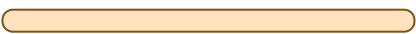


Dynamics & Articulation

HOW LOUD — THE EIGHT STEPS

<i>fff</i>		<i>fortississimo</i> — as loud as the instrument will give
<i>ff</i>		<i>fortissimo</i> — very loud
<i>f</i>		<i>forte</i> — loud
<i>mf</i>		<i>mezzo forte</i> — moderately loud
<i>mp</i>		<i>mezzo piano</i> — moderately soft
<i>p</i>		<i>piano</i> — soft
<i>pp</i>		<i>pianissimo</i> — very soft
<i>ppp</i>		<i>pianississimo</i> — barely there

No fixed decibel sits behind any of these: they are steps relative to each other.

GETTING LOUDER, GETTING SOFTER



<i>cresc.</i>	Gradually louder. Written as a word or as an opening hairpin.
<i>dim. / decresc.</i>	Gradually softer. The two words mean the same thing.
<i>morendo</i>	Dying away — softer and usually slower with it.
<i>calando</i>	Falling away: quieter and slower together.
<i>al niente</i>	To nothing. The hairpin closes to a point.

AND IN WHAT MANNER

<i>legato</i>	Smoothly, each note joined to the next.
<i>cantabile</i>	In a singing style.
<i>dolce</i>	Sweetly, gently.
<i>espressivo</i>	With expression — <i>espress.</i>
<i>leggiero</i>	Lightly, without weight.
<i>sostenuto</i>	Sustained, notes held to their full length.

Two questions asked of every note: how loud, and how attached to its neighbour. Dynamics are relative — a *forte* for a solo flute is not a *forte* for a brass section — and articulation is what turns the same pitches into a different piece of music.



Staccato

A dot. Detached — roughly half the written value, with silence after.



Staccatissimo

A wedge. Shorter and sharper still — a point of sound.



Tenuto

A short line. Hold the note its full length, and give it a little weight.



Accent

A wedge pointing right. Attack this note harder than the ones around it.



Marcato

A roof. Stronger than an accent, and slightly short with it.



Slur

A curve over different pitches. Play them joined — one bow, one breath, one tongue.



Portato

Line and dot together. Separated, but gently — carried rather than cut.



Tie

The same curve, but between two notes of the *same* pitch. One sound, added lengths.

Sudden and single-note marks

<i>sf · sfz</i>	<i>sforzando</i> — force this one note out.
<i>fz</i>	<i>forzando</i> — the same idea, an older spelling.
<i>fp</i>	Loud, then instantly soft on the same note.
<i>sfp</i>	Forced, then immediately soft.
<i>rfz</i>	<i>rinforzando</i> — reinforce the phrase, not just the note.
<i>sub. p</i>	<i>subito piano</i> — suddenly soft, with no fade into it.
<i>> over a note</i>	An accent. Over a long note held under a hairpin, a swell.

Where the marks go

Dynamics go **below** the staff for instruments, and **above** it for voices, where the words live underneath.

Articulation goes on the **notehead side** — opposite the stem — except the marcato roof, which always sits above.

For piano, one line of dynamics goes between the two staves and serves both hands.

How short is short?

Staccato is not a fixed length. It shortens with the tempo, the instrument and the room — a staccato crotchet in a slow adagio is far longer than a staccato quaver in a presto.

The silence is the point. A staccato note keeps its place in the bar; only its sound is cut short.

Under a slur, dots mean *portato*: separated within one bow or breath, not chopped.