

Musical Terms

MUSC 326

Beat - Underlying pulse in music (subdivided beat = "running beat")

Rhythm - A pattern of long & short sounds or silences in music

Tempo - The speed of the beats (Fast & slow)

Meter - Patterns of strong and weak beats

Tone Quality (Timbre) - The unique difference in tone color of sounds

Pitch - degree of high or low

Loudness - degree of loud or soft

Other Musical Terms:

Accelerando - tempo gradually gets faster

Accidental - symbols such as sharps or flats and naturals that raise or lower a pitch.

Adagio - slow speed (not too slow)

Allegro - fast tempo / speed

Andante - play the music at a moderately slow speed.

Bar Line - a vertical line on the staff to separate measures in a composition.

Beam - a straight line connecting two or more notes such as eighth and sixteenth notes.

Chord - a combination of three or more notes sounding at the same time / multiple notes sounding simultaneously (Ex. A C Major chord may consist of the notes C-E-G.)

Clef - a symbol placed at the beginning of the staff to indicate names of lines and spaces.

Conductor - the director of a group of musicians.

Crescendo - gradually get louder

Decrescendo - gradually get softer

Dot - a small symbol placed to the right of a note that increases the duration of the note by one half.

Dynamics - symbols that indicate a change in volume of a song. (The

students played the music louder and softer, as indicated by the dynamics written on the music.)

Enharmonic - Two notes that sound the same but are spelled differently.

Fermata - a pause in the music, indicated by this sign.

Flat - a symbol written to the left of a note that lowers the pitch by a half step.

Forte - loud. (The percussion section saw the forte mark on their music and played the music with a booming sound.)

Half Step - the distance between one key and the next adjacent white or black key on a keyboard.

Interval - the difference in pitch between two notes.

Largo - slow and stately

Ledger Line - a small line written above or below the staff to extend the range of notation.

Legato - playing notes in a smooth, connected manner.

Measure - the space between one bar line and the next.

Moderato - medium tempo / speed

Octave - the interval between two adjacent notes of the same name.

Orchestra - a large group of instrumentalists consisting of woodwind, brass, string and percussion sections.

Pentatonic - a scale having five tones to the octave, usually avoiding half steps.

(The students played a song on the xylophone using the notes C,D,E,G, and A from the pentatonic scale.)

Phrase - a complete musical thought.

Piano - soft

Pizzicato - pluck strings instead of bowing

Presto - very fast tempo or speed

Recorder - an end-blown flute-like instrument that has a whistle mouthpiece, available in soprano, alto, tenor and bass. (The teacher told the students to play the recorder by blowing more softly.)

Refrain - the melody of a song that is repeated after each verse. (After singing the second verse of the song, the chorus sang the refrain.)

Repeat Sign - a sign that indicates a section of music to be played again. (The clarinet players had to go back and play measures 5-13 again when they got to the repeat sign.)

Rest - a symbol used to indicate silence in music.

Sharp - a symbol written to the left of a note that raises the pitch by a half step.

Slur - a curved line connecting two or more different notes, indicating to play the music smoothly.

Staccato - a dot over or under notes that indicate playing the music short and detached. (The students were told to play the notes with a more staccato sound because they were making each note sound too long.)

Staff - horizontal lines on which notes are written. The musical staff has five lines and four spaces.

Syncopation - a rhythm accented on notes that are not usually stressed.

Tie - a curved line connecting two notes indicated to play them as a single note.

Vivace - lively and quick tempo

Whole Step - A whole step is equal to two half steps. (Examples - C to D is a whole step. E to F Sharp is a whole step.)