

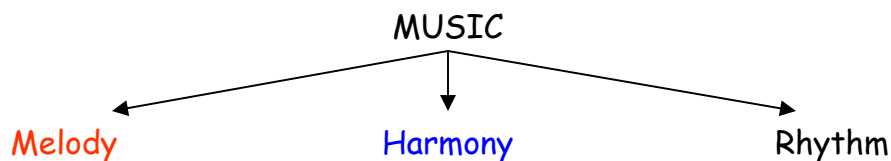
The Language of Music

Learning about music is a process and like all other processes must be approached using the two-step cycle of differentiate and integrate.

Differentiate:

Step 1—Recognize that just because we listen to music doesn't mean we understand how it works. Music is this big, general blob of stuff. We enjoy it but don't know anything about it.

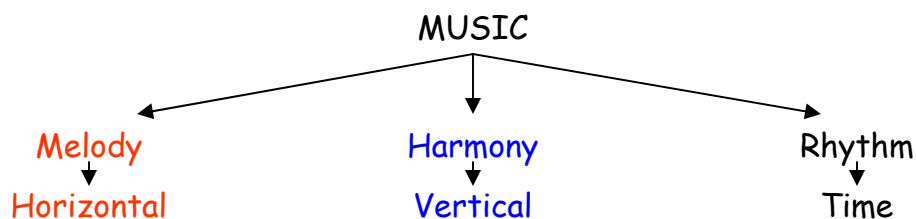
Step 2—Let us begin by separating out or breaking into parts if you will this blob called music. The first level of breaking the whole we call music into parts is fairly agreed upon and goes as follows:



Step 3—We can now begin to discover the elements of each of these parts that gives them their specific identity.

- **Melody** is what can be sung by the human voice. We can only sing one musical pitch at a time and they follow after one another in a *horizontal* fashion.
- **Harmony** is about the relationship of two or more different pitches sounding at the same time. The notes are stacked one on top of the other in a *vertical* alignment.
- **Rhythm** deals with the organizing principle of the sounds and how they are distributed in *time*.

Now our Parts are beginning to take on an identity.



Step 4—If music is a language then there must be an impact that is definable in the listener. Let's dig a little deeper into the workings of each category and its corresponding effect on the listener. Have you ever had a melody stuck in your head or shed a tear as the strings swelled to a crescendo in the climax of a good movie? Have you found your feet, hands or head moving involuntarily to the beat of a great piece of music while your mind and feelings were engaged in some other type of activity? There three ways human beings approach the world around them.

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Human beings can *think* about the world around them. They can *feel* about their lives and finally they can *will* themselves to take some form of action.

- **Melody** is what human beings can hold in their minds and consciously *think* about. This may be because it is related to and emulates the human voice, much like the sound of our thoughts that tend to be in words. Melody is the *thinking* aspect of music.
- **Harmony** is not something we can easily hold on to in our minds. No one hears a song and goes around hearing and singing an Am chord. Play a single pitch like a high E over and over again. It is the simplest of melodies and might be boring but it does not make you feel emotions. Play an Am harmony with this High E and you will feel something like sadness. Change to an F major 7th chord with the E and the feelings change. Play an A Major 7th and you will feel a shift to a happier feeling. Harmony is the dreamy, *feeling* aspect of music.
- **Rhythm** is related to the unconscious rhythmic elements in the human body—the heart beat, the unconscious processes necessary to move the body around in space. The *Will* has to be engaged for music to arrive here on earth. Otherwise it remains in the dreamy world of the subconscious or simply rattles around the brain unable to escape. Rhythm is the unconscious, *willing* aspect of music.

How these different parts relate to the human body can lead to incredible insights into the process of learning to play an instrument.

- **The Head** obviously contains the brain and is the main source of thinking. This is also the only place where human beings are completely awake—which is why almost all of the senses are located in the head (sight, hearing, smell, taste). The **head** is connected to melody.
- **The Chest/Torso** are always associated with feelings and emotions—the heart with love and grief, the gut with fear and anger. The **chest/torso** is connected to harmony.
- **The Limbs** are the way human beings get around and create in the world. We are unconscious as to how they do what they do. The **limbs** are connected to rhythm.

Our parts are becoming a reality:

