

This outline is to guide you in self-review in preparation for the first Musicianship Test. You will only be tested on terms, symbols, and concepts as presented on the board during the first nine weeks of rehearsals. Make sure and understand the **boldface** items and you'll do fine.

What we have done so far is to explain things in context – just by picking up on things as they come along. We will go into more detail on each of these areas in future sessions.

RHYTHM – all things dealing with the sense of forward motion in music.

In Western music (meaning Western European, or “classical” music, if you will), we tend to group **beats** (regular pulses) into groups of twos and threes. This grouping creates what we call **meter**. Meter is also an attribute of poetry or verse – it's the little rhythmic bounce that we associate with light verse.

By grouping beats into patterns of twos and threes, we create musical meter. The meters in two – like 4/4, 2/4, etc. – are called **duple** meters. “Joy To The World” and “Don'tcha Wish Your Baby Was Hot Like Me” are duple. Patterns of three – like $\frac{3}{4}$, 6/8, etc. – are called **triple** meters (like “Silent Night” or “Amazing Grace”).

Triple meters have a little “lilt” to them. Back in the Medieval Era and Renaissance, triple meters were quite the fashion. That's why so many Christmas carols coming from that time are in three or six. Asymmetrical groupings like 2+2+3 can create cool meters like 7/8, found in more contemporary music (1900-present).

The grouping of say, four beats, can create a **measure**, or “bar”. Measures are indicated on the page by **barlines**. Typically, beat 1 is the strongest beat in any measure, regardless of meter, so in performance we goose that beat a little. Strong beats in 4/4 are typically beats 1 and 3. When rhythms go “against the grain” of these natural points of emphasis, we experience a little rhythmic rush called **syncopation**.

Meter is represented on the page in a **Time Signature**. Think of the Time Signature as a fraction:

The top number = how many beats in a measure

The bottom number = what kind of note gets one beat

Note and rest values are the next point of organization. For our purposes right now, just think of a measure of 4/4 as a pie. The whole pie is fun to eat, it's a whole note (four counts long). Half of that makes two halves, or “half notes”, cut it into four pieces and you've got “quarter notes” and so on through eighths, sixteenths, thirty-second, and sixty-fourth notes. But the pie becomes pretty messy when you cut it that many times.

The Brits, who like to spell words like “colour” and call trucks “lorries”, have their own lingo for note values. Quarter notes are called “quavers”, etc. They even have a hemisemidemi-quaver or something like that.

At this point, it’s enough for you to understand the basic **note and rest values**.

Tempo is simply how fast we’re going. There’s a couple ways to go about it.

The general way is with tempo markings in Italian. Here are some of the more common ones that represent a range of tempi from slow to fast:

Grave – slow as molasses. And it’s pronounced “Grah-vay”.

Largo – very slow

Larghetto – Slow, but not as slow as Largo

Adagio – slow

Moderato – moderately

Andante – walking speed

Allegretto – a little Allegro

Allegro – fast (literally “joyfully”)

Vivace – really fast

Presto – someone could get hurt

The more specific way is with a **Metronome mark** that shows exactly how many beats in a minute. These little windup devices came along around the time of Beethoven (1800’s) and he and all his homeboys all went out and bought them and had a great time clicking away. So that’s when we start seeing metronome marks on published pieces.

We can play with tempo by pushing ahead (**accelerando**), slowing down (**ritardando or rallentando**), or a combination of both (**rubato**) when we want to play on people’s emotions - which is the whole point of music anyway.

MELODY and MELODIC ORGANIZATION

We express melodies through the motion of **steps and skips**. The distance between two notes is called an **interval**. Steps are easy (like in children’s songs), skips are more challenging. Most melodies have some of both kinds of motion.

In singing, we use a system of “**solfege**” that uses the “Do-Re-Mi” syllables to represent the seven tones of most scales. **Major** scales start on “Do”, **minor** scales start on “La”.

Although now and then you see some music focused on other syllables (“modal”), most of our music is based in the Major-minor system, and we perform music in groups or “families” of notes we call **keys**. There’s also five-tone or **Pentatonic** scales associated with Native American, Asian, and various other exotic musics.

The whole point of **Key Signatures** is to **preserve the half-steps that occur between Mi-Fa and Ti-Do**, no matter what note we start on or designate as “Do”.

When things get a little too predictable, a key change (**modulation**) freshens things up a bit. Sticking around one **Tonic** too long is dull (another reason a lot of pop music lacks effectiveness – too static. Gotta move!)

HARMONY

This is where things get interesting. **By combining tones, we get harmony.** This can happen through melodies winding around and bumping into each other, or through stacking notes on top of each other, as in chords.

Just like **melodic intervals**, we can have **harmonic intervals**. It simply means the relationship between notes in chords. Most of our music is built on three-note stacks of thirds called **triads**. If we keep piling on thirds to the basic triad, we get all kinds of saucy combinations of 7th, 9th, 11th, and 13th chords.

The whole deal on melodic and harmonic motion is about this thing we call **tonality**. It's that sense of gravitational pull back to the most important note of the scale. In Major keys, that's "Do". **We call this "home-base" note or chord "Tonic"**.

Music relies on the skillful combination of opposites. Yin and Yang. Male and Female. Black and White. Republican and... you get the picture. Good music plays on the opposites of tension and release. We call stable harmonies **consonant**, unstable ones **dissonant**. Dissonance is the spice of harmony.

When we go on a musical journey, we get pulled away from the familiar "home base" of "Do" or "Tonic", and into less familiar territory. Once we conclude a phrase, a section, or piece, it feels pretty good to get back "home" to Tonic. And that's why a lot of top 40 stuff we hear on the radio doesn't have much staying power – it's too static, it doesn't take you on much of a journey. Dull as dirt. Z-z-z-z-z.

Some notes of the scale – I, IV, and V – have a real sense of travel, of "going somewhere". This powerful **root motion** creates the harmonic "hinge points" we call **cadences**. Some imply moving forward, some imply pausing or stopping. These all shape our listening experience, so as performers we need to emphasize these.

The "**So-Do**" or "**V-I**" **relationship** is the most powerful of these cadences, with the IV-I, or "Amen" cadence being a close second. 300+ years of hearing these cadences has hard-wired them into our collective consciousness, so when harmonies zig when we expect them to zag and we get "fooled" or "deceived", we experience the "**deceptive**" **cadence**, which delays the satisfaction of coming "home" to "Do" or "Tonic".

Sometimes a chord tone lags behind, and a note kind of hangs around for awhile. A non-chord tone that "resolves" into the chord is called a **suspension**, and choral music is full of them.

So tonality, cadences, and suspensions, etc., are all about playing on people's expectations. People like the familiar, but they like a little twist along the way, too.

And when we start figuring out how to deny people's expectations a little bit before getting back to the familiar, to "home base", we are on track to manipulate (in a nice way) people's emotions and reactions to our performance, just like a little plot twist at the end of a story. Or like those girls that have a knack for playing hard to get.

TEXTURE

In visual art, texture means something you can feel. Musical texture simply refers to how voices are combined. By **voices** we don't just mean singing voices – it means any combination of notes performed by whatever.

Just as all good melodies have a nice balance of steps, and good harmony provides some of the expected and unexpected, we also like a little variety in texture.

The simplest texture is simple **unison**, like when you sing in the shower, or when monks sing Gregorian chant (or if you sing with monks in the shower, but in this case I suggest seeking professional help). It's also called "monophonic".

Once we split up, or divide into parts (**divisi**), we can create melodic lines that run along the same direction (**parallel motion**) or go opposite directions (**contrary motion**). Music like this with many independent voices is termed polyphonic, and Baroque composers like Bach carried this to extremes (like they did with everything else, after all, he had 21 children and went through two Mrs. Bachs).

Bach and his Baroque bros were big on **imitation**. For a while they even tried to introduce sound effects like bird sounds in their music, but settled on imitation, which is where one voice "imitates" or repeats another, like in a round or **canon**. You still hear it in the call-and-response of good jazz players.

When everyone one is performing at one time all together, the Italians call it **tutti**, like "Tutti-Fruiti" ice cream.

The basic Soprano-Alto-Tenor-Bass (**SATB**) four-part texture we hear in hymns and choral music frequently has everyone singing different notes but moving together. (homophonic). When we sing without accompaniment, it's called a **cappella**.

Back in the Italian Renaissance, the Gabrielli boys and some of their buddies used to like to stage their brass players around the room, almost like the offense and defense of two football teams. This "playing against" each other created a kind of 15th century stereo, or **antiphonal** texture. It's cool, and introduces a spatial element that is novel if not overdone.

DYNAMICS, STYLE, and ARTICULATIONS

At home, slumped on the couch, we can control the volume of our television machine and other gadgets with a remote control. That is, if anyone can find it.

But musicians deal with volume in terms of **dynamic levels**. Unlike the boys across the hall who think in terms of numbers and measure sound as precise "decibels",

musicians take a more general path, using **dynamic markings** to give a general picture of things. And actual volume levels depend on the context of the piece, when it was written, who has the melody, and so forth. It's not an exact science.

The basic dynamic palette is based on the opposites of **piano** (soft), and **forte** (loud). The middle ground is called “**mezzo**”, which makes a dandy modifier, as in “mezzo-piano”.

A bit of trivia: since the piano was the first keyboard instrument that was capable of producing a wide range of dynamics, its' real name is the “pianoforte”. No one calls it that, though.

On a personal level, I discourage the use of the term “loud” at all. Loud to me means awful shirts with big splashy patterns and colors not found in nature, or guys with stereo systems worth more than the vehicle they reside in. I prefer the term “full”. “Full” is a nice feeling, like looking in your piggy bank and it's full, or how you feel after eating a nice meal. It's warm and happy, not in your face, and it matches the *f* used in dynamic markings anyway.

Common dynamic markings include:

very soft	soft	medium soft	medium full	full	very full
pianissimo	piano	mezzo piano	mezzo forte	forte	fortissimo
<i>pp</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>mp</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ff</i>

The rule of thumb is move up or down one level at a time. Gradual changes in dynamic include the **crescendo** (gradually stronger) and the **diminuendo** (gradually softer - some people prefer the term **decrescendo**). Sudden, or **subito** changes are dramatic and unexpected, like a **subito piano**, where the bottom drops out all at once.

And when we sock a note a bit more, then back off, it's called a **forte-piano** (*fp*). It's a flashy gimmick when followed by a crescendo. Again, not to be over-used. The *sfz* indicates a stronger accent, so *sfzp* indicates an heavier-handed forte-piano.

Styles and Articulations are many. Connected, lyrical styles are termed **legato**, while **staccato** indicates a light, detached approach. **Marcato** indicates a normal, separated style. One good teacher I know just calls tunes either “song-style” or “dance-style”.

There's a whole lot of opinions on articulation marks and what they mean. And the string players have whole books written on them and various bowings. But for our purposes, the basics include the **staccato mark**, **tenuto mark** (long notes), **accents** (more separation and force), and **heavy or “housetop” accents**.

Style refers not only to the style of a given phrase or piece, but to its' place in history. Therefore, there are distinct styles and practices associated with the music of the **Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and Contemporary** era.