

GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

[It = Italian, Fr = French, L = Latin]

accented passing note A note that moves by step between harmony notes, but is itself on the beat, creating a dissonance.

accidental Sharp, flat or natural sign placed before a particular note in the music to alter it from the key signature, with that note remaining altered for the remainder of the measure.

ad libitum (ad lib.) [L] Play freely or not at all.

added-note chord Where the second, fourth, or sixth forms part of a chord, but without being heard as an extension of the series of superimposed thirds that form the basic triads of tonal music.

Aeolian mode Scale created by starting a major scale on the sixth degree, corresponding to the descending form of the melodic minor scale and often employed in early classical music as basis for minor-key harmony.

alt chord Jazz chord derived from the altered scale, used to reharmonise V.

alteration (or chromatic alteration) A note incrementally raised or lowered from its original pitch – usually by a half-step (semitone) – but still heard as the same scale degree.

altered scale Jazz scale used to embellish and reharmonise V chords, corresponding to the seventh mode of the jazz minor scale (especially bebop and modern jazz).

anacrusis The practice of starting and ending a piece of music (and often all intervening subdivisions such as sections, phrases, etc.) in the middle of the bar, usually resulting in an incomplete bar at the start and end that together add up to one full bar in the given metre.

anticipation (decorative) A note that sounds just before the harmony it belongs to, then again with the harmony.

appoggiatura [It] A note that sounds on the beat or strong beat as a dissonance, before resolving by step to a consonance on a weaker beat (or subdivision); also, a grace note corresponding to this (always written without a slash).

arpeggio [It] Similar to an arpeggiation (ie, playing the notes of a chord in rapid succession as on a harp, rather than together) but with notes played rhythmically to produce a melodic pattern.

articulation How individual notes are played in relation to one another, where this is understood from the point of view of the performer's playing techniques, e.g. legato, staccato, accents, slurs.

augmented sixth chord Chord arrived at through chromatic alteration from the major or minor scale, combining the flattened (minor) sixth in the bass and a sharpened fourth from the same scale (see Italian sixth, French sixth, and German sixth).

auxiliary note A note that moves to the note above or below and back again as a melodic embellishment.

avoid note A note in a jazz scale that is considered too dissonant to be played against the underlying chord, and so is either avoided or chromatically altered.

backbeat A strong accent placed consistently on the weak (second and fourth) beats of the bar to heighten the sense of rhythm and metre, originating in African music and typical of rock music.

background structure (or structural background) A structure arrived at through (more or less) complete melodic and/or harmonic reduction of some existing music, to the point where only its most basic elements or simplest usable structure is left.

bar A segment of music enclosed between adjacent bar lines for purposes of measurement and identification, also called a measure, and usually corresponding to a metrical cycle.

bar line A line drawn vertically across the stave or staves to indicate the end of one bar and the beginning of the next.

baroque Classical music from the 17th and early 18th centuries, often characterised by elaborate decoration or contrapuntal unfolding.

bassline A melody line formed by the succession of notes lying at the bottom of a harmonic texture or chord sequence, possibly with melodic embellishment (usually of a stepwise character) or some rhythmic elaboration.

bebop scale The practice in bebop of adding one extra chromatic note to the usual seven-note scales of jazz, to allow melodic sequences to retain a regular rhythmic relationship to chords.

blues scale A minor pentatonic scale with the addition of the flattened fifth.

boogie-woogie Blues-based solo piano style with repetitive left-hand rhythmic figures, influenced by the pounding style of piano playing typical of 19th-century American bars and barrelhouses

borrowed chord A chord introduced into major-key classical harmony that is taken from minor-key harmony with the same key note, or vice versa.

bossa nova A Latin-American dance-based song idiom with a relaxed feel, using syncopated rhythms drawn freely from a repeating rhythmic pattern related to the clave patterns of salsa; first associated with the music of the Brazilian composer Jobim.

bridge The contrasting chords of the middle 'B' section in jazz song form, usually linking the earlier 'A' sections with a final repeat before recapitulating the song as a whole.

broken chord A classical pattern in which notes of a chord are stated melodically in ascending or descending order in groups of three or four, each beginning on the next note of the same chord; also used as an exercise for chord fingerings and technique.

cadence A chord progression used at the end of a phrase, section, or movement to generate a stronger or weaker sense of completion and finality through degrees of tonal harmonic resolution.

cadential six-four A chord progression in which a second inversion tonic chord resolves downwards by step to a dominant chord in root position over a dominant bass, forming an imperfect cadence.

cambiata A decorative melodic effect in which the line leaps past the note it is heading for, before reaching the latter via stepwise movement in the opposite direction to the leap.

canon A piece of music whose principal formal feature is the imitative relationship between different melodic voices or parts.

cantus A given melody line, often consisting of simple long notes of even length, used as the starting point for contrapuntal elaboration, i.e. developing one or more countermelodies.

changes Underlying or given chord structure in jazz.

chord chart A chart indicating only the chord changes and metre of a song, used by jazz and popular musicians as a basis for their own arrangements or for improvisation.

chord extension The inclusion of further notes as part of a chord in addition the root, third, and fifth, usually by continuing the principle of accumulating ascending thirds.

chord progression A distinctive succession of two or more chords whose musical effect reflects their functional relationship.

chord relationship The relationship between two chords, as determined by their functions relative to a common key.

chord substitution A chord that is typically substituted for another with a closely related function to add variety to the harmony.

chord type The particular spacing of notes in a chord that characterises chords based on certain notes of a scale but not others: eg, major, minor, augmented or diminished triads, and major, dominant, half-diminished or diminished sevenths, etc.

chromatic approach Replacing a given chord with a diminished seventh chord whose root is a half-step (semitone) below that of the following chord.

chromatic interval Intervals based on chromatic alterations of diatonic intervals, or derived directly from the chromatic scale itself.

circle of fifths The arrangement of key centres in western tonal music to show how the successive additions of sharps or flats needed to reproduce major and minor scales and harmony on different notes produces a sequence in which adjacent keys are separated by an interval of a perfect fifth.

clef Symbol placed at the start of a staff to show which position on that staff corresponds to the letter name of note from which the symbol is derived.

close position The layout of notes in a chord that puts them in the closest possible vicinity to one another.

close-position voicing A jazz chord voicing with similar characteristics to the close-position layout of notes in a chord in classical music.

Coltrane changes Rapid and direct modulation between keys a major third apart as used by John Coltrane.

compound time Time-signatures that indicate a metre in which the normal subdivision of the beat is into three rather than two, notated using dotted beats instead of triplet subdivisions.

consonance An interval between two notes sounding together with an internally resolved character.

contour The shape produced by the rise and fall of a melodic line over time, normally also reflecting its rhythmical character.

contrafactual The practice, in jazz, of using just the chords from an existing song, so they can be used as a basis for improvisation.

contrary motion (Versus similar motion in scales, but also versus contrary/oblique motion in voice-leading.)

countermelody An independent and contrasting melodic line unfolding at the same time as a given or principal melody line.

counterpoint Music that unfolds as two or more simultaneous and independently heard melody lines, rhythmically complementing one another and often unfolding related material at different times.

couplet A pair of notes in which the first is joined smoothly to the second, while the second is released with a shortening effect similar to staccato.

degree (of the scale) A pitch defined relative to its position in a given scale and key, in virtue of which it has its particular character and function.

diatonic interval Any harmonic or melodic interval based strictly on notes of the major or minor scales, to the exclusion of structures derived through chromatic alteration or based on the chromatic scale.

diatonic scale Any seven-note major or minor scale, as distinct from pentatonic scales or the chromatic scale.

diminished seventh chord A seventh chord consisting of three superimposed intervals of a minor third, resulting in a diminished triad with an additional note a diminished seventh above the root; most commonly used on VII of the minor or major scale.

diminished scale An eight-note ('octatonic') scale based on alternating whole steps and half-steps (whole tones and semitones), beginning with either interval.

direct pedalling A technique in which the sustaining (right) pedal is depressed at the start of a note, chord, or texture and released at its end, adding resonance and/or volume.

dissonance An interval between two notes sounding together with an internally unresolved character, produced by the phenomenon of audible acoustic interference known as 'beating'.

dominant seventh chord A chord based on the fifth step of a diatonic scale (V), with the addition of a note a minor seventh above the root.

Dorian mode Scale created by starting a major scale on the second degree, with a minor-key character, often used in jazz for improvising over II chords, and sometimes employed in early classical music as basis for minor-key harmony.

double barline or **double bar** The use of two adjacent vertical bar lines together at the end of a bar to indicate the end of a section, movement, or piece.

doubling The practice of including more than one note of the same letter name in a chord, in different octaves; also, the sounding of a melody simultaneously in more than one instrument or more than one transposition (usually one or more octaves apart).

drop two

dynamics The use of varying levels of loudness by players to enhance the musical effect.

enharmonic equivalence The relationship between two notes having different note-names (e.g. F-sharp, G-flat) but corresponding to the same pitch within the system of equal temperament.

escape note or **échappé** A note inserted between two notes forming a step or leap, to make a stepwise movement in the opposite direction to the original interval.

fake book (or **real book**) A collection of lead sheets for standards, used by jazz musicians.

fantasia A term used from the 16th century right through to the early 19th century to describe a loosely defined or free approach to musical form suited to classical improvisation, or to refer to a composition with similar features.

fifth species Another term for florid counterpoint.

finger staccato A staccato achieved through use of the finger alone, often to emphatically characterise individual notes.

first inversion The arrangement of a chord so that the third of the chord is at the bottom

first species Counterpoint in which one or more countermelodies stand in a fixed rhythmic relationship to a cantus, with one note of the countermelody for each note of the latter (and the parts moving simultaneously).

flat Symbol used to indicate that a note should be lowered by one half-step (semitone).

florid counterpoint (or **fifth species**) Counterpoint in which one or more countermelodies unfold against a cantus in ways that mix the four species of rhythmic relationship (corresponding to first, second, third, and fourth species).

foreground structure (or **structural foreground**) The first level of structural elaboration or embellishment to be removed when subjecting some existing music to harmonic and/or melodic reduction.

four-note scale A harmonic structure consisting of four different notes per octave used as a scale in jazz.

fourth chords (or **quartal harmony**) A chord built on successive intervals of a fourth instead of the more normal third

fourth species Counterpoint in which one or more countermelodies stand in a fixed rhythmic relationship to a cantus, with one note of the countermelody for each note of the latter, but with the parts moving alternately rather than together; the cantus sounds on the first beat of each bar and the countermelodies at the half-bar.

four-way close A technique for readily arranging block-chords in bebop jazz, that enables all melodic scale notes to be harmonised either as inversions of the same basic chord or (for alternate notes in the scale) as inversions of a single diminished seventh chord; see also **drop two**.

French sixth A type of augmented sixth chord including two other notes alongside the flattened sixth (in the bass) and sharpened fourth (of the same scale), one a major third and the other an augmented fourth above the bass.

functional displacement Introduction of a note foreign to the existing key through chromatic alteration, in order to accomplish a modulation to a new key.

galant A style of classical music that emerged in the 18th century, after the Baroque but before the Classical period, combining decorativeness and dramatic expression in a manner comparable to Rococo in other arts.

German sixth a type of augmented sixth chord including two other notes alongside the flattened sixth (in the bass) and sharpened fourth (of the same scale), one a major third and the other a perfect fifth above the bass.

goal note The note which we feel a melody or improvised figure as heading towards, in advance of it arriving there.

groove The distinctive rhythmic feel created in rock and popular music through repeating one or more rhythmic patterns at a particular speed, especially on drums and bass.

Half-step Another term for semitone.

halftime A rhythmic idiom or feel in popular music (especially funk), where syncopations are based on subdivisions of the beat into quarters instead of halves.

hand staccato Staccato achieved through an up-and-down flapping movement of the hand from the wrist, suited to rapidly staccato repetitions and runs.

harmonic minor The form of the minor scale commonly used in classical music as the basis for minor-key harmony, characterised by a large step between the flattened sixth and the leading tone.

harmonic reduction The technique of simplifying a given harmonic structure so that it can be used more effectively as a basis for improvisation.

harmony note A note in a melody line or melodic part that also belongs to the harmony (the chord) heard as sounding at the same point in time.

homophony A musical texture in which all parts (or block chords) move together in the same rhythm as the principal melody line.

imitation Where one melody line enters in succession after another with the same material, sometimes transposed, as in contrapuntal music.

imperfect cadence A cadence ending on the dominant chord, producing a sense of only partial completion lacking in finality.

incomplete or imperfect dominant A dominant seventh chord (V), usually extended to include the ninth, in which the root is absent, leaving what appears to be seventh chord based on the leading tone of the scale (which itself often corresponds to a diminished seventh chord).

interrupted cadence A cadence that proceeds from the dominant to the submediant chord (instead of the expected tonic), creating a sense of unexpected and only partial resolution.

interval The size of the gap between two notes of different pitch, measured in terms of steps of a scale.

interval inversion Transposing one or other of the two notes of an interval by an octave so that the lower note becomes the higher note and vice versa, resulting in a new interval (known as the 'inversion' of the original one), and which added together with original interval makes an octave.

inversion Any technique in which the vertical arrangement of pitches is reversed: eg, the arrangement or position of a chord (viewed in terms of the choice of note to sound at the bottom) arrived at through successively shifting the bottom note to the top, or the technique of replacing each interval in a melody or chord with one of equal size but in the opposite direction; also an interval which combines with some other interval to add up to an octave, and which results when the notes of that interval are switched around so the lower becomes the higher.

Italian sixth A type of augmented sixth chord including one other note alongside the flattened sixth (in the bass) and sharpened fourth (of the same scale), a major third above the bass.

jam, jamming Informal improvising sessions used by jazz and popular musicians to develop and exchange musical ideas and to 'get to know one another'.

jazz minor A form of minor scale used in jazz, in which only the third of the major scale is flattened; resembling the ascending form of the classical melodic minor scale, and used as a source of many of the modal chord-types used in advanced jazz reharmonisation and bebop-style improvising.

jazz minor mode Modes derived from the jazz minor scale in the same way as ordinary modes can be thought of as derived from the major scale – by starting on a note other than the tonic.

jazz-rock A stylistic fusion of jazz and rock, usually featuring jazz-style melodic improvising over a groove with a strong backbeat.

key The set of structural relationships between scale-tones and the chords derived from these, heard primarily in terms of their relations to a central note and chord corresponding to the starting note of the scale.

key relationship The relationship between two different keys, principally determined by the distance separating them on the circle of fifths and the number of notes shared by their respective scales (with respect to sharps and flats).

key-signature The custom of specifying the sharps or flats corresponding to the key of the music at the beginning of each stave according to a fixed sequential formula.

keyboard harmony The art of improvising a harmonic texture over a bass line with chord symbols or a figured bass.

keynote The first step of a major or minor scale (tonic), which gives its name to the key of that scale.

lateral movement The technique of swinging the hand around from the arm in a sideways direction while keeping it on the keys, in order to change its angle and cover a different range of notes; often used to execute arpeggios and enhance the expressive shaping of legato phrases.

Latin jazz Improvisation using jazz scales and harmony combined with a Latin rhythmic feel, sometimes on standards or folk material from Latin America.

lead sheet A form of written-out music that limits itself to showing the melody line, chord structure, metre and form of a well-known song, for use by jazz and popular musicians.

leaning on the beat The deliberate placing of notes just after the beat to create a looser or more downbeat rhythmic feel, common in jazz and blues.

legato [It] Joining notes together smoothly – achieved on the piano through a slight overlap between the start of one note and the end of the previous one.

legato pedalling The use of the sustaining (right) pedal to achieve a legato join between notes or chords where this would not otherwise be possible, through delaying the release of the pedal until just after the next note or chord sounds, then immediately clearing the pedal so that the previous note or chord is damped.

lick A brief improvised melodic figure that can be interpolated into the gaps between rhythmic textures or longer phrases of an improvised lines, to add tension and interest.

locked hands A pianistic technique used in jazz, whereby the hands are allowed to move in parallel through a sequence of block chords that allow a melody to be harmonised on the spot without having to attend to the details of voice-leading.

lower auxiliary A decorative auxiliary note that moves to the note a step below and back again.

major seventh chord substitution Substituting a chord that enables the existing melody note to then be heard as sounding a major seventh above the root/bass.

major scale The principal scale of western European music, composed of two identical four-note scale-segments (tetrachords), each with two whole steps (tones) followed by a half-step (semitone).

melodic paraphrase The technique of composing or improvising a melodic line with reference to the underlying structure and/or distinctive features of an existing line (or song), in such a way that the new one may be heard as loosely related to the original, but also as independently interesting.

melodic reduction The technique of simplifying a given melodic structure so that it can be used more effectively as a basis for improvisation.

melodic skeleton A simple melodic outline, used as a basis for developing more elaborate melodic lines through embellishment, often arrived at through melodic reduction, and/or used to define goal-notes when improvising over a given chord sequence.

melodic minor The form of the minor scale used in classical music to produce smooth stepwise melodic movement between sixth and seventh degrees of the scale, neither of which are flattened from the major when ascending, but both of which are flattened when descending.

metre The organisation of musical pulse into cyclically recurring regular patterns of stronger and weaker accents, as in spoken verse.

Middle C The note C nearest the middle of the piano keyboard, written on a ledger line immediately below the treble clef staff or immediately above the bass clef staff.

middleground structure (or **structural middleground**) A structure arrived at through partial melodic and/or harmonic reduction of some existing music.

minor scale The chief alternative to the major scale in western European music, arrived at by flattening the third and sometimes the sixth and/or seventh of the major scale (see **harmonic minor** and **melodic minor**)

modal harmony Harmony derived from the notes of a modal scale form rather than from the ordinary major or minor scale, as when classical composers base harmony on modal folk tunes; also, the technique used in 'bebop' and 'modern jazz' whereby the same voicing functions as a realisation of several different chords, allowing

continuous improvisation with the same scale material over a stretch of time that originally corresponded to a several chord changes, so that a single chord begins to function like a modal equivalent of a key.

modal jazz Jazz based on modal harmony and related scale-based improvising of the kind typified by **bebop** artists such as Charlie Parker and Miles Davies

mode Originally the term used to refer to the various scales used in early European and Byzantine church music, and related scales thought to have been used as the basis for ancient Greek music, from which these probably evolved; also used to refer to these same scales when treated as derivations from a major scale through permutation (ie, changing just the choice of note on which the scale begins, but keeping the actual notes the same), or to refer to any scale derived from a more basic form in this fashion.

modulation A change of key achieved through careful introduction of notes and chords belonging to the new key but foreign to the original one, while exploiting notes and chords that can be heard ambiguously as belonging to either key to provide a 'pivot'.

monody A musical texture consisting of a single melodic line only, with no simultaneously sounding parts, chords or textures.

motive A short musical figure or idea, often used as a constituent of more extended themes.

natural A sign (usually an accidental) placed before a note to cancel a sharp or flat occurring earlier in the same bar or in the key-signature.

Neapolitan sixth chord A major chord constructed on the flattened second degree of the scale in classical music (normally in a minor key), and used in first inversion.

non-harmony note A note in a melody line or melodic part that does not belong to the harmony (the chord) heard as sounding at the same point in time.

oblique motion In classical voice-leading, one part or voice moving melodically while another remains stationary (or repeats the same note).

octave The interval from one note to the next with the same letter-name, which then corresponds to the eighth note of a diatonic scale.

offbeat accent A rhythmic stress on a beat of the bar not normally accented as part of the metre, such as the second and fourth beats in quadruple time, or second and third in triple time.

off-note Deliberate use in jazz of a note foreign to the scale implied by the harmony over which it is sounded.

open position The layout of notes in a chord so that they are no longer in the closest possible vicinity to one another (usually omitting one possible chord note between each adjacent pair of notes).

open-position voicing A jazz chord voicing with similar characteristics to the open-position layout of notes in a chord in classical music.

parallel fifths (or **consecutive fifths**) the effect created when two parts move simultaneously in parallel a perfect fifth apart; avoided in almost all classical music before the 20th century

parallel motion In classical voice-leading, two melodic parts moving melodically in the same direction simultaneously and by the same step or leap.

parallel octaves (or **consecutive octaves**) The effect created when two independent parts (ie, not just an octave doubling) move simultaneously in parallel an octave apart; avoided in almost all classical music before the 20th century.

parallelism A kind of jazz texture produced by letting entire chords move in parallel with a given melody line.

passage work A texture consisting of scale and/or chord-based figurations that maintains the unfolding of some music, but without introducing any important new ideas or thematic contrasts.

passing modulation A brief modulation that fails to establish the new key and so either returns almost immediately to the original one or passes on to another.

passing note A non-harmony note moving by step between two harmony notes and sounding on or off the beat.

passing six-four The use of a second inversion chord in between the root position and first inversion of another chord, so that a stepwise movement results in the bass (e.g. I-V^c-I^b or I^b-V^c-I).

pedal point A note, usually in the bass, that is held (or repeated) unchanged as the harmony shifts above or around it, generating tension and expectancy – usually (but not always) the dominant.

pentatonic scale Any five-note scale, including those created by using just the black notes of the piano.

perfect cadence A cadence in which the dominant chord is followed by the tonic, creating a strong sense of finality and harmonic resolution.

phrase A series of notes, usually forming part of a melodic line, joined together or played expressively in some other way, so that they are heard to form a single unbroken musical utterance.

phrase structure The sense of an unfolding musical structure corresponding to the divisions articulated between musical phrases, often creating a sense of a developing discourse of musical thoughts.

phrasing The art of reflecting the structure and character of musical phrases through expressive shaping of tone, time and articulation.

pitch The change to the experienced character of a sound that results when its frequency is altered; often understood or felt as a change between locations separated by greater or lesser distances, in terms of height and depth.

plagal cadence A cadence in which the subdominant chord is followed by the tonic, creating a sense of finality and harmonic resolution that is relaxed in character, like an 'amen'.

plainchant Early form of liturgical chanting from the Middle Ages, usually consisting of a single modal line sung slowly in unison with no fixed metre; occasionally sung in parallel fifths or octaves.

polyphony A texture composed of several independently unfolding melodic lines.

polyrhythm The effect created by superimposing two different rhythms that do not stand in any simple relationship to one another.

polytonality The effect created by superimposing musical material in more than one key.

posture The proper way of sitting at the piano when playing.

primary triad Any of the triads in a major key that are themselves major chords (I, IV, V), or any of the chords based on these same scale degrees in a minor scale.

pulse The sense of temporal pattern and rhythmic involvement resulting from hearing and/or feeling a sound or movement repeated at regular intervals.

pushing the beat The deliberate placing of notes just in front of the beat to create a looser or more upbeat rhythmic feel, common in jazz and country.

reduction The technique of simplifying a given melodic and/or harmonic structure so that it can be used more effectively as a basis for improvisation.

reharmonisation The technique, principally used in jazz of the bebop and post-bebop eras, of altering the chord structure of a familiar tune or progression so that it furnishes new possibilities for improvised embellishment.

relative major The major key related to a minor key through having the same key-signature.

relative minor The minor key related to a major key through having the same key-signature.

rhythm The dynamic sense of shape, energy, and movement in time created by the organisation of different time-intervals separating successive notes.

riff A repeated and rhythmically distinctive melodic figure in rock, jazz, blues, or Latin.

rock minor A term for the form of the minor scale with both sixth and seventh degrees flattened from the major, just as in the Aeolian mode or the descending classical melodic minor scale.

rococo A stylistic tendency within European visual art of the early 18th century, often combining dramatic intensity with extravagant decorativeness.

root The note in a chord which is also the scale-note on which the chord itself is built.

root position Any arrangement of notes in a chord which has the root in the bass.

root progression The progression between two or more chords where this functions primarily as an expression of the relations between the roots of the chords.

salsa A term coined to describe Afro-Cuban music, in which continuously syncopated Latin-American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban folk rhythms and melodies interact with Afro-American and Creole elements in jazz; usually based on a fixed rhythmic pattern known as a clave.

samba A rhythmically exuberant Brazilian dance rhythm with a hypnotically powerful sense of forward propulsion and a two-bar rhythmic pattern moving in and out of syncopation.

second inversion The arrangement of a chord so that the fifth of the chord is at the bottom.

second species Counterpoint in which one or more countermelodies stand in a fixed rhythmic relationship to a cantus, with two equal notes of the countermelody for each note of the latter.

secondary triad Any of the triads in a major key that are not themselves major chords (ie, II, III, VI and VII), and the chords based on the same scale degrees in a minor scale.

semitone A single step of the chromatic scale, often referred to as a half-step to indicate that it is half of a step between notes separated by an interval of a whole tone.

sharp Symbol used to indicate that a white note should be raised by one semitone.

shuffle An insistent 12/8 rhythm alternating crotchets (quarter-notes) and quavers (eighth-notes), or equivalent triplet rhythms in 4/4, typical of blues, boogie, and rhythm & blues, creating a heavy, dragging feel at a slow tempo.

similar motion Two (or more) parts (or hands) moving in the same direction, but not necessarily by the same distance (ie, not necessarily in parallel).

simple time A metre in which the basic unit of pulse typically subdivides into halves, and is a simple (undotted) time value such as an eighth-note, quarter-note, or half-note (eg, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/8).

slash chord A chord symbol in non-classical music that specifies both the chord and the bass note, to indicate either an inversion or a more complex harmony.

slur A curved line drawn above or below a series of notes to indicate that they should be joined smoothly.

'so what' chord A major triad in second inversion played over an interval of a perfect fourth, producing a chordal structure consisting of three superimposed perfect fourths and one major third – heard usually as a ii chord.

soft pedal The left pedal on a piano, which when depressed moves the hammers sideways slightly, so they engage less fully or less forcefully with the strings, producing a muted and veiled effect (usually indicated by the marking 'una corda', meaning 'one string').

species (of counterpoint) A form of counterpoint defined by a fixed rhythmic relationship between two or more countermelodies and the given cantus (see 'first species', 'second species', etc).

staccato [It] A technique for shortening the length of individual notes so that they are no longer joined to one another.

standard A well-known tune familiar to jazz musicians, whose chords (and melody) are used as a basis for improvising.

stave or staff The five parallel lines drawn horizontally across the page on which notes are positioned to indicate their pitch in Western musical notation.

strophic form A musical and poetic form consisting of an alternation between a verse (whose words, and sometimes music too, are varied each time) and a chorus (that remains the same each time).

stylistic improvisation An approach to classical improvisation aimed at reproducing a style from a specific historical period as exactly as possible.

sus chord A chord in which an added fourth replaces the third but is not required to resolve to the latter – usually a v chord.

suspension A note like an appoggiatura, but with the dissonance prepared as a consonance over the previous chord (on a weaker beat) that is held over onto the strong beat before resolving by step to a consonance on a weaker beat (or subdivision).

sustaining pedal The right-hand pedal, used to lift all the dampers off the strings together so that notes sound freely even after keys are released, giving rise to sympathetic resonance resulting in increased volume and richer, smoother textures.

swing A term used to describe the rhythmic feel of jazz that results from repeatedly shifting back the halfway subdivision of the beat so that the rhythm becomes uneven like a triplet, even though it is still written as ordinary equal or dotted-note subdivisions; also 1930s big-band New York style jazz.

syncopation The classical musical term for a shift of rhythmic emphasis away from the beat and onto a subdivision, but now widely used to describe the effect of continuously accenting subdivisions and offbeats in Afro-American influenced music (which is really a distinct phenomenon).

technique Physical dexterity and control, achieved through systematic training, as required to perform successfully on a musical instrument.

tempo [It] Speed (literally: 'time').

tetrachord A series of three whole and half-steps (tones/semitones), linking four pitches together to form part of a scale; two tetrachords combined may form a diatonic scale or a mode (providing that the second starts where the first ends).

third inversion The arrangement of a seventh chord so that the seventh of the chord is at the bottom.

third species Counterpoint in which one or more countermelodies stand in a fixed rhythmic relationship to a cantus, with four equal notes of the countermelody for each note of the latter.

tierce de picardie [Fr] The effect of substituting a major form of the tonic chord as the final cadential resolution of a section or movement in a minor key.

time-signature The two numerals normally placed at the beginning of the first line of a piece of music to show how many beats there are in each bar, and what length of note they correspond to.

tonality The general phenomenon in which a structure or hierarchy of harmonic relations defines a sense of key relative to a scale; also the different basic forms this can take, such as major and minor.

tonic major The major key based on the same keynote as a given minor key.

tonic minor The minor key based on the same keynote as a given major key.

transposition Altering the pitch of all notes in a phrase or chord by the same interval, so that exactly the same structure reappears higher up or lower down (and sometimes in a different key).

triad A chord constructed from three different notes.

triplet 'Three-in-the-time-of-two': three notes of equal length played in the time normally taken to play two of similar time-value.

tritone interchangeability Interchangeability between most or all of the notes in two chords, when these have roots a tritone away from one another.

tritone substitution A common jazz reharmonisation technique where one or more of the chords in a II-V-I progression is replaced with the equivalent chord a tritone away.

12-bar blues The basic 12-bar chord sequence of the blues.

two-five-one (II-V-I) the most commonly used chord sequence in jazz, most typically in a major key, often simply repeated but transposed into different keys; varied using chord substitutions.

unaccented passing note A non-harmony note moving by step between two harmony notes and sounding off the beat (or on a weaker beat than the preceding and following notes).

upper auxiliary A decorative auxiliary note that moves to the note a step above and back again.

upper structure An advanced form of jazz reharmonisation in which a triad is superimposed over one or both of the notes of a tritone interval corresponding to the third and seventh of a V7 chord; the complex resulting harmony can then be conveniently referred to by specifying the distance between the root of the seventh chord and the root of the triad.

variation The technique (especially in classical music) of presenting existing material in one or more subsequently altered forms to produce more extended music.

verse The section that alternates with a chorus or refrain in strophic song forms, whose words (and occasionally music) are varied each time.

voice-leading The art of joining chords in such a way that individual notes in one chord are heard to proceed in a smooth and satisfying melodic fashion to those in the next.

voicing The particular layout of the notes in a jazz chord, in respect of spacing, register, vertical ordering, notes doubled or omitted, viewed in terms of the harmonic character, colour or texture that results.

walking bass A melodic bass-line pattern based around a steady rhythm of one note per beat, often outlining notes of the chord or connecting harmony notes by stepwise (diatonic or chromatic) movement; based on the figures used by string bass players in jazz, and imitated by early jazz pianists in their left-hand parts.

whole step A melodic step corresponding to the interval of a whole tone.

whole tone (or tone) The distance between two adjacent white notes on the piano separated by a black note, equivalent to an interval of two half-steps/semitones.

whole-tone scale A scale consisting of six identical whole steps (whole tones).

wrist staccato A leisurely staccato produced by lifting the wrist in such a way that the finger playing a note gets drawn in slightly under the hand to lift it off the key.