

Motiflab — Activity Book

A Spark & Anvil activity book — puzzles, questions, and fun from Motiflab.

Write in the book, circle your answers, and check the Answer Key at the back.

1. What Is a Motif?

Circle the correct answer

1. What is a musical motif?

(A) The name of an instrument (B) A whole song from start to finish (C) A type of music stand (D) A short, memorable musical idea that repeats

2. How long is a motif, usually?

(A) Exactly one page of music (B) Several minutes long (C) Just a few notes or one short rhythm (D) The entire chorus

3. The famous 'da-da-da-DUM' opening of Beethoven's 5th Symphony is an example of a —

(A) full symphony (B) key signature (C) time signature (D) motif

4. Why do composers repeat a motif?

(A) To make the piece longer only (B) Because they ran out of ideas (C) To confuse the audience (D) So the listener remembers and recognizes it

5. A motif can be made of —

(A) pitches, rhythm, or both (B) only silence (C) only loud sounds (D) only the lyrics

6. A motif built only from a rhythm pattern (no fixed pitches) is a —

(A) harmonic motif (B) silent motif (C) rhythmic motif (D) lyric motif

Write the answer

7. A motif made from a memorable sequence of pitches is a —

Answer: _____

8. Which is the BEST test of whether an idea is a good motif?

Answer: _____

9. In MotifLab, the motif is treated like the —

Answer: _____

10. Two pieces can share the same rhythm but sound different because they have different —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

- 1.** A motif is different from a full melody because a motif is — →
- 2.** If a motif never came back in a piece, the listener would probably — →
- 3.** Which of these is most likely a motif? →
- 4.** The film theme for Jaws uses just two alternating notes. This makes it a — →
- 5.** Why is a SHORT motif easier to develop than a long one? →

- (A) Small ideas are easy to change and combine
 - (B) shorter and more fragment-like
 - (C) very short, tense motif
 - (D) not notice it as an important idea
 - (E) A snappy 3-note idea that opens and reappears
-

2. Motifs in Famous Music

Circle the correct answer

- 11.** Beethoven's 5th Symphony opens with a motif of how many notes?
(A) Two (B) Four (C) Ten (D) Twenty
- 12.** The Jaws theme is built from —
(A) two alternating notes (B) a drum roll only (C) a full orchestra melody (D) a piano scale
- 13.** A motif used to represent a specific character or idea in film/opera is called a —
(A) leitmotif (B) chorus (C) coda (D) cadence
- 14.** Star Wars gives the villain Darth Vader his own recurring motif. That is a —
(A) leitmotif (B) time signature (C) rest (D) key change
- 15.** Recognizing a returning motif helps a listener —
(A) forget the piece (B) ignore the melody (C) follow the story of the music (D) leave early
- 16.** Which is a RHYTHMIC motif you might clap?
(A) A whole rest for the whole piece (B) Short-short-short-long (C) The color blue (D) The letter Q

Write the answer

17. A composer transforms a famous motif so it sounds sad instead of happy, often by switching to —

Answer: _____

18. Hearing a motif return at the END of a piece often gives a feeling of —

Answer: _____

19. Which statement about famous motifs is TRUE?

Answer: _____

20. A motif that keeps its rhythm but appears on new pitches is being —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Peter and the Wolf gives each character its own tune. This uses the idea of — →

2. Why are short motifs common in film scores? →

3. A listener who notices the SAME motif in two different sections has spotted — →

4. The 'William Tell Overture' finale motif is famous because it is — →

5. When a motif is played higher and faster near a movie's climax, the composer is using it to build — →

(A) motifs representing characters

(B) excitement/tension

(C) catchy and instantly recognizable

(D) unity across the piece

(E) They can flash by quickly to signal something

3. Building a Melody

Circle the correct answer

21. A melody is —

(A) a stack of notes played at once (B) a series of pitches heard as a musical line
(C) the loudness of a note (D) the drum part only

22. The up-and-down SHAPE of a melody is called its —

(A) contour (B) key signature (C) tempo (D) dynamic

23. Moving from one note to the very next note (like C to D) is a —

(A) leap (B) step (C) chord (D) rest

24. Moving to a note several notes away (like C to G) is a —
(A) leap (B) step (C) beat (D) rest
25. A melody made mostly of steps tends to sound —
(A) smooth and singable (B) out of tune (C) silent (D) jagged and jumpy
26. A melody with many big leaps tends to sound —
(A) perfectly smooth (B) always boring (C) silent (D) more dramatic or angular

Write the answer

27. The highest note a melody reaches is often its —
Answer: _____
28. A short musical 'sentence' that feels somewhat complete is a —
Answer: _____
29. Singers usually breathe at the ends of —
Answer: _____
30. A melody that keeps rising higher and higher tends to build —
Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. A melody that falls step by step to a low note tends to feel — →
2. Which contour word describes a melody that arches up then comes back down? →
3. Balancing steps and leaps in a melody helps it be — →
4. A repeated pitch (same note several times) in a melody is a — →
5. Which is the smallest melodic move? →
- (A) both singable and interesting
(B) settling or relaxing
(C) repeated tone
(D) A step (to the next note)
(E) Arch shape
-

4. Rhythm & Meter Basics

Circle the correct answer

31. The steady pulse you can tap along to is the —
(A) beat (B) melody (C) key (D) dynamic

32. Rhythm is —

(A) how loud a note is (B) the pattern of long and short sounds (C) how high a note is (D) the name of the piece

33. Grouping beats into repeating patterns (like groups of 4) is called —

(A) meter (B) timbre (C) melody (D) contour

34. In 4/4 time, how many beats are in each measure?

(A) Two (B) Four (C) Six (D) Three

35. A note that lasts one beat in 4/4 is usually a —

(A) eighth note (B) quarter note (C) sixteenth note (D) whole note

36. A whole note in 4/4 lasts how many beats?

(A) Two (B) Four (C) Eight (D) One

Write the answer

37. Two eighth notes together last as long as —

Answer: _____

38. A rhythmic motif is a —

Answer: _____

39. A silence in music is written as a —

Answer: _____

40. The 'strong' beat we naturally feel as the start of a group is the —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Notes played BETWEEN the main beats create — →

2. Syncopation means putting emphasis on — →

3. 3/4 time is often felt as a — →

4. A dotted half note in 4/4 lasts how many beats? →

5. Keeping a steady beat while a rhythm changes above it shows the difference between — →

(A) Three

(B) offbeats / syncopation feel

(C) unexpected (weak) beats

(D) beat and rhythm

(E) waltz (ONE-two-three)

5. Repetition & Variation

Circle the correct answer

41. Playing a motif exactly the same way again is —
(A) variation (B) exact repetition (C) retrograde (D) inversion
42. Changing a motif a little each time it returns is —
(A) silence (B) exact repetition (C) deletion (D) variation
43. A short pattern repeated over and over as a background is an —
(A) cadence (B) coda (C) accent (D) ostinato
44. Too much EXACT repetition can make music sound —
(A) boring or repetitive (B) more surprising (C) faster (D) impossible to hear
45. Too much variety with NO repetition can make music sound —
(A) confusing or hard to follow (B) perfectly clear (C) silent (D) too repetitive
46. Good composers balance —
(A) only variation (B) only repetition (C) repetition and variation (D) only silence

Write the answer

47. Repeating a motif at a higher pitch level (same shape) is a —
Answer: _____
48. An ostinato is useful because it —
Answer: _____
49. Varying only the RHYTHM of a motif while keeping its pitches is one kind of —
Answer: _____
50. Varying only the PITCHES while keeping the rhythm is also a kind of —
Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. A 'theme and variations' piece works by — →
2. Which keeps a varied motif RECOGNIZABLE? →
3. An ostinato in the bass under a changing melody is common in — →
4. Repetition helps a listener because it — →
5. Variation helps a listener because it — →

- (A) many pop and classical pieces
 - (B) keeps interest and shows growth
 - (C) Keeping some part of its core shape
 - (D) stating a theme, then transforming it many ways
 - (E) builds familiarity and memory
-

6. Transforming a Motif

Circle the correct answer

51. Moving a motif up or down to start on a different pitch (keeping its shape) is —
(A) augmentation (B) inversion (C) retrograde (D) transposition
52. Flipping a motif's up-and-down directions (ups become downs) is —
(A) diminution (B) transposition (C) inversion (D) retrograde
53. Playing a motif backward (last note first) is —
(A) retrograde (B) transposition (C) augmentation (D) inversion
54. Making every note of a motif LONGER (e.g., doubling durations) is —
(A) retrograde (B) inversion (C) diminution (D) augmentation
55. Making every note of a motif SHORTER (e.g., halving durations) is —
(A) inversion (B) diminution (C) transposition (D) augmentation
56. Retrograde-inversion means the motif is —
(A) reversed AND flipped upside-down (B) only reversed (C) only flipped (D) unchanged

Write the answer

57. Transposition is useful because it lets a motif —
Answer: _____
58. Inversion is a good way to create —
Answer: _____
59. Augmentation of a motif often makes it feel —
Answer: _____
60. Diminution of a motif often makes it feel —
Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. If a motif rises C-D-E, its INVERSION starting on C would — →
2. If a motif is C-D-E, its RETROGRADE is — →
3. Doubling a motif's note lengths from quarters to half notes is — →
4. Halving a motif's note lengths from quarters to eighths is — →
5. Transposition changes the motif's **_ but not its _**. →

- (A) pitch level; shape
 - (B) augmentation
 - (C) E-D-C
 - (D) fall C-B-A
 - (E) diminution
-

7. Development Techniques

Circle the correct answer

61. Taking just PART of a motif and using it alone is —
(A) fragmentation (B) repetition (C) augmentation (D) transposition
62. Adding notes to make a motif longer is —
(A) extension (B) retrograde (C) deletion (D) diminution
63. Developing a motif means —
(A) ignoring it (B) growing and exploring it in many ways (C) playing it once (D) deleting it
64. A 'development section' in a piece is where the composer —
(A) stays silent (B) ends the piece (C) states themes for the first time (D) works and transforms the themes
65. Fragmentation is useful for building tension because it —
(A) removes the motif (B) focuses on a small, insistent piece (C) makes everything calm (D) adds silence
66. Combining fragmentation with sequence means —
(A) playing one note (B) repeating a fragment at rising or falling pitches (C) deleting the theme (D) using no rhythm

Write the answer

67. Extending a motif's ending is a way to —
Answer: _____

68. Motivic development is important because it —

Answer: _____

69. Which is an example of FRAGMENTATION?

Answer: _____

70. Which is an example of EXTENSION?

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. A development section often feels more **_ than the opening.** → __

2. Combining two DIFFERENT motifs at the same time is — →

3. Why might a composer fragment a motif near a climax? →

4. Developing a motif keeps a piece UNIFIED because — →

5. An 'answer' phrase that extends and varies the 'call' shows — →

(A) development within call-and-response

(B) unstable / tense

(C) To intensify and focus the energy

(D) everything grows from the same source

(E) counterpoint / combination

8. Contrast & Tension

Circle the correct answer

71. Contrast in music means —

(A) keeping everything the same (B) using only one idea (C) playing nothing (D) using different, opposing ideas

72. A loud section after a soft section is contrast in —

(A) title (B) pitch (C) meter (D) dynamics

73. A high, bright passage after a low, dark one is contrast in —

(A) tempo (B) meter (C) dynamics (D) register

74. A busy, thick passage after a sparse, thin one is contrast in —

(A) title (B) composer (C) texture (D) key signature

75. Tension in music is the feeling that —

(A) the title is long (B) everything is settled (C) something wants to resolve (D) the music has stopped

76. Release (resolution) is the feeling of —

(A) arriving at rest (B) more tension (C) silence forever (D) a new key only

Write the answer

77. Contrast helps a piece by —

Answer: _____

78. A contrasting SECOND theme is common in many forms because it —

Answer: _____

79. Increasing tension often uses —

Answer: _____

80. Resolving tension often uses —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Dissonance (clashing notes) usually creates — →

2. Consonance (smooth notes) usually creates — →

3. A sudden silence before a big moment can INCREASE tension because it — →

4. Alternating a calm motif with a stormy one creates — →

5. Which element is NOT a common way to create contrast? →

(A) makes the listener wait

(B) Keeping everything exactly identical

(C) a sense of rest

(D) tension

(E) contrast that shapes the drama

9. Harmony & Mood

Circle the correct answer

81. Harmony is —

(A) the beat (B) notes sounded together to support a melody (C) the loudness (D) one note at a time

82. A chord is —

(A) a rest (B) a rhythm pattern (C) a single note (D) three or more notes played together

83. Music in a MAJOR key often sounds —
(A) bright or happy (B) silent (C) dark or sad (D) out of tune
84. Music in a MINOR key often sounds —
(A) bright or happy (B) faster (C) dark or sad (D) silent
85. The 'home' note or chord a piece centers on is the —
(A) rest (B) tonic (C) dominant (D) leading tone
86. Consonant chords sound —
(A) silent (B) harsh and clashing (C) always sad (D) smooth and stable

Write the answer

87. Dissonant chords sound —
Answer: _____
88. Changing a motif from major to minor keeps its **_ but changes its _**.
Answer: _____
89. Harmony can support a melody by —
Answer: _____
90. Ending on the tonic chord gives a feeling of —
Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. A chord progression is — →
 2. The chord built on the tonic note is called the — →
 3. A chord that creates strong pull BACK to the tonic is the — →
 4. Harmony that stays on ONE chord for a long time can feel — →
 5. Harmony that changes frequently can feel — →
- (A) a series of chords in order
(B) dominant (V)
(C) static or calm
(D) more active or restless
(E) I (one) chord / tonic chord
-

10. Musical Form: Small Forms

Circle the correct answer

91. Musical form is —

(A) the tempo only (B) a single note (C) the overall structure or plan of a piece (D) the loudness

92. Binary form is described as —

(A) ABACA (B) AB (two contrasting sections) (C) ABA (D) one section only

93. Ternary form is described as —

(A) AB (B) one section (C) ABCD (D) ABA (statement, contrast, return)

94. The RETURN of A in ternary form gives a feeling of —

(A) silence (B) a brand new piece (C) coming home (D) endless tension

95. Rondo form features —

(A) no repetition (B) a main theme that keeps returning (ABACA) (C) only two sections (D) silence

96. Verse-chorus form is common in —

(A) popular songs (B) silence (C) no music (D) only symphonies

Write the answer

97. The CHORUS in a song usually —

Answer: _____

98. The VERSE in a song usually —

Answer: _____

99. A 'bridge' in a song provides —

Answer: _____

100. Form helps listeners by —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Which form is a 'sandwich' with the same bread on both sides? →

2. Which form keeps bringing back ONE main theme between different episodes? →

3. Through-composed music means — →

4. Repetition of a section (like the chorus) helps a song be — →

5. Contrast between sections helps a form by — →

(A) Ternary (ABA)

(B) memorable

(C) new material throughout, with little repetition

(D) making each section distinct

11. Musical Form: Large Forms

Circle the correct answer

101. Theme and variations form works by —

(A) stating a theme then transforming it repeatedly (B) staying silent (C) using no theme (D) playing one chord

102. Sonata form's three main parts are —

(A) verse, chorus, bridge (B) exposition, development, recapitulation (C) AB, only (D) intro, outro, coda

103. In sonata form, the EXPOSITION —

(A) explores the themes (B) brings the themes back (C) introduces the main themes (D) ends the piece

104. In sonata form, the DEVELOPMENT —

(A) is silent (B) introduces new themes only (C) brings the themes home (D) explores and transforms the themes

105. In sonata form, the RECAPITULATION —

(A) adds new unrelated themes (B) introduces them for the first time (C) brings the themes back (often resolved home) (D) removes them

106. The exposition–development–recapitulation shape mirrors a story's —

(A) single moment (B) title only (C) credits (D) beginning, middle, and end

Write the answer

107. Theme and variations is a whole form built on the principle of —

Answer: _____

108. A coda is —

Answer: _____

109. Large forms need strong DEVELOPMENT because —

Answer: _____

110. The recapitulation feels satisfying largely because it —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. A motif in a large form can unify it by — →
 2. Which best matches sonata form to MotifLab's arc? →
 3. In theme and variations, each variation should feel — →
 4. A large form usually contains — →
 5. The development section of a large form often feels the most — →
 - (A) several contrasting sections with returns
 - (B) Exposition = introduce; development = explore/struggle; recap = return/resolve
 - (C) appearing and transforming across all sections
 - (D) unstable and exploratory
 - (E) connected to the theme yet distinct
-

12. Texture & Orchestration

Circle the correct answer

111. Musical texture refers to —
(A) how loud the music is (B) the tempo only (C) the title (D) how many layers of sound are happening and how they relate
112. Monophony is —
(A) a single melodic line with no harmony (B) silence (C) melody plus chords (D) many independent melodies
113. Homophony is —
(A) a melody supported by chords/accompaniment (B) no melody (C) many equal melodies (D) one line alone
114. Polyphony is —
(A) a single line (B) silence (C) melody plus chords only (D) two or more independent melodies at once
115. Counterpoint is —
(A) the art of combining independent melodic lines (B) loud dynamics (C) a single melody (D) a rest
116. A round like 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' sung in overlapping parts is an example of —
(A) monophony (B) a single chord (C) polyphony (D) silence

Write the answer

117. Instrumentation (orchestration) is —

Answer: _____

118. Giving a motif to a bright trumpet vs a mellow cello changes its —

Answer: _____

119. A thin texture (few layers) tends to feel —

Answer: _____

120. A thick texture (many layers) tends to feel —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Changing texture during a piece is a way to create — →

2. Timbre is best described as — →

3. Doubling a melody with two instruments in unison makes it — →

4. Which texture is a solo singer with NO accompaniment? →

5. Which texture is a singer with a guitar strumming chords? →

(A) the characteristic 'color' of a sound

(B) Homophony

(C) contrast

(D) sound fuller/stronger

(E) Monophony

13. Narrative Arc in Music

Circle the correct answer

121. MotifLab's core idea is that a piece can be shaped like a —

(A) list of random notes (B) single unchanging chord (C) title only (D) story with a beginning, middle, and end

122. In MotifLab's arc, the motif acts as the —

(A) protagonist (main character) (B) audience (C) background noise (D) title

123. The six stages of MotifLab's arc are —

(A) do, re, mi, fa, sol, la (B) motif, variation, development, contrast, recapitulation, resolution (C) loud, soft, fast, slow, high, low (D) intro, verse, chorus, bridge, outro, credits

124. The CLIMAX of a piece is —

(A) its point of greatest tension or intensity (B) the first note (C) its quietest moment (D) the title

125. Resolution in a musical story is —

(A) more tension (B) silence only (C) the opening (D) the release of tension and arrival at rest

126. Tension and release across a piece create its —

(A) emotional arc (B) title (C) key signature (D) instrument list

Write the answer

127. A motif that CHANGES across the arc mirrors a character who —

Answer: _____

128. Why introduce the motif clearly at the START?

Answer: _____

129. A CONTRAST section works like a story's —

Answer: _____

130. The RECAPITULATION works like a story's —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Building toward a single strong CLIMAX helps a piece feel — →

2. A motif returning TRANSFORMED at the end suggests — →

3. Pacing in a narrative arc means — →

4. A common problem is a piece with NO climax, which feels — →

5. A common problem is a piece that is ALL climax, which feels — →

(A) the character has been changed by the journey

(B) exhausting with no relief

(C) how tension rises and falls over time

(D) flat or directionless

(E) purposeful and shaped

14. Dynamics, Articulation & Expression

Circle the correct answer

131. Dynamics in music refer to —

(A) how high it is (B) the title (C) how loud or soft the music is (D) how fast it is

132. 'Piano' (p) as a dynamic means —

(A) soft (B) loud (C) slow (D) fast

133. 'Forte' (f) as a dynamic means —

(A) slow (B) fast (C) soft (D) loud

134. A crescendo means —

(A) staying the same (B) gradually getting softer (C) suddenly stopping (D) gradually getting louder

135. A diminuendo (decrecendo) means —

(A) the title (B) gradually getting louder (C) speeding up (D) gradually getting softer

136. Articulation refers to —

(A) how high notes are (B) the key (C) how notes are attacked and connected (D) how loud notes are

Write the answer

137. Legato means —

Answer: _____

138. Staccato means —

Answer: _____

139. Playing a motif legato vs staccato changes its —

Answer: _____

140. Tempo markings like Allegro and Adagio tell you the —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. A ritardando means — →

2. An accelerando means — →

3. Expressive phrasing means shaping a phrase with — →

4. A sudden loud accent in a quiet passage creates — →

5. Which dynamic shape best builds toward a climax? →

- (A) gradually speeding up
 - (B) A crescendo
 - (C) gradually slowing down
 - (D) subtle changes in dynamics and timing
 - (E) a dramatic surprise
-

15. Composing Choices

Circle the correct answer

- 141.** A cadence is a —
(A) harmonic ending that punctuates a phrase (B) drum fill (C) type of instrument
(D) single melody note
- 142.** An 'authentic' cadence (V-I) gives a feeling of —
(A) silence (B) being unfinished (C) a new beginning (D) strong conclusion
- 143.** A 'half' cadence (ending on V) feels —
(A) completely finished (B) unfinished, wanting to continue (C) like a new key (D) silent
- 144.** Modulation means —
(A) adding an instrument (B) changing from one key to another (C) changing the tempo (D) getting louder
- 145.** Modulating to a new key can make music feel —
(A) slower always (B) silent (C) exactly the same (D) fresh or lifted
- 146.** Revision in composing means —
(A) deleting the whole piece (B) never changing anything (C) copying someone else (D) improving a draft by changing and refining it

Write the answer

- 147.** A good FIRST question when revising is —
Answer: _____
- 148.** Cutting a section that doesn't serve the piece is —
Answer: _____
- 149.** Choosing where to place the climax is a —
Answer: _____

150. A composer deciding to reharmonize the final statement of a motif is making a choice about —

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Which is a strong reason to modulate UP near the end of a song? →
2. Revising is easier when a composer — →
3. Listening back to a draft helps a composer — →
4. A cadence at the end of a large section signals — →
5. Deciding the ORDER of sections (which comes first, which returns) is — →

- (A) hear what works and what to change
 - (B) the section is closing
 - (C) has a clear goal for the piece's feeling and shape
 - (D) a form/structure choice
 - (E) To add energy and lift for the final chorus
-

16. Capstone: Whole-Piece Thinking

Circle the correct answer

151. Whole-piece thinking means considering —

(A) only a single note (B) only the tempo (C) only the title (D) how motif, form, harmony, and arc work together

152. A unified piece usually grows most of its material from —

(A) no ideas (B) one or a few motifs (C) random noise (D) dozens of unrelated tunes

153. A well-shaped piece has a clear —

(A) flat, unchanging intensity (B) title only (C) arc of tension and release (D) list of instruments

154. If a piece has great ideas but feels shapeless, it likely needs better —

(A) a longer title (B) form and arc planning (C) more instruments only (D) louder dynamics only

155. If a piece feels repetitive and dull, it likely needs more —

(A) exact repetition (B) silence (C) variation and development (D) a new title

156. If a piece feels chaotic and hard to follow, it likely needs more —

(A) no motif (B) silence (C) repetition and unity (D) more unrelated material

Write the answer

157. A strong ending usually —

Answer: _____

158. Balancing unity and variety means —

Answer: _____

159. A motif that appears in every section, transformed each time, provides —

Answer: _____

160. Which order best describes composing a whole piece?

Answer: _____

Match each question to its answer

1. Harmony's role in a whole piece is to — →

2. Texture's role in a whole piece is to — →

3. A capstone composition should demonstrate — →

4. The single most unifying element in most well-crafted pieces is — →

5. When self-evaluating a piece, a great question is — →

(A) motif, development, form, and a clear arc together

(B) add contrast and shape energy across sections

(C) Does the motif's journey feel complete and satisfying?

(D) a recurring, developed motif

(E) color mood and shape tension/resolution

Riddle & Joke Break

Guess the answer, then check the key!

161. What do we call a short, memorable musical idea that a whole piece can be built from?

162. A melody is the tune you hum. What is rhythm?

163. A composer plays the same motif but starts it on a higher note. What technique is this?

164. In music, what is a "rest"?

165. "Dynamics" in music refers to what?

166. "Tempo" describes what part of music?

167. A composer takes a four-note motif and plays it backwards. What is playing a melody in reverse called?

168. What is "harmony" in music?

169. Why did the little motif grow into a whole song?

170. Why did the melody feel like a journey?

171. Why did the rhythm never sit still?

172. Why did the composer repeat the theme?

173. Why did the variation feel familiar yet fresh?

174. Why did the dynamics steal the show?

Fun Facts

- Did you know? A "motif" is a short musical idea -- sometimes just three or four notes -- that a whole piece can grow from. Composers develop one tiny seed into minutes of music!
 - Did you know? One of the most famous motifs in history is the "short-short-short-long" opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Just four notes -- and almost everyone recognizes them!
 - Did you know? Silence is part of music! A "rest" is a beat with no sound, and skilled composers use rests to build suspense and give the notes room to breathe!
 - Did you know? Repetition is a composer's best friend. Repeating a melody or motif is how a tune becomes catchy and memorable -- your brain loves recognizing patterns!
 - Did you know? You can transform a motif by playing it backwards (retrograde), upside down (inversion), faster, or slower -- turning one small idea into a whole family of related ideas!
 - Did you know? "Dynamics" are the louds and softs of music. The Italian words "piano" (soft) and "forte" (loud) are so central that the instrument that plays both got named the "pianoforte" -- the piano!
 - Did you know? "Tempo" is the speed of the music, and it's usually written in Italian too -- "allegro" means fast and lively, "adagio" means slow. Tempo hugely changes a piece's mood!
 - Did you know? An "ostinato" is a short pattern repeated over and over as a song's foundation. Tons of pop, film, and classical music are built on a repeating riff or loop underneath everything else!
-

Answer Key

1. D — A short, memorable musical idea that repeats
2. C — Just a few notes or one short rhythm
3. D — motif
4. D — So the listener remembers and recognizes it
5. A — pitches, rhythm, or both
6. C — rhythmic motif
7. melodic motif
8. Can you hum it back after hearing it once?
9. main character (protagonist) of the piece
10. pitches
Matching (What Is a Motif?): 1→B, 2→D, 3→E, 4→C, 5→A
11. B — Four
12. A — two alternating notes
13. A — leitmotif
14. A — leitmotif
15. C — follow the story of the music
16. B — Short-short-short-long
17. a minor key
18. coming home / resolution
19. They are often very short and simple
20. moved to a new pitch level
Matching (Motifs in Famous Music): 1→A, 2→E, 3→D, 4→C, 5→B
21. B — a series of pitches heard as a musical line
22. A — contour
23. B — step
24. A — leap

25. A — smooth and singable

26. D — more dramatic or angular

27. climax / high point

28. phrase

29. phrases

30. tension/energy

Matching (Building a Melody): 1→B, 2→E, 3→A, 4→C, 5→D

31. A — beat

32. B — the pattern of long and short sounds

33. A — meter

34. B — Four

35. B — quarter note

36. B — Four

37. one quarter note

38. memorable pattern of note lengths

39. rest

40. downbeat

Matching (Rhythm & Meter Basics): 1→B, 2→C, 3→E, 4→A, 5→D

41. B — exact repetition

42. D — variation

43. D — ostinato

44. A — boring or repetitive

45. A — confusing or hard to follow

46. C — repetition and variation

47. sequence

48. gives a steady, unifying foundation

49. variation

50. variation

Matching (Repetition & Variation): 1→D, 2→C, 3→A, 4→E, 5→B

- 51. D — transposition
- 52. C — inversion
- 53. A — retrograde
- 54. D — augmentation
- 55. B — diminution
- 56. A — reversed AND flipped upside-down
- 57. appear in new keys or registers
- 58. a related-but-new-sounding version
- 59. grander or more important
- 60. faster or more urgent

Matching (Transforming a Motif): 1→D, 2→C, 3→B, 4→E, 5→A

- 61. A — fragmentation
- 62. A — extension
- 63. B — growing and exploring it in many ways
- 64. D — works and transforms the themes
- 65. B — focuses on a small, insistent piece
- 66. B — repeating a fragment at rising or falling pitches
- 67. delay resolution and build anticipation
- 68. creates a large piece from small material
- 69. Using only the first three notes of a longer motif
- 70. Adding extra notes to spin the motif out longer

Matching (Development Techniques): 1→B, 2→E, 3→C, 4→D, 5→A

- 71. D — using different, opposing ideas
- 72. D — dynamics
- 73. D — register
- 74. C — texture
- 75. C — something wants to resolve

76. A — arriving at rest
77. adding variety and shaping its form
78. balances the first theme
79. rising pitch, louder dynamics, faster tempo
80. falling pitch, softer dynamics, arriving at the home key
Matching (Contrast & Tension): 1→D, 2→C, 3→A, 4→E, 5→B
81. B — notes sounded together to support a melody
82. D — three or more notes played together
83. A — bright or happy
84. C — dark or sad
85. B — tonic
86. D — smooth and stable
87. clashing and tense
88. shape; mood
89. adding depth and mood underneath it
90. resolution / arrival
Matching (Harmony & Mood): 1→A, 2→E, 3→B, 4→C, 5→D
91. C — the overall structure or plan of a piece
92. B — AB (two contrasting sections)
93. D — ABA (statement, contrast, return)
94. C — coming home
95. B — a main theme that keeps returning (ABACA)
96. A — popular songs
97. repeats with the same words and tune
98. changes its words each time
99. contrast before returning to familiar material
100. giving the music a clear, followable shape
Matching (Musical Form: Small Forms): 1→A, 2→E, 3→C, 4→B, 5→D

101. A — stating a theme then transforming it repeatedly

102. B — exposition, development, recapitulation

103. C — introduces the main themes

104. D — explores and transforms the themes

105. C — brings the themes back (often resolved home)

106. D — beginning, middle, and end

107. variation

108. a concluding section that rounds off a piece

109. little material must sustain a long structure

110. returns familiar themes, now resolved

Matching (Musical Form: Large Forms): 1→C, 2→B, 3→E, 4→A, 5→D

111. D — how many layers of sound are happening and how they relate

112. A — a single melodic line with no harmony

113. A — a melody supported by chords/accompaniment

114. D — two or more independent melodies at once

115. A — the art of combining independent melodic lines

116. C — polyphony

117. choosing which instruments play what

118. timbre / tone color

119. intimate or clear

120. full or powerful

Matching (Texture & Orchestration): 1→C, 2→A, 3→D, 4→E, 5→B

121. D — story with a beginning, middle, and end

122. A — protagonist (main character)

123. B — motif, variation, development, contrast, recapitulation, resolution

124. A — its point of greatest tension or intensity

125. D — the release of tension and arrival at rest

126. A — emotional arc

127. grows and is changed by the story

128. So listeners can follow its journey

129. conflict or challenge

130. return / homecoming

Matching (Narrative Arc in Music): 1→E, 2→A, 3→C, 4→D, 5→B

131. C — how loud or soft the music is

132. A — soft

133. D — loud

134. D — gradually getting louder

135. D — gradually getting softer

136. C — how notes are attacked and connected

137. smooth and connected

138. short and detached

139. character/expression

140. speed

Matching (Dynamics, Articulation & Expression): 1→C, 2→A, 3→D, 4→E, 5→B

141. A — harmonic ending that punctuates a phrase

142. D — strong conclusion

143. B — unfinished, wanting to continue

144. B — changing from one key to another

145. D — fresh or lifted

146. D — improving a draft by changing and refining it

147. Does each section serve the whole piece?

148. a valid, common revision choice

149. structural decision

150. harmony/mood

Matching (Composing Choices): 1→E, 2→C, 3→A, 4→B, 5→D

151. D — how motif, form, harmony, and arc work together

152. B — one or a few motifs
153. C — arc of tension and release
154. B — form and arc planning
155. C — variation and development
156. C — repetition and unity
157. resolves tension and often recalls earlier material
158. enough repetition to unify AND enough change to stay interesting
159. unity with variety across the whole piece
160. Generate a motif → develop it → shape it into a form → revise
Matching (Capstone: Whole-Piece Thinking): 1→E, 2→B, 3→A, 4→D, 5→C
161. A motif! It's a musical seed -- just a few notes that grow and return throughout a piece.
162. The pattern of long and short sounds and silences in time! Melody is the notes; rhythm is their timing.
163. Transposition (or sequence)! Moving a musical idea higher or lower keeps it recognizable while adding variety.
164. A silence -- a beat with no note played! Rests are as important as notes; they give music breathing room.
165. How loud or soft the music is! Terms like "piano" (soft) and "forte" (loud) tell players the dynamics.
166. The speed! A fast tempo feels lively and urgent; a slow tempo feels calm or sad.
167. Retrograde! It's one classic way to transform a motif into something new but related.
168. Two or more different notes or lines sounding at the same time in a pleasing way! Melody is one line; harmony is what supports it.
169. Because a great tune can start from just a few notes!
170. Because it takes the listener somewhere, note by note!
171. Because rhythm is all about how the beats move!
172. Because repetition helps a musical idea stick in your head!
173. Because it takes the motif and changes it just a little!

174. Because playing soft then loud makes music dramatic!

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