

Elements of Music

Concepts about the elements of music presented here are from the original handbook. They include:

- Dynamics
- Form in Music
- Forms of Music
- Harmony
- Melody
- Rhythm
- Tempo
- Tone Color

Dr. Larsen is currently working on a presentation of these concepts that begins at the most elementary level and builds to greater complexity. The chart on the following page illustrates this approach.

Following the chart is a section from a Teachers' Guide on Music Theory. It covers:

- Pitch Notation
- Note and Rest Values
- Meter and Rhythm
- Intervals, Scales and Chords

Concepts about Dynamics

1. Every musical sound possesses some degree of loudness and softness (dynamics).
2. Dynamic contrasts provide a source of variety and expressive meaning in a composition.
3. Subtle relationships exist between changes of dynamics and changes of tempo and/or melodic direction.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Listen to music with attention focused upon the loudness and softness of tones.
2. Discover that some passages of music are louder or softer than others.
3. Respond with body movement to louder and softer passages.
4. Experiment with voices and instruments to produce louder and softer tones.

Concepts about Form in Music

1. The organization of the constituent elements in a musical composition creates its own design or form in music.
 - a. The relationship of the parts to the whole is more obviously evident among groups of phrases than within a single phrase.
 - b. When one or more of the elements of music are repeated identically while at the same time one or more are altered, both unity and contrast are created within the composition.
 - c. When sets of melodic and/or rhythmic groupings are repeated within one or more phrases, they become identifiable patterns that give unity to a composition.
 - d. When a phrase or melodic pattern is immediately repeated at a pitch higher or lower than that of its first appearance, this is identified as a melodic sequence.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Hear a complete composition several times paying particular won to its beginning and its ending to discover its introduction (if any) and main sections.
2. Sing the phrases that are identical.
3. Identify contrasting phrases.
4. Differentiate between identical and contrasting phrases, patterns, and sections.

Concepts about Forms of Music

1. Each musical composition has a unique structure or form of its own.
 - a. When a composition contains two basic ideas and the composition ends with the second idea, the form is identified as binary.
 - b. When a composition contains two basic ideas ending with a repetition of the first idea, its form is identified as ternary.
 - c. When a composition contains several different parts and when the first part repeats alternately with other parts, the form may be identified as rondo.
 - d. When a composition presents a given melody (theme), followed by repetitions of it with alterations, either in the melody itself or in its accompaniment, the form may be identified as theme and variations.
 - e. Melodies having the same harmonic structure may be combined.
 - f. When the first section of an extended composition in ternary form includes two themes having certain key relationships to each other, and when the second section consists of a development of the themes from the first section, and when the third section repeats the first with certain relationships of key, a sonata allegro form results.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Hear a complete composition several times.
2. Discover its beginning and its ending.
3. Discover its parts.
4. Identify sections that are identical.
5. Identify contrasting sections.
6. Differentiate contrasting sections from identical sections.

Concepts about Harmony

1. Harmony is the vertical organization of three or more tones into chords.
2. Harmony may be an accompaniment to melody.
3. Harmony and melody are closely related.
 - a. When tones of a chord are heard in succession they take on melodic structure.
 - b. When a succession of chordal tones appears in a melody, that chord is a fitting accompaniment to the melody.
 - c. When the structure of a melody changes, the harmonic structure changes accordingly.
 - d. A given melody may be harmonized in several ways.
4. Melodies having the same harmonic structure may be combined.
 - a. When the nature of a melody is such that it can be performed in two or more parts starting at different points, it is a canon or round.
 - b. When several melodies of individual design are performed simultaneously, polyphonic or contrapuntal music results.
5. Chords are constructed and used according to a plan.
6. Composers experiment with combinations of tones, resulting in different harmonic effects.
7. The harmonic nature of music is influenced by the ethnic group from which it originates.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Experiment with producing combinations of tones with bells, piano, or autoharp.
2. Listen to various chords played on autoharp or piano.
3. Become aware of chord changes as they occur.
4. Learn to listen with concentration to match the pitches heard within a chord.
5. Identify the sounds of chords.

Concepts about Melody

1. Melody is a linear arrangement of tones.
 - a. Melody is made up of a series of tones moving in a single (horizontal) line.
 - b. Tones in a melody may repeat or change.
 - c. When tones in a melody change they may go up or down in a regular succession of half steps, whole steps, or leaps.
2. Musical notation is a set of visual symbols that show the relationships that can exist among tones.
3. The movement of a melody is not only linear but rhythmic.
 - a. The rhythm of a melody is determined by the relatively longer and shorter time values of its tones.
 - b. The character of a melody is changed when its rhythm is changed.
4. The structure of some melodies is harmonic.
5. Two or more lines of melody may move together simultaneously, thereby creating a polyphonic (contrapuntal) texture.
6. When tones are arranged in a particular scalewise fashion distinctive melodic and harmonic idioms may result.
7. When a melody includes all of the 12 tones of a chromatic scale, not in consecutive order, before any one of the tones is repeated, the melody is unrelated to any tonal center.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Experiment with producing a tone with the voice.
2. Identify verbally which tones are higher and which are lower.
3. Experiment with longer and shorter tones with the voice and other pitch media in which tone can be sustained.
4. Identify verbally which tones are longer and which are shorter in duration.

Concepts about Rhythm

1. Music always involves rhythm.
2. Music contains an endless variety of rhythmic patterns, which consist of groupings of longer or shorter sounds or silences.
3. Rhythm usually has a recurring pulse or beat within it.
4. Meter provides an organization of time values within bar lines.
 - a. Meter offers a means of measuring mathematically both pulse and rhythm pattern.
 - b. Within a given metrical scheme, numerous rhythmic combinations are possible.
 - c. Changes of meter may occur within a composition.
5. Polyrhythms are created when contrasting rhythmic groupings occur simultaneously.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Listen to the sound of a beat and identify it.
2. Listen to the sound of regular beats and identify them.
3. Listen to the sound of regular beats in sets and the accents that separate them, identifying the groupings of the beats.
4. Listen to patterns of sounds that are the result of longer and shorter time values, describing and identifying them.

Concepts about Tempo

1. Tempo is relative rather than absolute.
2. The choice of an appropriate tempo is a critical factor in the realization of the expressive intent of a musical composition.
3. Within a composition tempo may change for a variety of expressive purposes.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Discover that tempo may be faster or slower.
2. Experiment producing faster and slower tempos with body movement and percussion instruments.
3. Observe the phenomena of faster and slower tempos as they exist in nature and in mechanical objects.
4. Respond to rhythms that are faster and slower.
5. Identify the comparative fastness and slowness in music.

Concepts about Tone Color

1. Characteristic qualities of sounds are determined by the types of voices or instruments which produce them.
2. When instruments are played in different ways, they produce different sounds.
3. When individual instruments are combined, new effects of tone color are created.
4. When formal structures call for repetition of themes, variety may be achieved by use of contrasting tone colors.

Preliminary Perceptual Experiences

1. Listen to a pattern of non-tonal sounds and compare it with the same pattern produced with a single musical tone.
2. Listen to a pattern of non-tonal sounds and compare it with the same pattern played on a variety of pitches.
3. Listen to a short pattern of tonal sounds and compare it with the same pattern when the quality of sound has been changed.
4. Listen to a melody sung by two voices of highly contrasting or differing tone colors, or played by two different instruments.
5. Experiment with percussion instruments to discover their characteristic sounds.

These concepts have been taken from *The Study of Music in the Elementary School: A Conceptual Approach*, Music Educators National Conference, NEA Center, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D. C., 20036 (1967).