

CHARACTERISTICS OF WORLD MUSIC (from Yahoo NBPTS Music listserv)

Continent	Melody	Harmony	Rhythm	Instruments	Vocal	Function
Africa	pentatonic, tritonic heptatonic, using western intervals	not important as melody; but important in S. African choral music (parallel, open harmony); polyphonic textures	polyrhythms each drum plays one rhythm repeatedly highly accented	djembe, mbira, talking drums, musical bow, drums important in W.Africa.; harps, lutes important in E. Africa; slit-log drum; ongo (trumpet – groups of about 18; each instrument plays a single tone); shekere; metal bells; instruments are vehicles of speech; xylophones	middle voice; call and response; songs inflected like spoken word; songs teach traditions; ululation; unison singing	integrated into everyday life; music for all occasions and events; communal music making; secular and sacred songs
Asia/China	based on pentatonic or heptatonic scale; pure tones; each tone has a mystical significance; music rooted in melody and its variations	drones on zithers; melody more important	duple meters	qin (most important solo instrument) flutes; sheng (mouth organ); metal percussion; gongs	Opera - main male sings baritone; secondary male sang falsetto; heroines sang with high nasal quality	early music meant to purify one's thoughts; believed sound influenced the harmony of the universe; separation of vocal and instrumental music repertoire; art music most appreciated of all forms of traditional music
Asia/Japan	same scales but melodic contour not as important; heterophony; microtones	melody more important	duple meters or long-short, long-short 6/8	koto (most important solo instrument); shakuhachi (flute)- 5 holes but uses variations in fingering and movement to produce microtones and subtle sound effects	evolved into middle range; some improvisation on melody	separation of vocal and instrumental music repertoire; art music most appreciated of all forms of traditional music
Asia/Indonesia	five-tone or seven-tone scale; but not tuned to western intervals; melody broken up between instruments; little room for improvisation	heterophony produced by elaborations on melody	duple or quadruple divisions; 4 th beat most important; exact opposite of western beat	gamelan is considered one instrument; all individual instruments tuned to one scale; one of each pair of metallophones is tuned slightly higher than the other to produce shimmering effect; gongs mark the subdivisions of "phrases;" intervening beats are subdivided among melody instruments; drums – master drummer is head of ensemble; favored blending of timbres over solo performances; up to 30 or 40 instruments; Javanese gamelan music is more refined. Balinese gamelan is loud, dramatic and characterized by sudden changes of tempo and dynamics	vocal music tends to be highly ornamented	Bali - outdoor religious ceremonies to inspire trances and invite ancestral spirits Java – royal court music (indoors) Music not notated. Names of pieces are about animals

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Asia/India	ragas – specific sequence of pitches (melodic modes related to certain time of day or night, mood, deity, event, or sex; 7 basic tones which represent a mood)	drone of tonic, fifth, octave (western designation not Indian)	talas - rhythmic cycles of a fixed number of beats grouped together in orderly arrangement; players free to improvise; three tempos: solo, moderate, fast	sitar – 7 strings, 13 sympathetic strings; tabla – right hand drum banya – left hand bass drum (one player for both) tambura – 4-6 strings plays drone; sitar plays melody; like Indonesia, uses idiophones to mark spans of musical time cycles; drummers are independent + virtuosic	singer improvises on raga	music intimately connected to spiritual world; music reflects inherent order of universe; ragas and talas memorized many theoretical treatises written
Australia		overblowing creates harmonics	breathing creates rhythm; tongue taps on mouth-piece	didgeridoo – made from limbs or tree trunks hollowed out by termites; aerophone; circular breathing produces constant drone as player hums or vocalizes into instrument; fitted with beeswax mouthpiece		originally a sacred instrument used in tribal rituals; though gaining in secular use
Asia/Russia (throat singing)	imitates the sounds of nature	one person sings 2-4 pitches by singing overtones;			called “khoomii” sung by males; has also been found in the singing of the women of the Xhosa tribe in South Africa	pastoral music that is intimately connected with animism, the belief that natural objects have souls
Europe/Russia	folk melodies religious chants			balalaika developed from the dombra of Siberia; triangular body with small sound hole; long narrow neck; 3 strings; 6 sizes from piccolo to contrabass; organized into orchestras		traditional dance music; originally played alone to accompany songs and dance
Europe/Ireland	melody, rhythm and harmony closely resemble music of western Europe			bodhran - goatskin drum; fiddle ; tin whistle ; accordion		oral folk tradition instrumental music for dancing
Europe/Scotland	ditto			bagpipe – originally came from Egypt!!! (also important in Eastern European music for weddings festivals and dances); fiddle , harp		jigs, reels, marches retreats
Europe/Eastern	harmonic minor scale; augmented 2 nd is characteristic of this scale	chordal harmony	steady duple meter; heavily accented	klezmer band; combines wind and string instruments; clarinet, saxophones, accordions, drums shofar ; string instruments in Arab	religious; songs; also songs to transmit history melismatic; nasal ululations;	performed for social occasions - weddings, dances (klezmer); religious prayer

music

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Europe/ Switzerland, Austria	intervallic leaps; 4 th , 6 th , 7 th most common; 2 – 6 sections	major scale oriented	regular beat		rapid alternation of registers; legato	communication in mountainous areas
South America/ Brazil (folk music)	Portugese heritage; Euro- pean modes	European heritage	African origin; polyrhythms	guitars, cuica, bamboo scraper (guiro), cabasa, drums (like congas from Cuba)	Iberian polyphony	celebrations, dance music
Central America/ Mexico (folk)	text more important – before Conquest			flutes, maracas, drums, slit-drums (before Conquest)	high-pitched (before Conquest)	dance, festivals, drama, poetry (before Conquest)
	European models; text in couplets	European heritage	triple rhythms	modern mariachi band - guitars, bass guitar, 2 trumpets		entertainment
Trinidad/ Tobago (folk)	call-response from African Heritage		polyrhythms,	conga drum, calabash rattle,	Amerindian heritage is primarily vocal	combining cultures and religions
(calypso)	call and response short phrases European Derived	major scale	duple meter syncopation	steel drum bands; drums made from discarded oil drums	primarily male	social criticism and satire
Cuba/ Puerto Rico (salsa)	European derived; improvisations	simple 4 or 8 bar harmonic progressions of primary chords	West African rhythms interlocking rhythmic ostinati	vocals, piano, bass, trum- pets, trombones, saxophone, bongos, conga drums, timbales, claves, cymbals, cowbells, maracas, claves, woodblock, guiro		based on Cuban dance styles and elements of jazz and rock
North America/ USA (Blues)	European	12-bar blues form using pattern of primary chords	duple meter	rhythm section	solo	self-expression
(Ragtime)	European; 3 or 4 sections	European	duple meters highly syncopated	piano		listening entertainment
(Dixieland)	European phrases; Call and response; group improvisation	European heritage	syncopation	Dixieland band: 1 or trumpets, trombone, tuba, clarinet, piano, string bass, banjo, Drum set		entertainment at weddings, funerals, political rallies, night clubs; originated in red light district of New Orleans dancing and listening
(Swing)	melody played by one section of band; one person improvises at a time	ditto	less synco- pated	Big Band: 4 saxes, 4 trombones, 4 trumpets, rhythm section: piano, drums, string bass, guitar		
(Bebop)	melody obscured by rapid scalar improvisation	ditto	syncopation	Small combo: lead melody instrument (sax or trumpet) rhythm section		listening to virtuosic performances
(Cool)	fewer notes; slower rhythm; improvisation	ditto	laid back syncopation	Small combo		explore tone colors, listening

(Fusion)

phrases

ditto

combined rock
and jazz rhythms

electronic instruments added

listening