



~ A Glossary of Music Terms ~

A

A: 1. The musical pitch relating to 440 oscillations per second of vibration, or any **octave** transposition of that pitch. 2. The key of A.

Absolute Music: Music without associations outside of itself, in contrast to **program music**.

Absolute Pitch: see **perfect pitch**.

A Cappella: "In the manner of the chapel". Sung music without instrumental accompaniment.

Accidentals: **Sharps**, **flats**, or **natural** signs that raise or lower a given diatonic pitch to deviate from its **key signature**.

Accompaniment: A vocal or instrumental part that supports the primary part, or provides background for a soloist.

Achromatic: See **diatonic**.

Acoustic: Any instrument that can provide sound without the use of electronic amplification.

Acoustics: 1. The science relating to the creation and dissipation of sound waves. 2. The way in which sound production is affected by the physical properties of the room or chamber in which they are produced.

Advent: Christian religious observance which takes place in the four weeks immediately preceding Christmas.

Aeolian Mode: A medieval **mode** whose scale pattern is that of playing A to A on the white keys of a piano. This scale is also called the natural minor scale.

Agnus Dei: "Lamb of God". In the **Mass**, the fifth part of the **ordinary**.

Air: A song or melody.

Alberti Bass: A pattern of bass notes that outlines the chord being sounded in the pattern low-high-middle-high.

Albumblatt: (*Ger.*) a page or leaf from a book, or a short, easy piece.

Allemande: (*Fr.*) "German." A stately 16th-century German dance, initially in a duple meter. During the 17th and 18th centuries, it was used as the first movement of the suite.

Alteration: The use of a **sharp** or **flat** to raise or lower a pitch from its **natural** state.

Altered Chord: A chord in which a note has been changed from its normal position, usually **chromatically**.

Alto: 1. In most choirs, the lowest female vocal part. Occasionally, extremely high **tenors** may be said to sing this part. 2. An instrument in the alto range. 3. A **viola**.

Alto Clef: The C **clef** falling on third line of the staff, in modern practice, is usually only used by the **viola**.

Analysis: The study of the form and structure of music.

Answer: In a **fugue**, the second entry of the **subject**.

Antecedent: The first phrase of a musical **period**. In a **fugue**, the **subject**.

Anthem: A choral or vocal composition, often with a religious or political lyric, with or without accompaniment, written either for performance in a church, or another place with significance to the song itself.

Antithesis: In the **fugue**, the **answer**.

Aria: A musical work usually found in an **opera** or **oratorio**, which generally dwells on a single emotional theme of one of the characters.

Arietta: A short **aria**.

Arpeggio: The notes of a chord played in succession to one another, rather than simultaneously. A broken chord.

Arrangement: An adaptation of a given composition into a form other than as originally composed.

Ars Antiqua: "Old Art". Refers to the old musical practices of Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries.

Ars Nova: "New Art". A term invented by Philippe De Vitry to describe the music of his era, the 14th century, as opposed to the music of earlier generations.

Art Song: A serious vocal composition, generally for voice and piano. Denotes a self-contained work, as opposed to an *aria*.

Atonal: Music that lacks a tonal center, or in which all pitches carry equal importance.

Augmentation: The lengthening of note values used in a *theme* to alter the melody without changing the pitches.

Augmented: Raised, or enlarged. Generally refers to the raising of a pitch *chromatically* by one half step.

Augmented Chord: A chord, which contains a *root*, a major *third*, and an augmented *fifth*.

Augmented Sixth Chord: A *chord* which contains an augmented *sixth* above the bass, in addition to various other tones, which determine whether the chord is a *German Sixth Chord*, *French Sixth Chord*, *Italian Sixth Chord*, *Neapolitan Sixth Chord*, or *Doubly Augmented Sixth Chord*.

Authentic Cadence: A *cadence* that starts of the *fifth* of the key, and resolves to the *tonic*.

B

B: The key of B, or in the German musical system, B-flat.

Bagatelle: A short light or whimsical piece, usually written for piano.

Ballad: 1. A simple song. 2. A song that tells a story.

Ballet: A theatrical dance form with a story, sets, and music.

Band: An instrumental ensemble, usually consisting of percussion, woodwind, and brass instruments, and excluding strings.

Baritone: A low male singing voice between *tenor* and *bass*.

Baroque Period: The musical era from roughly 1600 to 1750 A.D., characterized by the establishment of major and minor tonality, rather than *modes*, and the introduction of *opera*.

Bass: "Low." 1. The lowest male singing voice, below *baritone*. 2. The lowest part in a piece of music. 3. The lowest instrument in a musical work. 4. In the *violin family*, the lowest instrument.

Bass Clef: The *F clef* indicating the fourth line of the staff. Used in combination with the *treble clef* to make the *grand staff*.

Basso Continuo: "Continuous Bass", sometimes referred to as "thorough bass". Used in *Baroque* music, a continuo is a *bass* line that repeats throughout an entire work, or section of a work. Played by the lowest instrument, a continuo usually consisted of a bass line, and a series of *figures*.

Battaglia: "Battle". A composition that imitates the sounds and feel of battle, and martial music.

Bequadro: A *natural* sign.

Berceuse: A *lullaby*.

Binary Form: A two-part song form consisting of an initial section, which is then followed by a contrasting section. (AB), see *song forms*.

Bitonal: The use of two different keys, or *tonic* centers at the same time.

Borrowed Chord: Use of a chord in a key in which it is not *diatonic*, or the substitution of a chord from a different key into a work.

Bouts: In the *violin* and *guitar* families, the curves in the sides of the instrument, especially the C-shaped inward curves that form the *waist*.

Bow: The device used in the string instrument families, such as the *violin family*, consisting of a wooden stick, pointed at one end, and strung with horsehair. The bow is drawn across the strings to generate a tone.

C

C: The key of C.

C Clef: A *clef* that indicates which line represents C on a staff, as opposed to a *G clef*, or an *F clef*.

Cabalistic Numerological Symbolism: A method of imbedding hidden messages in music, by using a code of numbers based on which notes are used, their durations, arrangement, subdivision, etc--whereby the composer made symbolic reference to specific persons, places, or things and/or events in some way associated with the music.

Cacophony: A discordant or dissonant sound.

Cadence: The melodic or harmonic ending of a piece, or the sections or *phrases* within a piece. A chord progression that gives a feeling of resolution, or conclusion.

Cadenza: An extended solo passage, usually near the end of a piece, improvised by the performer, or sometimes written out by the composer.

Cambiata: In *counterpoint*, a *nonharmonic* tone inserted between a *dissonance* and its *resolution*.

Camera: Secular chamber music, as opposed to church music, or *chiesa*.

Camerata: Small art or music schools dating from the 16th century.

Cancel: A natural sign, used to remove a previously applied accidental.

Canon: "Rule". In counterpoint, a melody that is repeated exactly by a different voice, entering a short interval after the original voice.

Cantata: "Sung". A multi-movement vocal work for concert or church performance by a choir, sometimes soloists, and an instrumental ensemble.

Canticle: A non-metrical hymn or song.

Canto Fermo: A cantus firmus.

Cantus Firmus: "Fixed Song". A pre-existing melody, used as the foundation for a polyphonic work. Used in counterpoint, Canto Firmus were usually based on ecclesiastical chant.

Canzona: A song, or ballad, or "in the style of a song".

Capellmeister: Kapellmeister.

Cappella: See a cappella.

Cello: In the violin family, the tenor instrument, played while held between the knees.

Chamber Music: Music for small ensemble.

Chanson: A song, usually secular. This term is usually applied to works composed during the Medieval and Renaissance periods, though many twentieth-century composers have also applied the term to their own works.

Chiesa: "Church". Church music, as opposed to chamber music, or camera.

Chorale: A German Lutheran hymn tune.

Chord: A set of notes, usually three or four, played simultaneously--usually containing a root, and other tones which have a tonal relationship to that root.

Chordal: A form of music in which a single melody is accompanied by sets of chords, rather than a competing counter melody.

Chromatic: Motion by half steps; or pitches used outside of the diatonic scale in which they normally occur.

Classical Era: The musical period from the late 1700s to the mid 1820s, characterized by more rigidly defined musical forms, increased attention to instrumental music, and the evolution of the symphony.

Clef: The symbol used at the beginning of a staff to indicate which lines and spaces represent which notes. In modern practice, only three clefs are commonly used, the G clef or treble clef, the F clef or bass clef, and the C clef, when used as an alto clef.

Close Harmony: A harmonic voicing technique in which all the parts involved remain as close together as the chords allow, often within a single octave.

Clusters: Groups of notes that are the interval of a second apart from one another.

Coloratura: "Coloring". Elaborate coloration of the melodic line, usually by a vocalist.

Comic Opera: An opera with light-natured music, comedy, and a happy ending. In contrast to grand opera.

Common Chord: A chord composed of a root, third, and fifth.

Common Time: 4/4 meter.

Common Tone: A note that remains the same between two different chords.

Compound Interval: An interval greater than an octave, such as a ninth, or eleventh.

Concert: A public performance of music.

Concertante: A piece for two or more instruments with orchestral accompaniment.

Concerto: A piece for soloist(s) and orchestra.

Consequent: The second phrase in a musical period, in a fugue, the answer.

Consonance: Sounds that are in agreement in terms of physical generation of sound; i.e. sounds found in the harmonic series of a pitch being harmonized, in contrast to dissonance.

Consort: A Renaissance chamber group.

Continuo: Basso continuo.

Counterpoint: The combination of two or more melodic lines played against one another. A horizontal structure built upon competing melodic lines, rather than a chordal setting.

Countertenor: "Against the tenor". The highest male singing voice, above tenor.

Crab Canon: A counterpoint piece in which one part is identical to another, but backwards.

Crescendo: A gradual increase in volume.

Credo: "I believe". In the Mass, the third part of the ordinary. The Creed.

D

D: 1. "Deutsch". D numbers are used instead of **opus** numbers to catalogue works by Schubert 2. The key of D.

Deceptive Cadence: A **cadence** where the **dominant** tonality resolves to any chord other than the **tonic**, most especially when it goes instead to the **sixth**.

Degree: A note of a scale, usually as identified by number. See **second**, **third**, **fourth**, **fifth**, **sixth**, **seventh**, and **octave**.

Descant: 1. Soprano or **tenor** voice. 2. The melodic line or **counterpoint** accompanying an existing melody. 3. The upper part of a **polyphonic** composition.

Descriptive Music: **Program music**.

Development: The elaboration of melodic, thematic, or harmonic progressions in a piece.

Diatonic: The notes that occur naturally in a scale, without being modified by **accidentals** other than in the **key signature**.

Dies Irae: "Day of Wrath". The **sequence** for the **Requiem Mass**.

Diminished: Lowered, or reduced. Generally refers to the lowering of a pitch **chromatically** by one half step.

Diminished Seventh Chord: A chord that contains a **root**, a minor **third**, a **diminished fifth**, and a diminished **seventh**.

Diminished Triad: A chord that contains a **root**, a minor **third**, and a **diminished fifth**.

Diminution: The shortening of note values used in a **theme** to alter the melody without changing the pitches.

Dirge: A piece that is performed at a funeral or memorial service.

Dissonance: Notes that conflict, or sound outside of a chord in which they occur. Such notes usually fall outside of the **overtones** which are being generated by the note or chord that is sounding.

Divertimento: An entertaining instrumental piece made up of several short movements.

Dodecaphonic: **Twelve-tone** music.

Dominant: A chord based on the **fifth** degree of the **diatonic** scale being used. A dominant usually resolves to the **tonic**.

Dorian Mode: A medieval **mode** whose scale pattern is that of playing D to D on the white keys of a piano.

Double Concerto: A **concerto** for two solo instruments, and orchestra.

Double Counterpoint: **Invertible Counterpoint**.

Double Flat: An **accidental** that lowers the note it precedes by one whole step.

Double Fugue: A **fugue** with two **themes** that occur at the same time.

Double Sharp: An **accidental** that raises the note it precedes by one whole step.

Doubly Augmented Sixth Chord: An **augmented sixth chord**, which contains a **sharp second** from the **tonic**.

Dramatic Soprano: A female singer with a slightly lower range than a **Lyric Soprano**.

Dramatic Tenor: A male singer with a slightly lower range than a **Lyric Tenor**.

Dynamics: The degrees of loudness or softness in a musical work, and the symbols that represent them.

E

E: The key of E.

Eighth: An **octave**.

Elegy: A melancholy piece.

Eleventh: The interval of eleven **diatonic** degrees.

Embellishment: **ornaments** added to music to make it more interesting.

Ensemble: A group of singers, or instrumentalists.

Equal Temperament: Any tuning system which divides the **octave** into equal intervals.

Ethnomusicology: The study of various types of music in relation to their geographic, racial, and cultural context.

Etude: A short song, usually written for pedagogical or instructional use.

Evaded Cadence: A **cadence** that implies one type of **resolution**, but goes to another instead.

Even Tuning See **equal temperament**.

Exercise: A short piece written to improve performance technique.

Exposition: The first occurrence of the **theme** or **subject** in a work, where the principal idea of the piece is stated.

Expressionism: An early 20th-century musical style, employing an abstract approach to music, unlike impressionism.

F

F: The key of F.

F Clef: A clef that indicates which line represents F on a staff, as opposed to a C clef, or an G clef.

False Cadence: A deceptive cadence.

Falsetto: A high, light, artificial voice used to sing notes that are above the normal register.

Fantasy, Fantasia, Fantaisie: A piece in freestyle and form.

Feminine Cadence: A cadence ending on a weak beat.

Fibonacci Series: A mathematical sequence in which the next number in the series is the sum of the previous two numbers. Used by many 20th century composers to determine various elements of composition, especially Bella Barton.

Fifth: The interval of five diatonic degrees.

Figured Bass: The bass part of a piece written by giving a single bass note, with numbers beside it to indicate the inversion of the chord to be played.

Figured Melody: A highly ornamented melody.

Finale: The last movement of a sonata or symphony, or the last section of an opera.

Fingerboard: On string instruments, the top surface of the neck, where the fingers press down on the strings.

Flats: An accidental that lowers a given pitch by one half-step. See also key signature.

Fourth: The interval of four diatonic degrees.

French Sixth Chord: An augmented sixth chord, which contains a second from the tonic.

Fret: On certain string instruments, a thin, raised bar placed across the fingerboard to indicate a specific position of a note, and aid in tuning that note.

Fugue: "Flight." A contrapuntal piece, in which two or more parts are built or "layered" on a recurring subject that is introduced alone, and followed by an answer, which is the subject (or theme) at a different pitch, usually the fifth.

Function: The way in which chords, and individual tones within the chord, tend to imply movement toward another chord.

Fundamental: Any note that sounds, producing overtones in the harmonic series.

G

G: The key of G.

G Clef: A clef that indicates which line represents G on a staff, as opposed to a C clef, or an F clef.

Gallant: an 18th century compositional style that was light, elegant, non-contrapuntal, and highly ornamented.

German Sixth Chord: An augmented sixth chord, which contains a flat third from the tonic.

Gloria: "Glory". In the Mass, the second part of the ordinary.

Golden Section: A mathematical proportion where the ratio between a small section and a larger section is equal to the ratio between the larger section and both sections put together. Used by many 20th century composers, especially Béla Bartók, to determine the point of climax for a given work.

Grace Note: A note, or notes that are played quickly, usually before the beat. See ornaments.

Grand Opera: Opera on a large scale, usually entirely sung, in contrast to comic opera.

Grand Staff: The combination of a staff line notated in treble clef with one notated in bass clef. Used primarily in scoring for piano, and other keyboard instruments, this staff is also sometimes used to score vocal works, such as hymns.

Gregorian Chant: A body of chants of the Roman Catholic Church, most of which are part of two liturgical rites, the Mass and the Offices. Origins traditionally are ascribed to the period of Pope Gregory I (590-604).

Guitar: A string instrument from Spain, with a large, flat-backed sound box, violin-like curved shape, a fretted neck, and six strings.

H

H: 1. In the German musical system, B natural, or the key of B natural. 2. "Hoboken", the cataloguer of Haydn's works; H numbers are used instead of opus numbers for the works of Haydn.

Half-Cadence: A cadence that ends on the **dominant** instead of the **tonic**. Also called an **imperfect cadence**.

Half-Step: The smallest **interval** that is commonly used in Western music. There are 12 half-steps in an octave.

Harmonic Progression: The movement from one chord to another, usually in terms of their **function**.

Harmonic Series: A series of notes produced above the **fundamental** (the series includes the fundamental) which fall in the **overtones** of that pitch.

Harmony: 1. The study of progression, structure, and relationships of chords. 2. When pitches are in agreement, or **consonance**.

Head Voice: The upper register of the singing voice.

Heldentenor: A heroic **tenor** with a strong, robust singing voice.

Hemitonium: A **half-step**.

Heterophony: The simultaneous performance of two slightly different melodies.

Homophony: Music in which one voice has the melody, performed with a **chordal accompaniment**.

Hymn: A song, often a **chorale**, written in praise of God, or for a religious congregation.

I

Imitation: A **fugal** technique of composition, in which one part introduces a theme, or **subject** which is then **answered** by the other parts by reiterating the same theme later in the work. This term is usually applied to **fugal** passages in choral music.

Imperfect Cadence: See **half-cadence**.

Impressionism: A stylistic period of composition that sought to put to music only the most immediate, direct impressions, upon the composer, of a given subject. Impressionism avoided traditional harmony of **thirds**, employing more often **quartal** or **quintal** tonality.

Impromptu: A short, improvisational-sounding piece.

Improvisation: Spontaneous Composition. The performance of music that is composed on the spur-of-the-moment by the performer, usually as a solo, or **cadenza**. Also used extensively in **jazz**.

Incidental Music: Short musical segments that accompany, or highlight dramatic moments in, a play, or other stage work.

Instrumentation: The art of composing, **orchestrating** or arranging works for an instrumental **ensemble**.

Interlude: Short music used to bridge the acts of a play, or the verses of a **hymn**.

Introduction: The preparatory section, movement, or phrase of a musical work.

Interval: The distance between two notes, in terms of oscillations per second. The difference in one **half-step** is about 35 beats per second.

Introit: "Entrance". A psalm sung at the start of the Roman Catholic **Mass**.

Invention: A short, **contrapuntal** piece.

Inversion: The different forms that a chord may take by changing the chord member that is the bass of the chord.

Invertible Counterpoint: **counterpoint** in which two or more voices can be interchanged for one another.

Ionian Mode: A medieval **mode** whose scale pattern is that of playing C to C on the white keys of a piano. This scale is identical to a major scale.

Italian Sixth Chord: An **augmented sixth chord**, which contains only three tones, as opposed to a German Sixth Chord, or a French Sixth Chord.

J

Jazz: A style of music of Afro-American roots characterized by a strong rhythmic understructure, blue notes, and improvisation on melody and chord structure.

Jubilate: A song of praise, usually based on Psalm 100.

Just Tuning: Any system of tuning in which the **intervals** are pure, and do not deviate from the **overtone** series.

K

K: 1. "Kochel", used instead of **opus** numbers to designate the works of Mozart. 2. "Kirkpatrick", used to designate the works of Domenico Scarlatti.

Kanon: **Canon**.

Kapellmeister: "Master of the chapel." Director of music for a church or royalty.

Key: The tonal center based on the **tonic** note of the scale.

Key signature: Sharps or flats written at the beginning of a staff line to indicate which pitches are to be raised or lowered from their natural state during the piece.

Kreuz: (*Gr.*) a sharp.

Kyrie: "Lord." In the Mass, the first part of the ordinary.

L

Lament: A mournful piece, either meant to be played at a funeral, or to commemorate a death.

Landini Cadence: The melodic cadence that moves in the sequence 7-6-8, used primarily by Francesco Landini, and later by other composers.

Leading Tone: The seventh degree of the diatonic scale, when it is only a half-step below the tonic. It is called "leading" because it gives the feeling of wanting to move up a half-step toward the tonic.

Leap: the movement of a single musical line by more than a second at a time.

Ledger Lines: Lines written above or below the staff to help indicate the correct pitches for notes written outside of it.

Leitmotif: "Leading Motive". Use of a musical phrase to identify with a certain person, place or thing in a dramatic work, especially an opera, usually repeated every time its referent appeared in the work.

Lent: The season of the church year from Ash Wednesday to Easter (40 days, not counting Sundays).

Libretto: The text (lyrics and any spoken parts) of an opera or oratorio.

Lied/Lieder: A German art song, usually those of the Romantic or Classical eras.

Litany: A set of prayers recited by a leader alternating with responses by the congregation, often set in plainsong form.

Liturgy: A prescribed order of worship in a church, usually used in reference to the Mass.

Locrian Mode: A mode whose scale pattern is that of playing B to B on the white keys of a piano. While this mode theoretically existed in medieval times, it was never used.

Lullaby: A cradle song.

Lydian Mode: A medieval mode whose scale pattern is that of playing F to F on the white keys of a piano.

Lyric: 1. The words to a song. 2. In a singing and melodious manner.

Lyric Soprano: A female singer with a slightly higher range than a Dramatic Soprano.

Lyric Tenor: A male singer with a slightly higher range than a Dramatic Tenor.

M

Madrigal: A Renaissance choral piece, usually unaccompanied.

Maggiore: The major mode.

Major: "Greater". A term used to describe certain intervals (seconds, thirds, sixths and sevenths), chords and the Ionian Mode.

Major Chord: A triad composed of a root, a third, and a fifth.

Major Scale: A diatonic scale where the half-steps fall between the third and fourth, and the seventh and tonic. This scale is identical to the Ionian Mode.

Mannheim School: A Pre-classical group of German symphonic composers whose style including extended crescendos (called *steamrollers*) and melodies that arpeggiated upward, (called *rockets*).

March: Music for marching, such as in a parade or procession.

Mass: The musical setting of the Roman Catholic Church service, usually just the ordinary, but sometimes also the proper.

Mixolydian Mode: A medieval mode whose scale pattern is that of playing G to G on the white keys of a piano.

Meter Signature: See time signature.

Mode: A scale pattern consisting of set intervals of whole and half steps. The primary modes are Aeolian, Dorian, Ionian, Locrian, Lydian, Mixolydian, and Phrygian.

Modal: Pertaining to modes.

Modern: Music written in the 20th century, or contemporary music.

Modulation: To change keys, the movement from one tonic center to another.

Monody: A solo or unison song with accompaniment.

Monothematic: Music based upon a single theme.

Monophony: Music written in a single melodic line, as opposed to polyphony.

Morceau: "Morsel". A musical work or composition.

Mordent: An ornament consisting of a single alternation between a given pitch, and the one immediately below or above it--called an inverted mordent.

Motet: A choral composition, usually on a religious text.

Motif: A short musical idea, or melodic theme that runs through a piece.

Movement: A self-contained segment of a larger work. Found in works such as sonatas, symphonies, concertos, etc.

Musicology: The study of music and music history.

Music Drama: Opera, specifically that of Richard Wagner and his successors.

Musique Concrete: Music composed by manipulating recorded sounds, specifically acoustically generated real-world sounds.

N

Nachschlag: An ornament consisting of an unaccented note or notes at the end of the main note, or at the end of a trill.

Nachtmusik: "Night Music", a serenade.

Natural: A note that has not been raised or lowered from its named pitch. On a piano, naturals are the white keys. Sharps or flats may be used to alter a natural pitch up or down a half step, respectively.

Neapolitan: Any chord built upon the flat second degree of the tonic key.

Neapolitan Sixth Chord: An augmented sixth chord built upon the flat second degree of the tonic key.

Ninth: The interval of nine diatonic degrees.

Nocturne: A night-piece, or serenade.

Nonharmonic: Notes that fall outside of the harmonic structure in which they occur.

Notation: Written music indicating pitch and rhythm.

O

O: The symbol for diminished.

Oblique Motion: Two melodic lines, where one voice remains stationary, while the other moves.

Octave: An interval eight diatonic scale degrees above it. Two notes an octave apart have the same letter name, and form the most consonant interval possible.

Octet: A piece written for eight parts, or the group that performs such a piece.

Oeuvre: (Fr.) opus.

Offertory 1. A part of the Roman Catholic Mass proper, following the Credo and sung during the offering. **2.** In Protestant church services, any music sung or played during offering.

Open Fifth: A triad that does not contain a third, consisting only of a root and a fifth.

Opera: A musical play, usually entirely sung, making use of costumes, staging, props, sets, and dramatic elements. Operas usually consist of two types of musical elements, the aria, which primarily expresses a single idea or theme, and the recitative which advances the story.

Opera Comique: Comic Opera.

Operetta: A light opera.

Opus: "Work". With a number, used to show the order in which the works by a given composer were written or published. Opus numbers are most often used for composers who catalogued their own works.

Oratorio: An operatic work without staging, sets, or elaborate costumes. Usually performed in amore relaxed setting than a formal opera, and usually having a religious theme.

Orchestration: The art of arranging, writing or scoring music for an orchestra.

Ordinary: In the Mass, the parts that are used every day, as distinct from the proper. The ordinary consists of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei.

Ornament: A melodic embellishment, either written or improvised. Types of ornaments included trills, turns, mordents, and grace notes.

Overtone: A tone that is present in the sounding of a fundamental, due to the physics of the production of musical tones.

Overture: The introductory music for an opera, ballet, or oratorio.

P

Parallel Chords: The movement of specific chords or chord combinations up and down a scale.

Parallel Intervals: The movement in two or more parts of the same intervals in the same direction.

Parallel Keys Major and Minor keys having the same tonic note.

Parallel Motion The movement in two or more parts of the same intervals in the same direction.

Partial: Either the fundamental or an overtone in the harmonic series.

Partita: 1. A set of variations. 2. A suite.

Part Song: An unaccompanied homophonic song for three or more voices.

Perfect Pitch: The ability to distinguish and identify any given note without any musical or tonal support.

Period: A musical statement, made up of two or more phrases, and a cadence.

Phrase: A single musical idea, or element. Usually very short, often consisting of only one or two measures.

Phrygian Mode: A medieval mode whose scale pattern is that of playing E to E on the white keys of a piano.

Plainsong: A monophonic chant which is unmeasured, and unaccompanied; such as Gregorian chant.

Polonaise: A stately Polish dance in moderate triple time, often with a repeated rhythmic pattern.

Polychoral: A style in which an ensemble is divided into groups that may perform individually, alternately, or together.

Polyphony: "Many sounds". Music that has many notes sounding together, either in a chordal, or contrapuntal setting.

Prelude: "Play-before". An introductory movement or work.

Program Music: A piece that conveys a picture or story, in contrast to absolute music.

Proper: The parts of the Mass whose parts change daily, as distinct from the ordinary. The proper consists of the introit, Gradual, Alleluia or Tract, Offertory, and Communion.

Q

Quartal Harmony: Harmony based on the interval of a perfect fourth, rather than on thirds.

Quintal Harmony: Harmony based on the interval of a fifth, rather than thirds.

R

Recitative: A musical work usually found in an opera or oratorio, which mimics the patterns of speech, in order to advance the story.

Red Notes: In medieval music, notes that were colored red on the page in order to distinguish differences in rhythm or octave transposition for specific notes. They were also used to show differences in a cantus firmus from the original.

Renaissance: "Rebirth." The era from the mid-15th century to the end of the 16th century. The music was characterized by the use of freer forms, and a progression from modes toward major and minor scales, and harmony.

Requiem: A version of the Mass performed to commemorate the dead. The sections are: introit, Kyrie, Gradual and Tract, Sequence (*Dies Irae*), Offertory, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei.

Resolution: The changing of a dissonant pitch, usually by stepwise or chromatic motion, so that it becomes consonant with the chord being sounded.

Romantic Era: The musical period from roughly 1827-1900, characterized by freer forms, larger, more elaborate works, and an increased attention to emotional themes within the music.

Root: The most fundamental note of a chord, often the bass note, which usually contains the other members of the chord in its overtones.

S

Sanctus: "Holy." In the Mass, the fourth part of the ordinary.

Scale: A series of notes which define a diatonic tonality, often consisting of eight degrees, and containing a tonic and sometimes also a leading tone.

Serialism: A form of music writing based on Twelve-Tone technique, in which pitch classes, rhythms, and often dynamics are determined systematically.

Second: The interval of two diatonic degrees.

Sequence: 1. Repetition of the same basic melodic theme at a different pitch. 2. A type of Gregorian chant with non-biblical texts, lines grouped in rhymed pairs, and one note per syllable.

Serenade: A love song, or piece traditionally performed below a loved one's window in the evening.

Seventh: The interval of seven diatonic degrees.

Sharps: An accidental that raises a given pitch by one half-step. See also key signature.

Sixth: The interval of six diatonic degrees.

Sonata: A piece for a solo, or accompanied, instrument, usually in 3 or 4 movements.

Song Forms: The arrangement of sections in a song to contrast similar and different sections. Often, letters are used to represent different parts of a given selection: ABA, AABA, ABACA, etc.

Soprano: The highest female vocal range, above **alto**.

Staff: The five horizontal lines upon which music is written. Usually including a **clef**, and having a **time signature** and **key signature**.

Subject: A theme or motif that is the basis for a musical form, such as a **fugue** or **sonata**.

Symphony: A piece for large orchestra, usually in four movements.

T

Tenor: "Holder." 1. A high male voice between **alto** and **baritone**. In early **polyphonic** music, it sang the **cantus firmus** in long held notes. 2. Instruments in the tenor range.

Tenor lied: A German song, in which the **tenor** vocal line predominates, or has the melody.

Theme: 1. A **phrase** that serves as the **subject**, or melody for a given work, as in a **fugue**, or **sonata**. 2. A conceptual idea that motivates a given work.

Third: The interval of three **diatonic** degrees.

Time Signature: The numbers written on **staff** of any piece, indicating which type of note gets a single beat, and also how many beats are in each measure.

Tonal: Music with a center, or **tonic**, which employs tones which relate to that tonic in a predictable and measurable manner.

Tonic: The key center, or foundation of, a scale or melody.

Treble: The highest voice, instrument, or part.

Treble Clef: The **G clef** falling on the second line of the staff. Used with the **bass clef** to form the **grand staff**.

Triad: A **chord** consisting of a **root**, and two other members, usually a **third** and a **fifth**.

Trill: An **ornament** consisting of a rapid alternation between two pitches, the main pitch, and the pitch a whole or half step above it.

Turn: An **ornament** consisting of four or five notes that move up and down 'around' a given pitch, using that pitch as a tonal center.

Twelve-Tone Music: Music in which no pitch class (or note) is repeated until all other chromatic pitches have been used. Any group of twelve pitches arranged this way is called a row.

V

Venetian School: Late-Renaissance group of composers in Venice whose style included **polychoral** textures and the foundations of **orchestration**.

Viola: In the **violin family**, the **alto** instrument, played under the chin.

Violin: In the **violin family**, the **treble** instrument played under the chin.

Violin Family: A family of four-string instruments originating during the 17th century, tuned in **fifths**, and characterized by rounded backs and shoulders, f-shaped sound holes, and deep middle **bouts**. See **violin**, **viola**, **cello**, and **bass**.

Votive: A chant or hymn honoring a particular saint, or the Virgin Mary.

W

Wagner Tuba: A five-valved tuba designed by Richard Wagner, for use in his music.

Waist: A narrowing in the middle of the body of an instrument, resulting in a shape like an hourglass. Typically found in string instruments, and some drums.

Z

Zigeunermusik: Gypsy music.

Zwischenspiel: **Interlude**.