

Chapter

8

KEY WORDS

clave
concerto
exposition
fugue
heterophony
homophony
monophony
polyphony
program music
son

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this unit, the student will understand that:

1. The subject of musical texture can be divided into two broad areas: 1) the organization of music into one or more simultaneously sounding parts, including sung or played melodies, chords, and percussion; and 2) the ways in which these different parts relate to each other. Musical texture can also be categorized as thick or thin.
2. There are many varieties of musical texture found in and around the world. The kinds of musical textures that composers and performers create reflect cultural tastes and preferences. Musical texture is an important component of a culture's aesthetics.
3. Western music scholars have classified texture into four main categories: monophony, heterophony, polyphony, and homophony. While musicians and composers in other cultures may not use these terms to categorize their music, they can be used to discuss texture in all musics. Not all music falls neatly into any one of these categories; the model is meant to be flexible.

Television Program

Texture

Audio Selections

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 36. Plainchant: "Benedicamus Domino" | 34. "Kasatriyan" |
| 16. "Hifumi Hachi Gaeshi" | 41. "Kreasi Beleganjur Padma Mudra" |
| 37. "Chidori no Kyoku" | 42. Fugue in G minor, BWV 578, by J. S. Bach |
| 38. Highlander Men's Ganga | 43. "Spring" (1st Movement) from The Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi |
| 39. "The Train to Bre" | |
| 40. "Ahora Vengo Yo" | |

Texture

“ . . . something I had seen on an amateur video taken minutes after the first plane had hit the first tower stuck in my mind: it was an image of millions and millions of pieces of white paper slowly drifting down to earth. . . . memos and letters, faxes, spreadsheets and God knows what . . . all of this suggested a kind of density of texture that I wanted to capture in music . . . ”

JOHN ADAMS—COMPOSER
ON THE TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS

This chapter provides an introduction to the subject of musical texture. Texture refers to how music is organized into one or more simultaneously sounding parts and the ways in which these different parts relate to each other. Western music scholars have classi-

fied musical texture into four main categories: monophony, heterophony, polyphony, and homophony. While musicians and composers around the world don't necessarily think in these terms, they can be used as a starting point to discuss texture in all music. The chapter will examine the role of texture in several world music cultures.

The word *texture* often refers to our senses of touch and sight. We feel rough or smooth objects with our fingers. We notice the difference between silk, cotton, or wool in the clothes we wear. We see textures in our environment and in nature, such as the smoothness of snow, the craggy grandeur of rock formations, and the fluffiness of clouds. Texture can also refer to how something is made or constructed. The texture of a piece of woven cloth is created by the weaver's use and arrangement of specific threads. The size and quality of the thread in conjunction with the looseness or tightness of the weave determines the overall texture of the material.

Texture in music most clearly relates to this idea of structure and method. If we use fabric as an analogy, we can say that the weave or texture of music is created through the use of various combinations of instruments or voices, ranging from a solo voice to a large ensemble or orchestra. As in weaving, texture in music is established through the structuring of parts that exist in relationship to each other to create a whole. This structuring occurs differently from culture to culture. According to Mark Slobin, texture is an important component of musical taste and aesthetics:

Any music is a set of preferences. . . . People really have strong preferences in terms of something like texture. There are large regions where people really only like to hear one or two things happening at a time. They perhaps like to hear a really dominant sound and something accompanying it. And that's mostly what they like. There are other places where people seem to feel that's not enough or that's limited in some way. They want a really complex texture with a lot of different things going on at the same time. These are preferences. It's basically about an aesthetic. And traditionally, people have had very strong aesthetic feelings in terms of texture as much as anything else they do with their music."¹

The subject of musical texture can be divided into two broad areas: (1) the organization of music into one or more simultaneously sounding parts, including sung or played melodies, chords, and percussion and (2) the ways in which these different parts relate to each other. Since qualities that distinguish one kind of voice or instrument from another include

tone color and pitch range, texture in music is closely connected to concepts of timbre and melody.

Texture also refers to the density of sound. A symphony orchestra will have a denser, thicker sound than a string quartet or a solo violinist. In the West, music is often described as thick and full when many parts are being played together and thin or transparent when few parts are played together. Rhythm, tempo, and dynamics, the loudness or softness of music, affect how we perceive density of sound. If the music is played loudly it often seems fuller and richer; conversely, music played softly, even within a large ensemble, can feel thinner.

Dance can add an additional texture to a musical performance. The percussive rhythms of the dancer's feet in traditions as diverse as tap, clogging, Irish step dance, North Indian Kathak, and South Indian Bharata Natyam add another musical line to the overall texture of the performance.

Western music scholars have classified musical texture in ways that refer to the number of parts and to the manner in which these parts relate to each other. While musicians and composers around the world don't necessarily think in these terms, they can be used to discuss texture in all musics. The four main categories include *monophony*, *heterophony*, *polyphony*, and *homophony*. It is important to note that while these classifications suggest a model for analyzing texture in music, they are not air tight categories. Some musics will be difficult to place in any one category, while others will employ three or four within one performance.

Monophony: Music in One Part

Monophony can be defined as music in one part—a single unaccompanied line. There are many cultures that have rich monophonic musical traditions that give voice to the solo performer. By playing or singing unaccompanied, the soloist has enormous freedom in interpreting the music. Monophonic textures occur in both sacred and secular music.

Perhaps the most common form of monophony occurs as part of religious practice. Single-line chants are found in many of the world's religions, including Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Chants are not considered music in some religions, but they are melodic utterances that are meant to heighten religious experience and render speech sacred. Chants may be personal renderings of religious texts or formal performances by religious professionals, such as priests, cantors, and monks. They may be sung by a single person or in unison within a group. Chant forms range from recitations on a single tone to those that use six or seven pitches and are highly ornamented.



An example of a plainchant that uses six pitches. Notice the weight given to the first and final pitch [d] throughout the melody.

Plainchant is a tradition that comprises the earliest music of the medieval church in Europe. Plainchants were originally sung by priests, nuns, and monks as part of a fixed daily schedule of worship. Over 3000 melodies survive today, each with its own significance in the Catholic liturgy. This repertory is called “plain” because it is monophonic and without fixed rhythm. It was often called Gregorian chant after Pope Gregory (540–604) who assembled and standardized the basic chants of his time. Because many chants were composed after Pope Gregory’s lifetime, the repertory is now commonly referred to as plainsong or plainchant.

“Benedicamus Domino” (plainchant)



Here you can hear the richness of the single line of music embellished by subtle fluctuations of pitch, ornamentation, and a wide variety of playing techniques by Tomie Hahn. Such fluidity of timbre and rhythm are made possible because the music is performed by a single player.

Solo shakuhachi playing in Japan is another example in which monophony is used for spiritual expression. The shakuhachi, an endblown flute made from bamboo, is traditionally linked to Zen Buddhist philosophy and aesthetics. The main solo repertoire for the shakuhachi comes from the wandering monks of the Tokugawa period (1600–1867). Pieces are played slowly in a free rhythm that is influenced by the breath of the player. Great changes in dynamics and tone color—within the piece as a whole and within a single phrase—are characteristic of the playing style.

Monophonic textures are also found in many secular music traditions around the world. What these traditions have in common is the power of the solo singer or instrumentalist to convey a message, whether in the home or in the concert hall. Unaccompanied solo song forms are found in every corner of the globe, ranging from lullabies to laments to ballads. In Ireland, solo instrumentalists play slow airs derived from the rich unaccompanied song traditions in both the English and Irish languages.

Heterophony: Variations on a Single Musical Line

Heterophony occurs when two or more musicians simultaneously sing or play the same melody in different ways. These differences can range from small discrepancies in unison singing—such as in a church congregation—to more pronounced variations in ornamentation or rhythm. According to ethnomusicologist David Reck, heterophony “is the weaving of melodic strands around a single core of a melody; it is melody-based

(rather than harmonically-based) and its strands, happening simultaneously, all relate to the central melody in some way: they may be variations of it, they may ornament it, they may scan or punctuate its important notes.² Heterophonic textures are found in many musical traditions in Asia, The Middle East, and Europe.

A good example of a heterophonic texture can be found in the performance of traditional Irish dance music. The tunes found in the repertory consist of melodies that are played solo or in unison. These tunes are usually in two sections that are both repeated during performance. Each tune is played over and over again before musicians switch to another. While there are formal parameters of each tune that make it recognizable, musicians usually have their own slightly different versions. These different renditions occur because the music is usually learned orally and passed along from musician to musician.

As discussed in Chapter 6, many players pride themselves on never playing a tune exactly the same way twice in performance. Therefore, when musicians get together in a playing session, there will always be slight variations in the playing of a single tune. These variations include differences in ornamentation and in melodic contour. Other differences in playing occur simply because each instrument has its own characteristic playing techniques, fingerings, and sound.

Irish traditional music often takes place in an informal social setting, such as in a pub or in a living room. The communal setting for the music is reflected in the playing style. However, while all the musicians agree to play essentially the same thing at the same time, there is still enormous scope for individuality. Musicians really listen to each other and value different versions of a tune or the melodic variations that spontaneously occur within a session. Players often ask each other where they learned a specific tune and there is enormous interest taken in how and from whom individuals acquired their repertory. The heterophonic textures that occur within the informal group playing demonstrate the respect musicians have for a common shared repertory and for individual expression. Spontaneity and the acquisition of a deep knowledge of the tune tradition are both considered essential qualities for a good player.

Heterophony can also occur on a more formal level in ensemble playing. For example, when the Japanese shakuhachi is used as an ensemble instrument combined with voice and koto, a thirteen-stringed zither with movable bridges, the resultant texture is heterophonic. While voice and instruments follow a single melodic line, slight variations in melody and rhythm occur because of specific playing or singing techniques.



The koto plays essentially the same melodic line as the shakuhachi, but follows slightly later. The shakuhachi player (Tomie Hahn) and koto player (Masayo Ishigure) also play different ornaments around a single note and move at times in slightly different rhythms. While these variations do occur among the two parts, there is always an evident central melody.



▲ Tomie Hahn playing the shakuhachi with Masayo Ishigure playing the koto.

Polyphony: Multi-Part Music

The term polyphony is generally used to describe any multi-part musical tradition, and examples of rhythmic polyphony, melodic polyphony, and a combination of the two can be found around the world. Polyphony results when two or more lines of music are played or sung simultaneously. Music with a polyphonic texture can create a rich layering of sound.

In much polyphonic music there is often a fluctuation in the density of parts during a piece or performance. As in the case of a

round or canon, one sung or played part will enter alone followed by other parts entering at prescribed intervals. A round, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” is a strictly imitative form—all the parts imitate the first one. At its most complex, after all the parts have come in, there will be a dense polyphonic texture. As the piece nears conclusion, the texture will thin again as one part at a time drops out until only a single part is left.

Ganga, a popular type of song performed throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, is another example of a polyphonic genre that changes density within performance. As discussed in Chapter 1, ganga singing occurs in either men’s or women’s groups that usually form at an early age and con-

Notation of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”

Row, row, row your boat gent-ly down the stream. Mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, life is but a

Row, row, row your boat gent-ly down the stream. Mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly,

Row, row, row your boat gent-ly down the

Row, row,

dream.

mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, life is but a dream.

stream. Mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, life is but a dream.

row yourboat gent-ly down the stream. Mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, mer-ri-ly, life is but a dream.

tinue well into adulthood. The nature of the close part singing, involving drones (long sustained notes on a single pitch), adjacent intervals, and accompanying patterns of vocal fluctuations called “cutting,” creates a loud, powerful sound that is well suited to the mountainous environment. The metaphors used by singers to describe the texture of their singing reflect both the close-knit unit of the village and the social ideals of power and strength.

The term polyphony has a specific meaning in Western classical music, describing much of the multi-part music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance in which all the sung or played parts are of equal importance. Each part functions as an independent entity providing approximately the same amount of interest. The compositional technique of writing a polyphonic texture that has two or more simultaneously sounding melodies is called counterpoint, although the two terms are often used as synonyms. Imitative counterpoint is a common form of Renaissance polyphony in which each independent melodic line in a composition enters at staggered intervals with the same theme as the first.

Composers after the Renaissance and to the present day continue to employ polyphony in their music. While some genres, such as the Baroque *fugue*, are completely polyphonic, other multi-part musical genres feature contrasting textures even within a single movement. Examples of polyphony in European art music will be explored later in the chapter and in the next chapter.

Homophony: Multi-Part Music with One Dominant Part

A piece of music with multiple parts in which one voice affirms the principal part and the remaining voices serve as accompaniment is called homophonic. In general terms, homophony is a form of polyphony in which one or more simultaneously occurring parts function as a support for a dominant part. In Irish traditional music, for example, the addition of a chordal guitar accompaniment makes the overall texture homophonic, although the melody players may be creating a heterophonic texture between themselves. The dance tune stands out as the dominant part backed up by the chordal support from the guitar.

Most music in the Euro-American classical and popular repertoires has a homophonic texture. Composers in eighteenth-century Europe, including Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, developed the use of homophony by strong memorable melodies supported by straightforward harmonic accompaniments. Twentieth-century popular musics,



One man sings the first phrase, followed by the other singers in parts. The vocal lines are extremely close together, sometimes only a minor second apart. The parts all rise at the end of the phrase in a kind of whoop followed by a pause. The first singer then comes in again to begin the next part of the song.



In this piece written by Stan Scott, Scott sings the dominant melodic line while playing a chordal guitar accompaniment. The melodic line is also supported by counter melodies played on the fiddle by Becky Tracy and alto recorder by Dora Hast. During the instrumental break, both fiddle and recorder begin by playing the melody in unison supported by the guitar; in the second half, the recorder plays a counter melody while the fiddle continues playing the melody.

including show tunes, country, and rock also have, for the most part, a dominant melody line supported by chordal and percussion accompaniment. Homophony also plays an important role in church music: Protestant hymns have a prevalent texture in which the hymn melody, usually found in the soprano part, is supported by the alto, tenor, and bass lines.

When considering music cultures around the world, such a definition creates complications if indigenous concepts of polyphony and homophony don't exist within the specific culture. For example, while most West African drumming traditions can be considered polyphonic because of the many layers of interlocking percussion parts, the lead or master drummer's improvisations on top of the other parts could be viewed as creating a kind of homophonic texture. We look to indigenous musicians for clues and find that the improvised line may not be considered the most important. Among the Ewe in Ghana, for example, the repetitive bell part is considered the glue holding all the other parts together.³ Therefore, it is important to understand the flexibility and limitations of these Western-imposed categories in analyzing music from other parts of the world.

In considering homophony in the West, the dominant line is always melodic. This part can be supported by counter melodies, chords, and percussion.

We will now take a more detailed look at the role of texture in several musical cultures from around the world.

TRINIDAD: THE STEEL BAND

Originally created in the urban ghettos of Trinidad, the steel band has now become an important symbol of national identity on the island. The spectacular annual *Panorama* competitions held at Carnival time attract bands from all over the island and spectators from all over the world. Bands are also found throughout the Caribbean, as well as in Great Britain, the United States, and in parts of South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. The instruments have been used in music education in England since the 1970s, and more recently, in schools and universities in America.

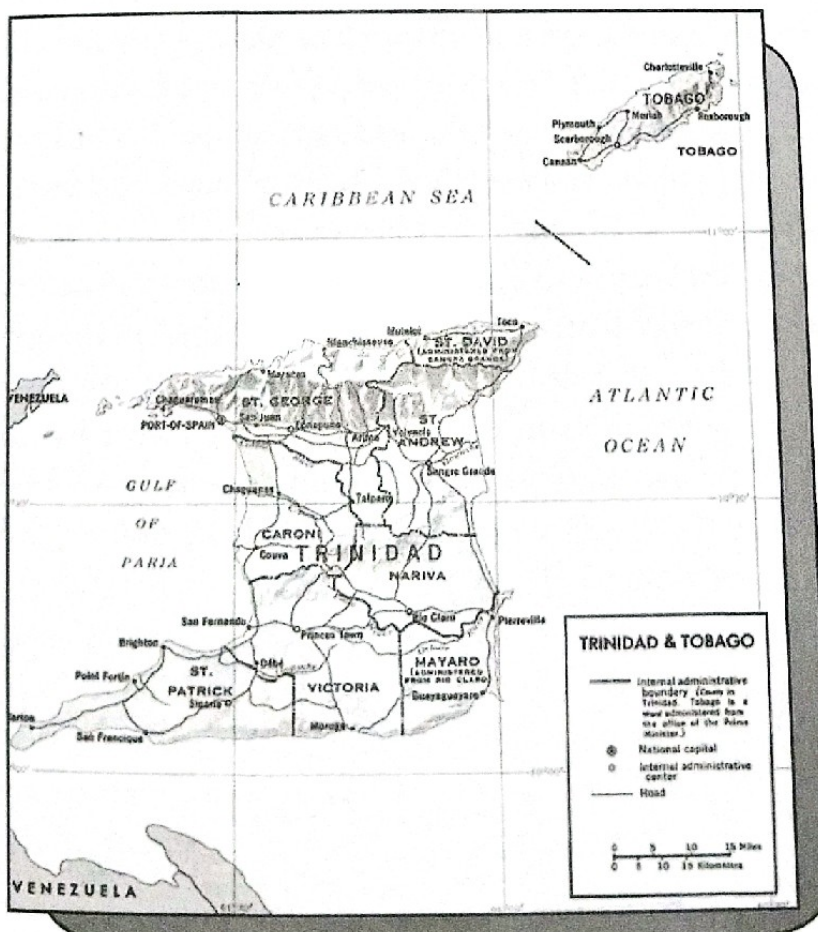
The versatility, range, and sonority of the instruments and the rich texture of the ensemble have inspired composers and arrangers to orchestrate all kinds of music for the steel band. While the most popular tunes are arrangements of indigenous calypso songs, repertoire ranges from pan-Latin dance musics to Western classical music. Texture plays a vital role in the music because of the similar sonorities of the steel drums or pans. While the instruments have different pitch ranges, they all have a similar tone

color. Therefore, arrangers make great use of texture in order to create contrast, vitality, and excitement.

The most common and predominant texture for steel band music is homophonic—a dominant melody played on the lead instruments supported by many underlying parts, including a rhythm section. Because so many different genres of music are represented in the steel band repertoire, there are also arrangements of monophonic and polyphonic pieces, as well as compositions that includes all three textures within one piece.

History of the Steel Band

The name “Trinidad” is often used to refer to both Trinidad and Tobago, two islands in the southeast Caribbean, seven miles off the coast of Venezuela. They were settled in the 1500s by the Spanish; by the end of the eighteenth century, French landowners from other islands came in large numbers bringing their slaves with them. The two islands were subsequently under British rule from 1797–1962. Today there is a rich layering and blending of social and cultural traditions. The history of settlement on Trinidad—both through forced and voluntary immigration—make it one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse places in the world.⁴



The history of the steel band is linked to the history of Carnival in Port of Spain, Trinidad. This festival, which has become the largest of its kind in the Caribbean, took on special significance after the abolishment of slavery in 1834. Originally of French Catholic origin, Carnival had previously been a holiday celebrated by the ruling class during the period immediately before Lent. It was a time for boundary crossing and inversions of the social order, marked by masquerade balls, dancing, and promenading.

After emancipation, Carnival became an important venue for Afro-Trinidadian expressive culture—a lively and often disorderly event featuring “cannes brulees” (cane burning), torch light processions, stick fighting, masquerades, singing, loud drumming, and occasional outbreaks of street fighting. In the 1850s and 1860s, the British attempted to suppress what they considered the subversive and unlawful activities at Carnival by banning processions. The government enacted further legislation in 1884 that effectively banned drumming on the island. This restriction on the use of drums is thought to have gradually led to the development of the steel band.

As Carnival continued to exert a strong influence on Afro-Trinidadian culture, musicians were forced to find other means for making music. *Tamboo-bamboo* bands formed in which musicians used hollowed-out bamboo sticks of various lengths to produce sounds. The bamboo sticks were either struck together or against the ground to produce various pitches. Bottles and spoons were also used to produce higher pitches and rhythmic accompaniment. Soon musicians began to add further accompaniment in the form of discarded metal objects and containers, such as metal buckets, paint cans, dust bins, brake drums, frying pans, and pitch oil pans. By the early 1930s, metal instruments became more and more dominant in the tamboo-bamboo bands. This preference for metal sounds finally resulted in the appearance of an all-steel band in 1937 that was an instant hit at Carnival.⁵

A series of innovations in the late 1930s and 1940s led to the twin discoveries that a single piece of metal could be bent to produce multiple pitches and that fifty-five gallon oil barrels could be used to make beautiful sounding instruments. These barrels were plentiful and free, discards of the oil companies in Trinidad. The instruments were soon called steel drums or pans, and were cut from the barrels into different sizes, each capable of producing more than one pitch. The first pans were worn around the necks of the performers, but by 1960, pans were placed on movable stands that enabled musicians to play larger instruments and more than one at a time.

The Steel Band Today

The contemporary conventional steel band consists of a wide variety of pans in different sizes. Instrument making and tuning has become a respected art demanding special skills. Fierce competitions between bands have led both to innovative instrument construction and a lack of standardized tuning from band to band. Instruments are made in five steps:

1. The head of the instrument is pounded into a concave shape.
2. The position of each note is marked on the head by a steel punch.
3. The metal is tempered by heat.
4. The drum barrel is cut to the required length.
5. The instrument is tuned.

Conventional steel bands may employ over one hundred and twenty musicians using up to three hundred different instruments. The whole group is divided into major sections for each size pan in the steel drum family, ranging from high to low. The highest instrument is called the *lead* or *tenor* and is capable of producing up to thirty-two different pitches. It plays the melody in approximately the soprano range. This melody is supported in various ways by the rest of the ensemble creating a thick homophonic texture.

The double tenor is a set of two drums slightly larger than the tenor and used to play harmony. Other pans are used primarily to play rhythm, including the second and the double second pans. The guitar pan consists of two drums that are used to play strumming patterns. It is approximately fourteen to sixteen inches in depth as compared to the tenor which is about six inches in depth. The cello pan is in the tenor voice range and is played in sets of three.

The largest instruments in the ensemble are the bass pans that consist of full-size oil drums. These pans are played in sets of six or nine. Each



◀ Trinidadian Steel Band

instrument has a range of two to four notes and is arranged on a stand either vertically or horizontally. These instruments provide the underlying harmonic structure in the form of bass lines.

In addition to the pans, the steel band usually includes an "engine room," a rhythm section made up of drum set, conga, bongos, maracas, and a piece of heavy iron (often a brake drum). The iron keeps the pulse for the whole group; its loud sound cuts through the entire band. The interlocking patterns of the skin drums and hand-held percussion instruments create a dense and vibrant underlying texture for the ensemble, as well as providing a variety of different tone colors. The engine room musicians may take solos at various points in the overall performance of a composition.

When all these instruments are put together, the overall musical texture is rich and complex. The sound of over one hundred instrumentalists playing steel drums in combination with other percussion instruments is powerful, exuberant, and festive. With the emergence of women players in the 1970s, the formation of school bands, and the presence of at least fifty large adults bands on the islands, the steel band movement has become a vital national art form in Trinidad. Through recordings, performances, emigration, and the creation of new bands, the steel band tradition has also extended far beyond the borders of Trinidad.

LATIN AMERICA: SALSA

Is New York City part of Latin America? It is if the subject is *salsa* music, which developed among Nuyoricans (New Yorkers of Puerto Rican descent), immigrants from Cuba and other parts of Central and South America, and American jazz musicians in the mid-twentieth century. This hybrid genre was initially referred to in the United States just as "Latin music"; but in the 1960s its cultural context was changing, and its name changed accordingly.

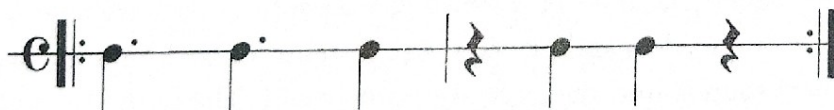
Salsa literally just means sauce, but its usual meaning—hot sauce—already carried the metaphoric connotation of invigorating Latino spices, in music as well as in cuisine. Responding to the increasing pride in Latino identity in the New York *barrio*, the Spanish-speaking part of the city, salsa became a vibrant, celebratory music of cultural empowerment and affirmation.

The genre has disseminated all over Central America and parts of South America, making it almost a "Pan-Latino" music. And now it can be heard in many other parts of the world as well, from Europe to Africa to East Asia.



Salsa derives largely from the Cuban *son*, a genre founded on a basic form called *largo-montuno*—a brief song followed by an extended vocal call-and-response section over characteristic harmonic and rhythmic ostinatos—and a core rhythm known as *clave*. Like the rumba *clave* rhythms discussed in Chapter 5, the *son* *clave* has two parts, one with three accents and one with two; a given piece can begin with either part, yielding a “three-two” or “two-three” *clave*.

Clave Rhythmic Cycle (two versions)



OR



This rhythm is characteristically played on its namesake wooden sticks, though in practice it can be produced on just about anything from clapping hands to a spoon tapping on an empty bottle.

In the 1940s, *son* was evolving in New York City from a relatively informal collective music into a carefully organized ensemble music with arrangements influenced by big-band jazz. The montuno section featured extended vocal and instrumental improvisations, the latter again drawing on certain jazz practices, as well as composed instrumental sections.

The fundamental *clave* rhythm started to become something felt rather than explicitly heard, as it was adorned with more and more layers of rhythmic improvisation and sometimes not played at all. Off-beat bass parts, combined with a rhythmic basis which often existed only in the players' minds, produced an infectious danceable music to those who understood, consciously or not, the implicit *clave* cycle. Outsiders, by contrast, could be so dazzled by all the syncopation that they couldn't find "the beat"; even the great jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie confessed to occasional rhythmic disorientation when jamming with Cuban musicians. Already this was a new, dynamic music which lent itself to a kind of ethnic pride: if you didn't have the *clave*, which literally means "key," you couldn't get inside.

Cuba had long been a source of inspiration for many Caribbean musicians, and when the island became politically and economically isolated following Fidel Castro's revolution, New York City became an important international center for Cuban music. And Latino circumstances and perceptions there were changing: the rise of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s inspired young Latinos in the *barrio* to strive for more social and political power, and to embrace and honor their ethnic identities. The evolution of Cuban music in New York became a revolution, as a wave of musical creativity was unleashed by these cultural developments.

Young Nuyoricans, immigrants from other Latino cultures, such as those of Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, and even some non-Latinos brought ideas and practices from their own backgrounds, pouring many new sounds into the *largo-montuno* mold. The term "Latin music" sounded old-fashioned, and the music was no longer strictly Cuban; *salsa* arose as a term for this new musical aggregate, pushed to a certain extent by recording and performing venues, and it stuck.

Some salsa devotees feel that the music has gone into a creative decline since the more socially-conscious days of the 1960s and 1970s. Others point to the persistence of serious-minded songwriting among some *salseros* and recent cross-fertilizations with rap and other musics as evidence that salsa is still vigorous and relevant in people's lives. Any popular mu-

sic, they argue, develops a bland, predictable side as some musicians and entrepreneurs seek the broadest possible commercial base. But whether it is serving as a force for Latino identity and expression or just as excellent dance music, salsa is currently thriving throughout and well beyond the world of Latino culture.

Texture in Salsa

Generally, a salsa group can be described as comprising three subgroups, similar to those of big-band jazz: the rhythm section, which supplies rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment; the horn section, which plays composed segments and provides improvising soloists; and the vocal section, usually a soloist and at least two backing vocalists, known as the *coro*. Some of the vocalists may also play hand-held percussion instruments. A typical band consists of ten to fourteen people.⁶

The rhythm section includes piano and bass, either of which may temporarily move to the foreground for an improvised solo, as well as certain important percussion instruments: congas (a pair of tall standing drums), timbales (a pair of shallower drums on a stand plus two cowbells and often a suspended cymbal, the whole resembling an abbreviated drum set), bongos (a pair of small drums held between the seated player's legs), and often another cowbell and maracas (shakers) which might be played by one of the vocalists.

Some rhythm sections include the *tres* or *quatro*, a kind of small guitar with three or four unison pairs of strings, in addition to or instead of the piano. The horn section most often includes one or more trumpets and trombones; less often, a saxophone, flute, or violin might be part of this section. These sections, and their various members, create changing textures which delineate the formal structures of the overall performance. Overall, salsa texture would be described as homophonic, although the music always involves a richly polyrhythmic accompaniment.

For example, in "Ahora Vengo Yo" by Ricardo Ray and Bobby Cruz, at the beginning the audience is already clapping the clave cycle. The piano and bass start up a melodic theme which will return at various times throughout the performance, and they are joined by the rest of the rhythm section. After a trumpet solo, the largo section begins: a short song in which the singer humorously complains that people in Puerto Rico criticized him for being in New York, but then failed to welcome him when he returned. The montuno section begins as the singer launches into an *inspiración*, improvising phrases about the good life in Puerto Rico—bask-



"Ahora Vengo Yo" performed by The Fania All-Stars.

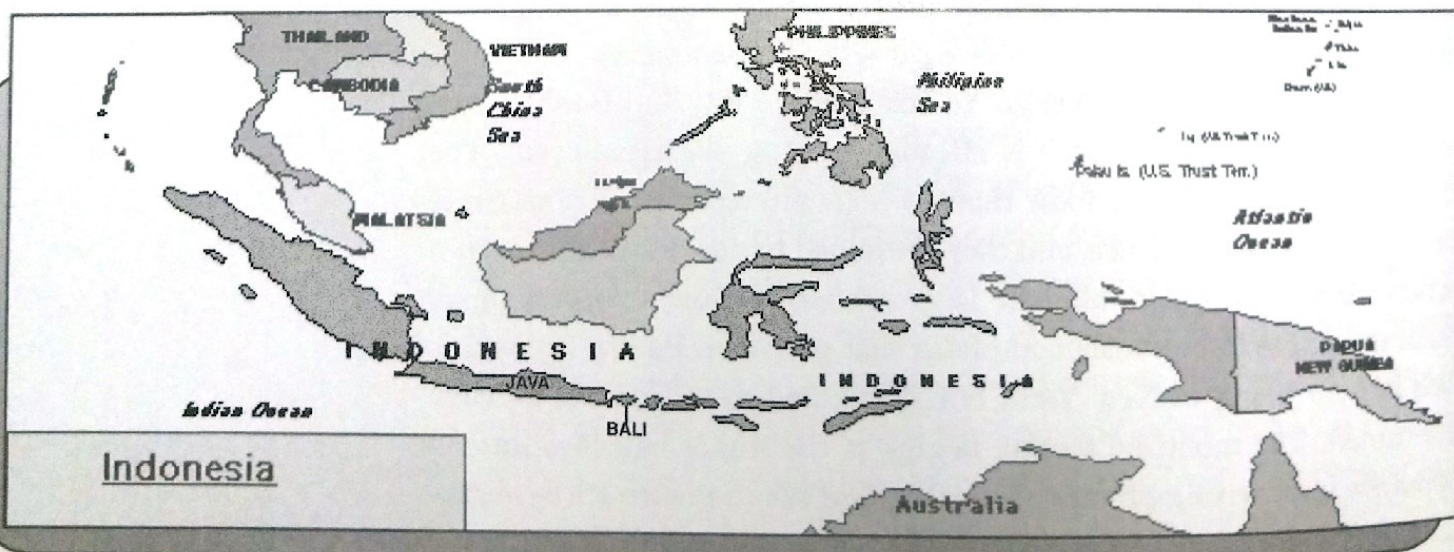
ing in the sun, drinking rum, enjoying the gentle breezes and fine music—as well as extolling his situation in New York by praising the band and the dancers.

Rhythmically polyphonic textures like those of salsa are considered ideal for dancing in many cultures. In such ensembles each member performs a distinct role, resulting in a texture which metaphorically affirms social unity while valuing individuality, as does the highly structured yet personally nuanced dancing that often goes with polyrhythmic music. Certainly this is true of salsa musicians and dancers, who respect each other's abilities to express their personalities and aesthetics within standardized systems. And even if it is felt inwardly rather than sounded outwardly, the clave is the foundation that supports all participants, the single most essential element of salsa texture.

INDONESIA: THE CENTRAL JAVANESE GAMELAN

"Unity in Diversity" is the hopeful motto of the Republic of Indonesia, which comprises thousands of populated islands between Australia and mainland Southeast Asia. Java is not the largest of these islands, but it is the seat of political and economic power. Still, its cultural dominance is limited: numerous cultures and peoples—with over two hundred distinct languages—thrive on these islands, united by some similarities and distinguished by many differences.

One general term used in various parts of Indonesia is *gamelan*, which might be translated as "musical ensemble." Such ensembles involve sets of instruments tuned to each other, and not to any standard "objective"



pitch, like Western instruments. These instruments might be made of bronze, bamboo, wood, or other materials, and often a gamelan includes more than one kind of instrumental set. One very widespread instrument type is the *gong*—an Indonesian word which refers to a hanging metal disk with a knob in the center; when this knob is struck, the gong resonates with a clear pitch, unlike the flat-surfaced “gongs” commonly found among Western percussion instruments.

Within each type of gamelan, particular kinds of instruments play particular textural roles; usually there is some kind of basic melody, played by certain types of instruments in unison or octaves, while other types play various formulaic elaborations or countermelodies, and still others provide punctuating accompaniment. Some kinds of gamelan also include singers. A gamelan may be considered a living being: it may have a name and the instruments are given the same kinds of respectful treatment accorded to people, such as never stepping over an instrument, or otherwise exposing the soles of one's feet to it.

Central Javanese gamelan is generally found in and around the aristocratic cities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, roughly in the middle of the island. Whether it is played by esteemed professionals at royal courts and music schools, or by villagers who come together at the end of a working day for pleasure and community service, the music is considered auspicious. Certain types of gamelan are strictly used for ceremonial purposes; others may function primarily as a component of various kinds of theater/dance forms, including the very popular shadow-puppet theater, or as an accompaniment to social events.

Traditionally, there is no such thing as a gamelan “concert,” in the Western sense of a formal presentation before a silent audience. Gamelan performances, with or without theater or dance, often take place in an open pavilion, making it possible for some people to come closer to listen and watch, while others might remain at more of a distance to socialize, smoke, or eat while they enjoy the event.

Most pieces in the large repertory of Central Javanese gamelan date from antiquity, and are not identified with a composer's name. However, in the twentieth century several Javanese gamelan musicians have begun to compose new pieces, sometimes involving innovative formal structures, techniques, and textures. Certain Western composers have also taken an interest in creating new music for gamelan, and some Western groups, such as New York City's Gamelan Son of Lion, are devoted to playing new music on Central Javanese gamelan instruments.

Western institutional ethnomusicology and world music programs have brought whole sets of instruments from Indonesia, along with expert teachers, and the number of Western players of this music is growing. In some cases, "town gamelans" have arisen in Britain and the United States. Gamelan—perhaps especially Central Javanese gamelan—is starting to become a worldwide phenomenon. Such developments are alarming to some lovers of this music, who decry the abandonment of traditional practices and performance contexts in favor of more modern ones. But at the moment it appears that recent developments in the gamelan world have not supplanted the older usages, which continue to create power and meaning within the culture of Central Java.

Texture in Central Javanese Gamelan

Central Javanese gamelan music may generally be described as polyphonic, though there is more to its texture than a single word can encompass. In various instances, the texture may be thought of as comprising simultaneous layers of homophony, heterophony, homophony, and polyphony. At other times—particularly in the ever-changing music which accompanies shadow-puppet performances—textures may alter dramatically, from the solo singing of the puppeteer accompanied by a single instrument to the full, throbbing sonorities which underscore battle scenes.

The repertory involves two basic playing styles, often referred to as "loud" and "soft." In both styles the central melody, or *balungan*, is played mainly by one-octave keyed metal instruments. Other instruments create elaborations of the *balungan*, and various kinds of gongs are struck to punctuate specific points in the overall form. Each section of a piece ends with a stroke on the *gong ageng*, the lowest-pitched instrument in the ensemble. The "loud" playing style involves only metal instruments, with the exception of the *kendang* drum which leads the tempo. This style can be considered homophonic because it involves one melody with accompanying parts; it can also be considered heterophonic because different instruments play the melody in different ways.

"Soft style" pieces involve further melodic layers, resulting in a polyphonic texture. A group of male singers may sing a unison melody; sometimes men and women sing together in octaves. A countermelody to the *balungan* is played on the *rebab* (a two-stringed spike fiddle), and formulaically elaborated by a solo female vocalist and certain "soft-playing" instruments such as the wooden-keyed *gambang*, the *gender* with bronze keys suspended over resonators, and the bamboo *suling* flute. This overall texture can be altered in dynamics and density: for example, on a signal

from the *kendang* the *balungan* and punctuating instruments may gradually slow down and settle into a more deliberate tempo, playing more softly, while the “soft playing” instruments play more quickly, filling the pauses between *balungan* pitches with more elaborate melodic figurations and playing a more prominent role in the ensemble sound.

Although most of the instruments in a Central Javanese gamelan are played throughout a piece’s duration, various kinds of formalized adjustments can cause subtle changes in overall timbre and texture, contributing to a sense of flow and timelessness which is never static. To one who knows the tradition well, there are many levels of musical communication to relish. And to the many who are not familiar with such concerns, the music of the gamelan still provides the inspirational experience of a complex and beautiful musical texture, imbued with auspicious spiritual power.



Kasatriyan is an example of the “soft” playing style of Central Javanese gamelan.

INDONESIA: BALINESE GAMELAN BELEGANJUR

The relatively small island of Bali is home to a dazzling array of artistic practices, and music is no exception. Though many of their instruments are structurally similar to those of Java, which lies just to the west, the Balinese create very different musical textures with them. From the dynamic, lightning-fast music of the *gamelan gong kebyar* to the stately, haunting flutes of *gamelan gambuh*, the world of Balinese music is one of kaleidoscopic variety.

In Bali, music is seldom a profession in itself, nor is it a solitary avocation; rather, it is a community undertaking. Often the center of such activities is the *banjar*, a community organization with a meeting hall



◀ A Central Javanese Gamelan in the United States (Wesleyan University)

Photo: Michael Bakur



▲ Kreasi Beleganjur

which houses musical instruments and provides rehearsal space. Many other community activities are supported by the banjar as well, all of which involve the kind of group collaboration which is highly valued in Bali. Here music is not just pleasing sound—it is also a public affirmation of social values like cooperation, responsibility, and hard personal work toward a collective achievement.

One of the many types of gamelan which might be supported by a local banjar is *gamelan beleganjur*, which could be translated as “gamelan of walking warriors.” The name points both to the fact that

this is a processional music, and to one of its earliest functions: accompanying warriors into battle. With its thundering drums and gongs, and the vibrant resonance of gong-chimes and cymbals, beleganjur inspired soldiers while terrifying their enemies.

Gamelan beleganjur has also long been used for various rituals: accompanying processions bearing offerings for temples or cremation towers for funerals, aiding in exorcistic purification rites, and so on. It is perhaps the most widespread form of gamelan in Bali, and is considered crucial for many religious functions. Unlike the many kinds of Balinese gamelan that are intended for aesthetic enjoyment or used as accompaniment for theater and dance performances—forms that often involve many changes of musical texture, tempo, and mood—traditional beleganjur provides a constant pulse of multileveled, exuberant concord. Through various signals, the lead drummer can adjust the tempo or signal an invigorating outburst of drums and cymbals, but in general the texture remains unchanged, an ever-flowing river of sonorous energy.

Less is known about the history of beleganjur than other Balinese genres, but it appears that the basic formal, structural, and textural aspects of the music have not undergone radical transformation until recently, when a new context prompted the development of a new style.

In 1986, a beleganjur contest was announced as part of an annual festival in Denpasar, Bali’s capital city, commemorating Bali’s illustrious past. Notices were sent out to all the local banjars, stating that entrants would be judged on the extent to which their performance embodied youthful, heroic masculine energy. They were also encouraged to include movement or choreography, and to arrange their music with changing sections of differing character, showcasing virtuosity. Following the success of that event,

beleganjur contests sprang up all over Bali. The resulting presentational "contest style," *kreasi beleganjur* quickly became immensely popular among young Balinese men, often to the neglect of the older ritual-oriented style of performance.

To the chagrin of some older Balinese, *kreasi beleganjur* is now performed on many ritual occasions, in what they see as an unacceptable incongruity between flashy presentational music and sacred devotional practice. Others feel that the good results of getting young people excited about indigenous music outweigh any imagined offenses; Balinese arts, they argue, have accommodated new influences throughout history, ensuring a constant flow of creativity.

There are controversies within the *kreasi beleganjur* world as well. The combination of movement/choreography with an ideal of youthful masculine energy has led to some very sassy dancing; sometimes proprietary boundaries are broached, as when an otherwise outstanding group was demoted by judges for their "pornographic" presentation. It appears that some contest results have been politically tainted, with rewards going to the banjars of districts which supported incumbent politicians. And the vitality and presentationality of *kreasi beleganjur* make it a prime target for jingoistic exploitation by both the tourist industry and political propagandists.

Perhaps the most controversial development of all is the emergence of women's beleganjur groups. While the Hindu-Balinese religion does not explicitly ban women from any artistic activity, beleganjur's categorical identification with masculine energies makes it impossible for some Balinese to accept the idea of female involvement. Yet this development is directly in line with Indonesia's prevalent political agenda of modernity, which includes a mandate for the "emancipation" of women. As the American ethnomusicologist Michael Bakan put it, "the act of women playing beleganjur is defiantly un-Balinese, yet quintessentially Indonesian."⁷

But women's beleganjur is not necessarily just politically motivated. "Since childhood, I had a feeling I really wanted to play [beleganjur] music," one woman told Bakan. "I saw the boys playing and I thought, 'I really want to try.' But initially the head of the village didn't allow it." Now some banjars proudly support women's beleganjur groups, despite the uneasiness such activities cause to more conservative Balinese. As Bakan noted, this ancient music of "walking warriors" now flourishes on battlegrounds of culture.

Texture in Gamelan Beleganjur

The standard beleganjur group involves twenty-nine people: twenty-one musicians and eight gong-carriers. The instruments fall into four general categories: drums, cymbals, gongs, and gong-chimes—small hand-held gongs. Each of the gong-chime players plays only one pitch, and their interlocking patterns create a four-pitch *reyong* ornamentation based on the two-pitch *ponggang* melody.

The result is undoubtedly a good texture for rhythmic walking: full and lively, with a strong marching beat provided by the drums and punctuating instruments. Beleganjur's texture also makes it an appropriate accompaniment for sacred rituals. Its tumultuous resonances, overlapping and pulsating with power, fend off evil or meddlesome spirits, while its jagged cross-rhythms confuse demons, who can only move in straight lines. At the same time, its throbbing energy inspires ritual participants, even aiding the souls of the deceased on their perilous journeys in the afterlife.

Gamelan Beleganjur: Gong-Chime Parts

The musical score for 'Gamelan Beleganjur: Gong-Chime Parts' is presented in three systems. The first system, labeled 'reyong', consists of four staves showing an interlocking pattern of eighth notes. The second system, labeled 'ponggang', consists of two staves showing a melody of quarter notes. The third system, labeled 'result', consists of a single staff showing the combined effect of the previous parts, resulting in a continuous eighth-note pattern. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.



TEXTURE IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

The beginning of a performance of *kreasi beleganjur*. Notice that various rhythmic patterns are played just by the cymbals and drums before the gong-chime parts enter.

There are many different textural possibilities within the Western classical tradition. Composers have written instrumental and vocal music for many kinds and sizes of ensembles, ranging from a solo singer or instrumentalist to a symphony orchestra. But while there are many possibilities for orchestration, the prevalent texture in the music is polyphonic

and homophonic. Monophony exists in the European tradition, both in unaccompanied instrumental and vocal pieces and in the large body of plainchant melodies dating back to the Middle Ages. But more often, composers have used monophonic textures as contrast within compositions that have a prevailing homophonic texture.

The prevalent texture in classical music up to 1600 was polyphony. The melodic lines of Renaissance polyphonic music were considered to have equal weight. Each musical part was an independent entity, rhythmically and melodically whole. Around the end of the sixteenth century composers began to think more vertically—using chords and harmonies to support a dominant melody. Homophonic textures in music were developed during the Baroque and Classical eras. The history of these developments in musical texture will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Homophony and Polyphony in Baroque Music: Fugue and Concerto

Although homophony was explored in the Baroque era, composers continued to use polyphonic textures. *Fugues*, one of the most important forms developed in this period, are imitative polyphonic compositions usually built on a single theme. They were often written as single movement works for keyboard instruments. The basic structure of all fugues follows a similar pattern that begins with the exposition—the section in which the theme, called the subject, is “exposed” at staggered intervals in all the voices. The subject is announced first in a single voice, then it appears in the second voice while the first continues with new melodic material. This process goes on until all the voices (usually three or four) have stated the theme in its entirety.

After the exposition, the subject will be stated again at various intervals in each of the voices. Passages called episodes appear in between; usually the music in the episodes is derived from the original theme. The fugue develops by the alternation of theme and episodes in all the voices.

In many other instrumental compositions of the Baroque period, composers used a basically homophonic texture, but employed polyphony as a contrasting within the single piece. The concerto and concerto grosso, the most important orchestral genres of the Baroque, provide many examples.

The Baroque concerto was scored for one solo instrument with orchestra, while the concerto grosso was written for a small group of soloists with orchestra. Both genres typically consisted of three movements of



Johann Sebastian Bach's Organ Fugue in G minor BWV 578 is an excellent and clear example of a four voice fugue.

[Additional listening information is at the end of the chapter.]

contrasting mood and tempo: a slow second movement—often in contrasting key—was usually sandwiched between two fast movements. Composers of the era (including Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel, and Antonio Vivaldi) explored textural contrast in the concerto form by pitting the sound of a soloist or soloists against the sound of the whole orchestra. The solo instrument or instruments were treated in a virtuosic manner that set them well apart from the rest of the ensemble.

Bach Organ Fugue in G Minor: Opening



The resultant texture alternates between thick (the “tutti” sound of the whole ensemble) and thin (the sections for one or more soloists). The typical format of a concerto movement consists of four tutti sections alternating with three solo ones. The tutti sections are usually homophonic, supported by the chordal accompaniment of the harpsichord—the main keyboard instrument of the period. In contrast, the solo passages can be polyphonic, homophonic, or more rarely, monophonic.

This kind of textural contrast can be explored in more detail by looking at the first movement (“Allegro”) of Antonio Vivaldi’s “Spring,” one of four violin concertos comprising his famous orchestral masterpiece, *The Four Seasons*. Vivaldi’s work is programmatic—instrumental music that is representational rather than abstract. Program music is intended to be narrative or descriptive of a particular scene, story, or image. In this case, Vivaldi was inspired by the sounds, rhythms, and imagery of the changing seasons. He was perhaps the first composer to write program music in the concerto form.

Four explanatory sonnets accompanied the publication of *The Four Seasons* in 1725. Vivaldi apparently added them after writing the music, but their authorship is unknown. Each line of text appears in the score



Antonio Vivaldi, “Spring”
Concerto, First Movement.
[Additional listening information is at the end of the chapter.]

indicating the details of the scene that the music is supposed to depict. Letters preceding the lines are also found in the score at the corresponding passage.⁸

In "Allegro," the first movement of "Spring," Vivaldi used the typical concerto format, alternating tutti sections with solo sections. The accompanying sonnet describes the events of the movement:

- A Spring has arrived and merrily
- B the birds hail her with happy song
- C and meanwhile, at the breath of Zephyrs, the streams flow with a sweet murmur
- D thunder and lightning, chosen to proclaim her, come covering the sky with a black mantle
- E and then, when these fall silent, the little birds return once more to their melodious incantation.

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▲ Antonio Vivaldi

SUMMARY

While there are many examples of music from the European classical tradition that fall neatly into the categories of monophony, polyphony, or homophony, the texture in most music changes during the course of the composition. Just as in many other musical traditions, composers use different textures as a way to add tension and variety to their music. It is important to realize that a piece of music doesn't have to fit into any one mold. Since it is often difficult to accurately analyze the texture of a piece of music, theorist Jay Swain conjectures that it may be better to understand the "prevailing texture":

Because the texture can change so rapidly and because it is often a matter of judgment, not precise like the length of a note, it is often the prevailing texture that is described. That means naming the texture present most of the time in a passage or piece. In this way we can make a useful observation about a piece without worrying about every small detail or judgement.⁹

This is useful advice in looking at music from outside the European classical tradition as well. In widening our perspective, we can understand that the categories of monophony, heterophony, polyphony, and homophony provide a workable model for understanding texture in music, but that this model must be flexible.

ADDITIONAL LISTENING

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S ORGAN FUGUE IN G MINOR (BWV 578)

This is an excellent example of a four-voice fugue. The composition was written for solo organ. In the exposition, the subject first appears in the highest voice played with the organist's right hand. This theme then enters in progressively lower pitch areas. While the theme is being stated, the parts that have already come in continue on with additional contrapuntal material; the only time you hear the theme by itself is in the very beginning of the piece. When the fourth voice enters with the subject in the bass, the texture is at its thickest.

After the exposition, episodes containing elements of the theme alternate with restatements of the theme itself. The first episode begins after the bass part states the subject. This short episode contains a four-note pattern or sequence that also reappears later in the composition. The theme is then restated, shared by the tenor and soprano voices. The composer modulates and the theme is played again in the middle voice.

Another short episode follows that is marked by a three-note sequence in the upper and middle voices. The theme can then be heard clearly in the bass part followed by another short episode. The theme is heard again in the highest voice. The last episode begins with the four-note sequence noted earlier and then builds in intensity to the final restatement of the theme in the lowest part. The piece ends with a strong final cadence and *ritard* or slowing down.

VIVALDI'S "SPRING" CONCERTO (FIRST MOVEMENT)

The opening tutti (A) presents two three-measure themes which are both repeated. The first solo section (B) is an interplay between the solo violinist, first violinists, and second violinists. The three violin parts with their repeated notes, trills, and their quick melodic fragments are meant to suggest bird song.

Here the texture becomes polyphonic as the three voices echo each other and pass melodic motifs back and forth. The absence of the lower instruments (violists, cellists, and harpsichordist) creates a thin and light texture dominated by the three melodic parts.

After this section, Vivaldi repeats the second theme, bringing the texture back to homophony. For the rest of the movement, Vivaldi alternates between the thick texture of the whole ensemble and the thinner texture of solo sections.

The following Figure maps out the tutti and episode sections of the entire first movement.

Listening Guide: "Allegro," (first movement)

Antonio Vivaldi, *Spring Concerto*

	Time
A. Tutti—opening two themes	
B. Episode one: solo violin, violins, violas: bird song	0:32
Tutti (repeat of second theme)	1:09
C. Tutti: gentle breezes and streams	1:16
repeat of theme two	1:42
D. Episode two: thunder and lightning: solo violin with sparse accompaniment in form of slow descending notes	1:49
Tutti (second theme in minor key)	2:19
E. Episode three: solo violin, violins, violas with long notes on cello, polyphonic, bird song	2:27
Tutti (new material)	2:45
short passage with solo violin and harpsichord leading back to tutti	2:55
Tutti	3:09

[Lettered sections (A–E) represent lines of text upon which Vivaldi based his music.]

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Texture is an essential element of music that varies significantly from culture to culture.
2. The subject of musical texture can be divided into two broad areas:
1) the organization of music into one or more simultaneously sounding parts, including sung or played melodies, chords, and percussion; and 2) the ways in which these different parts relate to each other.
3. Texture refers to the density of sound. Within the European-American classical tradition, music is often described as thick or thin depending on the number of parts contained within a composition.
4. Western music scholars have classified texture into four main categories: monophony, heterophony, polyphony, and homophony. While musicians and composers in other cultures may not use these terms to categorize their music, they can be used to discuss texture in all musics.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How would you define the subject of musical texture?
2. Describe how texture refers to density? Give examples.
3. What are the four main categories in which Western music scholars have classified texture? Give examples for each.
4. Describe the texture of the steel band.
5. Why is texture often difficult to classify into one category?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How do you define the role of texture in music?
2. Define the four main categories of musical texture.
3. What musical textures are prevalent in Irish traditional music?
4. What is the prevailing texture in the steel band?
5. What is the history of salsa? What instruments comprise a typical salsa band?
6. What kinds of instruments are found in a Central Javanese gamelan?
7. Why is it difficult to categorize texture in Central Javanese gamelan music?

8. Describe a typical Balinese beleganjur group.
9. What is a fugue?
10. How does the texture change in the first movement of Vivaldi's "Spring" Concerto?

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