



The World of Music

Module 1: Music Fundamentals

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Prof. Portia Seddon



Music Fundamentals Pt.1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxdGWIFM4cg>

Edit: Thai Buddhist monks'
chant is called *thet*, not
“chet” (sorry!)



Some questions to think about:

- What does music do?
- What does music mean for you? What role does it play in your life?
- What music do you listen to? What does it do to you?
- *Why* does it do what it does to you?
- What is the difference between *sound*, *noise*, and *music*?
- What is the division between speech and song - when does speech become song?



Considering sound

- Ethnomusicologist Marina Roseman wrote: “[s]ounds, when socially performed and interpreted by human actors occupying particular social roles, express and help formulate how members of a society think about and act toward one another and the world around them.” (*Healing Sounds from the Malaysian Rainforest: Temiar Music and Medicine*, 1993, p.131)
 - What do you think of this analysis?
 - What does it assume about society and social organization?
 - What does it assume about sound/music?

Considering “world music”



- What is “world music”? What do we mean when we use this term?
 - largely defined by the meaning we give it, it is a conceptual category that we distinguish from noise
 - this concept is culturally relative

- How are we to understand the following recordings? Are they closer to speech or song? Are they defined as music? Who gets to define them?



Heart Trembling Adhaan (Islamic call to prayer)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSyEpZOsJNk>

Thai Buddhist Monks Chanting

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE2AFb0rKrg>

There is **no universal consensus** about what constitutes music, and what divides it from speech, noise, or other sounds.



Music as a “universal language”



- Is music a “language”? Why or why not?
 - Could that language be “universal”? Can all people understand music in exactly the same way?
- The idea that music is “culturally determined and culturally encoded with meaning” is more useful for us
- **Semiotics** = study of symbols and signs
 - How could you apply it to studying music?
 - What is a possible problem with this approach?
 - What assumptions could it lead us to?
 - In what ways could semiotics be **ethnocentric**?

The problem with typologies



- Ethnomusicologists often use categories of folk, classical, and popular music to discuss differences between major types
- However, there is a danger in using these categories because it tends to assert a hierarchical relationship
 - What are assumptions of each of these terms?
 - What is the problem with identifying something as “traditional” music?



What is ethnomusicology?

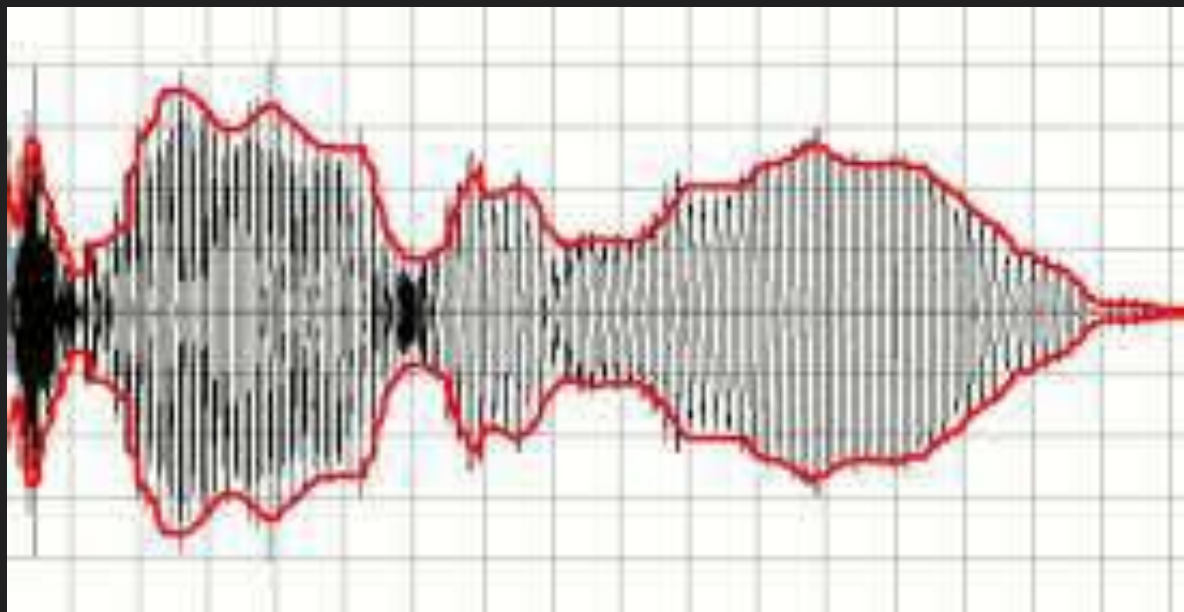
- What are ethnomusicologists concerned with?
 - Combining two poles of anthropology and musicology
 - How is their approach different than musicologists?

- Process of ethnomusicology:
 - 1) preparation
 - 2) fieldwork
 - 3) analysis
 - 4) dissemination

- How is fieldwork done?

4 basic components of musical sound

- 1) Timbre
- 2) Pitch
- 3) Duration
- 4) Dynamics





Timbre: the tone quality of a musical sound

- What are some examples of timbral differences? How can we describe **tone quality**?
- What produces timbre?
- When you listen to a recording, think about the following:
 - Are there voice(s), instruments, or both? How many instruments do you hear? What could they be?
 - Distinguishing **vocal timbre** - differences in range and timbral quality can help to define what genre you hear
- **Instrumental timbre** - related to the physical construction of the instrument
- **Organology** = study of musical instruments



Music Fundamentals Pt.2: The Sachs-Hornbostel System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlgMsGZ8wH0>

Sachs-Hornbostel system



- Curt Sachs and Erich M. von Hornbostel created system in early 1900s to classify instrument types:
 - Aerophones
 - Chordophones
 - Idiophones
 - Membranophones
 - Electrophones
- Classified according to what part of instrument vibrates to create sound

Pitch



- **Definite pitch** has specific frequency level (measured in Hz) - A = 440 Hz; C = 261.6 Hz
- **Indefinite pitch**: group of pitches played at equal volume, so cannot discern any single frequency - used percussively (handclap, drums, etc.)
 - **Tuning system**: the whole range of pitch frequencies used in a musical tradition
 - e.g., Western “equal temperament” system (octave divided into 12 “equal” pitches, vs. Arab tuning system with 24 pitches in an octave (use of semi-tones)
 - **The octave** organizes most tuning systems
 - **Intervals** between pitches in an octave can give tuning system its particular sound - distance between two pitches - 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.
 - **Scale**: set of pitches in a particular order used in a given performance

Example: Indonesian *slendro* scale vs. *pélog* scale



Gamelan - Slendro Scale By Saron

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNCGa-EgerU>

Pelog Musical Scale (Gamelan music of Bali/Java)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWfumqpFwaY>

Melody



- Organization of pitches into a musical phrase or idea
- How is it different from a scale?
- **Melodic contour**: shape or direction of the melodic line (ascending, descending, cascading)
- **Ornamentation**: embellishment of the original melody, can be improvised or not
- **Text setting**: relationship between music and lyrics - can be **syllabic** (each syllable gets its own note) or **melismatic** (several pitches for a syllable)

(Video: Los Moussakis - Grana Ed
Bora) How would you describe
this music? Melismatic or syllabic?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKGtL4SWnWk>



Rhythm: relationship of sound durations

- **Beat** = regular pulsation of sound
- **Tempo** = speed of the beat
- **Accent** = emphasis placed on a particular beat
- **Meter** is grouping of beats, usually with a particular feel - either duple (group of beats can be divided by 2; example on left) or triple (divided by 3, example on right)

Y Llegaste Tu Banda El Recodo

Banda El Recodo - Te Presumo (Video Oficial)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kCkEuCgmcU> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQWOAjSffHI>



- Meter can alternate within a single phrase
 - This is called **sesquialtera** or **hemiola**
 - Example: “I Like to Live in America” from *West Side Story*
 - Meter changes from triple to duple (123 123
12 12 12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhSKk-cvblc>

Rhythmic density: quantity of notes between accents or within a given rhythmic unit

Phonic structure or Texture



- Relationship between the different components of musical sound
 - **Monophonic** = single melodic line performed by soloist or group in unison
 - **Polyphonic** = multiple parts performed simultaneously
 - **Homophony** - multiple lines with same musical idea and same meter at different pitches
 - harmonic - uses **chords** (three or more notes stacked) - so homophony is generally **melody with chordal accompaniment (i.e., harmony)**
 - **Independent polyphony** - two or more lines with different musical idea - e.g., “Row Your Boat” sung as a round
 - **Heterophony** - simultaneous variations of same musical line, one may be more ornamented e.g., Prespa Albanian song (video at left)

Albanian Folk Iso-polyphony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4V2cE-LmBU>



- **Dynamics**: volume of a musical sound - soft or loud (in Western music terms, *piano* or *forte*)
 - crescendo = increase in volume
 - Descrescendo = decrease in volume
- **Form**: overall pattern or structure of piece of music - how it is organized structurally?
 - Does it have beginning, middle, end, or is it a cycle with no clear beginning or end?



Music Fundamentals Pt. 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIKaTj6Lo0c>