonic or home pitch—are called **modulations**. You will have many opportunities to hear the effects modulations can create; here you should try Listening Exercise 7, the most challenging one yet, listening for changes in mode and key.

CHAPTER 5

# Musical Form and Musical Style

*Form* is a general word with a long list of dictionary definitions. As applied to the arts, **form** is an important concept that refers to the shape, arrangement, relationship, or organization of the various elements. In poetry, for example, the elements of form are words, phrases, meters, rhymes, and stanzas; in painting, they are lines, colors, shapes, and space.

## 1 Form in Music

In music, the elements of form and organization are those we have already discussed: rhythm, dynamics, tone color, melody, harmony, and texture. A musical work, whether a simple song or a symphony, is formed or organized by means of repetitions of some of these elements, and by contrasts among them. The repetitions may be strict or free (that is, exact or with some variation). The contrasts may be of many different kinds—the possibilities are virtually limitless—conveying many different kinds of feeling.

> "Music has four essential elements: rhythm, melody, harmony, and tone color. These four ingredients are the composer's materials. He works with them in the same way that any other artisan works with his materials."
>
> *Aaron Copland,* What to Listen for in Music

Over the centuries and all over the world, musicians have learned to create longer and more impressive pieces in this way: symphonies, operas, works for the Javanese gamelan or Japanese gagaku orchestras, and more. Each piece is a specific sound experience in a definite time span, with a beginning, middle, and end, and often with subtle routes between. Everyone knows that music can make a nice effect for a minute or two. But how does music extend itself—and hold the listener's interest—for ten minutes, or half an hour, or three whole hours at a time?

This is one of the main functions of musical form. Form is the relationship that connects those beginnings, middles, and ends.

### Form and Feeling

Form in art also has a good deal to do with its emotional quality; it is a mistake to consider form as a merely structural or intellectual matter. Think of the little (or big) emotional click we get at the end of a limerick or any poem with a "punchline," where the accumulated meanings of the words are summed up with the final rhyme. On a small scale, this is an effect to which form contributes. Similarly, when at the end of a symphony a previously heard melody comes back, with new orchestration and new harmonies, the special feeling this gives

*Form in Painting*

A Madonna by Raphael Sanzio (1483–1520), built out of two cunningly nested triangles. To balance the boys at the left, the Virgin faces slightly to the right, her extended foot "echoing" their bare flesh. On a larger scale, the activity at the left is matched by a steeper landscape.

us emerges from a flood of memory; we remember the melody from before, in its earlier version. That effect, too, is created by form.

How easy is it, actually, to perceive form in music and to experience the feelings associated with form? Easy enough with a short tune, such as "The Star-Spangled Banner"—that's what the analysis on page 30 was all about. The various phrases of this tune, with their repetitions, parallel features, contrasts, and climax, provide a microcosm of musical form in longer pieces. A large-scale composition such as a symphony is something like a greatly-expanded tune, and its form is experienced in basically the same way.

To be sure, a symphony requires more from the listener—more time and more attention—than a tune does. Aware of the potential problem here, composers scale their musical effects accordingly. The larger the piece, the more strongly the composer is likely to help the memory along by emphasizing the repetitions and contrasts that determine the musical form.

## Form and Forms

Like the word *rhythm* (see page 7), the word *form* has a general meaning and also a more specific one. "Form" in general refers to the organization of elements in a musical work, but "*a* form" refers to one of many standardized formal patterns that composers have used over the centuries. The ones treated later in this book are listed in the margin.

The fixed elements in such forms provide a welcome source of orientation for listeners, but they are always general enough to allow composers endless possibilities on the detailed level. The quality and feeling of works in the same standardized or conventional form can therefore vary greatly.

*Form in Poetry*

Fleas:
Adam
Had 'em.

The poet creates rhyme and meter to add a little lift, and a smile, to the prose observation "Adam had fleas" (or "Ever since Adam, we've all suffered"—and Eve: you gotta believe!).

*The Main Musical Forms*

Musical forms, as standardized patterns, are conventionally expressed by letter diagrams, such as **A B A** or **a b a** (small letters tend to be used for shorter sections of music). They will be used again and again in this book. More complicated forms come about through "nesting":

| A | B | A |
|---|---|---|
| a b a | c d c | a b a |

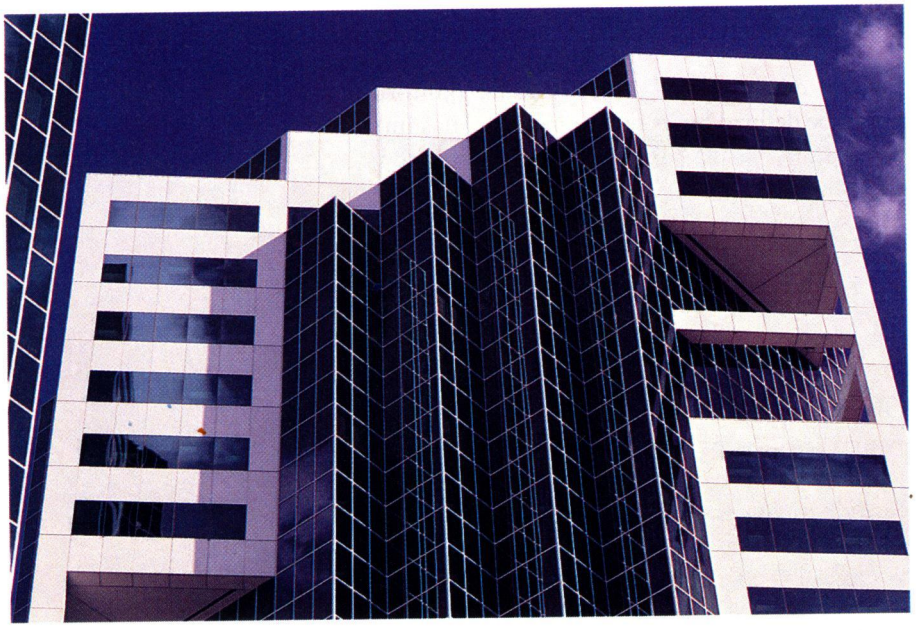
Two basic factors create musical form: *repetition* and *contrast*. In **A B A** form, one of the simplest, the element of repetition is **A** and the element of contrast is **B**. Some sort of tune or theme or other musical section is presented at the beginning (**A**), then comes another section (**B**) that contrasts with the first, and then the first one again (**A**). If **A** returns with significant modification, this can be indicated by a prime mark: **A′**.

Seems clear enough. Yet the letters tell us only so much. With any particular work, what about the specific music they stand for? Is **B** in a different mode? A different key? Does it present material that contrasts in rhythm, texture, or tone color—or does it work its contrast by ringing changes on the original material, on **A**? The returns to **A** material in **A B A′** form, too, can convey very different feelings. One return can sound exciting, another unexpected, while yet another provides a sense of relief.

So diagramming forms—getting the letters right—is just a first step in music appreciation. The real point about great music is the way composers refine, modify, and personalize conventional forms for their own expressive purposes.

## Musical Genres

One often hears symphonies, sonatas, and operas referred to as "forms" of music. Actually this is loose terminology, best avoided in the interests of clarity, because symphonies and other works can be composed in completely different standardized forms. Thus, the last movement of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 95 is in rondo form, whereas the last movement of Hector Berlioz's *Fantastic* Symphony follows no standard form whatsoever.



*Form in Architecture*

The central, contrasting unit of this building seems almost to flow into the unit at the right. The musical analogy would be to an interesting **A B A′** form, in which **A** comes back after **B** in an expanded version (**A′**), and that version includes some new rhythm or instrument that we first heard during **B**.

## LISTENING EXERCISE 8

DVD 16, 18

### Musical Form

"The Star-Spangled Banner" has one of the simplest forms, **a a b.** "Oh, say can you see . . . the twilight's last gleaming" is a, "Whose broad stripes . . . gallantly streaming" is the second **a,** and the rest of the anthem is **b.** Section **b** makes a definite contrast with **a** by means of its new melody and higher range, as we've seen on page 30.

When sections of music are not identical but are considered essentially parallel, they are labeled **a, a′, a″,** and so on. The first theme of Schubert's Quartet in A Minor is in **a a′ a″ form.**

| 16 | 0:00 | a | Melancholy |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 0:21 | a′ | Begins like **a,** but the melody lasts longer and goes higher and lower than in **a** |
| | 0:47 | a″ | The beginning now turns luminously to the major mode. |

Smaller form elements (**a, b, a′**) can be nested in larger ones, marked with capital letters: **A, B, A′**. A more extended example comes from an all-time classical favorite, the Christmas ballet *The Nutcracker* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky used the Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy mainly to show off the celesta, a rare instrument (see page 20). The **A B A′** form of the dance breaks down into **a a′ b b a a′**.

| 18 | 0:00 | | | Introduction: The 2/4 meter is previewed by low stringed instruments. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0:08 | A | a | Solo for celesta, with comments by a bass clarinet |
| | 0:23 | | a′ | Begins like a, but the ending is different—on a new pitch and harmony |
| | 0:37 | B | b | Contrast with a |
| | 0:44 | | b | |
| | 0:51 | | | Transition: The music has a preparatory quality. |
| | 1:07 | A′ | a | Celesta an octave higher, with a quiet new click in the violins |
| | 1:22 | | a′ | The high celesta is a very striking sound. |

The new orchestration is what gives this **A B A′** form its prime mark—not changes in melody or harmony, as is usually the case. More strictly, the form could be marked ***introduction*** **A (a a′) B (b b)** ***transition*** **A′ (a″ a‴)**, but this level of detail is seldom needed.

The best term for these general categories of music is **genre** (jáhn-ruh), borrowed from French. A genre can be defined by its text (a madrigal has Italian verses of a specific kind), or by its function (a Mass is written for a Roman Catholic service), or by the performing forces (a quartet is for four singers or instrumentalists). The main genres of Western music are listed in the margin on page 43.

## 2 Musical Style

**Style,** like *form,* is another of those broad, general words—general but very necessary. The style of a tennis player is the particular way he or she reaches up for the serve, follows through on the forehand, rushes the net, hits the ball deep or short, and so on. A lifestyle means the whole combination of things one does and doesn't do: the food one eats, the way one dresses and talks, one's habits of thought and feeling.

The style of a work of art, similarly, is the combination of qualities that make it distinctive. One composer's style may favor jagged rhythms, simple

harmonies, and tunes to the exclusion of other types of melody. Another may prefer certain kinds of tone color or texture; still another may concentrate on a particular form. The type of emotional expression a composer cultivates is also an important determinant of musical style.

One can speak of the lifestyle of a generation as well as the lifestyle of a particular person. Similarly, a distinction can be made between the musical style of a particular composer and the style of a historical period. For example, to a large extent George Frideric Handel's manner of writing falls within the parameters of the Baroque style of his day. But some features of Handel's style are unique, and perhaps it is those features that embody his musical genius.

## Musical Style and Lifestyle

In any historical period or place, the musical style bears some relation to the lifestyle in general; this seems self-evident. Perhaps the point is clearest with popular music, where distinct (and distinctly different) worlds are evoked by rock, rap, and country music, to say nothing of earlier styles such as 1950s rhythm and blues or 1930s swing.

Older styles of music, too, relate to total cultural situations, though how this works in detail is not fully understood. We can, however, at least suggest some of these cultural connections to music of the various historical periods. In the Prelude chapters for each time period in this book, we sketch certain aspects of the culture, history, and lifestyle of the time. We then briefly outline the musical style and, wherever possible, suggest correlations. Then the musical style is examined in more detail through individual composers and individual pieces of music in the chapters that follow.

These individual pieces are our principal concern—not history, or culture, or concepts of musical style in the abstract. Learning the basic concepts of music (as we have tried to do in this unit) is useful only insofar as it focuses and sharpens the process of listening to actual music. This book is called *Listen,* and it rests on the belief that the love of music depends first and foremost on careful listening to particular pieces. But such listening never happens in a cultural vacuum; for all of us it takes place in a vivid, experienced context of some kind. The general information presented here on history, culture, styles, and genres is intended to remake, in some small way, our own listening contexts—and hence reshape our listening experiences.

*The Main Musical Genres*



*Early Music Genres*



Benjamin Britten conducting a Promenade Concert in London's Albert Hall, capacity 8,000. For over a century droves of music lovers have heard and learned music of all kinds at the "Proms," given every day during July and August and broadcast on BBC Radio and TV.