

THE ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

Victorian Curriculum F–10

RHYTHM

the organisation of sound and silence using beat, metre and tempo

BEAT

the regular underlying pulse of a piece of music, like a heartbeat

pulse

regular

METRE

the organisation of beats into groups; often the accenting of the beat determines the metre

1234... 1234

TEMPO

the speed of a piece of music

time

speed



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FORM & STRUCTURE

the plan or design of a piece of music, including the order of ideas in the piece

REPETITION

what is the same

VARIATION

what is different

binary (AB)

song forms (often contain intro, verses, choruses, bridge and outro)

sonata form (exposition, development, recapitulation)

ternary (ABA)

12-bar blues (structured around chords I, IV and V)

rondo (ABACA)

arch (ABCBA)

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MELODY

horizontal organisation of pitch

HARMONY

vertical organisation of pitch

PITCH

*the relative
highness or lowness
of sound*

CHORD

*different pitches played
at the same time*

ACCOMPANIMENT

*supports the melody by using notes
from chords*

conjunct melody
(pitches that travel easily
from one to the next)

dissonant harmony
(a harsher
combination of notes)

consonant harmony
(a smooth-sounding
combination of notes)

disjunct melody
(pitches that jump around
in a disjointed way)

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EXPRESSION

using dynamics and articulation to create an effect

DYNAMICS

the relative volume (softness or loudness) and intensity of sound

pianissimo pp (very softly)

fortissimo ff (very loudly)

ARTICULATION

the attack, release and decay of sound

staccato (detached)

tonguing

bowing

(on a wind instrument to stop the airflow)

legato (smooth and connected)

(on a stringed instrument to create a legato or staccato phrase)

accented



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TIMBRE

the particular tone, colour or quality of sounds (also called tone colour)

how tone, colour or quality vary

there is a different quality of sound in the upper or lower register of an instrument

the same pitch played on different instruments can sound very different

bright

shimmering

warm

smooth

piercing

TEXTURE

the layers of sound in a musical work and the relationship between them

how musical sounds are combined and layered

monophonic (unison)

homophonic (melody and accompaniment)

polyphonic (multiple melodies played simultaneously)