

Music Terminology

Articulation: How specific notes or passages are played or sung. (legato, staccato, accents, phrases, slurs, etc.)

Beat: The regular rhythmic pattern of the music.

Dynamics: The levels of sound, loud or soft, in a piece of music.

Energy: The intensity or vitality of expression. Very often composers will talk about building energy (for example, towards the climax of the work) and releasing energy (i.e. giving the listener a chance to take a breath before launching into the next thing).

Harmony: Pleasing combination of two or three tones played together in the background while a melody is being played.

Intonation: The exactness of pitch or lack of it in playing or singing.

Phrase: A complete musical thought. Phrases are usually short, like 5-10 seconds, although much shorter and much longer are, of course, possible.

Rhythm: The arrangement of notes according to their relative duration and relative accentuation; a specific pattern of sounds.

Tempo: The speed at which a piece of music is performed.

Timbre: Describes the tone or unique quality of a sound. If you play the same note on a piano and on a guitar, each note will have its own *timbre*.

Vibrato: A rapid, slight variation in pitch in singing or playing some musical instruments, producing a stronger or richer tone.