

2.4. TIMBRE



One of the basic elements of music is called color, or timbre. Timbre describes all of the aspects of a musical sound that do not have anything to do with its pitch, loudness, or length. In other words, if a flute plays a note, and then an oboe plays the same note, for the same length of time, at the same loudness, you can tell that the only difference is this: a flute sounds different from an oboe. This difference is in the timbre of the sounds. Timbre is caused by the **by the fact** that each note from a musical instrument is a **complex wave** containing more than one frequency. For instruments that produce notes with a clear and specific pitch, the secondary frequencies that are **involved** in the sound are called **harmonics**. The human ear and brain are capable of hearing and appreciating very small variations in timbre. **Another approach would make possible** to look at and to touch music. You could refer to the colour of a given sound (light or dark), to its brightness (**glossy or matt**) and to its touch (**smooth or rough**), its weight (heavy or light), its width (**wide or narrow**), its consistency (**soft or tough**) and its temperature (warm or cold).