

THIRD EDITION

THE EDUCATED LISTENER

A New Approach to Music Appreciation



BY JAREN HINCKLEY

The Educated Listener

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Third Edition

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INTRODUCTION

This textbook is designed to aid anyone—regardless of musical knowledge—in developing skills needed for creatively and intelligently discussing and listening to music. By learning about the musical genres, forms, and techniques used by composers of Western classical music, you will gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the art of music. You will become an educated listener.

In order to increase your musical knowledge effectively and quickly, here are some suggestions:

Use the Text Wisely:

This text is a giant glossary. Entries include a basic definition followed by a more detailed explanation. If you encounter a word that you do not understand, it is likely explained somewhere else in the text. Referring to the index will lead you to the correct information.

Ask Questions:

At times, you may not understand something you hear on the radio or online, or something you read in liner notes or in a program, or something the conductor or performer says during a performance. If this happens, ASK! Ask a musically knowledgeable friend. Ask a music instructor. Refer to this book. Do not be discouraged if you have a steep learning curve when it comes to grasping these new concepts. Do not be embarrassed to ask questions; asking leads to learning.

Listen to Classical Music:

Find out if you have a local classical radio station. Search online using the name of your city and “classical radio” as the keywords and see what comes up. Another option is listening online. Many classical radio stations have live streaming or an app that allows you to listen to that station online, on your phone, or on other devices. Once you have found a station or online source, you can immediately begin to increase your musical knowledge by paying attention to the things the announcer says about the music. Spotify, Pandora, Naxos, and iTunes are a few of the many online programs, apps, and websites that can help you increase your listening opportunities. Some of these programs may require a subscription fee, but others are free.

Attend Musical Events:

Every large city and many small towns have professional or community orchestras, performing arts centers that host chamber music concerts, and other artistic events. Most universities have student and faculty recitals throughout the year—and many are free of charge. Whatever the venue, attend them! When you attend events like these, get a program and read it. Programs list the pieces to be performed; many also contain program notes explaining various details about each piece. You will learn a lot about music and its terminology by doing this simple thing.

Avoid Snap Judgments:

A lot of people make statements like “I hate opera” because at one time they had an initial negative reaction to it. If you give different styles of classical music multiple chances, you will discover that you like certain performers and composers better than others, but you’ll never know what you like until you start listening. For example, I used to dislike opera, but after listening to examples of opera through various classes and performances, I discovered that there were certain operas (and certain composers) that I truly enjoyed. I am now much more willing to explore different genres, and I learn something each time I do. My life is much richer as a result of my exposure to music—all kinds of music.

Suggestions for Instructors

The primary purpose of introductory music history classes is to help students develop a love and understanding of classical music. Every instructor has their own unique approach to teaching. This text:

- is designed to help instructors pick and choose concepts they feel are most important to teach;
- focuses on the genres and forms that students are most likely to encounter at concerts, on the radio, at church services, and throughout their lives; and
- does not attempt to cover all facets of music history—it presents the main genres, forms, styles, techniques, and basic information about the best-known composers from each time period.

The composer lists found at the end of each section are to provide both instructor and student myriad study options.

Text Layout:

It is not necessary to proceed chapter by chapter. Maybe you will want to start with the Contemporary Era and work backwards; perhaps you prefer to skip the Middle

Ages and the Renaissance; or you may want to organize your class by genre. This text is designed for flexibility so you can choose which topics to focus on and in what order you will proceed. If you prefer to teach a particular form in conjunction with a particular genre (found in a different chapter), by all means, do it! For example, I may want to teach ground bass in conjunction with the genre of opera. In that case, I would assign students to read about Baroque opera in one chapter and ground bass in another.

Reading Assignments:

Because this text is essentially a large glossary, you can teach using a variety of approaches. Some professors prefer to introduce students to concepts in class and then assign readings that follow up and reinforce the knowledge gained. Others prefer to have the students read in advance so class time can be spent listening to music and discussing concepts that have already been studied. Others do a mix of both. Be creative!

Listening Examples:

Because of the diversity of resources available to students and the lack of flexibility involved with sticking to a specific set of CDs or online collection, I have chosen to not provide a CD set or online playlist with this textbook. This gives you the flexibility and freedom to create your own listening playlists using whatever online resources you have at your disposal. Most university libraries have subscriptions to online listening libraries such as Naxos, Classical Music Library, or Music Online, to name a few. These online services allow faculty to create listening lists with more flexibility than ever before. This text offers suggested listening for each genre and composer, but individual instructors should still create personalized listening lists geared directly to the topics being taught.

Listening Charts:

Most textbooks have listening charts that the students can follow along with as they listen. Because this text relies on individual instructors' personalized playlists for the listening examples, it is impossible to include second-by-second listening charts. This should not be a problem; students learn material and retain it more deeply by being provided with a general chart of a particular form (like ritornello, sonata, or fugue) to follow along with the assigned listening. You may want to consider having students listen together in a study-group setting to ensure that, through their collective intelligence, they succeed. The professor can then follow up at the next class session to see how students fared. Alternatively, individual professors can provide their own listening charts with a play-by-play to help students in their at-home listening.

Assignments:

Numerous studies have shown that students learn through discussion, experience, and application. At the end of most entries are “Further Investigation” assignments and “Suggested Listening.” These are intended for use either in class to facilitate discussion, or as assignments for students to complete between class sessions, or as a follow-up or prelude to class instruction.

It is my hope that you will find this a fun and new way of teaching introductory music history. It provides freedom for you to teach the topics you want to teach using the listening examples you want to use.

The future patrons of classical music are in your hands—help them become educated listeners and music lovers!

SECTION ONE

Prelude

The history of music—its composers, its compositions, its forms and genres—is rich, vast, and exciting. In any study of the history of music, it is very helpful to understand basic music terminology. This section covers the basics of music, such as rhythm, tempo, and dynamics; the instruments and voice types used in music; and the most common ensembles of music, such as choirs, bands, and orchestras.

In addition, this section will help listeners get the most out of attending concerts by developing certain knowledge and skills that will make their experiences attending live productions of music much more fulfilling. Among the skills discussed are knowing when to clap, knowing how to decipher the material contained in the printed program, and knowing how to meet the current expectations of behavior while attending classical music concerts.

CHAPTER 1

Components of Music

Historical Time Periods

Musicologists and historians determine time periods in a number of ways. In general, they take into account the stylistic, artistic, and musical characteristics that are most popular and common in any given time period and come up with a name for it. For the most part, these names were applied to these time periods—with the benefit of hindsight—long after the time period ended.

Middle Ages	450–1450
Renaissance	1400–1600
Baroque Era	1600–1750
Classical Era	1750–1830
Romantic Era	1810–1910
Twentieth Century	1900–2000
Contemporary Era	1960–present day

The Basics

Pitch

A **pitch** is a sound created by vibrations. More specifically, pitch refers to how high or low a particular sound is. If the vibration is fast, the pitch will be high; if it is slow,

the pitch will be low. In string instruments, the sound is produced by the vibrating strings; in the human voice, by the vibrating vocal cords; and in brass and woodwind instruments, by the vibrating reed, lips, or column of air.

Note

A **note** is a specific pitch. Notes have letter names—A through G, for instance, is the basic music alphabet. Oftentimes, people use the words *pitch* and *note* interchangeably.

Chord

A **chord** is two or more notes played at the same time. There are certain kinds of chords that sound more normal to our Western ears—for instance, the major triad. Sing “Do-Mi-Sol” to hear the three notes used in a major triad.

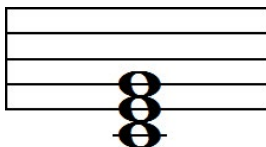


FIGURE 1.1 Chord.

Consonance/Dissonance

Consonance is when music features notes that sound nice together—no real sense of discord or tension. Consonant moments sound conclusive or at rest.

Dissonance is when music features notes that don’t sound nice together—there is a sense of discord or tension. Dissonant moments sound transitional or uneasy.

While these are certainly subjective judgments, when one note is sounded at the same time as another note, the listener has an immediate sense of dissonance or consonance.

Many composers choose to use dissonance sparingly, allowing brief moments of tension to develop before they resolve to a consonance. Other composers use dissonance nonstop because they want the listener to feel unsettled for the entire piece of music. Because the perception of dissonance/consonance is subjective, many composers and listeners find the effect of dissonance to be enjoyable rather than unsettling.

Interval

An **interval** is the distance between any two pitches. These are the main intervals:

Minor second: A dissonant interval. To hear a minor second, play any key on the piano and then the very next key or sing the first two notes of the *Jaws* theme. This is also known as a **half step**.



FIGURE 1.2 Minor second interval.

Major second: A mildly dissonant interval. Sing the first two notes of a major scale (“Do-Re”) and you’ll hear a major second. This is also known as a **whole step**.



FIGURE 1.3 Major second interval.

Minor third: A slightly dissonant interval. Sing the first two notes of “Greensleeves” (also known as “What Child Is This?”).



FIGURE 1.4 Minor third interval.

Major third: A consonant interval. Sing “Do-Mi” or the first two notes of “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”

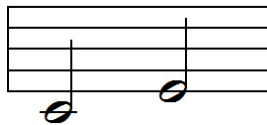


FIGURE 1.5 Major third interval.

Perfect fourth: A consonant interval. Sing “Do-Fa” or the first two notes of “Here Comes the Bride.”



FIGURE 1.6 Perfect fourth interval.

Tritone (also known as an augmented fourth, a diminished fifth, or “the devil’s interval”): A very dissonant interval. Sing the first two syllables of “Maria” from *West Side Story* or sing the words “The Simpsons,” at the start of the television theme song—the first two syllables (“The Simp-”) make a tritone.



FIGURE 1.7 Tritone interval.

Perfect fifth: An extremely consonant interval. Sing “Do-Sol” or “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”—when you move from the first “twinkle” to the second “twinkle,” you have sung a perfect fifth.



FIGURE 1.8 Perfect fifth interval.

Minor sixth: A somewhat dissonant interval. Sing the first two notes of “Close Every Door,” from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Or, sing the first four notes of Scott Joplin’s “The Entertainer”; the third and fourth notes are a minor sixth (and so are the fifth and sixth notes and the seventh and eighth notes).



FIGURE 1.9 Minor sixth interval.

Major sixth: A consonant interval. Sing “Do-La” or the first two notes of “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean” or the first two notes of the NBC jingle.



FIGURE 1.10 Major sixth interval.

Minor seventh: A dissonant interval. Sing the first two notes of “Somewhere” from *West Side Story*. In the main theme of the original *Star Trek* television series, the first two notes that are sung (by the female voice) form a minor seventh.



FIGURE 1.11 Minor seventh interval.

Major seventh: A very dissonant interval. Sing “Do-Ti” or the first two notes of the chorus of “Take on Me” by the band a-ha. Or, if you are familiar with 1980s television theme songs, the first two notes of the theme song to *Fantasy Island*.



FIGURE 1.12 Major seventh interval.

Octave: The most consonant interval. Sing “Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti-Do.” The first and last “Do” create an **octave**. Or you can sing the first two notes of the chorus of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from *The Wizard of Oz*.



FIGURE 1.13 Octave.

Unison: A **unison** is the same note sung or played by more than one person. (It is technically not a true “interval” since there is no distance between the two notes.)

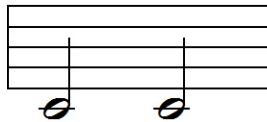


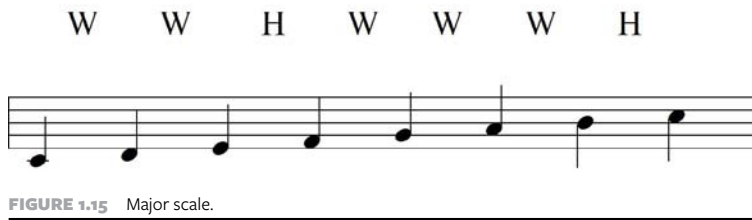
FIGURE 1.14 Unison.

Scale

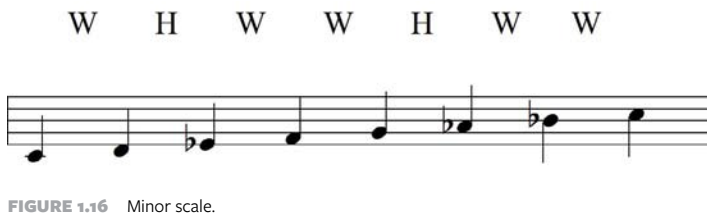
A **scale** is a succession of whole-step and half-step intervals that sound normal or logical to our Western ears.

There are three main types of scales used in Western music today—**major**, **minor**, and **chromatic**.

Major scale: A major scale is created by playing the succession of whole steps (W) and half steps (H) indicated on the illustration below. Sing “Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti-Do” and you will have sung a major scale.



Minor scale: A minor scale is created by playing a different succession of whole and half steps.



Chromatic scale: A chromatic scale is created by playing only half steps—no whole steps.



By following the above successions of intervals, anyone can play these scales starting on any note.

Melody

A **melody** is a succession of notes—any succession of notes. Composers choose which pitches and intervals they want to use in their melody. In very general terms, the melody is the catchy, hummable part of a piece of music.

Because melody is such a general term, there are other terms that are helpful in describing a particular piece of music.

Phrase: A **phrase** is a short melody that, if you were singing it, would feel quite natural to take a breath at the end. For instance, “Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle all the way [breath]. Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh [breath].” Or for a slower example, “Silent Night, [breath] Holy Night, [breath], all is calm, [breath], all is bright [breath].”

Motive: A **motive** is a short succession of notes that is used throughout a piece of music to create a sense of unity within the piece. Motives can be melodic or rhythmic. One of the most famous motives in music history is the first four notes of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5* (dum-dum-dum-DUUUUUUM).

Theme: A **theme** is similar to a motive but longer. The opening clarinet solo in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is a good example. It is heard right at the beginning of the piece, played by the clarinet, then it comes back time and time again played by various instruments within the orchestra.

Harmony

Harmony is musical material that enhances or supports the melody. Any other notes that occur at the same time as a melody can be considered part of the harmony. For instance, in most hymns or music sung by choirs, it is customary to have four-part harmony—the soprano line (the melody line), the alto line, the tenor line, and the bass line. Aside from the melody line, the other three parts are considered harmony. (Harmony features notes lined up vertically on the page, while melody features notes arranged in succession horizontally.)

Structural Elements

Key/Tonality/Atonality

A **key** is an organizing principle within a composition. Key is determined by the first note in the scale; in other words, if a scale begins on the note called C and a piece is composed using the notes in the C scale, we would say that that piece is written in the key of C.

Every note within a scale has a functional name as labeled here:

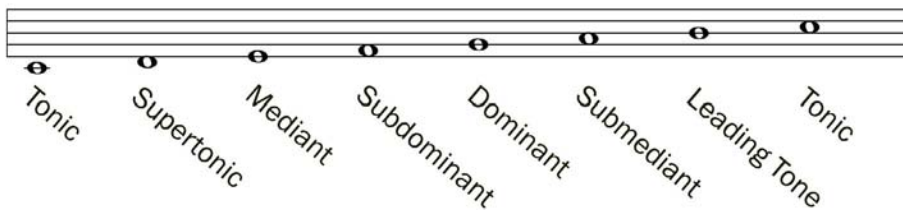


FIGURE 1.18 Functional scale degree names.

The first note of each scale is called the **tonic**. Turn on a piece of music and listen for a moment, then start to hum the note that seems to be the most prominent overall. You will likely find that you are humming the tonic. The tonic acts as a homing signal that draws us in throughout the music and provides a sense of conclusiveness at the end of a piece. The tonic is most obvious in the bass line. You may notice that occasionally, when you are humming the tonic, it goes away and you can't find it for a few moments. The bass line has most likely moved to the subdominant or dominant notes briefly before returning to the tonic. The word that describes what

happens when a piece of music moves from one key to another is **modulation**. The composer modulates the piece from one key to another.

Tonality is when a piece of music has a distinct tonic. The tonic may be present for the entire piece, or a composer may choose to modulate the piece to other keys, each having its own tonic. We label this music as tonal. When you see a title of a piece such as *Sonata in E minor*, you know that E is the tonic.

Atonality is when a piece of music avoids maintaining a tonic. Atonal music is generally perceived as dissonant.

Chord Progression/Cadence

A **chord progression** is the order in which a series of chords occurs. The harmony of most music relies on chords built upon various notes in a particular scale. Throughout history, certain chord progressions have developed that sound normal to our ears. For instance, think of the bass line at the start of “Summer Lovin’” from *Grease*. The bass line is T (tonic), T, S (subdominant), S, D (dominant), D, S, D, S, T with chords punctuating each note of the bass line—chords built on the tonic, subdominant, and dominant. This chord progression is used so consistently throughout history in thousands of pieces of music that it can easily be considered the most popular chord progression in Western music. Most pieces of music from the Classical era, for example, end with a chord progression of T, S, D, D, T.

A **cadence** is the last few chords in a chord progression. Ending on the tonic chord provides a sense of conclusion. Cadences occur in music at the ends of phrases and at the end of the entire piece. Cadences at the ends of compositions often emphasize (repeat) the tonic numerous times to ensure that listeners feel a sense of conclusiveness.

Rhythm

Rhythm is how music occurs within time. At its most basic, rhythm is the succession of durations of notes. Some rhythms will feature repeated notes of the same duration, and some rhythms will feature notes with varied durations.

Beat

A **beat** is a regularly recurring pulse. Musical time is measured in beats. Turn on a rock song with a heavy drumbeat and see what effect it has upon you. Most likely you will start tapping your toe (or banging your head) in a regular, evenly spaced pulse. If you can do that, you have found the beat of the music.

Measure/Bar

A **measure** (or **bar**) is a unit of musical time. Measures are indicated in music by vertical **bar lines** that look like this:

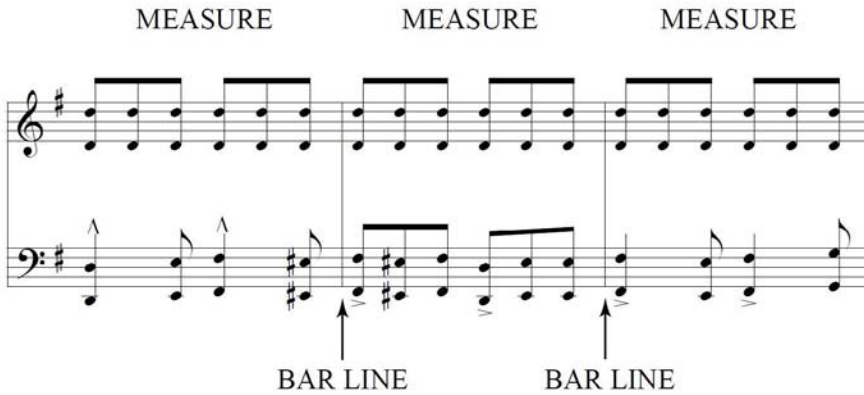


FIGURE 1.19 Measure/bar.

Meter

Meter is a pattern of regularly recurring accented beats and unaccented beats. There are many different types of meter:

Duple meter: Duple meter is a recurring pattern of one accented beat followed by one unaccented beat—heavy, light, heavy, light. Most marches are in duple meter. Here are some possible duple-meter indications (known as **time signatures**):



FIGURE 1.20 Duple meter 2/4.



FIGURE 1.21 Duple meter 2/8.



FIGURE 1.22 Duple meter 2/2.

Triple meter: Triple meter is a recurring pattern of one accented beat followed by two unaccented beats—heavy, light, light, heavy, light, light. Waltzes and many other dances are in triple meter. Here are some possible triple-meter time signatures:



FIGURE 1.23 Triple meter 3/4.



FIGURE 1.24 Triple meter 3/8.



FIGURE 1.25 Triple meter 3/16.

Quadruple meter: Quadruple meter is a recurring pattern of one accented beat followed by a light beat, then a somewhat heavy beat, and then a final light beat—heavy, light, somewhat heavy, light. This meter is also called **common time** because it is so prevalent in music. Listen to practically any pop song and you will likely hear common time. Here are some possible quadruple meter time signatures:



FIGURE 1.26 Quadruple meter 4/4.



FIGURE 1.27 Quadruple meter 4/8.

Compound meter: Compound meter is a recurring pattern of accented beats that can be perceived as either duple or triple, and each beat can be subdivided into three beats. As an example of this, sing “Silent Night” much faster than you normally would—you’ll find that it is in duple meter. Then sing it more slowly, the way it is normally sung, and you’ll find that it can be perceived in a triple meter.



FIGURE 1.28 Compound meter.

Nonmetrical: Some music has no regular recurring pattern of beats and, therefore, no meter. Gregorian chant, for example, is nonmetrical.

Mixed meter: Mixed meter is when a piece of music has one meter for a certain amount of time, then shifts to another meter. These shifts can occur every single measure in a piece of music or can occur infrequently. Listeners might perceive pieces composed with mixed meter as nonmetrical, but they are still metrical; the constant shifting just makes it more difficult to tap your toes as you listen.

Irregular meter: Irregular meter has an irregular number of beats per measure—for instance, five beats per measure, or seven, or eleven. If a meter isn’t easily divisible by two or three, it is irregular.

Texture

Texture is the means by which melody, harmony, and rhythm are combined in a composition.

Monophony: The most basic texture, monophony, is found in music in which a single melody line has absolutely no harmony. Examples of **monophonic texture** in daily life include someone whistling a tune or singing in the shower.

Homophony: This texture is found in music in which a melody line is enhanced or supported by other musical material, usually chords. Examples of **homophonic texture** in daily life include hymns, most pop songs, and patriotic songs.

Polyphony: This texture is found in music in which there are two or more melodic lines that are equal (or practically equal) in importance. There are two main types of **polyphonic texture**:

Imitative polyphony is when one melody line begins and then another melody begins shortly thereafter, imitating the first melody line. The second line might be higher or lower in pitch, or it might use exactly the same pitches as the initial melody, but because the individual entrances are staggered, they are identifiable as separate melodies. Examples of **imitative polyphonic texture** in daily life include rounds (like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”) and fugues.

Nonimitative polyphony is when there are two or more contrasting melody lines occurring at the same time. Examples of **nonimitative polyphonic texture** include the kids’ song “Fish and Chips and Vinegar” and “One Day More” from *Les Misérables* (where each character sings their own individual melody overlapping with the other characters’ individual melodies).

Form

Form refers to the way a particular piece of music is laid out—a roadmap or blueprint that a composer can follow when composing a particular piece of music. There are some very basic forms that are used quite frequently in music. **Binary form** is when a piece of music has two sections of contrasting music. **Ternary form** is music in which there are three sections of music, the first and last being the same, the middle contrasting. When discussing form, we often use letters to indicate repetition or contrast. Whatever the first section of music sounds like, it is labeled A; if that first section repeats, it is labeled A again. Or if it is contrasting material, it is labeled B. If another contrasting section occurs, it is labeled C.

Here is an example of binary form (AB). Sing “My Bonnie” and notice how the first section (A) contrasts with the second section (B):

A	My Bonnie lies over the ocean, My Bonnie lies over the sea. My Bonnie lies over the ocean, Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me.
B	Bring back, bring back, Oh bring back my Bonnie to me, to me. Bring back, bring back, Oh bring back my Bonnie to me.

The first part is very obviously a different melody from the second part; the contrast between A and B is clear.

Here’s an example of a piece in ternary form (ABA). Sing this song aloud and pay attention to how the initial A melody repeats following the B melody.

A	Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool? Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.
B	One for the master, one for the dame, One for the little boy who lives down the lane.
A	Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool? Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.

Note: Determining form in music has little to do with the words and everything to do with the melody. In “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep,” both A sections had the same words, but you could also sing the alphabet song, which uses the exact same melody, and you will notice that even though the two A sections have different words, they would still be marked A, because they have the exact same melody.

This next example is a less common form because it has no repetition of sections:

A	I’ve been working on the railroad all the live-long day, I’ve been working on the railroad just to pass the time away.
B	Can’t you hear the whistle blowing, Rise up so early in the morn; Can’t you hear the captain shouting, “Dinah, blow your horn!”
C	Dinah, won’t you blow, Dinah, won’t you blow, Dinah, won’t you blow your horn? Dinah, won’t you blow, Dinah, won’t you blow, Dinah, won’t you blow your horn?
D	Someone’s in the kitchen with Dinah, Someone’s in the kitchen I know. Someone’s in the kitchen with Dinah, Strummin’ on the old banjo!

Most pop music follows a very basic pattern of verse, verse, chorus, verse, chorus—or, in other words, AABAB. Listen to your favorite pop songs and pay attention to the patterns of repetition and contrast. Occasionally, a section might repeat (A A, for example), but on the repeated part, the composer might have made small changes—not enough to obscure the relationship to the first A, but enough to be noticeable. In these cases, a prime is added to the slightly altered section, like so: A A’.

Movement

A **movement** is a self-contained portion of music (with a beginning, middle, and end) that is part of a larger work. In the example below, the piece listed has a main title followed by four individual movements (indented). Each movement sounds like a complete piece of music. You might even feel like you ought to clap at the end of the first movement (especially if it is particularly exciting), but the first movement is not the end of the complete piece; you need to wait until all four movements are complete before you applaud.

Quintet in D minor, Op. 68, No. 3

Andante sostenuto—Allegretto

Andante

Minuetto: Allegretto

Finale: Allegro assai

Franz Danzi

(1763–1826)

Many music lovers feel that this rule about applause is silly, while others most vociferously defend the practice. In any event, the current concert-going etiquette is to wait until the end of the entire piece to applaud. When you attend concerts, follow along with the program to keep track of the movements so that you know when to applaud.

Note: Many performers will choose to only play certain movements of a particular composition in a performance. Their reasons for doing so may be due to a time restriction or simply not liking certain movements. Classical music purists feel that it is a terrible thing to leave movements out in performance because it is not the entire composition the way the composer intended it to be heard. They feel that it is akin to reading a book but only reading some of the chapters; you're not getting the full story. Nevertheless, it is quite common, particularly at performances at universities.

Score

Score is the word used to describe a printed piece of music. There are solo scores, chamber scores, vocal scores, orchestral scores, and more.

When studying music, it is very helpful to look at scores while you listen. To find scores, the easiest and quickest method is to search for the composer and title of the



FIGURE 1.29 Schubert's op. 100: Excerpt from a chamber music score by Franz Schubert (Piano Trio No. 2 in E-Flat Major, Op. 100, D. 929, mvt II).

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Chamber_music#/media/File:Es-Dur-Trio_Schubert.jpg.

piece you are studying at the International Music Score Library Project's website (imslp.org). Most music libraries at universities also have a tremendous number of scores available.

Expressive Markings

Expressive markings are words or symbols that provide guidance to the performer as to how to perform a piece of music. These markings indicate the mood, volume, or speed of the music.

Dynamics

Dynamics are descriptive markings or words printed in the music that indicate volume—how loud or how soft. Because a lot of musical terms developed at a time when Italy was the artistic center of Europe, we use Italian words to describe dynamics. Dynamics are indicated with various symbols and abbreviations (below the printed notes).

Italian Term	English Translation	Symbol or Abbreviation Used to Indicate Dynamic
<i>Pianississimo</i>	Triple soft	<i>ppp</i>
<i>Pianissimo</i>	Double soft	<i>pp</i>
<i>Piano</i>	Soft	<i>p</i>
<i>Mezzo-piano</i>	Medium soft	<i>mp</i>
<i>Mezzo-forte</i>	Medium loud	<i>mf</i>
<i>Forte</i>	Loud	<i>f</i>
<i>Fortissimo</i>	Double loud	<i>ff</i>
<i>Fortississimo</i>	Triple loud	<i>fff</i>
<i>Crescendo</i>	Gradually get louder	<i>cresc.</i> or  (This symbol is placed underneath a section of music and is as short or as long as the composer wants the crescendo to take place.)
<i>Decrescendo</i> or <i>Diminuendo</i>	Gradually get softer	<i>decresc.</i> or <i>dim.</i> or 

Italian Term	English Translation	Symbol or Abbreviation Used to Indicate Dynamic
<i>Subito</i>	Suddenly	<i>sub.</i> This dynamic marking is only used in conjunction with a specific volume, like so: <i>sub. fff</i> or <i>sub. p</i>

Dynamics are only general terms. It is up to the individual performer to decide how loud or soft one dynamic is in relation to another dynamic.

Tempo

Tempo is the speed of music. Composers can indicate how fast or how slow a particular piece or section of a piece is by using tempo markings. These are generally in Italian, although other languages are occasionally used. They appear above the printed music at the beginning of the piece and whenever the composer changes the tempo within a piece of music. In multi-movement works, movement names are often tempo markings. It is helpful for you to have a working knowledge of these terms. Here is a chart showing the most commonly used tempo markings.

Desired Speed of Music	Tempo Markings Commonly Used
Very slow	<i>Grave, Largo, and Lento</i>
Slow	<i>Adagio</i>
Somewhat slow	<i>Andante</i> (often translated as “at a walking pace”)
Medium speed	<i>Moderato</i>
Somewhat fast	<i>Allegretto</i>
Fast	<i>Allegro</i> and <i>Vivace</i> (lively)
Very fast	<i>Presto</i>

As with dynamics, these terms are quite general, so it is up to the individual performer to determine how fast or slow each tempo really is. Many composers try to be more specific by using certain modifiers in their tempo markings.

Modifier	What It Means	How It Might Appear in Conjunction With a Tempo Marking
<i>Agitato</i>	Agitated	<i>Allegro agitato</i>
<i>Animato</i>	Animated, with life	<i>Allegro animato</i>
<i>Appassionato</i>	With passion	<i>Allegro appassionato</i>
<i>Assai</i>	Very	<i>Allegro assai</i>
<i>Cantabile</i>	In a singing manner	<i>Allegretto cantabile</i>

Modifier	What It Means	How It Might Appear in Conjunction With a Tempo Marking
<i>Con brio</i>	With vigor	<i>Allegro con brio</i>
<i>Con fuoco</i>	With fire	<i>Presto con fuoco</i>
<i>Con moto</i>	With motion	<i>Allegro con moto</i>
<i>Espressivo</i>	With expressiveness	<i>Andante espressivo</i>
<i>Giocoso</i>	With joy	<i>Allegro giocoso</i>
<i>Grazioso</i>	With gracefulness	<i>Allegro grazioso</i>
<i>Maestoso</i>	Majestic	<i>Allegro maestoso</i>
<i>Molto</i>	Much	<i>Molto allegro</i>
<i>Non troppo</i>	But not too much	<i>Allegro non troppo</i>

The above table is only a sample of the myriad possible terms used as modifiers. If you see a tempo marking that you've never seen before, try using basic knowledge of Latin-based languages (including English) to make educated guesses as to meaning. For instance, one can infer that *Presto furioso* means fast and furious or that *Andante sostenuto* means slow and sustained.

Here are other tempo markings that help guide performers in their music-making:

Italian Term	English Translation	Symbol or Abbreviation Used
<i>Accelerando</i>	Speeding up	<i>accel.</i>
<i>Meno mosso</i>	Less motion	<i>meno mosso</i>
<i>Più mosso</i>	More motion	<i>più mosso</i>
<i>Poco a poco</i>	Little by little	<i>poco a poco</i> This term is usually used in conjunction with another tempo marking: for instance, <i>poco a poco accelerando</i> would mean “little by little, speed up.”
<i>Rallentando</i> or <i>Ritardando</i>	Slowing down	<i>rall.</i> or <i>rit.</i>

Composers can also indicate exact tempo by using metronome markings. A **metronome** is a time-indicating device that clicks or beeps a certain number of times per minute. As an example, if the metronome marking is ♩ = 60, the click would occur sixty times per minute—a relatively slow tempo. If the metronome marking is ♩ = 176, the click would occur 176 times per minute. On a traditional metronome, 40 is the lowest tempo and 208 is the fastest tempo.

Descriptive Terms

Tone Color/Timbre

Tone color or **timbre** (the terms are interchangeable) is the quality of sound of an instrument or voice. Tone color is affected by the way the sound vibrations are created. To describe tone color, use descriptive adjectives like smooth, harsh, nasal, mellifluous, or even toad-like. To get a better sense of this, sing the exact same pitch multiple times with a different timbre each time; for instance, sing a note with a nasal tone color, then sing the same note with a hollow tone color, then with a gravelly tone color. (Note: Sometimes people make the mistake of describing the mood of a piece when they're trying to describe tone color. Mood and tone color are two different concepts.)

Genre

Genre is a word that essentially means the same thing as *category*. In music, a genre is a term that helps categorize a particular piece of music by characteristics it shares with other compositions.

It might be helpful to illustrate this concept using the world of film as an example. Within the many possibilities of types of films to watch, we find genres such as comedy, action, romance, horror, children's, and westerns. Every film in the western genre shares similar characteristics, the most obvious being that they take place in the Wild West and involve gunfights, horses, and saloons. Yet every western is also individually identifiable due to each film's unique characters and storylines. Even though they are all easily labeled "western," they have unique characters and storylines, so specific titles are used to identify the specific films—*High Noon*, *True Grit*, and *The Wild Bunch* to name a few. Each of these films is easily recognized as part of the western genre, yet they are also unique.

It works the same way in the world of music. In music, *concerto* is a specific genre, or category of composition. Individual pieces of music within that genre have more detailed titles to help them be identified more specifically than the general term of genre. As with a western-genre film, there are hundreds of concerti with unique characteristics and identifying factors with titles such as:

- *Marimba Concerto No. 1*
- *Piano Concerto No. 12 in A major, K. 414*
- *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048*
- *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*

Another example: A genre that originated in the Catholic church is called Mass. The Mass is a specific church service; it is also a musical genre that has developed and

evolved through the centuries. Within the vast genre of mass there are hundreds of masses identified more specifically with identifying titles such as:

- *Mass No. 3 in C major, Hob.XXII:5*
- *Mass No. 16 in C major, K. 317, “Krönungsmesse”*
- *Messe solennelle, Op. 16*
- *Mša glagolskaja (Glagolitic Mass), JW III/9*

At some point, you may be asked, “Do you like listening to concertos?” or “Do you enjoy the music of the Catholic Mass?” If you reply in the affirmative, you may be asked, “Which ones?” The person asking you questions has determined that you enjoy the genre of the concerto or the mass, and now they want more specific titles.

Genre is quite a useful term and can be very broad or very specific. For example, in the world of music one could divide up all music that has ever existed into two rather large genres: (1) classical music and (2) pop music. These are extremely broad genres. Within each of these genres are hundreds of subgenres. For instance, in the large genre of pop music, there are the subgenres of R&B, bubblegum pop, country-western, hair metal, and grunge, to name a few; and within the large genre of classical music there are hundreds of subgenres, such as concerto, sonata, symphony, string quartet, and piano trio.

Absolute Music/Program Music

When discussing instrumental music—music with no vocal elements, no lyrics—there are a few terms that can help specify what type of music we are listening to, in a general way. **Absolute music** is instrumental music for music’s sake. It is intended for listening pleasure. It does not tell a story or paint a picture in the head of the listener. Most of the instrumental music of the Baroque and Classical eras is considered “absolute.” **Program music**, on the other hand, is instrumental music that is meant to tell a story or paint a picture in the head of the listener. Often the “story” is explained in written “program notes” in the printed program. This allows the audience to read in advance what the story is so that as they listen, they can envision the story in their heads. To make this even more of a tongue twister, the “story” itself (of any piece of instrumental program music) is actually called the “program.” So ... you can go to a performance of *program* music and read about the *program* in the *program* notes in the printed *program*! If a piece of vocal music has instrumental accompaniment and the instrument(s) behave in a manner that sounds like they are contributing to telling the story, enhancing what the lyrics are telling us, or even adding information beyond what the lyrics are telling us, we can refer to the piece as having “programmatic” qualities or features.

Song/Piece/Work

A **song** is sung. Songs are usually quite short and are generally sung by a person or small number of people. For instance, most pop music can be referred to as songs. When a group sings “Happy Birthday” to a friend, it is a song. Occasionally, a song can be sung by a very large group of people—for instance, “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” sung at a ballpark. It is incorrect to refer to a large-scale composition like Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* or Verdi’s *Aida* as a song.

The word **piece** is a handy catch-all term that can apply to all instrumental music and vocal music (including songs and works).

A **work** is a large-scale multimovement (or multisectioned) piece of music such as an opera, an oratorio, a symphony, a song cycle, and the like.

Pop Music/Classical Music

Pop music is music that is “popular.” Rock and roll, musical theater, film music, and jazz are categories of popular music.

Classical music is music that is artistic in intent; thus, classical music is also referred to as **art music**. Classical music from the Middle Ages through the present day is considered to be “art music” or simply “classical music.”

Both terms are problematic. Labeling a piece of music as pop implies that it is not artistic; labeling a piece of music as classical music implies that it is not popular. But neither of those implications is true or fair. Jazz, musical theater, film music, and rock and roll all have artistic merit. And classical music is indeed popular all over the world. For the purposes of this book, however, these terms will be used, with the understanding that pop music and classical music are both popular *and* artistic.