

# MUSIC Appreciation

## THE ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

### Properties of Sound

- Pitch:** The highness or lowness of a sound, determined by the frequency of vibration
- **Tone:** A sound with a definite pitch
- **Interval:** The distance between two pitches
- **Dynamics:** The loudness or softness of a sound, indicated by Italian terms or symbols

### Italian Terms & Abbreviations for Dynamics

Very soft	Soft	Moderately soft	Moderately loud	Loud	Very loud
pianissimo	pianissimo	mezzopiano	mezzolargo	forte	fortissimo
p	p	mp	mf	f	f

### Italian Terms & Symbols for Changing Dynamics

diminuendo	<	growing louder
diminuendo	>	growing softer

- Tone color (a.k.a., timbre):** The unique characteristics of a sound, what makes one instrument or voice sound different from another
- **Timbre:** How being or about a sound is
- **Rhythms:** How sounds and silences are organized over time
- **Beats:** The regular underlying pulse in music
  - **Accent:** An emphasis on a beat or note by playing it louder or longer
  - **Syncoptation:** A temporary disruption of the regular accent pattern by accenting weak beats in between beats
- **Meter:** Four beats are organized into regular groups, called **measures**
  - **Simple meter:** Four beats per measure
  - **Triple meter:** Three beats per measure
  - **Quadruple meter:** Four beats per measure; a.k.a., **common time** because it is the most common
- **Tempo:** The speed of the music, measured in beats per minute
  - **Metronome:** A practice aid that gives a regular beat at a specified tempo, in clicks or beeps
- **Melody:** A tune; a coherent succession of single pitches
  - **Phrase:** A segment of a melody ending with a cadence
  - **Cadence:** A resting place at the end of a phrase, like punctuation marks in a sentence; a progression of chords that sounds meant or feels conclusive
  - **Theme:** A melody used as a building block by the composer
  - **Motif:** A short musical idea; could be a fragment of a theme
- **Harmony:** The way chords are constructed and how they relate to each other
  - **Chord:** Three or more notes sounding together
  - **Dissonance:** A group of notes that sound clashing, unstable, tense, in need of resolution
  - **Consonance:** A group of notes that sound pleasing, stable, at rest
  - **Scales:** A series of tones arranged in ascending or descending order; the two most common scales in Western music history are **major** and **minor**; they contain different patterns of intervals; generally, pieces based on the major scale sound happy, and those based on the minor scale sound sad; the **chromatic scale**, for example, includes all the notes on the keyboard
  - **Tonality:** The organization of a piece around a central note, scale, and chord; the particular scale determines the **key** (e.g., F Major); the first note of the scale is called the **tonic**; music without a key is **atonal**
  - **Modulation:** To change keys within a piece of music
  - **Texture:** How the melodic and harmonic elements of the music relate to each other
  - **Monophony:** One melodic line without accompaniment; could be a single performer or many performers in unison (e.g., Gregorian chant)
  - **Polyphony:** Two or more melodic lines sounding simultaneously; the technique of composing polyphony is called **counterpoint**
  - **Homophony:** A melody with accompaniment (e.g., a singer with guitar or a barbershop quartet)
  - **Forms:** How a piece of music is organized as it progresses; largely influenced by the repetition, variation, and contrast of themes

## INSTRUMENTS & ENSEMBLES

### Instrument Families

#### Voice

- **Chorus:** A large vocal ensemble; most often music is written for male and female voices in four parts: soprano, alto, tenor, bass
- **Choir:** A smaller vocal group; usually connected with a church; performs sacred music

#### Strings

Players move a bow across the strings with their right hand or pluck the strings with their fingers; the left hand is used to control the pitch by pressing a string against the fingers; the largest group in the orchestra

- **Violin:** The highest string instrument in the orchestra; one of the most popular instruments throughout history
- **Viola:** The alto member of the string family; has a darker sound compared to the violin
- **Cello:** (violoncello): Known for its mello, singing tone
- **Double bass:** Has a very dark, heavy sound; strings are usually plucked when used in a jazz setting
- **Hammer strings:** Are plucked with both hands, and pitch can be changed by foot pedals
- **Guitar:** Six strings plucked or strummed with fingers or a pick



#### Woodwind

Players blow into a tube with holes along its length; pitches are changed by opening and closing the holes with the fingers of both hands via a system of keys; capable of playing very quick notes; originally all made of wood, but most now are metal or plastic

- **Flute:** Soprano member of the woodwind family; made of metal; tone is produced by blowing across a hole in the tube
  - **Piccolo:** A "little flute"; the highest instrument in the orchestra
- **Oboe:** A double-reed instrument; tone is produced by blowing air between two cane reeds tied together; sound is pastoral and sometimes nasal
- **English horn:** A larger, lower-sounding oboe
- **Clarinet:** A single-reed instrument; tone is produced by blowing into a chisel-shaped mouthpiece with the reed attached to it; rich sound; warm in the lower register; shrill and piercing in the upper register
- **Bass clarinet:** A longer clarinet; sounds an octave lower
- **Bassoon:** A double-reed instrument; plays in the bass range; timbre varies widely between low and high notes
- **Contrabassoon:** The lowest woodwind instrument in the orchestra; has a very heavy sound
- **Saxophone:** A single-reed instrument; made of brass; the newest woodwind instrument; rarely used in the orchestra but common in jazz

#### Bass

Players buzz their lips together while blowing into the mouthpiece; pitches are changed by valves or slides; the sound comes out of the bell

- **Trumpet:** The highest brass instrument in the orchestra; comes in pairs; usually has a brilliant tone; uses three piston valves
- **French horn:** Developed from the ancient hunting horn; very rich, mellow tone; blends well with brasses, woodwinds, or strings; the bell points behind the player; wide range; uses four rotary valves operated with the left hand; right hand is inside the bell and can be used to make fine pitch adjustments



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