



Government of **Western Australia**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority

MUSIC GLOSSARY

FOR THE **WACE MUSIC SYLLABUSES**

Copyright

© School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2018

This document – apart from any third party copyright material contained in it – may be freely copied, or communicated on an intranet, for non-commercial purposes in educational institutions, provided that the School Curriculum and Standards Authority is acknowledged as the copyright owner, and that the Authority's moral rights are not infringed.

Copying or communication for any other purpose can be done only within the terms of the *Copyright Act 1968* or with prior written permission of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. Copying or communication of any third party copyright material can be done only within the terms of the *Copyright Act 1968* or with permission of the copyright owners.

Any content in this document that has been derived from the Australian Curriculum may be used under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence](#).

Disclaimer

Any resources such as texts, websites and so on that may be referred to in this document are provided as examples of resources that teachers can use to support their learning programs. Their inclusion does not imply that they are mandatory or that they are the only resources relevant to the course.

Glossary

For the purposes of the WACE Music syllabuses, the following definitions will apply.

Notes:

- musical terms with commonly-accepted definitions (e.g. forte, allegro, falsetto) have not been included in this glossary
- this glossary applies to all three course contexts (Western Art Music, Jazz and Contemporary Music.) Some definitions vary according to musical context. These variations have been highlighted where deemed appropriate. Some terms are specific to one context only; refer to the syllabus to determine which terms students are required to understand
- this glossary is a support resource for the syllabuses and does not constitute an exhaustive list of terms that students are required to comprehend and apply in their school work and examinations.

12-bar blues

Standard chord progression and musical form used in Jazz and Contemporary Music. In its simplest form (there are many variations) the progression uses the primary triads from the major key in the following pattern: I | I | I | I | IV | IV | I | I | V | IV | I | I.

accent

An emphasis placed on a particular note or series of notes. Indicated by a symbol above or below the note (e.g. $\hat{\cdot}$ $\hat{\cdot}$ $\bar{\cdot}$) or an abbreviation, such as *sf*.

accidental

A symbol placed before a note to indicate an alteration of its pitch. A sharp (#) raises a note one semitone, a double sharp (x) raises a note two semitones, a flat (b) lowers a note one semitone, a double flat (bb) lowers a note two semitones and a natural (n) restores a note to its original pitch.


accompaniment

A part in a musical work that usually provides harmonic support and rhythmic structure for the main melody or lead. It also describes the composed music, arrangement, or improvised performance that accompanies and supports the soloist or main melodic part. The accompaniment can be provided by a single instrument or part, or an entire ensemble.

Alberti bass

Accompaniment pattern where a three-note chord is broken up and played in the order: lowest, highest, middle, highest. Named after Domenico Alberti who used this accompaniment style extensively.

alto clef

The clef () used by some instruments/parts (most often the viola). It indicates that 'middle C' is located on the third line of the staff.

anacrusis

An incomplete bar at the beginning of a musical work or phrase. The remaining value of this incomplete bar is accounted for in the final bar. Also referred to as upbeat or pick-up.

arch form

Organisation of a musical work to create symmetry by repeating all, or most, sections in reverse order (e.g. ABCDCBA). Repetition need not be exact, but similar enough to be recognisable.

arpeggio

A type of broken chord where the notes of the block chord are played in ascending or descending order. The process of converting a block chord to an arpeggio is referred to as arpeggiation.

arrangement

An adaptation of a musical work that is different from the original version. It could be arranged for and performed by a different combination of voices or instruments, or arranged or performed in a different musical style.

articulation

The way a note is sung or played. See **accent**, *legato* and *staccato*.

atonal

Term used to describe a musical work that has no clear tonic or tonal centre.

augmentation

Lengthening the durations of all the notes in a melody by the same factor (e.g. doubling).

augmented

May refer to:

- interval: a major or perfect interval that is widened by one semitone (e.g. C-E#)
- triad: a major triad with the fifth degree raised by one semitone (e.g. C-E-G#).

backing riff

Short, repeated musical idea making up part or all of the accompaniment for a vocal or instrumental melody. Most often referred to in Contemporary Music and consisting of percussion, bass and rhythm (guitar or keyboard outlining the harmony/chords).

balance

The consideration of the volume of voices and/or instruments in a musical work or ensemble to achieve an overall sound that is clear. For example, accompanying parts may be softened to ensure a lead part can be clearly heard.


bar

The pitches, rhythms and rests occurring between two bar lines on a musical staff. The length of a bar is usually determined by the time signature/metre. Also referred to as measure.

bar line

Vertical lines that divide the musical staff into bars of certain length, usually in accordance with a time signature.

bass clef

The clef used by lower instruments/parts, also called the F clef () as it indicates the location of the F note on the staff.

beat

The unit of measurement of rhythmic pulse in music. Beats are organised and emphasised according to time signature and tempo.

binary

Organisation of a musical work into two contrasting sections (AB), both of which are usually repeated. The sections can be the same length (simple binary: AB) or different lengths (extended binary: AB/AB). A small part of the A section may return (rounded binary: \parallel : A \parallel : B A \parallel).

blend

The adjustment of the timbre of different voices/instruments within an ensemble, in order to achieve a group sound in which no one part dominates the others.

block voicing

Accompaniment where harmony notes move in parallel with, and usually below, the melody notes to create two- to four-part harmony. Notes are played simultaneously (block), rather than one at a time (arpeggiated). Chord rhythm is either on the strong beats or matches the rhythm of the melody. Most often referred to in Jazz.

blues scale

A six-note scale, comprising a minor 3rd, perfect 4th, augmented 4th/diminished 5th, perfect 5th and minor 7th (e.g. C E \flat F G \flat G B \flat). This scale is prevalent in Jazz and Contemporary Music.

bridge

A section that links two or more sections of a musical work, also called a transition passage, in which new musical material is usually introduced. Bridge also refers to the B section in AABA form. In Contemporary Music, sometimes also referred to as middle 8.

cadence

A progression of chords (usually two) that is used to end a phrase, section or musical work.

call and response

A melodic or rhythmic pattern consisting of alternating sections of calls – or questions – usually improvised by a leader, and responses that are sung or played by an individual or group. The response, or answer, is different from the improvised call and is usually not an echo.

canon

A compositional technique where a melody is exactly imitated by one or more voices/instruments after a specified duration (e.g. after two beats, or a whole bar).

chant

The repetitive rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds, using a limited pitch set.

chord

A collection of two or more notes played simultaneously. Root position refers to the standard organisation of the tonic note with two notes stacked above (usually a third and a fifth above the tonic). A first inversion chord contains the same notes but starts on the third and a second inversion chord starts on the fifth. Chords can have added notes, such as a seventh, and can be identified and described using Roman numerals (e.g. V, I, Ib) or chord names (e.g. C major, Cmaj, C⁹, C/E).

chord/harmonic progression

A sequence of chords that is the basis for a musical work.

chorus

May refer to:

- musical form: section of a song that is usually repeated after each verse. The chorus usually remains unchanged, alternating with verses, which often feature different lyrics. In Jazz, a chorus is usually a single statement of the harmonic/melodic pattern that repeats throughout with some variation (**see** head).
- group of musicians: a large group of singers, such as an opera or orchestral chorus.

chromatic

May refer to:

- notes: notes not belonging to the diatonic scale, or the prevailing scale in a musical work
- harmony: chords with one or more notes not belonging to the prevailing scale in a musical work
- scale type: **see** chromatic scale.

chromatic scale

A twelve-note scale with all notes a semitone apart.

circle of fifths

A representation of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale, arranged to show closely-related keys (those that share mostly common notes, e.g. C major and G major). In composition, the circle of fifths can be employed to select a suitable key for modulation or a series of modulations. Also referred to as the circle of fourths and the cycle of fourths/fifths.

clef

Symbol usually placed at the beginning of each musical staff to indicate the location of a particular note. **See** alto clef, bass clef, percussion clef, tenor clef and treble clef.

coda

A section that occurs in addition to the defined form to finish a musical work.

comping

Refers to the accompaniment provided for the melody and improvisations, including various common harmonic and rhythmic patterns. This is usually provided by one or more keyboards, guitars, horns and percussion. Also refers to the (usually left hand) backing a solo pianist uses to accompany a melody. The word is a shortened version of accompanying. Most often referred to in Jazz but sometimes also in Contemporary Music.

compositional devices

Techniques that composers use to create, develop, manipulate and enhance their musical ideas.

See Alberti bass, augmentation, backing riff, call and response, diminution, double time, half time, imitation, inversion, ostinato, pedal-note, retrograde, riff, sequence and *tierce de Picardie*.

compound time

Compound time (e.g. $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{9}{8}$ $\frac{12}{8}$) is organised into dotted beats that subdivide evenly into three or six.

consonance

The effect of stability and agreement made by certain combinations of musical sounds. The concept is subjective, relative to the musical context and changes over time. The opposite of dissonance.

Contemporary Music

Contemporary Music encompasses popular music from the 1950s to the present day. It is predominantly commercial in nature and is constantly evolving through the influence of youth culture and the emergence of new artists and styles.

context

The setting and circumstances (e.g. time period, purpose, place, culture and style) in which music has been composed and performed.

copyright

The exclusive right or license to the ownership of material; the control over exploitation of any work by another person.

cover (version)

In Contemporary Music, one artist's performance or recording of the work of another. A cover, or cover version, is typically varied in its interpretation, rather than aiming to replicate the original performance. Similar to an arrangement in Jazz or Western Art Music.

culture

The values, attitudes, customs, practices, language and conventions commonly shared by a particular group that forms a part of their group identity and contributes towards a sense of shared understanding.

cyclic/thematic transformation

Refers to the use of a single musical theme across more than one movement within a large-scale musical work. The theme may reappear either in its original state, or be varied.

diatonic

Intervals, chords, harmonies and musical passages made up of the notes of the prevailing key. The opposite of chromatic.

diminished

May refer to:

- interval: a minor interval that is narrowed by one semitone (e.g. A-C \flat)
- triad: a minor chord with the fifth degree lowered by one semitone (e.g. C-E \flat -G \flat).

diminution

Shortening the durations of all the notes in a melody by the same factor (e.g. halving).

dissonance

The effect of tension or disturbance made by certain combinations of musical sounds. The concept is subjective, relative to the musical context and changes over time. The opposite of consonance.

dotted note

A dot after a note or rest extends the note or rest by half its original value. For example, a dotted minim (♩.) has a value of three crotchet beats and a dotted crotchet (♪.) has a value of one and a half crotchet beats.

double-time

A compositional device in Jazz (sometimes employed in other music contexts) when rhythm values are halved (i.e. twice as many notes are played compared to standard time) without altering the pace of the chord changes. The effect is most prominent in the percussion and occasionally the bass.

drone

A note or chord sustained throughout all, or most, of a musical work. Also, the part of a musical instrument that is used to produce a drone (e.g. in bagpipes).

duplet

In compound time, two notes played in the time of three of the same value (e.g. ♩^2).

dynamics

The relative volume (loudness) of sound.

elements of music

The most important components or building blocks of music. **See** dynamics, expression, form/structure, harmony, key, melody, pitch, rhythm, tempo, texture, timbre and tonality.

enharmonic

May refer to:

- notes: enharmonic equivalents are the alternative ways of naming the same pitch (e.g. C \sharp , D \flat)
- intervals: enharmonic intervals are those that differ in name but not in pitch (in the context of equal-temperament). For example, a major third, A to C \sharp , and a diminished fourth, A to D \flat .

ensemble

May refer to:

- groups: a group of musicians or instruments (e.g. orchestra, choir, concert band, rock band or jazz band)
- musicianship: the degree to which a group of musicians plays with appropriate balance, blend and co-ordination of articulation and expression.

expression

The aspects of musical performance associated with the personal response or interpretation of the performer. In musical works, expression is specified in varying degrees by the composer.

See expressive devices.

expressive devices

Particular kinds of emphasis or colour applied to notes that alter or enhance the overall sound and interpretation of music. **See** articulation, dynamics, tempo and timbre.

form/structure

The plan or design of a musical work. Often defined by identifying sections of the work and describing the similarities and differences between sections. **See** 12-bar blues, arch, binary, cyclic/thematic transformation, fugue, minuet and trio, rhythm changes, ritornello, rondo, sonata, song form, strophic, ternary, theme and variations, and through-composed.

fugue

Musical form consisting of an 'exposition' in which a number of parts, or 'voices,' enter successively in imitation of each other with the short melodic 'subject.' The exposition is usually followed by an 'episode' introducing new melodic material, usually derived somehow from the subject. Re-statement of the subject alternates with further episodes to the end of the work. There are many complexities and variations to this form.

guide tones

In Jazz harmony, the third and seventh scale degrees of each chord in a harmonic progression. The thirds and sevenths determine whether a chord is major, minor, dominant, etc. Guide tones are useful for creating accompaniment lines (such as long notes to be played by a horn section) or as a basis for melodic improvisation.

half-time

A compositional device in Jazz (sometimes employed in other music contexts) when rhythm values are doubled (i.e. half as many notes are played compared to standard time) without altering the pace of the chord changes. The effect is most prominent in the percussion and occasionally the bass.

harmony

The simultaneous sounding of two or more notes or pitches and the resulting relationship between them.

harmonising

May refer to:

- performing: singing or playing in such a way as to form harmony with the melody notes
- composing and arranging: the process of assigning chord notes to different parts of a musical ensemble, or solo instrument capable of performing multiple simultaneous notes. The chords may be listed explicitly, or may be inferred from the melody.

head

In Jazz, the melody and its accompanying harmonic progression, usually notated as a single staff for the melody with chord symbols above. The head typically alternates with sections of improvisation which are based on the head's harmonic progression. Also referred to as chorus.

homophonic

Musical texture describing a single melodic layer supported by accompaniment.

hook

A memorable melodic or rhythmic pattern or idea that is repeated several times throughout a musical work, common in Jazz and Contemporary Music.

imitation

The repetition of a melody, phrase or idea by a different voice or instrument.

improvisation

Spontaneously extending and varying music ideas in response to initial material or responses invented by other performers in an ensemble.

interval

The distance between two pitches (e.g. minor 2nd, semitone or half-step). Intervals may be described as:

- compound: intervals greater than an octave (e.g. 9th, 11th)
- harmonic: where the two pitches sound simultaneously
- melodic: where the two pitches sound one after another.

intonation

The accuracy of pitch when playing or singing, or the pitch accuracy of a musical instrument.

introduction

The beginning of a musical work. May be related to the musical material of the following sections but not necessarily. Also referred to as intro. Not all musical works include an introduction.

inversion

Refers to intervals, chords and melodic patterns that can be turned and played upside down. For example, an inverted interval is when the lower note is moved to become the top note, and an inversion in a chord is when the positioning of the notes changes so that the bottom note becomes the top note. In the WACE Western Art Music syllabus, inversion as a 'compositional device' refers to the inversion of a melody after its initial statement in a musical work.

irregular metre

Irregular metre (e.g. $\frac{5}{8}$ $\frac{7}{4}$) is any organisation of beats into bars that do not divide into either two or three.

Jazz

A musical style with its origin in the mid to late 19th century in the USA. It is a fusion of African and European musical traditions. Jazz has a heavy reliance on syncopation, swing rhythms, extended chord vocabularies and improvisation.

key

The set of pitches and the tonic/home note (or scale) that are the basis of a musical work, or part of a work.

key signature

The pattern of sharps and flats in a certain order that are placed next to the clef at the beginning of a musical work to indicate the key or scale on which the work is based.

legato

Playing or singing smoothly and well connected. Often indicated in musical notation with a slur.

major

The characteristic of an interval, chord or musical work when based on the notes of the major scale.

major scale

A seven-note scale with a particular ordering of pitches and intervals: *d r m f s l t d'*, T T S T T T S (e.g. C Major: C D E F G A B C).

melody

An organised succession of sounds and silences that relate together to create a distinct musical phrase or idea.

middle 8

A section in a musical work that is eight bars in length and features musical material that contrasts from the preceding sections. In song form, a middle 8 is similar to a bridge and appears between two instances of a song's chorus. In thirty-two bar (AABA) form, the middle 8 is the contrasting B section.

minor

The characteristic of an interval, chord or musical work when based on the notes of a minor scale.

minor scale

A group of seven-note scales. Some common types of minor scale are:

- **natural minor** or aeolian mode: *l t d r m f s l'* or T S T T T S T T (e.g. E natural minor/aeolian: E F# G A B C D E),
- **harmonic minor**, containing a raised 7th: *l t d r m f s i l'* or T S T T S T +½ S (e.g. E harmonic minor: E F# G A B C D# E),
- **jazz minor**, containing a raised 6th and 7th: *l t d r m f i s i l'* or T S T T T T S (e.g. E jazz minor: E F# G A B C# D# E), and
- **melodic minor**, containing a raised 6th and 7th in the ascending octave, which are lowered in the descending octave: *l t d r m f i s i l' s f m r d t l* or T S T T T T S | T T S T T S T (e.g. E melodic minor: E F# G A B C# D# E D# C# B A G F# E).

minuet and trio

Musical form consisting of two distinct sections (the minuet and the trio) both in triple time. A variation that developed from this form is a 'scherzo and trio' where the minuet is replaced by the similar (usually faster and more playful) scherzo. The minuet, trio and scherzo sections are usually in rounded binary form. The sequence of minuet/scherzo-trio-minuet/scherzo results in an overall ternary form.

mixed metre

The use of more than one metre, frequently alternating from one to another (e.g. alternating bars of three-four and four-four).

mode

A group of scales which use the same set of notes as the major scale, in the same order, starting from one of its seven degrees.

modulation

The process of changing from one key to another during a musical work. Modulation occurs as a process and is not simply an instantaneous switch from one key to another. May or may not involve a change of key signature.

monophonic

Musical texture describing a single melodic layer, or several parts playing in unison or octaves.

motif

A short musical idea. A phrase or melody will usually contain several motifs. Most commonly associated with melody but can also be a rhythmic or harmonic idea. Similar to riff.

ostinato

A repeating pattern, either rhythmic, melodic or a combination of both, that usually has an accompanying role.

outro

A section that occurs in addition to the defined form to finish a musical work. Similar to coda, referred to most often in Contemporary Music and Jazz.



pedal/pedal-note/pedal-point

A note repeated or sustained (usually in the bass part) while the harmony in the other parts changes. When pedal-point appears in a voice other than the bass, it is usually referred to as an inverted pedal.

pentatonic scale

A five-note scale with a particular combination of intervals. The major pentatonic scale can be derived from the major scale by omitting the fourth and seventh degrees. The minor pentatonic scale can be derived from same set of notes, commencing on the sixth degree. For example, C major pentatonic: *d r m s l d'*, C D E G A C; A minor pentatonic: *l d r m s l'*, A C D E G A.

percussion clef

The clef ( or ) used by non-pitched percussion instruments. It indicates that the lines of the staff refer to specific instruments (e.g. bass drum and snare drum) rather than notes on a pitched instrument.

perfect

May refer to:

- interval: the quality of intervals of a unison, fourth, fifth and octave
- cadence: a chord progression of V-I (or V-i) that ends a section or musical work.

phrase

A musical sentence or thought. An inexact term, phrases can vary greatly in length. In traditional notation, usually indicated by a slur.

pitch

The highness or lowness of sound. Pitch occurs horizontally (as in a melody) and vertically (as in harmony). May also be used to refer to a single musical sound or note (**see** pitch nomenclature).

pitch nomenclature

The various methods for naming pitches or notes, particularly in relation to scales:

letter names, e.g. C major	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
scale degrees	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
solfège	do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	ti
technical names	tonic	supertonic	mediant	sub-dominant	dominant	sub-mediant	leading note

polyphonic

Musical texture describing two or more rhythmically- and melodically-independent layers combined together in equal importance.

power chord

A chord made up of the tonic and the fifth scale degrees (usually notated by the number five, e.g. C⁵). Most commonly associated with Contemporary Music. May be played inverted, making the interval a fourth, and/or with either or both notes doubled. Also referred to as a fifth chord.

practice

The application of music skills and knowledge to create, represent, communicate and respond (noun).

practise

Regularly revising, developing and consolidating skills, techniques and repertoire as a class, an ensemble or an individual (verb).

pre-chorus

A section in a musical work that precedes a chorus, usually associated with song form in Contemporary Music. The function of the pre-chorus is to build to, or prepare for, the chorus. The pre-chorus is often shorter than the surrounding sections and contains material that contrasts from both the verse and the chorus.

primary triads

Triads built on the first (tonic), fourth (subdominant) and fifth (dominant) scale degrees in any major or minor key. Major: I, IV, V and minor: i, iv, V.

repertoire

The collection of pieces, songs or musical works that a musician or group of musicians are able to perform.

retrograde

Compositional device applied to a melody or series of pitches, whereby the order of the pitches (and sometimes the rhythm values) is reversed.

rhythm











Organisation of sound and silence using beat, note values/durations and tempo. **See** rhythm nomenclature.

rhythm changes

Standard 32-bar AABA chord progression and musical form used in Jazz, based on *I Got Rhythm* by George Gershwin. The A section is based on the progression I, VI, ii, V and the B section is based on the circle of fifths progression III⁷, VI⁷, II⁷, V⁷.

rhythm nomenclature

The various methods for naming rhythm units or duration of notes:

British	semiquaver	quaver	crotchet	minim	semibreve
American	sixteenth	eighth	quarter	half	whole
beat value in $\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	2	4
note					
rest					

riff

Short, repeated musical idea that can be rhythmic, melodic or harmonic. Most often used in Jazz and Contemporary Music. Similar to motif.

ritornello

Musical form comprising a recurring passage or series of passages (referred to as the ritornello) alternating with other contrasting, usually soloist, sections (RARBR, etc.). Similar to rondo form, the main difference is that the ritornello can return in different keys whereas the A theme in a rondo is typically restricted to the tonic key. Most often used in Western Art Music.

rondo

Organisation of a musical work into sections with one section repeating and alternating with contrasting sections (ABACA, etc.).

round

A musical work for three or more voices/parts. Consisting of a repeating canon in which all voices are musically identical.

scale

An ordered series of pitches with a particular combination of intervals, based around a tonic or key note. **See** blues, chromatic, major, minor, mode, pentatonic and whole-tone.

score

The notated form of a musical work. Scores can be hand-written, printed or digital. Sometimes referred to as sheet music. Types of score include:

- full score: a score containing every instrument/part in full (e.g. orchestral score, big band score). This type of score is uncommon for Jazz and Contemporary music works
- lead sheet: melody and its accompanying harmonic progression, usually notated as a single staff for the melody with chord symbols (e.g. C⁷) above. Most often used for Jazz and Contemporary Music works
- piano score/reduction: a piano version of a musical work originally composed for an ensemble, or solo instrument other than piano. 'Reduction' implies that two or more parts have been combined into a single piano part, often requiring some modification to the original work

- piano, vocal, guitar (PVG): a score consisting of a piano part (sometimes a reduction), a vocal line (melody with lyrics) and guitar chord symbols. Most often used in Contemporary Music.

secondary triads

Triads built on the second (supertonic), third (mediant) and sixth (sub-mediant) scale degrees in any major or minor key. Major: ii, iii, vi and minor: ii°, III, VI. Triads built on the seventh (leading note) or flattened seventh (sub-tonic) can be considered secondary triads but are less commonly used.

semitone

An interval of a minor second, or half a tone (e.g. E-F).

sequence

A melodic, rhythmic or harmonic pattern. A melodic sequence is a pattern of notes that is repeated at a different pitch. It can also describe the process or product of arranging music digitally using software.

simple time

Simple time (e.g. $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ c) is organised into non-dotted, or simple, beats (e.g. crotchet or minim) that subdivide evenly into groups of two or four.

slur

A curved line connecting two or more notes of different pitch and indicating that they are to be played or sung in a legato manner. For string players, it indicates that all the notes are to be played in the same single bow direction, and for wind and brass players, it indicates that only the first note is to be tongued.

sonata

A musical form consisting of three main sections: exposition, development and recapitulation. Two melodic themes (subjects) are introduced in the exposition, used as a basis for the development, and revisited in the recapitulation. Sometimes features an introduction, often includes a coda. Most often used in Western Art Music.

song form

A musical form associated with works for voice and instruments in the various Contemporary Music styles from the 1950s onwards. Often referred to as verse-chorus form (e.g. verse 1, pre-chorus, chorus, verse 2, pre-chorus, chorus, bridge, chorus, chorus). Also known in Jazz as AABA form.

staccato

Playing or singing notes short and detached, or separated, from each other. Represented in notation by a dot above or below the note head.

staff/stave

The five lines and four spaces on which music is written using notation.

strophic


A song in which the same musical material is repeated for each stanza of text (AAA, etc.). The opposite of through-composed.

style

Musical type or category. Style terms (e.g. Jazz, Be-Bop, Classical, Rock, grunge, flamenco) group music works primarily by the characteristic use of the elements of music. Some style terms are both style and

era; for example, classical refers to both a time period (era) and characteristics of the music of that time period (style).

swing

In rhythm, the conversion of even subdivisions (usually the quavers) into long-short pairs. The ratio of the two notes may vary but typically the first note is twice the duration of the second, so dividing the beat into thirds. Represented in notation by the symbol: . The opposite of swing is straight, where the quavers are to be performed evenly.

syncopation

The displacing of beats and the irregular accents resulting from weak beats being emphasised rather than strong beats.


tab notation

Form of notation that illustrates finger position on a fretted instrument (e.g. guitar) to represent pitch patterns, both melodic and harmonic. Can be combined with rhythmic notation symbols.

tempo

The speed or pace at which a musical work is performed. Can be indicated as a metronome marking indicating beats per minute (e.g. ♩=144, or 144BPM).

tenor clef

The clef () used by some instruments/parts. It indicates that 'middle C' is located on the fourth line of the staff.

ternary

Organisation of a musical work into three sections, with a contrasting section in between two repeated sections (ABA).

texture

The layers of sound in a musical work, and the relationship between them. **See** homophonic, monophonic and polyphonic.

theme and variations

A musical form where a theme is used as the basis of a set of variations (AA¹A²A³, etc.). The theme can be varied in many different ways; for example, by augmentation or diminution, or by changing the rhythm, tonality, key or dynamics.

through-composed

A song in which different musical material is used for each stanza of text (ABCD, etc.). The opposite of strophic.

tie

A curved line that joins two or more notes of the same pitch, indicating that they should be performed as one unbroken note of the combined value.

tierce de Picardie

Compositional device whereby a major third is used at the end (usually the final chord) of a musical work in a minor key.

timbre

The particular tone, colour or quality that distinguishes one sound from another (e.g. violin from flute). Includes various instrumental techniques (e.g. muting, picking, flutter-tonguing), vocal techniques (e.g. *falsetto*, growling) and electronic effects (e.g. reverb, distortion).

time signature/metre

Indicates how many beats occur in a bar of music and how the rhythm is organised or grouped.

See compound time, irregular metre, mixed metre and simple time.

tonality

The character of a musical work as determined by the key or scale upon which the work is based.


See atonal, chromatic, major, minor, mode and pentatonic.

tone

May refer to:

- interval: the interval of a tone is defined as a major 2nd, or two semitones (e.g. C-D, E_b-F)
- pitch: the terms tone, pitch and note are used interchangeably to mean a single musical sound
- timbre: **see** timbre.


treble clef

The clef used by higher instruments/parts, also called the G clef () as it indicates the location of the G note on the staff.

triad

A chord consisting of three notes: the root note and two notes stacked above (usually a third and a fifth above the root). Triads can have different combinations of major and minor thirds to create different qualities, such as major, minor, diminished or augmented.

triplet

In simple time, three notes played in the time of two of the same value (e.g. .

unison

Two or more instruments or voices singing or playing at the same pitch, or the same note at a different octave, simultaneously.

verse

See chorus.

Western Art Music

Western Art Music involves the European tradition of art music and its development over time. This can include music composed outside of Europe but still in the European art music tradition.

whole-tone scale

A six-note scale with all notes a tone apart (e.g. C D E F[#] G[#] A[#]).