

Listening Guide Glossary

Accelerando - Gradual speeding up of the beat or pulse

Accompaniment – Background for the main musical idea

Allegro – Fast

Adagio - Slow

Andante – Moderately slow

Beat – Perceived regular pulse of the music

Binary Form – Movement structure containing two complete sections (AB)

Cadence – An ‘arrival point’ in a melody or chord progression

Chord – Group of usually three or more pitches sounded simultaneously

Chord Progression – Succession of chords moving toward a destination

Chromatic Scale – Scale made up of only half steps

Crescendo – Getting louder



Concertino – Small group of soloists playing with a larger ensemble

Decrescendo or Diminuendo - Getting softer



Dolce – Sweetly

Dynamics – Use of loudness and softness for expressive purposes

Fermata – Pause of unspecified length over a note or a rest

Form – Intellectual organization of musical ideas

Forte (f) – Loud

Giocando – Playfully

Glissando – Sliding the finger(s) in a gliding, smooth manner

Grace Note – An ornamental or embellishing note preceding a principal note

Harmony – Simultaneity in music; more than one pitch being sounded at a time

Homophony – Texture in which melody is supported by chords

Imitation – Exact replication of a musical idea immediately following the original

Legato – Performance instruction to make the music smooth and flowing

Melody – Pattern of pitches performed one at a time

Meter – Grouping of beats by stress (i.e. triple meter, duple meter)

Molto – Very; much

Monophony – Texture in which there is only melody without harmony

Mordent – Two or more grace notes played rapidly before a principal note

Movement – Complete ‘chapter’ of a composition, usually separated by silence

Muted – Instruction in music to mechanically stifle the sound of an instrument

Notation – Organized system of symbols used to write music

Pedal Point – Single pitch sustained against changing harmonies around it

Piano (*p*) – Soft

Pitch – Singular sound caused by regularly vibrating sound waves (i.e. 440 Hz)

Pizzicato – Instruction to string players to pluck the strings with their fingers

Poco – A little

Polyphony – Texture in which separate melodies are performed simultaneously

Range – Complete spectrum of pitches audible to the human ear - low to high

Rest – Notated indication in music for a specified silence to be observed

Ripieno – Remainder of instrumentalists who accompany the concertino

Ritardando – Gradual slowing down of the beat or pulse

Sempre – Always

Sequence – Pattern of pitches or chords repeated successively higher or lower

Sforzando (*sf*) – Forced; to play a particular note or chord with force

Sostenuto – Sustained

Staccato – Performance instruction to make the music detached and choppy

Stretto – Passage of music containing overlapping imitation

Stringendo – Literally, tightening in Italian, pressing the tempo forward, faster

Subito – Suddenly

Syncopation – Deliberate shift of musical stress/accent to an unexpected place

Tempo – Speed of the perceived beat or basic pulse

Tension & Release – Building and release of emotional tension using music

Ternary Form – Movement structure containing three complete sections (ABA)

Texture – Specific manner in which sounds are combined or not

Timbre – The sound source (i.e. human voice, violin, timpani, trumpet, etc.)

Tremolo – Effect created by rapidly repeating the same pitch

Trill – Rapid alternation between two adjacent pitches

Vivace – Lively