



## Music Glossary

### A-E



**accent:** a note or beat that is played louder

**accelerando:** gradually getting faster

**accompaniment:** a musical part which supports a melody

**adagio:** slow

**allegro:** fast

**appraise:** evaluate music

**audience:** people who listen to or watch a performance

**backing vocalist:** a singer who provides vocal harmony with the lead vocalist or other backing vocalists

**bar:** segment of time corresponding to a specific number of beats

**bar line:** separates each bar according to the time signature

**bass line:** lowest part of the music, creates rhythm and harmony with the chords and adds to the texture of the music

**beat:** a unit of time marking out the speed at which the music is played

**binary form:** two sections, often called section A and section B

**body percussion:** using the body to produce sound

**brass:** a section of the orchestra, instruments are made of brass and are blown to make a sound

**broken chord:** where the notes of the chord are separated and played in a sequence

**call and response:** two phrases, the first phrase being the call and the second phrase is a response to the first

**cell:** one, singular musical idea

**chord:** three or more notes played at the same time

**chord structure:** how we organise chords into a sequence

**chorus:** the most repeated bit of a song with the main idea of what the song is about

**clef:** a symbol placed at the start of a staff to indicate the pitch of the notes written on it

**composer:** someone who writes/creates music

**compose:** to write or create music

**conductor:** the leader of the orchestra, letting the musicians know when and how to play

**counter melody:** a second melody sung or played simultaneously with the main melody

**consonant:** combinations of pitches that create pleasing sounds

**crescendo:** getting louder

**crotchet:** a note worth one beat, represented by a stem with a solid dot

**crotchet rest:** a silent note worth one beat

**da capo:** repeat from the beginning

**decrescendo:** getting quieter

**diction:** to pronounce clearly

**discordant:** the sound of two or more notes that are clashing to listen to

**dissonant:** combinations of pitches that create harsh sounds

**dotted note:** a note with a dot after it increases that note's value by half

**drum groove:** a repeated drum pattern that sets and maintains the rhythm and tempo of the piece

**drone:** a sustained sound, which could be a single note or a chord

**duet:** when two musicians perform together

**duration:** how long or short a sound or silence is

**dynamics:** how loud or quiet a sound is

**ensemble:** a group of performers

**expression:** how the words are sung to convey emotion and character through pronunciation, tempo, pitch and dynamics



## Music Glossary

### F-O



**fanfare:** brief musical formula played on trumpets, horns, or similar instruments sometimes accompanied by percussion for signal purposes

**forte:** loud

**fortissimo:** very loud

**genre:** a style or category of music

**glissando:** a continuous slide upwards or downwards between notes

**graphic notation:** a graphic that can signify a particular musical action

**graphic score:** images or a mark used to write music down that is not traditional music notation

**harmony:** the sound of two or more pitches performed together at the same time

**harmonious:** the sound of two or more notes that are pleasing to listen to

**improvise:** creating music on the spot

**inter-related dimensions:** pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure

**introduction:** the first part of the song you hear

**instrument:** an object created to make musical sounds

**interval:** the distance between two pitches

**key:** set of notes that form the foundation for the piece. It has a 'home note' which is the most important note for that piece.

**layer:** the different parts that make up a piece of music

**lead vocalist:** the member of the band who sings the main melody or tune and lyrics

**leaping:** moving more than one pitch at a time

**lyrics:** words that make up a song

**major:** a scale that sounds bright and cheerful

**melody:** the tune of the music made up of high and low pitches

**mezzo forte:** moderately loud

**mezzo piano:** moderately quiet

**minim:** a 2 beat note

**minimalist:** a genre of music that often has repetitive patterns and rhythms

**minor:** a scale that sounds sad

**mnemonics:** the use of words to help remember and create rhythms

**moderato:** moderate tempo

**monophonic:** only one melody being played or sung at a time

**motif:** a short musical idea that is repeated often

**notation:** a way of writing down music so that anyone can play it

**note:** a symbol used to write down a musical sound

**neutral clef:** a symbol located at the beginning of a staff line used to indicate that the instruments used to perform the notation are untuned percussion

**octave:** the distance between two musical notes that have the same letter name

**off-beat:** music that is not played on the main beats of the bar

**opera:** a dramatic piece of music with singers and instrumentalists

**orchestra:** a group of performers who play various musical instruments

**ostinato:** a musical phrase or rhythm which is repeated



## Music Glossary

### P-S



**paired quavers:** two 1/2 beat notes

**partner song:** when two different songs are sung at the same time and they fit together

**passing note:** a note not included in the chord or harmony and can be used as a stepping stone to connect two notes that are within the chord or harmony

**pentatonic scale:** a series of five notes e.g. C, D, E, G, A

**percussion:** a musical instrument that is played by being shaken, struck or scraped

**performance:** an act of performing a song or piece of music

**phrase:** like a musical sentence, a short section of music that has a clear beginning and end

**phrasing:** indicates where the singer should breathe, connecting or grouping several notes or rhythms to create a sequence of sounds that sound pleasing

**pianissimo:** very quiet

**piano:** quiet

**pitch:** how high or low a sound is

**polyphonic:** when two or more different melodies are played or sung at the same time

**polyphony:** layering two or more melodies

**polyrhythm:** two or more rhythms played at the same time

**posture:** refers to the way the body is held

**presto:** very fast

**programmatic:** music that is descriptive

**pulse:** the steady heartbeat of the music

**quaver:** 1/2 beat; a note worth half a beat, represented by a solid dot, a stem and a tail

**rallentando:** gradually getting slower

**rehearse:** to practice for a later performance

**repeat:** repeat a section of music

**rest:** a silent note in music

**retrograde:** when a phrase or pattern is played backwards

**rhythm:** patterns of sound consisting of shorter and longer notes

**rhythmic displacement:** when the cell is moved along one or more beats

**riff:** a repeated melodic pattern that is recognised as the main part of a song

**root note:** the first note in a chord

**round:** a song in which singers perform the same melody but at staggered starting points, producing an overlapping harmony

**scale:** a set of musical notes ordered by pitch

**score:** how a musician writes music down

**semibreve:** a four beat note

**semiquaver:** 1/4 beat

**semitone:** the smallest step you can take between two notes in most Western music

**solo:** a section of music played or sung alone by one performer

**soundscape:** sound effects or music composed to a given theme

**staff notation:** notes values placed on a staff

**staff:** a single line to write music on

**stave:** the five lines that notes are placed on to indicate pitch

**stepping:** moving between two neighbouring pitches



## Music Glossary

### S-Z



- strings:** a section of the orchestra, instruments are made of wood and are bowed or plucked to make a sound
- structure:** how a piece is organised
- suspension:** when one note is held into the next chord creating tension
- symphonic poem:** a piece of music that has been written to describe the words of a poem, the images of a painting, a story in a book or a landscape
- syncopation:** playing on the off-beat
- tempo:** how fast or slow the music is
- ternary form:** a three part musical form consisting of an opening section, a following section and then a repetition of the first section (ABA)
- texture:** combining different layers of music to give an overall effect
- tie:** when two notes are joined together with a curved line
- timbre:** the unique sound of an instrument or piece of music
- time signature:** tells us how many beats are in each bar and which note value is to be given one beat
- tonic:** the first and last note on the scale. Often called the root note
- treble clef:** a symbol located at the beginning of a staff line used to indicate which pitch should be played. Instruments that use the treble clef include flute, clarinet, trumpet, recorder, violin
- triad:** a three-note chord often built from the root note (the lowest in note in pitch of the chord)
- unison:** playing or singing together
- verse:** the lyrics that help to tell the story of the song
- voice:** the production of sound from the vocal chords
- walking bass line:** a bass line that moves through the different notes of the chord
- Western notation:** a way of writing music that uses symbols and words, informing the musician of what to play and how to play
- woodwind:** a section of the orchestra, instruments are made of metal or wood and are blown to make a sound