Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

Music for ensemble

Contents

1. What an ensemble is
2. Texture in ensembles
3. Roles in an ensemble
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

What an ensemble is

- An **ensemble** is a group of performers. Its size has a name: duet (2), trio (3), quartet (4), quintet (5), sextet (6).
- **Chamber music** is for a small classical **ensemble** with one player to a part, such as a **string quartet** (two violins, viola and cello) or a piano trio (piano, violin and cello).
- Other **ensembles**: jazz and blues bands, musical theatre **ensembles**, rock bands, choirs and vocal groups.

Texture in ensembles

- **Monophonic**: one melody line with nothing else. **Homophonic**: a melody with chords underneath, or all parts moving together.
- **Polyphonic** (contrapuntal): two or more independent melodies at the same time. **Imitation** is when one part copies another a moment later.
- Heterophonic: several parts play slightly different versions of the same melody.
- Other textures: melody and accompaniment, unison (everyone on the same notes), octaves, call and response, and descant (a decorative higher part).

Roles in an ensemble

- Parts take different roles: the melody, the **countermelody**, the harmony, the bass line and the rhythm.
- In jazz, the **rhythm section** (piano, double bass, drums) supports soloists who take turns to improvise.
- Listen for which instrument has the tune, how the others support it, and how the texture changes from section to section.

Key terms

Ensemble	A group of performers.

Chamber music	Music for a small group with one player to a part.
String quartet	Two violins, viola and cello.
Monophonic	A single melody line with no accompaniment.
Homophonic	A melody with chords, or all parts moving together.
Polyphonic	Two or more independent melodies at once.
Imitation	One part copying another a moment later.
Countermelody	A second melody played against the main tune.
Rhythm section	The piano, bass and drums that support a band.

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is a quartet?
2. Which instruments make up a string quartet?
3. What is chamber music?
4. What is a monophonic texture?
5. What is a homophonic texture?
6. What is a polyphonic texture?
7. What is imitation?
8. What is a countermelody?

Answers

1. A group of four performers
2. Two violins, viola and cello
3. Music for a small group with one player to a part
4. A single melody line with no accompaniment
5. A melody with chords, or all parts moving together
6. Two or more independent melodies at once
7. One part copying another a moment later
8. A second melody played against the main tune

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.