AB form - A musical plan that has two different parts, or sections. See form.

ABA form - A musical plan that has three sections, also called Sonata Form. See form.

ABACA form - Also called Rondo form. See Form.

Absolute Music - Music that has no literary, dramatic, or pictorial program.

A capella - Choral music sung without instrumental accompaniment.

Accelerando, accel - Gradually faster.

Accent - > placed above a note to indicate stress or emphasis.

Accidental - A sharp, flat, or natural not included in the given key.

Accompaniment - A vocal or instrument part that supports or is background for a solo part.

Accordion - A Musical instrument with a small keyboard and free-vibrating metal reeds that sound when air is generated by pleated bellows.

Acid Rock - Genre of American rock that emerged in the late 1960s, often associated with psychedelic drugs. It's style featured heavy amplification, instrumental improvisation, new sound technologies, and light shows.

Adagio - Slow; slower than andante, faster than largo.

Additive meter - Patterns of beats that subdivide into smaller, irregular groups (e.g., 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 = 10); common in certain Eastern European musics.

Addolorato - Sorrowfully.

Ad libitum, ad lib - A term which permits the performer to vary the tempo and/or to include or omit a vocal or instrumental part. Synonymous with a piacere.

A due - Return to unison after divisi.

Aerophone - Instrument that produces sound by using air as the primary vibrating means, such as a flute, whistle, or horn.

Affrettando - Hurrying.

Agilmente - Lively.

Agitato - Agitated; with excitement.
DICTIONARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

Al, all', alla, alle - To; used with other words, e.g. al Fine (to the end).

Album - A full length recording. In pop music, it contains a number of songs.

Al coda - "To the coda."

Aleatory, or aleatoric music - Chance music in which the performers are free to perform their own material and/or their own manner of presentation.

Al fine - To the end.

Alla breve - Cut time; meter in which there are two beats in each measure and a half note receives one beat.

Allargando, allarg - Slowing of tempo, usually with increasing volume; most frequently occurs toward the end of a piece.

Allegretto - Slower than allegro.

Allegro - Quick tempo; cheerful.

Allemande - German dance in moderate duple time, popular during the Renaissance and Baroque periods; often the first movement of a Baroque suite.

Al segno - Return to the sign, Dal segno.

Alteration - The raising or lowering of a note by means of an accidental.

Alto - Lowest of the female voices

Alto clef - The C clef falling on the third line of the staff. Most of the time is used by the viola.

Ancora - Repeat.

Andante - Moderate tempo.

Andantino - Slightly faster than andante.

A niente - To nothing, e.g. to ppp.

Animato - Animated; lively.

Answer - Second entry of the subject in a fugue, usually pitched a fourth below or a fifth above the subject.
**DICTIONARY OF MUSICAL TERMS**

*Anthem* - A religious choral composition in English; performed liturgically, the Protestant equivalent of the motet.

*Antiphonal* - Performance style in which an ensemble is divided into 2 or more groups, performing in alternation and then together.

*Antique cymbals* - Small disks of brass, held by the player one in each hand, that are struck together gently and allowed to vibrate.

*A piacere* - Freedom in performance. Synonymous with ad libitum.

*Appassionato* - Impassioned.

*Appoggiatura* - A nonharmonic tone, usually a half or whole step above the harmonic tone, which is performed on the beat and then resolved.

*Arabesque* - A fanciful piano piece. Ornate passage varying or accompanying a theme.

*Aria* - Lyric song for solo voice with orchestral accompaniment, generally expressing intense emotion; found in opera, cantata, and oratorio.

*Arpeggio* - A term used to describe the pitches of a chord as they are sung or played one after the other, rather than simultaneously.

*Arrache* - Strong pizzicato.

*Arrangement* - An adaptation of a composition.

*Articulation* - The degree to which notes are separated or connected, such as staccato or legato.

*A tempo* - Return to the previous tempo.

*Atonality* - Lacking a tonal center.

*Augmentation* - Compositional technique in which a melodic line is repeated in longer note values. The opposite of diminution.

*Augmented* - The term for a major or perfect interval which has been enlarged by one half-step, e.g. c-g, (an augmented fifth,) or c-d, (an augmented second). Also used for a triad with an augmented fifth, e.g. the augmented tonic triad in C major, C+, c-e-g.

*Baby grand* - A small grand piano.

*Balance* - The harmonious adjustment of volume and timbre between instruments or voices; it can be between players or vocalists or electronically while recording or mixing.
Ballade - In the medieval period a form of trouvere music and poetry. In later time, German poetry set as a through-composed song.

Band - An instrumental ensemble, usually made up of wind and percussion instruments and no string instruments.

Bar - Same as measure. A way of dividing music into small, organized groups of beats. The division of measures is indicated by a vertical line, called the bar-line. Music is usually grouped in 2's (duple meter), or 3's (triple meter). See meter.

Bar line - The vertical line placed on the staff to divide the music into measures.

Baroque - The period 1600-1750.

Bass clef - The other name for the F clef.

Basso continuo, Continuo, Thorough-bass - The Baroque practice in which the bass part if played by a viola da gamba(cello) or bassoon while a keyboard instrument performed the bass line and the indicated chords. Baton - Conductor's stick.

Battuto - Beat, bar, or measure. A due or a tre battuta, the musical rhythm in groups of two or three respectively.

Ben - Well. Used with other words, e.g. ben marcato, well accented, emphasized.

Big bands - Bands that play swing music. They were popular in the 1930's and 40's.

Binary form - The term for describing a composition of two sections. AB, each of which may be repeated.

Bis - Repeated twice. Encore!

Bitonality - The occurrence of two different tonalities at the same time.

Blues - A slow, sad style of jazz.

Bourree - A French dance from the 17th century in brisk duple time starting with a pickup.

Brass family - Wind instruments made out of metal with either a cup- or funnel-shaped mouthpiece, such as trumpet, cornet, bugle, Flugelhorn, trombone, tuba, baritone horn, euphonium, saxhorn, and French horn.

Bridge - A section of a song that connects other sections of a song.

Broken chord - Notes of a chord played in succession rather than simultaneously. Arpeggio.
Cadence - A chordal or melodic progression which occurs at the close of a phrase, section, or composition, giving a feeling of repose; a temporary or permanent ending. The most frequently used cadences are perfect, plagal, and deceptive.

Cadenza - A solo passage, often virtuosic, usually near the end of a piece, either written by the composer or improvised by the performer.

Caesura - A sudden silencing of the sound; a pause or break, indicated by the following symbol: //

Calmo, calmato - Calm.

Cambia - A direction found in scores to change tuning or instruments.

Camminando - Following easily and gently.

Canon - The strictest form of imitation, in which two or more parts have the same melody but start at different points.

Canonic - A term used to describe a polyphonic style of music in which all the parts have the same melody but which start at different times.

Cantabile - In singing style.

Cantata - Baroque sacred or secular choral composition containing solos, duets, and choruses, with orchestral or keyboard accompaniment.

Carol - The term was derived from a medieval French word, carole, a circle dance. In England it was first associated with pagan songs celebrating the winter solstice. It then developed into a song of praise and celebration, usually for Christmas.

C clef - A clef usually centered on the first line (soprano clef), third line (alto clef), fourth line (tenor clef), or third space (vocal tenor clef) of the staff. Wherever it is centered, that line or space becomes middle C.

Chance music - Aleatoric music.

Chorale - Hymn-like song, characterized by blocked chords.

Chord - Three or more different tones played together.

Chromatic - The chromatic scale divides an octave into twelve half steps (all the white and black notes on the keyboard from middle C to the C above it). This is different than the major scale and minor scale, which only have 8 tones.

Chromatic scale - A scale composed of 12 half steps.
Circle of fifths - The succession of keys or chords proceeding by fifths.

Classical - Music conforming to certain form and structure. Usually music composed during the period 1770-1825.

Clef - A symbol placed at the beginning of the staff to indicate the pitch of the notes on the staff. The most commonly used clefs in choral music are the G, or treble, clef and the F or bass clef. On the keyboard, all the notes above middle C are said to be in the G clef; all the notes below middle C in the F clef.

Coda - Closing section of a composition. An added ending.

Col, coll', colla - With or "with the."

Common time - 4/4 meter.

Complete cadence - I-IV-V-I progression.

Composer - A person who creates a piece of music by putting sounds together in his or her own way. Beethoven was a composer.

Con - With.

Con brio - With spirit; vigorously.

Con calore - With warmth.

Concert - A public performance of music.

Concert grand piano - The largest of the grand pianos, usually about nine feet long.

Concertino - A short concerto. The group of soloists in a concerto grosso.

Concert master - First chair violinist in an orchestra.

Concerto - A piece for a soloist and orchestra.

Concert pitch - The international tuning pitch -- currently A 440 or 442. The pitch for non-transposing (C) instruments.

Conducting - The directing of a group of musicians.

Conductor - The person who directs a group of musicians.

Con intensita - With intensity.
Conjunct - Pitches on successive degrees of the scale; opposite of disjunct.

Con moto - With motion.

Consonance - Intervallic relationships which produce sounds of repose. Frequently associated with octave, third and sixth intervals; however, fourths and fifths may be sounds of consonance, as in both early and 20th-century music.

Consort - A 17th-century term for instrumental chamber ensembles and for the compositions written for these ensembles.

Con spirito - With spirit.

Contra - The octave below normal.

Corda, corde - String.

Counterpoint - The art of combining two or more musical lines that are to be played or sung at the same time. These lines may be said to be "in counterpoint" with each other. The term is in some ways like polyphony, although counterpoint is most commonly used for Baroque music.

Crescendo - Gradually louder.

Cue - Indication by the conductor or a spoke word or gesture for a performer to make an entry. Small notes that indicate another performer's part. Music occurrence in a film.

Cut time - 2/2 meter.

Da capo, D. C. - Return to the beginning.

Dal - "From the," "by the."

Damper pedal - On pianos, the pedal that lifts the dampers from the strings.

Deceptive cadence - Chordal progression dominant (V) to a chord other than the expected tonic.

Decrescendo - Gradually softer. Synonymous with diminuendo.

Degree - One of the eight consecutive tones in a major or minor scale.

Delicato - Delicately.

Di - Of, with.
**Diatonic** - Any octave divided into a seven-note scale (consisting of various combinations of whole tones and semitones). The major and minor scales, as well as the church modes, are diatonic. Diatonic harmony, which is the basis for our tonal system, consists of chords which contain only the notes of a given diatonic scale. (See chromatic.)

**Diminished** - The term for an interval which has been decreased from the major by two half steps and from the perfect by one half step, e.g. c-a, diminished sixth, or c-g, a diminished fifth. Also used for a triad which has a minor third and a diminished fifth, e.g. c, c-e, g.

**Diminuendo, dim** - Gradually softer. Synonymous with decrescendo.

**Diminution** - The shortening of note values; the opposite of augmentation.

**Dirge** - A piece that is performed at a funeral or memorial service.

**Disjunct** - The term used to describe intervals larger than a second; the opposite of conjunct.

**Dissonance** - Sounds of unrest, e.g. intervals of seconds and sevenths; the opposite of consonance.

**Divisi, div** - An indication of divided musical parts.

**Dixieland.** An early style of jazz that was born in New Orleans. Several players play different melody lines at the same time (see counterpoint) and use lots of improvisation.

**Do** - The first degree of the major scale.

**Dolce** - Sweetly.

**Dolcissimo** - Very sweetly.

**Doloroso** - Sadly; mournfully.

**Dominant** - The fifth degree of the major or minor scale. Also, the term for the triad built on the fifth degree, labelled V in harmonic analysis.

**Double bar** - Two vertical lines placed on the staff to indicate the end of a section or a composition. Also, used with two dots to enclose repeated sections.

**Double flat** - A symbol for lowering pitch one step.

**Dynamics** - The louds and softs in music. Piano (soft) and forte (loud) are most common.

**Form** - The overall structure, or plan, of a piece of music. AB form has two different sections. ABA form, also called Sonata form has three sections. Rondo form is in ABACABA form. Also see Theme and Variations.
Fugue - A musical composition or technique in which the composer introduces a tune (the theme) while other voices enter at different times playing the same theme on higher and lower pitches. Fugues are usually written for two to four voices. Bach wrote some of the greatest fugues. See counterpoint and polyphony.

Half step - On a keyboard, the distance from one note to the next note, black or white. See whole step.

Harmony - Two or more different tones sounding at the same time.

Hip Hop - The hip hop culture, from which rap music sprang, has its own language, style, and dress. This culture is constantly changing. The hip hop culture originally consisted of graffiti, break dancing, DJ scratching, and rapping.

Homophony (homophonic) - Music in which all voices move in the same rhythm. Also, a musical texture in which there is a clear difference between melody and accompaniment. (See polyphony.) The Star Spangled Banner is a good example of the melody and the harmonies moving in the same rhythm.

Impressionism - A style of music born in France and inspired by French painters. This music has fuzzy chords, blurry harmonies, and suggests exotic locations.

Improvise - Making up music as it is being performed; often used in jazz.

Jazz - A class of music born in New Orleans around 1900 that uses syncopation, improvisation and scat. There are many different styles of jazz, including Dixieland, the blues, and swing.

Key - A musical work that is centered around a certain scale or tone is said to have a key. A piece written in C major will usually end in that key. Most music is written in major keys or minor keys. Some pieces are written without a key so that all the tones can be equally important.

Key signature - The key signature is made up of sharps or flats is usually found at the beginning of a musical composition, indicating the key of the piece.

Ma - But. Used with other words, e.g. lento ma non troppo, slow but not too slowly.

Maestoso - Majestically.

Major - The designation for certain intervals and scales. A key based on a major scale is called a major key. Major chord - A triad composed of a root, major third, and perfect fifth.

Mancando - Fading away

Marcato - Emphasized, heavily accented.
Measure - A group of beats containing a primary accent and one or more secondary accents, indicated by the placement of bar lines on the staff. The space between two bar lines.

Medesimo - The same.

Mediant - The third degree of the major or minor scale. The triad built on this degree is labeled iii in the major scale, III in the natural minor scale, and III+ in the harmonic minor scale.

Medieval - The period prior to the Renaissance, c. 500-1450, marking the music of the early Christian church.

Melody - A series of notes that form a tune, phrase, theme, or motive. Repetition is what makes a melody stick in your mind. The melodies you remember are the ones you will like the most. Some melodies are difficult to remember because they don't repeat. Other melodies can be remembered easily because they repeat.

Meno - Less.

Meno mosso - Less motion.

Meter - The organization of beats, Also called a pulse. A waltz is in a triple meter, which is three beats per measure. A march is in duple meter, which is 2 or 4 beats per measure. A time signature, usually placed at the beginning of the piece, tells you what the meter will be. The first beat of a group is generally emphasized. A beat should not be confused with a note; a beat may contain one note, many notes, or may be silent (indicated by a symbol called a rest).

Meter signature - The numbers placed at the beginning of a composition to indicate the meter of the music, e.g. . The upper number indicates the beats in a measure; the lower number tells what kind of a note will receive one beat.

Metronome - Invented by Maelzel in 1816, the instrument is used to indicate the exact tempo of a composition. An indication such as M.M. 60 indicates that the pendulum, with a weight at the bottom, makes 60 beats per minute. A slider is moved up and down the pendulum to decrease and increase the tempo. M.M. = 80 means that the time value of a quarter note is the equivalent of one pendulum beat when the slider is set at 80.

Mezzo - Half, Medium

Mezzo forte - Medium loud.

Mezzo piano - Medium soft.

Mi - In solmization, the third degree of the major scale.

Middle Ages - European historical period between roughly A.D. 500 and 1450.
Middle C - The note C in the middle of the Grand staff, and near the middle of the piano.

Minor - The designation for certain intervals and scales. A key based on a minor scale is called a minor key. The three types of minor scales include natural, harmonic, and melodic, which is used infrequently in choral music. Misterioso - Mysteriously.

Mit - With.

Mode - These are special scales. The major scale and minor scale are modes that we recognize today, but there are many others. If you played all the white keys on the piano from D to the next D one octave higher, you would have the Dorian mode.

Moderato - Moderate speed.

Modern - Music written in the 20th century or contemporary music.

Modulation - A change of key. It's when the music starts out on a certain set of notes, called a key, then changes to a higher or lower set of notes, which is a new key.

Molto - Very. Used with other terms, e.g. molto allegro.

Mordent - "Biting." An ornament consisting of an alteration (once or twice) of the written note by playing the one immediately below it (lower mordent), or above it (upper, or inverted, mordent) and then playing the note again.

Morendo - Gradually decreasing in volume; dying away.

Mosso - Rapid. Meno mosso, less rapid. Piu mosso, more rapid.

Motive - A short melodic or rhythmic pattern.

Moto - Motion. Con moto, with motion.

Movable Do - The system of solmization in which do changes to accommodate the key, e.g. in the key of C major, do is c; in E major do is e. In the key of a minor do is c (relative major); in the key of c minor do is e (relative major).

Movement - Sections of a larger musical work. A symphony usually has four movements. A piano sonata has three movements.

Music - The organization of sounds with some degree of rhythm, melody, and harmony.

Music theory - The study of how music is put together.

Nach - After (as "in the manner of"); behind.
Nachtmusik - "Night music." A serenade.

Nationalism - The love of one's country and the desire to be free from others. Nationalistic music tells you where the music is from and expresses that country's hopes and dreams.

Natural - A musical symbol which cancels a previous sharp or flat.

Neumatic - One style of chant in which two to four pitches occur on one syllable; in contrast to melismatic and syllabic.

Non - No; not.

Nonharmonic tones - A designation for tones outside the harmonic structure of the chord. Two frequently used examples are the passing tone and the appoggiatura.

Non troppo - Not too much. Used with other terms, e.g. non troppo allegro, not too fast.

Notation - A term for a system of expressing musical sounds through the use of written characters, called notes.

Note - The symbol which, when placed on a staff with a particular clef sign, indicates pitch.

Nuance - Subtle variations in tempo, phrasing, dynamics, etc., to enhance a musical performance.

Octave - The eighth tone above a given pitch, with twice as many vibrations per second, or below a given pitch, with half as many vibrations.

Octet - A piece for eight instruments or voices.

Open fifth - A triad without a third.

Open strings - Strings are not stopped, fingured, or fretted.

Opus, Op - The term, meaning work, is used by composers to show the chronological order of their works, e.g. Op. 1, Op. 2.

Orchestra - A large group of musicians made up of string, brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments.

Orchestration - The art of writing, arranging, or scoring for the orchestra.

Ornamentation - Note or notes added to the original melodic line for embellishment and added interest.

Ornaments - Melodic embellishments, either written or improvised.
Ossia - "Or." Indicating an alternative passage or version.

Ostinato - A repeated melodic or rhythmic pattern, frequently appearing in the bass line.

Ottava - Octave.

Ottava alta - (8va) An octave higher.

Ottave bassa - (8va or 8vb) An octave lower.

Overtones - The almost inaudible higher tones which occur with the fundamental tone. They are the result of the vibration of small sections of a string (instrument) or a column of air. Other general terms for overtones are partials and harmonics.

Overture - The introductory music for an opera, oratorio or ballet. A concert overture is an independent work.

Pacato - Calm, quiet.

Passing tones - Unaccented notes which move conjunctly between two chords to which they do not belong harmonically.

Pausa - A rest.

Pensieroso - Contemplative, thoughtful.

Percussion family - Instruments made of sonorous material that produce sounds of definite or indefinite pitch when shaken or struck, including drums, rattles, bells, gongs, and xylophones.

Perfect - A term used to label fourth, fifth, and octave intervals. It corresponds to the major, as given to seconds, thirds, sixths, and sevenths.

Perfect cadence - The chordal progression of dominant to tonic, in a major key V-I, in minor V-i.

Perfect interval - Interval of an octave, fifth, or fourth without alteration.

Perfect pitch - The ability to hear and identify a note without any other musical support.

Pesante - Heavy.

Petite - Little.

Peu a peu - Little by little.
Phrase - A melodic idea that acts as a complete thought, something like a sentence. A melody will contain many phrases, just like a story contains many sentences. This melody has four phrases.

Pianissimo - Very soft.

Pitch - The highs or lows of a tone. A flute has a high pitch. A tuba has a low pitch.

Polyphony (polyphonic) - From the Greek for "many-sounding." Music in which two or more "voices" are heard at the same time. This is different than monophonic ("one-sounding") and homophonic ("like-sounding"). See counterpoint and texture.

Ragtime - An early form of jazz that uses lots of syncopation.

Rap - Poetry with a beat. It may or may not have a melody. Rap music sprang from the hip hop culture, which initially consisted of graffiti, break dancing, DJ scratching, and rapping.

Refrain - The part of the song that repeats, using the same melody and words. See verse and bridge.

Register - The pitch location of a group of tones. Tones with high pitches have a high register. Those with low tones have a low register. A flute has a high register. A tuba has a low register.

Rest - A symbol for silence in music. See meter.

Rhythm - The way movement is organized in a piece of music, using beat, no beat, long and short sounds, meter, accents, no accents, tempo, syncopation, and so on. See meter and time signature.

Rock and Roll - Popular music that was born from jazz and the blues. It has a strong beat and a melody that repeats often.

Sanft - Soft, gentle.

Sans - Without.

Scale - An arrangement of pitches from lower to higher according to a specific pattern of steps. Major, minor, pentatonic, whole-tone, and chromatic are five kinds of scales. Each one has its own special sound.

Scat - To sing words on nonsense syllables, used in jazz. Also called scatting or scat singing.

Scherzo - "Joke." A piece in a lively tempo. A movement of a symphony, sonata, or quartet in quick triple time, replacing the minuet.

Schnell - Fast.
Score - The written depiction of all the parts of a musical ensemble with the parts stacked vertically and rhythmically aligned.

Secco - "Dry." Unornamented.

Second - The second degree of the diatonic scale. Also, the interval formed by a given tone and the next tone above or below it, e.g. c up to d, or c down to b. Intervals of the second may be major, diminished, or augmented.

Section - A division of a musical composition.

Segno - "Sign."

Sehr - Very.

Sehr leise beginnend - Very soft in the beginning.

Semitone - A half step. The smallest interval on the keyboard.

Sempre - Always. Used with other terms, e.g. sempre staccato.

Semplice - Simple.

Senza - Without. Used with other terms, e.g. senza crescendo.

Septet - A piece for seven instruments or voices. Seven performers.

Sequence - The repetition of a melodic pattern on a higher or lower pitch level.

Serenade - A love song or piece, usually performed below someone's window in the evening.

Sereno - Serene, peaceful.

Seventh - The seventh degree of the diatonic scale. Also, the interval formed by a given tone and the seventh tone above or below it, e.g. c up to b, or c down to d. Intervals of the seventh may be major, minor, diminished, or augmented.

Seventh chord - When a seventh (above the root) is added to a triad (root, third, fifth), the result is a seventh chord, e.g. the dominant triad in the key of C major, g-b-d, with the added seventh becomes g-b-d-f and is labelled V7.

Sforzando, Sfz, Sf - Sudden strong accent on a note or chord.

Sharp - A symbol which raises the pitch of a note one-half step.
Sheet music - An individually printed song, most often for voice, piano, guitar, or a combination of the three. Any printed music.

Shifting meter - The changing of meter within a composition. Synonymous with changing meter.

Simile - An indication to continue in the same manner.

Sin' - Until.

Sinistra - Left hand.

Sino - Until.

Six-four chord - The second inversion of a triad, made by placing the fifth of the chord in the lowest voice, e.g. Cis g-c-e.

Sixteenth note/rest - A note/rest half the length of an eighth note and a sixteenth the length of a whole note.

Sixth - The sixth degree of the diatonic scale. Also, the interval formed by a given tone and the sixth tone above or below it, e.g. c up to a, or c down to e. Intervals of the sixth may be major, minor, diminished, or augmented.

Sixth chord - The first inversion of a triad, made by placing the third of the chord in the lowest voice, e.g. C6 is e-g-c.

Skip - Melodic movement of more than one whole step.

Slur - A curved line placed above or below two or more notes of different pitch to indicate that they are to be performed in legato style.

Smorzando - Fading away.

Soave - Sweet, mild.

Sognando - Dreamily.

Sol - In solmization, the fifth degree of the major scale.

Solfeggi - The term for the use of syllables for the degrees of the major scale: do, re, mi, fa, sol, la ti, do. The minor scale (natural) is la, ti, do, re, mi, fa, sol, la.

Solo - To perform alone or as the predominant part.

Sonata - An instrumental piece, often in several movements.
Sonatina - A short sonata.

Sostenuto - Sustaining of tone or slackening of tempo.

Spiccato - On string instruments, a bowing technique wherein the bow is bounced on the string at moderate speed.

Staccato - Detached sounds, indicated by a dot over or under a note. The opposite of legato.

Staff - The most frequently used staff has five horizontal lines, with four spaces, upon which the notes and other musical symbols are placed.

Stanza - A selection of a song, two or more lines long, characterized by a common meter, rhyme, and number of lines.

Steady beat - Regular pulses. See meter and time signature.

Stesso - Same.

String instrument family - Instruments with strings that produce sound when plucked, bowed, or struck.

Strophic - A term used to describe a song in which all the stanzas of the text are sung to the same music. The opposite of through-composed.

Subdominant - The fourth degree of the major or minor scale. Also, the name of the triad built on the fourth degree of the scale, indicated by IV in a major key and by iv in a minor key.

Subito - Suddenly.

Submediant - The sixth degree of a major or minor scale. Also, the name of the triad built on the sixth degree of the scale, indicated by VI in a major key and by vi in a minor key.

Sul - On the.

Supertonic - The second degree of the major or minor scale. Also, the name of the triad built on the second degree of the scale, indicated by II in a major scale and iio in a minor scale.

Sur - On, over.

Suspension - The use of a nonharmonic tone to delay the resolution of a chord, frequently as it occurs in a cadence.

Svelto - Quick, light.

Swing - A style of jazz with a lively, steady rhythm that was popular in the 1930's and 40's.
Symphony - A piece for large orchestra, usually in four movements, in which the first movement often is in sonata form. A large orchestra.

Syncopation - Accent on an unexpected beat.

Tanto - Much, so much.

Tempo. The rate of speed at which a musical composition is performed. Tempo is indicated by a tempo marking (usually in Italian), which describes the general speed (and often the mood) of a piece or section. Allegro (fast), andante (fairly slow) and adagio (slow) are common tempo markings.

Tempo primo - Return to the original tempo.

Teneramente - Tenderly.

Tenor clef - The C clef falling on the fourth line of the staff.

Tenuto, ten - Hold or sustain a note longer than the indicated value, usually not as long a duration as the fermata.

Ternary form - Three-part form in which the middle section is different from the other sections. Indicated by ABA.

Terraced dynamics - The Baroque style of using sudden changes in dynamic levels, as opposed to gradual increase and decrease in volume.

Tertian harmony - A term used to describe music based on chords arranged in intervals of thirds.

Tessitura - The general pitch range of a vocal part.

Texture - The way melody and harmony go together: a melody alone (monophonic) or two or more melodies together (polyphonic) or melody with chords (homophonic).

Theme - An important melody that occurs several times throughout a piece of music. The theme is usually a melody or melodic fragment. A single theme may be used as the basis for a set of variations. Most music has more than one theme.

Theme and Variations - A musical form where the theme is played, then repeated in different ways.

Theory - The study of how music is put together.

Third - The third degree of the diatonic scale. Also, the interval formed by a given tone and the third tone above or below it, e.g. c up to e, or c down to a. Intervals of the third may be major, minor, diminished, or augmented.
Through-composed - A term used to describe a song in which the music for each stanza is different. The opposite of strophic.

Ti - In solmization, the seventh degree of the major scale. Also called the leading tone.

Tie - A curved line over or below two or more notes of the same pitch. The first pitch is sung or played and held for the duration of the notes affected by the tie.

Timbre - Tone color. It's the quality of sound that makes one instrument or voice sound different from another. For example, a flute has a different timbre than a clarinet.

Time signature - A number that appears at the beginning of a piece of music. The top number tells you how many beats each measure (bar) will have. The bottom number tells you what kind of a note receives one beat. In 4/4 time there are four beats per measure (bar) and the quarter note receives one beat. In 6/8 time there are six beats per measure (bar) and the eighth note receives one beat.

Tonality - This is a central key in a musical composition. If the music moves to a different key (see modulation), it is expected to return to the original key (called the tonic). Tonality gives the listener a "center," providing a context in which melody and harmony have "meaning." Atonal music, popular in the 20th century, has no tonal center.

Tone - A note; the basis of music.

Tone clusters - The simultaneous sounding of two or more adjacent tones.

Tonguing - On wind instruments, articulation with the tongue.

Tonic - The first note of a key. Also, the name of the chord built on the first degree of the scale, indicated by I in a major key or i in a minor key.

Tono - Tone, key, pitch.

Tosto - Quick.

Tranquillo - Tranquilly; quietly; calm.

Transposition - The process of changing the key of a composition.

Tre - Three. Used with other terms, e.g. a tre voci, in three parts.

Treble clef - The G clef falling on the second line of the staff.

Triad - A chord of three tones arranged in thirds, e.g. the C-major triad c-e-g, root-third-fifth.
Trill, tr - A musical ornament performed by the rapid alternation of a given note with a major or minor second above.

Triple meter - Meter based on three beats, or a multiple of three, in a measure.

Triplet - A group of three notes performed in the time of two of the same kind.

Troppo - Too much. Used with other terms, e.g. allegro non troppo, not too fast.

Turn - A musical ornament characterized by the rapid performance of a given note, the major or minor second above and below, and a return to the given note.

Tutti - All. A direction for the entire ensemble to sing or play simultaneously.

Twelve-tone technique - A system of composition which uses the twelve tones of the chromatic scale in an arbitrary arrangement called a tone row or series. The row may be used in its original form, its inversion, in retrograde, and in the inversion of the retrograde. The system was devised by Arnold Schoenberg in the early 20th century.

Una corda - Soft pedal.

Unison - Singing or playing the same notes by all singers or players, either at exactly the same pitch or in a different octave.

Un peu - A little. Used with other words, e.g. un peu piano.

Un poco - A little.

Upbeat - One or more notes occurring before the first bar line, as necessitated by the text for the purpose of desirable accent. The unaccented beat of a measure.

Variation - The manipulation of a theme by the use of melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic changes.

Verse - A group of words in a song. Songs can have one verse or many verses. Most of today's popular songs have a verse and a refrain.

Vibrato - Repeated fluctuation of pitch.

Virtuoso - A brillant, skillful performer.

Vivace - Lively, brisk, quick, and bright.

Vivo - Lively, bright.

Volti subito - Turn [the page] quickly.
Whole note/rest - A note/rest equal to two half notes and four quarter notes.

Whole step - On a keyboard, the distance from one note to another with a single key between. See half step.

Wind instrument family - Instruments in which sound is produced by the vibration of air, including brass and woodwind instruments.

Woodwind family - Instruments, originally made of wood, in which sound is produced by the vibration of air, including recorders, flutes, clarinets, saxophones, oboes, and bassoons.

Woodwind Quintet - Standard chamber ensemble consisting of one each of the following: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and French horn (not a woodwind instrument).

Word painting - Musical pictorialization of words from the text as an expressive device; a prominent feature of the Renaissance madrigal.

Work song - Communal song that synchronized group tasks.

World Beat - Collective term for popular third-world musics, ethnic and traditional musics, and eclectic combinations of Western and non-Western musics.

Xylophone - Percussion instrument consisting of tuned blocks of wood suspended on a frame, laid out in the shape of a keyboard and struck with hard mallets.

Yangqin - A Chinese hammered dulcimer with a trapezoidal sound box and metal strings that are struck with bamboo sticks.

Zither - Family of string instruments with sound box over which strings are stretched; they may be plucked or bowed. Zithers appear in many shapes and are common in traditional music throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa.