

MELODY

WHAT IS A MELODY?

A melody is a linear succession of musical tones grouped together and perceived as a single entry, to form a single line of music. Melodies are generally repeated several times (often to various forms) to form a piece of music.

WHAT IS A MOTIF?

A motif is a short musical idea, recurring figure, musical fragment or succession of notes that is of special importance in or is characteristic of a composition. A motif is usually made up of harmonic, melodic, and/or rhythmic aspects, and has an identity and purpose in a composition. Harmonic motifs focus on chords, melodic motifs focus on melodies, and rhythmic motifs focus on rhythms; respectively harmony, melody and rhythm. Composers use motifs in a variety of ways. Without going into depth, all three types of motifs (harmonic, melodic and rhythmic) can be used in different ways, and combined as the composer sees fit.

ELEMENTS OF A MELODY

Most melodies consist of these elements having fixed and easily discernible patterns and recurring events including durations and patterns of durations. A melody is made up of several different and distinct elements:

1. Melodic motion, which is the range between the pitches
2. Pitch Range
3. Tension and release
4. Continuity and coherence
5. Cadence
6. Shape

20TH CENTURY MELODIES

Melodies found in the 20th C. do not follow the conventions found in prior musical periods. Twelve-tone scales are often used, creating melodic shapes that do not follow logical patterns and in which melodic motion can vary widely between pieces. Musical elements are not structured.

MELODY AND MUSICAL STYLES

1. **Jazz:** Melody is used for improvisation
2. **Rock, Contemporary, Pop & Folk:** Alternating between verse and chorus. A verse is defined as a section of the song that has the same melody but different lyrics. A chorus is defined as a section of the song that has the same melody & the same lyrics. Harmony can occur in both
3. **Indian Classical:** Melody & rhythm are given more importance
4. **Balinese Gamelan:** Melody is varied and altered and is played simultaneously

WESTERN CLASSICAL MELODIES

The initial melody is introduced then variations are created; this is often called theme and variations. Polyphony, which is several melodic layers which make up a musical piece, is common. Other practices include Musique Concrete (A 20th C. compositional technique which utilizes the distortions of sounds in various ways), and a leitmotif, a motif or melody associated with a certain idea, person or place. A head-motif (German: Kopfmotiv) is a musical idea at the opening of a set of movements which serves to unite those movements.