Concepts of music

Duration

Refers to the speed of a piece of music as well as the length and organisation of notes and rests.

Key terms include: tempo, rhythm, Lento, Andante, Moderato, Allegro, Presto, syncopation, ostinato, backbeat, polyrhythm.

Pitch

Refers to highness and lowness of sound and their combinations.

Key terms include: melody, harmony, tonality, atonality, modes, dissonance, blues scale, sequence, modulation, theme, range, drone, pedal point, riff.

Structure

Refers to the order of sections and ideas in a piece of music.

Key terms include: binary, ternary, rondo, theme and variations, strophic, 12 bar blues, repetition, imitation, call and response, verse/chorus form, sonata form.

Texture

Refers to layers of sound.

Key terms include: monophonic, homophonic, heterophonic, polyphonic, unison, rhythmic unison, staggered entry.

Tone colour

Refers to varying types of sound production and using adjectives to describe quality of sound.

Key terms include: chordophone, idiophone, membranophone, aerophone, electrophone, roles of instruments, instrument families (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion) and types of ensembles.

Adjectives can include: dry, woody, hollow, mellow, bright, dull, icy, metallic, grating, resonant, shrill, breathy, airy.

Dynamics

Refers to the volume (loudness/softness) of sound

Key terms include: pianissimo, piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, forte, fortissimo.

Expressive techniques

Refers to the manipulation of the other concepts. For example, crescendo manipulates dynamics, accelerando manipulates duration and vibrato manipulates tone colour.

Key terms include: crescendo, decrescendo, accelerando, ritardando, rubato, legato, staccato, glissando, double stopping, falsetto, vibrato, muting, pizzicato.

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