

The Study of Music

Oak Meadow Syllabus

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Item #13062

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Lesson 1

Critical Listening: Pitch, Dynamics, Timbre, and Instrument Families

Lesson Objectives

The first two chapters of your text explore the sounds of music. You will become familiar with the elements that define the characteristics of sounds and the instruments that create music as we know it. We will listen to a sample by Igor Stravinsky, which demonstrates contrasting changes in dynamics, and a sample by Duke Ellington, which demonstrates a succession of different tone colors. At the end of the lesson, we will listen to a lengthy sample, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* by Benjamin Britten, which introduces all the instrument families in the orchestra.



Read Part I—Chapters 1 and 2 of your text (pp. 1-28).

Comprehension Questions

Please answer the questions below in “short answer” form. Short answers should be written in complete sentences and should run no longer than four sentences. In some cases it might be tempting to answer questions with one or two words. Please do your best to use complete sentences unless the question indicates otherwise. Enrolled students, please check your answers for spelling and punctuation errors before you submit them to your teacher.

Short answer questions are designed to assess your comprehension of the reading. We are looking to see that you understood what you have read and that you can write clearly and concisely about the material. If the answer doesn't come to you right away, feel free to go back and reread the assigned sections.

1. How does sound begin?
2. What is the definition of *pitch*?
3. What is the definition of *dynamics*?
4. What is the definition of *timbre*?
5. What are the six categories of families of instruments?

Critical Listening and Thinking



The Firebird by Igor Stravinsky (CD 1, Tracks 1-2)

Listen to the selection and read the accompanying notes on pg. 8 of your text.



C-Jam Blues by Duke Ellington (CD 1, Tracks 3-10)

Listen to the selection and read the accompanying notes on pg. 8 of your text.



The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra by Benjamin Britten (CD 1, Tracks 11-35)

Listen to the selection and read the accompanying notes on pp. 27-28 of your text.

Listening Questions

Answer the following questions in short answer form:

1. If you were a violinist, in what ways other than traditional bowing could you play your instrument to produce a sound?
2. What is similar about the way woodwinds and brass instruments are played and produce sound? What is different about them?
3. Describe some of the ways in which sounds are created on percussion instruments.
4. How are the piano, harpsichord, and organ similar and different in terms of the ways in which they make sound?

Things to Do and Points to Ponder

Complete the following exercises in “long answer” form. Long answer questions should be answered in one or two paragraphs (or occasionally in list form). Some of your paragraphs may be quite short, but they should be organized around a single topic and should be easy to follow. Enrolled students, please check your answers for spelling and punctuation errors before you submit them to your teacher.

Long answer questions are designed to assess how well you understand the material covered in the lesson. Rather than repeating information you have learned in the reading, you should apply your new knowledge in a different way. Try to write clearly, use your imagination, and make connections between material learned in this lesson and material learned in other lessons.

Sound Exercise: You read on page 4 about John Cage’s composition *4'33"*. Recreate your own version of *4'33"* by sitting quietly for four minutes in a space of your choosing. This can be an urban setting, a rural setting, or even a room in your house. Become acutely aware of the sounds you hear around you. Then, describe the “music” you hear as you write about the qualities of the sounds.

Pitch Exercise: Sing the following three songs devoid of pitch (i.e., use only one tone and don't vary it, but keep the rhythm of the song as you know it). How does the lack of varied pitch affect the songs as you know them?

- *The Star-Spangled Banner*
- *Happy Birthday to You*
- *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*

Dynamics Exercise: Create a percussive instrument. This can be your hands clapping together, tapping your pencil against your desk, hitting spoons together, etc. Use your percussive instrument to experiment with the qualities of loudness and softness that correspond to the following: *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*. Now create a crescendo from *pp* to *ff* and a decrescendo from *ff* to *pp*. Describe how much of a variation of dynamic expression you were able to achieve.

Timbre Exercise: Kamien describes instrument timbre with words such as *bright*, *dark*, *brilliant*, *mellow*, and *rich*. What words would you use to describe the timbre of the instruments in Ellington's *C-Jam Blues*? If you thought of the timbre in terms of color, what colors would you see as you listened to the piece, and why?

Singing Exercise: Put your fingers on your throat and create a sound. Feel the vibrations as the air passes through your larynx and vocal cords. Experiment with creating sounds that pass out through your lungs, throat, mouth, and nasal cavity. Turn these sounds into a singing tone. How does it feel to sustain your sound beyond typical speech? How would you classify your singing range? Have you ever had any singing experience? If so, describe it.

Random Note

There are actually variations within the four basic ranges of the human singing voice. For example, there is the *contralto*, which is a woman who can sing very low, and the *countertenor*, which is a man who sings exceedingly high. David Daniels is a current star of the opera and concert stage who is a countertenor.

If you are interested in hearing what a countertenor sounds like, check out David Daniels's web site, where you can hear samples of his recordings.



A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence.

— Leopold Stokowski

Lesson 2

Critical Listening: Rhythm and Notation

Lesson Objectives

Chapter 3 explores the concepts of rhythm, beat, meter, accent, syncopation, and tempo, which all have to do with the movement of music through time. Chapter 4 discusses notation, which is the written language of music. In this lesson, you will learn to differentiate between rhythm and beat; you will learn why and how music is accented; and you will explore the way in which pace, or tempo, is kept. Also, by the end of this lesson, you will learn how to recognize the shapes of note heads and their stems as well as the staves on which they are written.



Read Part I—Chapters 3 and 4 of your text (pp. 29-36).

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in short answer form:

1. What is the definition of *rhythm*? What is the definition of *beat*? How do the two differ?
2. Describe meter.
3. What do you call a group containing a fixed number of beats?
4. What is the definition of *downbeat*?
5. What is the definition of *syncopation*?
6. What effect does adding a dot to the right of a note have on that note?
7. When two notes in a row are on the same pitch and are connected by a tie, what happens?
8. What is a triplet? In the three songs from the rhythm and beat exercise below, where is there an example of a triplet?

Things to Do and Points to Ponder

Rhythm and Beat Exercise: Using the songs we used in the pitch exercise from the last lesson, speak or sing the songs, keeping rhythm as you go. Which words in each song get more than one beat? Are there any places where more than one word fits against a single beat? Please answer these questions using the short answer form.

1. *The Star-Spangled Banner*

Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light
 What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
 Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
 O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
 And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
 Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
 Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
 O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

2. *Happy Birthday to You*

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you,
 Happy birthday dear friend, happy birthday to you!

3. *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*

Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream.
 Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.

Meter Exercise: Listen to some of your favorite songs and see how many of them are in quadruple meter. Popular music tends to be in quadruple time. Can you find any of your favorites (or think of any songs you know or have played on an instrument) in triple meter? If so, list some of them.

Downbeat Exercise: Refer to the lyrics of the three songs in the rhythm and beat exercise above. Write the words you think were the downbeats (or first beats) of each measure.

Tempo Exercise: Now that you have learned about the tempo markings a composer uses to indicate how he or she wishes a piece to be played, think about how *you* would indicate a tempo. Think of five different kinds of moods you have felt. Describe in a paragraph those five moods and a tempo marking that would be appropriate for a piece of music to accompany that mood.

Notation Exercise 1: Please draw the following:

- Whole note
- Half note
- Quarter note
- Eighth note
- Two eighth notes joined by a beam
- Sixteenth note
- Two sixteenth notes joined by beams
- Whole rest
- Half rest
- Quarter rest
- Eighth rest
- Sixteenth rest

Notation Exercise 2: Study the example on the next page, and identify numbers 1-18.

Random Note

A few years back, entire classes in music notation were offered in colleges and universities. Special pens and inks (similar to those used for calligraphy) and *lots* of staff paper were used in these classes. Assignments consisted of copying, copying, and more copying of music until all the notes and symbols could be written beautifully, just as they appeared in printed scores. Now, however, computer notation software systems are available. All one has to do is enter parts with a mouse, drag notes to the staff, or play a keyboard to let the computer know what notes are wanted where. Then, with a push of a button... presto! One can print out in minutes or seconds what it used to take copyists hours and days to notate by hand.



The discovery of song and the creation of musical instruments both owed their origin to a human impulse which lies much deeper than conscious intention: the need for rhythm in life... the need is a deep one, transcending thought, and disregarded at our peril.

— Richard Baker

1. **Minuet in G Major**

2. J.S. Bach

3. $\text{♩} = 150$

4. $\text{♩} = 150$

5. $\text{♩} = 150$

6. $\text{♩} = 150$

7. $\text{♩} = 150$

8. $\text{♩} = 150$

9. $\text{♩} = 150$

10. $\text{♩} = 150$

11. $\text{♩} = 150$

12. $\text{♩} = 150$

13. $\text{♩} = 150$

14. $\text{♩} = 150$

15. $\text{♩} = 150$

16. $\text{♩} = 150$

17. $\text{♩} = 150$

18. $\text{♩} = 150$

The image displays a musical score for a Minuet in G Major by J.S. Bach. The score is presented in a grand staff format, consisting of a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 150. The score is annotated with 18 numbered red circles, each pointing to a specific note or rest in either the treble or bass staff. The annotations are as follows: 1. Treble clef, first measure, first note (G4); 2. Treble clef, second measure, second note (A4); 3. Treble clef, first measure, first note (G4); 4. Treble clef, first measure, first note (G4); 5. Bass clef, first measure, first note (G2); 6. Bass clef, first measure, second note (A2); 7. Treble clef, second measure, second note (A4); 8. Bass clef, second measure, second note (A2); 9. Treble clef, third measure, first note (G4); 10. Bass clef, third measure, first note (G2); 11. Treble clef, fourth measure, first note (G4); 12. Treble clef, fourth measure, second note (A4); 13. Treble clef, fourth measure, third note (B4); 14. Bass clef, fourth measure, first note (G2); 15. Treble clef, fifth measure, first note (G4); 16. Treble clef, fifth measure, second note (A4); 17. Bass clef, fifth measure, first note (G2); 18. Bass clef, fifth measure, second note (A2).

Lesson 23

The Romantic Period: Program Music

Lesson Objectives

These chapters discuss the principles behind program music. By the end of this lesson, you will better understand this style of writing and why composers such as Hector Berlioz felt that descriptive narrative helped guide their compositional efforts.



Read Part V—Chapters 10 and 11 of your text (pp. 238-244).

Comprehension Questions

Please answer the following questions in short answer form:

1. What is the definition of *program music*?
2. What are the differences between *program symphony*, *concert overture*, *symphonic tone poems*, and *incidental music*?

Critical Listening and Thinking



Symphonie fantastique, Fourth Movement, by Hector Berlioz (CD 4, Tracks 7-10)
Listen to the selection and read the accompanying notes on pp. 242-243 of your text.

Listening Questions

Complete the following exercises in long answer form:

1. On pg. 241 you read a programmatic description of the fourth movement, “March to the Scaffold,” of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*. Do you think reading this programmatic description before listening to the selection affected your listening experience? How would your experience have been different had you not read the programmatic description prior to listening?

Random Note

During his lifetime Hector Berlioz was better known as a conductor than a composer, because his music was not very popular. He made much of his income as a journalist and wrote a treatise on instrumentation.

Things to Do and Points to Ponder

Program Symphony Exercise: Imagine you are a composer in the romantic period. Your current composition is a five-movement program symphony. As with all program symphonies, each movement needs a unique, descriptive title and a narrative paragraph. Write these for each of the movements—one paragraph for each movement, each with its own title—to help tell the overall story of your program symphony. You may use an existing story from myth, legend, or literature, or you may make up your own story. Remember that the point of a program symphony is to lend itself to compositional techniques of the romantic period, which will make for stunning music.



My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us; the world is full of it, and you simply take as much as you require.

— Edward Elgar

Lesson 24

The Romantic Period: Nationalism in 19th-Century Music

Lesson Objectives

These chapters explain the impact nationalism had on romantic composers and look closely at the music of Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák, two leading 19th-century composers. By the end of these chapters, you will have a clearer understanding of why composers felt a need to incorporate nationalistic elements into their music, and you will be able to identify such elements in listening examples.



Read Part V—Chapters 12 and 13 of your text (pp. 244-249).

Comprehension Questions

Please answer the following questions in short answer form:

1. In the late 1800s, what prompted a sense of national identity for many citizens?
2. How did nationalism find its way into romantic music?

Critical Listening and Thinking



The Moldau by Bedřich Smetana (CD 4, Tracks 11-17)

Listen to the selection and read the accompanying notes on pp. 246-247 of your text.



Symphony No. 9 in E Minor by Antonín Dvořák (CD 4, Tracks 18-24)

Listen to the selection and read the accompanying notes on pp. 249-250 of your text.

Listening Questions

Complete the following exercises in long answer form:

1. Do you have an emotional response to the listening example *The Moldau* by Bedřich Smetana? Why or why not? Is there a particular section that affects you strongly? If so, why do you suppose this is? Which section do you think is most successful at illustrating what it sets out to evoke as indicated by its title? Why? Which section is the least successful? Why?

2. Is there any part of the listening example *Symphony No. 9 in E Minor* by Antonín Dvořák that sounds “American?” Where? Why do you think you have identified this part as nationalistic to you?

Random Note

Antonín Dvořák’s name has quite a few funny characters in it—and pronouncing it isn’t so easy either! The proper way to pronounce the name is *AN-toe-neeen di-VOR-zhok*—and that *zh* sound is something we don’t encounter very often in English!

Things to Do and Points to Ponder

Reflection Exercise: Do you think that it is significant that Antonín Dvořák came to America in 1892 and spent time working and writing music here? Why or why not? Write one or two paragraphs to answer.

Music Illustration: Using an illustrative medium of your choice (you may use mixed media, if you wish)¹ that involves the use of color, pick a section of the listening example *The Moldau* by Bedřich Smetana and illustrate what you hear. Incorporate the different sounds and *tone colors* of the instruments of the orchestra, and follow the way in which Smetana uses them to depict his images through sound. Try to recreate them visually through your artistic creation.



Music is an outburst of the soul.

— Frederick Delius

¹ Suggestions for illustrative media: colored pencils, crayon, pastels, watercolor paints, tempera paint, construction paper collage, collage made of ripped magazine pages, ink pens, magic markers, highlighters.