

SQ_AMIM - Glossary

Common Composer Markings

adagietto: slightly faster than adagio

adagio: slowly and gracefully

allegretto: fairly quick – faster than andante and usually slower than allegro

allegro: fast

andante: walking speed – moderately slow

appassionato: with passion

arco: played with the bow – as opposed to plucking the strings

Bartok pizzicato: the strings are to be plucked so hard they hit the fingerboard leading to a harsh sound

battuto: hit – the bow is made to strike the string, not bow it

crescendo: gradually getting louder

espressivo: expressively; may also encourage physical expression by the performer; allows the taking of slight liberties with articulation and dynamics

fortissimo: very loud

grave: very slow – solemn

langsam: slow, slowly, gently

largo: slow and dignified manner

larghetto: rather slow

lento: to be performed slowly

mezzo-forte: moderately loud

moderato: moderate speed

molto: qualifier – very – much – e.g. allegro molto = very fast – molto largo = very slowly

piano: soft

pianissimo: very soft

pizzicato: a technique for stringed instruments where strings are plucked with the right hand

presto: very fast

poco: qualifier – a little – to a small degree – e.g. poco adagio – a little faster than adagio

romanze: played with a song-like character

rubato: played freely, not at a fixed tempo

sarabande: a slow, stately Spanish dance in triple time

vivace: lively

This is just a selection of markings to which I regularly refer – more comprehensive listings can be found all over the internet.

Other Relevant Musical Terms

abstract: music that is not explicitly about anything – in contrast to program music, it is non-representational and often *atonal*. It could apply to Beethoven's Late Quartets – a complex Bach Fugue or extremely modern works. You can't quite put your finger on it – a bit mysterious.

arpeggio: a chord where notes are played in succession rather than simultaneously. This succession may either be slow, or rapid.

atonal: music that has no tonal centre, and is not in any particular key. Leads to an abstract, often dissonant sounding music. It can also sound very beautiful.

avante-garde: movements or individuals at the forefront of innovation and experimentation in their fields.

canon: a piece of music where one voice repeats the part of another, throughout a section.

chamber music: music for small ensembles, originally played in homes by amateur musicians. Due to this, most of the early chamber music was not technically difficult. Over time, the string quartet has become the most popular chamber ensemble. It is now rarely played in homes.

counterpoint: music consisting of two or more lines that sound simultaneously, each played with a different phrasing.

chromatic: interspersing the seven primary tones of a scale with the five normally unused tones.

Deutsche Grammophon: from Germany, the world's most prolific classical recording company.

entropy: I love this word, for me it's always meant degree of randomness but it has some scientific definition as well.

exposition: the initial presentation of the theme of a composition, movement, or section. The use of the term generally implies that the material will be developed or varied at a later stage.

FOSQC: French One String Quartet Club – the more than a handful of French composers who wrote just one string quartet. Members include: Debussy, Ravel, Faure, Dutilleux and many others, who are scattered throughout this book.

fugue: a short melody or phrase, known as the subject – introduced by one instrument, successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the

parts. For a more detailed definition, please read my *The Art of Fugue* discussion under 'BACH'.

glissando: a glide from one pitch to another – used on stringed instruments. In modern music, the technique of bowing a note, and then sliding the fingers down the fingerboard. This leads to notes that descend in a smeared manner. It, is a very common technique, producing micro-tones, and a whining sound. Plural *glissandi*, but I prefer glissandos.

harmony or harmonic background: the sounding of two or more *musical* notes at the same time to form chords – used to accompany a melody.

harmonise: the sound of two or more instruments playing consonant notes together, with the same phrasing, leading to a richer texture.

harmonics: the creation of a sound effect on stringed instruments. The player gently touches a string above where a note would normally be fingered, then plucks the string. A bell-like sound ensues.

Impressionism: a movement among various composers in Western classical music, mainly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, whose music focuses on suggestion and atmosphere, writing about the feeling obtained from some object or event, not about the thing itself – thanks, Wiki.

je ne sais quoi: a pleasant quality that is hard to describe – French.

lyrical: song-like – expressing the composer's emotions in an imaginative and beautiful way.

miniaturism: fitting a lot of musical expression into a small space. I made it up.

minimalism: a hotly debated term. Prominent features of the technique include: consonant harmony; steady pulse; immobile drones; stasis or gradual transformation; and often reiteration of musical phrases or smaller units such as figures, motifs, and cells – thanks, Wiki.

modal: a system of using different scales than the most common major scale. Leads to ethnic or folk-like melodies. Obscure modes are the standard in some middle-eastern countries, leading to the phrase *eastern sounding*.

microtones: intervals smaller than a semitone – the notes between the notes.

Neoclassicism: a twentieth century movement, particularly popular in the period between the two World Wars, in which composers drew inspiration from certain elements of music from the eighteenth century. A reaction against Modernism.

ostinato: a continually repeated, musical phrase or rhythm.

pastoral: having the emotional feeling of a countryside e.g. trees, hills, wide open plains.

pentatonic scales: scales containing only five notes as compared to the seven notes found in a normal scale – commonly used in folk music around the world – leading to an open feel in the melodies.

program music: music intended to convey an impression of a definite series of images, scenes, or events.

recapitulation: repeating a melody that has been played earlier, usually after a development phase.

serial or twelve-tone: although these two terms are technically not identical, I do tend to use them interchangeably for simplicity. The 12 pitches are arranged into a tone-row and the composer then has to follow a series of rules in using the tones. For example, no one tone can be repeated until all of the other eleven have been used. Various manipulations can be made to the basic row, leading to 48 possibilities. Can lead to very difficult music for some listeners.

staccato: a technique where consecutive notes are played sharply and cut off, leaving gaps between the notes

string quartet: a musical ensemble consisting of two violins, a viola and a cello – a piece written for such an ensemble.

syncopated: stressing a normally weak beat.

tonal music/tonality: a musical system that arranges pitches or chords to induce a hierarchy of perceived relations, stabilities, and attractions. The pitch or triadic chord with the greatest stability is called the tonic, and the root of the tonic chord is considered to be the key of a piece or song – as opposed to atonality, which has no key centre. Tonality may be major or minor, which is a slightly darker version of major.

tone poem: an instrumental composition intended to portray a particular story or poem, scene or mood.

This Glossary, in PDF format can be found at the following address – from here it can be downloaded and/or printed:

www.jhredguitar.com/sq_amim/glossary.pdf

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