

MUSICAL 'DEVICES'

To use in exam answers and in your compositions!!!!

HARMONIC DEVICES	MELODIC DEVICES	RHYTHMIC DEVICES	TEXTURAL DEVICES
• Pedal • Cycle of fifths (harmonic sequence) • Suspension • Tierce de Picardy • False relation • Cadential 6/4 (Ic-V or Ic-V-I) • Dominant preparation	• Sequence (melodic sequence) • Appoggiatura • Fragmentation • Inversion • Retrograde • Repetition • Variation	• Syncopation • Hemiola • Cross rhythms • Swung rhythm • Straight • Rhythmic displacement • Cross phrasing	• Imitation (overlaps) • Antiphony (like Q&A) • Unison • Octave doubling • 2 part, 3 part etc Counterpoint • Polyphonic • Monophonic • Homophonic • MDH

MUSICAL 'DEVICES'

Sometimes called 'compositional devices' or 'compositional techniques' they can also be divided into 'melodic devices', 'harmonic devices', 'textural devices' or 'rhythmic devices'.

In essence it is about the *language* we use to describe music.

MELODIC DEVICES

Sequence: Immediate repetition of a motif or phrase of a melody in **the same part** but at a *different pitch*. The most common device used by far, and fairly easy to detect when you hear it.

Anacrusis: One or more off-beat or weak beat notes preceding the first strong beat of a musical phrase.

Melodic inversion: A melody or melodic fragment in which every interval between adjacent notes is retained but moves in the opposite direction to the original. E.g. A day in the Life 'Nobody was really sure if he was from the House of Lords' the melody is later inverted in 'Turn you on'

Riff or ostinato: Short repeating pattern forming the basis of part or whole of a song. e.g. Howlin Wolf p 476, bar 53 to end in lead guitar.

NOTE: Ostinati can be either melodic or purely rhythmic (i.e. on drums) in which case they would be a 'rhythmic device'

Fragmentation: When the composer detaches part of a previously used melody to use in its own right.

Blue note: In jazz or blues, a note sung or played deliberately out of tune and falling somewhere between two adjacent notes of the chromatic scale. E.g. the Gb played by the trumpet on the last quaver of bar H 6.

EMBELLISHING NOTES These are notes in the melody that are *not part of the chord* Or in other words 'not essential'.

Passing note: Weak beat notes that move by step and are not part of the chord

Accented passing note: A dissonant/non harmony note that occurs in step-wise movement on a *strong* beat. E.g. p. 347, bar 7 beat 1 on the word 'let'.

Auxiliary note: A note which moves one step up or down and then returns to the original note.

Anticipation: The sounding of a dissonant note on a weak beat before it becomes a harmony note on the next beat. Usually at the end of a phrase.

Echappée or 'escape note': Unaccented dissonant melodic decoration that leaves an essential note by step and returns to the next essential note by a leap in the opposite direction.

ORNAMENTS These are a specific kind of embellishing note or 'melodic device'.

Appoggiatura: literally 'leaning note' it sounds like the wrong note followed by the right one. It is a note one step above or below the main note creating a dissonance which is then resolved as it moves by step to the 'correct' note in the chord.

N.B. Appoggiaturas and accented passing notes are very similar. The difference is that the appoggiatura is approached by *leap* and the accented passing note is approached by *step*!

Turn: ornament involving upper neighbouring note, the note itself, lower neighbouring note and the note itself (in that order!)

Mordent: Ornament involving alternation of printed note with its upper or lower neighbour. E.g. Schoenberg, p.365, bar 25.

Acciaccatura: A melodic decoration a step above or below the note it decorates, played as short as possible. Also called a crushed note. 

Trill: The rapid alternation of two tones either a whole or a half tone apart.

HARMONIC DEVICES

Circle of fifths: *harmonic progression* in which the root of each chord moves by a fifth. E.g. Mozart Symphony 41 1st movement bars

Suspension: A harmonic device. A stressed dissonance requiring preparation/ note held over and resolution. It is prepared, suspended and then resolved. E.g. Dowland.

Tierce de Picardie: The use of a major third in the last tonic chord of a passage in a minor key. E.g. Dowland *Flow my tears* final chord.

Cadential 6/4: Second inversion tonic chord (chord I), preceding chord V (dominant) forming an imperfect cadence or else a lead into a perfect cadence. e.g. Mozart – the ends of most of his phrases!

Pedal: a note that is sustained or reiterated while harmony changes.

Tonic pedal: First note of scale/keynote sustained or reiterated while harmony changes above e.g. Haydn, p.359, bars 1-2

Dominant pedal: Fifth note of scale (dominant) sustained or reiterated while harmony changes above. e.g. Monteverdi last few bars.

Inner pedal or internal pedal: A pedal in an inner part. (pedal: sustained or repeated note against which the harmony changes.) e.g. The F# in the RH of the piano part is maintained from bar 1 to bar 40.

Inverted or upper pedal: A pedal in the high register.

False relation: Note in one part heard in another part on adjacent beat (or simultaneously) with chromatic alteration .e.g. p. 355, bar 50, Eb in canto part, and E natural in bass part a beat later.

CADENCES examiners will ask specifically for cadences

Plagal cadence: 2-chord progression at the end of a phrase consisting of IV-I

Perfect cadence: 2-chord progression at the end of a phrase consisting of V-I

Imperfect cadence: 2-chord progression at the end of a phrase ending with chord V

Interrupted cadence: 2-chord progression at the end of a phrase consisting of V-VI

TEXTURAL DEVICES

These are the three MAIN textures you will find:

Monophonic texture: A single unaccompanied melodic line e.g. West End Blues opening trumpet solo bars 1-6.

Homophonic texture: *sounding together - chordal (eg Hymns)*

Polyphonic texture: *more than 1 main tune at once (eg. JS Bach)*

Then look on closer detail to find these textures:

Melody Dominated Homophony; *melody plus accompaniment*

Imitation: *Contrapuntal device* in which a second melodic part copies a first while the first continues with its own, independent material.

Canon: The strictest form of imitation. A piece or passage of music in which the parts begin one after the other, at regular intervals, successively taking up the same subject. E.g. p.350, bar 43 beat 3 cantus part is then followed by quintus part 3 beats later.

Unison: Two or more parts playing the same melody at the same pitch.

In octaves: Two or more parts playing the same melody an octave apart.

Solo: One voice or instrument playing a melody either alone or accompanied.

Contrary motion: Parts moving in opposite directions.

Antiphony: Material performed by alternating groups of performers. A dialogue. E.g. p. 347, bar 12 between the voice and the upper part of the lute.

Call and response: (use only for pop & jazz) antiphonal exchanges between two different groups of performers
e.g. *West End Blues* page 462, bars 30-34

Heterophony: Two or more parts follow the same melodic outline simultaneously, but with some minor differences in pitch and/or rhythm. E.g. *Honey Don't*, p 478, Bar 16.

Stop time: the attention is focused on the soloist by limiting accompaniment to isolated beats e.g. 'I'm Leavin' You', p 474, bar 27

RHYTHMIC DEVICES

Ostinato: persistently repeated rhythmic motive. (you can have melodic ostinati too)

Cross rhythm: A rhythm that conflicts with the regularly stressed beats of the prevailing metre. E.g. bar 10 beat 3 the singer has crotchet triplets that conflict with the quavers rhythms underneath.

Syncopation: An alteration to the expected distribution of accents in metrical music.
E.g bar 24 sax.

Scotch snap: a rhythmic pattern consisting of a short note followed by a long one, so named because it is characteristic of, though not exclusive to, Scottish dance music.

Dotted rhythms: self explanatory but useful phrase! ♩. ♪

Triplet: A group of three notes of equal length played in the time of two notes of the same time-value. E.g. p.363, bar 3 beat 3.

Rhythmic augmentation: When the note values of a given melody are lengthened.
E.g. P 364, bar 38 beat 3 – bar 41, vocal part.

Hemiola: Rhythmic device often preceding a cadence where the stresses are shifted so that 2 bars in triple time sound like 3 bars of duple time. E.g. p. 349, bar 20-21 particularly clear in the alto part.

Augmentation: When a previously stated melody is played with longer note lengths
e.g. Schoenberg, p. 365, bar 25 vocal line.

Diminution: When a previously stated melody is played with shorter note lengths.
e.g. Mozart Symphony 41 1st movement.

HOW TO DESCRIBE ACCOMPANIMENTS

Alberti figuration *left hand broken chord pattern 'low high middle high'*

Broken chords *arpeggio shapes*

Basso continuo: The bass line and harmony (shown by figured bass) of most Baroque music. Usually played by one low string instrument and one keyboard instrument. (Cello/viola da gamba and harpsichord/organ). Can be played on a lute as well.

Ground bass: English name for a bass ostinato that is repeated throughout a piece.
E.g. the ground bass in 'When I am Laid in Earth' is heard 11 times.

POP & JAZZ only!

Comping: To play a jazz chordal accompaniment, as on a piano or guitar.

Walking bass: A bass part moving steadily throughout a piece (or substantial passage of a piece) mostly in notes of the same time value and mostly in conjunct motion. E.g. double bass line in *Four*

Shuffle rhythm: the duration of the initial note in a pair is augmented and that of the second is diminished. A **swing** or **shuffle rhythm** is the rhythm produced by playing repeated pairs of notes in this way. E.g. *Love me do* by The Beatles

Riff: Short repeating pattern (ostinato) forming the basis of part or whole of a song.
e.g. Howlin' Wolf p 476, bar 53 to end in lead guitar.

Backbeat: In jazz and pop, an instrumental articulation of beats 2 and 4 usually on the snare drum.

Four on the floor: a rhythm pattern used in disco and electronic dance music, characterized by a steady, uniformly accented beat played on the bass drum in 4/4 time. This was popularized in the disco music of the 1970s.

Fill: Melodic or rhythmic fragment that is played in between phrases – usually improvised.

Swung rhythm: In jazz the division of the beat into a pair of notes in which the first is longer than the second. This approximates to crotchet-quaver pattern in compound time



i.e:

e.g. Love me do

Straight quavers: an instruction to play quavers as written rather than swung.

HOW TO DESCRIBE MELODIES

Scalic: melodies that include scalar passages

Sustained: Long held notes

Detached: Short notes – if very short they are called 'staccato'

Conjunct movement: Stepwise melodic movement

Disjunct movement: when a melodic line moves by intervals of more than a second (by leap). Angular melody.

Chromatic movement: a melody that moves by semitone step e.g. P 360, bar 22 last quaver – bar 24 beat 1, vocal part.

Diatonic: Diatonic melodies are those whose pitches correspond with one of the degrees of the scale of the prevailing key.

Chromatic: Chromatic notes are those that are foreign to the scale of the prevailing key.

Pentatonic: using a five note scale

Whole tone: using the whole tone scale (French impressionist music)

Triadic figures: motifs based on triads e.g. P 359, bar 9, vocal part and right hand of piano

Periodic phrasing: Balanced phrases of regular lengths particularly associated with music of the Classical period.

Antecedent and consequent: In a melody, two phrases of equal length, the second sounding like an answer to the first. E.g. bars 1-4 (antecedent) and 5-8 (consequent).

For vocal music only:

Word painting: The musical illustration of the meaning or emotion associated with particular words or phrases e.g. p. 360, bars 23-24, the fragmented melody give the impression of weeping.

Strophic: A song that uses the same music for every verse.

Melismatic: More than one note sung to a syllable e.g. *A day in the Life* on 'Turn you on.....' and 'please' in *Love me do*.

Syllabic: one note sung to a syllable.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES

Pizzicato: plucked (String family only)

Arco: bowed (string family only)

Tremolo: The rapid and continuous repetition of a single note or rapid alternation between two notes. E.g. WEB p 462, bar 50 piano part, also used by strings.

Glissando: a rapidly executed series of notes on the harp or piano, each note of which is discretely audible

Mutes: Used by brass and string instruments to create a different timbre. 'con sordino' means with a mute

Scat singing: a melody sung to nonsense syllables.

Portamento: sliding between notes. Can be done on voice or string or brass instruments.

Pitch bend: Bending the pitch of a note to explore the microtones between semitones. Can be either above or below the note. E.g. 'Four Miles Davis bar 1.19 and 1.20 in the first chorus.