



LiteracyWorks

Senior Music Aural Concepts

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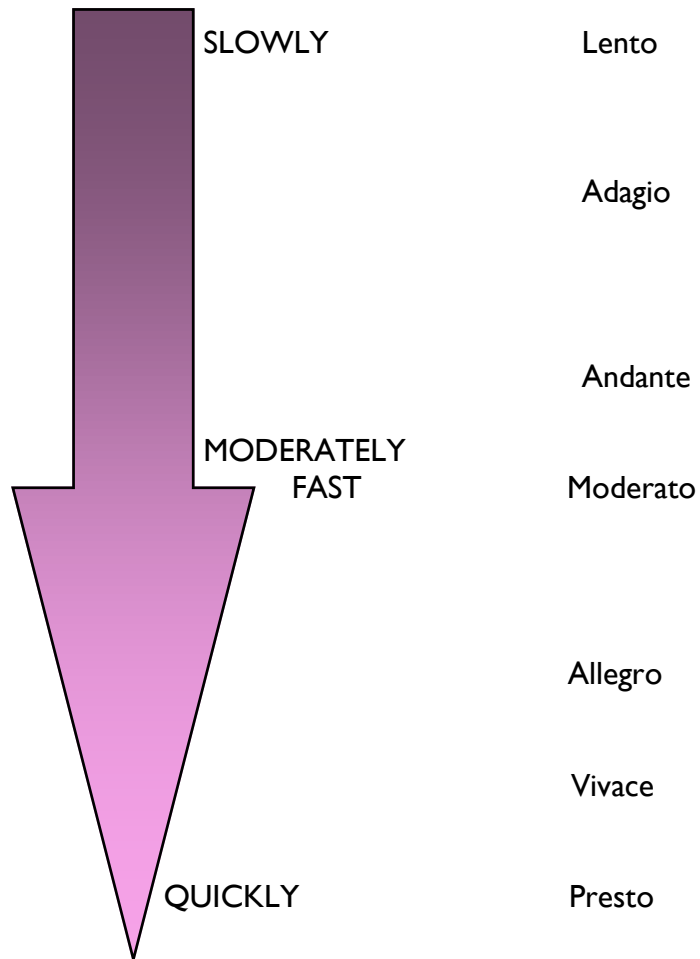


Tempo = speed

The international language of music is



By common agreement among musicians, most markings on music are in Italian, so a composer in China can communicate his or her intentions with a performer in Spain or Australia. As always, there are exceptions to this rule. Romantic composers often wrote their instructions in German, the Impressionists wrote theirs in French, and in modern music, anything goes! But as a general rule, musicians use Italian to specify speed, dynamics and expression.



When the music speeds up, we use the term **accelerando** which means gradually getting faster. Think of the accelerator that makes a car speed up.

When the music slows down, we use the term **ritardando** which means gradually getting slower.

These are words for gradual changes of speed, not a total change of tempo.

Rubato In some compositions, the speed seems to ebb and flow, creating expressive climaxes in each phrase. This is rubato, which means “robbing”. You steal part of the value of one note, and pay it back on the next note or phrase. Rubato technique consists of mini-accelerando and mini-ritardando parts, while the overall tempo remains constant. Rubato was used extensively in the Romantic period by composers such as Chopin, as performers were given the opportunity to express themselves through variations in tempo. Rubato is also used in jazz, and in slow romantic pop ballads.



Tick or cross

Below you will find 16 statements made by students when writing about duration for an aural skills examination. Some statements make sense and musical terminology is used correctly, while others do not make sense or musical terminology is used incorrectly. Draw a tick or a cross in the box next to each statement to indicate if you think it is correct. If the statement is incorrect, explain why the statement is incorrect.

eg. There is an ostinato in one bar.

The statement cannot be correct. An ostinato is a continuous, repeated pattern so it is not possible for it to be in one bar only.

1. *The rhythm was high.*

2. The piece has a quick pulse.

3. *The excerpt is in a jazz, swing style, using complex dotted rhythms.*

4. The backbeat was on the main beat.

5. *There was one polyrhythm.*

6. The accelerando towards the end adds to a sense of excitement and climax in the piece.

7. *The speed is smooth.*

8. The drums play a syncopated ostinato.

9. *The tempo changes from Allegro in Section A, to Adagio in Section B.*

10. The singer sings Allegro, the piano plays Lento, and the saxophone plays Moderato.

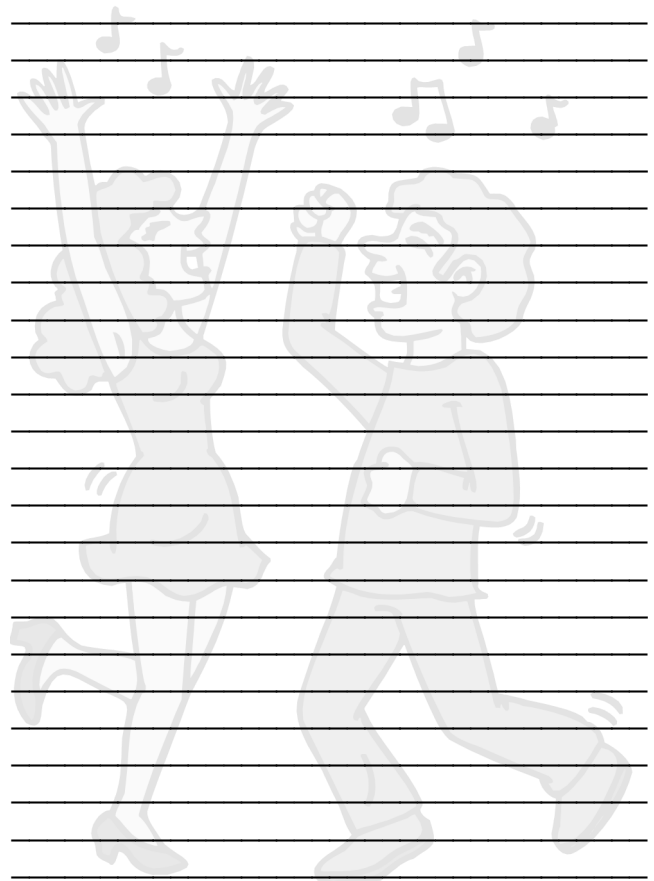
11. *There is no rhythm until half way through the piece.*

12. The composer uses cross rhythms - the guitar plays in 3/4 and the fiddle is in 6/8.

13. *The beat has a jazzy feel.*

14. The tempo gets louder and faster.

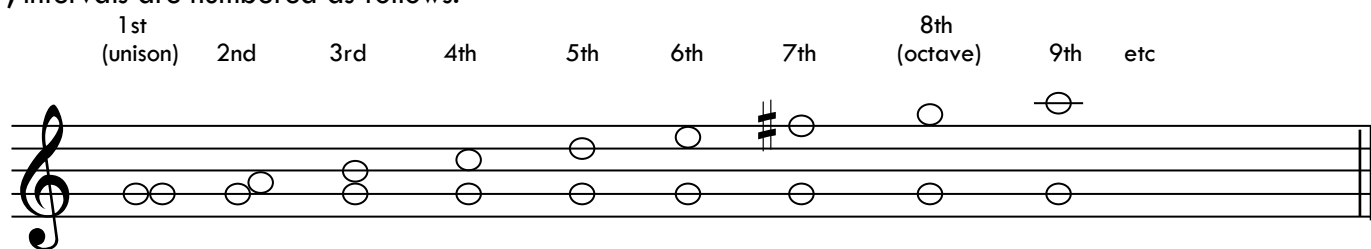
15. *The time signature is slow.*



Range, intervals, contour

Range. Every instrument or voice has a range - from the lowest note it can produce to the highest note it can produce. For example a piano has an 88 note, 7 octave range. The flute has a range of 3 octaves starting on middle C and ascending. The bassoon has a 3½ octave range starting on Bb two octaves below middle C. The range of pitches in a piece can be **wide** or **narrow**. Some singers have a wide range, which means they can comfortably sing notes across 2-3 octaves, while other singers can only comfortably sing a few notes in a narrow range. You will be expected to compare the ranges of the performing media, or sound sources, in the piece.

An **interval** is the distance between two pitches. We use numbers to indicate how many notes in between two pitches eg. 2nd, 5th, 7th. Start counting the bottom note as 1. For example, starting with G as 1, intervals are numbered as follows:



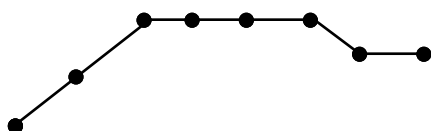
If you practise listening to intervals and identifying them, you should be able to describe exact intervals in the examination.

Contour means the shape of a melody. It can be **ascending** (going up) or **descending** (going down) in pitch. If you look at a musical score and draw a line through the centre of each note in a melody, you can see a shape. The contour can be described as smooth or jagged, depending on the intervals in the melody.

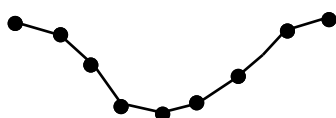
A melody moves in combinations of **steps** and **leaps**. A step is an interval of a 2nd (a tone or semitone), and a leap is an interval of a 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th etc.

You will be expected to draw the contour of the melody. Notating it would be even better!

Here are two examples of melody contours and sample descriptions:



The melody starts with two ascending leaps, followed by three notes of the same pitch. Then there is one descending step and the last note is repeated.



The melody has a curved contour, with 4 descending steps followed by 4 ascending steps back to the starting pitch. The melody is symmetrical.

Drawing melodic contour

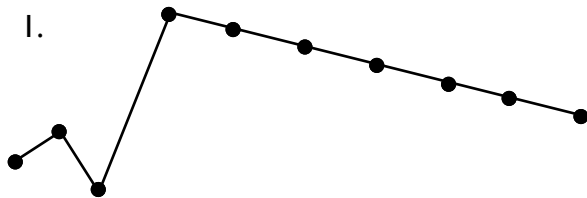
Practise drawing the shape of a melody then describe it. Talk about the overall shape. Use dots to indicate individual pitches. Use these words:

smooth

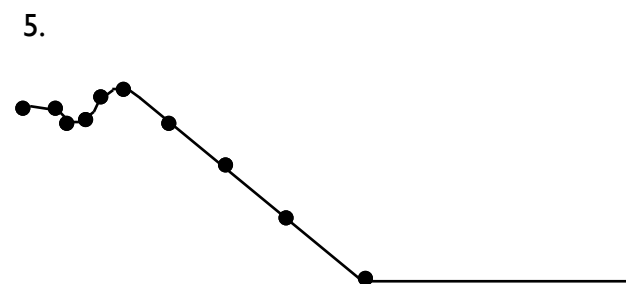
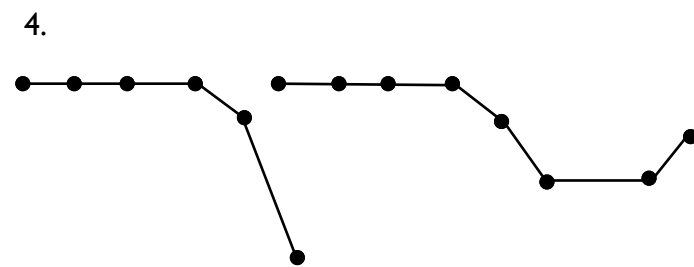
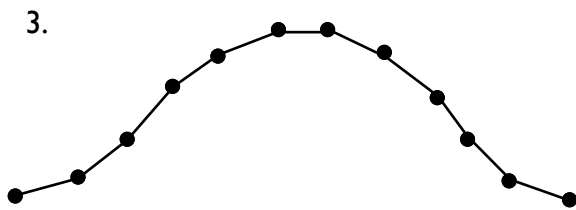
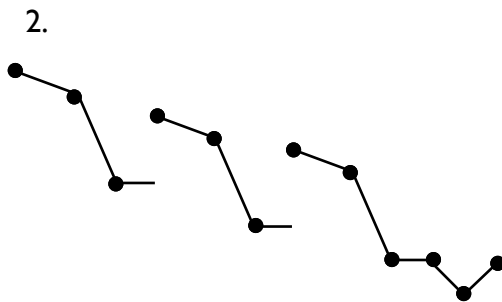
jagged

symmetrical

asymmetrical



1. The melody is asymmetrical with a jagged shape. It starts with an ascending step and a descending step, then a wide ascending leap. Then there are 6 descending steps.



A large set of 12 horizontal lines for drawing a melody. A faint watermark of a person holding a book is visible in the background.