

## Introduction to Directed Listening

In any live music performance, every person in the audience hears the same sounds. But, in another sense, the way each individual listens determines what he/she hears. Some in the audience enjoy letting the music “wash over them”—often creating a sense of escape and/or relaxation. Others may move—outwardly or internally—to the beat. Those who are familiar with the composition may anticipate hearing a favorite theme or episode in the music.

For many students, the DSO Youth Concert may be their first or only opportunity to hear a symphony orchestra. The experience will be more meaningful if they know how to focus their listening on the music itself.

Musical composition is the art of interweaving the elements of music to create a desired effect. It is the way composers use each element in relation to the others that makes each composition, and each composer’s style, identifiable.

An outline of the elements of music would include:

- **PITCH**—the highness or lowness of musical tones  
Melody (or the tune) is created by sequencing pitches, one after another.  
Counterpoint occurs when one or more melodies are played at the same time.  
Harmony is created when two or more pitches are played simultaneously.
- **DURATION**—the relative length of musical tones  
Duration is relative to the underlying pulse (beat) of the music.  
Tempo is the speed of the underlying pulse.  
Tones of different duration organized over a steady pulse create Rhythm.
- **TIMBRE**—tone quality, or tone color  
The same pitch played by two different instruments (i.e., violin and flute) have a different tone quality. Timbre is the characteristic tone quality each instrument produces.
- **DYNAMICS**—the relative loudness and softness of musical tone  
Dynamics contribute to building and releasing tension, shaping phrases, and bringing out voices within the musical texture, etc.
- **STRUCTURE**—the organization of musical ideas in a composition  
Musical ideas are shaped through the use of repetition, contrast, and variation.

As students listen to music in the classroom, direct their attention to one of the elements and how it interacts with the others. When they attend the concert, encourage students to focus on how the elements of music are used in each piece they hear.