

Glossary



a cappella Singing without accompaniment.

accompaniment The music or instruments that play along with the main melody.

accompany To play along with.

accordion A portable instrument that is shaped like a rectangular box and contains a small keyboard; it opens and closes like a bellows; aerophone.

acoustic The natural sound of an instrument or space; no amplification.

acoustic guitar A guitar that is not amplified and features a natural sound; chordophone.

aerophones Instruments that you blow into to make sound, including flutes, whistles, and horns.

anthem A song of praise or devotion, often for one's country or homeland.

antiphonal Singing back and forth between singers or groups; call-and-response.

aria A sophisticated solo song that comments on the story or expresses an emotion; usually accompanied by instruments, performed in opera.

arrangement The written music rearranged for a band or orchestra.

arrhythmic Without a specific rhythm; not rhythmical.

atonal Without a tone center or central key.

bajo sexto A twelve-string, deep-sounding, guitarlike instrument originally from Spain; chordophone.

ballads Songs that tell stories about people, events, history, personal experiences.

banjo A stringed instrument; strings are stretched over a drumlike frame and a neck; chordophone and membranophone.

bar Same as a measure; it contains a group of musical beats.

bass guitar A guitarlike instrument with four strings, same as a double bass but electric; chordophone and electrophone.

- beat** A unit of music, a tap or strike on a drum, or a note played; what you tap your foot to when you listen to a song.
- bebop** An up-tempo style of jazz that uses a theme and includes improvised solos by the players.
- big band** A group of eight to twelve instruments that plays swing-style jazz; these bands were popular in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Billboard charts** *Billboard* is a music industry trade journal that tracks entertainment news, including "charts" of the top-selling records (see *record charts*).
- bluegrass music** A fast tempo country music performed on acoustic instruments—guitar, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, and bass guitar—that features strong harmony and verse-chorus-style singing. Bluegrass groups also feature "breakdowns," when each instrumentalist takes a turn featuring his or her instrument.
- blues** A style of music that evolved from African-American spirituals and work songs; uses blue notes (bent notes), certain kinds of chord patterns, call-and-response, and so on.
- boogie-woogie** A fast tempo, syncopated piano music that evolved from the blues; uses polyrhythms.
- brass instruments** Horn instruments, including trumpets, trombones, tubas, French horns; aerophones.
- Broadway musicals** Popular song shows performed on the stages of New York's theater district.
- Cajun music** A French-based style of music that features singing with accordions and fiddles; developed in Louisiana.
- call-and-response** When a leader sings and a group or individual responds; two groups singing back and forth.
- ceremonial** A system of rituals or formal actions connected with an occasion. Native ceremonials usually have singing, instruments, dancing.
- chamber music** Music written for small groups of classical instruments.
- chant** A repetitive kind of song sung with vocables or words; may be sung on one pitch or on many.
- Chicago blues** An evolution of country blues that developed in Chicago.
- chord** When several pitches are played at once, resulting in harmony.
- chord pattern** An arrangement of chords into a predictable pattern or structure.
- chord structure** The arrangement of chords in a predictable structure or pattern.
- chordophones** Instruments whose sound is made by vibrating strings.

- chorus** The part of a song that is repeated, usually after each verse; refrain. Also refers to a group of singers.
- chromatic scale** A set pattern of pitches that moves up by half-steps.
- clapper rattle** An idiophone that makes a rhythmical sound by slapping or clapping together; may be made from objects such as wood, metal, deer hooves, or bird beaks.
- classical music** A common term describing European-influenced styles of orchestral music and opera.
- comic opera** A funny story, or funny stories, acted out and told in song.
- compose** To create music; it may be written down or remembered in one's head.
- composer** A person who creates music.
- composition** A written piece of music.
- conceptual** Having to do with concepts or ideas rather than visual or physical themes.
- concerto** A piece of music written for a solo instrument and a full orchestra.
- conductor** The person who directs, or leads, the orchestra.
- contemporary music** Music that is played today; modern music.
- cool jazz** A relaxed style of jazz played on piano, bass, and drums or a solo instrument.
- country blues** The earliest form of blues to emerge in the South after the Civil War.
- country music** Music influenced by the traditions of rural America; it has evolved into many modern country styles.
- country rock** Country rock mixes country themes and chords with rock rhythms and faster tempos; often played with electric guitar, piano, bass, and drums.
- country-western music** Popular country music; developed in Nashville, Tennessee.
- cover song** A song that is recorded or sung by someone other than the composer or original performer.
- cowboy songs** Songs that describe life on the prairie, wagon trains, cattle drives, horses, famous cowboys; sometimes they add cattle calls or are sung to the rhythm of horses' hooves.
- deejay (DJ)** A person who spins records or otherwise coordinates recorded music for performance; also called a disc jockey.

- digital sampler** A computer microprocessor that records, or takes a "sample" of, a live sound that can be played back on a keyboard; electrophone.
- dissonance** When certain pitches played together create a harsh or unpleasant sound.
- Dixieland jazz** An upbeat style of jazz music originally from New Orleans and revived in the 1940s.
- downbeat** The first beat in the measure, usually accented for emphasis.
- drum** An instrument played by striking; usually made from a stretched membrane over a frame or container; membranophone and idiophone.
- drumhead** The stretched membrane over the frame or container of a drum.
- drum machine** Electronic device that imitates the sound of live drums; electrophone.
- duet** A musical composition played or sung by two people.
- dulcimer** An American stringed instrument usually shaped like an hourglass, played by strumming, striking, or plucking; chordophone.
- dynamics** The loud and soft parts of a musical composition.
- early jazz** A style of music that featured wind and rhythm instruments played in an upbeat, syncopated style, with collective improvisation (everyone improvising at the same time) being one of its main characteristics. Later came to be called New Orleans jazz, or Dixieland.
- electrophone** A musical instrument that uses electricity to make sound.
- emcee (MC)** In rap music, this is the rapper, the person who talks in rhyme to the rhythm of the beat; also refers to master of ceremonies.
- ethnomusicologist** A person who studies the music of a culture.
- fiddle** A stringed instrument, also called a violin or folk violin; chordophone.
- field calls** Slaves' calls and songs as they worked in the fields.
- field holler** Another term for field call.
- film score** Musical compositions performed as background to the action in a film.
- finger-picking** Using fingers to pluck the strings of an instrument to make sound.
- flute** A wind-blown instrument that consists of a cylindrical tube with holes; aerophone.
- folk music** The ethnic music of a culture; the music of ordinary people.
- folk opera** A story told in song; folk operas are usually about the lives of ordinary people.

- folk songs** Songs in the folk tradition (see *folk music*).
- foot drum** A drum played with the feet—for example, stomping on wooden planks placed over a hole; idiophone.
- form** The structure of a musical composition made of notes, melody, harmony, and rhythm.
- frame drum** A stretched membrane over a round, bent-wood frame; membranophone.
- free jazz** A style of jazz that tends to avoid recognizable structure; atonal, arrhythmic.
- funk music** A mixture of soul music, rock, and jazz; groove-oriented dance music.
- fusion** A mixture of jazz and rock music that uses electric instruments; groove-oriented; also called jazz-rock.
- game songs** Songs that accompany games, including skipping songs, jump-rope songs, and so on.
- genre** A style or type; in music, a style or type of music—rock, jazz, country, blues, for example.
- gospel music** Sacred music that mixes soulful lyrics with the rhythms and instruments of popular music.
- grand opera** Opera performed in an elaborate, lavish manner; serious.
- guitar** A stringed instrument, usually made of wood in the shape of an hourglass; with a neck; played by strumming or plucking; chordophone.
- harmonica** A wind instrument; a small flat metal instrument with reeds that is played by inhaling and exhaling into different reeds to change the pitch; aerophone.
- harmony** A combination of pitches sounded together.
- harmony singing** Many voices singing together on different pitches.
- high pitch** A high-sounding musical tone; higher frequency of vibration.
- honky-tonk music** A popular country-style music performed in bars and “honky-tonks” popular in the 1940s and 1950s. The music featured guitar, steel guitar, dobro, fiddle, and bass, with straightforward lyrics about heartbreaks and breakups, good times and bad times, finding love and losing it.
- horn** A wind instrument with a small opening at one end expanding to a wider opening at the other; may be made from animal horns, tusks, wood, or metal; aerophone.
- humorous songs** Songs with comical lyrics.