

Chapter 1

Basic Concepts and Definitions

Octave Equivalence

There is something special about the octave. Pitches separated by one or more octaves are usually perceived as in some sense *equivalent*. Our musical notation reflects that equivalence by giving the same name to octave-related pitches. The name A, for example, is given not only to some particular pitch, like the A a minor third below middle C, but also to all the other pitches one or more octaves above or below it. Octave-related pitches are called by the same name because they sound so much alike and because Western music usually treats them as functionally equivalent.

Equivalence is not the same thing as identity. Example 1–1 shows a melody from Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 4, first as it occurs at the beginning of the first movement and then as it occurs a few measures from the end.

Example 1–1 Two equivalent melodies (Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 4).

The two versions are different in many ways, particularly in their rhythm and range. The range of the second version is so wide that the first violin cannot reach all of the

