

AP MUSIC THEORY

Listening to Music

The basic activity that leads to the love of music and to its understanding is listening to music. Listeners need to understand musical concepts and know musical terms in order to grasp more clearly what they already hear in music. Analyzing things, pinpointing things, even simply using the correct names for things, makes us more acutely aware of them. Conversely, this process of analysis, pinpointing, and naming can actually assist listening. We become aware of some aspects of the music only after they have been pointed out.

This lesson is designed to provide students in AP Music with a few strategies and ideas to understand and discuss music that is listened to, and to recognize and understand those concepts in their “natural habitat”.

Basic Musical Listening Concepts

I. Rhythm

- ▶ patterns
 - “Which of these rhythmic patterns is played by the snare drum?”
 - “Can you write the rhythmic pattern?”
 - syncopation
 - ostinato
- ▶ meter
 - “Is this duple, triple, or quadruple?”
 - “Is this simple or compound?”
 - “What are possible meter signatures?”
- ▶ tempo
 - “What tempo marking would be most appropriate?”
 - “Does the tempo remain steady throughout the section/piece?”
- ▶ Rhythmic Transformation
 - Augmentation
 - Diminution

II. Dynamics

- ▶ Terms
 - “What term best describes the dynamics of this section?”
 - “Do the dynamics remain constant throughout the section/piece?”

III. Mode

- ▶ Major or minor
 - Key relationships (relative and parallel major/minor)
 - “Is this in major or minor?”
 - “Does it stay in major/minor throughout?”
- ▶ Modal
 - “Is there a scale other than major or minor being used?”

IV. Melodic Elements

- ▶ Conjunct/disjunct motion
“Is this melody primarily conjunct or disjunct?”
- ▶ Melodic patterns
 - sequences
 - melodic motives
 - motivic development
 - repetition
 - transformation
 - inversion
 - retrograde
 - transposition
 - fragmentation
 - sequencing
- ▶ Melodic motion
 - similar
 - parallel
 - contrary
 - oblique
- ▶ Diatonic or chromatic melody
- ▶ Intervals
 - “On what scale degree does this phrase begin?”
 - “What interval is predominant?”

V. Phrase Structure

- ▶ Antecedent/consequent

VI. Texture

- ▶ Monophonic
- ▶ Homophonic
 - Chordal- Hymn style
 - Melody with accompaniment
- ▶ Polyphonic
 - imitative/nonimitative
 - “Is the imitation you hear strict (canon) or non-strict?”

VII. Harmony

- ▶ Consonance/Dissonance
- ▶ Chord Progressions
 - “Raise your hand every time you hear V-I”
 - “What is the chord progression of this phrase?”
- ▶ Harmonic Rhythm
- ▶ Modulation
 - “Does the piece change to a new key?”
 - “Does it return to the original key?”

VIII. Non-chord Tones

- ▶ Passing tones
- ▶ Upper/lower neighbor tones
- ▶ Pedal
- ▶ Appoggiatura
- ▶ Escape Tone
- ▶ Anticipation
- ▶ Suspension
 - Preparation
 - Suspension
 - Resolution
- ▶ Retardation

IX. Cadences

- ▶ Authentic
 - Perfect/Imperfect
- ▶ Plagal
- ▶ Half
- ▶ Deceptive

X. Form

- ▶ Repetition
- ▶ Contrast
- ▶ Variation
- ▶ “Diagram the form of this piece”