**Analysing Music**

The Advanced Higher unit ‘Understanding and Analysing Music,’ will help you with all aspects of the course. Looking at techniques used by other composers will help you to develop tools for your own composition. Looking at how the music is structured will help you with developing your performance skills. Developing a language about how we talk about music can really help how we communicate and express our ideas and thoughts.

**What is music analysis**

Analysing music will help you to think about both how and why a piece of music does and doesn’t work. Analysing music means that you have look closely at the different elements of music and understand what is going on. Throughout the advanced higher course, you will be asked to analyse pieces of music and report on your findings.

**How do we analyse music?**

It is really important as a musician to listen to lots of music. This will help to broaden your skills in listening and develop your skill s in music analysis. When we analyse music we should be asking ourselves questions such as:

Why does the music make me feel that way? & How does the composer use music techniques and elements to communicate their ideas.

When we take a more forensic approach to listening, analysing and appreciating, it greatly enhances our understanding of how to composing, performing and develop our lifelong appreciation of music.

The table over the page should help guide you in analysing music. This is just a prompt and it may need to be adapted depending on the piece of music you are analysing.

**Tensions**

In music, it is the tension between elements which make music so expressive. This could be, for example, Sound vs Silence, Unity vs Variety, Tension vs Resolution, Stability vs Instablity, Motion vs Stasis. Here are some examples of how different moods are created

**“...Music must bring something more, something that you can't express only by images and words. It must let us feel the rhythm that the characters have inside themselves…” (Mahamat-Saleh Haroun – Film Director)**

**Harmony**

**Major tonality**: happiness, joy, cheerfulness, positivity

**Minor tonality:** sadness, darkness

**Tonality**

**Melody**

**Consonance**: happiness, relaxation, serenity.

**Dissonance**: anticipation, anger, unpleasantness, suspense

Tonality/Mode

**Tempo**

**Fast tempo**: happiness, excitement, anger.

**Slow tempo**: sadness, calmness, peacefulness

**Rhythm**

**Smooth/consistent rhythm:** happiness, peace.

**Rough/irregular rhythm:** amusement, uneasiness, tension, suspense

**Dynamic**s

Loud**:** Intensity, power, anger.

**Quiet:** Peace, Tranquility,

Contrasting between Loud and Quiet dynamics can bring energy to the music

**Timbre**

Certain instruments help set music into a scene or place (bagpipes will instantly make you think of Scotland). Instrument choice is also important. Jaws wouldn’t have sounded so menacing if the theme was played on a flute!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Piece of Music | Background of the piece of music |
|  |  |
| Musical Element | What effect does it have? |
| Melody |  |
| Harmony |  |
| Rhythm |  |
| Form |  |
| Texture |  |
| Instruments |  |
| Dynamics |  |

**Questions to help guide your analysis**

**Melody**

Does the melody repeat?

Does the melody contain short motifs?

If they repeat, do they change?

What compositional devices/concepts are used in the melody?

**Harmony**

Is it major, minor, modal, tonal, atonal?

Does the tonality change at all?

Does the piece modulate? If so, how?

**Rhythm**

What is the time signature of the music?

Does the time signature change?

Are there repeated rhythms used?

Are there complicated rhythms used?

What is the tempo of the piece?

**Form**

Can you identify how the music is structured?

Are there repeats of sections?

**Texture**

Is the music mainly homophonic or polyphonic?

Do the instruments create any interesting textures?(link with rhythm and harmony)

**Instruments**

What are the main instruments used?

Are there any special techniques or devices used?

**Dynamics**

Are the dynamics – Loud? Quiet?

Do they change?

Are the changes dramatic?