

Melody

Melody is one of the most basic elements of music. A note is a sound with a particular pitch and duration. String a series of notes together, one after the other, and you have a melody. But the melody of a piece of music isn't just any string of notes. It's the notes that catch your ear as you listen; the line that sounds most important is the melody.

There are some common terms used in discussions of melody that you may find it useful to know. First of all, the melodic line of a piece of music is the string of notes that make up the melody. A melody that stays on the same pitch gets boring pretty quickly. As the melody progresses, the pitches may go up or down slowly or quickly. One can picture a line that goes up steeply when the melody suddenly jumps to a much higher note, or that goes down slowly when the melody gently falls. Such a line gives the contour or shape of the melodic line. You can often get a good idea of the shape of this line by looking at the melody as it is written on the staff, but you can also hear it as you listen to the music.

So, what are some of the traits of a good melody?

Basic Melodic Principals:

When creating a melody, composers often start with a rhythmically simple line according to the following guidelines.

1) Rhythm – keep it simple to start with

2) Contour – this is the shape of the line. Usually, there is only one highest or lowest note, called the peak or climax. If the peak is repeated, it loses its effect, so it is important to have only one peak to your contour. There are two basic contours, *arch* and *ramp*. Melodies most often use a combination of arches and ramps.