



## Definition of Terms

**Absolute music** - Instrumental music that does not claim to be about anything other than its own form and sound; the opposite of program music.

**Academy** - In 16th- and 17th-century Italy, a society of like-minded intellectuals dedicated to pursuits including discussion, debate, and engagement with the arts.

**Achievement** - What a person does with their aptitude.

**Advent** - In the Catholic church calendar, the four weeks leading up to Christmas.

**Air pipe** - The pipe extruding from a set of bagpipes into which the player blows air.

**Allegory** (in music) - The use of musical sounds to signify hidden meaning.

**Alto** - A singer with a range somewhat lower than that of a soprano, usually female.

**Anchor** - A monastic who lives their entire life in a small room adjoining a monastery, thereby “anchoring” the community.

**Antiphon** - A short Gregorian chant that can be used in various ways throughout the Canonical Hours and in the Mass.

**Apartheid** - The system of legalized racial segregation that was in place in South Africa from 1948 into the early 1990s.

**Aptitude** - The ease and speed with which the brain processes certain kinds of information.

**Aria** - A work for solo vocalist that follows a set form. Arias are most common as components of operas and oratorios, but can also be composed as stand-alone works.

**Arioso** - A passage of vocal music that is more structured than recitative but less formal than aria; usually brief in comparison with an aria.

**Arpeggio** - A musical gesture that sounds the pitches of a chord one at a time, either ascending or descending.

**Arranger** - Someone who takes a melody or work created by another composer and makes limited alterations; arrangements are usually created for specific ensembles and include some new musical material, although the original material is still easily detected.

**Arrangement** - A version of a composition designed for performance by a specific set of instruments or voices. Arrangements can be made by the original composer, but are usually produced by a collaborator or successor.

**Ars perfecta** - A style of vocal composition that reached maturity in 15th-century Italy. Music in this style is polyphonic and follows a robust set of rules concerning the treatment of dissonance.

**Articulation** - The manner in which a pitch is begun, sustained, and released.

**Auditory cortex** - The area of the brain in which sound is first processed.

**Avant-garde** - From the French for “advance guard”; used to refer to works of art that break with norms and explore new creative territory.

**Ayre** - A solo song with lute accompaniment common in the Baroque English tradition.

**Backspinning** - The practice employed by DJs of spinning a record in reverse in order to repeat a passage.

**Ballad** - A song that tells a story.

**Ballet** - A style of presentational dance, the current form of which emerged in 18th-century France. Ballet is often used to tell stories by means of gesture and music, and is characterized by unique apparel, including tutus and pointe shoes.

**Bar** - A unit determined by meter that contains the basic grouping of pulses (e.g. a bar in triple time will contain three beats). Synonymous with “measure.”

**Bar form** - A musical form, A A B, common in troubadour songs and Lutheran hymns.

**Bar lines** - In notated music, vertical lines that indicate the beginning and end of each bar.

**Baroque** - A period in Western music history that is typically bookmarked by the invention of opera (ca. 1600) and the death of J.S. Bach (1750).

**Belting** - A style of singing employed by women for which the performer uses their chest voice to produce pitches in a high range to powerful effect; common in Broadway productions beginning in the mid-20th century.

**Basso continuo** - A type of instrumental accompaniment developed in the Baroque era. Basso continuo is most often performed using two instruments:

one that can play harmonies (e.g. harpsichord) and one that can play a bass line (e.g. cello).

**Beijing opera** - A style of Chinese opera that was developed in the Beijing court in 1790; relies on stable character types and incorporates symbolic actions, costumes, and makeup.

**Binary form** - A two-part musical form, usually mapped as A B.

**Blackface minstrelsy** - The practice of portraying African American stereotypes with the aid of dark makeup. Although primarily associated with the 19th-century minstrel show, neither blackface nor minstrelsy have entirely disappeared from American society.

**Blue note** - A lowered note (usually the third, fifth, or seventh scale degree); typical of the blues style.

**Blues** - An African American musical style dating from the early 20th century. Distinctive characteristics of this style include lowered notes, slides, and a 12-bar structure.

**Break** - A passage in dance music in which the melody recedes and we hear only the rhythm section.

**Breaking** - The athletic style of dancing that developed alongside hip-hop music.

**Broadside** - A single-sheet publication format popular from the 16th to 19th centuries.

**Broadside ballad** - A broadside containing the text to a new song, usually meant to be sung to a familiar melody that is named but not notated.

**Broca's area** - The area of the brain that controls the physical production of speech. This area takes in sound, converts it to neuronal representations, then translates it to the physical motion involved in making speech sounds.

**Bugle call** - A brief melody played on the bugle or trumpet for the purpose of signalling a military maneuver or structuring military life. The best-known bugle call, "Taps," is played at US military funerals.

**Cadence** - A harmonic gesture that brings a phrase to an end.

**Call and response** - A texture in which two parts exchange melodic material.

**Calypso** - A song tradition associated with Trinidadian Carnival. Although the musical style of calypso songs has changed over the past two centuries, their lyrics are characterized by clever wordplay and sociopolitical topics.

**Canon** - A texture in which all parts carry the same melody, but enter at points separated by a set distance.

**Canonical hours** - A sequence of eight daily church services that structure life in a Benedictine monastery.

**Canso** - A type of troubadour song that addresses the hopeless love a knight feels for the noblewoman he serves. Such love, termed *fin'amor*, cannot be consummated, for the knight has sworn fidelity to the woman's husband.

**Cantata** - A multi-part work for voice(s) and accompaniment. 17th-century cantatas were often for solo voice and basso continuo, while later cantatas were more often for soloists, choir, and orchestra. Cantatas can be secular (a chamber cantata) or sacred (a church cantata).

**Carnival** - The public celebration that immediately precedes the period of Lent in many Catholic-majority countries.

**Castanets** - Small wooden clappers that are held in each hand and used to tap rhythms in the flamenco tradition.

**Caste system** - A system of social organization in which roles are hereditary and immutable. Caste membership generally determines an individual's social class, marriage prospects, and trade.

**Castrati** - Male singers who were castrated before puberty to prevent their voices from changing. Castrati were first used in Catholic church choirs, but later took the leading male roles in Italian opera. The practice was made illegal in Italy in 1861.

**Cerebral cortex** - The outermost layer of the brain. It is this area that controls complex thought.

**Cerebrum** - The outermost layer of the brain that gives it a wrinkled appearance. Both Broca's and Wernicke's Areas are situated in the Cerebrum.

**Chamber music** - Music intended for one-on-a-part performance in a small space; usually refers to compositions that require between two and eight performers.

**Chamber orchestra** - A small orchestra, containing around twenty performers.

**Chanter** - The pipe on a set of bagpipes that contains holes, allowing the player to sound nine distinct pitches.

**Conceptual art** - A work of art to which the underlying idea is more important than its visual characteristics.

**Chest voice** - A mode of vocal production used to access notes in the medium and low ranges; so named because the singer feels the vibrations in their chest. When chest voice is carried into the high range, it sounds quite different from head voice.

**Chord** - A collection of pitches, usually three or four, that belong to the same mode, are separated by intervals of a third, and are often sounded simultaneously to support a harmony.

**Chord progression** - A sequence of chords; certain chord progressions are common, while others are unusual and might sound displeasing.

**Choreographer** - The person who determines the physical movements (choreography) of a dance.

**Chorus** - In most popular songs, the part of the melody that is frequently repeated, and always with the same text; usually the most memorable part of a song.

**Chromatic** - Using notes beyond those included in the major or minor scale.

**Classical** - A period in Western music history that is typically considered to extend from 1750 to 1815. This period is characterized by restrained harmonies, balanced phrases, and transparent textures.

**Clawhammer** - A style of banjo playing for which the performer sounds melody notes by striking the four melody strings with the fingernail of their index or middle finger and sounds drone notes by plucking the short fifth string with their thumb.

**Coda** - A concluding passage added to the end of a composition that otherwise adheres to a set musical form or process.

**Col legno** - A technique for playing a string instrument that involves turning the bow upside down and bouncing the wooden stick on the strings.

**Commission** - The process by which a performer, producer, or organization hires a composer to create a new musical work.

**Common-practice tonality** - The system that governed the use of harmonies in Western music between the 17th and early 20th centuries; still relevant to most music produced today.

**Compound duple meter** - A type of duple meter in which each of the two pulses is subdivided into three subpulses; can be counted ONE-two-three-FOUR-five-six.

**Concept album** - An album (collection of songs) that is unified by a coherent narrative or mode of presentation.

**Concert overture** - A descriptive single-movement orchestral work.

**Concerto** - A work for instrumental soloist(s) with orchestral accompaniment.

**Conductor** - An ensemble leader who does not play an instrument but instead keeps time, often using a baton, and guides the performance using gestures.

**Conjunct motion** - Melodic motion in which the pitches move up and down the scale; the opposite of conjunct motion.

**Contrast** - The relationship between two musical passages that do not share recognizable melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic features.

**Copyist** - The person who copies out a written work; before printing technology became cheap and accessible, this role was crucial to the proliferation and performance of musical works.

**Corpus callosum** - A bundle of fibers that divide the two halves of the brain and transmit messages from one side of the brain to the other.

**Countermelody** - A secondary melody that complements the principal melody.

**Covert** - A term applied to a work of art that has a hidden meaning.

**Crescendo** - The process of gradually getting louder.

**Cyclical technique** - An approach to composition in which the various parts of a large-scale work are unified by recurring melodic material.

**Da capo form** - A form used principally in 17th- and 18th-century arias containing two contrasting sections and an instruction to the singer to repeat the first section upon reaching the end of the notated music. The form can therefore be diagrammed A B A.

**Dactylic hexameter** - A poetic meter in which a phrase is divided into six feet, each of which contains a long and two short syllables.

**Dance caller** - The person who calls out instructions to dancers while they perform a social dance with established moves, most of which require the interaction of partners; common in square dancing and contra dancing.

**Dance suite** - A genre of music in which each movement is inspired by a courtly European dance. Every dance suite contains an Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue, in addition to other dances. This genre emerged in 17th-century Germany.

**Decrescendo** - The process of gradually getting softer (interchangeable with “diminuendo”).

**Development** - In sonata form, the middle passage between the Exposition and the Recapitulation, in which themes from the Exposition are explored and transformed. In a fugue, the bulk of the composition, between the exposition and the final subject entrance, during which the subject is heard in a variety of keys and possibly undergoes specific transformations.

**Diaspora** - All members of a population that has been spread across various nations or regions (e.g. the African diaspora contains all people of African

ancestry found throughout the world).

**Diegetic music** - Music that is part of a dramatic scene and is therefore audible to the characters in that scene.

**Diminuendo** - The process of gradually getting softer (interchangeable with “decrescendo”).

**Disco** - A style of dance music that emerged in New York City in the 1970s; characterized by a fast tempo, quadruple meter, syncopated bass lines, and dense textures.

**Disjunct motion** - Melodic motion in which the pitches do not simply move up and down the scale but are instead separated by large intervals; the opposite of conjunct motion.

**Dissonance** - The effect produced by simultaneously-sounded pitches that are separated either by a very small interval (e.g. a minor or major second) or an interval not present in triad-based harmonies (e.g. an augmented fourth or major seventh). Although the perception of dissonance is rooted in musical context and personal taste, it strikes most listeners as uncomfortable.

**Dominant** - The fifth degree (note) in a major or minor scale, or the harmony based on that note.

**Dotted rhythm** - A rhythmic pattern in which pairs of notes are of unequal length, the first being three times as long as the second.

**Double reed** - A type of instrument that utilizes a pair of reeds protruding from one end to produce sound. The player blows through these reeds, causing them to vibrate. This family includes the oboe, English horn, and bassoon.

**Double tracking** - An audio recording technique in which a performer sings or plays along with their own prerecorded performance, usually to produce a stronger sound than can be obtained with a single voice or instrument.

**Downbeat** - The first beat in a measure or bar.

**Dubbing** - The process by which additional audio tracks are added to a studio recording.

**Duple meter** - A meter in which pulses (beats) are grouped by twos, usually in a strong-weak pattern.

**Dynamic level** - The loudness or softness of a musical passage.

**Epic** - A lengthy story concerning a quest or heroic adventure. Epics are often ancient, having been orally transmitted for many generations, and are frequently associated with a nation or ethnic group.



**Episode** - In a fugue, a passage in which the subject is not heard.

**Ethnomusicologist** - A scholar who specializes in indigenous music traditions.

**Exoticism** - The exploitation of a culture for the purpose portraying it as foreign, unusual, exciting, or titillating; relies on stereotypes instead of authentic representation.

**Exposition** - In sonata form, the section in which the Primary and Secondary Themes are introduced in their respective keys. In a fugue, the opening passage in which the subject is heard once in every voice.

**Extramusical** - Anything related to a musical work that is not explicitly conveyed in a performance.

**Fanfare** - A short, martial melody, usually played on trumpets or other brass instruments, that most often emphasizes the first, third, and fifth scale degrees; can introduce a performance or be integrated into a larger work as a dramatic signifier.

**Fasil** - A suite of six to eight movements in the Ottoman tradition.

**Falsetto** - The head voice range in male singers; this technique allows men to sing in what is typically a female range.

**Field holler** - A style of unaccompanied singing, often improvised, used by enslaved African Americans to accompany work, communicate, or express emotions.

**Field recording** - The act of making recordings on location, usually of non-professional musicians in the rural communities where they live and work; also the recorded object itself.

**Fixed composition** - A musical work the contents of which are firmly established ahead of performance by a composer. Every performance of a fixed composition will be recognizable as a performance of the same work.

**Flamenco** - A style of music and dance native to Spain that features guitar accompanied by complex rhythms both clapped and played on the castanets.

**Florentine Camerata** - A group of intellectuals who gathered in Florence in the late 16th century and are responsible for developing European opera.

**Folk revivals** - In the United States, a period of widespread interest in folk music beginning in the 1930s and peaking in the 1960s.

**Folk rock** - A genre that emerged in the United States in the 1960s that blends elements of folk and rock music, usually by adding electric guitars and drums to songs that would otherwise qualify as folk.

**Foot** - In poetry, the basic metric unit; analogous to a measure or bar in music.



**Forbrain** - The anterior (forward-most) region of the brain.

**Form** - The organization of a musical work in time; can be mapped using terms or letter names.

**Formalist** - A term used in the Soviet Union to condemn art that did not meet the expectations set forth by the doctrine of Socialist Realism. Formalist art was usually described as being preoccupied with its own qualities instead of advancing the goals of the revolution.

**Forte** - A loud dynamic.

**Fortissimo** - A very loud dynamic, louder than forte.

**Freemasonry** - A system of secret fraternal organizations that traces its roots to the stonemasons' craft guilds established in the fourteenth century. Freemasonry is rich with lore and symbolism, and initiates progress through degrees as they become privy to its secrets.

**Fret** - A raised piece of wood or metal on a fingerboard that allows the player to easily stop the string at a specific point in order to sound a pitch. Frets are common on instruments in the lute class (e.g. the guitar).

**Frontal lobe** - The anterior (forward-most) lobe of the brain.

**Fugue** - A type of composition in which a melodic subject is introduced in each of the voices (usually numbering three or four) at the outset. Statements of the subject then alternate with episodes in which the subject is not present.

**Gamelan** - An instrumental ensemble native to Indonesia, consisting primarily of bronze gongs and metallophones.

**Genre** - A way of categorizing musical works based on perceived characteristics, use, or market.

**Gesamtkunstwerk** (German; English: "total artwork") - Composer Richard Wagner's term for an all-encompassing work that brings together varied art forms--music, dance, gesture, poetry, image--into a single, ideal medium of artistic expression. He used this term to describe his late operas.

**Glissando** - When an instrumentalist slides from one pitch to another.

**Goliard** - A medieval cleric who had studied at a European university but then grew disaffected with religious life. Goliards are remembered for their satirical poems and songs.

**Gregorian chant** - A body of monophonic vocal music developed in the medieval Catholic church.

**Guru** - In the North Indian tradition, a master who passes on musical knowledge to an apprentice.

**Harlem Renaissance** - A 1920s intellectual, social, and artistic movement centered in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City.

**Harmonics** (string technique) - A technique whereby the player touches the string lightly at a specific place while bowing, thereby producing an airy, high pitch.

**Harmony** - The pitches that support the melody; can refer generally to non-melodic voices or specifically to chords.

**Head voice** - A mode of vocal production used to access notes in the high range; so named because the singer feels the vibrations in their head.

**Head** - In jazz, a composition that is used as the basis for improvisation.

**Heterophonic texture** - A musical texture in which all melodic instruments/voices perform essentially the same melody at the same time, but with individual variations determined by the capabilities of the instrument.

**Hindbrain** - The posterior (back) region of the brain.

**Hocket** - A technique by which two or more voices contribute different notes to a single continuous melody.

**Homophonic texture** - A musical texture in which a single prominent melody is supported by accompaniment.

**Homorhythmic** - A musical texture in which all of the voices move in the same rhythm.

**Hot jazz** - In the 1920s, social dance music played primarily by African American bands; defined in contrast to sweet jazz, which was played primarily by white bands and was more rhythmically and timbrally restrained.

**Idiomatic** - Tailored to the capabilities and limitations of a specific instrument.

**Imitation** - A compositional technique whereby the voices in a polyphonic texture enter one at a time with similar melodic material.

**Impresario** - An impresario takes on the presentation of art as a financial venture, overseeing all elements of a production.

**Improvisation** - Composition during the act of performance. Improvisation is usually guided by norms and practices that belong to a given tradition.

**Intertextual** - Concerning connections or exchanges between distinct creative works.

**Interval** - The distance between two pitches.

**Jali** - In West Africa, a member of a hereditary caste of musicians responsible for transmitting stories and songs.

**Jazz combo** - A small jazz ensemble with one player per instrument.

**Jim Crow** - Legalized racial segregation in the United States. Jim Crow laws were in place between 1877 and the mid-1960s and were most common in the South.

**Kumbengo** - The repetitive melodic pattern--usually played on a kora, balafon, or ngoni--that underpins various types of singing in the West African jali tradition.

**Lead sheet** - A notated composition in the jazz tradition. A chart indicates the melody and harmonies of a composition, but it does not indicate instrumentation. In addition, performers will alter the melody and improvise solos over the harmonies, meaning that various performances of the same chart will sound quite different.

**Legato** - A smooth, connected form of articulation.

**Lent** - In the Catholic church calendar, the forty days of fasting and penitence that lead up to Easter.

**Libretto** - The words that are sung in a musical drama, such as an opera or oratorio.

**Lining out** - A hymn-singing practice in which a leader calls out fragments of text before the congregation slowly sings the passage. This approach to hymn singing was common before hymnals were readily available and churchgoers had the ability to read music.

**Liturgy** - All of the required words, music, and actions that constitute a church service.

**Lindy Hop** - An influential dance of the Swing era, introduced in 1928 by a pair of African American dancers.

**Low-frequency oscillation** - In synthesized music, the use of low frequencies to produce a pulsing or vibrating effect

**Lute** - A class of plucked string instruments in which the strings extend along a neck and pass over a closed resonating chamber; the guitar is a member of the lute class.

**Lutheran chorale** - A hymn for use in the Lutheran church; all chorales were originally monophonic.

**Lutheran chorale cantata** - A special type of Lutheran church cantata that incorporates chorale texts and melodies.

**Lutheran church cantata** - A multi-movement work for soloists, choir, and orchestra intended for use in a Lutheran worship service; typical in 17th- and 18th-century Germany.

**Luthier** - A craftsperson who builds and repairs wooden musical instruments.

**Major mode** - A collection of pitches that can be used to craft melodies and harmonies. The major mode is characterized by a specific sequence of intervals between scale degrees and is often heard as happy, cheerful, or confident.

**Makam** - The system of modes in Turkish music, developed in the Ottoman Empire.

**Makam music** - The classical music of the Turkish tradition.

**March** - A musical composition in duple meter performed at a steady, moderate tempo to which one could march, whether the composition is intended for practical use or concert performance.

**Mass** - Originally, the Catholic church service that includes Communion; other denominations have also adopted this term, and today Mass typically takes place on Sunday morning.

**Mass Ordinary** - The texts that are recited or sung during every Catholic Mass.

**MC** - Short for “master of ceremonies”; in hip-hop, the original designation for the performer, now known as a rapper, who improvises spoken lyrics over the beat.

**Measure** - A unit determined by meter that contains the basic grouping of pulses (e.g. a measure in triple time will contain three beats). Synonymous with “bar.”

**Melisma** - A sequence of notes all sung on a single vowel.

**Melismatic** - Vocal music in which there are many pitches per syllable.

**Melodic motion** - Described in terms of the intervallic relationship between adjacent pitches, which can produce either conjunct or disjunct motion.

**Melodic range** - The span between the low and high notes of a melody; can be small, medium, or large in size.

**Melodic shape** - The shape of a melody, which is determined by the trajectory of the pitches in terms of highness and lowness.

**Melody** - A coherent sequence of notes that, if embedded in a complex texture, is clearly of primary importance.

**Meter** - The grouping of pulses into stable units usually containing two, three, or four pulses.

**Mezzo forte** - A medium-loud dynamic.

**Mezzo piano** - A medium-quiet dynamic.

**Microtones** - Intervals smaller than a half step.

**Midbrain** - The middle region of the brain.

**Mimesis** - The imitation of real-world sounds with instruments or voices.

**Minimalism** - An approach to composition in which a process of gradual transformation is applied to limited musical material.

**Minor mode** - A collection of pitches that can be used to craft melodies and harmonies. The major mode is characterized by a specific sequence of intervals between scale degrees and is often heard as tragic, ominous, or serious.

**Minstrel** - In 12th-century Aquitaine, a travelling musician who spreads the songs of the troubadours.

**Minstrel show** - In the 19th-century United States, a form of entertainment in which performers (usually white) enacted African American stereotypes by darkening their faces with burnt cork or greasepaint, speaking in pseudo-dialect, and portraying established character types through song, dance, and comical sketches.

**Mixed meter** - The alternation between various meters, such that meter is not felt consistently throughout a musical composition.

**Modal jazz** - A jazz genre in which the traditional chords of bebop are replaced by harmonies built on modal scales. Performers focus on melodic development, rhythmic intricacy, timbral variation, and emotional expression.

**Mode** - In music, a system for organizing pitches. The most common modes in Western music are major and minor. Non-Western modal systems include makam and raga.

**Modernism** - An artistic movement of the early 20th century that glorified progress and presented an optimistic view about the future.

**Modulation** - The act of changing from one key (a set of pitches determined by a scale) to another.

**Monophonic** - Having a single melodic line with no accompaniment or countermelodies.

**Multitrack recording** - A technique by which each instrumental or vocal part is recorded on a different track, often not simultaneously, allowing for the creation of a studio recording that cannot be replicated in live performance.

**Murder ballad** - A ballad that tells the tale of a murder, most often concerning a young woman who has been murdered by her lover.

**Music therapy** - The clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a licensed music therapist.

**Musical topic** - A compositional style or technique that has come to be associated

with a specific subject matter (e.g. chromatic scales to represent wind, or horn calls to connote hunting). Topics were first theorized by musicologist Leonard Ratner.

**Nationalism** - Identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.

**New Music** - Experimental art music produced recently by living composers.

**Non-diegetic music** - Music that is heard in tandem with a dramatic scene but that is not a part of the scene and therefore not audible to the characters in that scene.

**Obbligato** (Italian; English: "obligatory") - A term used in the 17th and 18th centuries to refer to a solo instrumental countermelody incorporated into an aria. The term references the fact that such accompaniments cannot be omitted without seriously detracting from the work.

**Octave equivalence** - The idea that pitches whose frequencies are related by powers of two (e.g. 220, 440, 880) are the same note and, to a degree, interchangeable; pitches separated by an octave are therefore assigned the same letter name.

**Offbeat** - A weak pulse (two or four) in quadruple meter, or the weak pulse (two) in duple meter.

**Opera** - A form of staged music drama in which all or part of the text is sung.

**Opus** - Latin for "work;" used to number compositions, usually in the order of creation (e.g. Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is his opus 67).

**Oral tradition** - The means by which stories, customs, and music are passed from generation to generation by word of mouth.

**Oratorio** - An unstaged dramatic work for solo vocalists, choir, and accompanying ensemble that tells a story using sung text and music.

**Orchestration** - The act of adapting a composition for orchestra, which involves assigning elements of the melody and harmony to different instruments; also the resulting product.

**Organicism** - A compositional technique by which all parts of a musical work are interconnected; in typical cases, the work seems to grow out of a single motif.

**Orientalism** - The stereotyped representation of Eastern cultures in Western works of art.

**Ornamentation** - The addition of trills, runs, or other embellishments to a melody. Ornamentation is sometimes indicated in the notated score but often not.

**Ostinato** - A repeating melodic or rhythmic figure.

**Overt** - A term applied to a work of art the meaning of which is entirely apparent.

**Overtone** - A higher-pitched frequency that is activated when a pitch is produced.

**Overtone series** - A sequence of higher-pitched frequencies that are activated every time a pitch is produced.

**Overtone singing** - A style of singing employed primarily by men for which the performer produces a single low pitch but changes the shape of their mouth to accentuate various overtones.

**Overture** - An instrumental work that opens a musical drama. Overtures precede operas, oratorios, ballets, musicals, and other forms. Overtures can also be composed as stand-alone works.

**Panning** - A technique used in two-channel recording by which a sound gradually transitions from one channel to the other; this effect is most evident when one listens using headphones, in which case the sound will move from one ear to the other.

**Parody** - A musical parody is produced when someone supplies new lyrics to a familiar melody.

**Participatory** - A music event in which the boundary between the roles of performers and audience members is indeterminate or nonexistent; with “presentational,” one of two ends of a spectrum of music event types.

**Pavan** - A type of slow, stately court dance popular in 16th-century Europe.

**Pentatonic** - A melody that uses only five pitches.

**Performance practice** - Non-notated practices that are essential to the accurate presentation of a musical work.

**Period instruments** - Instruments that were used in a specific historical period. This term is most often applied to performances of works from before 1900 on instruments built to meet historic specifications.

**Piano** - A quiet dynamic.

**Pianissimo** - A very quiet dynamic, quieter than piano.

**Pitch** - The “highness” or “lowness” of a sound; can be represented as a frequency or a note name.

**Pizzicato** - A technique for playing a string instrument by which the performer plucks the strings with their finger.

**Plantation song** - A popular song written ostensibly from an African American perspective that expresses a nostalgic yearning for plantation life in the South.



Such songs, often written using dialect and performed in blackface, were popular between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century.

**Polka** - A fast dance in duple meter, performed by couples, that was first popularized in the 1830s.

**Polyphonic texture** - A musical texture in which no single voice has the melody and all are equally important.

**Polytonality** - When harmonies in multiple keys are sounded at the same time.

**Presentational** - A music event in which there is a clear boundary between the roles of performers and audience members; with “participatory,” one of two ends of a spectrum of music event types.

**Producer** - In contemporary popular music, the person who designs the overall sound of a track. A producer might program beats, adjust audio levels, or contribute in a variety of other ways before, during, and after the recording process.

**Program music** - An instrumental composition that tells a story or paints a picture. Program music never includes a sung or spoken text, but it is always associated with a printed text. This might range from a descriptive title to a lengthy essay.

**Prosody** - The pattern of accented and unaccented syllables in poetry.

**Protest song** - A song intended to protest a corporate or political action or regime. Such songs can carry overt (apparent) or covert (hidden) meaning.

**Psychedelic rock** - Rock music inspired by or representative of psychedelic culture, which centers on the use of mind-altering substances; a category associated primarily with the late 1960s US.

**Pulse** - A regularly-spaced rhythmic emphasis; synonymous with “beat.”

**Quadruple meter** - A meter in which pulses (beats) are grouped by fours, usually in a strong-weak-medium-weak pattern.

**Quadratonic** - A melody that uses only four pitches.

**Quotation** - The technique of incorporating a familiar melody into a composition for the purpose of conveying information to the listener.

**Raga** - A musical mode in the North Indian system. Ragas are organized into families, and each has a unique name. Unlike the Western scale, a raga contains more than just a set of hierarchically-organized pitches. It also contains information about pitch order, how to approach and ornament pitches, characteristic melodic motifs, and affective associations.

**Ragamala** - A miniature painting that captures the character of a raga.

**Rastafarianism** - A belief system that emerged in Jamaica when regent Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1930; combines biblical faith with the belief that Selassie is (or was) Christ.

**Recapitulation** - In sonata form, the section in which all of the themes from the Exposition are heard for a second time, but in the home key.

**Recitative** - A style of singing that is modelled on dramatic speech. In recitative, there is minimal repetition and seldom a recognizable melody. The rhythm is determined by text stresses. Recitative is usually sparsely accompanied, using only a few instruments. It is used in opera and oratorio to propel the plot forward.

**Refrain** - A passage of music that returns throughout a vocal work.

**Reggae** - A genre of music that developed in Jamaica beginning around 1968; characterized by a medium tempo, quadruple meter, off-beat accents, electric instruments (organ, guitars, bass) that play interlocking rhythmic patterns, and lyrics concerning social justice and Rastafarian beliefs.

**Register** - A part of an instrument or vocalist's range; can be high, middle, or low.

**Renaissance** - A period in Western music history that is typically bookmarked by the rise of humanist thought (ca. 1400) and the invention of opera (ca. 1600).

**Repetition** - The relationship between two identical musical passages.

**Reprise** - The return of a musical number in the context of a theatrical performance.

**Requiem** - The Catholic funeral Mass.

**Rhythm** - The temporal aspect of sound; can be described as the pattern of "on" and "off" states exhibited by any sound as time passes.

**Riff** - A brief, repeated melodic fragment in popular music.

**Ritornello** - A passage of instrumental music that returns throughout a composition. This term is usually applied to music of the Baroque era.

**Romantic** - A period in Western music history that is typically considered to extend from 1815 to 1900. This period is characterized by expressive harmonies, experimental forms, and the rise of program music.

**Rondo form** - A musical form in which a refrain, introduced at the outset, alternates with contrasting material (e.g. A B A C A B A).

**Rounded binary form** - A type of two-part form in which both parts end with similar melodic material (e.g. [a a'] [b a'']).

**Royalties** - The profit share due to creative artists when their work is sold or reproduced in any form, including sheet music, recordings, and live

performances.

**Sacred Harp singing** - A shape-note singing practice that relies on the Sacred Harp hymnal, first published in 1844.

**Salon** - A gathering in the home of a wealthy art lover for the purpose of engaging with elite culture in intimate surroundings.

**Saz semâisi** - The concluding movement in a *fasıl* suite of the Ottoman tradition. The form alternates between unique *hane* passages and a *teslim* refrain. The final *hane* is in a lively dance meter.

**Scale** - A sequence of pitches containing the principle notes that can be used to compose or improvise in a given key. A scale is characterized by the intervals between the notes, which are usually major or minor seconds but can also be thirds.

**Scenario** - The sequence of scenes in a ballet.

**Scenarist** - The person who develops the scenario for a ballet.

**Scenic cantata** - A staged dramatic work for vocal soloists, choir, and orchestra that includes costumes, pantomime, and dancing; developed by Carl Orff.

**Score** - A document in which all parts of a composition are notated. In most cases, only the conductor reads from the score, while instrumentalists read from individual parts that include only their own music and singers read from vocal scores that include only the voice parts.

**Session musician** - A professional musician who makes studio recordings for use in film, television, or the popular music industry.

**Sequence** - The repetition of melodic material at a different pitch level.

**Shape-note singing** - A tradition of hymn singing that relies on notation in which the scale degrees are indicated with differently-shaped noteheads; flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries, but still widely practiced today.

**Silk Road** - The trade route, spanning from Italy to Japan, that shaped Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia beginning in the second century BCE.

**Single reed** - A type of instrument that utilizes a single reed embedded in a mouthpiece to produce sound. The player blows across the reed, causing it to vibrate. This family includes the clarinets and saxophones.

**Singspiel** - A form of German comic opera in which sung arias are interspersed with spoken dialogue; can be translated as “song play.”

**Soca** - A dance music genre associated with Trinidadian Carnival that dates to the 1970s.

**Socialist Realism** - The Soviet doctrine requiring that all art portray the communist revolution in a positive light. Art was also expected to be optimistic and accessible.

**Sonata form** - A typical form for the first movements of instrumental works in the European tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. The form contains three principal sections (the Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation) and an optional fourth (the Coda). The thematic contents and key areas of the Exposition and Recapitulation are tightly controlled.

**Song cycle** - A set of songs that work together to tell a story or explore an emotional state.

**Song plugger** - In the first half of the 20th century, a music publishing company employee who was responsible for advertising songs either by performing them in public or convincing professional singers to adopt them.

**Soprano** - A singer with a high range, usually female.

**Source music** - Music in a film or television show that is generated from within the scene and is therefore audible to both the viewer and the characters.

**Southern Appalachians** - The mountainous region traversing the states of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia.

**Spiritual** - A folk hymn from the African American tradition.

**Square dancing** - A form of social dancing in which four sets of couples face one another as the sides of a square and engage in a sequence of interactive movements.

**Staccato** - An articulation that is short and accented.

**Staff notation** - A system of notation that developed in Europe beginning in the 11th century and is in common use today. Noteheads are placed on a 5-line staff to indicate pitch and register. Rhythm is indicated by the appearance of the note.

**Stop time** - A style of accompaniment in jazz and blues that is characterized by chords sounded on the downbeat and followed by space that is occupied only by a soloist.

**Strain** - In certain forms, including those of marches and ragtime, the term used for a unique section (e.g. the B strain).

**String quartet** - Can refer either to a chamber ensemble made up of two violins, a viola, and a cello, or to a piece of music composed for such an ensemble.

**Strophic song** - A song in which all verses are sung to the same melody.

**Subgenre** - A means of dividing musical genres into increasingly specific subcategories.

**Subject** - In a fugue, the unaccompanied melody that is introduced at the outset and then heard in all voices over the course of the composition.

**Suite** - A multi-movement instrumental work that does not adhere to a standard formal structure (e.g. symphony).

**Sweet jazz** - In the 1920s, social dance music played primarily by white bands; defined in contrast to hot jazz, which was played primarily by African American bands and was more rhythmically and timbrally daring.

**Swing** - A style of dance music that emerged in the 1930s and is characterized by “swung” rhythms, which are produced when the first in a pair of notes is held for twice as long as the second, resulting in a long-short pattern; also refers to the accompanying style of dance.

**Syllabic** - Vocal music in which there is one pitch per syllable.

**Sympathetic strings** - Strings on an instrument that are intended to vibrate in sympathy with sounded pitches, thereby influencing the timbre and resonance of the instrument.

**Symphonic poem** - A descriptive single-movement orchestral work that portrays a scene, tells a story, or communicates a philosophical idea; popular in the late 19th century.

**Symphony** - A genre of orchestral music. A symphony usually contains four movements, the first of which is in sonata form. The interior movements are respectively slow and dance-inspired, although the order is not set. The final movement is fast.

**Syncopation** - A rhythmic pattern that deemphasizes strong beats and emphasizes off-beats (that is, the second halves of beats).

**Syntax** - The orderly arrangement of sounds in a system.

**Tablature** - A type of instrument-specific notation that provides the player with visual instructions regarding where to place their fingers on a fretboard or keyboard. Guitar tablature, or “tab,” is common today.

**Tango** - A style of dance and music that emerged in the slums of Buenos Aires, Argentina, in the late 19th century.

**Tape loops** - Short audio recordings made on magnetic tape that can be endlessly looped. The use of tape loops was common amongst early minimalist composers.

**Tempo** - The rate at which the pulse is felt.

**Ternary form** - A three-part form that can be diagrammed as A B A.

**Text painting** - A technique by which the composer translates the meaning of a text into sound (e.g. sets the word “falling” to a descending melodic line).

**Throat singing** - Any of several variants of overtone singing, for which the performer produces a single low pitch but changes the shape of their mouth to accentuate various overtones.

**Through-composed** - A vocal composition in which each stanza of the poem is sung to unique music, in contrast to a strophic setting.

**Timbre** - The quality of a sound, determined by its overtones.

**Tin Pan Alley** - The music publishing industry that flourished in New York City between the 1890s and 1940s; so named because many of the publishers stationed their headquarters on the same block, and the sound of their many pianos was said to resemble the clanging of tin pans.

**Tonic scale degree** - The first and most important note of a scale; the “home” pitch to which melody and harmony tend to return.

**Transcription** - The act of notating music.

**Tremolo** - Rapid articulation on a single pitch or, sometimes, quick alternation between two pitches. On string instruments, tremolo involves moving the bow back and forth very quickly to produce a fluttering sound.

**Tresillo** - A syncopated rhythm common in Latin American music. This rhythm, which occurs in a duple- or quadruple-meter framework and can be counted as 3+3+2, has its roots in West Africa.

**Trill** - A rapid oscillation between two adjacent pitches.

**Triple meter** - A meter in which pulses (beats) are grouped by threes, usually in a strong-weak-weak pattern.

**Trobairitz** - A 12th-century Aquitanian noblewoman who wrote refined love songs; the female counterpart to a troubadour.

**Underscoring** - Music in a film or television show that is audible to the viewer but not to the on-screen characters.

**Variation** - The relationship between two musical passages that share recognizable melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic features, but that are not identical. Also, a compositional technique in which a foundational piece of music is altered in a ways that distinguishes it from the source while leaving the source recognizable.

**Velum** - A common material in the production of medieval manuscripts; most often made from dried sheep skin.

**Verbunkos** - A style of dance music performed by Romani musicians; can be roughly divided into two parts: the slow, expressive *lassan* and the lively *friska*,

- which features simple harmonies and increases in tempo.
- Vernacular** - The language spoken by the people in a given area; can also refer to folk or popular music traditions that are comprehensible to the average citizen.
- Verse** - In most popular songs, the part of the melody to which the same words are never sung twice; usually alternates with the chorus.
- Vibrato** - A wobble added to a pitch.
- Vida** - A medieval biography of a troubadour.
- Viol consort** - An ensemble of viols of various sizes, ranging from treble to bass. This was a common chamber ensemble in 16th-century Europe.
- Volume** - The loudness or quietness of sound; can be specified in terms of amplitude (specific) or dynamic marking (contextual).
- Virtuoso** - One who is highly skilled at playing an instrument.
- Waltz** - A moderately-paced dance in triple meter, performed by couples, that dates from the 18th century.
- Wayang wong** - A narrative dance tradition from Java, performed to the accompaniment of gamelan music.
- Wernicke's Area** - The specific area of the brain that processes understanding of language and construction of meaningful thoughts.
- Zither** - A class of plucked or hammered string instruments in which the strings extend across a closed resonating chamber; familiar examples include the autoharp and hammered dulcimer.