

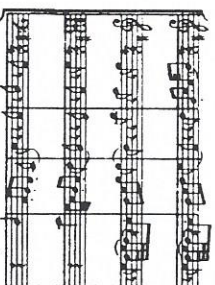
## Building Blocks of Music

# Harmony

### Chords

Chords are three or more tones sounding simultaneously.

Chords can be combined, altered, and used to create harmonic sounds to accompany a melody. (*The most common types of chords are major and minor.*)



### Consonant and Dissonant Sounds

Consonant sounds are combinations of notes that sound comfortable together. They give a sense of calm and arrival. (*Major and minor chords are consonant sounds.*)

Dissonant sounds are combinations of notes that clash with each other. They give a sense of unease and movement. (*The juxtaposition of dissonance and consonance provides exciting pulls between tension and repose in music.*)

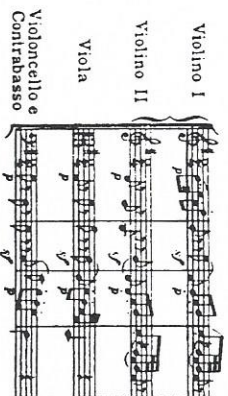
# Expressive Elements

### Dynamics

Dynamics refers to the volume in music. The two most basic terms are *forte* (loud) and *piano* (soft). Related terms include *fortissimo* and *pianissimo* (very loud, very soft) *mezzo forte* and *mezzo piano* (medium loud, medium soft). *Crescendo* means gradually louder, *diminuendo* means gradually softer.

### Tone color

Tone color or timbre refers to the sound quality of the instrument. The unique sound of an instrument is determined by its construction, materials, pitch and the technique of the player.



## Building Blocks of Music

# How to Listen to Music

Use your **musical memory** by listening for repetition and change. Often you will hear a melody repeated and altered in a composition.

How the composer first presents the tune and then later brings it back is fascinating.

**Anticipate** what will happen next in the music, but then be delighted by surprise or confirmation.

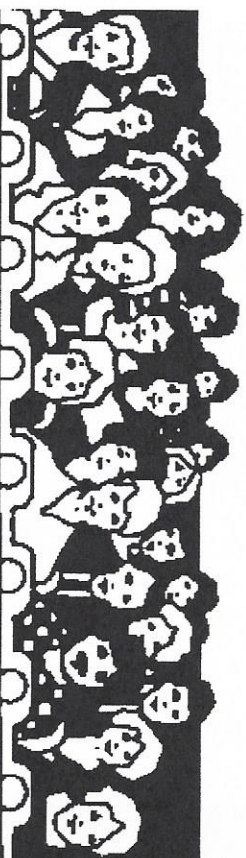
**Notice tone color:** instrumental sounds are carefully selected and combined to express various moods and colors.

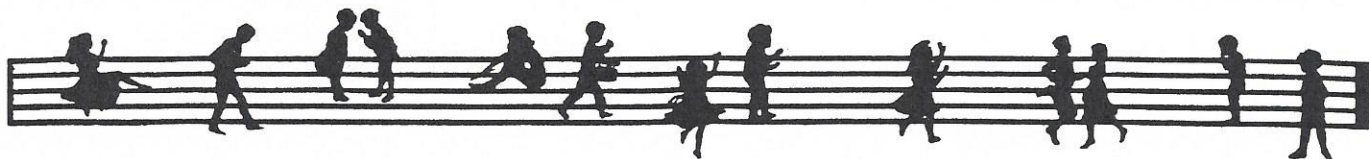
**Focus on details** (musical building blocks): rhythmic patterns, tempo, melodies, harmony, dynamics, etc. Observe just one or two elements for a while.

Be aware of how the music affects you emotionally. When you, the listener, interact with the music, it becomes a personal experience.

**Consider the time period** of the music (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Modern); technological advancement of the instruments and social and political environments affect the composer.

**Buy recordings** so that you can hear pieces repeatedly. Familiar pieces often become our favorites.





# THE SCORE—A MUSICAL MAP

## Adagio for Strings

Samuel Barber, Op. 11

**Molto adagio**  
*espr. cantando*

**TEMPO** — points to the tempo marking above the first staff.

**DYNAMICS** — points to the *pp* marking in the first staff.

**CLEF** — points to the treble clef on the first staff.

**KEY SIGNATURE** — points to the key signature (one flat) on the second staff.

Violino I  
Violino II  
Viola  
Violoncello  
Double-Bass

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### TEMPO

The rate of speed of a composition—or how fast or slow the music is.

### DYNAMICS

The degree of loudness or softness, the volume of sound. The composer usually indicates the dynamics with symbols (*ff*, *p* or *<*) in the score.

### CLEF

A sign placed at the beginning of a musical line to determine the position of the notes.

### KEY SIGNATURE

The number of sharps (#) or flats (b) shows the key of the piece.