

Chapter 4

Texture

Chapter Summary

In music, texture describes the number of instruments or voices in a piece of music and what they do in that composition. There are a variety of melodic treatments for composers to use. The three main categories are monophony, homophony, and polyphony. Texture may also refer to the number of instruments playing and what parts they are playing in relationship to each other. Texture in music may describe the harmonies that support a melody or several melodies (harmonies are simultaneously sounded pitches). Texture may describe simultaneous but unrelated melodies. In music, texture occurs simultaneously with the melody. Texture also describes how a composer combines a composition's elements or components. Texture describes the music's depth and its richness of sound or the sparseness of a melodic composition.

Glossary Terms With Definitions

augmentation—A contrapuntal device that means a melody's notes are mathematically increased based on the original time value of a melody's notes. In augmentation (and diminution), a composer or arranger might change the time signature as well.

canon—The strictest form of musical imitation. A canon starts when a melody begins; it may be vocal or instrumental. At a predetermined place in the first melody, a second voice or instrument begins and states the same melody exactly as the first voice.

canon inversion—An imitation technique in which a melodic inversion overlaps itself. In the context of canons, the term "inverted canon" is synonymous with "canon in contrary motion" (<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/tas3/canonanatomy.html>).

contrary motion—See also *inversion*. Going in the opposite direction. When a theme is inverted, the intervals go in the opposite direction.

counterpoint—Originated in the Middle Ages and describes the technique of writing polyphonic music or one voice of a multivoice texture in later periods (17th to 18th centuries).

diminution—A melodic counterpoint treatment in which a melody's note values are shortened. The composer or arranger determines the amount of the decrease in time.

finite canon—A canon in which the composer has predetermined its length.

1 From N. Nolen Holland, 2013, *Music fundamentals for dance web resource* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

homophony—A musical texture based on a melody and its accompanying harmonies.

imitation—Each voice (vocal or instrumental) uses the same melodic material as it enters the musical fabric.

imitative counterpoint—Includes canons and rounds, where instruments or voices repeat the melody in specific, overlapping time intervals.

infinite canon—Commonly known as a round and is usually repeated many times.

inversion—In counterpoint, turning the melodic contour in the opposite direction from its original statement. Inversion may also be applied to a single interval.

monophony—Classifies music composed of only a single melodic line. A melody heard alone with no other voices or melodic instruments is monophonic. Monophony may also be voices singing in unison or instruments playing in unison.

nonimitative polyphony—When different melodies occur at the same time within the same key or related keys. Musicians may be playing in the same key and meter, yet their melodies may or may not be related. If the melodies are not related, then what they are doing is called nonimitative polyphony.

perpetual canon—See *infinite canon*.

polyphonic simultaneity—Occurs when dissimilar melodies sound at the same time. They do not have to be in the same key, share the same time signature, or have any other musical elements in common.

polyphony—Consists of at least two independent melodies that are approximately equal in importance within a piece of music. The melodies' resultant harmonies and rhythms add interest to the polyphony. Polyphony has two or more melodies sounding at the same time. Applies to early music (15th and 16th centuries).

retrograde—A form of melodic manipulation in which the melody's pitches occur in a backward sequence beginning with the last note and moving backward through the melody to the first note.

retrograde inversion—A musical structure and melodic manipulation technique that is performed from last note to first with the intervals inverted beginning with the last note and moving backward through the composition or phrase to the first note.

texture—Describes how a composer combines a composition's elements or components. Texture also describes the music's depth and richness of sound.

Glossary Terms Without Definitions

augmentation—

canon—

canon inversion—

contrary motion—

counterpoint—

diminution—

finite canon—

homophony—

imitation—

imitative counterpoint—

infinite canon—

inversion—

monophony—

nonimitative polyphony—

perpetual canon—

polyphonic—

polyphony—

retrograde—

retrograde inversion—

texture—

Web Links

- The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Online should be available through your school library's database. The 29-volume reference set is a music encyclopedia that can serve as a starting point for music research.
- Muse Score is a free downloadable music composition and notation program that can be used with a keyboard, mouse, or MIDI keyboard. <http://musescore.org>
- Noteworthy Composer is a music composition and notation processor for Windows. It allows you to create, record, edit, print, and play back your own music scores in pure music notation. You can also print music from your computer as well as transpose music. www.noteworthysoftware.com
- Dolmetsch Online features a music dictionary, information on music theory and history, and services such as manuscript paper and printed music. www.dolmetsch.com
- Squidoo contains links to free digital music editing software and free web-based music composition software. www.squidoo.com/freemusiccreationsoftware.

Extended Learning Activities

1. **Monophonic music:** In the music library or from online music databases or sources, locate and listen to examples of Gregorian chant, Native American music, and Egyptian music.
 - What are the similarities among these three styles?
 - How are the three styles different?
 - Select your two favorite examples to share with the class and be prepared to (a) identify their cultural source, (b) defend your selections as being monophonic, and (c) present the similarities and differences in the examples.
2. **Homophonic music:** In class or individually, listen to two or three different hymns. Listen to how voices harmonize and support the melody; listen for whether the voices or instruments follow the melody's rhythmic pattern.
3. **Homophonic music:**
 - *Part I:* Listen to blues music or songs, bluegrass music, or folk music. Note how the melody is supported by other instruments' pitches or the other voices' harmonies.
 - *Part II:* For a class or group activity, create movement to represent a melody for an individual voice or vocal part that is danced by one student. Have other individual students or groups create the complementing dance parts that enhance or correspond to the movement that is representative of the melody.
4. **Polyphonic music:** Listen to an early madrigal by Claudio Monteverdi, Thomas Morley, or other composers from the Renaissance era. Note how the voices interweave their individual parts and then finish together. As a class, try to identify each voice's entry into the music and also the madrigal's texture.
5. **Counterpoint:**
 - *Part I:* Listen to several works by J.S. Bach, such as his Toccata and Fugue in D minor (BWV 565) or one of his two-part inventions for piano. Listen to a four-part chorus selection from one of Handel's oratorios, the most famous of which is *The Messiah* (select a chorus such as "For Unto Us a Child Is Born"). In these works, listen for and try to follow one part. If possible, view the score while listening to the selection or while viewing a performance of it on [YouTube](#).
 - *Part II:* For an extended choreographic project, choreograph movement for one of the vocal parts of the anthem (soprano, alto, tenor, or bass). This could be a class project for

individuals or groups. Each separate part could then be combined in class to visually illustrate the counterpoint. For the success of the class project, you will need to determine whether you will follow the vocal lines literally or diverge from the vocal lines to create visual counterpoint to each vocal line.

6. Nonimitative polyphony project:

- *Part I:* Using Garage Band or a similar music composition program, create and record a simple and original nonimitative polyphony composition to play back for your group or the class. Beyond the initial individual nonimitative polyphony compositions, a follow-up activity is to isolate one of your melodies and pair that melody with another student's melody, thus creating instant examples of nonimitative polyphony.
- *Part II:* Group or class composition project. Once you have shared your nonimitative compositions with your group or the class, you can individually create movement for your own composition or work in groups of two or more to create movement for your partner's composition. You can then perform it for the entire class or teach it to the class to perform together.

Forms, Worksheets, and Other Materials for Student Work

- Extended Learning Activity, Question 1 Answer Key