

GCSE Music

Glossary

Ornamentation

Decorations to the melody

Acciaccatura

A crushed note, played in as short a time as possible. It is notated as a small note with a diagonal line through the stem to show that it really has no value.

Lip trills

Using the lips to produce a trill effect on brass instruments rather than the valves.

Mordent

A musical ornament involving moving rapidly from one note, to another, then back again.

Portamento

Sliding from one pitch to another

Tremolo

A rapidly repeated note or a rapid alternation between two different notes. The note or notes to be played in this way are shown with one or more lines crossways through the stem to indicate the speed of repetition.

Trill

Rapid alternation between two notes.



Turn

A musical ornament consisting of the note above the written note, the written note, the note below and the written note again.



Articulation

Marcato

Marked, i.e. accented (stressed on a certain note)

Legato

Played smoothly

Staccato

An instruction to play the notes crisply, detached, which is shown in the music by placing dots above or below the notes being played.

Texture

Texture refers to the way that the various instrumental or vocal parts relate to one another.

Monophonic

Music consisting of a single unaccompanied melody line.

Homophonic

A musical texture in which all parts move in a similar rhythm creating a chordal effect.

Polyphonic

A musical texture where two or more parts move independently of each other.

Contrapuntal

Two or more independent melodic lines performed at the same time.

Call and response

Refers to a musical texture whereby one musician or group of musicians makes a musical statement and this is immediately answered by another musician or group of musicians.

Imitation

One part copying or imitating another, not necessarily at the same pitch

Antiphonal

Where a bar or phrase is alternated between two instruments, groups of instruments or singers; from 'anti' (opposite' or 'against') and 'phonos' (voice).

Unison

Two or more people performing the same note or melody.

Harmony

Harmony refers to the chords and cadences used.

Diminished seventh

A chord built up of minor thirds.

Dominant seventh

The dominant chord plus an extra note a minor seventh above the root or first note.

Drone

A harmonic effect where a single note or chord is sustained throughout a musical phrase. Often appears as a perfect 4th or 5th interval.

Imperfect cadence

In an imperfect cadence the last chord is chord V (the dominant) creating an unfinished effect.

Inverted pedal

When the pedal (the sustained or repeated note) is played at a higher pitch than the other parts.

Inversions

An inverted chord is one where any note from the chord appears as the lowest in pitch other than the root.

Modulation

Process of changing from one key to another.

Pedal

A sustained or repeated note, usually in the bass or lowest part, above which the harmony changes

Perfect cadence

Two chords played as a progression to mark the end of a phrase. The chords are dominant to tonic, often shown by Roman numerals as V-I.

Tierce de Picardie

A major chord used to end a piece in a minor key.

Rhythm

Rhythm refers to the patterns made by the notes and rests.

Anacrusis

An upbeat to a musical theme starting before the first beat of the bar.

Augmentation

Extending a musical idea rhythmically. Typically doubling the length of the notes.

Backbeat

(Or offbeat) Refers usually to the second and fourth beat in a drum rhythm in 4/4 time.

Bi-rhythm

Two independent rhythms played simultaneously

Cross Rhythm

When two different rhythms are heard together with different accented beats (different time signatures together)

Double-dotted

A dot after a note increases its duration by half the original value. The second dot adds a further half of that half.

Hemiola

A rhythmic device in which two groups of three beats are performed as three groups of two.

Ostinato

A repeated rhythm or melodic pattern; such short melodic patterns are often referred to in pop music as 'riffs'.

Polyrhythm

Two different rhythms heard played simultaneously.

Scotch Snap

A two-note dotted pattern with the shorter note first followed by the longer note.



Shuffle beat

Commonly found in rock, jazz and blues with an 8 beat rhythm sub-divided into triplets.

Sextuplets

Six notes played in the time usually taken by four. The feeling is of two triplets rather than pairs of quavers or semiquavers.

Swung Rhythms

Particularly in jazz music, the first quaver of a pair will be played slightly longer than the second.



Syncopation

Refers to stresses in the rhythmic flow that appear to be off the main beats in the pulse.

Tala

A repeated rhythmic pattern found in Indian music.

Tie

Two or more notes tied together – the length of the two notes combined

Triplet

Three notes played in the time of two.

Compound Time

A metre (time signature) in which the main beats can be subdivided into three.

Simple Time

A metre in which the main beat can be subdivided into two.

Dynamics

Dynamics are the levels of loudness and quietness in a piece.

ppp – pianississimo

Very, very quiet

pp-pianissimo

Very quiet

p – piano

Quiet

mp – mezzo piano

Quite (half) quiet

mf – mezzo forte

Quite (half) quiet

f – forte

Loud

ff – fortissimo

Very loud

fff – fortississimo

Very, very loud

Crescendo

To get gradually louder

Diminuendo

To get gradually quieter

Melody

How is the melody constructed?

Conjunct

A melody in which each note is a step away from the previous one.

Disjunct

A melody in which there are many leaps between one note and the next.

Interval

The distance between two pitches: C-G = 5th (count the letter names between including the first and last)

Inversion

When a melody is turned upside down, the intervals between the notes are the same but move in the opposite direction.

Tonic

The first note of the scale used by the piece of music, known as the home key of the piece of music.

Dominant

The fifth note of the scale or the key based on the fifth note of the tonic key eg if the original key is C major, the dominant is G major.

Melisma

A group of notes sung to the same syllable.

Octave

The interval of eight notes.

Passing notes

Melodic notes that do not form part of the essential harmonic structure but 'pass' between one chord and another.

Riff

A short, repeated musical phrase.

Scalic

Melody based on segments of scales.

Sequence

Repetition of a music motif or melodic phrase at a higher or lower pitch.

Stepwise

Refers to melody in cases where the movement is largely by step, ie from one note to the next adjacent note.

Word painting

A compositional technique whereby the sound of the music reflects the lyrical content thereby literally 'painting' the words.

Structure

The overall form of the piece.

Binary

A structure with two sections with contrasting material (A B)

Ternary

A musical structure with three sections with similar outer sections and a contrasting central one (A B A).

Rondo

A musical structure in which a main melody alternates with contrasting sections (A B A C A)

Arch Shape

A musical structure of contrasting sections in the form A B C B A

Theme and Variations

A composition where the main musical idea (theme) is repeated, each time with alterations to one or more of its original elements.

Ground Bass

A repeated bass line over which the melody changes.

Minuet and Trio

A minuet is an elegant dance in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. It is often paired with a trio section and repeated to form an ABA structured movement.

Verse

In vocal music, a section of music that is repeated but with different words each time

Chorus

In pop music, a section of music that is repeated each time with the same words.

Bridge

In song-writing, a bridge is usually a contrasting section performed before returning to a verse or chorus. Can also be called a 'Middle 8'.

Interlude

Similar to a bridge or a break, an interlude breaks up the structure.

Segue

A smooth, uninterrupted transition from the end of one piece of music to the beginning of another.

.

Transition

A transition is a section of music that links one main idea to another, for example, between a verse and a chorus.

Technology

Automatic Double Tracking (ADT)

Creating a double tracking effect through the use of tape delay. Can also now be done digitally.

Close-micing

A microphone is placed close to an instrument within three to twelve inches.

Double tracking

Recording the same instrumental or vocal part twice to achieve a chorus type effect.

Direct Input Transfer (DIT)

Recording directly into the mixing desk or computer with the aid of an amplifier

Feedback

Using the amplifier to set up vibration with the strings on electric guitar producing a howling effect.

Lesley speaker

A loudspeaker and amplifier with a rotating drum producing a fluttering effect.

Varispeeding

The music is recorded with the tape machine slowed down or sped up. The track is then played back at the standard speed altering the timbre of the voice/instrument.

Tempo - The speed of the beat or pulse.

Largo

Very Slow

Adagio

Slow

Andante

At a walking pace.

Moderato

A moderate speed.

Allegro

Quick.

Presto

Very Fast

Accelerando

To accelerate, increase in speed, become gradually faster

Rallentando

To decrease in speed, become gradually slower.

BPM

The number of beats in a minute in a musical pulse.

Meno mosso

A little less (movement)

Poco rit.

Slow down a little

Molto rit

Slow down a lot

Rubato

'Robbed' – being flexible with the strict tempo allowing some speeding and slackening of pace.

Timbre / Instrument Techniques

The type of instruments being used and the way those instruments are being played.

Arco

With a bow (also *con arco*).

Con sord./con sordino

With a mute

Celeste

A keyboard instrument where hammers strike metal plates of different pitch.

Congas

Tall wooden drums - Latin percussion instruments.

Crook

Lengths of tubing which could replace the central section of the natural horn to increase or decrease its overall length, altering the range of notes available.

Dilruba

A bowed string instrument found throughout the Indian sub-continent.

Falsetto

False voice. Male vocal in highest register.

Feedback

Using the amplifier to set up vibration with the strings on electric guitar producing a howling effect.

Harmonic series

The range of notes available to a brass player by tightening or slackening the pressure of his or her lips on the mouthpiece.

Harpsichord

A keyboard instrument where the strings are plucked rather than struck.

Horn section

A group of wind/brass instruments in rock, soul, jazz etc.

Pitch bend

Bending the strings on a string instrument such as guitar.

Pizzicato

Plucking rather than bowing a stringed instrument such as the Violin or 'Cello.

Rap

A vocal part that combines elements of speech, rhythm and chant.

Rim shot

Where the snare drum player places one stick across the rim of the drum, resting on the skin, and then hits this stick with the other stick, thus producing a short, loud sound.

Sitar

A plucked string instrument found mainly in Indian music.

Staccato

An instruction to play the notes crisply, detached, which is shown in the music by placing dots above or below the notes being played.

Swardmandal

An Indian Harp or Zither.

Tabla

An Indian drum where the pitch can be altered by pressing on the skin.

Tambura

A lute-like stringed instrument producing a drone.

Timbales

Shallow single-headed drums with a metal casing.

Tone

The sound quality of an instrument or voice.

Vibrato

Making a note vibrate rather than playing/singing it pure.