

Definitions of musical parameters

Musical form

The term *musical form* can (...) mean: the shape of the music and how it is planned. The form of a piece of music may, for example, be an “ABA” form, which means that there is the first part of the piece (which we can call part “A”), then something different happens (which we can call part “B”), and finally part “A” comes back again. There are many other ways of planning a piece of music, (...) in classical music there is sonata form which can often be the plan of a movement lasting anything from five minutes (as in the early Classical symphonies) to half an hour (as in some of Mahler’s symphonies).

Melody

A melody in music is a group of notes of various pitches (how high or low a note sounds) which are played one after another. Together they make a tune in the same way that a group of words make a sentence. (...) In music, 'melody' contrasts with 'harmony'. Harmony means notes which are played at the same time, like chords. Composers often think of a melody and then add harmony to it. Some music has more than one melody happening at the same time. When this happens throughout the whole piece, it is called polyphonic music (...) Music that does not have an obvious melody may be hard to understand (...) Many melodies are easy to sing, while others are difficult to sing.

Harmony

Harmony means playing several notes together to make “chords”. (...) A tune by itself can sound nice, but it can be “harmonized” by adding an accompaniment of chords. (...) Music students learn which chords sound nice after one another. These are called “chord progressions”. (...) Music which is made of a tune with harmony underneath is called “homophonic”. In a way it is the opposite of polyphonic which means that each part (each voice) is a tune in itself. However, even polyphony needs to make pleasant harmony.

(Source: <https://simple.wikipedia.org> (April 2017))

Sound

(Here, the general ‘sound’ of a piece can be understood as a combination of timbre and texture.)

In music, timbre (...) is the perceived sound quality of a musical note, sound, or tone that distinguishes different types of sound production, such as choir voices and musical instruments (...) In simple terms, timbre is what makes a particular musical sound have a different sound from another, even when they have the same pitch and loudness. For instance, it is the difference in sound between a guitar and a piano playing the same note at the same volume.

In music, texture is how the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic materials are combined in a composition, thus determining the overall quality of the sound in a piece. Texture is often described in regard to the density (...) and range (...) between lowest and highest pitches (...) For example, a thick texture contains many 'layers' of instruments. One of these layers could be a string section, or another brass. (...) A piece's texture may be changed by the number and character of parts playing at once, the timbre of the instruments or voices playing these parts and the harmony, tempo, and rhythms used (...).

(Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org> (April 2017))