

Instrumental Timbre

Timbre: The distinctive tone quality of the sound

As a listener of music, our perception is sharpened when we can delineate the variety of sounds we are hearing. When we can identify the source of the sound, music becomes more focused (like wiping the fog off your glasses). Different timbres and their combinations lend variety, clarity, interest, and expression to the music.

Every culture in the world has created musical instruments by using the natural materials of their region – fiber, metal, reed, gut, skin, and even stone – to fashion ways to produce sound. Anthropologists have classified all musical instruments in five basic categories:

Aerophones: instruments that produce a sound by a vibrating column of air. Usually these consist of a pipe made out of wood, metal, or plastic, sometimes with a reed attached.

Examples of aerophones include _____

Idiophones: simple, solid instruments that produce sound by being struck, scraped, or shaken.

Examples of idiophones include _____

Membranophones: instruments made by striking or rubbing a skin or membrane stretched across a resonating air chamber.

Examples of membranophones include _____

Chordophones: instruments that create sound by striking, rubbing, or plucking a taut string (or chord). The strings on many of these instruments are attached to a resonating box.

Examples of chordophones include _____

Electrophones: instruments that generate sound from electricity.

Examples of electrophones include _____