

**MODULE 1**  
**MUSIC ELEMENTS**  
**AND CONCEPTS**

Table of contents

<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>	2
<b>ICONS TO LOOK OUT FOR</b>	2
<b>1. Elements</b>	3
<b>2. Concepts</b>	3
<b>3. Definition of elements and concepts</b>	5
3.1 Duration	5
3.2 Pitch	7
3.3 Timbre	7
3.4 Form	8
3.5 Loudness	9
3.6 Style	9
3.7 Mood	10

**MUSIC ELEMENTS AND CONCEPTS**






.....

**Learning outcomes**

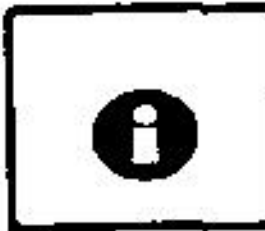
At the end of this module you should be able to:

- define the elements and concepts of music
- name the elements and concepts of music.

**Icons to look out for:**

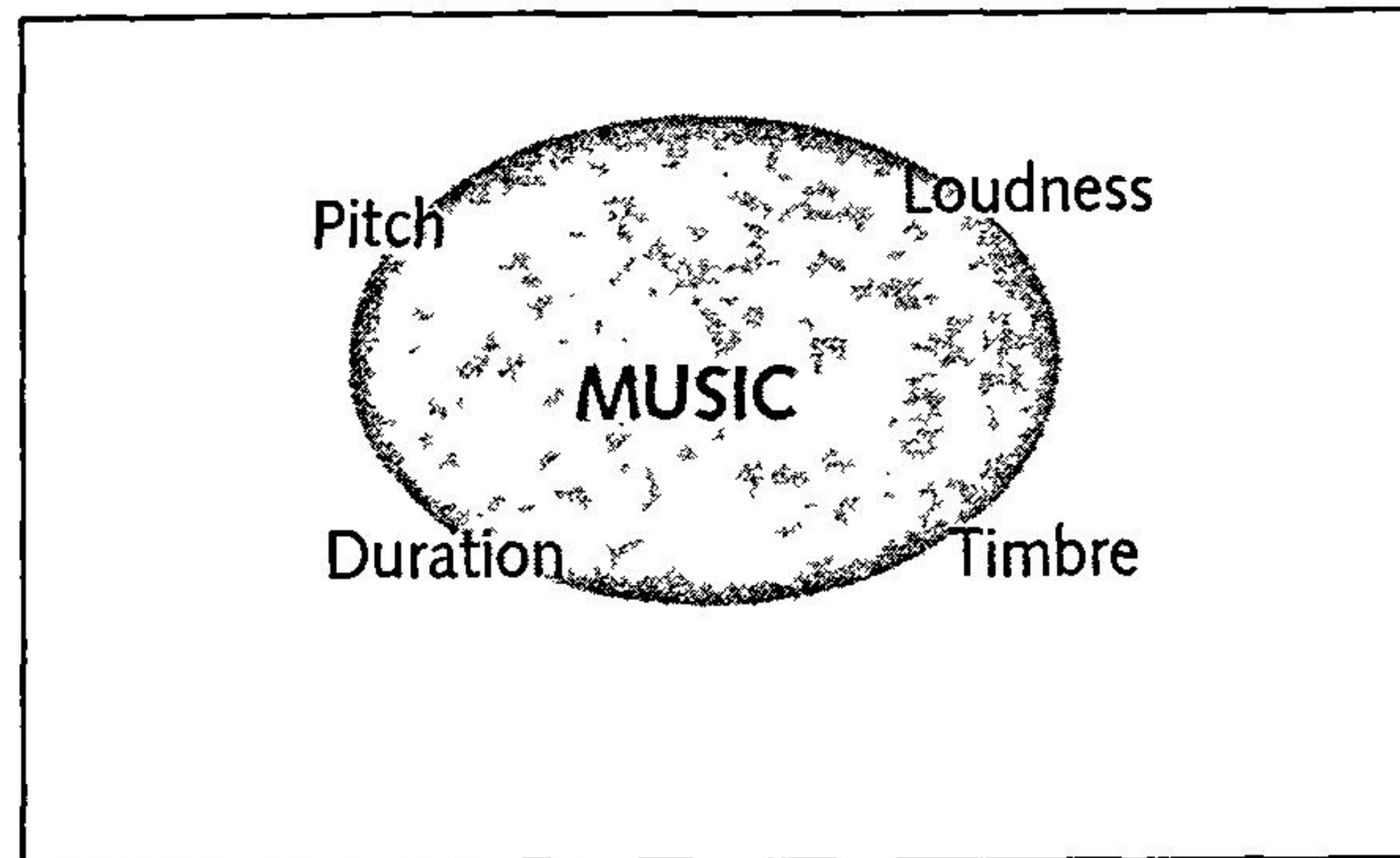
- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
|  | - specific outcomes  |
|  | - summary of content |
|  | - examples           |
|  | - assignment         |
|  | - definition         |

# 1. Elements



Music elements are the most basic building blocks of music. When listening to music, various elements can be distinguished. These elements are present in all types of music, and can be combined in different ways.

## Elements of music:



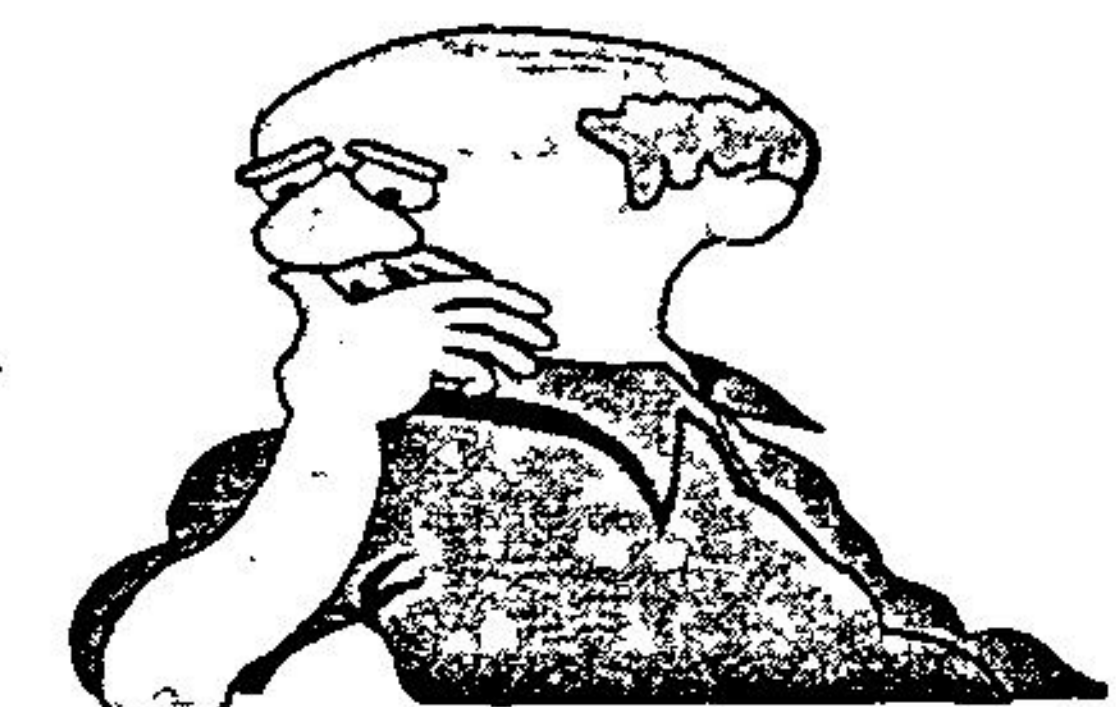
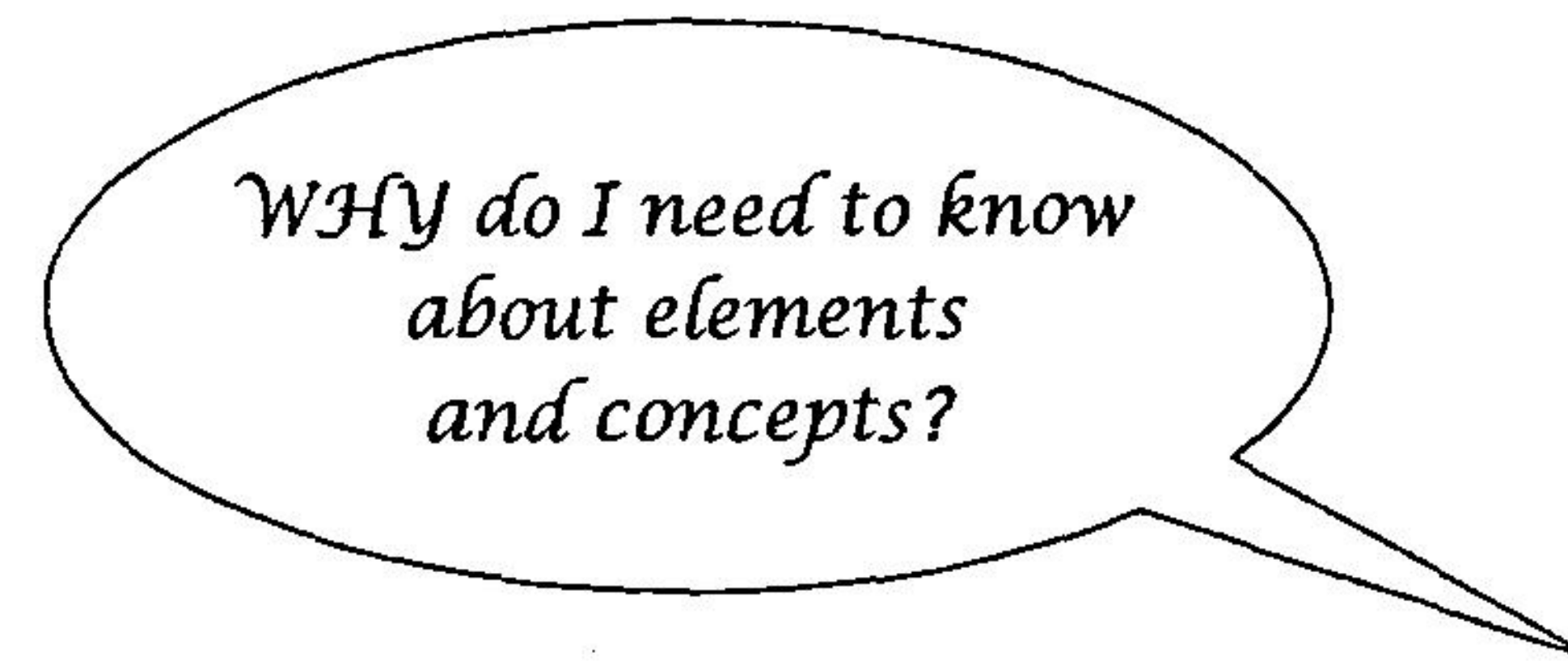
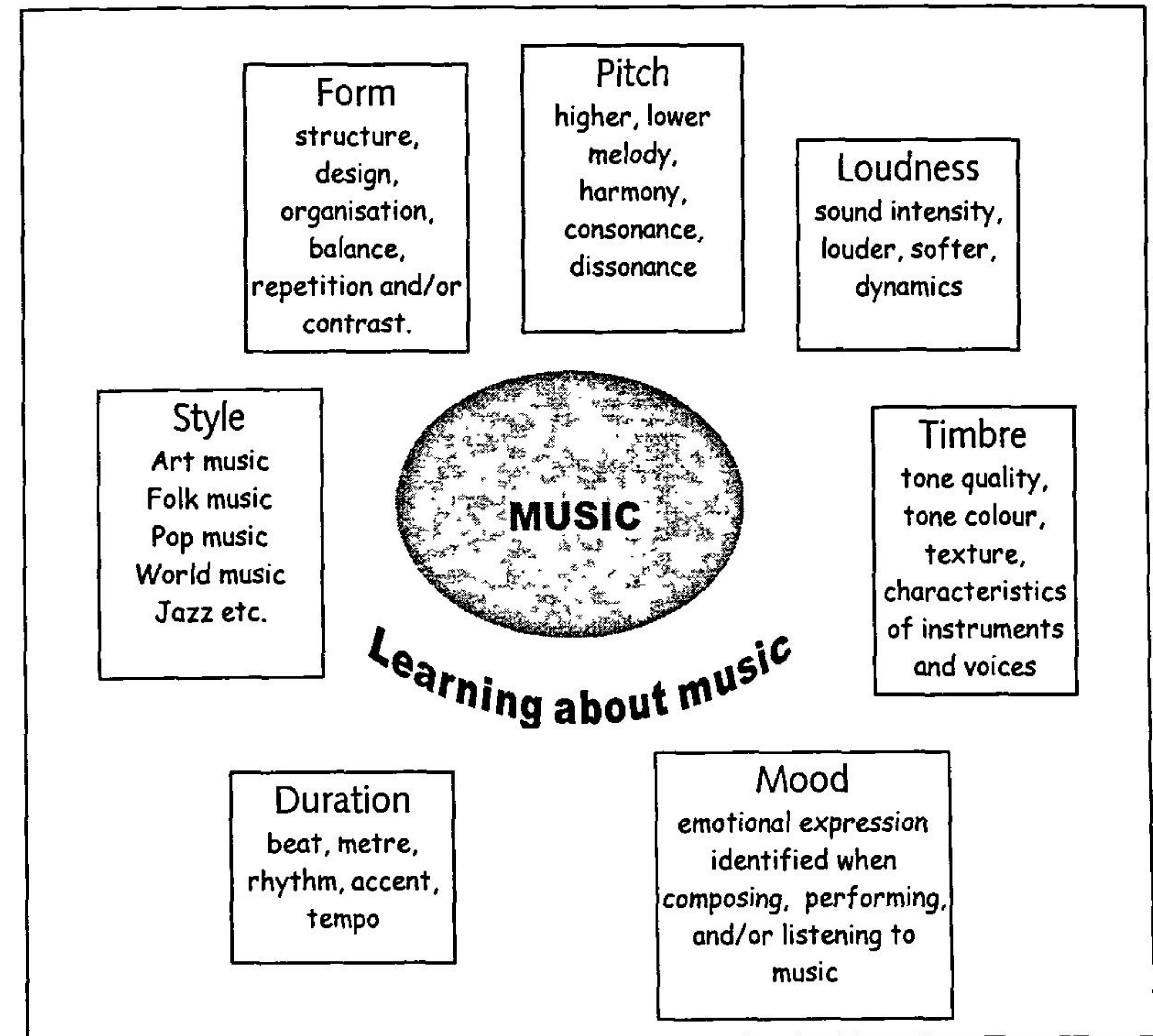
# 2. Concepts



The concepts of music are the descriptive terms used to facilitate the understanding of the combination of elements present in the music. The concepts therefore describe how the music elements sound, as combined in a particular piece of music.

Music learners also need to form concepts in their minds, based on their recognition and understanding of the musical elements and concepts they encounter.

## Concepts of music:



It is important that you are familiar with the definitions of the different elements and concepts for they are present in all forms of music and in combination they form music.

.....

### 3. Definition of elements and concepts

The elements of music and their corresponding concepts can be described as follows:

#### 3.1 Duration

Duration covers everything which relates to the timing of music - that is, the effects of beats, accents, the grouping of notes and the tempo at which they are performed. The concepts categorised under duration include the following:

- **Beat** can be described as a rhythmic or structured pulse.
- **Metre** is a regular succession of rhythmic beats.
- **Rhythm in music** is a grouping of sounds and silences of varying duration, usually controlled by a regular beat.
- **Accent** can be distinguished when one note or combination of notes are emphasised.

**EG**

Which of the following aspects regarding duration can be identified in the pictures?

- a) beat
- b) metre
- c) rhythm
- d) accent

- **Tempo** indicates the speed of the music. Descriptive words, often in a language like Italian, are used to indicate this pace of the music.

**EG**

<i>presto</i>	-	very fast
<i>lento</i>	-	slow
<i>ritardando</i>	-	gradually slower

**1.1** Can you name a piece of music which has the following tempo?

FAST.....

MODERATE.....

SLOW.....

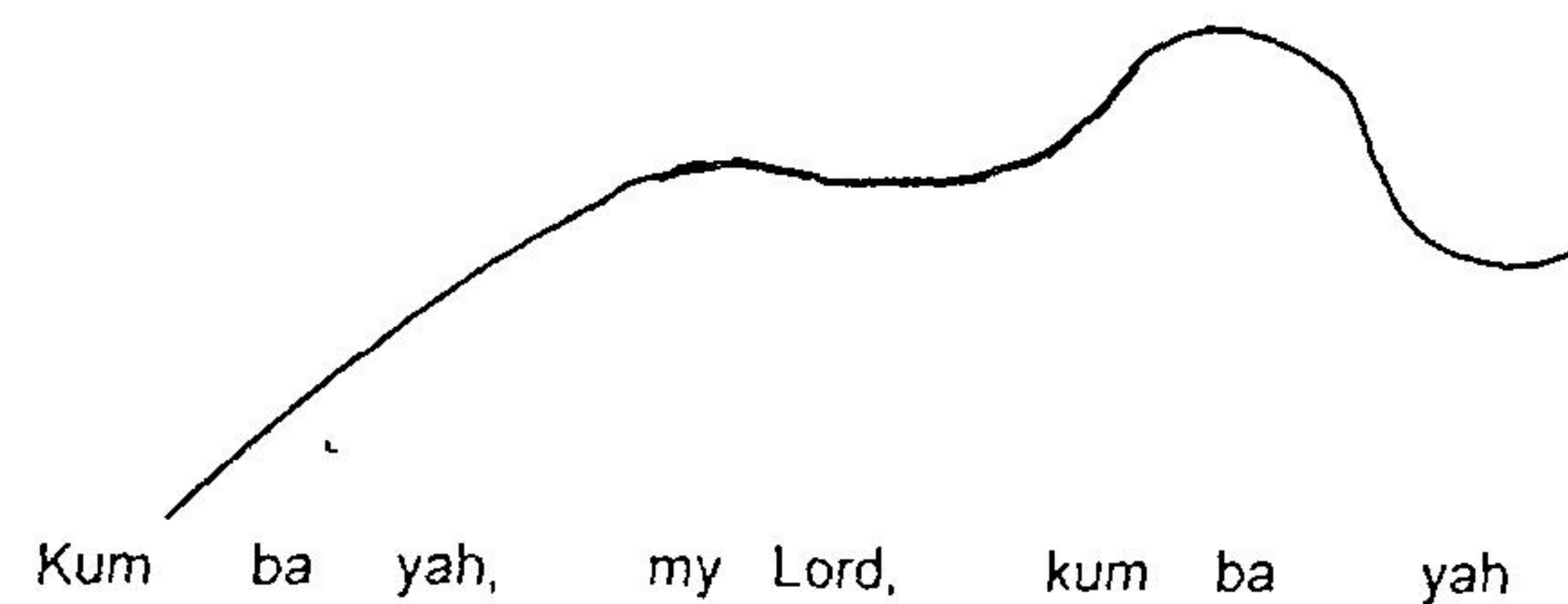
### 3.2 Pitch

Pitch can be described as the location of a sound or groups of sounds on a scale. In order to distinguish the pitch the notes can:

- move **higher** or **lower**;
- be **grouped together** to form a **melody**;
- be **consonant** or **dissonant**;
- be heard simultaneously to form **harmony**.

EG

The pitch of the song *Kum ba ya, my lord* can be portrayed as follows:



### 3.3 Timbre

Timbre, a French word, describes the **quality of tones**. Timbre is also known in English as **tone colour**.

- **Tone colour** is the distinctive sound of any instrument or voice. By distinguishing the tone colour one can, for example, categorise voices as being soprano, alto, tenor or bass.
- **Texture** refers to the relationship between a melody and other simultaneous sounding notes. Texture is often described as light, heavy, thick or thin.

EG

#### thick texture

When many instruments of an orchestra or band are playing together or when big chords are played on a piano, for example.

THIN TEXTURE  
A SOLO VOICE OR INSTRUMENT WITH PERHAPS ONE ACCOMPANYING INSTRUMENT.

### 3.4 Form

- The organisation of music into musical forms can be compared to the visual plans of construction made by architects. Form therefore refers to the **design** or **structure** of a melody. Musical forms are most successful when they are **balanced**. Most musical forms are based on the principle of **repetition** and **contrast** as described by the following example.

EG

An **AB** form structure tells you that there are two basic themes used in this composition, the one is marked **A** and the other **B**.



A B A

- Repetition and contrast

### 3.5 Loudness

Loudness is characterised by the **intensity of sound**. When variations in loudness are indicated by a composer and found in music, they are also referred to as **dynamics**. Descriptive words are often used to describe the degree of volume, **loudness or softness, of sounds**.


<b>EG</b>	<i>p (piano)</i> - soft	
	<i>f (forte)</i> - loud	
	<i>cresc. (crescendo)</i> - gradually increasing loudness	<
	<i>decresc. (decrescendo)</i> - gradually decreasing loudness	>

### 3.6 Style

We use the word style in reference to everything from clothing to cooking, cars and paintings. In music, style refers to a characteristic way of using elements and concepts. A particular way these elements are combined results in a total sound that's distinctive or unique. When you listen to the radio and identify music as rock or jazz - you are responding to style. We also refer to the musical style of a composer, country or historical period. Music styles can change from one era to another (Kamien 1988: 86). Music styles are described in further detail in Module 3, and in this course we include Art, Folk, Pop, World music and Jazz.


### 3.7 Mood

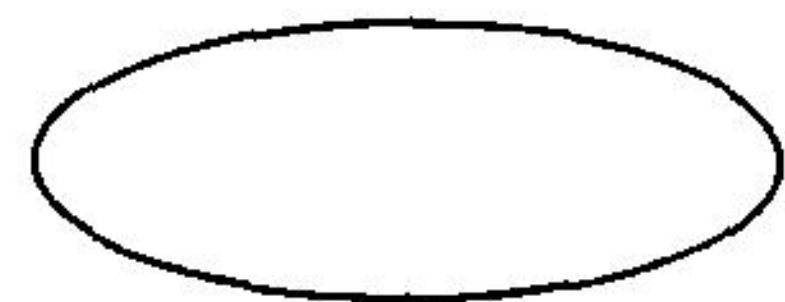
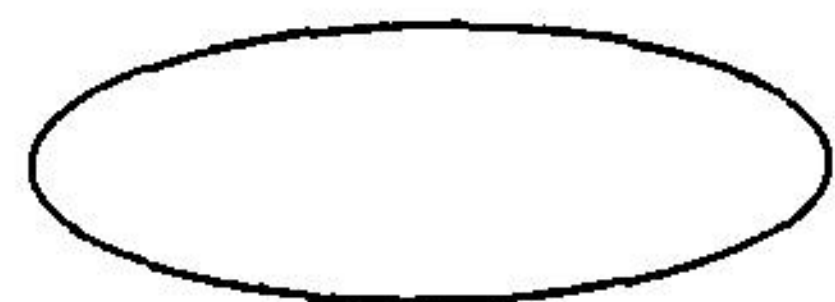
The mood of music refers to the emotional experiences involved when listening to or performing music. It can also refer to the emotion which a composer was trying to convey.

1.2		Name a piece of music that makes you feel:
* HAPPY.....	* SAD.....	
* CALM .....	* ENERGETIC.....	

Music elements and concepts form the basis of music knowledge. According to Nye & Nye (1992) concepts do not exist in reality; they represent our attempts to give order to the information perceived by our senses. The defining of concepts thus helps us to understand, explain and teach music to others.

.....

1.3  Look at the following piece of music and name the number of concepts you can distinguish.



The image shows a musical score enclosed in a rectangular box. It consists of two systems of staves. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The time signature is 4/4. The first system contains two measures of music. The second system also contains two measures of music. The notes are simple, mostly quarter and eighth notes.

