

MUSICMAP NOTES

BY LORENZO MITCHELL (207-374-5391),

WITH PATRICK HARRIS

www.mitchellmusicmap.com

Glossary of Musical Terms (Chamber Music Version)

- 16th-note:** Refers to a note-value half the length of an **8th-note** and twice that of a **32nd-note**. In **common time**, there is time for sixteen 16th-notes per bar. Aside from slow movements, this is the fastest practical note-value, and 16ths whip by in a blur of motion. (*semiquaver* in British terminology)
- 32nd-note:** Refers to a note-value half the length of a **16th-note** and twice that of the (rarely encountered) 64th-note. In **common time**, there is time for thirty-two 32nd-notes per bar. These are only encountered at slow tempos, where they serve a role analogous to 16th-notes. (*demisemiquaver* in British terminology)
- 3rd:** Refers to the interval between two notes that are three scale-degrees apart. 3rds are either **major** or **minor**, with the major 3rd being a **half-step** larger. When two voices harmonize a melody, they frequently do so in 3rds, producing a particularly sweet and ingratiating effect. 3rds are also the basic building-blocks of **chords**. 6^{ths} create an effect very similar to 3rds because they result when 3rds are inverted.
- 4th:** Refers to the interval between two notes that are four scale-degrees apart. This is called a ‘perfect’ 4th if there are five **half-steps** occurring between the two notes. Otherwise, in some cases, a 4th with an extra half-step (an augmented 4th) can result, and this is the dissonant interval known as the **tritone**. Perfect 4^{ths}, when both notes are played simultaneously, have an open, ringing quality similar to 5^{ths}, because they readily turn into 5^{ths} if the interval is inverted.
- 5th:** Refers to the interval between two notes that are five scale-degrees apart. This is called a ‘perfect’ 5th if there are seven **half-steps** occurring between the two notes. Otherwise, in some cases, a 5th with one less half-step (a diminished 5th) can result, producing the same dissonant interval as an augmented 4th (**tritone**). Perfect 5^{ths} (when both notes are played simultaneously) have a primal, elemental sound because the 5th is the most basic harmonic relationship after the unison and the octave. The sound is very similar to that of the 4th, its inversion. Also, because of this fundamental relationship, keys located a 5th apart are especially closely related (see **circle of 5^{ths}**).
- 6th:** Refers to the interval between two notes that are six scale-degrees apart. 6^{ths} are either **major** or **minor**, with the major 6th being a **half-step** larger. The sweet character of 6^{ths} when both notes are played simultaneously is similar to that of 3rds because a minor 6th inverts to become a major 3rd, while a major 6th inverts to become a minor 3rd.
- 7th:** Refers to the interval between two notes that are seven scale-degrees apart. 7^{ths} are either **major** or **minor**, with the major being a **half-step** larger. 7^{ths} have a discordant sound when played simultaneously, especially the major 7th, which is almost, but not quite an octave, and hence especially biting (similar to its inversion, the minor 2nd or half-step). Minor 7^{ths} are heard with particular frequency because this is the interval from the root to the top of a **dominant 7th chord**. In melodic writing, leaps of a 7th are always notably striking and expressive.
- 8th-note:** Refers to a note-value half the length of a **quarter-note**, and twice that of a **16th-note**. In **common time**, there is time for eight 8th-notes per bar. 8th-notes are generally fast notes, especially at lively tempos. (*quaver* in British terminology)
- accelerando:** Accelerating. (Italian)

accent: Added rhythmic or dynamic emphasis.

accidental: A chromatic pitch, or one that departs from the established key signature.

accompaniment: With most **homophonic** textures, this is an important element providing **harmonic** and **rhythmic** support to a principal **melody**. Most often, the accompaniment is pitched to lie low enough to allow the lead voice to float freely over it. While attention is naturally drawn to the melody, a well-wrought accompaniment will exhibit both subtlety and beauty and contribute enormously to the overall effect. There is a wide variety of different accompanimental styles, often based on some sort of repetitive pattern and featuring elements such as **arpeggios** (see **broken chord pattern** and **Alberti bass**), **block chords**, or smoothly **lyrical** inner **voices**. Rhythms may flow steadily, for example **8th-notes**, **16ths**, or **triplets**, or there may be a more assertive effect such as the dance-inflected **oom-pah-pah**, **oom-cha-cha-cha**, etc. Note, too, that the term ‘accompaniment’ is used in a somewhat different sense for the keyboard part of a **duo** such as a **sonata** for melody instrument and piano. In such a case, this should not necessarily imply a subordinate role for the piano, which may in fact often be in the lead or at least an equal partner in the musical collaboration.

adagio: Slow **tempo** indication. (Italian - “at ease”)

Alberti bass: Another term for a broken chord accompanimental pattern. This most often renders triads following the pattern of lowest, highest, middle, highest. Named after Domenico Alberti, who did not invent it but tended to over-rely on it in a rather mechanical way.

allegro: Fast **tempo** indication. (Italian - “cheerful”)

andante: Moderate **tempo** indication, walking speed. (Italian - “going”)

antecedent: Referring to phrase structure, the first idea of a two-part period.

antiphonal: Refers to a series of exchanges between one performer or group of performers and another performer or group. While this may result in a contrasting of tone colors, the essence of antiphony is a sense of spatial separation between the participants. Antiphonal passages may rely on the same or similar material being exchanged (see **call & response** for a specialized example) or they may employ deliberately contrasting ideas. The term comes originally from ecclesiastical music and the practice of deploying musical forces in various parts of a church to create particularly striking acoustical effects. Derived from ‘antiphon’ (Greek for “opposite voice”).

aria: A solo vocal number, principally associated with opera. In the context of instrumental music, the idealized evocation of this style of writing for the human voice. (Italian - “air”)

arpeggio: Playing the notes of a chord sequentially, in any of various possible patterns, as opposed to sounding them all at once. The term comes from the Italian word for harp (*arpa*) and is suggestive of the strumming of a stringed instrument.

augmentation: The rendering of a previously heard melody or motive in longer note-values (usually twice as long), thus making it sound slower than before.

balanced period: Referring to phrase structure, a theme with two complementary halves of equal length, also called **symmetrical**.

bar: Also **measure**. The basic unit of rhythm established by the time signature. The first beat naturally receives the most emphasis. Bars give the effect of evenly measuring out the music and are convenient for sensing and describing the relative lengths of phrases and themes.

Baroque: In this context, refers broadly to the style of European art music from 1600, conventionally stretching through 1750 (death of Bach). The very start of the Baroque era saw the birth of the hugely important new genre, opera, and before long an extravagant theatricality exerted a powerful influence on most other types of music, including instrumental. Baroque music exhibits a remarkable variety, but typical features include contrapuntal textures, motoric rhythm, terraced dynamics (sudden shifts between soft and loud without gradations), active and assertive basslines, frequently irregular phrase structure, and intricate ornamentation. Among the preferred instrumental genres were **concertos** of various types, solo and group **sonatas**, and **suites** drawing on a wide variety of dance types. See also **fugue**, **cannon**, and **French overture**. Followed by the **Classical** style.

bass: The lowest voice of an ensemble, often referred to as the bass line. May also designate the lowest register of an individual instrument.

beat: The pattern of evenly-spaced stresses with regularly varying strength, establishing the **meter** and designated by the **time signature**. May also refer to a single instance of these stresses, as in strong beat/weak beat, on the beat/off the beat, etc.

binary form: Binary means two, and this refers to either themes or even whole movements in two parts, with each part immediately repeated (usually literally). The form was extremely popular during the **Baroque** era, especially for dance movements, and its influence remained strong through the **Classical** era. Themes in binary form are especially favored for variation movements. See also **rounded binary form**.

block chords: A style of harmonization using full-voiced vertical chords moving in rhythmic synchrony and often emphasizing the separation between each chord.

bridge: Also **modulating bridge** or ‘episode.’ Refers to the transitional passage in a sonata-form movement that separates the main theme group from the subordinate theme group and effects the modulation from the tonic to the contrasting key (usually dominant or relative major). Can vary from a memorably melodic modulating theme to busy “action” music or passagework. Some sources refer to it as the “episode.”

broken chord pattern: A particular method of arpeggiated accompaniment suggestive of vocal-style music. Rather than arpeggios being played straight up or down, a regular pattern is established in flowing rhythm that mixes up the sequence of the pitches (see **Alberti bass**). In effect, this creates a murmuring bed of harmony that provides rhythmic momentum and attractive support over which the melody line can gracefully float. Even when it is just the R.H. of the piano supported by a L.H. Alberti bass, we are hearing at a deep, evocative level a singer accompanied by the plucked strings of a lute or similar instrument.

cadence theme: In a sonata-form movement, a final theme at the end of the exposition emphasizing cadence harmonies and often exhibiting a catchy directness that lends greater specificity to the close.

cadence: This is the equivalent of punctuation in music, as harmony and melodic formulas are used at the end of a phrase to create a sense of pause or closure. Sequences of chords are deployed with various effects, leading to either a **closed cadence** (equivalent to a ‘.’ [period]), an **open cadence** (‘,’ [comma]), or a **deceptive cadence** (‘...’ [ellipses]).

cadenza: A brief flight of soloistic display, usually performed outside of strict tempo and with an improvisatory feel. Originally, these were left to the actual improvisation of the performer, with just the location indicated by a fermata. Eventually, composers grew more reluctant to leave things to chance and wrote out exactly what they wanted, while still conveying an effect of spontaneous invention. The word is from the Italian for “cadence,” and cadenzas are most often encountered at the end of a work or section.

calando: The effect of dying away; a *diminuendo*, but accompanied by a sense of slowing as well. (Italian - “decreasing”)

call & response: An **antiphonal** dialogue between a soloist and a group. After the individual has introduced a **phrase**, the combined ensemble echoes it back with fuller sound and **harmony**. The effect is evocative of a priest leading a congregation or a singer teaching a new song to a group. Because of this, the use of this style of **statement** and repetition seems to touch on some of the deepest roots of humanity.

canon: What in common parlance is referred to as a ‘round’; imitative counterpoint in which one voice is faithfully copied by a second or sometimes more. Canonic imitation can be used to refer to this effect without the procedure necessarily continuing at length.

cantabile: Song-like or singingly, used especially when an instrument is to convey the effect of a human voice. (Italian)

cantilena: A sustained, singing line. (Latin)

chamber music: Instrumental music for small ensembles, typically two or more performers, and with only one player per part.

chorale: Literally, a church song sung by the congregation or a choir in Northern European Protestant territories, equivalent to the English hymn. In the context of instrumental music, the sound and atmosphere of a chorale is often evoked through stately melodies in long-notes, scored with full vocal-style harmonies. Often **block chords** are employed. From the German *choral*.

chord: A harmony created by the combination of different notes, usually sounded simultaneously. The most common type of chord is the three-note **triad**, while more complex 7th chords add a fourth note, and 9th chords a fifth note.

chromatic: Refers to the expressive device of including a note or notes foreign to the key of a particular passage. These ‘wrong’ notes can be extremely effective as ornaments and can convey a wide range of moods, from supple elegance to emotional distress. The word comes from *chroma* (“color”) as chromatic notes are used to add a coloring effect to the normal notes of the scale. **Chromaticism** is the associated noun. A **chromatic scale** includes all twelve pitches within an octave (on the piano, for example, playing all the white *and* black keys in succession) and has a very distinctive ‘sliding’ sound without any clear point of rest, similar to a *glissando*. The opposite of chromatic is **diatonic**.

cimbalom: An Eastern European folk instrument with many strings struck rapidly by a pair of hammers, often creating a distinctive and highly atmospheric rippling sound. (The American hammer dulcimer is a related instrument.) Composers sometimes evoke the effect of the cimbalom in writing for the piano (or even strings) to suggest a Hungarian or other exotic mood.

Circle of 5ths: This is an extremely useful tool for conceptualizing the relationship between the 24 keys, 12 major and 12 minor, in the Western harmonic system. For the sake of clarity, let’s start this explanation by just considering major keys. For every major key, there are two other major keys that are the most closely related to it, the **dominant** and the **subdominant**. The dominant is the key based on the note a perfect 5th higher, while the subdominant is the key based on the note a perfect 5th lower. Given this, imagine a circle divided into 12 pie slices like a clock, with each wedge representing one of the major keys. At the top in the 12 o’clock position, it will be convenient to put C major, with its key signature lacking any sharps or flats. Moving then clockwise from C, each key is a perfect 5th higher than the last, and each key signature has one additional sharp. Thus, clockwise movement can be referred to as moving in the ‘sharp’ direction. Likewise, if we move counter-clockwise from C, this is the ‘flat’ direction, with each key a perfect 5th lower than the previous one and each key signature gaining an additional flat. So, for every key on the circle, its two neighbors are its closest relatives: the one clockwise of it being its dominant and the one counter-clockwise its subdominant. It now becomes apparent that keys several positions apart on the circle are more distantly related and that keys on opposite sides of the circle are extremely foreign to each other. As an example, let’s briefly consider the key of A major with its key signature of three sharps, located at 3 o’clock on the circle. Below it at 4 o’clock is E major, its dominant, with one more sharp, thus a key signature of four sharps. Above it at 2 o’clock is D major, its subdominant, with only two sharps. But what about the key of A-flat? While its tonic is only a half-step away on the piano, on the circle of 5ths the two keys are actually very distant. With A-flat way over in the 8 o’clock position and possessing a key signature of four flats, it is almost, but not quite, directly opposite A on the circle. The key that is exactly opposite it at 9 o’clock is E-flat, with a key signature of three flats. This is the most removed major key of all from A major and appropriately enough, the distance separating the two notes on the keyboard is a **tritone**. Starting with any other major key on the circle, all of the other equivalent relationships with our example will still hold true. Now let’s consider the bottom of the circle at 6 o’clock, the opposite pole from C major. This is where the extremes of the sharp and the flat sides of the circle meet and reconcile with the dual keys of F-sharp major or G-flat major, which sound exactly the same but are just written differently with either a key signature of six sharps or six flats. Moving in the clockwise, or sharp, direction from C major, the order of keys may be remembered using the mnemonic C-old G-ray D-awn A-rries E-arly B-oys, F#-

reezing! Similarly, moving counter-clockwise in the flat direction, the order of keys corresponds to C-arl F-ound B \flat -aby E \flat -agles A \flat -re D \flat -angerous G \flat -uests. Now it's time to add the 12 minor keys to the circle of 5ths. Every major key has a closely related minor key that shares the same key signature: the relative minor. Thus, A minor, the relative minor of C major, goes at the 12 o'clock position, and so forth around the circle. In other words, each of the 12 wedges of the circle of 5ths is the home of a different specific key signature and its two corresponding major and minor keys. So now, with the minor keys filled in, it is also possible to study their relationships to each other, as well as the relationships between various minor and major keys. In particular, it becomes apparent that for every one of the 24 keys, there are four closely-related companion keys: the dominant and subdominant to the right and left, the relative minor or major sharing the same position on the circle, and the parallel minor or major. Of these, the parallel keys are the most separated. For example, one has to travel three spaces counter-clockwise from G major (one sharp) at one o'clock to G minor (two flats) at ten o'clock. Still, though parallel major and minor are separated by a quarter of the distance around the circle, this is powerfully countered by the affinity resulting from the two keys sharing the same tonic note. Also, with a little thought, it will be apparent that the letter order of the keys going around the circle of 5ths is identical for major and minor, only with the minor keys offset a quarter-turn flatward (though the last two on the sharp end are spelled differently). In general, when composers modulate from key to key following the circle of 5ths, the effect tends to be particularly smooth and natural, while modulations between more distant keys sound more surprising and exotic. The major and minor keys located in the top half of the circle are the ones most often encountered for the simple reason that their key signatures are less technically challenging.

Classical: This has two common and separate meanings when applied to music. The most popular understanding of the term is any Western 'high art' or concert music, as opposed to popular music, though this distinction is fraught with difficulties. More specifically, the Classical era refers to the style of music that succeeded the **Baroque**, and is conventionally placed between 1750 and the death of Beethoven in 1827. Classicism arose as a reaction to the Baroque style, rejecting its contrapuntal complexity, irregularity, expressive extremes, and lavish ornamentation in favor of clarity, simplicity, balance, and accessibility. The goal was to create music that would appeal directly to a wide audience, but without sacrificing elegance and good taste. During the last decades of the eighteenth century, primarily through the works of giants such as Haydn and Mozart, Classicism evolved into a language of tremendous sophistication, depth and emotional power. At the end of the era, stands Beethoven, a transitional figure and thus hard to classify. His extraordinary creative output was at once a logical culmination of Classicism and a harbinger of many aspects of the **Romanticism** that would supersede it. Formally, the Classical period established important new templates and genres that would persist through the following **Romantic** era and beyond.

closed cadence: The equivalent of a full stop in punctuation, created by the chord sequence of a dominant 7th followed by the tonic. Such a closed cadence is the strongest means of establishing the present key.

closing group: See **closing material**. This term is used especially when several distinct and contrasting ideas are presented.

closing material: A term from **sonata form** referring to additional themes or passagework after the subordinate theme or sub-theme group. This is used to prolong the exposition and more strongly establish the sense of the new contrasting key. Closing material can be brief and rather formulaic-sounding, or it can ramble freely and at surprising length. Sometimes it is difficult to say for sure where the sub-theme group ends and the closing material begins. The clearest indication is a sense of wrapping up reinforced by an emphasis on cadence harmonies. Often closing material is freer in phrase structure and more transitional-sounding than the preceding sub-theme or themes. Traditionally, this material ends the exposition with a clear and strongly articulated closed cadence in the new key (see also **cadence theme**).

coda: In musical form, this refers to an additional passage at the end of a movement or piece that provides a fuller and more rhetorically robust sense of closure. Codas can vary from a few extra cadence chords to an extensive new exploration of thematic material, similar to a development section.

Beethoven in particular placed considerable weight on his codas and used them to furnish important final insights. (Italian - "tail")

codetta: Just as a coda is added to a piece or movement to give a stronger sense of completion, a codetta is a short additional passage used to round off a theme or section of a movement. (Italian - "little coda")

common time: Refers to meter. The same as 4/4, that is, four quarter notes per bar.

compass: See **range**.

compound meter: Any time signature, such as 6/8, 9/8, or 12/8, in which the beat is subdivided into three. Thus 6/8 has six 8th-notes to the bar but is counted in two. In this way, 6/8 combines a small-scale pulse of three with a larger-scale feeling of three, and this gives it a distinctive flexibility and versatility. 6/8 meter is often employed to lend a graceful and lilting gate to dance music. Also, 6/8 was traditionally used to evoke a mood of pastoral simplicity and idealized peasant life.

concerto: From the **Classical** era onward, refers to a genre featuring a solo instrument (or instruments) both accompanied by and pitted against a full orchestra. Concertos are characterized by **virtuosity** and provide the soloist an opportunity for dazzling display while allowing the instrument to be heard to maximum advantage. The solo concerto evolved as a response to opera and affords, in instrumental terms, a showcase analogous to a bravura aria with its featured singer and orchestral accompaniment. (In the **Baroque** era, concerto was a broader term referring to a more varied range of genres.) From the Italian for "together," as well as the Latin *concertare*, meaning "to fight" or "to struggle."

conjunct: Refers to the motion of a musical line. A melody is described as conjunct if it moves in a stepwise fashion without leaps greater than a major 2nd. Essentially it travels incrementally up and down along the scale. The opposite of conjunct is **disjunct**.

consequent: Referring to phrase structure, the concluding idea of a two-part period.

contrapuntal: That adjective associated with **counterpoint**.

contrary motion: Refers to the relative motion of two musical lines displaying the tendency to approximately mirror each other (that is, as one goes up, the other goes down and so forth). Contrary motion can be very effective at conveying a sense of musical space with the feeling of expansion or contraction, often in alternation.

contrasting period: Referring to phrase structure, a period in which the antecedent and consequent exploit different material. May vary from mildly to strongly contrasting.

counterpoint: Refers to a musical texture featuring two or more independent lines of relatively equal weight and importance. From the Latin *contra punctum* ("against note"). Alternately referred to as **polyphony**. See also **fugue**, **canon**, **imitation**, and **non-imitative counterpoint**.

counter-melody: A secondary voice that is heard along with the main melody, while having a more prominent and tuneful role than just a harmony part or accompanimental pattern.

counter-statement: Refers to the repetition of a theme immediately after its presentation and usually varied in some way such as a change in instrumentation or movement to a higher or lower octave. A counter-statement enables us to hear a melody again and take better hold of it, while the music still retains its freshness through some alteration of effect.

crescendo: A gradual increase in loudness. (Italian - "growing")

cut-time: Refers to meter. This is written to look like 4/4, but with the understanding that it should be counted in two. Cut-time is often used with faster tempos and especially with marches. (Also referred to as *alla breve*.)

da Capo: Generally encountered in **ternary-form** movements, especially **dance movements** such as **minuets** and **scherzos**. After the end of the **trio**, the return of the principal song is effected through a literal repeat, with the performers instructed to turn back to the start of the movement. This time the

principal song or A-section is played straight through without internal repeats. *Da Capo* in Italian means “from the top (head).”

dance movement: During the **Baroque** period, **suites** consisting mostly of stylized court dances made up an extremely popular genre. One holdover of this into the **Classical** era was the tendency to introduce an extra dance movement into the typical fast-slow-fast movement pattern characteristic of symphonies, string quartets, and sometimes sonatas, etc. This additional movement, originally always a **minuet**, was normally placed second to last, providing a transition between the **slow movement** and the fast **finale**. The benefit of this arrangement was to follow the slow movement’s lyrical respite with music of a strongly physical rhythmic character and thus galvanize the audience out of its collective contemplative reverie. This four-movement pattern became especially associated with the music of Vienna and in turn with the mature Classical style. (In rare cases, dance movements would make their way back into three-movement works as well, replacing the traditional central slow movement.) Originally, the inserted minuet always represented a return to the tonic key of the piece after the slow movement’s contrasting key. Though the four-movement template proved remarkably durable even into the Romantic era, the character, key and placement of the dance movement became much more flexible over time. Beethoven especially was responsible for this, with his switch from minuets to **scherzos** and other experiments. During the Romantic era, dance movements that were neither minuets nor scherzos also sometimes appeared, especially exploiting various ethnic dance types in a bow to nationalism. The **ternary form** of the original Classical minuet also proved very durable, though the **rounded binary-form** structure of the **principal song** and **trio** was often freely adapted or superceded.

deceptive cadence: This starts out sounding like a closed cadence, but instead of the dominant 7th being followed by the tonic, an unexpected different chord is substituted, serving either to delay the true closed cadence or to initiate a transition.

decoration: See **ornament**.

descant: Refers to a counter-melody, often florid, harmonizing above the principal melody.

development: The manipulation and exploration of previously introduced material either melodically or harmonically, and often relying on fragmentation, imitation, and extension.

development section: Also known as the ‘working-out’. In a sonata-form movement, this is the section following the exposition (and its repeat, if called for). Typically one or more themes or motives introduced during the exposition are now freely developed. This is an opportunity for the composer to display his imagination and versatility as he draws on any number of tools from his arsenal. Themes are often fragmented or reconfigured, harmonies altered and intensified, striking contrasts exploited, and various contrapuntal devices and textures employed. All the while the music modulates from key to key, lending a feeling of instability and suggesting an almost dreamlike state distinctly different from the orderly progression of events during the preceding exposition. During the **Classical** era, this was referred to as the ‘free fantasy’. Some development sections, especially from earlier in the Classical period, make no clear reference to previous material, and these are known as “episodic” developments.

diatonic: An adjective referring to music that limits itself both melodically and harmonically to the notes naturally occurring in the scale of a given key, that is, without any use of chromaticism.

diminished chord: A **chord** built from the combination of two minor 3rds, resulting in the perfect 5th of a normal **triad** shrinking to a **tritone** (diminished 5th). Diminished chords are typically used to convey an effect of shock or distress. If an additional minor 3rd is added on top, a diminished 7th chord is created, and this is the most powerful dissonance encountered in the normal harmonic vocabulary of the **Classical** era.

diminuendo: Gradually becoming quieter. (Italian - “shrinking”)

diminution: The rendering of a previously heard melody or motive in shorter note-values, most commonly making it sound twice as fast.

disjunct: Refers to the motion of a musical line. A melody is described as disjunct if it features frequent leaps either up or down as opposed to stepwise intervals. The opposite of disjunct is **conjunct**.

dissonance: In common usage, this refers to a discord or jarring clash of notes. In modern harmonic theory, dissonance is used more strictly to refer to any unstable note or harmony that requires resolution.

dolce: An expressive indication directing that a passage should be played suavely or tenderly. (Italian - "sweet")

dominant: Refers to the 5th degree of the scale and to the V chord built on that note. From a broader perspective, when comparing different key areas, the dominant refers to the key of the V chord and is very closely related to the home key. It is extremely common for music to modulate to the dominant, and this has the effect of temporarily breaking free from the tonic, providing dynamism and polarity. Still, the dominant is inherently unstable and must always eventually resolve by returning to the tonic. Either as chords or keys, the relationship of the tonic and dominant is the most important and primary in functional harmony and is in fact the fundamental principle upon which it is based. See **circle of 5ths**.

dominant 7th chord: A V chord to which a fourth note is added, creating a minor 7th in relation to the bottom of the major triad (when in root position). This is an extremely common chord that strengthens the sense of polarity between V and I. Dominant 7th harmony, especially if extended, creates a powerful sense of instability, demanding resolution.

dominant pedal: A **pedal** on the dominant that creates the expectation of resolution to the tonic. A dominant pedal is very commonly deployed during the retransition at the end of the development of a sonata-form movement to signal the approach of the home key and the start of the recapitulation.

dominant preparation: The use of dominant 7th harmony to signal a modulation to the corresponding tonic key.

dotted rhythm: A distinctive type of rhythm that juxtaposes long and short notes in various possible ways and with an exaggerated effect. The reason for its unique sound is that the relationship between the note-values is more complicated than the simple divisions represented by quarter-notes, 8th-notes, 16ths, etc. Instead, a dot is added to the longer notes, which increases their normal duration by a half. Fast dotted rhythms can convey an almost intoxicating sense of dynamism, and one typical use is to represent the gallop of a horse. Slower dotted rhythms, on the other hand, suggest a ceremonial mood, for example the evocation of a grand procession characteristic of the **Baroque French overture**. Double-dotted rhythms are an even more exaggerated variant.

double-stop: The bowing of two strings at once by a string instrument. Unlike other multiple-stops, a double-stop can be played in an even, sustained manner because the bow can easily pass over each string simultaneously. This is a very important effect in the repertoire of string writing.

downbeat: The beat occurring at the start of a bar and customarily receiving the greatest emphasis.

drone: Similar to a pedal point, but instead of a single pitch, two notes (usually a 5th apart) are simultaneously sustained as a backdrop to the melody and other harmonies. This is a device often used to create a rustic atmosphere as it is evocative of bagpipes and other simple peasant instruments.

duo: A piece for two instruments, usually in more than one movement. The term is sometimes used synonymously with **sonata**, but most typically occurs when both instruments are melody instruments rather than one being a keyboard. (There are also duos or duets for piano with two performers and either one or two instruments.)

duple meter: Any time signature based on a feeling of 2, such as 2/4 or 4/4, etc. In each case, there is a regular alternation of strong and weak beats that at some level relate to the universal human experience of walking or running. From this perspective, the march could be seen as the most primary of duple-meter genres.

dynamics: Refers to the relative loudness or softness of notes or passages of music. There are a large number of standardized dynamic markings to indicate different levels of volume and gradations over time. See *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *fff*, *fp*, *sfz*, **crescendo**, **diminuendo**.

episode: Most generally, any section of music within a movement that seems clearly set off from what precedes and follows it. The term is encountered especially in descriptions of rondo movements, where the contrasting passages (often in new keys) encountered between recurrences of the rondo theme are

formally called episodes and typically labeled with capital letters such as B, C, D, etc., as opposed to the rondo theme's A. Likewise, with fugues the freer material after the exposition is completed, and elsewhere when the subject is not clearly present, can also be referred to as episodes. Some commentators call the modulating bridge in a sonata form the 'episode', while sonata-form development sections that introduce new material rather than drawing on the exposition are commonly called 'episodic'.

exposition: In a sonata-form movement, this is the large initial section (sometimes preceded by a **slow introduction**) that presents in an orderly progression the chief thematic material under consideration. After a **main theme** or theme group in the tonic, the **bridge** effects a modulation to a contrasting key, usually the dominant or relative major, and the **subordinate theme** or themes follow in that key, along with any **closing material**. The exposition typically has the effect of a dramatic 'narrative,' setting up a contrast of themes and polarity of key areas that will be further explored and eventually resolved over the later course of the movement. The first part of a fugue, during which the subject enters in each of the various voices, is also referred to as the exposition.

extension: A very common practice by which themes are freely lengthened beyond their original phrase structure, or where they would naturally be expected to come to an end. Extension is a useful tool for adding flexibility and forward momentum to the progress of a movement.

f: For *forte*, a dynamic marking indicating 'loud'. (Italian - "strong")

fermata: A momentary slowing of the forward motion of a passage of music, marked by a 

over the specific point to be sustained. The actual extent of the pause is left to the discretion of the performers. Also, in some contexts a fermata is used to indicate that a brief cadenza is to be improvised. (Italian - "pause")

ff: For *fortissimo*, a dynamic marking indicating 'very loud'.

fff: For *fortississimo*, a dynamic marking indicating 'extremely loud'.

finale: A term used to designate the last movement of a multi-movement composition. The typical characteristics described here hold especially for the **Classical** era, but the patterns established then had strong **Baroque** antecedents and often persisted into the Romantic era. Finales are generally fast and frequently the fastest movement of all. They are typically lighter and more accessible in character, with a squareness of phrasing that carries the listener easily along. Often they are suggestive of dance music, and at times they quite explicitly evoke a particular type of dance. Other popular options included a bustling *moto perpetuo* style or fugal finales that returned to the learned contrapuntal language of the Baroque era. Structurally, **sonata forms** and **rondos** (or sonata-rondos) predominate, but **theme & variation** provides an occasional alternative. In most cases the role expected of a finale is to leave the audience in a good mood and eager to applaud without making particularly strong demands upon them. Since Beethoven, however, there has been a counter-trend to put increasing weight on the last movement as a point of culmination, for example as in his 5th and 9th symphonies.

figuration: Any repetitive use of a short musical pattern, commonly based on conventional elements such as **arpeggios** or **scales**. Figuration is often employed in accompaniments and in the process of **ornamenting a theme**. See also **passagework**.

flat: (symbol: \flat) Indicates that a pitch is to be played a **half-step** lower than the natural note designated by the same letter. Many will also be familiar with the use of the term 'flat' to describe a pitch erroneously sounded somewhat below the note intended.

fp: For *fortepiano*, a dynamic marking indicating a brief loud accent immediately followed by a softer volume.

French overture: One of the most important instrumental forms of the **Baroque** period, originally developed at the court of Louis XIV and intended to convey an atmosphere of royal majesty and solemnity. This effect is most exemplified during the stately opening section featuring impressive dotted rhythms, suspensions, and sweeping ascending scales. The French overture is in binary form, and the

second part starts with a shift to a faster tempo and a contrapuntal texture (usually fugal). After this has run its course, the slow tempo and opening material return briefly to round things off and provide a grandiose close. Thus, this offers an early example of rounded binary form. During the **Classical** era, the imposing effect of French overture was often evoked, especially in slow introductions.

fugato: Refers to the temporary suggestion of fugal writing without actually presenting a complete **fugue**. Most typically, just an exposition is given before the effect is dropped and the music transitions to a more homophonic texture. Fugato is most frequently encountered during the development section of a sonata form. (Italian - “fugued”)

fugue: A particular genre of contrapuntal music, and one of the cornerstones of the **Baroque** era. In its most basic form, fugue is imitative polyphony in which one voice enters by itself with a statement of an idea called the subject, after which the other voices enter in turn until all have formed an interweaving texture. Once the subject is originally presented in the tonic, successive entries repeat it in alternation between the dominant and the tonic. Essential to the effect of fugue is the fact that each voice continues to sound following the subject, typically first with a contrasting idea called the counter-subject and then with a freely extending line. The most characteristic and immediately recognizable part of a fugue is its opening, called the exposition and consisting of everything until the final voice has presented both the subject and counter-subject. Fugues can continue at considerable length after this point, alternating between freer episodes and varied returns of the exposition material. The subject and counter-subject of a fugue must be crafted with care to allow for a wide variety of contrapuntal combinations and to remain easily identifiable within a complex and shifting texture. It is very common for the subject to feature long notes and a distinctive rhythm, while the counter-subject typically switches to bustling faster note-values. Techniques frequently employed over the course of a fugue include **stretto**, **augmentation**, **diminution**, and **inversion**. Expressively, fugue often manages to combine a feeling of intellectual rigor, resulting from the discipline of making all the parts properly fit together with a sense of electric excitement and teeming vitality. Though fugue reached its highest development in the music of J.S. Bach, it remained an important form through the **Classical** era and beyond, though used more self-consciously as a deliberate evocation of an earlier style.

functional harmony (or **tonal harmony**): Refers to the harmonic language developed during the early **Baroque** period and further extended and elaborated over the following centuries. Functional harmony assumed a clear tonal center and derived its logic and power from the systematic manipulation of the polarity between the **tonic** (I) and **dominant** (V), mediated by the **subdominant** (IV). This central relationship allows for successive experiences of tension and release, of departure and return that underlie and power most of the music we now encounter.

glissando: Refers to sliding smoothly up or down from one pitch to another, the distance traversed being variable. One type of *glissando* involves an even change of pitch not separated into individual notes and can only be performed by certain instruments, for example the violin or trombone, as well as the human voice (*portamento*). On other instruments such as the harp or piano, a *glissando* is created by rapidly and fluidly traversing the intervening notes. (Italian, from the French *glisser* - “to glide”)

grace note: A musical ornament consisting of a note (or notes) played very quickly before a more prominent and longer note. It has the effect of a split-second precursor and adds rhythmic excitement, along with a certain panache. Grace notes are printed smaller than regular notes, and it is customary to execute them by stealing a little of the time from the note just prior.

half-note: Refers to a note-value half the length of a **whole note**, and twice that of a **quarter-note**. In **common time**, there is time for two half-notes per bar. (*minim* in British terminology)

half-step: Refers to the shortest possible interval or distance between two notes. The **chromatic** scale moves entirely by half-steps. On the piano, a half-step is the distance between two neighboring keys (either white key to black, black key to white, or white to white if no black key is in between). Also called a **semitone** or minor 2nd. When a half-step is played simultaneously, the clash of the two very

close pitches produces a particularly intense discord. The character of this pungent dissonance is closely related to the major 7th, which is the same interval inverted.

harmony: This basic element of music is traditionally defined as the vertical dimension concerned with the effect of different pitches heard simultaneously, as opposed to horizontal elements such as rhythm and melody. Still, this simple division is complicated by the fact that a single unaccompanied voice can convey harmony through the notes that are emphasized and the use of **arpeggios**. Also, the concept of verticality is countered by the fact that harmony can only truly be understood in terms of the way it changes over time. Harmony is the subtle and complex language of shifting chords and shifting keys. Somewhat paradoxically, while it is among the most difficult musical disciplines to thoroughly master and understand, its appeal to even the untutored can be surprisingly immediate and emotionally direct. Moreover, our ears understand much more of the syntax of harmony than we might consciously realize, as is evident from the jarring effect of a wrong note or chord when a child is practicing the piano.

hemiola: A term describing the rhythmic effect of briefly changing meter, such as duple-to-triple or triple-to-duple, achieved by means of accents that temporarily throw off the sense of the actual meter. (Greek - "proportion")

home key: Another way of referring to the **tonic** key. This is generally used in the context of a movement or multi-movement composition where the tonic represents a 'home base' that is returned to after significant departures.

homophonic: The adjectival form of **homophony**.

homophony: Refers to a musical texture consisting of one obvious main melody with other voices either moving mostly in step with it ('chordal style'), or clearly relegated to a subordinate accompanimental pattern. (Greek - "alike-sounding") The opposite of **polyphony**.

imitation: The close repetition of an idea first heard in one voice by one or more subsequent voices, either literally copying the same notes or moving them to another pitch-level and perhaps ornamenting or varying them. Typically this is done with the effect of overlap between the voices. Imitation is the basis of **contrapuntal** forms such as **canon** and **fugue**, but it also crops up frequently as a means of adding extra interest to otherwise-**homophonic** music.

instrumental-style melody: Refers to melodies that are clearly conceived with the technical capabilities of an instrument in mind, making no effort to evoke the effect of the human singing voice. This type of melody is a clear contrast to **lyrical** or **vocal-style themes**, and often the two approaches will be effectively juxtaposed within the same movement or piece.

interval: Refers to the distance between two notes. A harmonic interval results when both notes are heard simultaneously, while a melodic interval denotes two consecutive pitches and is either rising or falling depending on their relative position.

inversion: 1) The playing of an already-heard motive or theme upside down, so that what were once the highest notes are now the lowest, etc. This is an especially popular technique in contrapuntal forms such as **fugue**, but it is also encountered in other contexts, especially as a means of getting more mileage out of a pervasive motive. 2) Any **interval** can be inverted by moving one of the pitches an octave so that it is now in an opposite relationship to the other pitch. That is, where once it was perhaps above, now it is below. In this process, small intervals grow large and large intervals grow small, but they tend to retain much of their particular sound-character when both pitches are heard simultaneously. For example, a minor 3rd inverts to become a major 6th, while a perfect 5th inverts to become a perfect 4th. In every case, the sum of the numerical values of the original and inverted intervals will add up to 9.

K.: Abbreviation for Köchel number, referring to a chronological listing of the complete works of Mozart originally compiled by the pioneering Mozart bibliographer Ludwig von Köchel.

key: Refers to the harmonic orientation of a passage of music derived from the prevailing scale and the chords arising therefrom. The name of the key is taken from the first note of the scale, which provides the tonal center (**tonic**), and from the prevailing **mode** (either **major** or **minor**).

key signature: Every **key** has this indication of which notes (if any) in its scale are to be played as **sharps** or **flats**. There are 12 different key signatures in all, and each one applies to both a major and a minor key (the **relative major/minor** of each other). See also **circle of 5ths**.

L.H.: Abbreviation for ‘left hand’ when referring to a piano part. Typically the left hand provides the rhythmic and harmonic underpinning in piano music, but it is also sometimes given the opportunity to sing a bass melody-line.

ländler: An Austrian folk dance in 3/4 time with a distinctive rustic character that was often imitated by composers of the **Classical** era, especially in minuet movements. The ländler was sort of a ‘countrified’ precursor to another Viennese dance in triple-time, the **waltz**.

largo: Very slow **tempo** indication. (Italian - “broad”)

lead-in: This is a way of designating a short passage, often consisting of a **scale** or scale fragment, that is used to gracefully anticipate the opening **downbeat** of a **theme**. (An idiosyncratic usage, rather than a standard musical term.)

leading-tone: Refers to the 7th degree of the major or harmonic minor scale, and to the VII-chord built on that note. From a broader perspective, when comparing different key areas, the leading-tone refers to the key of the VII-chord, but this is an unusual relationship and rarely encountered. Particularly mitigating against the frequent use of VII in major keys is the fact that it is the only of the naturally occurring triads to be diminished. The name ‘leading-tone’ derives from its position as the last note of the scale before arriving back at the tonic, leading to that ‘home base’ by means of the strong pull of a half-step.

leap: Refers to a melodic movement from one note to the next that is at least a 3rd or more apart.

legato: Playing notes in a smoothly connected manner. The opposite of **staccato**. (Italian - “bound”)

line: A term sometimes interchangeable with **melody** or **voice**, but its use tends to draw particular attention to contour and direction. While the highest musical voice is often identified as the melody, the lowest is typically referred to as the bass line.

lyrical: When used in the context of instrumental music, this refers to a song-like quality and the evocation of the human voice.

main theme: A term used to designate the opening theme of the exposition of a **sonata-form** movement. Traditionally the main theme’s first important job is to clearly establish the tonic key, and for this reason it was common in the **Classical** era to begin a main theme with some arpeggiated form of the tonic chord. There is a certain tendency for main themes to be more rugged and assertive (‘masculine’ in the old parlance) than **subordinate themes**, but certainly this is far from a general rule. Also commonly called the ‘first theme’.

main theme group: This is a more useful term when the opening of a **sonata-form** movement has two or more distinctive thematic ideas in the tonic key prior to the modulating bridge.

major: 1) One of the two modes in common usage from the **Baroque** period on, major is generally perceived as having a brighter and more ‘neutral’ quality than **minor**. It results from the specific arrangement of **half-steps** and **whole steps** peculiar to the major scale. During the antique period when many medieval church modes were in use, what would later become major was called the ‘Ionian’ mode. 2) For intervals such as 2nds, 3rds, 6ths & 7ths, which can be either major or minor, the major form is a half-step larger.

measure: See **bar**.

mediant: Refers to the 3rd degree of the scale, and to the iii chord build on that note. From a broader perspective, when comparing different key areas, the mediant refers to the key of the iii chord. So named because of its intermediate location between the **tonic** and the **dominant**. In minor, the mediant is always the key of the **relative major**.

melody: Also **tune**. A consecutive arrangement of notes combining pitch and rhythm to create a memorable musical line. Melody is often the most readily noticeable element of music, and it is frequently given additional prominence through placement in a higher, more brilliant register, above a

clearly subordinate harmonic accompaniment. While this definition captures the most idiomatic use of the term, from a strictly technical point of view melody can refer to any succession of notes without consideration of emphasis or importance.

meter: Refers to that aspect of rhythm which organizes music into a repetitive sequence of underlying stresses called **beats**. Meter is expressed through **bars** (or measures) of equal length, with a set number of beats per bar and a characteristic pattern that emphasizes certain beats, especially the first or **downbeat**. See also **duple meter, triple meter, compound meter & time signature**.

mf: For *mezzo-forte*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘moderately loud’.

minor: 1) One of the two modes in common usage from the **Baroque** period on, minor is generally perceived as having a darker, more complex, and frequently ‘sadder’ quality than **major**. It results from the specific arrangement of **half-steps** and **whole steps** peculiar to the minor scale, though this is complicated in that there are actually three variants (effecting just the final few notes) called the ‘natural’ minor, ‘harmonic’ minor, and ‘melodic’ minor. During the antique period when many medieval church modes were in use, what would later become minor was called the ‘Aeolian’ mode. 2) For intervals such as 2nds, 3rds, 6ths & 7ths, which can be either major or minor, the minor form is a half-step smaller.

minuet: A stately court dance in 3/4 time, originally of French origin and spread across Europe during the **Baroque** period. Though the minuet was at first only one of many different dances popularized through the prestige of Louis XIV’s court at Versailles, during the **Classical** era it assumed an importance that eclipsed virtually all others. It was then that the minuet became the standard **dance movement** added to symphonies, string quartets, etc., and its **ternary-form** structure (consisting of **rounded binary-form** sections with literal repeats and a concluding *da Capo* return) proved the most orthodox and predictable of all **Classical** movement patterns. Working within a seemingly rigid template, composers exploited every opportunity to add variety and interest through ingenious manipulation of meter and phrase structure, along with occasional departures from the aristocratic formality usually associated with the dance. Often a contrasting rustic style was evoked, especially in the middle **trio** section. Though usually minuets have a moderate tempo, they can sometimes be directed to proceed considerably faster. It should be noted that with Classical-era **serenades** and other such light genres, there emerged a common tendency to expand the minuet’s usual ABA structure by including a new second trio that expands the dance to a rondo-like ABACA.

mode: 1) Refers to either **major** or **minor**, the two possible versions available since the **Baroque** period for a key starting on the same note. For example, though C major and C minor share the same tonal center, they differ in mode because of their alternate combinations of **half-steps** and **whole steps** used to traverse an **octave**. Also, arising from this, they have different key signatures and the chords built on the various scale degrees have different qualities. The contrast between the two modes might somewhat playfully be likened to that between vanilla and chocolate, with major seeming more light, bland & neutral, and minor darker, richer & more complex. During the Baroque, major and minor were used quite even-handedly, but the following **Classical** period saw major greatly predominating. Though minor was relegated to a subordinate role, its use was often the occasion for music of unusual depth and intensity. The heightened emotionalism of the Romantic era returned minor to prominence and even perhaps dominance. 2) Any of many possible scale arrangements dividing the octave into seven steps that were in common use during the Middle Ages and referred to with such fanciful-sounding Greek names as Aeolian, Dorian, Ionian, Lydian, Mixolydian and Phrygian. Though only the Ionian and Aeolian modes survived into later ages (giving rise to major and minor), the obsolete companion modes are sometimes touched upon for special effect or deployed to impart an exotic or antique atmosphere. Music that makes use of modes other than major and minor is now referred to with the adjective ‘modal’. The curious will find it easy to sample the various modes on a piano by starting on different white notes and playing the span of an octave using only the white keys.

moderato: Moderate tempo indication, usually a little faster than *andante*. (Italian - “moderately”)

modulation: Refers to a change from one **key** to another, usually by means of a transitional process that renders the shift both smooth and natural. Graceful modulations are most easily achieved between closely-related keys (see **Circle of 5ths**), but with skill and ingenuity, even vast harmonic gulfs can be deftly traversed. Sometimes modulations will be used in a way that is deliberately startling or exotic, including the stark juxtaposition of two remote keys without preparation. The process of modulation lends a feeling of great freedom and possibility to music, and passages that stay doggedly rooted in one key can soon begin to feel claustrophobic. In **sonata form**, the sections that usually rely most strongly on modulation are the **bridge** and **development**.

monody: See **monophony**.

monophonic: The adjectival form of **monophony**.

monophony: Refers to a musical texture consisting of one single unadorned voice, though possibly doubled in other **octaves**. This simplest of all textures has the power of great concentration and is frequently used at the start of a **Classical**-era movement to draw maximum attention to a dominant idea or **motto**. (Greek - “single voice”) See also **homophony** and **polyphony**.

Motive (or **motif**): A small, flexible, melodic idea that provides a generative impulse and can lend coherence to themes, developmental and transitional passages, as well as sometimes whole movements or even pieces. Motives can also be purely rhythmic or harmonic. Some are easily recognizable when they recur, while others may be subtle enough that they only register at a subconscious level for the casual listener.

***moto perpetuo*:** A character of nonstop rapid motion, often sustained throughout an entire movement and featuring persistent use of repetitive figuration. This is most frequently encountered in a particular style of hectic, bustling finale, sometimes contrapuntal in texture and often essentially monothematic in material. (Italian - “perpetual motion”)

motto: An idea of signal importance to a movement or work, generally heard at the beginning and recurring frequently thereafter. The typical motto is a pithy motive that is immediately memorable and lends itself to varied treatment while still preserving its essential identity. The insistent rhythm heard at the opening of Beethoven’s 5th symphony provides a paradigmatic example.

movement: A discreet section of an instrumental composition with its own defined structure and key that in most cases could apparently stand on its own but is understood to belong in a certain specified order with one or more other movements as part of a larger musical entity. In this way, movements might be compared by analogy with acts of a play or chapters of a book. Though the movements of a composition may be strikingly different in form, tempo, meter, mood, and key, they should still seem like they somehow belong together and create a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. Some of this sense of greater coherence is provided by the listener simply experiencing the juxtaposition of these separate parts, but a composer will usually exert himself to go beyond this by employing all manner of techniques, both obvious and subtle. Usually there is a break of silence, unspecified in length, between movements (in the past there was also often applause, though this is now frowned upon), but there are cases when two or more movements are joined together without pause. See **slow movement**, **dance movement**, **finale**.

***mp*:** For *mezzo-piano*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘moderately quiet’.

multiple-stop: The bowing of more than one string at a time by a string instrument. If more than two strings are involved, there will be a distinctive staggered or ‘rolled’ effect because the bow cannot actually make contact with them all at once. Multiple-stops often create a dramatic, highly charged impression, especially when loud, and they considerably extend the compositional possibilities of writing for a solo instrument that is usually limited to a single melodic line. See **double-stop**, **triple-stop**, **quadruple-stop**.

music-box scoring: Piano writing featuring both hands up in the treble range and lending a distinctly delicate, ‘tinkly’ quality to the sound. (This is an idiosyncratic usage and not an orthodox musical term.)

muted: Aside from its obvious meaning of ‘hushed,’ this can refer to the use of a specific technical apparatus that is employed with string instruments to give them a distinctive, slightly-muffled tone color. Brass instruments can also be muted in various ways to create a range of special effects.

non-imitative counterpoint: The simultaneous playing of two or more distinctive melodies. Generally this is limited to two tunes, and they must have enough interest, memorability, and rhythmic independence that one does not seem to merely be a harmony part to the other. This type of **counterpoint** is usually very attention-getting, and is often used to create a moment of culmination by combining important themes that were previously heard separately. (Wonderful examples of non-imitative counterpoint can also be found in the popular song literature such as Irving Berlin’s *Simple Melody & Old-Fashioned Wedding*, or Meredith Willson’s *Lyda Rose/Will I Ever Tell You*.)

octave unison (also orchestral unison): The simultaneous playing of a single musical idea in two or more **octaves**. This term is used to distinguish from merely ‘unison’ when different instruments or parts are heard in different registers. Octave unison is an effective way of focusing complete attention on a salient motive, the equivalent of bolding or italicizing it, and this makes it a popular gesture with which to start a movement. It is also common to reinforce a melody line by playing it in two octaves at once (in this case usually over accompaniment), a technique known as ‘octave doubling.’

octave: Refers to the distance between a note and the nearest note either above or below with the same name. It is called an ‘octave’ because the two notes are 8 scale-degrees apart (including the starting note). From a harmonic point of view, both notes are the same, as well as corresponding notes in other octaves. Playing notes an octave apart simultaneously produces a very ‘neutral’ effect, with fuller sound and range but no harmonic coloring.

octet: A piece for eight instruments, usually in more than one movement. A chamber ensemble this large is relatively rare, but there are some very important examples. A string octet would normally be made up of two string **quartets** combined. Octets for winds (or winds and strings), exhibit a wide variety of different instrumentations.

off-beat: A stress or sequence of stresses falling on weak **beats** or between beats, thus contradicting the pattern of emphasis established by the **meter**.

oom-pah-pah: A style of chordal accompaniment characteristic of dance music, and with a distinctly popular flavor. The essential effect results from the bass note of each chord being sounded first, followed by higher repetitions of the rest of the chord. The concept lends itself to a number of possible variations, including ‘oom-cha-cha-cha’ and ‘oom-cha-oom-cha’.

Op.: See **opus**.

open 5th: Two notes a 5th apart and played simultaneously without filling in the typical 3rd of a **triad**. If sustained, this can evoke a primal ‘nature’ mood, or suggest the rustic drone often characteristic of peasant music.

open cadence: This is equivalent to a comma in punctuation, and has the effect of a pause without a sense of closure. Open cadences are typically encountered in the breath that divides a period. The lack of completion arises from ending on a V or IV chord rather than a I chord.

operatic: In an instrumental context, this describes a passage of such opulent vocality and emotional expressiveness that it seems to draw inspiration from music for the stage. Many of the great instrumental composers, above all Mozart, were also masterful opera composers, and there was much cross-fertilization between the salon, the concert hall, and the opera house.

opus (abbr. op.): Literally “work” in Latin. Music publishers created the tradition of assigning opus numbers to a specific composer’s compositions (or groupings of compositions) at the time of first printing. Opus numbers can generally be a useful guide to whether a particular piece is early or late in a composer’s output, but beware, as many youthful pieces were published long after their composition (often posthumously) with high opus numbers.

ornament (or decoration): A note or rapidly-executed cluster of notes added to a musical line to provide embellishment or emphasis. Sometimes ornaments are integral to a melody or motive, while

other times they are worked into previously heard material as a means of providing fresh interest or a new perspective. Ornamentation is fundamental to the language of music, and many specific examples have evolved, including **trills**, **turns**, **grace notes**, **triplets**, **runs**, etc. Much of the art of ornamentation, both vocal and instrumental, originally evolved as a result of spontaneous improvisation on the part of performers, but over time this shifted more and more to decorations being exactly specified and carefully notated. During the **Classical** era, slow movements especially lent themselves to highly ornate melodies drawing inspiration from contemporary opera and its style of florid virtuosity. As with the visual arts, judicious and tasteful decoration (versus clumsy or vulgar excess) is crucial to identifying the highest quality of workmanship.

ostinato: A brief, insistently repeated musical pattern, often forming an accompaniment to other material. (Italian - “obstinate”)

p: For *piano*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘quiet’. (Italian - “low”)

parallel period: Referring to phrase structure, a period in which the antecedent and consequent are closely related or even practically identical except for the closed cadence at the end of the consequent.

parallel major/minor (also tonic major/minor): Each of the 12 notes of the chromatic scale can be used as the tonal center of either a major or minor key. For both keys, that root note is the **tonic**, but the rest of the scales will have significant differences, and the keys will have different key signatures. Parallel keys are always separated by a quarter turn on the **circle of 5ths**. Despite this relatively large harmonic distance, they still have a very strong affinity because of their common tonic note. In other words, they occupy the same octave on a piano, but traverse the space differently. It is quite common for music to introduce a *chiaroscuro* effect by briefly changing modes, and this is typically accomplished through recourse to the parallel minor or major. Also, a multi-movement instrumental composition in minor is often given an optimistic ending by switching the last movement to the parallel major or, failing that, at least ending the coda in the parallel major.

passagework: A texture of rapidly executed, repetitive patterns lacking a high melodic profile. Passagework is often used during extensions and transitions, where its relatively neutral character can serve to offset more thematic material. Despite this rather utilitarian function, it need not be dull, and it often provides considerable rhythmic and harmonic interest, as well as an opportunity for virtuoso display.

pedal/pedal point: A long-held or insistently repeated pitch that acts to anchor a musical passage. Pedal points have the effect of doggedly hanging on regardless of other transitory harmonic events. The term comes originally from organ music, where a low note can easily be sustained by use of one of the foot pedals. Naturally enough, pedal points are very often heard in the bass, but they may also occur in other registers, including way up in the treble range. The two most common pedals are a **dominant** pedal, which creates a sense of tension and anticipation of resolution to the **tonic**, and a tonic pedal, which grounds the musical discourse especially solidly in the **home key** (and is thus a frequent feature of **codas**).

period: Referring to phrase structure, a theme which separates into two parts that give the effect of balancing and completing each other. The opening, or antecedent, is followed by the consequent.

phrase: Most melodies can be subdivided into constituent parts, and these are known as phrases. A phrase is set off by **cadences** and typically has its own sense of unity and distinctive identity. Listening to a theme and imagining the points where one might be able to take a breath if singing it will help to identify the divisions between phrases. In some cases, a phrase will appear to be made up of smaller sub-phases, while in rare instances an entire theme or other musical passage will consist of a single indivisible phrase.

phrase structure: The architecture of themes with attention to symmetry vs. asymmetry, the use of parallel or contrasting **periods**, division into 4 and 8-bar units as opposed to more unusual lengths such as 3 and 6 bars, the introduction of organic freedom via extensions or interruptions, etc. The concepts of **antecedent** and **consequent** will often be useful for examining phrase structure as well as, on a slightly

larger scale, **statement** and **counter-statement**. Some music tends to have square phrase structure, especially typical of dances, while other works will have phrase lengths that change more unpredictably. In many cases, movements will incorporate themes consisting of parts that receive immediate, literal repetitions, such as with **binary form**. Though the study of phrase structure is most readily applied to themes, it can also cast valuable light on freer transitional and developmental passages, as well as harmonic pacing.

pitch: Often used interchangeably with ‘note’, but pitch specifically identifies the ‘highness’ or ‘lowness’ (frequency) of a musical sound without regard to duration, volume, timbre, etc.

pizzicato: The special effect of producing notes by plucking a string instrument that would normally be bowed. (Italian - “pinched”)

plagal cadence: An ending that can substitute for a closed cadence, but with a gentler and more exotic effect. Rather than a dominant 7th leading to the tonic, this uses a IV chord (subdominant) followed by the tonic. Sometimes also referred to as an ‘amen cadence’ because of its use at the end of many hymns and its association with spiritual music.

polyphonic: The adjectival form of **polyphony**.

polyphony: See **counterpoint**. (Greek - “many voices”) See also **monophony** and **homophony**.

pp: For *pianissimo*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘very quiet.’

ppp: For *pianississimo*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘extremely quiet.’

presto: Very fast **tempo** indication. (Italian - “quick”)

principal song: Refers to the A-section of an ABA (**ternary form**) movement, hence the term **song & trio design**. This designation is usually only used for ABA **slow movements** or single-movement genre pieces, since in dance movements it is preferable to label the equivalent sections as either **minuet** or **schерzo**.

program music: Any instrumental piece that attempts to illustrate a story, scene, situation, person, etc. While listeners are always free to attach their own imaginative associations to music, with a program the composer is explicitly revealing what a composition is intending to evoke or depict. This can be done by means of the title of a whole piece, by titles given to individual movements, or a separate written explanation furnished to the audience. Programs can be detailed and explicit, or offer just a suggestive hint. Orchestral and keyboard music have proven by far the most popular vehicles for programmatic expression, but there are also some notable examples to be found among the chamber repertoire. Vocal music (operas, songs, choral works) strives as a matter of course to interpret and amplify the meaning of the words being sung; program music provides instrumental genres an opportunity to get in on this same game. The term ‘absolute music’ is used to differentiate compositions without any overt extra-musical associations from program music.

quadruple-stop: The bowing of four notes, virtually simultaneously, by a string instrument. Because contact cannot be made with all four strings at once, there will be a distinctive staggered or ‘rolled’ effect that is part of the appeal of this dramatic gesture. See **multiple-stop**.

quarter-note: Refers to a note-value half the length of a **half-note**, and twice that of an **8th-note**. In **common time**, there is time for four quarter-notes per bar. Quarter-notes most often correspond to the overall feeling of pulse, and for this reason most time signatures are written in terms of quarter-notes, for example 4/4, 3/4 & 2/4, which have respectively four, three and two beats per measure. (*crotchet* in British terminology)

quartet: A piece for four instruments, usually in more than one movement. Since Joseph Haydn perfected it in his early maturity, the string quartet has been the most important and prestigious of the chamber ensembles for strings alone. String quartets consist of four independent voices analogous to soprano, alto, tenor & bass, assigned to 1st violin, 2nd violin, viola & cello. The piano quartet is a very important mixed genre, but its repertoire is considerably smaller than that of the piano **trio** or string quartet. The ensemble usually combined with the piano consists of violin, viola & cello, though there are also delightful examples that substitute a wind instrument for the violin.

quintet: A piece for five instruments, usually in more than one movement. String quintets and piano quintets make up some of the most important pieces in the **chamber music** repertoire. String quintets vary between those that add an extra viola to the typical string **quartet** lineup and those that add a cello. The piano quintet is the fullest and perhaps noblest of the standard mixed ensembles and generally teams the piano with a string quartet. There are also celebrated quintets for other combinations, such as clarinet and strings, horn and strings, piano and winds, winds alone, etc.

R.H.: Abbreviation for ‘right hand’ when referring to a piano part. Typically, the right hand is the lead voice in piano writing, often singing like a soprano over a left hand accompaniment.

range: This identifies all the notes from the highest to the lowest that it is practical for a specific instrument to play. When applied to a particular composition, range refers to the highest and lowest notes in a specific part. It is the upper and lower extremes that are most significant. This is especially the case with instruments whose highest notes are difficult to play well, requiring equal shares of skill and daring. Even an unsophisticated listener will respond in a visceral way to such high notes, sensing instinctively the combination of challenge, strain, and accomplishment.

ready, set, go phrase structure (also “**wind up, wind up, throw**”): A not-uncommon variant of the 8-bar, 4+4 **balanced period**. In this case, the feeling is more one of 2+2+4, with the shorter 2-bar sub-phrases proposing an idea or gesture that then takes flight in the longer 4-bar **consequent**. Hum the chorus of *Jimmy Crack Corn* to get the idea. (An idiosyncratic usage, rather than a standard musical term.)

recapitulation: In sonata form, this is the final large section and is located immediately after the **development**. Usually closely resembling the **exposition**, the recapitulation is especially distinguished by the very important change that all the material originally presented in a contrasting key is now transposed to the tonic. This transposition serves the function of grounding and stabilizing the tension and polarity generated by the juxtaposing of two key areas in the exposition, and it strongly demonstrates that the **subordinate theme** and **closing material** have ultimately fallen under the sway of the **main theme** and its key. The start of the recapitulation is typically one of the most dramatic and attention-getting moments of any sonata form, with its double return of the home key after all the harmonic dislocation during the development section and of the main theme sounding more or less like its original self. It is common for composers to abbreviate and even sometimes significantly recast the main theme and **bridge** material (the bridge is not infrequently even omitted altogether), but the subordinate theme and closing material are then typically quite faithfully preserved except for the altered key.

recitative: In the context of instrumental music, this would refer to a passage that deliberately imitates a declamatory style often employed in opera. On the stage, recitative was used between arias and other more formal vocal numbers to present dialogue at a relatively naturalistic pace, sung with an imitation of normal speech rhythms, a flexible tempo, and generally spare accompaniment. Recitative became such a common and recognizable style within the overall musical culture that it inevitably found its way into some instrumental compositions, though there of course without the words that were its original *raison d’être*. (from Italian *recitativo*)

relative major/minor: Every major key has a closely-related minor key that shares its same key signature, known as its ‘relative’ minor. This relationship is reciprocal in that the major key is the minor key’s ‘relative’ major. The relative minor of a major key is the key based on its VI-chord, and the relative major of a minor key is the key based on its III-chord. For sonata-form movements set in minor, the contrasting key is usually the relative major rather than the dominant. See **circle of 5ths**.

repeat: When performing music, there are often occasions when the players are instructed to go back and play again a passage that they have just completed. This is especially a feature of certain phrase structures, such as **binary form**, or movement types, such as **sonata form**. In those cases, the repeats play an important architectural role, and omitting them does violence to the proportions and rhetoric of the composition. A ‘literal’ repeat means that the passage is executed exactly as before. At other times,

such as with a **rounded binary form** theme at the start of a **theme & variations** movement, the composer may employ the expected repeat structure, but alter the instrumentation for slight variety.

rest: A period of time during which a specific part or voice does not sound. Just as with a **note**, the duration of a rest is carefully defined and can range from a tiny pause to an extended silence. Some rests are especially noticeable because they coincide for the entire complement of performers, resulting in a moment of total silence.

retransition: In **sonata form**, this a term used to describe the last part of the **development section**, and it refers to the role of effecting the transition back to the home key, often from quite a remote harmonic starting point. It is during the retransition that we typically start to feel that we are getting our bearings and can sense that the tonic is approaching. Composers accomplish this feat in any number of clever ways, but the most traditional method is to use a dominant **pedal** that stabilizes the sense of harmonic drift while forecasting ultimate resolution to the tonic.

rhythm: A fundamental element of music dealing with the relative length and stress of notes comprising a passage, without regard to pitches or melodic contour. Rhythm in the broadest sense focuses on how musical sounds are placed in time and thus includes **meter** (defined elsewhere). However, the term is more typically used to describe the specific and changing relationships between notes of various lengths (along with any larger patterns this may generate) in motives, melodies, accompaniments, etc. With drums and other percussion instruments, rhythm can sometimes exist in its purest form, independent of melody or harmony. This speaks to the deep and primitive roots of music and the powerful appeal that rhythm can have to our physical being, especially in exciting our limbs into motion or mirroring our biological rhythms such as heartbeat and breathing. See also **dotted rhythm**, **hemiola**, and **syncopation**.

ritardando (abbr. **ritard**): A performance indication meaning that the **tempo** should be slowed. (Italian - "holding back")

Romantic, Romanticism: Terms with many possible meanings, but in the context of music, they refer to the period from the early 1800s through the beginning of the 20th century. Often the start of the era is placed at 1827 with the death of Beethoven, but there are works before this date that exemplify all the characteristics of early Romanticism. Moving to the period's end, a ripe and opulent late Romanticism coexists with pioneering Modernist efforts well into the first decades of the 1900s. With instrumental music, the Romantic style includes quite a variety of possible expressions. Probably first among these would be a heightened, often intense sense of emotional subjectivity, resulting in works of considerable length featuring expansive lyrical melodies. On the other hand, there was also a complementary new focus on short genre pieces. As performers pushed the frontiers of virtuosity to ever-greater heights, new technical possibilities exerted an influence on many works. In addition, composers were frequently drawn to create exotic effects by means of rich and chromatic harmony, lush scoring, and the use of various ethnic folk idioms. Much Romantic music was given explicit extra-musical associations by means of programs or evocative titles. Central to the movement were the celebration of nature and a focus on the human being as a separate individual. While the formal patterns established during the **Classical** era continued to exert a strong influence, they were commonly treated with great freedom, following the example of Beethoven.

rondo: One of the most important of the **Classical** era movement types, based on the idea of one dominant theme that returns as a refrain, separated by contrasting **episodes**. Normally, the rondo theme is always heard in the home key, while the episodes provide diverting harmonic excursions. In multi-movement works, this form is most frequently employed for **finales** or **slow movements**. Rondo finales typically exhibit an infectious good humor, often featuring a catchy dance-like theme that causes delight with each recurrence. These movements lend themselves to playfulness, with one common expression being the teasing gestures used to anticipate, but delay, the expected rondo returns. So dominant during the Classical era was the influence of **sonata form** that rondo movements not-infrequently display strong sonata characteristics; see **sonata-rondo**. The instrumental rondo existed already during the **Baroque**

period but with nothing approaching its later importance. The word comes from the French *rondeau*, a medieval dance song with recurring refrain.

rounded binary form: This is much the same as regular **binary form**, except that there is a clear sense of thematic return at the end of part II, linking it more explicitly and symmetrically with part I. During the **Baroque** period, **French overtures** provided an early, specialized example of rounded binary form, but it was really the **Classical** era with its love of symmetry that strongly embraced the idea. Like regular binary form, the rounded version can be used for individual themes, whole sections of movements, and even entire movements themselves. Because the phrase structure occurs so often, a convention has developed for labeling the constituent elements as follows: Part I in its entirety is designated as phrase *a*. Part II is often longer than I and consists of two separate phrases; the first, *b*, provides contrast accompanied by a sense of harmonic excursion, then is followed by *a'*, which presents a return to the tonic and a (usually) slightly varied version of the part I material. (There is a frequent tendency for the *b*-phrase to have a more fragmentary and developmental feeling, often breaking down into two short and parallel sub-phrases.) Rounded binary form is encountered with the greatest consistency in Classical-era minuet movements, where practically invariably both the **minuet** and the **trio** exhibit this phrase structure. As for whole movements, many Classical-era marches are cast in the form. Also, early **sonata forms** evolved in part as an elaborated version of rounded binary form, and that is why many of them from the Classical era call for a second repeat consisting of the **development** and **recapitulation** as equivalents to phrases *b* and *a'*. See **repeats**.

run: A rapidly and fluidly executed **scale** passage. Among other uses, these are often encountered as **upbeat lead-ins** and as a means of **ornamenting** melodies.

scale: Refers to a sequence of notes played one after another in ascending or descending order. The scales conventionally used in **Classical** music consist of seven notes before starting over with the **tonic** in a new **octave**, and the spacing of those notes determines whether a scale is either **major** or **minor**. For special effect, concert music may also sometimes draw on more exotic scales derived from medieval times, folk music, or non-Western cultures, as well as from different **pitch** systems created in the modern era. From the Italian *scala* for “ladder.” See also **mode** and ‘chromatic scale’ under **chromatic**.

scherzando: An expressive indication directing that a passage or movement should be performed in a free and playful manner.

scherzo: A **dance movement** with a deliberately jesting and eccentric character (from the Italian “I’m joking”). Within four-movement works, Haydn pioneered the term and concept (Op. 33 string quartets), but it was Beethoven who soon decided that he was losing interest in adding to the hundreds of **minuets** already composed by Mozart, Haydn, et al, and made it his usual practice to substitute scherzos. In his case, the humor tended to have a particularly gruff, boisterous, and at times even violent quality. Early Beethoven scherzos typically follow the **ternary form** and **rounded binary** phrase structure of minuet movements, but over time, even these conservative features gave way to more organic and idiosyncratic procedures, including sometimes forsaking the expected **triple meter**. During his middle period, one of his favorite strategies was to expand the usual ABA structure through repeats to become a more substantial ABABA-Coda. He also felt free to reverse the order of the middle movements so that the scherzo came second, followed by the **slow movement**, especially in cases when the first movement had a somewhat leisurely pace. So profound was Beethoven’s influence that the following generations of composers adopted the scherzo as the norm for dance movements, even into the early 20th century. During the Romantic era, scherzos not infrequently dispensed with ternary form for other novel structures including **sonata form**. While Beethoven’s beloved ABABA was rarely copied, the ABACA option previously employed for **serenade** minuets enjoyed a new popularity.

sequence: One of the most common and important procedures used in creating melodies or extending and developing material, this refers to the immediate repetition of a **motive** or **phrase** at a higher or lower pitch-level. Often this will be done several times in succession, and the basic melodic idea may undergo some additional alteration in the process.

septet: A piece for seven instruments, usually in more than one movement. Septets are relatively rare and can exhibit a wide variety of different instrumentations.

serenade: 1) Literally, a ‘night song’ of the sort a lover might sing outside his sweetheart’s window, usually to the accompaniment of some plucked instrument such as a mandolin, lute, or guitar. Music in this style has deep folkloric roots, and it is sometimes evoked instrumentally in lyrical **slow movements**. 2) A successor to the **Baroque suite**, the **Classical** serenade was a loose procession of movements in a light, accessible style, typically composed as entertainment for a particular party or celebration. The goal was music that was agreeably diverting without requiring careful attention, though with a composer such as Mozart, this did not preclude compositions of the very highest order. Serenades frequently start (and sometimes end) with a march. Following this, there is an **allegro** movement in **sonata form** and a flexible assortment of slow movements, **minuets**, and possibly other movements such as **rondos**, **theme & variations**, etc. Some serenades can be surprisingly long, and they frequently exceed the four-movement limit that applied to more formal genres. Other names used in lieu of ‘serenade’ were cassation, divertimento, nocturno, and nachtmusik (the latter two, like serenade, meaning ‘night music’). During the Romantic era, composers would occasionally revive the serenade form as an affectionate nod to the past.

sextet: A piece for six instruments, usually in more than one movement. String sextets normally consist of two violins, two violas, and two cellos, and there are important masterpieces for this combination from the late 19th century and early 20th. There are also a few celebrated piano sextets with varying complements of strings and sometimes winds.

sf or **sfz:** Both for *sforzando*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘sudden loud’ and typically used for shock effect where a stress would not normally occur. Especially beloved of Beethoven. (Italian - “forcing”)

sfp: For *subito fortissimo*, a dynamic marking indicating ‘sudden loud followed by quiet’ as with **fp** but with a sharper effect.

sharp: (symbol: #) Indicates that a pitch is to be played a **half-step** higher than the natural note designated by the same letter. Many will also be familiar with the use of the term ‘sharp’ to describe a pitch erroneously sounded somewhat above the note intended.

slow introduction: A preliminary section sometimes used to set up a first-movement **sonata form** and also occasionally a **finale**. Slow introductions are particularly associated with symphonies and overtures, where they project an air of seriousness and heightened expectation, but they also crop up in other instrumental genres. They tend to have a fragmentary and unstable character, teasing the listener with shifting gestures and obscure harmonies, offering hints and possibilities while withholding completion or resolution. The goal is to arouse increasing excitement and tension, relieved finally by the start of the **allegro** sonata form with its clear reaffirmation of the **tonic key** and sense of forward momentum. It is very common for slow introductions to pay homage to the earlier **Baroque French overture** through the use of impressive dotted rhythms and sweeping scales. Composers will sometimes deliberately create a sense of humorous anti-climax when the portentous solemnity of a slow introduction is followed by a merry and flippant **main theme**. However, even when comedy is not intended, slow introductions use anticipation and contrast to set off the rest of the movement in greater relief, making what follows seem brighter, faster, and more compelling than it otherwise might. Slow introductions can also provide an effective opportunity to suggestively foreshadow important **motives** or themes. Aside from the already-mentioned overtures, slow introductions sometimes furnish a convenient way of adding stature to single-movement works not in sonata form, such as **theme & variations** or **rondos**.

slow movement: With many **Baroque** multi-movement instrumental pieces, there is a middle movement characterized by a slow-to-moderate tempo and contrasting key, providing relaxation and variety between two up-tempo outer movements. This fast-slow-fast, three-movement template persisted into the **Classical** era as the dominant arrangement, though sometimes supplemented with the addition of a **dance movement**. Even in such four-movement works, however, slow movements were normally the only ones to be set in a different key, usually the subdominant for its effect of a release in tension (though

Haydn and especially Beethoven often explored far more remote key relationships). In most cases, slow movements offer a lyrical respite and an appeal to our hearts, a chance to reflect and revel in sentiment. Structurally, they exhibit great variety, including **sonata form**, **sonatina design**, **song & trio**, **rondo**, and **theme & variation**, but at the same time, one's attention is directed less to form than singing melody and an expressive mood. With an allowance for still greater freedom of style and lushness of harmony, many of the qualities enumerated above would carry over into the subsequent Romantic era.

sonata: 1) This term goes far back in music history and derives from the Italian verb *suonare*, meaning 'to sound', as in play a musical instrument. Thus a sonata is a 'sounded' piece or instrumental composition, as opposed to a cantata (from *cantare*) or sung piece. By the **Baroque** period, most sonatas consisted of several movements following a pattern of either fast-slow-fast or slow-fast-slow-fast (as opposed to the freer configurations of the more French-influenced **suite**). Moving on to the **Classical** era, the fast-slow-fast template generally prevailed but sometimes with the addition of a **dance movement (minuet)** before the **finale**. Depending on their instrumentation, the resulting works were often not titled 'sonatas,' but the term was still generally understood to apply to them. In this way, a symphony could be considered a sonata for orchestra and a string quartet a sonata for two violins, viola, and cello. It is this definition of the word that explains how **sonata form** got its name, as the most important movement type to be encountered over the course of a sonata. 2) Now the most commonly used and readily understood meaning: a multi-movement piece for solo instrument or for solo instrument with keyboard accompaniment. See also **duo**.

sonata form: (Sometimes also called 'sonata-allegro' or 'first movement' form.) This movement design is by far the most important structural innovation to emerge from the **Classical** era. In fact, so pervasive was its impact that the influence of sonata form will often be detected in other movement types as well. The fundamental idea is to set up a contrast between two **themes** (or groups of themes) and key areas, further complicate matters through **development**, and then resolve the polarity through simultaneous restatement and reconciliation. The result is a fluid and flexible design with great potential for dramatic exploration and narrative thrust. Taken in order, the constituent parts of a typical sonata form are **slow introduction** (optional), **exposition** (consisting of **main theme**, **bridge**, **subordinate theme**, **closing material**, and **cadence theme**), **repeat**, **development section**, **recapitulation**, and **coda**...all of which are discussed in detail under individual headings. There are exceptions, but the first movement of a multi-movement work is generally in sonata form. **Slow movements** and **finales** are also often cast in this design. Thus, it is not uncommon to encounter pieces in which all or almost all of the movements are sonata forms. **Dance movements** are the most resistant to the sonata allure, but even here, some **scherzos** have succumbed. During the early days of the Classical style, sonata form evolved quite naturally from **Baroque binary-form** dance movements. This explains the vestigial second repeat (of the development, recapitulation, and sometimes coda) that is found through much of Mozart and even occasionally in Beethoven. The dance origins of sonata form remain particularly evident in many a Classical-era finale. During the following Romantic period, sonata form maintained its dominant position, while at the same time experiencing new evolutionary pressures. In particular, in the late 1800s it became increasingly common to omit even the repeat of the exposition, thus yielding a design with more of a **ternary** feeling (ABA') that shifted greater weight onto the development as an equal partner with the exposition and recapitulation.

sonatina design: (Also referred to as 'truncated sonata' or 'cavatina' form.) This simplified variant of **sonata form** is almost exclusively encountered with **slow movements**. The important difference is that the **exposition** is immediately followed by a **recapitulation** without an intervening **development section**, although sometimes a brief transitional passage bridges the end of the **closing material** and the return of the **main theme**. Slow movements often privilege relaxation and lyrical expansion over drama, and dispensing with a development can help to further this objective. The term sonatina is also used in a different context to refer to certain multi-movement solo **sonatas** (see separate definition) that are relatively short and not too technically demanding. From the Italian, meaning 'little sonata.'

sonata-rondo: A hybrid movement type combining the **rondo** idea with more or less explicit elements of **sonata form**. The way this usually works is to arrange the **episodes** and rondo returns to approximate the harmonic scheme of a sonata movement. The most common design may be diagrammed as ABACAB'A, with the rondo theme (A) serving as a main theme analog, and the B-episode modulating to the **dominant** and including a new theme as a **subordinate theme** stand-in. When the B material is brought back later, it is transposed to the **tonic** as is typical during a **recapitulation**. In this scheme, the central (C) episode is often particularly dramatic, sometimes employing the minor mode and/or frequent modulations. This can seem to ally it with the idea of a **development** section, and occasionally this is made more explicit through actual development of motives from the rondo theme. After the central episode, the return of A, with its restoration of the tonic key, has much in common with the start of a recapitulation. The concluding appearance of A to complete the rondo design is generally used as the springboard for a **coda** and often introduces clever variation of the now very familiar theme. It will be seen that the most pronounced departure here from normal sonata procedure is the first return of A, thus ending the quasi-exposition with an otherwise unconventional restatement of the main theme and home key. Sonata-rondos seem to exist on a flexible gradient, from rondos with slight sonata tendencies to sonata forms that behave a bit like a rondo. Somewhat paradoxically, these movements can be among the most confusing to follow in detail (especially many Mozart finales) while at the same time, they easily carry along even a casual listener by means of their jaunty style and reassuring refrain.

song & trio design: A useful general designation for a movement in **ternary form** that is neither a **minuet** nor a **scherzo**, for example many **slow movements** or single-movement genre pieces. With this nomenclature, the opening section is referred to as the **principal song**, and frequently its return is somehow ornamented or varied, yielding a design of ABA'.

staccato: Playing notes separately with a little bit of silence between them, creating a sense of 'tiptoeing' articulation. The opposite of **legato**. (Italian - "detached")

statement: For the purpose of these notes, a term only used in the context of a statement/**counter-statement** pairing. Refers to the initial presentation of a **theme** that will then be immediately repeated (counter-statement), usually altered in some way and given a different ending.

stretto: An effect often encountered during a **fugue** or other instance of imitative **counterpoint**. During a stretto, voices enter with a swifter overlap than was heard originally, creating the effect of an exciting, impatient pileup. In other words, only a little bit of the familiar **subject** is heard in one voice before it is already being **imitated** by a second voice and then a third and so forth. From the Italian for "squeezed."

subdominant: Refers to the 4th degree of the scale and to the IV chord build on that note. From a broader perspective, when comparing different key areas, the subdominant refers to the key of the IV chord and is closely related to the home key. It is quite common for music to modulate to the subdominant, and this generally has the effect of a reduction in tension but without offering the final rest and resolution of the tonic. Either as chords or keys, the relationship between the tonic and subdominant is secondary only to that between the tonic and dominant. The IV-I progression can even be used as a substitute for a V⁷-I cadence (see **plagal cadence**). With multi-movement instrumental compositions, the subdominant is the preferred key for the slow movement, where its effect of relaxation complements the typical lyrical respite. See **circle of 5ths**.

subject: A **melody** which serves as the basis of a **fugue**. (The word will also sometimes be found used synonymously with **theme**.)

submediant: Refers to the 6th degree of the scale and to the vi chord build on that note. From a broader perspective, when comparing different key areas, the submediant refers to the key of the vi chord. The name might seem to suggest that this is the note below the mediant, but instead it refers to the fact that it is in a sense the opposite of the mediant; that is, a 3rd below rather than a 3rd above the tonic. In major, the submediant is always the key of the **relative minor**.

subordinate theme (or sub-theme): Refers to the theme in a contrasting key, usually the dominant or relative major, that occurs after the modulating bridge during the **exposition** of a **sonata-form**

movement. Subordinate themes often offer more than just key contrast by means of a style and melody that is a marked departure from that of the **main theme**. Frequently they are more gentle and lyrical ('feminine' in the old parlance), but this is by no means a general rule. Also, though they may seem demure, they are typically more harmonically active and complex. It bears noting that earlier in the **Classical** era, it was quite common to have a subordinate theme that was the same as (or at least very closely modeled on) the main theme, and this remains a feature of quite a few of Haydn's sonata-form movements. Many commentators prefer the term 'second theme' over subordinate theme. However, the word 'subordinate' denotes no lesser status as far as musical quality or importance, but refers to the fact that this theme's contrasting key must ultimately subordinate itself to the main theme's tonic when it is transposed during the recapitulation.

subordinate theme group: In **sonata form**, this is a more useful term for describing the material occurring after the modulating bridge if it consists of two or more distinct thematic ideas. Sometimes it is far from clear where this group ends and the **closing material** begins, but generally that final portion of the exposition is marked by a shift from lyrical expansion to a bustling, 'wrapping-up' feeling.

suite (or sometimes **partita**): An instrumental genre, originating primarily in France, that was extremely popular during the **Baroque** era. Suites usually consisted of a prelude or **French overture**, followed by an assortment of stylized **dance movements** and other character pieces. When compared with the Italianate **sonata**, suites typically had more movements, a greater variety of movement types, and a more casual ordering of movements. While most sonatas followed a pattern of fast-slow-fast or slow-fast-slow-fast, suites could draw from a bewildering assortment of different templates, including idiosyncratic new configurations. All of this latitude, combined with the prevalence of dance music, tends to impart a more light and casual character, but there are still a large number of Baroque suites of the highest possible musical quality and not a few that frequently project an aura of high seriousness. During the **Classical** era, suites metamorphosed into **serenades**, and by the 19th century the term 'suite' was generally applied to an arrangement of instrumental excerpts from a stage work (opera, ballet, or play with incidental music). From the French for "series" or "succession."

supertonic: Refers to the 2nd degree of the scale and to the ii chord build on that note. From a broader perspective, when comparing different key areas, the supertonic refers to the key of the ii chord. In minor, an important variant on this chord is the flat (major) supertonic, the chord and key of which are referred to as the Neapolitan (from Neapolitan 6th chord).

symmetrical period: See **balanced period**.

syncopation: A momentary or sustained contradiction of the normal pattern of metrical stresses. A syncopated **melody** sounds like it is moving out of step with the underlying **beat**. With popular styles such as ragtime and jazz, syncopation is an inherent and consistently-present rhythmic feature. Syncopation in **Classical** music is more likely to crop up as an occasional transitory special effect, contributing to moods as diverse as elegant, gently lilting sophistication, exuberant cross-grained excitement, or wildly agitated drama. See also **offbeat** and **hemiola**. From "syncope," meaning to miss a heartbeat.

tease: A passage where the return of a familiar **theme** is anticipated in an obviously prolonged way, creating the sense that the composer is playing with the listener. Harmonically and motivically, it seems as though the theme is just there around the corner, but its actual arrival is withheld, often with deliberately humorous effect. Of course, the payoff is that when the awaited melody does finally and truly arrive, it is that much more satisfying. The use of teases is particularly common in **rondo** movements. A similar effect sometimes also crops up at the end of a **slow introduction**, but of course in this case the theme has not been heard before. (An idiosyncratic usage, rather than a standard musical term.)

tempo: The speed at which a piece of music is played; that is, how fast or slowly the beats of the prevailing **meter** are counted out. Composers suggest their intentions by means of tempo indications, usually drawing upon a conventional vocabulary of Italian words such as **presto**, **allegro**, **andante**,

adagio, and *largo* with further nuance often added by a host of modifiers, suffixes, and expressive terms. In addition, the invention in the early 19th century of the mechanical device known as the metronome created the opportunity to designate tempos with numerical precision.

ternary form: One of the most primary, stable, and satisfying of all musical patterns. A symmetrical three-part structure traditionally schematized as ABA, ternary form satisfies the desire for unity and diversity in a very straightforward way through statement, departure, and return. Individual themes, sections, or entire movements can be constructed using the ABA principle.

tessitura: A term related to **range**, but more specialized in its meaning. Instead of merely focusing on the highest and lowest notes in a part, tessitura identifies where the majority of all the notes lie. Thus, a certain piece might not have an especially high range, but still have a high tessitura. (Italian - "texture")

texture: Refers to the number of voices present, their distribution, and manner of combination. Textures can be simple or complex, spare or full, easy-to-grasp or bewilderingly busy. The various categories of texture are described under **monody**, **monophony**, **homophony**, and **polyphony**.

theme & variations: In concept, one of the most ancient and primal of musical designs, theme & variations is often encountered in single-movement, stand-alone pieces, as well as in multi-movement works as a **slow movement** or **finale**. Theme & variations solves the problem of unity and diversity in a unique way, repeating the same basic **melody** over and over but maintaining interest by inventively altering it each time. After the **theme** under consideration has been stated in its original form, it is followed by a numbered series of variations, each typically marked off from its neighbors with a slight breath and its own distinctive style and character. Variations may be classified by means of two broad categories: decorative and disguised. With decorative variations, the original melody is still relatively easy to hear, though gussied up with **ornaments**, **counter-melodies**, and other instances of ingeniously elaborate scoring. Disguised variations treat the tune with far greater freedom and may seem to ignore it entirely except for its **phrase structure** and general harmonic scheme. Another type of variation (that can be either decorated or disguised) is the 'character' variation, which recasts the theme into a miniature version of some readily recognizable musical genre such as a military march, **waltz**, polka, **fugue**, etc. Because theme & variations is an additive form made up of multiple short sections in the same **key**, composers will typically try to superimpose an overall sense of unifying design. Sometimes they create larger structural rhythms and movement through grouping variations or alternating them in a consistent pattern. One common strategy is to start with a theme whose melody and accompaniment show a deliberate rhythmic restraint, then incorporate progressively faster note-values into the succeeding variations. This linking of variations by a gradient of increasing animation is usually only taken so far before a marked contrast is introduced. Other common features are at least one variation that switches **mode** and, towards the end, a variation in a slower **tempo**, often floridly **ornamented** in the style of an operatic **aria**. This slow variation can provide the perfect setup to the final variation, reverting to the original pace or sometimes something even faster and typically providing a sense of reprise and culmination by recalling the original version of the theme. Theme & variations form almost always calls for a **coda**, whose role is to break free of the tyranny of the theme's phrase structure and signal that the procession of different variations is truly at an end. It's also popular to have the last variation expand directly into the coda without a pause. Not infrequently, this entire complex of last variation and coda is further energized by a switch to 6/8 meter. There is also an alternate tradition that substitutes a sprawling fugue for a more conventional coda. The overall number of variations is in no way fixed and can range from just a handful to very many indeed. When writing variations, composers show a pronounced preference for themes in **binary form**, featuring either literal or varied **repeats**. Generally, a theme's phrase structure is adhered to with great fidelity, but there are also notable exceptions to this rule. Most theme & variations that are part of multi-movement works feature original melodies, though sometimes a composer will borrow one of his own tunes. In contrast, freestanding sets of variations very often use folk songs and popular airs of the day. This can be explained by the fact that the ability to improvise on-the-spot variations using any proposed tune was considered a standard part of the training of a virtuoso

performer/composer. Some specialized variations types are the **Baroque** passacaglia/chaconne, varying a recurring **bass** line or harmonic sequence, and the double-variation, which varies two contrasting themes in alternation.

theme: Any of the distinct, memorable **melodies** encountered over the course of a movement and usually playing an identifiable structural role within the larger design. Normally a theme is longer and possesses a greater sense of completeness than a **motive**.

timbre: Also called **tone color**, this refers to the actual specific quality of sound made by a particular instrument, influenced by how it is being played (volume, vibrato, etc.) and where in its compass. In addition, the blended sounds resulting from different combinations of instruments are also an aspect of timbre. This explains why the same exact passage of music - the same **notes, melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and dynamics** - could be played in succession by a piano, a string quartet, and a wind ensemble and still sound so markedly and gloriously different, and it's worth noting that the changes would be readily apparent to even the most unsophisticated listener. Of all the characteristics of music, timbre is certainly among the most immediate, thrilling, and sensual and least theoretical. Like an artist's pallet of paints or box of pastels, timbre offers a composer a rich and varied way of applying color to music. (French - literally "chime bell")

time signature: The numbers, written in what looks like a fraction, at the beginning of a piece or movement that identify the prevailing **meter**. The top number actually tells how many of the notes named after the bottom number will fit in one **bar** of the music. Thus, with 4/4 time, there can be four **quarter-notes** per bar and in 3/4 time, three quarter-notes per bar. With the exception of **compound meters**, the first number also tells how many beats or pulses will be felt per bar. Sometimes, instead of the numerical time signature, an abbreviation is used for **common time** (C) or **cut-time** (C^c). See **duple** and **triple meter**.

tonal harmony: See **functional harmony**.

tone color: See **timbre**.

tonic pedal: See **pedal/pedal point**.

tonic: Refers to the home note of a key, its tonal center, and the start of its scale, as well as to the I-chord built on it. Either as a chord or a key, the tonic is the position of rest and must always be returned to bring a sense of closure. During most of the **Classical** era, all but the slow movement of a multi-movement instrumental work would be set in the tonic key. See **circle of 5ths**.

transition: Any passage of music that doesn't seem to be strongly grounded in its own identity, but rather sounds like it is gradually going somewhere and setting up some future event. Transitions are usually harmonically unstable, lack regular phrase structure, and often busily repeat the same basic motivic material as they incrementally approach their goal. They are supporting players, without the glamour and prestige of **themes**, but their skillful deployment can do much to enhance the impact of those very themes through setting them in context. At the same time, a skillful composer will still manage to make a transition sound compelling in its own right. Two particularly important examples of transition are the **modulating bridge** and **retransition** encountered in **sonata form**.

tremolo: An exciting effect of throbbing or vibrating, often used as **accompaniment** and produced by a simple repetition of a single note or **chord** or rapid oscillation between upper and lower **notes**. In a way, this is similar to an extended **trill**, except that here if there is alternation, it is not between neighboring **itches**. (Italian = "trembling")

triad: The most basic type of **chord**, made up of two notes forming a perfect 5th with a third note in between filling in the 3rd. The result is basically two 3rds stacked on top of each other, one a **major** 3rd and the other **minor**. If the bottom 3rd is major, then so is the triad, and likewise if the bottom 3rd is minor, then so follows the chord. This description considers the triad in its most basic presentation, known as 'root position', with the three notes arranged in simple ascending order. The lowest note is called the 'root' and gives the name of its **pitch** to the chord. The notes above the root are the 3rd and 5th, respectively. In practice, it is possible to have the notes of a triad rearranged in different orders, and

these are called ‘inversions’. Note that there are also two special types of triads that are neither major nor minor. One is described as **diminished**, because instead of a perfect 5th it has a diminished 5th and is therefore made up of two minor 3rds. On the other hand, if both 3rds are major, then the chord is designated ‘augmented’ due to its augmented 5th.

triadic: A triadic **motive** or **melody** is wholly or primarily based on the notes of a simple, common **chord**. In other words, it is essentially an **arpeggio** but given a memorable sense of identity through the use of rhythm and the ordering and placement of its notes.

trill: A rapidly-executed oscillation between two neighboring notes. This extremely common musical device can be used either as a transitory ornament or in a more sustained way, sometimes similar to a **pedal point**. Extended trills generate tension that is resolved at their conclusion.

trio: 1) The contrasting middle section (or B-section) of a **ternary-form** movement (ABA). The term is especially associated with **dance movements** such as **minuets** or **scherezos**. With minuets, the trio is in **rounded binary form**, the same as the preceding minuet (A-section), but usually it is cast in a contrasting key and introduces a gentler mood and lighter scoring. This harkens back to the origins of the name ‘trio’, when it was a contrasting dance played by a few solo instruments (sometimes literally just three) between two renditions of a dance played by the full band. Eventually the ‘trio’ label proved a convenient designation for contrasting sections of other ternary forms, such as slow movements, marches, or individual genre pieces. Often, **Classical-era serenades** featured minuets with not one, but two different trios, creating a rondo-like ABACA design, a pattern that was sometimes also applied to scherezos during the Romantic era. 2) A piece for three instruments, usually in more than one movement. The piano trio is the dominant genre for mixed ensemble and enjoys a very large and distinguished repertoire. Normally, violin and cello combine with the piano, but there are important trios that substitute differing configurations of wind and string instruments. The string trio is also significant with a small but noble body of works, generally consisting of violin, viola and cello (though there are examples with two violins and viola).

triple meter: Any **time signature** based on a feeling of three, such as 3/4, 3/8, etc. Unlike **duple meter**, with its natural relationship to walking or running, triple meter has more of an affinity for another primal type of human locomotion - dancing. Certainly, there is lots of music in triple meter that betrays no obvious connection to dance, but still, somewhere underneath, that pulse of three suggests at least some sort of circular movement. See **minuet**, **ländler**, and **waltz**.

triple-stop: The bowing of three notes, virtually simultaneously, by a string instrument. Because contact cannot be made with more than two strings at once, there will be a distinctive staggered or ‘rolled’ effect that is part of the appeal of this dramatic gesture. See **multiple-stop**.

triplet: A grouping of three short notes that equally subdivide the beat. In this way, a triplet cuts against the prevailing tendency to divide the beat by progressively halving it. Sometimes faster triplets will break smaller fractions of a beat into three. An individual triplet is often used to add interest to a melody line, but there is also a strong tendency for triplets to be strung together into a steady flow. (More sophisticated triplet rhythms are occasionally encountered that incorporate **rests** or ties.) Whenever triplets are introduced, they catch the ear with the sense of a distinctly new rhythmic element - usually attractively elegant but also on occasion stormy and turbulent.

tritone: A commonly-used name for the dissonant interval that results when a 4th is augmented or a 5th diminished (though when spelled as a 5th, the term ‘tritone’ is generally not used). Essentially, this is the interval that occurs when the octave is split equally in half, and its unstable character might whimsically be compared to the splitting of the atom. As such, the tritone was regarded with disfavor in earlier Western musical history, earning it the sobriquet *diabolus in musica*, or “Devil’s interval.” However, as musical language evolved, excellent use was made of tritones, and they are essential to the very workings of functional harmony. Every **dominant 7th chord** contains a tritone, and the resulting instability contributes much to the magnetic pull towards resolution to the **tonic**.

tune: Basically synonymous with **melody**, though in the sense of a lead melody. Tune is a somewhat more informal word and also has connotations suggesting catchiness.

turn: A graceful little **ornament** consisting of several rapidly-executed notes that seem to revolve around a central **pitch**.

tutti: Refers to a passage where all available instrumental forces are playing simultaneously, usually loudly. A 'tutti unison' means that all the instruments are playing exactly the same notes together, though probably divided into different octaves. (Italian - "all")

unison: Two or more voices simultaneously playing the same **note** or series of notes. In the strictest sense, the voices would sound in the same **octave**, but the word 'unison' is often used more loosely to describe a very similar effect with voices spread out in different octaves (see **octave unison**). This is because the sound of unison and the interval of an octave have a great deal in common and mean the exact same thing harmonically.

upbeat: The final and weakest **beat** of a **bar**, immediately followed by the strong first beat (**downbeat**) of the next bar. Upbeats are probably most noticeable when they create a moment of expectation prior to the start of an important **theme**, **phrase**, or (especially) the opening bar of an entire piece. Often this sense is enhanced by some simple gesture leading to the downbeat (see **lead-in**).

variation: One of the most basic of all musical practices involving the ornamenting, altering, or enhancing of material that has already been heard. Note, however, that variation does not always mean adding new elements or greater complexity; it can also sometimes work by simplifying and streamlining. See **theme & variations**.

vertical chords: A series of **chords** in which each individual chord is played with all the **notes** sounding simultaneously (that is, with all notes neatly lined up vertically, one atop the other). The opposite of a vertical chord would be an **arpeggio**. See also **block chords**.

virtuosity: The deliberate display of exceptional technical skill on the part of performers. Composers sometimes write passages or entire movements whose primary interest lies in their ability to dazzle and amaze an audience through virtuoso wizardry. The excitement inherent in technical prowess overcoming formidable difficulties has always been a potent element of music, but during the Romantic era especially, it was elevated to a sort of cult status through performer-composers such as Paganini and Liszt, along with many imitators.

vocal-style melody: Any instrumental **melody** that deliberately evokes the **lyrical** sound of human singing. **Themes** of this type seem to automatically invite listeners to hum along. For contrast, see **instrumental-style melody**.

voice: In a non-vocal context, this refers to a musical **line** that has some sense of individuality and continuity as a result of the instrument playing it. (Note that keyboard instruments are capable of maintaining several voices simultaneously.) Different musical textures are usually described in terms of the number of voices participating and their level of independence. See **monophonic**, **homophonic**, **polyphonic**. In common parlance, if there is a clearly dominant voice, it is referred to as the **melody**. Subordinate **harmony** parts located between the melody and the bass line are called 'inner voices'.

waltz: While the minuet was the dominant 3/4-time dance for the 18th century, the waltz played an equivalent role during the 19th and beyond. In character, the new dance was usually more fluid and sensuous than the comparatively stiff and proper minuet. Inspired by rustic folk dances such as the **ländler**, the waltz evolved in Vienna but soon spread as a cosmopolitan phenomenon throughout Europe.

whole note: The longest note-value generally encountered. Its name comes from the fact that in **common time** its duration is that of an entire bar. For a note to be held longer, it must be tied to another note in the subsequent bar. (*semibreve* in British terminology)

whole step: Refers to an interval between two notes consisting of two **half-steps**. Also called a **whole tone** or major 2nd. When a whole step is played simultaneously, it produces a relatively strong discord similar in quality to a minor 7th, the interval resulting from its inversion.