

MBCI Band Program

Glossary of Common Musical Terms and Concepts

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Part 1 - Technique

posture - the proper position of the body either sitting or standing to maximize performance on a musical instrument

air stream - a fast, steady supply of air needed to produce good tone on a wind instrument

embouchure - the proper position of the mouth and surrounding muscles to maximize performance on a wind instrument

tone quality - the sound of a musical instrument; good tone quality is clear, controlled, and consistent

balance - two or more instruments playing at a proper dynamic to ensure all can be heard clearly

blend - two or more instruments matching tone quality

articulation - tonguing and slurring notes on a wind instrument; also, the style in which a note is played

slur - a curved line over two or more different notes, usually meaning not to tongue

double tongue - tonguing using both the front and back part of the tongue alternately in a t-k-t-k or d-g-d-g pattern to double the maximum articulation speed

flutter tongue - rolling the tip of the tongue to produce a very rapid articulation

intonation - playing notes in tune

overtone - notes which can be played with one fingering; a series of pitches heard faintly in every musical tone

lip slur - slurring from one overtone to another on a brass instrument



glissando (gliss.) () - a scale played rapidly to create a sliding effect

full compass scale - a scale played throughout the full range of the instrument

vibrato - a slight variation in pitch, tone and dynamic to add direction and richness; depending upon the instrument and the style of the music, vibrato is produced in different ways, and used in varying degrees

trill (*tr*) - alternating a given note with the scale step above it, according to the key; trills usually begin on the given note and are played rapidly and steadily; in music of earlier times, trills usually begin on the upper note, start slowly and accelerate

Part 2 - Notation

sightread - to perform music while reading it for the first time

pitch - a word meaning how high or low a musical sound is

accidental - a sign which raises or lowers the pitch of a note (sharps, flats, naturals)

sharp (#) - raises a pitch of a letter name one semitone

flat (b) - lowers a pitch of a letter name one semitone

natural (♮) - cancels out all other accidentals

double sharp (x) - raises a pitch of a letter name two semitones

double flat ($\flat\flat$) - lowers a pitch of a letter name two semitones
enharmonic notes - two notes written differently which sound the same

leger line - a short line which extends the range of a staff up or downward

transposing instrument - an instrument whose sounding pitch is different than written

non-transposing instrument - an instrument whose sounding and written pitch is the same

concert pitch - another name for sounding pitch

pickup note(s) - one or more notes which form an incomplete measure at the beginning of a phrase

tie - a curved line joining two or more notes of the same pitch, meaning that they should be played as one note

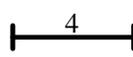
repeat sign (||) - repeat from the beginning; ||: :|| - repeat between the signs

 - 1st and 2nd endings: on the repeat, skip over the measures under the 1st ending and go to the 2nd ending

D.C. (Da Capo) al Fine - repeat from the beginning, then finish where Fine is marked

D.C. al Coda - repeat from the beginning, then skip to the Coda where ⦿ is marked

D.S. (Dal Segno) al Coda - repeat from the sign ♯ then skip to the Coda

multiple measure rest - rests longer than one measure, such as 

one measure repeating (↯) - repeat the previous measure; if the music has many of these in a row, they will often be numbered in succession to help keep track

two measures repeating (↯^2) - repeat the previous two measures

fermata (◡) - play the note longer than its full value; pause

Part 3 - Time

time signature - two numbers written as a fraction at the beginning of a piece; the top number (2, 3, 4, etc.) shows the number of beats in each measure; the bottom number shows the time value of each beat (2 = half notes, 4 = quarter notes, 8 = eighth notes, 16 = sixteenth notes)

common time (C) - another name for $\frac{4}{4}$ time

cut time (C) - another name for $\frac{2}{2}$ time

simple time - time signatures where the basic (main) beat breaks down into two parts; the top number is often 2, 3, or 4, and indicates the number of basic beats

compound time - time signatures where the basic beat breaks down into three parts; the top number is often 6, 9, or 12, and indicates the number of divided beats; the basic beat is always a dotted note value

irregular time - time signatures with beats of different lengths within the measure; the top number is often 5 or 7, but can be other numbers as well

mixed metre - music where the time signature often changes within a section

cross rhythms - a rhythmic texture created by note values which do not divide into each other; some examples are duplets against triplets, or triplets against a group of four notes

Part 4 - Dynamics

dynamic - the volume or intensity of a musical sound

forte (*f*) - strong

piano (*p*) - quiet

mezzo forte (*mf*) - moderately strong

mezzo piano (*mp*) - moderately quiet

fortissimo (*ff*) - intensely strong

pianissimo (*pp*) - intensely quiet

crescendo (*cresc.*) or  - gradually stronger

decrescendo (*decresc.*) or **diminuendo** (*dim.*) or  gradually quieter

fortepiano (*fp*) - play strong, then immediately quiet

Part 5 - Tempo & Style

tempo - the speed of a piece of music

style - the manner in which a piece is played

accelerando (accel.) - get gradually faster

accent (>) - play the beginning of a note stronger

adagio - slow

ad libitum (ad lib.) - play freely, as the performer wishes; improvised

alla marcia - in a march style; play long notes accented, short notes staccato

allargando (allarg.) - gradually slower and broader

allegro - quick and lively

allegretto - like allegro but not as much

allegro marziale - quick and lively in the style of a march

andante - at a walking tempo

andantino - like andante but not as slow

animato - animated

a tempo - resume speed; back in time after a change of tempo

cantabile - in a singing style

con brio - with brightness; with vigour

con moto - with movement

dolce - sweetly

energetico - energetically

espressivo - expressively; with much feeling

giocoso - jokingly

grandioso - grandly

grazioso - gracefully

grave - slow and solemn; gravely

largo - slow and broad

larghetto - like largo but not as much

legato - smoothly, connected

leggiero (legg.) - lightly

lento - slow

maestoso - majestically

marcato - play each note with an accent

meno mosso - less motion; slower

misterioso - mysteriously

moderato - at a moderate tempo

molto - 'much' or 'very' (used together with other words, as in molto allegro)

pesante - heavily

piu mosso - more motion; faster

poco a poco - little by little (used together with other words, as in poco a poco crescendo)

presto - very fast

prestissimo - as fast as possible

ritardando (ritard./ rit.) or **rallentando (rall.)** - gradually slower

roof top accent (♩) - play the beginning of a note stronger and detach or separate; combination of accent and staccato

rubato - freely changing tempo; robbed time

scherzando - playful

simile (sim.) - continue playing in a similar way

sforzando (sfz) - strongly accented

sordino (mute) - a sound-altering attachment to the bell of a brass instrument

con sordino - play with a mute

sensa sordino - take the mute off

sostenuto - sustained (maintain strength through each note, join notes together)

staccato (·) - detach or separate each note; or, play the note for half its value

stringendo (string.) - hurrying the tempo

subito (sub.) - suddenly (used together with other words, as in subito *ff*)

swing - a jazz style indicating that eighth notes should be played unevenly in a triplet rhythm

syncopation - a rhythmic style where weak beats are accented or emphasized

tempo di valse - in the tempo and style of a waltz - a traditional dance in 3/4 time

tempo I or **tempo primo** - go back to the speed of the first tempo

tenuto (-) - play notes for their full value; or slightly longer

vivace or **vivo** - vivaciously; very quick and lively

6 - Key

key signature - a set of sharps or flats at the beginning of a piece which mean to play those notes sharp or flat throughout the piece

order of flats in a flat key signature - BEADGCF

order of sharps in a sharp key signature - FCGDAEB

scale - a set of pitches arranged in ascending order

mode - another name for scale

diatonic scales - a general name for all traditional major and minor scales

major scale - a group of eight pitches arranged in ascending order with the following intervals in between: tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone (t t st t t t st)

+ / **M** - symbols meaning major

tetrachord - the first or last four notes of a major scale (t t st)

major pentatonic scale - a scale using 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 of a major scale

minor scale - a major scale played from the 6th note to an octave above (t st t t st t t)

-/ **m** - symbols meaning minor

natural minor scale - a minor scale without additional accidentals

harmonic minor scale - a minor scale with the 7th note raised one semitone

melodic minor scale - a minor scale with the 6th and 7th notes raised a semitone when ascending, and put back to normal when descending

minor pentatonic scale - a major pentatonic scale starting on the 6th degree; or, a scale using 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 of a minor scale

blue notes - the 3rd, 5th or 7th notes of a major scale played a semitone lower in jazz music

blues scale - a jazz scale consisting of a minor pentatonic scale with an added note a semitone between the 4th and 5th (ie. 1, \flat 3, 4, \flat 5, 5, \flat 7, 8)

Ionian mode - another name for a major scale (t t st t t t st)

Dorian mode - a major scale played from the 2nd note to an octave above (t st t t t st t)

Phrygian mode - a major scale played from the 3rd note to an octave above (st t t t st t t)

Lydian mode - a major scale played from the 4th note to an octave above (t t t st t t st)

Mixolydian mode - a major scale played from the 5th note to an octave above (t t st t t st t)

Aolian mode - another name for a minor scale; a major scale played from the 6th note to an octave above (t st t t st t t)

Locrian mode - a major scale played from the 7th note to an octave above (st t t st t t t); this particular mode tends not to be used much

relative keys - major and minor scales which share the same key signature

chromatic notes - notes altered by accidentals to be a semitone higher or lower

chromatic scale - a twelve note scale, each note a semitone apart; all the notes in an octave

synthetic scales - artificial scales using non-diatonic patterns of tones and semitones

diminished scale - a synthetic scale of eight notes in a pattern of t st t st t st t st

whole tone scale - a synthetic scale of six notes, each a whole tone apart

transpose - to play or write the same music starting on a different note

modulate - to change key in the middle of a piece of music

Part 7 - Intervals

interval - the distance from one note to another

measuring an interval by number - count up the total number of letter names from one note to another (ex. C up to F is a 4th because of four letter names - CDEF)

unison - two or more voices or instruments on the same pitch; an interval of 1

semitone (half tone / half step) - the smallest interval

tone (whole tone / whole step) - a distance of two semitones

octave (8ve) - an interval of an 8th; one note up to a note with the same letter name

measuring an interval by its quality (+ p) - intervals from the first note up to any note of a major scale are called major (+) if they are 2, 3, 6, or 7, or perfect (p) if 1, 4, 5, or 8

minor intervals (-) - are major intervals made a semitone smaller

interval inversion - turning an interval upside down; either by moving the bottom note an octave higher or the top note an octave lower

augmented intervals - are major or perfect intervals made a semitone larger

∗ / A - symbols meaning augmented

diminished intervals - are minor or perfect intervals made a semitone smaller

o / d - symbols meaning diminished

enharmonic intervals - two intervals written differently which sound the same

tritone - an interval equalling a distance of three whole tones; an ∗4; a o5

compound intervals - intervals larger than an octave; ie 9ths, 10ths . . .

Part 8 - Harmony

harmony - the sound of two or more pitches heard together

consonant harmony - harmony using pitches which seem to belong together; usually in one diatonic key

dissonant harmony - harmony using pitches chosen to create more tension; often taken from more

than one diatonic key

chord - a group of pitches sounded together creating harmony

arpeggio - a chord played one note at a time

triad - a chord using 1, 3, 5 of a scale

root - the 1st note of a triad or chord

inversion chord - a chord where the root is not the lowest note

major triad - a chord using 1, 3, 5 of a major scale

minor triad - a chord using 1, 3, 5 of a minor scale; a major triad with the 3rd lowered

augmented triad - a major triad with the 5th raised

diminished triad - a minor triad with the 5th lowered

Roman numerals - traditionally used to indicate the seven scale steps (I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII)

primary chords - chords built on I, IV, and V of a major scale; these are all major

secondary chords - chords built on II, III, and VI of a major scale; these are all minor

leading tone - the VII note of a scale, which often 'leads' melodically to the I (if it has been lowered a semitone, it no longer 'leads' and is called a subtonic; one step below the I)

submediant - the VI note of a scale; the middle note between IV going up to I

dominant - the V note of a scale; the second most harmonically important note of a scale

subdominant - the IV note of a scale; one step below the V

mediant - the III note of a scale; the middle note between I going up to V

supertonic - the II note of a scale; one step above the I

tonic - the I note of a scale; the most harmonically important note of a scale; musical 'homeplate'

harmonic progression - a succession of chords, each chord leading to the next

non-chord tones - extra notes which do not belong the chord being heard, adding more dissonance and harmonic interest

passing tone - a non-chord tone heard on a weak beat which melodically fills in the gap of a third between two chord tones

neighbour tones - a non-chord tone heard on a weak beat which goes melodically up or down a step from a chord tone

suspension - a chord tone which delays moving to the next chord tone until after the second chord has been sounded, momentarily creating a non-chord tone on the beat; usually used in places where there is step motion downward

pedal - a bass note sustained against a series of changing harmonies above

7th chord - a triad (1, 3, 5) with an added 7th on top

dominant seventh (V⁷) - a 7th chord built on the dominant (fifth note) of a major scale

polytonality - harmonies from two or more keys heard at once

atonality - music where all 12 pitches are heard equally, giving no sense of key or tonal centre

Part 9 - Texture

texture - the overall sound of a piece of music as expressed in terms of the number of and relationship between its different layers

strata - the different layers in a musical texture

monophonic - a musical texture where all parts are in unison or 8ves on a single line

polyphonic - a musical texture with several independent lines playing together

homophonic - a musical texture where all parts move together as a block in the same rhythm; or, a single line of melody with mostly chordal accompaniment

canon - a melody which is imitated in one or more parts a short time later; a round

duet/duo, trio, quartet, quintet, sextet, septet, octet - musical textures ranging from 2-8 parts

melody - a group of notes forming a phrase; the most important line in a piece of music

countermelody - a second melody heard at the same time which accompanies the first

solo - a single player performing a line of music

solì - a group of players performing a line of music

tacet - a marking which means don't play

tutti - a marking which means everyone plays

divisi (div.) - a marking which means players split into two or more lines of music

a2 - a marking which means players return to playing a unison part after a divisi

Part 10 - Form

composition - the act of creating a new piece of music and/or notating it

form - a description of how a piece of music is constructed

motive - a short melodic or rhythmic phrase which is used to construct a theme

sequence - a short musical phrase repeated either a step above or below

ostinato - a repeated rhythmic or melodic motive, often used as an accompaniment

phrase - a musical 'sentence' expressing one idea

question and answer phrases - two phrases with similar structure but different endings; the second phrase is altered to end on the tonic (first note) of the scale

theme - the main melody of a piece of music

variation - a melodic, harmonic or rhythmic alteration of a theme or motive

improvisation - the act of creating new music while performing it; often performing variations based on existing music

12-bar blues - a jazz form using the blues scale and a twelve bar harmonic progression commonly in the form of I - IV - I - I - IV - IV - I - I - V - IV - I - I - ; these progressions are called 'changes'

binary form (AB) - music with two related yet contrasting sections of equal length

ternary form (ABA) - music which returns to the A section after the B

rondo form (ABACA...) - music with a recurring A section alternating with others

32-bar form (AABA) - a common form of music used in many songs and jazz

bridge - a contrasting section; the B section in 32-bar form; the last 4 bars of 12-bar blues

fugue - an intricate compositional form where each line of music enters separately with the same theme, alternately on the tonic (first note) or dominant (fifth note) of the scale