

**A capella:** pertaining to choral music without instrumental accompaniment.

**Absolute music:** music that is free from extra musical associations, such as a story or mood, depending only on its formal structure for its comprehension.

**Acoustics:** The science of the production, propagation and perception of sound.

**Allegretto:** a moderately fast tempo-slightly slower than allegro. Often implying lighter texture or character as well.

**Anthem:** A choral composition with at sacred or moralizing text (in English) performed in a liturgical or ceremonial context.

**Aria:** a self-contained composition for solo voice, usually with instrumental accompaniment and occurring within the context of a larger form such as opera, oratorio, or cantata.

**Arpeggio:** A chord whose pitches are sounded successively, usually from lowest to highest, rather than simultaneously.

**Articulation:** the way a tone is begun and ended.

**Atonal music:** Music with the absence of key and tonality. The elimination of a central tonic triad and the diatonic functionality of the harmonies relating to it.

**Augmentation:** The statement of a theme in uniformly longer note values.

**Ballad:** A song that tells a story in which all verses are sung to the same melody.

**Baroque:** the style of art, architecture and music approximately between 1600 and 1750.

**Blues:** a style of jazz, vocal and/or instrumental, in a slow tempo and characteristically sad mood; based on a twelve-measure pattern.

**Cadence:** a succession of chords (chord progression), at the end of a musical phrase, section, or composition, giving a feeling of rest or finality.

**Call and response:** a form of music originating in Africa where one person sings a phrase or part of a melody and a group responds, often with a slightly different melody.

**Canon:** a composition in which a melody is stated in one part and is imitated in its entirety by one or more parts.

**Cantata:** a musical composition of the Baroque era consisting of vocal solos, recitatives, duets, and choruses with instrumental accompaniment.

**Chamber Music:** Music written for and performed by a small ensemble, usually instrumental, with one performer on a part.

**Chromatic:** The scale that includes all of the 12 pitches (and thus all of the 12 semitones) contained in an octave. Tones outside the diatonic scale which are identified by the use of accidental signs.

**Classical:** The term usually refers to the music in the period from 1750 through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Haydn, Mozart). It is characterized by emotional restraint in which formal structure and design play predominant parts.

**Concerto:** a composition usually in three movements for solo instrument and a large ensemble such as an orchestra.

**Counter melody:** A subordinate melody which is played simultaneously with a distinct melody.

**Development:** the second part of the first movement of a symphony in which the exposition of the first movement are structurally altered.

**Diatonic:** the tones of the major or minor scale; opposite of chromatic.

**Dominant:** The fifth scale degree of a major or minor scale.

**Drone:** a repeated, sustained or constant tone usually played below the melody.

**Duple meter:** meter in which the primary division of a measure is into two or four beats.

**Ethnomusicology:** the comparative study of music of the world, music as an aspect of culture, and the music of oral traditions.

**Exposition:** the first part of the first movement of a symphony, in which the musical ideas of the symphony are presented.

**Fanfare:** Music played by trumpets or other brass instruments sometimes accompanied by percussion, for ceremonial purposes, especially to call attention to the arrival of a dignitary or to the beginning of a public ceremony.

**Folk song:** Music in oral tradition, often in relatively simple style, primarily of rural provenance, normally performed by nonprofessionals, used and understood by broad segments of a population characteristic of an ethnic group.

**Form:** the shape of a musical composition as defined by all of its pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and timbres. The structure and design of a composition.

**Frequency:** in acoustics, the number of complete vibrations or cycles occurring per unit of time: number of cycles per second which specifies the pitch.

**Fugue:** The most fully developed procedure of imitative counterpoint, in which the theme is stated successively in all voices of the composition and developed according to a set pattern.

**Homophonic:** music in which the melody is concentrated in one part that has a subordinate accompaniment.

**Impressionism:** A term principally applied to the musical style cultivated by Claude Debussy during the final decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Non-climatic melodies leading to complex and elaborate textures.

**Inversion:** a chord is inverted when one of its notes other than the root is in the bass.

**Mass:** A large form of sacred music derived from the ritual commemoration of the Last Supper.

**Minuet:** An elegant dance in moderate triple meter; also a movement in a symphony, sonata, or chamber work.

**Mode:** a particular way of sequencing the tones of a scale: thus, music in the major and minor modes; more often used to refer especially to the old church modes.

**Modulation:** The process of changing from one key to another in the course of a composition.

**Monophonic:** music consisting of a single line or melody without an accompaniment that is regarded as part of the work itself.

**Mordent:** An ornament using single or multiple alternations of the principal note with its lower auxiliary

**Motet:** Unaccompanied choral compositions usually based upon Latin sacred texts; a form of early choral music from the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Motif:** A short rhythmic and or melodic idea that is sufficiently well defined to retain its identity when elaborated or transformed and combined with other material.

**Nocturne:** literally, a night piece; title for a slow lyrical, often reflective musical composition.

**Opera:** A drama that is primarily sung, accompanied by instruments, and presented theatrically.

**Opus:** literally, a work' a term used for the enumeration of a composer's compositions.

**Oratorio:** A musical setting of an extended narrative, usually of a religious or contemplative nature, for chorus, solo voices, and orchestra.

**Overtone:** In acoustics, a series of frequencies all of which are integral multiples of a single frequency or fundamental. The harmonics above the fundamental are termed overtones.

**Overture:** an orchestral piece introducing an opera, oratorio, etc.; also a term sometimes used for a self-contained concert piece.

**Pentatonic scale:** a five tone scale such as C D E G A.

**Pitch:** The quality of "highness" or "lowness" of sound; also applies to any particular pitch level, such as middle C.

**Polyphonic:** music in which several melodies are interwoven but which maintain its identity to some degree.

**Prelude:** music designed as an introduction to another to another work: a short self-contained piece.

**Program music:** music that attempts to express or depict one or more nonmusical ideas, images, or events.

**Ragtime:** A composed instrumental genre, primarily for piano and principally created by black Americans, which combines syncopated melodies with the forms of the march.

**Recapitulation:** The third part of the first movement of a symphony, in which the exposition is repeated with some changes in instrumentation and/or keys.

**Relative pitch:** The ability to identify specific intervals or to notate music by ear alone, without the ability to identify individual pitches independent of context.

**Ritornello:** An alternation of tutti and solo sections (characteristic form of the first and often the last movement of the late-baroque or classical concerto.

**Requiem:** the mass for the dead.

**Resonance:** The large oscillatory response of a system to a weak driving force whose frequency matches precisely one of the natural frequencies. i.e.: a soprano can make her voice “carry better by shaping her vocal tract so that one or several of its resonances have the same frequency as that of some partials of the note being sung thus more effectively generating the sound into the surrounding room.

**Rhapsody:** a composition for instrumental pieces which borrowed from the epic poem with loose episodic sections with no particular compositional method.

**Romantic:** a style of music of primarily the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which the main concern of the composer is the expression of emotions.

**Rondo:** A multi-sectional form, movement, or composition based on the principle of multiple recurrence of a theme or section in the tonic key.

**Scherzo:** literally, “joke”; a playful movement in a fast tempo often used in sonatas, symphonies, and chamber music.

**Sonata:** a composition usually for one or two solo instruments, arranged in a series of three or four separate movements of somewhat contrasting character.

**Sonata-allegro form:** the form of the first movement of a symphony, consisting of exposition, development and recapitulation.

**Sonority:** Om 20<sup>th</sup> century music, a sound defined by some combination of timbres or registers, especially one that plays a significant role in a work; the tonal quality produced by a performer on an instrument.

**Spiritual:** a religious folk song most often of African American origin.

**Suite:** a series of disparate instrumental movements with some element of unity, most often to be performed as a single work.

**Symphony:** a work for orchestra in multiple movements.

**Texture:** The general pattern of sound created by the elements of a work or passage. i.e.: homophonic, polyphonic etc.

**Timbre:** tone quality or tone color.

**Toccata:** an instrumental piece in free form, usually for solo keyboard, designed to exhibit the resources of the instrument and the virtuosity of the performer.

**Tone row:** a series of tones containing all twelve tones of the chromatic scale in a succession chosen by the composer and used as the basis of a composition.

**Triad:** a chord consisting of three tones primarily consisting of the tonic, third and fifth.

**Twelve-tone music:** a style of music developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which a composition is based entirely on a rearranged series of twelve tones (see tone row).

**Tremolo:** The quick and continuous reiteration of a single pitch.

**Virtuoso:** a performer with exceptional technical skill.

### Choral Vocabulary

**Antiphonal Singing:** singing that alternates between groups, or individuals and groups

**Art song:** A song intended for the concert repertory, as distinct from a folk or popular song. Text is traditionally of high literary quality.

**Cambiata:** changing voice; voices that undergo change between the ages of about twelve and sixteen; some boys' voices may become lower, while some girls' voices become fuller in sound.

**Plainchant:** monophonic Christian liturgical chant in free rhythm, a distinct from measured music. Also Plainsong

**Sea Chantey:** a work song sung by sailors, especially one that rhythmically coordinates strenuous effort.

**Libretto:** The text of an opera or oratorio.

**Lied:** A song in German, particularly for solo voice written in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. German art song.

**Recitative:** a type of vocal music, between singing and speaking, often used in dialogue or narrative portions of operas and operettas.

**Vocal timbre:** the quality of the voices, whether the sounds are full an open or soft and covered.

### Strings

**Harmonics:** A flutelike tone produced on a stringed instrument by touching a vibrating string at a nodal point. (i.e. dividing the string length by 1/2, 1/4, 1/3, etc.)

**Martele:** Releasing each bow stroke forcefully and suddenly.

**Ponticello:** A nasal, brittle effect produced by bowing very close to the instrument's bridge.

**Spiccato:** A stroke in which the bow is played at rapid tempos in the middle of the bow so that the bow bounces slightly off the string.

**Tremolo:** An effect produced by playing extremely short rapid up and down strokes on one note

### Piano

**Carillon:** A set of large, tuned bells, usually hung in a tower and played from a keyboard and pedal-board.

**Celesta:** an instrument in the shape of a small upright piano, having metal bars which are struck by hammers that are activated by a keyboard mechanism.

**Harpsichord:** a keyboard instrument similar in shape to the grand piano but whose strings are plucked rather than struck.

**Organ:** a keyboard instrument consisting basically of keyboards or manuals, pedals, and pipes through which air is blown and stops which regulate the tones.

