

Suggested Vocabulary and Glossary

- Accent:** In music, an accent is a symbol to tell musicians to play a note with more emphasis or stress than the surrounding notes. Accents are written in music with a carat > over or under a note.
- Accompaniment:** The accompaniment is the part of the music that is played along with the melody.
- Antiphonal:** Music that features solo or small groups of musicians playing from different places in the venue where they are performing.
- Aria:** A song in an opera sung by one singer. It usually tells the listener how the character feels about something. An aria is the same thing as a soliloquy in a play.
- Arranger:** A person who takes an existing piece of music written by another composer and rewrites that music so that it still sounds like the original, but has a different orchestration or added musical material.
- Ballet:** A story told through music and dancing.
- Basilica:** An early Christian church built in the Middle Ages. There are seven main churches of the Roman Catholic Church, which are known by this special name. In ancient Rome, a Basilica was not a church, but was a large oblong building used as a hall of justice and for public meetings.
- Baton:** A wooden stick, approximately one-foot in length that the conductor uses to communicate with the orchestra. The baton helps the musicians in the orchestra see the conductor's motions so that they can play better together.
- Brass:** Brass instruments are made of long metal tubes that are curled around and have bells on the end. The sound is made when the musician vibrates his/her lips into a mouthpiece, and the bells help amplify the sound. Valves in the tubing are used to change the length of the tubing, which changes the pitches.
- Canon:** A composition in which the voices enter one after the other at regular periods, repeating exactly the same melody. Also known as a round.
- Castanets:** A percussion instrument commonly found in Spanish music. They produce clicks for rhythmic accents, or a rattling sound. Castanets are traditionally made of hardwood and their name comes from the Spanish word for "chestnut" as they look like a nut.
- Chamber Ensemble:** A small group of musicians.
- Characters:** The individuals that a story is about. The people in a story. Characters can also be animals or objects that act like people.
- Choreographer:** A person who creates movement or dance, often to go along with music.

- Chorus:** A choir or group of singers. Choruses in operas usually play the part of a crowd of people.
- Clavichord:** An early keyboard instrument consisting of strings stretched across an oblong wooden box, and a brass wedge or tangent. When a key is struck, the tangent rises and strikes the string, causing it to make sound, which is very soft.
- Commissioned:** You could *commission* your own piece of music by hiring a composer and paying him or her to write a new piece of music.
- Composer:** A composer is a person who writes music. He or she can write music for groups as large as a symphony orchestra, or as small as a single instrument. Many times in orchestral works the composer tells a story, and all the different instruments of the orchestra are characters in the story. Composers can write a piece of music based on many different things, such as dreams, places, persons, or poems. Sometimes they even create music by mixing several different works together. A composer has the ability to hear a tune in his head and write it down as notes for instruments.
- Composition:** A piece of music
- Concert:** A musical performance in which several instrumentalists or singers, or both, participate.
- Concert Hall/Venue:** The building in which a concert takes place. For Young People's Concerts, it is the Civic Auditorium, which can seat nearly 2,500 people.
- Concertmaster:** The first violinist of the orchestra, second in rank to the conductor. The concertmaster sits in the first chair to the left of the conductor's podium. He or she comes on stage before the conductor and leads the orchestra in tuning.
- Concerto:** A piece written for a solo performer and an orchestra.
- Conductor:** The director of an orchestra, band or chorus. The conductor stands in front of the orchestra and communicates to the performers with motions of a baton or hands. The conductor is responsible for leading the ensemble in an interpretation of a composer's indications of rhythm, dynamics, tempo and his general interpretation of how the music should sound.
- Conservatory:** A school, which specializes in teaching music.
- Dynamics:** In music, these are the terms that indicate to the musician how loudly or softly to play the music. These terms are usually written in Italian. You use dynamics when you speak every day – you may whisper in the library, but call loudly to your friends on the playground.

p – *piano* (pee-an-oh) – soft

pp – *pianissimo* (pee-an-iss-e-mo) – extremely soft

mf – *mezzo forte* (met-tso for-tay) – medium loud

f – *forte* (for-tay) – loud

ff – *fortissimo* (for-tiss-e-mo) – very loud

Diminuendo: Getting progressively softer.

Crescendo: Getting progressively louder.

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| Ensemble: | A small group of musicians. |
| Fairy Tale: | A short story that features characters such as dwarfs, dragons, elves, fairies, giants, gnomes, goblins, mermaids, talking animals, trolls, unicorns or witches, and usually contains magic or enchantments. Fairy tales are set “once upon a time” in lands “far, far away” rather than in actual times or places. |
| Flamenco: | An art form that comes from the Andalusian region of Spain. It includes <i>cante</i> (singing), <i>toque</i> (guitar playing), <i>baile</i> (dance), <i>jaleo</i> (vocal sounds), <i>palmas</i> (handclapping) and <i>pitos</i> (finger snapping). |
| Fugue: | A fugue begins with a theme played by one instrument alone. A second instrument then enters and plays the same theme while the first instrument continues with an accompaniment. Remaining instruments enter one by one, each beginning with the theme. |
| Galop: | A lively dance. |
| Harmony: | A part of music that is different from the melody, but played along with it. Harmony often sounds good with or fills out the melody. |
| Harpsichord: | An early kind of piano, but unlike the piano this keyboard instrument is in the string family. Sound is created as the strings inside the instrument are plucked (in a piano they are hammered). |
| Instrumentation: | The specific set of instruments for which a piece of music is written. |
| Leitmotif: | A short segment of music that is associated with a person, place, thing or idea. For example, a specific piece of music will play each time a super hero is about to enter the scene. |
| Libretto: | The words that are sung in an opera |
| Lute: | The lute is a string instrument strummed or plucked like a guitar. It was first played in the Middle East but appeared in Europe during the Middle Ages. |
| Melody: | The main theme or tune of a piece of music. The melody is the part of the music that is easy to remember and sing along with. |
| Minimal Music: | Music that is created with limited elements (notes, rhythms, text, instruments, etc.) |
| Motive: | A short segment of music that can be associated with a person, place, thing or idea. For example, a specific piece of music that plays each time a superhero is about to enter the scene. |
| Movement: | A section of a symphony or concerto, which may make musical sense by itself, but requires the other <i>movements</i> to complete the composer’s thoughts. You may think of a <i>movement</i> as a chapter in a longer book. |
| Musical: | (Broadway Musical) A play that tells a story through music. These works using music, singing, dialogue, dancing and acting to tell the story. |

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| Musicologist: | An expert in the history and culture of music |
| Opera: | A play having all or most of its text set to music, with arias, recitatives, choruses, duets, trios, etc. sung to orchestral accompaniment, usually characterized by elaborate costuming, scenery, and choreography. |
| Operetta: | A light funny play having all or most of its text set to music, with arias, recitatives, choruses, duets, trios, etc. sung to orchestral accompaniment, usually characterized by elaborate costuming scenery, and choreography. |
| Orchestra: | A group of musicians who play various musical instruments of the string, woodwind, brass, and percussion families. A typical <i>orchestra</i> includes stringed instruments (violin, viola, cello, bass), whereas a <i>band</i> includes only woodwinds, brass and percussion. |
| Orchestration: | The specific set of instruments for which a piece of music is written. |
| Orchestrator: | A composer who takes a piece of music and writes parts of that music for each instrument of the orchestra to play. |
| Oratorio: | A piece of music for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra, that is usually based on a religious story, often with text from the Bible. Oratorio is like Opera except the story is not acted out and performers do not wear costumes. |
| Overture: | A piece of music of moderate length, either introducing a dramatic work or intended for concert performance. |
| Part: | Printed music, which only shows one line of music at a time – the musicians in the orchestra play from a <i>part</i> . |
| Pastorale: | A piece written about nature or the countryside that deals with a simple or natural setting, often about shepherds and shepherdesses. |
| Patriotic Music: | Or National Music is music created with a specific national identity (country) in mind. It uses folk songs, dances, legends and history of a certain land. |
| Percussion: | This orchestra family of instruments has the biggest variety. The various instruments are usually made of wood or metal and struck with mallets, but there are other types as well. |
| Pizzicato: | A technique used by the string family, where they pluck the strings on their instrument instead of using the bow. |
| Plot: | The events that happen in a story. A plot should have a very clear beginning, middle and end so the reader can make sense of the action and follow along from start to finish. |
| Premiere: | The first time that a new piece of music is played or presented. |
| Prologue: | An introductory piece played before the action of a play begins. |
| Ragtime: | A kind of music that uses a syncopated rhythm. Jazz music grew from Ragtime. Scott Joplin was a famous composer of ragtime and wrote his music for the piano. |

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| Refrain: | Also known as the chorus, the refrain is the part of the song that often sticks in the mind of a listener because it contrasts with the verse and is repeated several times. The main theme is expressed in the chorus, the title of the song is usually included in the chorus too. |
| Requiem: | A musical piece originally written for a Roman Catholic mass to commemorate those who have died. Today requiems are performed on concerts as well. |
| Rhythm: | The pattern of music. A regular repeated pattern of sounds built on a steady beat. |
| Sacred: | Music that has a religious subject |
| Score: | A special print of music that shows how all the instruments of the orchestra play at the same time. A complete copy of a musical work. Scores contain music for each instrument that is playing in the piece. They are generally large enough for the conductor to read as they are conducting. (see also Part). |
| Setting: | Where and when a story takes place. |
| Song Plugger: | A salesman who tried to sell songs by planning and singing them for performers who might want to record them on a record or perform them in concerts |
| Sirens: | Mythical female creatures whose songs were so beautiful that they could lure sailors off of their ships or cause shipwrecks. |
| Strings: | The strings are the largest family of instruments in the orchestra and the main group of strings come in four sizes: the violin, which is the smallest, viola, cello, and the biggest, the double bass, sometimes called the contrabass. These are each made of wood, hollow-bodied and strung with four strings across a bridge; they are played with a bow or plucked with the fingers. The harp is also a member of the Strings family; it has 47 strings that are plucked or strummed. |
| Symphonic Poem: | An orchestral piece inspired by a poem or narrative. |
| Symphony: | A piece written for a symphony orchestra. It is usually divided into four movements or parts. |
| Syncopation: | A type of rhythm that places accents on the weak beats in music |
| Temple blocks: | A percussion instrument from China, Japan, and Korea that is a carved hollow wooden block with a slit. Usually different sizes of blocks are used together. The sound of temple blocks is similar to that of the wood block. |
| Tempo: | The rate of speed of the music. Examples are <i>allegro</i> (fast) and <i>adagio</i> (slow). |
| Theme: | A theme is the main melody of a piece of music. It can be thought of as the subject of a piece of music. |
| Tuning: | For several instruments to play harmoniously together, they must be “in tune.” Tuning is done before the beginning of the concert and also usually after an intermission. First, the oboe plays the note “A.” Then the other musicians in the orchestra make their individual instruments match that same “A.” |

- Typewriter:** An instrument for writing that was used before computers in which the typist uses a keyboard that controls small hammers that make printed impressions of letters on paper.
- Valkyries:** In Scandinavian mythology, *valkyries* were female figures who made the decision during battle about who would die and who would live. They were sometimes depicted as young and beautiful, while others describe them as warriors.
- Variation:** The theme of a piece of music is repeated so that it can still be recognized, but is changed in some important way.
- Venue:** The place where a performance takes place (concert hall, theater, church, etc.)
- Vocal Music:** Music written for voices
- Waltz:** A dance in triple time, which became the most popular ballroom dance of the 19th century. In a waltz the first beat has a heavier stress than beats 2 and 3 (***1***, 2, 3, ***1***, 2 3).
- Woodwind:** Woodwinds got their name because historically these instruments were made out of wood. This family includes instruments such as the oboe, clarinet, flute and bassoon. Today these instruments can be made from other materials including metals and plastics. You play the instruments by blowing air into them, causing the air inside to vibrate and produce sound. There are finger holes along the side of the instruments to control the pitch.
- Zaruela:** A light, comic, uniquely Spanish form of musical theatre that alternates between spoken dialogue and musical numbers and that also includes dancing. This type of theatre became popular entertainment in the 1600's and then again in the early 1900's.