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)

sonata form (exposition, development, recapitulation)

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

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

chords: 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)

consonant harmony (a smooth-sounding combination of notes)

dissonant harmony (a harsher 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

fortissimo ff (very loudly)

pianissimo pp (very softly)

articulation: the attack, release and decay of sound

staccato (detached)

legato (smooth and connected)

accented

tonguing (on a wind instrument to stop the airflow)

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

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

how tone, colour or quality vary

the same pitch played on different instruments can sound very different

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

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)

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