

SALISBURY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MUSICAL TERMS GLOSSARY

- **ABA Form** – Also known as Ternary form, ABA refers to a piece of music composed of two distinct sections: *A* section is followed by *B* section, *A* section returns and closes the work
- **Accelerando** – Gradually getting faster
- **Accent** – An articulated, short emphasis placed on the beginning of a particular note or chord
- **Adagio** – Tempo indication: to be played slowly, at ease
- **Affettuoso** – Indication to be played with tenderness and affection
- **Agitato** – Direction to play in an agitated manner
- **Air** – A tune or melody, for voice or instrument (aria in Italian)
- **Alla** – The Italian *alla* means 'in the manner of' and may be found in titles like that of Mozart's 'Rondo alla turca', Rondo in the Turkish Style
- **Allegretto** – Tempo indication to play briskly
- **Allegro** – Tempo indication to play fast and bright
- **Allemande** – Often the first dance of a Baroque suite, written in moderate 4/4 time and danced in a stately manner
- **Alto** – The alto is the lower female or unbroken male voice, or male falsetto of similar range. The alto clef is a sign written on the musical staff to show that the middle line of the staff is middle C. It is now used for much of the music written for viola and other instruments of similar range.
- **Andante** – Moderately slow
- **Andantino** – A little faster and brighter than *andante*
- **Aria** – A song or air. The word is used in particular to indicate formally constructed songs in opera.
- **Arpeggio** – Also known as the broken chord, an arpeggio is a musical technique when the notes of a chord are played individually instead of simultaneously from the bottom note upwards or the top note downwards.

- **Bagatelle** – Used as the title of a short light-hearted piece of music, was employed most notably by Beethoven in a series of such compositions for piano. The descriptive title was thereafter used by a number of other composers.
- **Baroque** – Used in music to designate a period of musical history from about 1600 to about 1750
- **Bass** – The word 'bass' describes the lower register and lower sonorities in music. In vocal music it indicates the lowest type of male voice, and in instrumental music is generally used to indicate the bottom part. As an adjective it is used to describe instruments of lower register, such as the bass clarinet. In common speech the word bass may indicate the double bass, the largest and lowest instrument of the string family, or, in brass bands, an instrument corresponding to the orchestral tuba, the bass of the brass family.
- **Beat** – The pulse (beat) in a piece of music is the regular rhythmic pattern of the music.
- **Binary Form** – Two-part form containing two parts, each repeated, often found in Baroque dance movements or sonata movements.
- **Cadenza** – Elaborate passage for the soloist(s) interpolated usually near the end of a movement, often not written out by the composer, but left to the performer to improvise
- **Canon** – A compositional technique in which a melody is imitated after an interval.
- **Cantabile** – A songlike style imitating the human voice; an indication of producing a legato of the melodic line with flexible tempo and accompaniment
- **Capriccio** – A short, free form composition giving liberty to the performer to perform in an improvisatory style
- **Chanson** – A French song. The word is used to indicate songs from the troubadour compositions of the Middle Ages to the art-songs of the 19th and 20th centuries.
- **Chorus** – A group of singers. The word is also used to indicate a refrain in a song.
- **Chromaticism** – Movement by half-steps. Also refers to the introduction of chromatically altered pitches that do not belong in the key of the piece.
- **Cimbalom** – A large concert dulcimer originating in Hungary and played with small hammers rather than plucked or strummed.
- **Classical** – The period of music history which dates from the mid 1700's to mid 1800's. The music was spare and emotionally reserved, especially when compared to Romantic and Baroque music.

- **Coda** – A musical section used to wrap-up thematic material at the conclusion of a piece or movement.
- **Con brio** – With life and spirit
- **Con moto** – With motion
- **Concertino** – The small group of solo instruments used in a concerto grosso in contrast to the whole body of the orchestra, consisting of ripieno players (see Concerto Grosso). A concertino may also be a small concerto.
- **Concertmaster** – Head of the first violin section of an orchestra and often the person in authority next to the conductor; performs solo violin passages.
- **Concerto** – Work for one or more solo instruments accompanied by orchestra, often in three movements.
- **Concerto Grosso** – Baroque concerto contrasting a small group of soloists (concertino) against a small orchestra (ripieno).
- **Consonance** – Groups of tones that are harmonious when sounded together as in a chord.
- **Contrary Motion** – Type of melodic motion in which two voices or parts move in opposite directions.
- **Counterpoint** – A compositional technique in which the voices or parts are conceived as independent lines performed simultaneously.
- **Countertenor** – A voice is that of a male alto. Sometimes a distinction is made between the two, the second indicating the English falsetto tradition and the first a natural voice of similar range.
- **Courante** – A movement usually found in a Baroque suite; it is a triple meter, quick tempo dance.
- **Cross Rhythm** – The simultaneous use of conflicting rhythmic patterns.
- **Cycle** – A song cycle is a set of songs intended to be performed as a group
- **Decrescendo** – A direction to performers, meaning becoming softer
- **Developmental Section** – The second section of Sonata form. The development section immediately follows the exposition and usually incorporates previously heard thematic material through a series of modulations creating a sense of tonal ambiguity.

- **Dissonance** – Harsh, discordant, and lack of harmony. Also a chord that sounds incomplete until it resolves itself on a harmonious chord.
- **Divertissement** – A light, entertaining piece, usually for ballets within French operas
- **Dolce** – Direction to play in a gentle and sweet manner
- **Dotted Rhythm** – A dotted note is a note with a small dot written after it indicating that the dot increases the duration of the note by half its original value. Dotted rhythm is a repeated pattern of these crisp long-short notes.
- **Double Dot** – Use of two dots after a note prolonging it by $\frac{3}{4}$ of its original length
- **Duet** – A piece of music written for two vocalists or instrumentalists.
- **Duple** – Each measure is divided into two beats
- **Elegy** – An instrumental lament with praise for the dead.
- **Encore** – A piece of music played at the end of a recital responding to the audiences enthusiastic reaction to the performance, shown by continuous applause.
- **English Horn** – Known in England as the cor anglais. It is the tenor oboe.
- **Episode** – Typically used to describe a secondary passage in a fugue, an *Episode* may also refer to a section of music containing thematic material of secondary importance.
- **Ethnomusicology** – The study of music and dance throughout different cultures
- **Etude** – An instructional exercise designed to focus on improving a particular technical or musical skill of a performer.
- **Exposition Section** – In Sonata form, the opening section, usually consisting of the principal melodic materials that will be heard throughout the work
- **Fanfare** – A flourish of trumpets or other similar instruments, used for military or ceremonial purposes, or music that conveys this impression.
- **Fantasia** – An improvisatory composition lacking a strict form
- **Fiddle** – A fiddle is a violin, but the word is used either colloquially or to indicate a folk-instrument.
- **Finale** – Movement or passage that concludes the musical composition.

- **Flat** – A symbol indicating that the note is to be diminished by one semitone.
- **Folla,La** – A well known dance tune popular from the 16th century or earlier
- **Form** – The structure of a piece of music.
- **Forte** – A symbol indicating to play loud.
- **Fortepiano** – The word fortepiano, with the same meaning as pianoforte, the full name of the piano, with its hammer action and consequent ability to produce sounds both loud and soft, corresponding to the force applied to the keys, is generally used to indicate the earlier form of the piano, as it developed in the 18th century. A Mozart piano, for example, might be called a fortepiano. The instrument is smaller, more delicately incisive in tone than the modern instrument, and is in some respects more versatile.
- **Fortissimo** – An indication to play very loud
- **French Horn** – A brass instrument made of more than 20 feet (6.1 m) of tubing wrapped into a coil with a flared bell.
- **Fugue** – Compositional technique in which two or more voices repeatedly imitate a short melody called the subject or theme.
- **Galop** – A quick dance in duple meter, one of the most popular ballroom dances of the 19th century
- **Gavotte** – French folk dance found in Baroque suites in moderate 4/4 time
- **Gigue** – Loosely translated as “jig”, a lively Baroque dance in compound duple or triple time, and often found in Baroque suites
- **Glass Harmonica** – A musical instrument in which the sound is made by a row of rotating, concentric glass bowls, kept moist and pressed with the fingers or with keys. It was invented in 1761 by Benjamin Franklin and was popular until about 1830.
- **Glissando** – Sliding between two notes
- **Glockenspiel** – A percussion instrument similar in form to the xylophone, but with metal rather than wooden bars for the notes
- **Gong** – The gong is a percussion instrument originating in the East. In the modern orchestra it is usually found in the form of the large Chinese tam-tam. The gong appears in Western orchestral music in the late 18th century.

- **Grave** – Slow and solemn
- **Grazioso** – Grazia (grace) forms the Italian adjective grazioso, used as an indication of expression and of tempo, particularly in the 18th century.
- **Gregorian Chant** – Plainchant, the modal chant of early Christian and continuing Catholic worship and its derivatives, is often known as Gregorian chant, after Pope Gregory the Great, St. Gregory, to whom the attempt at standardization of the chant in the late 6th century is attributed.
- **Harmonica** – The Western harmonica or mouth-organ is an invention of the early 19th century, inspired by the ancient Chinese bamboo mouth-organ, the sheng.
- **Harmonium** – Developed in the early 19th century from experiments in the last quarter of the century before, is a keyboard instrument that produces its sounds by means of air from bellows passing through free reeds, metal tongues that are made to vibrate. The instrument has a relatively small classical repertoire.
- **Harmony** – Pleasing combination of two or three tones played together in the background while a melody is being played. Harmony also refers to the study of chord progressions.
- **Harp** – The harp is an instrument of great antiquity, represented from as early as 3000 B.C. in Sumeria. The form of the instrument has varied, but the modern double-action harp, a development of the early 19th century, is in general orchestral use. The strings are tuned in flats, starting from a bottom C flat, with seven pedals, each of which can change a given set of strings to a natural or a sharp. The C pedal, therefore, in its three positions, can make all the Cs on the instrument flat, natural or sharp.
- **Harpsichord** – The harpsichord is a keyboard instrument with strings running from front to back of its wing-shaped horizontal box and soundboard. Unlike the piano and the earlier clavichord with its hammers that strike the strings, the harpsichord has a mechanism by which the strings are plucked. The instrument seems to have existed in a simple form in the 14th century and assumed considerable importance from the early 16th until the fuller development of the pianoforte towards the end of the 18th century.
- **Homophony** – Music written to be sung or played in unison.
- **Horn** – The horn takes its name from the horn of an animal, the original form of this wind instrument in ancient times. The instrument was long associated with hunting and as a means of military signaling. The instrument now generally known as the French horn developed in France in its familiar helical form, but in one form or another the horn had come to be a frequent instrument in music for the church, the theatre and the chamber by the early 18th century.

- **Hornpipe** – An animated dance of British origin usually in 3-beat time, popular from the 16th – 19th centuries, resembles the jig.
- **Impressionism** – A term at first used mockingly to describe the work of the French painter Monet and his circle, who later made use of the word themselves. It was similarly used to describe an element of vagueness and imprecision coupled with a perceived excess of attention to color in the early music of Debussy, who did not accept the criticism or the label, although his harmonic innovations and approach to composition have points in common with the ideals of Monet.
- **Improvisation** – Improvisation was once a normal part of a performer's stock-in-trade. Many of the greatest composer-performers, from Bach to Mozart and Beethoven, were masters of improvisation, but in the 19th century this became a less common part of public performance, although it remained and remains a necessary skill for a church organist, traditionally required to provide a musical accompaniment of varying length to liturgical ritual.
- **Incidental Music** – Music composed to accompany the action or dialogue of a drama or to fill intervals between scenes or acts.
- **Interlude** – Piece of instrumental music played between scenes in a play or opera
- **Intermezzo** – Short movement or interlude connecting the main parts of the composition.
- **Interval** – The distance in pitch between two notes
- **Inversion** – A rearrangement of tones in which the notes of a chord are rearranged such that the bass has a different pitch.
- **Intonation** – The manner in which tones are produced with regard to pitch.
- **Key Signature** – The flats and sharps at the beginning of each staff line indicating the key of music the piece is to be played.
- **Largo e piano** – Very slow and quiet
- **Lebhaft** – Lively, brisk
- **Leggiero** – Literally, *light*, or to play as lightly as possible
- **Lento** – Tempo indication of very slow
- **Lied** – The German word for song

- **Ma non troppo** – Literally “but not too much”
- **Maestro di violin** – Master of violin
- **Major** – One of the two modes of the tonal system. Music written in major keys has a positive affirming character.
- **Marcato** – A variation on staccato (short) articulation, *marcato* indicates to play short with slight elongation or emphasis
- **Mazurka** – A Polish dance, transformed by Chopin in some fifty piano pieces in this form.
- **Melisma** – Originating in Gregorian chant, a technique of singing a group of notes for one syllable of text
- **Meno mosso** – Less quickly
- **Minor** – One of the two modes of the tonal system. The minor mode can be identified by the dark, melancholic mood.
- **Minuet** – French dance in triple meter normally in ABA form
- **Mode** – Modal scales are found in various forms. Plainchant, the traditional music of the Catholic liturgy, makes use of eight modes, the church modes, with names derived from very different, earlier Greek modes. The first church mode is the Dorian, the third the Phrygian, the fifth the Lydian and the seventh the Mixolydian. These are the so-called authentic modes, their range from D to D, E to E, F to F and G to G respectively.
- **Molto** – Very, much
- **Motive, Motif** – The shortest melodic and/or rhythmic figure that is intelligible and self-existent; *motives* are derivative of themes and may be as short as two notes.
- **Neoclassical** – Indicates a 20th century eclectic return by some composers to various styles and forms of earlier periods, whether classical or baroque.
- **Non assai** – Not very
- **Non tanto e con fuoco** – Indication to play not too much but with fire, fury
- **Notation** – The method of writing music down. Notation is inevitably imprecise, providing a guide of varying accuracy for performers, who must additionally draw on stylistic tradition.

- **Obbligato** – Used to indicate an additional instrumental part that cannot be omitted, particularly when a solo instrument adds an accompanying melody in some baroque vocal forms.
- **Oratorio** – A work in which religious texts often with a narrative content are set for performance by singers and instruments.
- **Ostinato** – Indicates a part that repeats the same rhythm or melodic element.
- **Overture** – An introductory piece, often designed to initiate an opera or other dramatic work.
- **Partita** – Another word for suite
- **Pastorale** – A musical expression of a genre familiar in European literature from Hellenistic times or earlier, an idealization of the rural, in literary form, in the lives and loves (often fatal) of shepherds and shepherdesses, and then, by extension, of the country in general. The word may be used as the title of a piece of music suggesting a rural idyll.
- **Pedal Point** – In harmony, a long sustained note usually occurring in the bass with changing harmonies above it.
- **Phrase** – A single line of music played or sung. A musical sentence.
- **Pianissimo** – Very soft
- **Piano** – Soft
- **Piano Four Hands** – A piano duet
- **Piu mosso** – More quickly
- **Pizzicato** – A direction to performers on string instruments to pluck the strings.
- **Polka** – A Bohemian dance, became one of the most popular ball-room dances of the 19th century.
- **Polyphony** – The writing of music in many parts or in more than one part, with reference in particular to contrapuntal practices.
- **Polytonality** – Combination of two or more keys being played at the same time.
- **Prelude** – A short piece originally preceded by a more substantial work, also an orchestral introduction to opera, however not lengthy enough to be considered an overture.

- **Presto** – Very fast
- **Principal** – The principal musician in an orchestra or other large musical ensemble is the leader of the group of musicians playing that instrument.
- **Quasi maestoso** – As if majestic and stately
- **Quasi minuetto** – As if a minuet
- **Rallentando** – A direction to a performer to play gradually slower
- **Recapitulation** – The last section of Sonata form, following the exposition and development, in which the initial thematic material is repeated, more or less in its original form.
- **Recitative** – Declamatory vocal style of speech-like, free rhythmic form to represent dialogue in contrast to the sung style of arias.
- **Recapitulation** – A reprise
- **Rhapsody** – A one movement episodic work featuring a diverse range of moods, color, and tonality combined with a sense of improvisation.
- **Ritornello** – A reappearing passage in Baroque compositions typically found in chamber works, vocal pieces, and concerti.
- **Rondo** – A compositional style in which one section intermittently returns between contrasting sections. Also known as the refrain theme.
- **Sarabande** – A slow Baroque dance in triple meter that emphasizes the second beat with dragging dance steps and alternating tied rhythms, typically the third movement of a Baroque suite.
- **Scherzo** – Pertaining to the sonata form, a fast movement in triple time.
- **Semi tone, Half Tone** – In Western music, the smallest interval between two notes.
- **Semplice** – Simple
- **Sequence** – The repetition of a short musical passage at a higher or lower pitch, or in the case of harmonic sequence, in a series of chords.
- **Sforzando** – Indication that a note or chord is accented or played in a forceful manner.
- **Sharp** – A symbol indicating the note is to be raised by one semitone.

- **Siciliano** – Pastoral in character, a Baroque movement embodying the form of a slow jig with a characteristic dotted rhythm.
- **Sinfonia** – In earlier usage, indicated a passage or piece of instrumental music, sometimes an introductory piece, leading later to the Italian overture, known as the sinfonia before the opera, the origin of the Italian symphony.
- **Singspiel** – A German form of play with music. The word is used to indicate a stage work that makes some use of spoken dialogue, even in a context of primarily musical interest.
- **Sonata Form** – At its most basic, a type of music construction prominent in the Classical and Romantic periods, typically consisting of three sections – Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation, occasionally followed by a coda.
- **Sonatina** – The elementary version of a sonata designed for teaching, often more basic in form and lighter in character.
- **Sostenuto** – An indication of a slightly slower tempo and instructions to smoothly sustain notes to their full value.
- **Staccato** – Form of musical articulation, signifying an unconnected note, which is separated or detached from its neighbors by a silence.
- **Staff** – Made up of five horizontal parallel lines and the spaces between them on which musical notation is written.
- **Stretto** – In a fugue, the imitation of the subject theme in close succession.
- **Strophic** – A simple song form in which the same music accompanies each stanza, occasionally with minor variations.
- **Suite** – A set of pieces, usually dances in a respective key for solo or orchestra, the five typical movements consisting of the: Overture, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue.
- **Sul ponticello** – Instruction to bow close to the bridge to produce a thin, glassy sound.
- **Symphony** – At its most basic form, the typical four-movement orchestral work consists of: opening movement, slow movement, minuet or scherzo, and finale.
- **Syncopation** – Rhythmic device that gives the feeling of lively and irregular rhythm by changing the emphasis from strong beats to weak beats.
- **Tarantella** – A Neapolitan dance in 6/8 time.

- **Tempo Giusto** – Strict tempo or in exact time.
- **Timbre** – Tone color, quality of sound that distinguishes one verse or instrument to another. It is determined by the harmonies of sound.
- **Timpani** – Kettledrums, unlike most other drums, have a definite pitch, tuned nowadays by pedals, but in earlier times by taps that served the same purpose, tightening or slackening the skin to produce higher or lower notes.
- **Toccata** – Virtuoso keyboard composition written in an improvisatory style utilizing chord and running passages occasionally includes imitative or fugal qualities.
- **Tonal Center** – A centralized pitch to which all pitches have a specific relationship within a movement, section, or work of music.
- **Tone Poem** – Also a symphonic poem, an orchestral composition that seeks to express extra-musical ideas in music.
- **Tonic** – The first scale note of a key and its tonal center.
- **Tremolo** – A musical effect of shaking or trembling created by rapid back and forth bow strokes or rapid alternation of two notes.
- **Tres Anime** – Animated and lively
- **Trill** – An ornamentation of a more or less rapid alternation of a note with the note or semitone above or below it.
- **Troubadour** – The court poets and composers of Southern France in the 12th and 13th centuries. The trouvères flourished particularly in the 13th century to the north of the country. Their surviving music forms an important body of secular song from this period.
- **Vivace** – Quick and lively
- **Waltz** – A dance written in triple time, where the accent falls on the first beat of each measure.