

Florida Vocal Association



2006-2007 All-State Musicianship Examination Terms Study Guide

Edited - 2006

1. a cappella - "In the manner of the chapel". Music sung without instrumental accompaniment
2. a tempo - return to the original tempo after some deviation
3. accelerando - becoming faster
4. accidentals - symbol used to raise or lower a given pitch by 1 or 2 semi-tones, or to cancel a previous sign or part of a key signature
5. adagio - slow, leisurely tempo
6. al fine - to the end, generally used after a repetition
7. alla breve – a tempo marking indicating quick double time; *i.e. 2/2 instead of 4/4 with the half note rather than the quarter note as the beat*
8. allegretto - slightly slower than allegro, often implying lighter texture and character as well
9. allegro - fast
10. allegro con spirito – fast tempo with spirit
11. amabile - sweet, loveable
12. ancora meno mosso – once more, but a little slower
13. andante - rather slow, at a moderate walking pace
14. aria - a self-contained composition for solo voice, usually with instrumental accompaniment and usually found within the context of an opera, oratorio or cantata
15. arpeggio - the notes of a chord played in succession to one another, rather than simultaneously; a broken chord
16. atonal - music that lacks a tonal center; absence of key
17. augmented - raised or enlarged. Generally refers to the raising of a pitch by one half-step
18. ballad - a strophic, narrative song
19. berceuse - a lullaby
20. cadenza - an improvised or written-out ornamental passage performed by a soloist usually near the final cadence
21. cantabile – singable; singing
22. chorale - a congregational song or hymn of the German Protestant Church, originally for the entire congregation to sing
23. chord - 3 or more pitches sounded simultaneously or functioning as if sounded simultaneously
24. chromatic - motion by half steps; also describes harmony or melody that employs some of the sequential 12 pitches (semi-tones) in an octave
25. common time - 4/4 meter, denoted C
26. crescendo - increasing loudness
27. D.C. or Da Capo - repeat from the beginning of the composition
28. D.S. or dal segno - repeat from the sign
29. decrescendo - decreasing loudness
30. diminished - lowered, or reduced; generally refers to the lowering of a pitch chromatically by one half step
31. dolce - sweetly, usually also softly
32. dynamics - the degrees of loudness in a musical work

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33. embellishment - ornamentation added to music to make it more beautiful or effective, or to demonstrate the abilities of the performer
34. fermata - a pause or hold
35. fine - the end
36. flat - the symbol which indicates the lowering of a given pitch by one half-step
37. forte (*f*) - loud
38. grave - grave, solemn
39. half-step - a semi-tone. There are 12 half-steps in an octave.
40. harmony - any collection of pitches as they sound simultaneously, or when pitches are in agreement
41. head voice - the higher register of the singing voice
42. interval - the relationship between two pitches, the distance between an upper and a lower pitch
43. key - the pitch relationships that establish a tonal center
44. key signature - sharps or flats at the beginning of each staff to indicate which pitches are to be raised or lowered from their natural state during the piece
45. largo - very slow and broad
46. leading tone - the seventh degree of the diatonic scale, when it is only a half-step below the tonic, gives the feeling of wanting to move up a half-step to the tonic
47. leap - melodic motion from one pitch to another that is more than a whole tone away
48. ledger lines - lines written above or below the staff representing a continuation of the staff, used to indicate pitches above or below the staff
49. legato - smoothly, with no separation between notes
50. leggiero (*leggero*) – light (soft)
51. lunga – a long pause that is determined by the performer (*director*)
52. major scale - a diatonic scale where the half-steps fall between the third and fourth, and the seventh and octave
53. marcato – marked, stressed
54. motif - a short musical idea or melodic theme, usually shorter than a musical phrase
55. natural - a note that is not affected by either a sharp or a flat, a natural sign cancels a previous sharp or flat
56. notation - any means of writing down music, usually indicating pitch, duration, timbre and loudness
57. octave - an interval eight diatonic scale degrees above it. Two notes an octave apart have the same letter name, and form the most consonant interval possible.
58. phrase - a single musical idea or element which is often defined by a repeated rhythmic pattern or a melodic contour
59. pianissimo (*pp*) - very soft
60. piano (*p*) - soft
61. portamento – special manner of singing where the voice glides from one tone to the next through all the intermediate pitches
62. poco a poco - little by little

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63. prestissimo – as fast as possible
64. presto - very fast, faster than *allegro*
65. primo – first or upper part
66. rallentando (*rall.*) - slowing down; the same as *ritardando*
67. ritardando (*rit.*) - slowing down gradually
68. rubato - making the established pulse flexible by accelerating and slowing down the tempo, an expressive device
69. sempre – always
70. sforzando (*sf or sfz*) - strongly accented, forced
71. sharp - the sign that indicates the raising of a given pitch by one half-step
72. simile (*sim.*) – continue to perform in a similar manner
73. sotto voce – softly; with subdued sound; performed in an undertone
74. staccato (*stacc.*) - detached, crisply played
75. strophic – describes a song where the stanzas are all sung to the same music
76. subito - suddenly, quickly
77. tenuto (*ten.*) – fully sustained, occasionally even a bit longer than the note value requires
78. time signature - the sign placed at the beginning of a composition to indicate its meter
79. tonic - the key center, the foundation of a scale or melody.
80. vivace - lively, briskly

Terms adapted from The New Harvard Dictionary of Music, The Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music and The Harvard Dictionary of Music (*second edition-1977*)