MUSIC THEORY

Notes

natural ♮
flat ♭
sharp ♯
double flat 𝄫 𝄪

Notes Names: naturals - A-B-C-D-E-F-G
sharps and flats - Ab-A#-Bb-B#-Cb-C#-Db-D#-Eb-E#-Fb-F#-Gb-G#

Intervals

minor second= m2 (half-step or semitone)
major second= M2 (whole-step or whole tone)
minor third= m3
major third= M3
perfect fourth= P4
tritone= Tri (also augmented 4th or diminished 5th)
perfect fifth= P5
minor sixth= m6
major sixth= M6
minor seventh= m7
major seventh= M7
perfect octave= P8

Chords — Triads

Major
Minor
Diminished
Augmented

Simultaneously
Successive
melodic/linear
arpeggios

7th Chords

Major 7th
Minor 7th
Dominant 7th
Half-Diminished 7th
Diminished 7th

9th Chords
11 Chords
13 Chords

Altered Chords

one or more notes
in the chord are

♭9 (= ♭2)
♯9 (= ♯2 or ♭3)
♯11 (= ♯4 or ♭5)
♭13 (= ♯5 or ♭6)
♭7

Quarter Tones
Demiflat (lower the pitch of a note by one quarter tone)
Sesquiflat (lowers pitch by three quarter tones or a flat and a half)
Demisharp (raises the pitch by a quarter tone)
Sesquisharp (raises the pitch by three quarter tones or a flat and a half)

Enharmonic: Alternative way to write/spell a note interval or
Note
Key Signature

A♯-B♭
B-C♭
B♯-C
C♯-D♭
D♯-E♭
F♭-E
E♯-F
F♯-G♭
G♯-A♭

most commonly used enharmonic intervals
Augmented 4th = Diminished 5th
Augmented 5th = Diminished 6th

Time Signatures
top number represents the number of beats in a bar
bottom number represents the note value equal to a beat

Scales

Diatonic: 7 note scale or mode containing the pattern W-W-H-W-W-W-H starting on any step in succession. (W=whole step H=Half-step) EXAMPLE: "white note scale" C–D–E–F–G–A–B. Starting on any white note produces the same basic sequence in some shape or form EXAMPLE: B-C-D-E-F-G-A = H-W-W-H-W-W-W and so on.

Major
Minor

Natural Minor' W-H-W-W-H-W-W
Harmonic Minor' W-H-W-W-H-A2-H (A2 = Augmented 2nd)
Melodic Minor' Ascending: W-H-W-W-W-W-H

Ionian (major scale)
Dorian (built on the 2nd step of a major scale)
Phrygian (built on the 3rd scale step of a major scale)
Lydian (built on the 4th scale step of a major scale)
Mixolydian (built on the 5th scale step of a major scale)
Aeolian (built on the 6th scale step of a major scale)

Heptatonic: scale that has seven pitch tones per octave.

Melodic ascending minor' W-H-W-W-W-W-H
Phrygian raised sixth' H-W-W-W-W-H-W
Lydian raised fifth' W-W-W-W-H-W-H
'Acoustic' or 'Lydian Dominant' Scale W-W-W-H-W-H-W
Major minor' scale W-W-H-W-H-W-W
Half diminished scale' or 'Locrian sharp 2' scale W-H-W-H-W-W-W
Altered scale' H-W-H-W-W-W-W
Neapolitan major scale' H-W-W-W-W-W-H
Hungarian Gypsy scale' W-H-A2-H-H-W-W (A2 = Augmented 2nd)
Phrygian dominant scale' H-A2-H-W-H-W-W (A2 = Augmented 2nd)

Chromatic: (12 notes per octave. Scale which consists of all semitones)

Whole-Tone (6 notes per octave)

Pentatonic (5 notes per octave)

Anhemitonic:
(without semitones/half-steps)

Hemitonic:
(with semitones/half-steps)

Ionian (major pentatonic) C-D-E-G-A-C
Dorian (Egyptian suspended) D-E-G-A-C-D
Phrygian (Blues minor) E-G-A-C-D-E
Mixolydian (Blues major) G-A-C-D-E-F-G
Aeolian (minor pentatonic) A-C-D-E-G-A

Japanese (based on the phrygian mode but skips the 3rd & 7th)

octatonic (8 notes per octave)
tetratonic (4 notes)
tritonic (3 notes)
ditonic (2 notes)

octuple whole note
quadruple whole note
double whole note
whole
half
quarter
eight
sixteenth
thirty-second
sixth-fourth
hundred twenty-eighth
two hundred fifty-sixth
multi-measure rests

breath mark: take a breath for wind instruments
slight pause for non-wind instruments bowed instruments lift the bow

caesura: a break or pause in the middle of a phrase

Time Signatures: represents how a measure is broken down into beats. The top number represents the number of beats in a measure and the bottom number signifies which note value is

Rhythm

Bar or Measure
Time Signature

Notation

natural notes A - B - C - D - E - F - G

symbols

octuple whole note
quadruple whole note
double whole note
whole
half
quarter
eighth
sixteenth
thirty-second
sixth-fourth
hundred twenty-eighth
two hundred fifty-sixth
duplet
tuplet or triplet
quadruplet
ties
beamed or barred notes
dotted notes

Dotted notes & rests:
Increases the duration of the note or rest by half its original value. EXAMPLE: in 4/4 time... a dotted quarter note would be held for a quarter note plus half its value (eighth note) or one and a half beats. A dotted half note in 4/4 time would be held for three beats.

flat
sharp
natural
double flat
double sharp

enharmonic notes spellings
A♯-B♭ B♯-C♭ C♯-D♭ D♯-E♭

Key Signature
natural ♮
flat ♭
sharp ♯

Clefs
G clef (treble)
C clef (movable clef that establishes where middle C is) used for
F clef (bass)
natural clef (perc)
octave clef (play one octave above or below what is written)
tablature (stringed instruments)

Alto
Tenor
Soprano
Mezzo-Soprano

Dynamics
ppp pianississimo
pp pianissimo
p piano
mp mezzo piano
mf mezzo forte
fp forte piano
f forte
ff fortissimo
fff fortississimo
fz forza
sfz sforzando
< crescendo
> diminuendo

Tempo
A tempo – resume previous tempo
Con moto – Italian for "with movement"
Larghissimo – very, very slow (24 bpm and under)
Adagissimo – very slowly
Grave – very slow (25–45 bpm)
Largo – broadly (40–60 bpm)
Lento – slowly (45–60 bpm)
Larghetto – rather broadly (60–66 bpm)
Adagio – slowly with great expression[10] (66–76 bpm)
Adagietto – slower than andante (72–76 bpm) or slightly faster than adagio (70–80 bpm)
Andante – at a walking pace (76–108 bpm)
Andantino – slightly faster than andante slower than andante) (80–108 bpm)
Marcia moderato – moderately, in the manner of a march[11][12] (83–85 bpm)
Andante moderato – between andante and moderato (thus the name) (92–98 bpm)
Moderato – at a moderate speed (98–112 bpm)
Allegretto –moderately fast (102–110 bpm)
Allegro moderato – close to, but not quite allegro (116–120 bpm)
Allegro – fast, quick, and bright (120–156 bpm)
Molto allegro is slightly faster than allegro, but always in its range; 124-156 bpm
Vivace – lively and fast (156–176 bpm)
Vivacissimo – very fast and lively (172–176 bpm)
Allegrissimo or Allegro vivace – very fast (172–176 bpm)
Presto – very, very fast (168–200 bpm)
Prestissimo – even faster than presto (200 bpm and over)
Molto – very
Poco – a little
Subito – suddenly
Tempo comodo – at a comfortable (normal) speed
Tempo di... (speed of a waltz, = 60 bpm or = 126 bpm), Tempo di marcia (speed of a march, = 120 bpm)
Tempo giusto – at a consistent speed, at the 'right' speed, in strict tempo
Tempo primo – resume the original (first) tempo

Variation in Tempo
Accelerando – speeding up (abbreviation: accel.)
Affrettando – speeding up with a suggestion of anxiety[19]
Allargando – growing broader; decreasing tempo, usually near the end of a piece
Calando – going slower (and usually also softer)
Doppio movimento / doppio più mosso – double-speed
Doppio più lento – half-speed
Lentando – gradually slowing, and softer
Meno mosso – less movement; slower
Meno moto – less motion
Più mosso – more movement; faster
Mosso – movement, more lively; quicker, much like più mosso, but not as extreme
Precipitando – hurrying; going faster/forward
Rallentando – a gradual slowing down (abbreviation: rall.)
Ritardando – slowing down gradually; also see rallentando and ritenuto (abbreviations: rit., ritard.)
Ritenuto – slightly slower, but achieved more immediately than rallentando or ritardando/or... can also be rit.
Rubato – free adjustment of tempo for expressive purposes
Slargando – gradually slowing down, literally "slowing down", "widening" or "stretching"
Stretto – in a faster tempo, often used near the conclusion of a section.
Stringendo – pressing on faster, literally "tightening"
Tardando – slowing down gradually (same as ritardando)[22]
Tempo Primo – resume the original tempo[23]

Key Signatures

tremolo (regular repeated thirty-second notes)
repeat signs
simile marks (preceding beats or measures are repeated)
volta brackets (1st and 2nd endings)
D.C. — D.C. (Da Capo... repeat from beginning)
D.S. — D.S. (Dal Segno ... repeat from Segno or "the sign")
Segno (the sign)
Coda (Jump to ending passage; used after playing through a D.S. al coda or D.C. al coda)
Glissando: A continuous sliding from one pitch to another
Slur: (to play two or more notes in one stroke, breath, or connected the note or notes into a single phrase)
Grace note: An extra note added as an embellishment
Ghost notes: A note with a rhythmic value... (used in percussion)
brace: slightly softer than surrounding notes
parentheses ( ): significantly softer than surrounding notes
square brackets [ ] : much softer than surrounding notes
Quarter tones: Demiflat (lower the pitch of a note by one quarter tone)
Sesquiflat (lowers pitch by three quarter tones or a flat and a half)
Demisharp (raises the pitch by a quarter tone)

Legato (notes are played or sung smoothly and connected in a phrase)
Staccato (short and detached)
Staccatissimo or spiccato (exaggerated staccato)
Accent (played more forcefully than notes before ot after)
Tenuto (play full value)
Mezzo Stacatto or Portato (notes are gently re-articulated... pulsating)
Marccato (note or passage played more forcefully than notes before or after)
Marccato Staccato
Marccato Legato
Staccato Duro
Legato Duro
Fermata (to stop or hold a note)
Tremolo (rapid repetition on a note)

staff/stave: five staff lines and four spaces
ledger lines: extend the staff to pitches that fall above or below it
barline: separate measures
double barline: separate two sections of music
bold double barline: the conclusion of a movement or entire composition
dotted barline (subdividing a complex meter according to its natural subdivisions)
Bracket

Octave signs
8va (ottava Alta): play the passage one octave higher
8va (ottava bassa) play the passage one octave lower
15ma (quindicesima) play the passage two octaves higher.
15ma (quindicesima) play the passage two octaves lower.

Piano Specific Notation
Engage pedal (press down sustain pedal)
Release pedal (let sustain pedal up)
Variable pedal mark
Con sordino (depress soft pedal)

Other terms
demisemiquavers (thirty-second notes)
equal temperament (musical tuning system which divides an octave (or other interval) into equal steps)
harmonic overtones (any frequency greater than the fundamental frequency of a sound)
appoggiatura or leaning note
arpeggio
metronome mark
Bisbigliando (tremelo performed on a harp)
Comp: to accompany or support the music
Divisi: to split the playing of the written simultaneous notes among multiple musicians
Improvise: To create music at the spur of the moment, spontaneously, and without preparation
Intro: Opening section of a piece
Modulation: TMe act or process of changing from one key (tonic, or tonal center) to another
Movement: A section of a musical composition (such as a sonata or concerto)
Ostinato: Obstinate, persistent (i.e. a short musical pattern that is repeated)
Overture: An orchestral composition forming the prelude or introduction
Reprise: Repetition of a phrase or verse; return to the original theme
Segue: to be carried on to the next section without a pause
Sostenuto: Sustained, lengthened
Tacet: do not play
Timbre: The quality of a musical tone
Tutti: everyone plays together
Plectrum (a pick, used for string instruments)
Vamp: Improvised accompaniment

String Symbols
down-bow
up-bow
whole bow
upper half bow
lower half bow
tip of the bow
middle of the bow
heel of the bow
art-pause'
E string
A string
D string

Circle of 5ths or 4ths
A geometrical representation of relationships among the 12 pitchs of the chromatic scale.

Trill: A rapid, repetition between two adjacent notes
Upper Mordent: Rapid playing of the principal note, the next higher note (according to key signature) then return to the principal note for the remaining duration
Lower Mordent: Rapid playing of the principal note, the next lower note (according to key signature) then return to the principal note for the remaining duration
Turn: (also known as a gruppetto) play upper auxiliary note, then principal note, then lower auxiliary note, and a return to the principal note.
Inverted Turn: the order of the auxiliary notes is reversed.
Vibrato: a fluctuation in pitch, volume, or both.
Trill: a rapid alternation in pitch, alternating from a whole step or half-step above or below the main pitch.
Trilled turn:
Triple-tongued
Warble: a technique used by flute players applying steady breath pressure on a fundamental note, the sound of different harmonic components of the note occur, with these components coming into focus at different times.
Appoggiatura: played as an accent on the beat prior to the principal note, it delays the appearance of the principal note suspending the resolution.
Acciaccatura: is played briefly before the principal note

snare drum
snare drum (snares off)
military snare drum
bass drum
bass drum on its side
bongos
tom-tom
woodblock
tambourine
timbales
slit drum
conga
log drum
temple blocks

crash cymbals
suspended cymbal
hi-hat
sizzle cymbal
tam-tam
gong
gong with button
triangle
sleigh bells
cowbell
almglocken
anvil
bell plate
brake drum

percusion
crotales
slide whistle
coin
stick shot
scrape from center to edge
on rim
slide brush on gong
buzz roll
maracas
cabasa
claves
guiro
ratchet
whip
lion's roar
bird whistle
siren
wind machine
thundersheet
police whistle
pistol shot
sand blocks

melodic percussion
glockenspiel
marimba
vibraphone
xylophone
timpani

beaters
soft xylophone stick
medium xylophone stick
hard xylophone stick
wood xylophone stick
soft timpani stick
medium timpani stick
hard timpani stick
soft bass drum stick
medium bass drum stick
hard bass drum stick
double bass drum stick
soft yarn beater
medium yarn beater