

# VARIATIONS

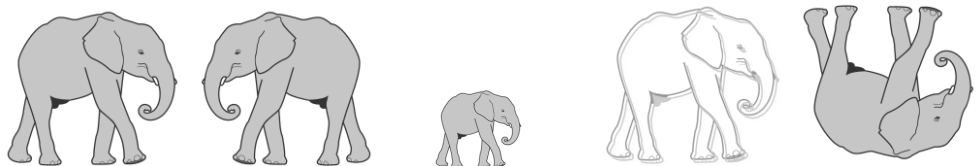
Exploring ways to develop musical ideas



## A. Theme and Variations Key Words

**MELODY** – A tune or succession of notes, varying in pitch, that have an organised and recognizable shape. Often called the main **TUNE** or **THEME** of a piece of music or song and easily remembered.

**VARIATION** – Where a **THEME** is altered or changed musically, while retaining some of the primary elements, notes and structure of the original. **VARIATION FORM:**



A (Theme) A1 (Variation) A2 (Variation) A3 (Variation) A4 (Variation)

## B. Augmentation and Diminution – Note Values and Duration

**AUGMENTATION** – the process of **DOUBLING** the note values (**DURATION**) of a theme as a means of variation.

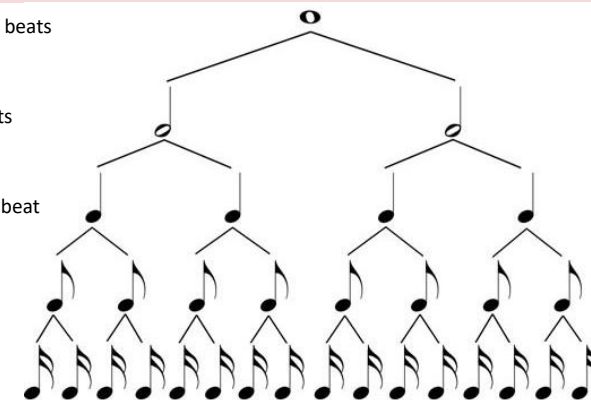
SEMI-BREVE = 4 beats

MINIM = 2 beats

CROTCHET = 1 beat


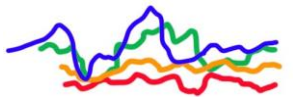



QUAVER = 1/2 beat

SEMIQUAVER = 1/4 beat



**DIMINUTION** – the process of **HALVING** the note values (**DURATION**) of a theme as a means of variation.

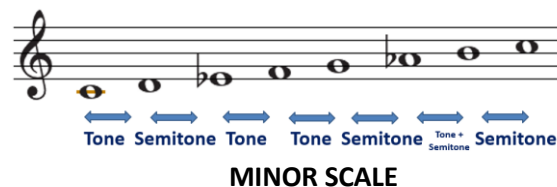
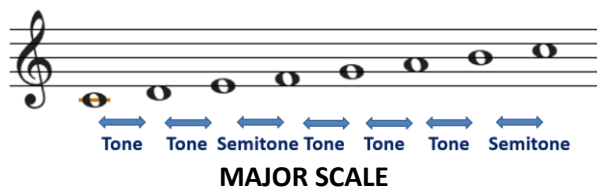
## C. Variation Techniques

<p><b>PITCH</b> – Change the highness or lowness of the theme – play the same notes, but at different pitches e.g. in different OCTAVES.</p>	<p><b>TEMPO</b> – Change the speed of the theme – play it faster or slower.</p>	<p><b>DYNAMICS</b> – Change the volume of the theme – play it louder or softer.</p> 	<p><b>TEXTURE</b>– Change the amount of sound we hear – play as a <b>SOLO</b>, add an <b>ACCOMPANIMENT</b> or <b>CHORDS</b>, add a <b>COUNTER-MELODY</b> (an ‘extra’ melody that is played or sung at the same time as the main melody, often higher in pitch and sometimes called a <b>DESCANT</b>).</p> 	<p><b>TIMBRE AND SONORITY</b>– Change the <b>SOUND</b> of the theme – play it on a different instrument.</p> 	<p><b>ARTICULATION</b> – Change the way the theme is played – smoothly (<b>LEGATO</b> – shown by a <b>SLUR</b>) or short, detached and spiky (<b>STACCATO</b> – shown by a dot).</p>	<p><b>PEDAL</b> – A long (often very long!) note in the bass line of the music over which other parts, including the theme or a variation of the theme can be played. Also called a <b>PEDAL NOTE</b> or <b>PEDAL POINT</b> and often the <b>TONIC</b> note (but can be the <b>DOMINANT</b> or other notes).</p>	<p><b>DRONE</b> – A long or series of repeated (often long) notes using the <b>TONIC</b> and <b>DOMINANT</b> notes together (a <b>FIFTH</b>).</p>	<p><b>MELODIC DECORATION</b> – Adding extra notes or embellishments to the theme such as trills, turns, mordents (<b>ORNAMENTS</b>) or <b>PASSING NOTES</b> (extra notes between the main melody notes).</p>	<p><b>OSTINATO</b> – Adding a repeated musical pattern (rhythmic or melodic) to the main theme as a form of variation.</p> 	<p><b>CANON/ROUND</b> – A song or piece of music in which different performers sing or perform the same <b>THEME</b> starting one after the other.</p>	<p><b>GROUND BASS</b> – A repeated musical pattern in the bass part upon which chords, and melodies can be performed and varied “over the top” of.</p> 
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## D. Tonality – Major and Minor



**TONALITY** refers to whether a **THEME** or **MELODY** is in a **MAJOR** or **MINOR** key. Changing the tonality from major to minor or minor to major is one way of providing a variation on the theme of melody. Major and minor scales follow a certain pattern of tones and semitones:



## E. Inversion and Retrograde

**INVERSION** – Changing the **INTERVALS** between the notes of a theme so that they are upside down from the original.

**RETROGRADE** – A variation technique created by arranging the main theme backwards.

**RETROGRADE INVERSION** – Arranging the “inverted” variation of the theme backwards!



