

It is important to understand the style that you are planning to compose in. One way to assist you, is to listen to works written by leading contemporaries in that style and work out how they have manipulated the elements. Following this section is a listening log. Here is where you can record different comments about the different elements and also make notes about the things you like and might use. Here is a short reference guide on the elements.

PITCH:

Contour: angular/smooth, direction—ascending/descending, predictability, consistent/inconsistent, arpeggio (harmony, broken chord), intervals—tone, semitone, stepwise/leaps, chromatic, leaps small (2—5 notes), large (5+ notes).

Harmony: higher, lower, unison, sparse, distant/compact, close, block, repetitive, reinforcing/individual tune, dissonance

Tonality: Diatonic, atonal, blues, pentatonic, modal, raga, chromatic, serial, clusters, indefinite

Expressive techniques: melisma, slide, glissando, vibrato, ornamentation (grace note, trill, mordent), bend,

Range—instrumental and vocal, technology (synthesizers)

Structure/Texture: call and response, layers, fills, climaxes, repetition, contract, imitation, motifs, riff, cadence points, canon, round, sporadic, variation, modulation, melodic phrases, sequences, extended phrases, drone, pedal point, ostinato, repeated tone.

RHYTHM:

Time signature	riffs, ostinatos	augmentation	diminution
Simple/compound time	poly rhythms/cross rhythms	irregular patterns	repetition
Anacrusis	swing / jazz	note lengths	dotted notes
Isometric/multimetric	syncopation	pauses	rests
Regular/irregular	couplets/duplets	tempo	pulse

Altering tempo—accelerando, ritenuto, rubato

Articulation—staccato, accents, slurs, fade out, attack/decay, delan, tenuto, vibrato

TEXTURE:

Level of activity - Sparse/dense, bare/cluttered, Confused/well defined, Antiphonal (question and answer), Canon, How many parts and how many instruments playing each part

Role - Solo/ensemble, Opposition/complimentary, supporting, Pulse reinforcing, Accompaniment, Staggered entries, Canon, round, Imitation, Call and response, Bass part, Walking bass, Chords, Accompaniment, Arpeggiated accompaniment, Ostinato, Drone, Counter melody, Unison, Close harmony (three parts - third above and fourth below the melody note), Four part harmony, Two part invention, Repetition, Layers of sound and roles

Contrast - Removal of instruments, New motif/voice, Foreground, background emphasis- does this change throughout piece, Differing rhythms

Performing Media - Identify instrument, describe role and the effect.

STRUCTURE:

Form - Binary (two sections e.g. AAB, ABA), ternary (three sections, returning to A), rondo (a number of sections separated and ended by A e.g. ABACA), Verse chorus form (popular style), Codas, Sonata, Through composed (all verses have totally different music)/strophic (only verses-all the same)/episodic, Progressive (e.g. 12 bar blues), colla voce

Development - Theme variation, Imitation, Symmetrical, Digression, Recurrence, Variation, Call and response, Links between sections

Unity - Melodic, phrase repetition, Rhythmic motif, Consistent style and concepts, Repetition on harmonic patterns (e.g. ground bass, rhythmic/melodic ostinato), Drones/pedal point, Static instrumentation, Structural repetition (e.g. rondo, theme, instrumentation changing roles but using previously heard material)

Contrast

Modulation, Introduction of new material, Change in metre, tempo, rhythmic patterns, Change in accompaniment or other parts, Change in register, Tonality- major/minor/modal/pentatonic, Harmony- dissonance, Structural- new section, Stylistic contrast, Phrase variation, Dynamics

TONE COLOUR: Always, list performing media, describe quality of sound, explain role of each source (harmonic, melodic, rhythmic), and mention how the sound is created (e.g. plucking)

Category

Brass- vibrant, rich, strong

Strings- acoustic, warm, sonorous (i.e. resonant)

Percussion- dominant or supportive role, harsh, bland

Woodwind- thin, airy, smooth

Electronic- resonant, piercing

Vocal- (harmonies) dissonant, perfect, unified

Vocabulary – Breathily, Silvery, Mellow, Colourful, Shrill, Dark, Majestic, Bright, Scratchy, Light, Nasal, Sombre, Icy, Distorted, Sharp, Flowing

Technique/effects – Pizzicato, Vibrato, Mute, Glissando, melisma, Distortion, Bend, Flutter tonguing, trill, Double/triple/quadruple stopping, Tremolo

Roles - Individual, solo (where occurring), Ensemble, pairs, grouping (The effect of each- full, rich [unison], thin, sparse), Accompaniment

Instrumentation

Orchestra, rock band, string, Amplified, electric/acoustic, natural, Traditional/non-traditional (e.g. didjeridoo in rock, everyday sounds- car brakes, birds, kettle boiling), Pre-recorded/sampler (sections of pre-recorded parts put together using computer technology)/live

Miscellaneous

Attack (smooth, explosive)/decay (dying away swiftly, slowly, sustained?), Register, key change, Discordant chord, Build up of instruments- sudden/gradual.

DYNAMICS AND EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

How is the instrument played? - Stylistic indications- swing, electronic etc., Ornamentation, Description: dolce (sweetly), cantabile, tranquillo (calmly) etc.,

Techniques/Effects

Piano - Leggiero (played lightly) vs. Pessante (played heavily), Pedalling, Staccato, Legato, Plucking – harp-sichord and prepared piano, Accents, Glissando, Trill, Acciaciatura, Apoggiatura, Bending (electronic piano), synthesizer sounds (vibrato)

Guitar - Slide, Glissando, Hammer on, Pull off, Distortion, Harmonics, Bends, Wah wah, Chorus, Whammy bar, Strumming, Plucking, Vibrato

Brass/Saxes/ Winds - Accents – dit bop doo bah. Lip trills, Fall offs, Slides, Acciaciatura, Apoggiatura, Flutter tonguing, Trills, Growling, Vibrato

Strings - Pizzicato, Spiccato, Bowing, Strumming, Double, triple and quadruple stopping, Col legno, Glissando, Tremelo, Trills, Acciaciatura, Apoggiatura, Harmonics, Vibrato

Dynamics - Volume- terraced (each section gradually getting louder/softer), forte, piano, mezzo piano etc., Crescendo, diminuendo, decrescendo, Movement with pitch/texture

Articulation – Legato, Staccato, Tenuto, Accents (on main or off-beat)

Note Values - Use of silence- pause, rests, highlighting, tension/resolution, Rubato

Tempo changes – rall (slow down) Accel (speed up) Double time, Half time, Rubato

TECHNOLOGY:

Reverb, Sampling, Pitch alteration through speeding up, Delay, Wah wah, Distortion, Techno drums – synthesized drums, drum machine, Pitch bending, Sequencing, Click track, Multi tracking.

COMPOSITIONAL DEVICES:

Layers and their roles—drone, pedal point, counter melody, melisma,

Sequences

Cadences

Imitation

Motifs, expansion and development

Riffs, ostinato, repetitive patterns

Canon, round

Theme and variations

Augmentation and diminution

Modulation

Polyrhythms / cross rhythms

Antiphonal—call and response, question and answer

Unison

Close harmony

Arpeggiated accompaniment