

Glossary

A cappella – vocal music without instrumental accompaniment

Accidentals – notes that are not normally found in a given key

Acoustical Engineer – a person who works in the area of acoustic technology **Acoustician** – a person who studies the theory and science of acoustics **Acoustics** – the study of how sound behaves in physical spaces

Amplitude – refers to how high the wave form appears to vibrate above zero when seen on an oscilloscope; louder sounds create higher oscilloscope amplitude readings

Anthem – a musical composition of celebration, usually used as a symbol for a distinct group, particularly the national anthems of countries. Originally, and in music theory and religious contexts, it also refers more particularly to short sacred choral work and still more particularly to a specific form of Anglican

Antiphonal – A genre of sacred music featuring multiple choirs, or a choir that has been divided into different groups that can perform call and responses.

Aria – Homophonic compositions featuring a solo singer over orchestral accompaniment. homophonic compositions featuring a solo singer over accompaniment. Arias are very melodic primarily utilized in operas, cantatas, and oratorios.

Art song – a composition setting a poem to music, generally for one solo voice and piano accompaniment; in German, a Lied

Atonal – Music that seeks to avoid both the traditional rules of harmony and the use of chords or scales that provide a tonal center

Ballads – a song form used often in folk music, which is used to tell a story that usually contains a moral or lesson.

Bar – see measure

Basso continuo – continuous realization of harmony throughout a musical piece, usually by a harpsichord and/or cello. The Basso continuo provides a framework/template for harmonic accompaniments.

Beat – the basic unit of time in music

Bebop - a style of small group jazz developed in the late 1940s, which featured fast moving harmonies, angular melodies, and highly complex rhythms

Big Band – large jazz ensembles (15-20 members) popular in the 1930's and 1940's. The term “Big Band” also refers to the era in which these bands were popular.

Bluegrass – a variation of country music featuring fiddle, guitar, mandolin, bass guitar, and the five-string banjo that developed largely in the Appalachian region

Blues – a style of music that, at the turn of the twentieth century, began to form out of African American work songs, field hollers, and spirituals. Today, the word “blues” is used loosely and can refer to feeling sad or down, to any song played in a bluesy style, or more specifically, to a song that follows a blues form, which is a twelve-bar strophic song form.

Bodhran - a traditional Celtic open-ended frame drum with a low, resonant sound

Brass – instruments traditionally made of brass or another metal (and thus often producing a “bright” or “brassy” tone) whose sound is generated by blowing into a mouthpiece that is attached to a coiled tube

Broadway Musical – a style of Musical Theatre, which integrated a cohesive plot with songs and dances that advanced that plot. Broadway specifically refers to the street of the same name in New York City that became known for this style.

Cadence – the ending of a musical phrase providing a sense of closure, often through the use of one chord that resolves to another

Cadenza – section of a concerto in which the soloist plays alone without the orchestra in an improvisatory style

Cajun Zydeco – American folk music developed by Cajuns, the descendants of Acadian immigrants (French speakers from Acadia), who settled in the swamps of Southwest Louisiana.

Cantata – A composite major church choir form from the Baroque period that involves soloist, choir, and orchestra. Cantatas have several movements and last for fifteen to thirty minutes. Cantatas are performed without staging but they utilize narration, arias, recitatives, choruses and smaller vocal ensembles.

Celts – a term referring to a diverse group of people who lived during the Iron Ages in what is now Great Britain and Western Europe.

Chamber music – music--such as art songs, piano character pieces, and string quartets--primarily performed in small performing spaces, often for personal entertainment

Chanson – is in general any lyric-driven French song, usually polyphonic and secular. A singer specializing in chansons is known as a “chanteur” (male) or “chanteuse” (female); a collection of chansons, especially from the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, is also known as a chansonnier.

Chant – text set to a melody written in monophonic texture with un-notated rhythms typically used in religious worship

Chapel Master – Director of music, secular and sacred, for the courts’ official functions and entertainment.

Children’s Song – a type of folk song designed to teach a simple lesson. They are often simple to sing and easy to remember.

Chorale – Originally the result from the German protestant church’s reformation, the chorale is the hymn (tune) is a four part homophonic work that is sung by the church congregation. Chorales became the foundation for several cantatas and chorale preludes for organ.

Chord – the simultaneous sounding of three or more pitches; like intervals, chords can be consonant or dissonant

Chord Progression – a series of chords

Chromatic – musical pitches which move up or down by successive half-steps

Chromaticism – a style of composition which uses notes that are not a part of the predominant scale of a composition or one of its sections.

Church Music – Sacred music written for performance in church, or any musical setting of ecclesiastical liturgy, or music set to words expressing propositions of a sacred nature, such as a hymn. Church Music Director is a position responsible the musical aspects of the church’s activities.

Coda – optional final section of a movement that reasserts the home key of the movement and provides a sense of conclusion

Composition – the process whereby a musician notates musical ideas using a system of symbols or using some other form of recording

Concerto – a composition for a soloist or a group of soloists and an orchestra, generally in three movements with fast, slow, and fast tempos, respectively

Concerto Grosso – a musical composition for a small group of soloists and orchestra.

Conductor – individual who leads an orchestra

Conjunct – a melody that moves mostly by step, in a smooth manner

Consonant – (adjective) term used to describe intervals and chords that tend to sound sweet and pleasing to our ears; consonance (noun), as opposed to dissonance, is stable and needs no resolution.

Consort – A renaissance consort is a group of renaissance instrumentalists playing together. A whole consort is an ensemble performing with instruments from the same family. A broken consort is an ensemble comprised of instruments from more than one family.

Contemporary Country – a mixture of rock rhythm sections and a singer singing with a country accent about many of the same topics that traditional country singers have used over the decades.

Contemporary R&B – generally refers to music with jazz, gospel, and funk roots that uses electronic instruments, drums, horns, and vocals.

Cori spezzati – A divided choir that is utilized to perform in a polychoral style—able to perform “call and response”. Large churches were designed with multiple choir seating sections to perform such works.

Counter-Reformation – The preservation movement or “Counter-Reformation” against the protestant reform led to the development of the Jesuit order (1540) and the later assembling of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which considered issues of the church’s authority and organizational structure.

Country Music – a term describing a broad variety of musical styles including Bluegrass, Hillbilly Music, and Contemporary Country. Generally speaking, most types of music that fall under this category originated in the American South (although it also encompasses Western Swing and cowboy songs) and features a singing style with a distinctly rural southern accent, as well as an instrumentation that favors string instruments such as the banjo, guitar, or fiddle.

Courtly Love – love for a beloved, without any concern for whether or not the love will be returned, called “courtly” because it was praised by those participating in medieval courts

Cycles per Second (cps) – a definition of frequency of vibration; replaced by Hertz in 1960

Da capo – instruction—commonly found at the end of the B section or Trio of a Minuet and Trio, to return to the “head” or first section, generally resulting in an A - B - A form

Dance Music – music written for dancing. The instrumentation of various types of folk dance music varies with the style.

Dance Music [WM1] – is music composed specifically to facilitate or accompany dancing

Development – the middle section of a sonata-form movement in which the themes and key areas introduced in the exposition are developed;

Disjunct – a melody with wide leaps and rapid changes in direction

Dissonant – (adjective) intervals and chords that tend to sound harsh to our ears; dissonance (noun) is often used to create tension and instability, and the interplay between dissonance and consonance provides a sense of harmonic and melodic motion in music

Dixieland – an early form of jazz developed in New Orleans during the turn of the twentieth century featuring syncopated rhythms, improvised solos and harmonies, as well as a common instrumentation that included trumpet, clarinet, saxophone, trombone, tuba, banjo, piano, guitar, and drums.

Djembe – a hand drum used in the music of West Africa

Double-exposition form – form of the first movement of a Classical period concerto that combines the exposition, development, and recapitulation of sonata form with the ritornello form used for the first movements of Baroque concertos; also called first-movement concerto form

Drone – a sustained pitch or pitches often found in music of the middle ages or earlier and in folk music

Dynamic – the variation in the volume of musical sound (the amplitude of the sound waves)

Elektronische Musik - (German term meaning “electronic music”) Music composed by manipulating only electronically-produced sounds (not recorded sounds.)

Equalization (EQ) – the process of raising or lowering different frequencies of sound, either in a recording, or within a tone (overtones)

Exposition – first section of a sonata form movement, in which the themes and key areas of the movement are introduced; the section normally modulates from the home key to a different key

Expressionism – Style of composition where composers intentionally use atonality. Arnold Schoenberg devised a system of composing using twelve tones. His students Alban Berg and Anton Webern composed extensively in this twelve-tone style.

Folk Music – a term used to describe a wide variety of musical forms that developed within different cultures, often for different reasons. Folk music is often passed down not through written music, but orally from one generation to another.

Form – the structure of the phrases and sections within a musical composition (Does it repeat?)

Frequency – how quickly or slowly a medium (solid, liquid, gas) vibrates and produces a sound

Frets – is a raised strip on the neck of a stringed instrument. Frets usually extend across the full width of the neck and divide the string into half steps for most western musical instruments. Most guitars have frets.

Fugue – perfected by J.S. Bach during the baroque period, fugues are a form written in an imitative contrapuntal style in multiple parts. Fugues are based upon their original tune that is called the subject. The subject is then imitated and overlapped by the other parts by the called the answer, countersubject, stretto, and episode

Fundamental Pitch – the lowest pitch in the harmonic series

Galliard – was a form of Renaissance dance and music popular all over Europe in the 16th century.

Guido of Arezzo – a medieval music theorist who developed a system of lines and spaces that enabled musicians to notate the specific notes in a melody

Harmony – any simultaneous combination of tones and the rules governing those combinations (the way a melody is accompanied is also another way to define harmony)

Hemiola – the momentary shifting from a duple to a triple feel or vice versa

Hertz (Hz) – the unit of frequency defined as one cycle per second and named after Heinrich Hertz (1857-1894) in 1960

Hillbilly Music – an early form of country music, Hillbilly Music was an alternative to the jazz and dance music of the 1920s and was portrayed as wholesome music of the “good old days.”

Homophonic – musical texture comprised of one melodic line accompanied by chords

Homophony – Music where the melody is supported by a chordal accompaniment the move in the same rhythm. Homophony is generally the opposite of polyphony where the voices imitative and weave with each other.

Honky Tonk Music – a country combo style that became quite popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Originally performed in saloons known as “honky tonks,” many of the songs dealt with subjects associated with honky tonks such as infidelity and drinking.

Hymn – religious song most generally having multiple strophes of the same number and length of lines and using strophic form

Idée fixe – a famous melody that appears in all five movements of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* to represent the beloved from the program

Impressionism – music composed based on the composer’s impression of an object, concept, or event. This style included the use of chromaticism, whole-tone scales and chords, exotic scales, new chord progressions, and more complex rhythms

Improvisation – the process whereby musicians create music spontaneously using the elements of music as building blocks

Instrumentation – the instruments comprising a musical group (including the human voice)

Interval – the distance in pitch between any two notes

Jig – is the accompanying dance tune for an energetic folk dance usually in a compound meter.

Key – the set of pitches on which a composition is based

Keyboard – instruments that are characterized by keyboards, such as the piano, organ, vibraphone, and accordion

Koto – a traditional Japanese string instrument with thirteen strings over movable bridges

Laptop orchestra – an ensemble formed by linking laptop computers and speakers together to generate live and/or recorded performances using both synthesized and pre-recorded sounds

Leitmotiv – “guiding motive” associated with a specific character, theme, or locale in a music drama, and first associated with the music of Richard Wagner

Libretto – The text or actual words of an opera, musical, cantata or oratorio, written or compiled by a librettist

Madrigal – a musical piece for several solo voices set to a short poem. They originated in Italy around 1520. Most madrigals were about love.

Mass – Catholic celebration of the Eucharist consisting of liturgical texts set to music by composers starting in the middle ages

mazurka – a Polish dance in triple time, with emphasis on beat 2

Mbira – an African thumb piano

Measure – a unit of time that contains a specific number of beats defined by the meter/ time signature

Melisma – More than one note sung during one syllable of the text. The melismatic style was used extensively in gregorian chant.

Melody – a succession of single tones in musical compositions

Meter – the way in which the beats are grouped together in a piece

Minstrel Show – an American form of theatre developed in the nineteenth century and featuring white performers in blackface performing in a variety show, which depicted black characters as happy participants in romanticized versions of the American slave south.

Minuet and trio form – form based on the minuet dance that consists of a Minuet (A), then a contrasting Trio (B), followed by a return to the Minuet (A)

Monophonic – musical texture comprised of one melodic line; a melodic line may be sung by one person or 100 people

Motet – is a highly varied sacred choral musical composition. The motet was one of the pre-eminent polyphonic forms of Renaissance music.

Motive – the smallest musical unit of a melody, generally a single rhythm of two or three pitches

Motor rhythm – The constant repeated subdivision of the beat. The motor rhythm provide unity and stability within the musical piece.

Movement – a subsection or independent section/piece of a larger work. (Ex. A symphony is divided into movements.)

Music – sound and silence organized in time

Musical Theatre – a type of dramatic performance that tells a story through dialogue, with singing and dancing added to support and move the plot along.

Musique Concrète – a type of electro-acoustic music that uses both electronically produced sounds (like synthesizers) and recorded natural sounds (like instruments, voices, and sounds from nature)

Nationalism – pride in one's nation or cultural identity, often expressed in art, literature, and music

Neoclassicism – A musical movement that arose in the twentieth century as a reaction against romanticism and which sought to recapture classical ideals like symmetry, order, and restraint. Stravinsky's music for the ballet *Pulcinella* (1920) is a major early neoclassical composition.

New Orleans Jazz – (see Dixieland)

Noise – a disorganized sound with no observable pitch

Octave – the distance between two musical pitches where the higher pitch vibrates exactly twice as many times per second as the lower

Opera – A staged musical drama for voices and orchestra. Operas are fully blocked and performed in costume with sets. Operas utilize arias and recitatives without no narration.

Opera Buffa – comic style of opera made famous by Mozart

Opera Seria – serious style of eighteenth-century opera made famous by Handel generally features mythology or high-born characters and plots

Operetta – a “light opera” developed in the nineteenth century that required classically trained singers, but featured less complex music than a typical opera.

Oratorio – a major work with religious or contemplative character for solo voices, chorus and orchestra. Oratorios do not utilize blocking, costumes, or scenery.

Oscilloscope - an electronic device that displays a visual representation of the different types of sound waves

Overtones (also known as harmonics) – a musical tone heard above a fundamental pitch

Partials – the sounds of different frequency that naturally occur above a fundamental (primary) tone

Pavanne – is a slow processional dance common in Europe during the 16th century Renaissance.

Pentatonic scale – a five-note scale used in traditional music throughout the world

Percussion – instruments that are typically hit or struck by the hand, with sticks, or with hammers or that are shaken or rubbed by hand

Performing Forces – see instrumentation

Phrase – smaller sub-sections of a melody

Pitch – a tone that is composed of an organized sound wave

Pizzicato – the plucking of a bowed string instrument such as the violin, producing a percussive effect

Plagal cadence – ending of a composition that consists of a IV chord moving to a I chord and most often associated with church music

Polychoral (style) – a compositional style where the chorus/choir is divided into two or more groups that can perform with or independently for each other (see antiphonal).

Polyphony – musical texture that simultaneously features two or more relatively independent and important melodic lines

Polyrhythm – two or more different rhythms played at the same time

Polytonality – a compositional technique where two or more instruments or voices in different keys (tonal centers) perform together at the same time

Primitivism – A musical movement that arose as a reaction against musical impressionism and which focused on the use of strong rhythmic pulse, distinct musical ideas, and a tonality based on one central tone as a unifying factor instead of a central key or chord progression.

Program music – instrumental music intended to represent something extra musical such as a poem, narrative, drama, or picture, or the ideas, images, or sounds therein.

Program symphony – program music in the form of a multi-movement composition for orchestra

Protest Song – a type of folk song written to directly, or by suggestion, voice complaints about some injustice.

Raga - a pattern of notes that used as the basis for improvisation in Indian classical music

Ragtime – a musical genre developed near the turn of the twentieth century that featured syncopated rhythms. The style became nationally popular after being widely published as sheet music.

Range – the number of pitches, expressed as an intervallic distance

Rap – a form of spoken word delivered over a beat. It can be improvised or written out in advance.

Recapitulation – third and final second of a sonata-form movement, in which the themes of the exposition return, now in the home key of the movement

Recitative – An operatic number using speech-like melodies and rhythms, performing using a flexible tempo, to sparse accompaniment, most often provided by the basso continuo. Recitatives are often performed between arias and have texts that tend to be descriptive and narrating.

Reformation – was a succession and division from the practices of the Roman Catholic Church initiated by Martin Luther. Led to the development of Protestant churches.

Refrain – a repeating musical section, generally also with repeated text; sometimes called a “chorus”

Register – the low, medium, and high sections of an instrument or vocal range

Rhythm – the way the music is organized in respect to time

Rhythm According to the Text – rhythm that follows the rhythm of the text and is not notated

Rhythm and Blues (R&B) – a term originally referring to music recorded by black musicians and intended for use by the African American community. The term has evolved throughout the years and encompasses several different musical styles, including soul, funk and now contemporary R&B.

Ritornello Form – repeated unifying sections found in between the solo sections of a concerto grosso

Rock and Roll – a style of music that grew out of Rhythm and Blues and came into prominence during the 1950s. The style features a strong backbeat and often features electric guitar, bass and drums. The style is now known as “rock” has spawned many subgenres.

Rondo – instrumental form consisting of the alternation of a refrain “A” with contrasting sections (“B,” “C,” “D,” etc.). Rondos are often the final movements of string quartets, classical symphonies, concerti, and sonata (instrumental solos).

Rubato – the momentary speeding up or slowing down of the tempo within a melody line, literally “robbing” time from one note to give to another

Sampling – a technique in which a clip of a preexisting song is isolated and looped, often as a background for a rapper

Scale – a series of pitches, ordered by the interval between its notes

Scena ad aria – nineteenth-century operatic combination of a recitative (“scena”) plus aria; here the aria generally has two parts, a slower cantabile and a faster cabaletta

Scherzo – form that prominently replaced the minuet in symphonies and strings quartets of the nineteenth century; like the minuet, scherzos are ternary forms and have a triple feel, although they tend to be somewhat faster in tempo than the minuet.

Scratching – the technique of improvising a rhythmic solo on one turntable over a beat

Sectional form – A piece where distinct sections can be identified due to changes in texture and other musical compositional techniques.

Sequence – a repetition of a motive or phrase at a different pitch level

Serialism – composing music using a series of values assigned to musical elements such as pitch, duration, dynamics, and instrumentation. Arnold Schoenberg’s 12-tone technique is one of the most important examples of serialism.

Seventh Chord – a chord that has four pitches stacked in intervals of thirds

Shakuhachi – a bamboo flute used in traditional Japanese music

Sine Wave – the simplest sound wave that occurs in nature. A pure sine wave contains no partials and is perfectly smooth and rounded in appearance on an oscilloscope.

Sitar – a plucked string instrument used in Indian classical music.

Solo – A musical piece that features on musician either with or without accompaniment. In larger scored piece, the solo is the main part that should be brought out while performing.

Sonata – composition for a solo instrument or an instrument with piano accompaniment, generally in three movements with fast, slow, and fast tempos, respectively

Sonata form – a form often found in the first and last movements of sonatas, symphonies, and string quartets, consisting of three parts – exposition, development, and recapitulation

Song – a composition sung by voice(s)

Song cycle – a collection of art songs, unified by poet, narrative, musical style, or composer

Sound – the mechanical movement of an audible pressure wave through a solid, liquid, or gas
Sound Waves – longitudinal waves (compression and rarefaction waves) that travel

through a solid, liquid, or gas

Step – the distance between adjacent notes in a musical scale

String quartet – performing ensemble consisting of two violinists, one violinist, and one cellist that plays compositions called string quartets, compositions generally in four movements

Strings – instruments whose sound is produced by setting strings in motion

Strophe – section of a poem or lyric text generally of a set number of lines and line length; a text may have multiple strophes

Strophic – a composition that uses the repetition of the same music (“strophes”) for successive texts

Stylized dance – piece of music that sounds like a dance but that was not designed for dancing. In other words, a stylized dance uses the distinct characteristics of a dance and would be recognized as sounding like that dance but might be too long or too complicated to be danced to.

Subject – The main melody or tune of a fugue.

Suite – A multi-movement instrumental musical composition of baroque music—usually in dance form.

Swing – a term used to describe the rhythmic bounce that characterizes the jazz style. The term can also refer to the big band music of the 1930s and 1940s.

Syllabic – music in which each syllable of a text is set to one musical note

Symphonic poem – program music in the form of a single-movement composition for orchestra; sometimes called a tone poem

Symphony – multi-movement composition for orchestra, often in four movements

Syncopation – the act of disrupting the normal pattern of accents in a piece of music by emphasizing what would normally be weak beats.

Synthesizers - instruments that electronically generate a wide variety of sounds. They can also modify electronic or naturally produced recorded sounds

Tabla - a pair of hand drums used in Indian classical music

Tala – a repeating rhythmic pattern that forms the rhythmic foundation for Indian classical music

Tamtam – a large metal gong

Tempo – the speed at which the beat is played

Ternary form – describes a musical composition in three parts, most often featuring two similar sections, separated by a contrasting section and represented by the letters A – B – A.

Terraced dynamics – Used during the Baroque period, this is where the different sections have a piece of music have a set volume unique for that particular section. The next section may be written to be performed at another volume.

Texture – the ways in which musical lines of a musical piece interact

Theme and Variation form – the presentation of a theme and then variations upon it. The theme may be illustrated as A, with any number of variations following it – A', A'', A''', A''', etc.

Through-composed – a movement or composition consisting of new music throughout, without repetition of internal sections

Timbre – the tone color or tone quality of a sound

Time signature – the numeric notation at the beginning of a line of music where the top number indicates how many beats are in each measure and the bottom number indicates which type of note will represent that beat

Tonic – the most important pitch of a key; the note from which the other pitches are derived

Triad – a chord that has three pitches stacked in intervals of thirds

Tutti – Where the entire musical ensemble performs together as a whole as opposed to a soloist.

Twelve-Bar Blues – a twelve-bar musical form commonly found in American music

Twelve-tone Technique – Compositional technique developed by Arnold Schoenberg that derives musical elements such as pitch, duration, dynamics, and instrumentation from a randomly produced series of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale (the 12-tone row)

Verse and Refrain Form – a musical form (sometimes referred to as verse and chorus) in which one section of music is sung to all the verses and a different section of music is sung to the repeating refrain or chorus

Vocal – having to do with the human voice

Western Swing – a style of country music that developed in western cities and borrowed instruments from the dance band such as saxophones, trombones, trumpets, piano, bass, and drums.

Woodwinds – instruments traditionally made of wood whose sound is generated by forcing air through a tube, thus creating a vibrating air column

Word painting – was utilized by Renaissance composers to represent poetic images musically. For example, an ascending melodic line would portray the text “ascension to heaven.” Or a series of rapid notes would represent running.

Work Songs – a type of folk song devised to help groups of people perform physical work. The music usually uses the tempo of the work itself and was sung by lumberjacks, railroad workers, and prison chain gangs, among others.