

# Music

## Genres

Listening to music often begins with genre identification, simply because it helps us to know exactly what kind of composition we are hearing. Being aware that we are listening to a *SYMPHONY*—a large musical composition for orchestra, typically consisting of four separate sections called “movements”—provides us with clues that are different from a *MASS*—a choral setting of the Roman Catholic service, the Mass. A *CONCERTO* (kahn-CHAIR-toh), a composition for solo instrument with accompaniment, gives us different experiences from an *OPERA* or *ORATORIO*, a large-scale choral work such as Handel’s *Messiah* performed in concert form.

## Melody and Form

Whatever the generic category, all music employs the same technical elements, of which *MELODY* and *form* are perhaps the two most obvious. We will introduce others at appropriate points in the text.

Melody is a succession of sounds with rhythmic and tonal organization. Any combination of musical tones constitutes a melody, but melody usually has particular qualities beyond being a mere succession of sounds. Musical ideas, for example, come to us in melodies called *THEMES*; shorter versions, brief melodic or rhythmic ideas, are called *MOTIVES* or *MOTIFS* (moh-TEEF).

## TECHNIQUES

### Musical Notation

Musical notation is a system of writing music so the composer can communicate clearly to the performer the pitches and rhythms (among other things) of the piece. A brief familiarity with this method of communication is important because later in the text we will illustrate characteristics of musical compositions with written notation.

The pitches of music are indicated with symbols, called *notes*, placed on a *staff*—five parallel lines on which each line and space represent a pitch (Fig. 0.15A). The higher a note’s placement on the staff, the higher the pitch. Seven of the twelve pitches of an octave in Western music are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The remaining five tones are indicated by the use of two signs, the *sharp* sign (#) and the *flat* sign (♭) (Fig. 0.15B). A *clef* (in French, “key”) is placed at the beginning of the staff to show the pitch of each line and space (Figs. 0.15c and d). Music is written in different *keys*—each associated with the presence of a central note, scale, and chord—which are indicated by a *key signature* (Figs. 0.15E and F). *Rhythms* are indicated with notes indicating time values relative to each other (Fig. 0.15G). The duration of silences in a musical piece is indicated by a symbol called a *rest* (Fig. 0.15H).

The figure illustrates various musical notation elements:

- A.** A musical staff with two notes: a quarter note on the second line (D) and a quarter note on the second space (E).
- B.** A musical staff with a treble clef and notes on the lines and spaces: F (first line), G (first space), A (second line), B (second space), C (third line), D (third space), E (fourth line), F (fourth space). The notes are labeled F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F.
- C.** A musical staff with a treble clef and a sharp sign (#) on the first line (F#).
- D.** A musical staff with a bass clef and notes on the lines and spaces: G (first line), F (first space), E (second line), D (second space), C (third line), B (third space), A (fourth line), G (fourth space). The notes are labeled G, F, E, D, C, B, A, G.
- E.** A musical staff with a treble clef and a sharp sign (#) on the first line (F#), labeled "Key of D".
- F.** A musical staff with a bass clef and a flat sign (♭) on the first line (F), labeled "Key of B♭".
- G.** Rhythmic notation showing:
  - 1 whole note: a single note with a stem and a flag.
  - = 2 half notes: two notes, each with a stem and a flag.
  - = 4 quarter notes: four notes, each with a stem and a flag.
  - = 8 eighth notes: a group of eight notes beamed together.
  - = 16 sixteenth notes: a group of sixteen notes beamed together.
- H.** Rest notation showing:
  - whole rest: a horizontal line with a vertical tick mark.
  - half rest: a horizontal line with a vertical tick mark.
  - quarter rest: a vertical line with a diagonal slash.
  - eighth rest: a vertical line with a diagonal slash and a flag.
  - sixteenth rest: a vertical line with a diagonal slash and two flags.

0.15 Musical notation.

Form, like the principles of composition in visual art, gives musical compositions shape and organization. Composers use form to arrange musical elements and relationships into successive events or sections. Basically, we can listen for two types of form: *closed* and *open*. Closed forms direct our attention back into the composition by restating at the end of a thematic

section the element that formed the beginning. This pattern of development often is described as ABA or AABA. The letters stand for specific thematic sections. Open form, on the other hand, uses repetition of thematic material as a departure point for further development, and the composition ends without repeating the opening section.