

EAR TRAINING

Meaning of ear training

This is the training of the ear to perceive and interpret musical sound correctly. It is also called aural perception. A well trained ear can differentiate between different musical sounds produced. A good musical ear should be able to perceive a sound in relationship with another. Have you ever heard someone singing out-of-tune? It is because their ears are not well trained. Someone with well-trained ears should be able to sing in line with a given key or harmony. One of the ways to do this is to make sure you listen carefully to people around you while you sing in a group. Make sure you all are singing in tune.

Part harmony

This is singing in different parts to produce harmony. Every harmony is arranged in parts. Some parts are higher while some are lower. The higher voices take the upper parts while the lower voices take the lower parts. In a choir, the females, having higher voices, usually take the upper parts while the males take the lower parts because their voices are lower in pitch.

Rudiments of Harmony

In developing training our ears to hear music, we are basically learning how to identify the fundamentals of music. When you turn on a piece of recorded music, listen out for the following

1. **Pitches:** This is the individual musical tones that make up melodies in a piece of music. A simple way to get this is to figure out each tone that make up the melody in the song you are listening to. You may even try to trace it on a keyboard.
2. **Interval:** This is the musical distance between one sound and another. You can easily relate a musical sound with another by finding out which one is higher or lower in relationship with the one before and after it in a melody. A keyboard can be useful in doing this. For example, the first word in the Nigerian national anthem, “A-rise” has two pitches. The first one is lower while the second one is higher.
3. **Melody:** This is the tune of the music. It is usually provided by a lead singer, lead instrument or the soprano/upper part of a choir.
4. **Tempo:** This refers to the speed of music. Identify how fast or slow the piece of music is.
5. **Harmony:** This refers to the combination of various sounds heard at the same time. You have to find out the various parts in the music. This takes careful and attentive listening.

Two-Part Harmony: This is the harmony that comprises of two parts

Three-Part Harmony: This is the harmony that comprises of three parts

Four-Part Harmony: This is the harmony that comprises of four parts

Class Activity

Get a piece of recorded music. Try to figure out the fundamentals as explained above.

Demonstration of two-part harmony

A simple way of demonstrating two part-harmony is by singing the song, 'Row, row, row your boat'. For this purpose, let us divide the song into two parts:

1. Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream
2. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream

Follow the procedures below:

Divide yourselves into two groups. The first group will begin by singing the first part of the song, 'Row, row, row your boat.' The second group will begin the singing of part one of the song immediately first group enters the second part. So as the first group enters with, 'merrily, merrily, merrily....', the second group begins with, 'row, row, row your boat'. It continues like that continuously. This is called a round.

Summary

Ear training is the training of the ear to perceive and interpret musical sound correctly. Part singing is singing in different parts to produce harmony. Every harmony is arranged in parts. Pitch, interval, melody, tempo and harmony are fundamentals of music to listen out for during a music listening process.

Review Questions

1. Explain what ear training is.
2. Explain part harmony
3. List and explain the rudiments of harmony
4. Explain two-part harmony
5. Explain three-part harmony
6. Explain four-part harmony