



Special Note to Teachers:

You may wish to present the material below as a mini-lesson, using the audio samples from the enclosed WVSO audio CD and pointing out the melodic and rhythmic patterns as they are listening to each one.

A Composer and His/Her Tools

Musical compositions usually do not just appear from the imaginations of the composer. The composer first must write smaller parts of his/her ideas, followed by an outline of how the beginning and the end will be. Then the composer will make rough drafts before the final piece is completed. The composer must help the listener hear and imagine each part of the musical structure.

By using different instruments, adding other instruments, adding accompaniments, or adding other contrasting music, an initial idea can take new shapes!

Sometimes "leftover" ideas can be used in later musical compositions. A composer or a writer never throws anything away!

Melody



Melody is an orderly chain or row of pitches which include modes and rhythms that work well together. When we listen to music, usually the melody is the dominant or most important tune we hear. It is the one we keep singing or whistling after hearing the piece. Melody is horizontal, meaning the notes sound one after the other; while harmony is vertical, meaning the notes sound at the same time.

Some melodies are built from several short groups of notes called musical motives, sometimes combined to form a theme. Melodies can be based on a particular chord or a certain mode or scale. They can be simple or very complex and organized according to various formulas. Plainsong, many European folksongs, as well as other music can be simple melodies.

Rhythm, or how long each pitch lasts, is a very important part of melody. Even when the pitches are the same, if the *rhythm* is changed, it is no longer the same melody.

Listen to the melody (a theme by Henry Purcell) as played by the violins in Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. (**Audio Track 3**)

A Composer and His/Her Tools (continued)

♩ = 86

f

ff *pp*

Then listen to **Audio Track 4** to have your students hear this same theme with full orchestration. As an extra exercise, your students may wish to orally identify the instruments playing in this audio sample. Note that this track is over 2 minutes long and may need to be stopped after the theme has been played (approximately 25 seconds).

Now listen to Tubby's two tunes from *Tubby the Tuba*. First the Pretty Tune other instruments are playing (**Audio Track 2**):

6

Then his own tune (**Audio Track 1**):

5

Continue on to the Rhythm Section ...

A Composer and His/Her Tools (continued)

Rhythm



The word rhythm means the way we organize sounds in time. Rhythm patterns can be steady or uneven. There are stressed and unstressed beats within a pattern. The grouping of these beats makes the meter for the music, which is shown by the time signature. Rhythm is found in the human heartbeat and in sounds of nature as well as in music. In visual art and poetry, rhythm refers to patterns repeated throughout a work. Beats or pulses in music are often heard by the drumbeats or in a repeated accompaniment pattern. The speed of the beats or pulse determines the tempo.

Sometimes rhythm forms a certain pattern. The most common patterns we use are ones with four beats (stress on the first beat, smaller stress on the third beat) and ones with three beats (stress on the first beat). A three beat pattern is sometimes known as a waltz rhythm (1-2-3). Sometimes a pattern shifts the emphasis away from a stressed beat to a normally unstressed beat, which is called syncopation.

We show rhythm by writing notes and rests of different lengths and accents. It is important to note that some music is structured without a regular rhythm, such as some music found in India and the Middle East, or in some Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and Buddhist liturgical chants.

The pattern or patterns the composer chooses help to create the character and expression of the music. Besides the patterns used in the "Patterns in Music" lesson, notice the distinctive rhythmic pattern in the theme used in Britten's work.

In addition to producing special effects, note that the Percussion section of the orchestra has an important part in the rhythm of the piece.

Continue on to the Harmony Section ...