

PVS Musical Terms Study Guide

<i>a tempo</i>	“to time” - return to the previous tempo
<i>accelerando</i>	“accelerating” - gradually becoming faster
<i>adagio</i>	“slowly, gently” - a leisurely tempo
<i>agitato</i>	“agitated” or “restless”
<i>al fine</i>	“to the end” - generally used after a repetition
<i>alla breve</i>	also “cut time” - C or 2/2 time signature –half note counted as one pulse
<i>allegretto</i>	“somewhat cheerful” - slightly slower than allegro, often implying lighter texture and character
<i>allegro</i>	“merry, cheerful” - relatively quick tempo
<i>andante</i>	“ordinary, common” - at a moderate walking pace
<i>arpeggio</i>	notes of a chord played in succession to one another (as with a harp [<i>arpa</i> in Italian])
<i>bel canto</i>	“Beautiful singing” – elegant Italian vocal style characterized by florid melodic lines delivered by voices of great agility, <i>legato</i> , and purity of tone.
<i>cadence</i>	a resting place in a musical phrase; music punctuation
<i>cadenza</i>	Virtuosic ornamental solo passage [improvised or written] performed by a soloist
<i>cantabile</i>	“singable” – in a lyric, singing style
<i>chromatic</i>	a melody or harmony built from the use of many, if not all 12 semitones of the octave
<i>coda</i>	“tail” – the last part of a piece, usually added to a standard form to bring it to a close
<i>con amore</i>	“with love” - tenderly
<i>con fuoco</i>	“with fire”
<i>contour</i>	the overall shape of a melodic line [i.e. upward, downward, arching, static, etc.]
<i>crescendo</i>	“growing” - gradually increasing loudness/intensity
<i>D.C. or Da Capo</i>	“to the top” - repeat from the beginning of the composition
<i>D.S. or dal segno</i>	“to the sign” - repeat from the sign
<i>decrescendo</i>	“shrinking” - gradually decreasing loudness/intensity
<i>dolce</i>	“sweet” - sweetly, usually also softly
<i>fermata</i>	“stopped” - a pause or hold referring to the stopping of a regular pulse or beat in the music
<i>fine</i>	“end”
<i>forte (f)</i>	“strong” - not necessarily loud
<i>grave</i>	“heavy” - grave, solemn
head voice	the higher register of the singing voice (above the principal <i>passaggio</i>)
<i>largo</i>	“wide, broad” - very slow and broad tempo
<i>legato</i>	“connected” - no separation between notes
<i>leggiero</i>	“light” - soft in character
<i>Lied [pl. Lieder]</i>	German for “song” [pl. “songs”]
<i>lunga</i>	“long”
<i>maestoso</i>	“majestic”
<i>marcato</i>	“marked” - an accent stressing the center of a tone
<i>meno</i>	“less”
<i>mezzo-forte [mf]</i>	“moderately strong”
<i>molto</i>	“very”
<i>mosso</i>	“motion” of “movement”

<i>motif</i>	a short musical idea or melodic theme, usually shorter than a musical phrase
<i>passagio</i>	“passage” – key locations in the singing range at which slight adjustments must be made
<i>pesante</i>	“heavy” - often an indication of a slower, deliberate <i>tempo</i> or weighty <i>staccato</i> tones
<i>pianissimo (pp)</i>	very soft
<i>piano (p)</i>	soft
<i>pieno/piena</i>	“full”
<i>poco</i>	“little”
<i>portamento</i>	“carrying” the voice from one tone to the next through all the intermediate pitches
<i>presto</i>	fast, faster than <i>allegro</i>
<i>primo</i>	first or upper part
<i>rallentando (rall.)</i>	slowing down; the same as <i>ritardando</i>
<i>ritardando (rit.)</i>	slowing down gradually
<i>rubato</i>	“robbed” - accelerating or slowing down the tempo, which is then “paid back”
<i>secco</i>	“dry” – style of recitative with sparse accompaniment; sung with relative rhythmic freedom
<i>sempre</i>	“always”
<i>sforzando (sf / sfz)</i>	sudden stress or accent on a note or chord
<i>simile (sim.)</i>	continue to perform in a similar manner
<i>sotto voce</i>	“under the voice” - softly; with subdued sound; performed in an undertone
<i>staccato (stacc.)</i>	“detached” - crisply sung as though each tone is not connected (<i>legato</i>) to the next
strophic	describes a song where the stanzas are all sung to the same music
<i>subito</i>	suddenly, quickly
<i>tempo</i>	“time” - the rate/speed of a musical selection
<i>tenuto (ten.)</i>	literally “held” – fully sustained, occasionally even a bit longer than the note value requires
through-composed	song structure written without repetitions of large sections of musical material
<i>timbre</i>	French for “color” – the quality of sound which distinguishes one voice from another
<i>trill</i>	musical ornament consisting of rapid alternation between one pitch and the next
<i>troppo</i>	“too much”
<i>tutti/tutto</i>	“all”
<i>vibrato</i>	small fluctuation of pitch, an expressive device used to intensify the sound
<i>vivace</i>	lively, briskly