

Musical element term list

Here's a selection of some of terms we've introduced in class and will continue to define and explore during the term. See Oxford Music Online or an encyclopedia or dictionary for definitions, or ask about them in class.

Melody, harmony, rhythm

Theme, tune

Melodic motion, melodic shape, melodic contour

Phrase, phrasing

Pitch, key

Tonic, scale

Interval

Key signature

Whole tone/half tone

Accidental – flat, sharp, natural

Major, minor, modal

Chord, triad, chord progression

Modulation

Tonality, atonality

Diatonic, chromatic

Dissonance, consonance (noun)

Dissonant, consonant (adj.)

Instrumentation and Instrument families (strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion), vocal ranges (soprano, alto, tenor, bass)

Range, tessitura

Falsetto

Diction, articulation

Legato, staccato

Accompaniment, a cappella

Head voice, chest voice

Melisma

Ornamentation, decoration, embellishment

Verse, chorus

Strophic, through-composed

Timbre

Dynamics (piano, forte; crescendo, decrescendo)

Texture

Form

Note values, notation

Rests

Beat

Tempo

Meter, duple meter, triple meter, mixed meter

Time signature

Syncopation

Improvisation