



PART 1

Texture, Melodic Structure, and Contrapuntal Techniques

Music is much more than sound, which is simply vibrations perceived by our brains. Music has the power to pull us in, to move our emotions, and to tell stories (even without words). What is it that holds music together? What makes music unified? One answer may lie in its texture. The study of texture in music is the study of the relationships among its parts or lines. Like textiles, musical fabric may be highly varied: light, smooth, dense, rough. Composers weave together melodies and voice leading threads to form the texture of music. Within those lines are recurring ideas that change or develop as the piece unfolds. Brief motives are defined by their characteristic melodic, rhythmic, or other elements. They, like the opening motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony ("dum-dum-dum-daahh"), may seem so simple yet be so full of potential that they provide reason for continuation and "motivate" an expansive composition more than 30 minutes in length.

Part I begins with the study of texture: how lines relate to each other. The study of melodic development then highlights how musical features are integrated into a single small unit, which in turn integrates with variations of that motive or with other motives to set the music drama in motion. A listener who perceives these textural and motivic relations can more deeply appreciate the unfolding drama.

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Chapter

I

Texture

Musical *texture* refers to the relationship among simultaneous lines in music. *Density* describes the number of lines or the distance between them. Changes in texture and density often underscore important formal divisions within a musical composition. Musical textures are classified as one of three types: *monophony*, *homophony*, or *polyphony*.

Monophony — A single melodic line of music in one or more voices without accompaniment. Melodies performed in unison or in octaves are considered monophonic, as they combine into a “single voice.” The heightened density of the monophony as shown in Example 1-1 results from four parallel lines in octaves.

Allegro con fuoco ♩ = 72

mf *cresc.* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

Example 1-1 Chopin, Etude in B Minor, Op. 25, No. 10, mm. 1–3 (1835) [AUDIO](#)

Homophony — A single principal line accompanied by one or more secondary lines. If all voices move together with the same or similar rhythm, they create *homorhythmic* homophony. Harmonized chorales are typical examples, as is the Brahms Intermezzo as shown in Example 1-2. Which voice

Andantino teneramente

p dolce e ben legato

Example 1-2 Brahms, Intermezzo in E Major, Op. 116, No. 6, mm. 1–4 (1892) [AUDIO](#)

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has the principal line in mm. 1–2? mm. 3–4? How do you know? While the bass of this example may have its own melodic character, its role is more supportive than independent.

Homophony in which one principal melodic line is relatively independent from the other supportive lines is more accurately described as *melody with accompaniment*. Songs and sonatas typically have this texture, normally with the melody in the top voice and subordinate accompanimental voices below. Which voice of Example 1-3 has the principal line? Which voices are accompanimental?

Lento assai

sotto voce

Example 1-3 Chopin, Prelude in B Minor, Op. 28, No. 6, mm. 1–4 (1839) [AUDIO](#)

Polyphony — Two or more simultaneous, *relatively equal* lines whose melodic independence results in more or less balanced *counterpoint*. The voices in Example 1-4 move independently and are equal in melodic activity. While not strictly imitative, they do have clear similarities and complementary rhythms.

60

Example 1-4 J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto*, BWV971, mm. 60–65 (1735) [AUDIO](#) (c. 1:13)

Texture commonly changes within a composition and may be ambiguous at times. Mozart's Piano Sonata in F, K. 332 (Example 1-5) begins with a melody and accompaniment, followed by a brief monophonic line that is then imitated to form a polyphonic texture. A homorhythmic passage leads to a strong cadence, and a new melody and accompaniment underscores a modulation to D Minor. Identify these changes below.

Allegro.
p

10

19

Example 1-5 Mozart, Piano Sonata in F, K. 332, I, mm. 1–26 (1783) [AUDIO](#)

Bach's Fugue No. 9 in E (Example 1-6) is polyphonic, given the independence of the distinct lines and their imitation, yet the texture is so chordal as to sound almost homophonic. Even the most polyphonic music tends to reduce to homophony as it approaches cadences.

33

40

Example 1-6 Bach, Fugue No. 9 in E, WTCII, mm. 35–43 (1740) [AUDIO](#) (c. 8:09)

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Textures described above may be combined to form hybrid textural passages as well, such as two polyphonic lines with accompaniment. In Vivaldi’s Trio Sonata (Example 1-7), the second violin answers the first in *imitative polyphony*, all of which is accompanied in simple homophony by the basso continuo—a pairing of a chordal instrument (like a harpsichord) and a bass instrument (like cello or bassoon). In the Baroque period, the harpsichord player would be provided the figured bass only (the bottom staff) and would improvise the right hand part, for which one possible realization is provided in the score below.

Example 1-7 Vivaldi, Trio Sonata No. 6, Op. 1, RV 62, III. Adagio, mm. 1–4 (1705) [AUDIO](#)

Thus, texture covers a wide spectrum of possibilities, sometimes ambiguous or open to analytical interpretation.

Exercise 1-1: Analysis of Musical Texture

1. Throughout each excerpt, identify the texture: monophonic, homorhythmic, melody and accompaniment, or polyphonic. Note any significant changes in texture.
2. Observe the number of simultaneous lines and the distance between them. How would you describe the density (dense, moderate, or sparse)? Note any significant changes in density.

Composer	Composition	Measures
a. Anonymous	“Kyrie” from <i>Missa de Angelis</i> AUDIO	Entire
b. Josquin Desprez	“Agnus Dei” from <i>Missa Mater Patris</i> AUDIO	Entire
c. Henry Purcell	“Thy Hand, Belinda” from <i>Dido and Aeneas</i> AUDIO	Entire
d. J. S. Bach	“Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme” AUDIO	Entire
e. J. S. Bach	Invention No. 1 in C Major AUDIO	Entire
f. J. S. Bach	Prelude No. 1 in C Major AUDIO	Entire
g. G. F. Handel	Concerto Grosso in G Major, Op. 6, No. 1 AUDIO	Entire
h. Haydn	String Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3, II AUDIO	Entire
i. Mozart	Piano Sonata in F Major, K. 332, I AUDIO	1–22

j. Beethoven	String Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1, I AUDIO	1–20
k. Chopin	<i>Valse</i> , Op. 69, No. 2 AUDIO	Entire
l. Ives	Piano Sonata No. 2 “Concord” AUDIO	1–3
m. Stravinsky	“Dance of the Adolescents” from <i>Rite of Spring</i> AUDIO	1–9, 62–63, 76–83

Exercise 1-2: Aural Analysis of Musical Texture

For each recording below, identify the opening texture and density. Note significant changes and the performance time they occur.

Composer	Composition	
a. Verdi	“Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves” from <i>Nabucco</i>	AUDIO
b. Berio	<i>Sinfonia</i> , III	AUDIO
c. Ligeti	<i>Lux Aeterna</i>	AUDIO
d. Reich	<i>Six Marimbas</i>	AUDIO
e. Janis Joplin	Mercedes Benz	AUDIO
f. Eagles	Seven Bridges Road	AUDIO
g. Led Zeppelin	Heartbreaker (1969)	AUDIO
h. Anonymous	<i>Dies Irae</i>	AUDIO
i. Chopin	Prelude in C Minor, Op. 28, No. 20	AUDIO
j. Dizzy Gillespie	Bebop (1947)	AUDIO
k. Wings	Silly Love Songs (1976) (Beginning at 4:44)	AUDIO
l. Bartók	Concerto for Orchestra, I (Beginning at 7:00)	AUDIO
m. Bartók	<i>Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta</i> , I (1936)	AUDIO
n. Pärt	<i>Magnificat</i> (1989)	AUDIO
o. Find your own example:		

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