



# **Art of Sound**

Compiled by

**Xolani Nomarola**

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## Introduction

It is important for learners who are playing instruments or singing to know the basics of Music Production, Sound engineering or how to use studio equipment.

In order that musicians, instrumentalists or vocalists may save time and money, they personally sample their ideas. These ideas regarding the final product are then what producers and sound engineers utilize to add and/or remove effects..

Producers help musicians create whereas sound engineers mix elements as many musicians do not have a clear understanding of the aspects required in good song structure. It is thus vital to have a solid knowledge of the fundamentals so that the passion for music may be fuelled.

### Chapter 1

“All the aspects”. Engineering a short clip of audio or music takes time and skill for all parts to come together. For a piece of music to be good it has to follow the eleven aspects of a great recording: concept, melody, rhythm, harmony, lyrics, arrangement, instrumentation, song structure, performance, quality recording/equipment, and the mix.

Each of these aspects has to apply the minimum fundamentals for the recording to sound good. The most important step is the last one, namely The Mix, and this brings everything into perfection and precision.

It can be used to mask some of the less good aspects. We will look at all of these aspects in the details section.

### Chapter 2

“How to write to play”. As much as the digital way of creating music has dominated the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the foreseeable future, pulling out a manuscript and transcribing lines for different instruments is still the best way to go. Though we can use software to help with note placement within the right range, key and time signatures. When writing music for orchestras, quartets, and/or jazz bands you need to be able to transcribe all the lines in order for it to be played exactly as required. Different instruments have varying entry and exit points.

It is essential to know a variety of instruments and their ranges to be able to write effectively. There are five different clefs which instrumentalists utilise in order that they may play their instrument: Treble , Alto , Tenor, Bass, and Percussion. The most commonly used are, the treble and bass clefs and so knowing these is essential.

We will consider all the clefs and different instruments that are playing in those ranges.

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## Chapter 1

I remember my very first time when I used a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) to create my music. I thought it sounded amazing through my headphones once I finished it, but when I played it in the car, it sounded awful with a lot of bass and everything masked by all the low frequencies. My mixing as well as the quality of studio equipment was not up to par. That is when I realised the many different layers to mixing.

It is vital to know and understand that all eleven aspects are important to the final product that you want to bring forth, as is backing.

### Aspect #1: Concept or theme

The concept or theme is the combination of all the other ten aspects as it is the overall sound which is produced by the music. When making a song you determine what mood, the flow, genre, style, and many other feeling aspects of the music. In many songs you can hear the concept which was being portrayed. Some songs have a strong repetitive melody which quickly hooks you. As an engineer you have to know and determine that a heavy metal guitar will not fit in a slow blues love song. Having a concept or understanding the theme of the song allows you to know which essential instruments to use and what role they are playing to deliver that specific concept.

### Aspect #2: Melody

Melodies are an art; as a musician, producer, or sound engineer it is important that the melody is intentional for it is the part that makes the song be remembered and known. A melody can bring positive values or negative values. Positive response for a melody can be that it is catchy, hummable, beautiful, or interesting. Negative values can be that it is busy, banal, simplistic, annoying or chaotic.

### Aspect #3: Rhythm

Rhythm is the heartbeat of the song, if it is too busy then it can throw people off and if it is too simple, watch-out, you will fall asleep. Instruments have their own rhythm parts in a song and it is important that learners know what rhythm each instrument is playing so that a guitar is not stepping on the piano's rhythm and masking it from its lines and parts.

### Aspect #4: Harmony

Harmonizing for voice or instrument, is a very good skill to be able to master because harmony brings the overall structure to sound as one. It is essential to be familiar with a keyboard/piano or guitar as they are instruments that play chords and inverted chords which are the basis of harmony.

### Aspect #5: Lyrics

Lyrics are not just words written and put to a song, they have to be rhythmically correct and the message which is to be conveyed must make sense. In a love song, for instance, syllables which reference love have to appear rather than talking about war.

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## Aspect #6: Arrangement

“Arrangement” are the layers of instrumentation, vocals, effects, and many other sounds which are placed at specific intervals creating textures, tones, melodies, harmonies, ensuring that the whole track is bright and beautiful. All these other aspects have to be arranged in a certain way for each part to sound like it was placed there intentionally.

## Aspect #7: Instrumentation

Even if you're a producer who does not play instruments, it is important to know instruments that fit in a particular type of a song and how best to use them and their unique ranges.

## Aspect #8: Song Structure

The song structure refers to how the song will be laid out; will it have an intro, how many verses before the chorus, are there any bridges and/or any instrumentals or solos in the song and most importantly the length of a song.

## Aspect #9: Performance

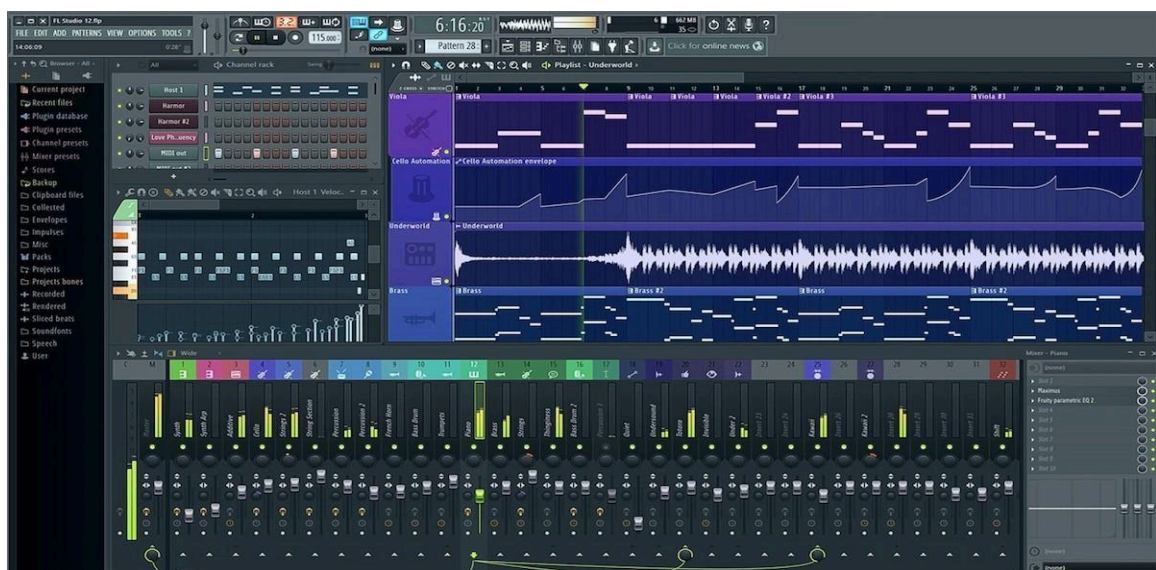
Performance is an essential part, when done correctly, everything comes together wonderfully. This is the stage where every idea is executed correctly while recording, and it consists of five major aspects: Pitch, Timing, Technique, Dynamics, and Greatness.

## Aspect #10: Quality of the equipment and recording

This refers to the quality of recording equipment and not the instruments as covered under “Instrumentation”. Things like microphones are key when recording, even the environment has to be as quiet as possible to get a clean audio to prevent unnecessary editing.

## Aspect #11: The Mix

The mix might be the smallest part in creating good music, however it is one of the most important aspects for it can be used to hide weaknesses in the other aspects.



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## Chapter 2

These days we use primarily automated sounds, as even in music there are DAWs which are being used to arrange music. But the knowledge of transcribing and arranging music on sheet music is still essential for quarters, orchestras, Jazz bands and other groups of musicians who might want to perform your music live. More exposure for you and your music then too.

It is essential for learners to know how to transcribe each part for each instrument, and voice is an instrument too. Working with a manuscript is a skill which learners need to master because there are five essential clefs which can be transcribed for.

The diagram illustrates five essential musical clefs and their corresponding pitch ranges. Each staff is shown with a clef and a sequence of letter notes (A through G) placed on the lines and spaces of the staff to indicate the pitch range. The notes are color-coded in green.

- TREBLE:** Treble clef. Notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A.
- BASS:** Bass clef. Notes: E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C.
- ALTO:** Alto clef. Notes: D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B.
- TENOR:** Tenor clef. Notes: B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- PERCUSSION:** Percussion clef. No notes are shown, as it is used for instruments without a precise pitch.

This clef indicates that the lines and spaces of the staff are each assigned to a percussion instrument with no precise pitch.

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There is a variety of software which has been developed to assist with the transcription of different instruments and learners have the privilege to listen to individual or all parts at once rather than requesting someone to play. These are namely Sibelius, MuseScore, Finale, Lily Pond and many others.

The screenshot displays the Sibelius software interface for an acoustic guitar score. The main window shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notation includes a treble clef, a dynamic marking of *mf*, and a crescendo hairpin. Above the staff, six guitar chord diagrams are shown for the notes E, E/D#, C#, A, F#, and B. Below the staff, a tablature line is visible with fret numbers (2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2, 1, 4, 2, 2) and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The interface includes a ribbon menu at the top with tabs for File, Home, Note Input, Notations, Text, Play, Layout, Appearance, Review, and View. The Notations tab is active, showing various musical symbols like Slur, Crescendo, Decrescendo, Trill, Glissando (straight), Glissando (wavy), and Rit. A keypad window is open on the right side of the score.

Sibelius software