

## Some (Very) Basic Definitions

**beat:** Unit of measurement of rhythmic pulse of music.

**chromaticism:** The use of chromatic (“colored”) or the smallest stepwise intervals, chords, and harmony.

**counterpoint:** The ability, unique to music, to say two things at once comprehensibly; the combination of simultaneous parts, each of significance in itself, the whole resulting in a coherent texture.

**dynamics:** The gradations of volume in music.

**interval:** The “distance” (difference in pitch) between two notes.

**melody:** A succession of notes, varying in pitch, which have an organized and recognizable shape. Melody is “horizontal,” i.e., the notes are heard consecutively.

**meter:** Regular succession of rhythmical impulses, or beats, in poetry and music.

**phrase:** Short section of a composition into which the music seems naturally to fall.

**pitch:** The location of a sound (in the tonal scale), depending on the speed of vibrations from the source of the sound, fast ones producing a high pitch and slow ones a low pitch.

**register:** The part of the pitch range (“compass”) of an instrument having a distinctive tonal quality.

**scale:** From the Italian *scala*, meaning staircase or ladder. A series of single notes progressing up or down stepwise.

**tempo:** Literally *time*. The speed at which a piece of music is performed.

**texture:** The blend of the various sounds and melodic lines occurring simultaneously in a composition. Examples would be monophony, homophony, polyphony (imitative or non-imitative).

**theme:** Succession of notes which play an important part in the construction of a composition. Comparable to *subject*. Often related to *melody*.

**timbre:** Tone color