

Music Terminology

1. **Andante**: at a walking pace
2. **Alla**: in the manner or style of
3. **Allegro**: quick and lively
4. **Accelerando**: gradually quicken tempo
5. **Adagio**: slow, restful, at ease
6. **accent**: emphasize, make a particular part more important
7. **adagietto**: rather slow
8. **agitato**: agitated
9. **allargando**: broadening, becoming a little slower each time
10. **allegretto**: a little lively, moderately fast
11. **Arco**: to bow a string instrument, rather than pluck
12. **amabile**: amiable, pleasant
13. **amoroso**: loving
14. **andante**: at a walking pace
15. **animato**: animated, lively
16. **appoggiatura**: also called a "leaning note" or grace note
17. **arpeggio**: like a harp; i.e., the notes of the chords are to be played quickly one after another instead of simultaneously.
18. **a tempo**: in time; i.e., the performer should return to the main tempo of the piece
19. **capo**: head; i.e. the beginning (of a movement, normally)
20. **coda**: a tail; i.e., a closing section appended to a movement
21. **con**: with; used in very many musical directions, for example con allegrezza (with liveliness)
22. **con anima**: with feeling
23. **con brio**: with spirit, with vigour
24. **con fuoco**: with fire, in a fiery manner
25. **con spirito**: with spirit; with feeling
26. **con sordina**, or **con sordine** (plural): with a mute, or with mutes;
27. **Baroque**: historical musical period ranging from the middle of the 16th to the middle of the 17th centuries. Characterized by emotional, flowery music; written in strict form. Baroque Composers: Bach, Handel, Vivaldi
28. **brillante**: brilliantly, with sparkle
29. **Cantabile**: in a singing style
30. **Classical**: historical musical period dates from the mid 1700's to mid 1800's. The music was spare and emotionally reserved, especially when compared to Romantic and Baroque music.
31. **crescendo**: growing; i.e., progressively louder (contrast diminuendo)
32. **da capo**: from the head; i.e., from the beginning (see capo in this list)
33. **D.S. : Dal Segno**, from the sign

34. **D.S. al fine**: from the sign to the end; i.e., return to a place in the music designated by the sign and continue to the end of the piece
35. **decelerando**: slowing down; decelerating; opposite of *accelerando* (same as *ritardando*)
36. **decrescendo, decresc.**: same as *diminuendo* or *dim.*
37. **diminuendo, dim.**: dwindling; i.e., with gradually decreasing volume (same as *decrescendo*)
38. **divisi, div.**: divided; i.e., in a part in which several musicians normally play exactly the same notes they are instead to split the playing of the written simultaneous notes among themselves.
dolce: sweetly
39. **dolore**: pain, distress, sorrow, grief
40. **dominant**: the fifth scale degree
41. **dynamics**: the relative volume in the execution of a piece of music
42. **espressivo or espr.**: expressively
43. **Fermata**: A symbol that indicates to hold the note or rest beyond the written value, as indicated by the conductor.
44. **feroce**: ferociously
45. **fine**: the end, often in phrases like *al fine* (to the end)
46. **Forte**: strong volume
47. **fortepiano** or *fp* (usually): strong-gentle; i.e., 1. loud, then immediately soft
48. **fortissimo** or *ff*: very strong
49. **fortississimo** or *fff*: as strong as possible
50. **forzando** or *fz*: see *sforzando* in this list, strong then immediately soft
51. **furioso**: furiously
52. **Grandioso**: play grandly
53. **Grave**: play slowly and seriously
54. **Homophony**: music written to be played or sung in unison
55. **hemiola**: the imposition of a pattern of rhythm or articulation other than that implied by the time signature; specifically, in triple time (for example in 3/4) the imposition of a duple pattern (as if the time signature were, for example, 2/4). See *Syncopation*.
56. **Interval**: the distance between two notes
57. **lacrimoso** or **lagrimoso**: tearfully; i.e., sadly
58. **largetto**: somewhat slowly; not as slow as *largo*
59. **largo**: broadly; i.e., slowly
60. **legato**: joined; i.e., smoothly, in a connected manner (see also *articulation*)
61. **lento**: slowly
62. **magnifico**: magnificent
63. **marcato**: detached, accented notes
64. **mezzo**: medium, generally used to describe dynamics (ie: *mezzo forte* (*mf*) is medium strong)
65. **Modulation**: To shift to another key

66. **molto**: very
67. **non troppo**– not too much (ie: Allegro non troppo = quickly but not too quickly)
68. **Ostinato**: a repeated melodic or rhythmic phrase
69. **piano**: relating to dynamics, it means to play softly
70. **pizzicato**: to pluck a string instrument, instead of bowing
71. **Poco a poco**: Little by little
72. **polyphony**: combining a number of individual but harmonizing melodies. Also called counterpoint
73. **pesante**: heavy, ponderous
74. **Presto**: very quick tempo
75. **Piu Mosso**: more movement
76. **Renaissance**: a period in musical history dating from the 14th to 16th centuries. This period signified a rebirth of music, art, literature and architecture.
77. **Romantic**: A period in history during the 18th and 19th centuries where the focus shifted from a neo-classical style to a more emotional, expressive and imaginative style. Romantic composers: Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Puccini, Verdi, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Bruckner, Grieg
78. **Root**: the principal note of a triad, scale degree 1 of a chord or scale
79. **Rubato**: relates to tempo, when a strict tempo is temporarily abandoned for a more flexible, emotional response to time, melody and harmony
80. **scale degree**: a number assigned to each note of a major scale. For example, the first note would be 1, the second 2, the third 3...
81. **staccato**: short detached notes
82. **subito**: suddenly
83. **tempo I / tempo primo**: return to the first tempo of the piece
84. **tenuto**: articulation marking meaning to play the note full value
85. **tritone**: the interval of an augmented fourth/diminished fifth
86. **timbre**: tone quality
87. **tonic**: the first degree of a scale or chord. also called the root
88. **vibrato**: vibrating, altering a single tone with wavering intonation for expressive purpose
89. **vivace**: related to tempo. brisk, quick and lively.