

5. Intensity in music

Dynamics and dynamic markings

SECTION 1 MUSICAL CONTEXT

1. Write in the right definition for each number (from left to right) and you will get a sentence that refers to dynamic markings in music.

1. A quality indicating whether a sound is loud or soft.
2. "A tempo" means _____ time.
3. The subject you are studying.
4. Third person singular of the verb "to be".
5. To find the size, length, amount, degree, etc. of something (past participle).
6. Same preposition as 2.
7. Units of measure of the loudness of a sound (plural).



1→ I N T E N S I T Y 2→ I N

3→ M U S I C 4→ I S

5→ M E A S U R E D 6→ I N

7→ D E C I B E L S



2. Identify the name of 5 types of dynamic markings in this letter soup. Classify these dynamic markings as indicated:



1. A stable intensity or volume:
Piano
Forte
Pianissimo
2. A variable intensity or volume:
Sforzando
Crescendo

3. Here are various abbreviations of dynamic markings used for music volume. Write in next to each one its complete name and say how it should be interpreted.

Abbreviation	Name of marking	Way played
<i>cresc.</i>	Crescendo	Gradually increasing in volume/intensity
<i>ff</i>	Fortissimo	Very loud
<i>sfz</i>	Sforzando	Accenting or stressing the note
<i>mp</i>	Mezzo piano	Medium soft
<i>dim.</i>	Diminuendo	Gradually decreasing in volume/intensity

4. Write in next to each one an SV to indicate Stable Volume or a VV to indicate that it is a Variable Volume.

Abbreviation	Type of volume	Abbreviation	Type of volume
<i>mp</i>	S.V. stable volume	<i>mf</i>	S.V. stable volume
<i>cresc.</i>	V.V. variable volume	<i>sfz</i>	V.V. variable volume
<i>pp</i>	S.V. stable volume	<i>p</i>	S.V. stable volume
<i>dim.</i>	V.V. variable volume	<i>ff</i>	S.V. stable volume

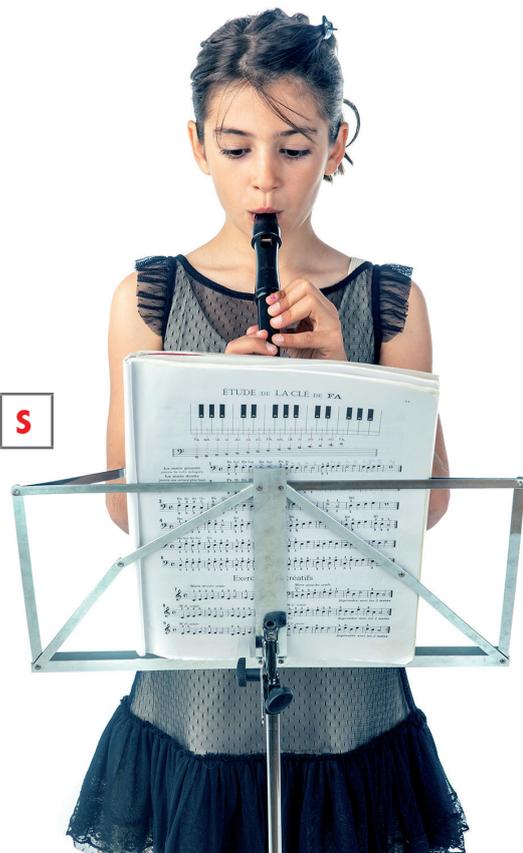
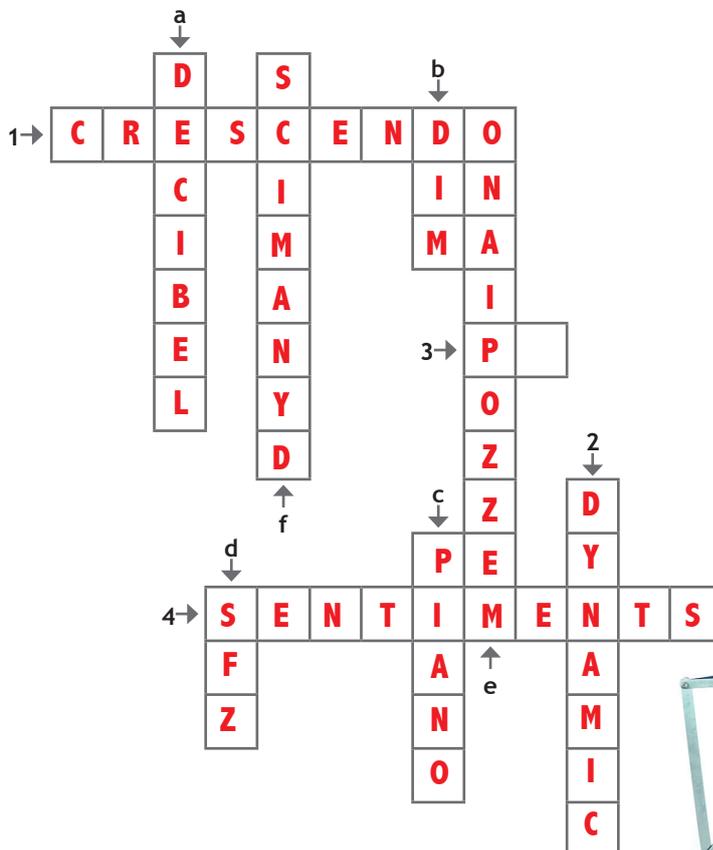
5. Answer the following questions referring to dynamics and markings and you'll be able to complete the crossword below.

Horizontal

1. Dynamic volume marking indicating a gradual increase in intensity crescendo
2. The kind of markings used to indicate intensity or changes in intensity dynamic
3. Abbreviation used to indicate a very soft sound pp
4. Using dynamics and dynamic markings, composers are able to produce in listeners emotions and feelings

Vertical

- a) A unit of measure of the intensity of a sound decibel
- b) Abbreviation indicating a gradual decrease in intensity dim
- c) Dynamic marking that means play softly piano
- d) Abbreviation of Sforzando sfz
- e) Dynamic marking which is the opposite of mezzo forte mezzopiano
- f) Word used to indicate the general intensity of a musical piece dynamics



SECTION 2 LISTENING**THE INTENSITY OF VOICE**

We don't always talk using the same volume. Depending on the situation we are in, we may raise our voices or lower them, so intensity depends on the expressive force used in each situation. At times our voices may be very low, such as when we are telling someone a secret, or when we are in a library. This is called whispering. At other times we have to raise our voices – when we shout at a football game, when we're angry with someone, or when we shout for joy!

Listen to the fragments of these films and give the right intensity you can hear in the dialogues.

Listening 11

Chinese Box, (Drama-Romance) 1997 Wayne Wang

A couple are arguing. He is a reporter and thinks the girl has done something wrong. The tension rises as the argument continues. Listen to the sounds of the street – cars, sirens, etc.

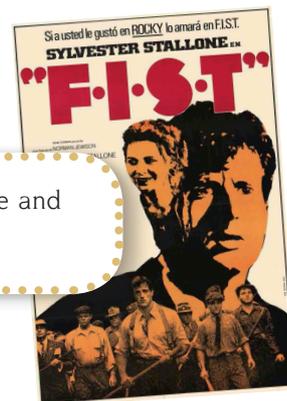
✓ Intensity loud

**Listening 12**

F.I.S.T. (Drama) 1978 Norman Jewison

A labour union is having a meeting. Everyone gets more and more excited as they argue.

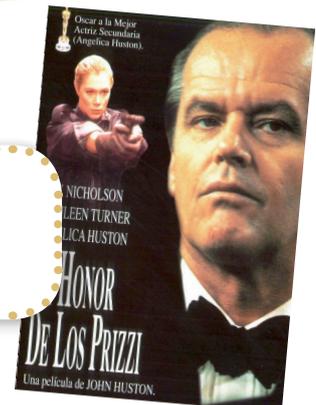
✓ Intensity very loud

**Listening 13**

Prizzi's Honor (Drama) 1985 John Huston

This is a gathering in the lounge of a house. The conversation is about the dirty businesses of Mafia families in the 1920s.

✓ Intensity medium loud





Listening 14



Three Days of the Condor (Drama) 1975

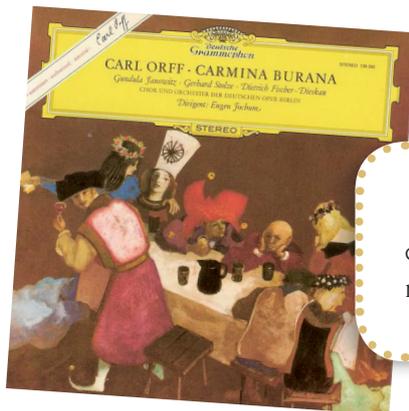
Sydney Pollack

The conversation takes place inside a house where the only light is the moonlight coming through the windows. The hero has a hostage inside and is afraid the police outside will hear them.

✓ Intensity soft

After listening to the four conversations, write the title of each one on the table below, ordering them from least to most in intensity.

Soft	<i>Three Days of the Condor</i>
Medium loud	<i>Prizzi's Honor</i>
Loud	<i>Chinese Box</i>
Very loud	<i>F.I.S.T.</i>



Listening 15



O Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi 13th C

Adpt. Carl Orff
(1937)

This is a song to the goddess Fortune, a fickle goddess, changeable like the moon, who plays capriciously with the destinies of men and women, who implore her favour with this cantata.

a) Mark the dynamic marking and the dynamic change with an X.

- f - ff*
- pp - ff*
- cresc.*
- f - mf*

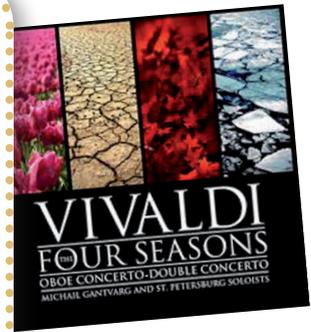
- Flat dynamics
- Sudden dynamic change
- Slight dynamic change
- Gradual dynamic change



Listening 16**Le Quattro Stagioni Autumn 1723-1725** Antonio Vivaldi

In this descriptive work, divided into three movements, the composer evokes images of the four seasons by using musical language.

The first movement, the *Allegro*, describes the joy of the peasants celebrating a happy harvest with dances and songs; and inflamed by the liquor of Bacchus, many end their rejoicing with sleep. In the second movement, the *Adagio Molto*, the mild pleasant air makes everyone abandon dance and song; now come the sweet delights of peaceful sleep. The third movement, another *Allegro*, evokes the hunters, who at the break of dawn, set forth with horns, guns, and hounds.



- a) After listening to this fragment of *Autumn*, do you think the changes in intensity are as great as they were in *O Fortuna*?

No

- b) Mark the right dynamic change.

- Flat dynamics Slight dynamic change
 Sudden dynamic change Gradual dynamic change

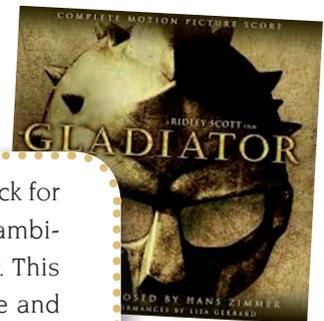
- c) Listen to the fragment again and write in the dynamic markings as you hear them.

f	p	f	p	f	p
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Listening 17**Gladiator (Action-Adventures) 2000** Hans Zimmer

This theme called *The Barbarian Horde* is part of the original soundtrack for the film about the Roman general Maximus Decimus Meridius and the ambitious Commodus who becomes Emperor of Rome by killing his own father. This is when Maximus, as gladiator, enters the arena in Rome for the first time and takes command.

Listen to this forceful, energetic, powerful music – three adjectives that describe the electrifying action of this scene.



- a) What intensity can you hear in this fragment? **Loud**

- b) Is there a change in intensity? **Yes**

c) Mark the dynamics and dynamic change as appropriate.

p

m.f

f

ff

Flat dynamics

Sudden dynamic change

Slight dynamic change

Gradual dynamic change



Listening 18

Gymnopédie 1888 Erik Satie



The composer of this piece had an eccentric and ironic character. His music contains humorous references, sometimes with curious markings for interpreters, such as: “very serious rest”, “delay very courteously”, or “please delay”.

He gave some of his works funny names such as “True Flabby Preludes for a Dog” or “Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear”.

a) What intensity can you hear in this fragment? Soft

b) Is there a change in intensity? No, there is no change.

c) Mark the dynamics and dynamic change as appropriate.

p

m.f

f

ff

Flat dynamics

Sudden dynamic change

Slight dynamic change

Gradual dynamic change



Listening 19

Danza del molinero 1917 Manuel de Falla



You listened to this piece in the last Unit to find its tempo. Now listen to it again and try and find the dynamic change made by the composer. Remember that the plot of this piece is how the miller tricks the magistrate and the people all see how bad he is because he runs after all the women in the town.

a) Do you think the intensity remains the same, or does it gradually change? _____

No, it changes gradually.

b) Mark the right dynamic marking and give its meaning.

 f
 dim.
 ff
 cresc.
 p

MEANING Gradually increasing in volume/intensity

c) Mark the right dynamic change.

 Flat dynamics

 Slight dynamic change

 Sudden dynamic change

 Gradual dynamic change

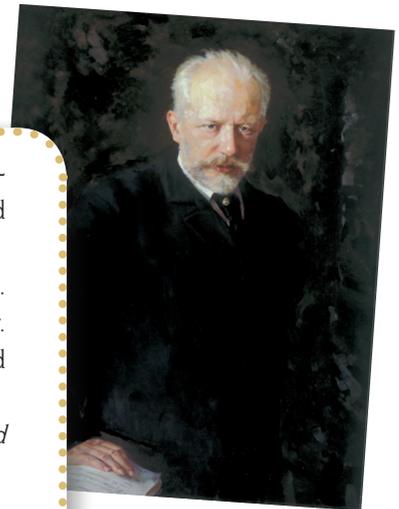
Listening 20

1812 Overture 1882 Piotr Ilich Tchaikovsky

This composition, premièred on August 20th 1882, commemorates the defeat of Napoleon when he tried to conquer Russia and pays homage to the triumph of liberty over tyranny.

At only 120 kilometres from Moscow a bloody battle was fought. Over 100,000 French soldiers lost their lives, and the end was near. Napoleon, with his troops decimated and suffering from hunger and cold, retreats and finally abandons Russia.

This inspired Leo Tolstoy to write his famous novel *War and Peace*, and Tchaikovsky to compose his celebrated *1812 Overture*.



a) Do you think the intensity remains the same, or does it gradually change? _____

b) Mark the right dynamic marking and give its meaning.

 f
 dim.
 ff
 cresc.
 p

MEANING Gradually decreasing in volume/intensity

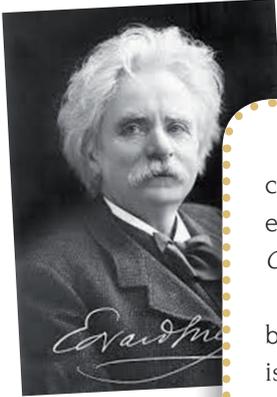
c) Mark the right dynamic change.

 Flat dynamics

 Slight dynamic change

 Sudden dynamic change

 Gradual dynamic change



Listening 21

The Death of Åse 1875 Edvard Grieg



Based on the play Peer Gynt by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen, this composition originally had a total of 23 movements, from which Grieg finally extracted eight, divided into two groups: Suite No. 2, Opus 55, and Suite No. 1, Opus 46, to which this fragment belongs.

The work tells the extraordinary story of Peer Gynt, a peasant who wants to become rich and famous. The listening exercise refers to Åse, Peer’s mother, who is very upset with her son.

The plot develops in 4 movements describing the events of this fantastic adventure:

- 1. Morning Mood
- 2. The Death of Åse
- 3. Anitra’s Dance
- 4. In the Hall of the Mountain King

a) The combination of the two kinds of dynamics you have heard can be written using a double hair-pin. How many times can you hear this dynamic marking? 3

b) How is this dynamic marking written?



Listening 22

Dance of the Adolescents 1913 Igor Stravinsky



This piece comes from The Rite of Spring, composed for the Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes company, première on May 29th 1913 in Paris and causing a sensation and near riot in the audience due to its avant-garde character and daring choreographies.

It is set in primitive Russia, where a girl is kidnapped and has to dance to the death. Only with the young maiden’s sacrifice will a new Spring season begin, if the gods are pleased. The Rite of Spring is performed in two Acts: The Adoration of the Earth and The Sacrifice, in which primitive scenes are evoked, full of beauty and action.

It is also called, Pictures of Pagan Russia in Two Parts, and at its première, people began to boo before it was finished, and the audience was divided into those who defended its avant-garde nature and those who thought the music was “cacophonous”, “the work of a madman”, “a series of incomprehensible noises”.

a) This fragment has a dynamic change that stands out above all others. Say which one it is and give its meaning.



mf



cresc.



sfz



ff



dim.

MEANING Accenting or stressing the note

Let's continue practising with dynamics and dynamic markings.

In the following listening exercises, give the dynamics used and the type of dynamic change.

Listening 23

Heart-Shaped Box Nirvana



DYNAMICS OR MARKINGS	<i>p - f</i>
DYNAMICS	<i>Sudden dynamic change</i>

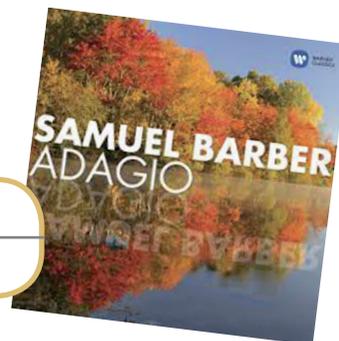
Listening 24

Yes, Speak Out Cristóbal Halfter

DYNAMICS OR MARKINGS	<i>mf</i>
DYNAMICS	<i>Sudden dynamic change</i>

Listening 25

Adagio Samuel Barber



DYNAMICS OR MARKINGS	<i>pp - mp</i>
DYNAMICS	<i>Soft dynamics</i>

Listening 26

Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da The Beatles



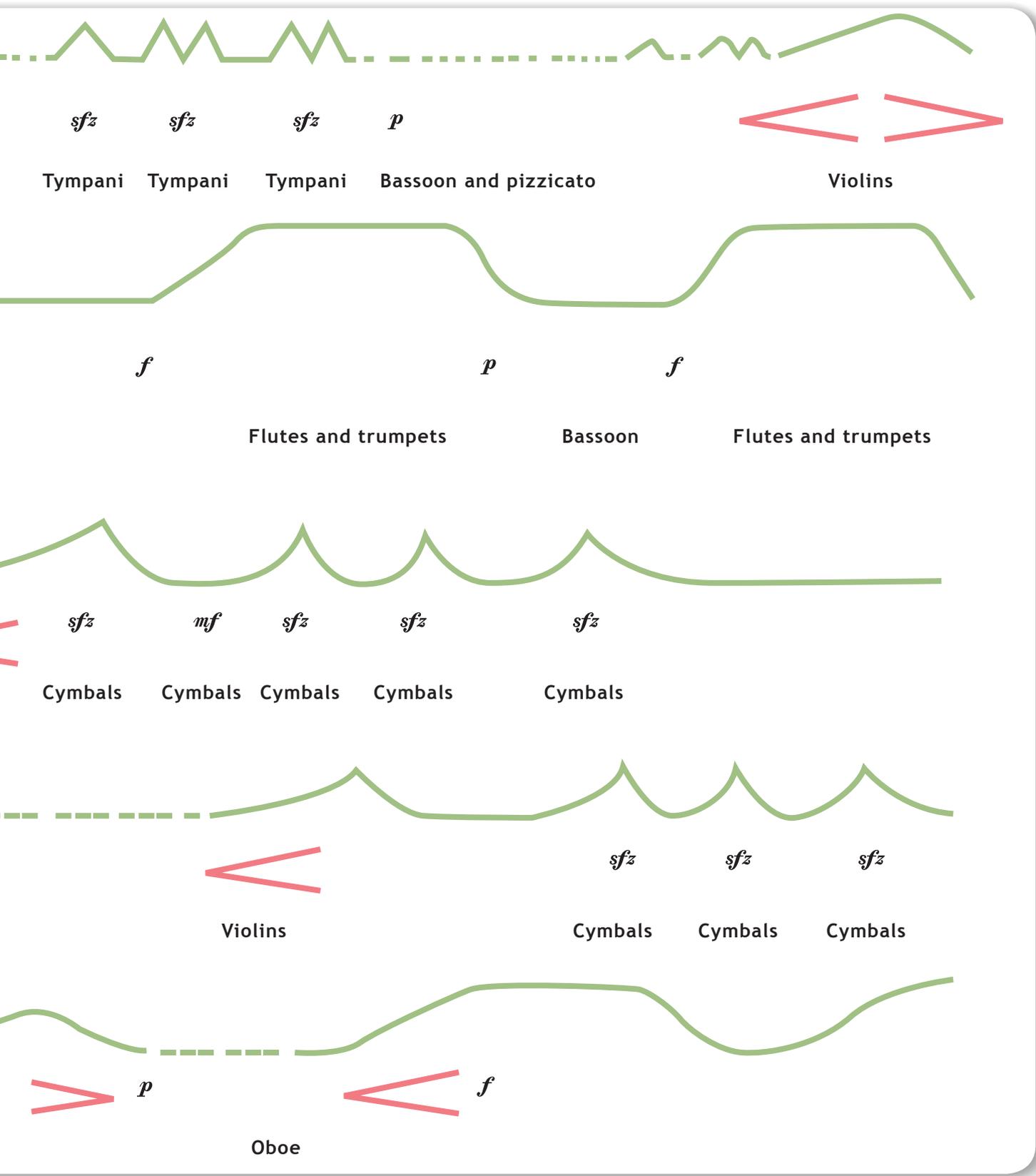
DYNAMICS OR MARKINGS	<i>f</i>
DYNAMICS	<i>Flat dynamics</i>

Listening 27

Brandenburg Concerto Johann Sebastian Bach



DYNAMICS OR MARKINGS	<i>f - p</i>
DYNAMICS	<i>Sudden dynamic change</i>



SECTION 3 CULTURAL CONTEXT



1. Complete these statements and you'll consolidate your knowledge of dynamics and dynamic markings in different historical periods.
 - a) **With a D:** The Classical period brings changes in dynamics, such as the crescendo and the **diminuendo** causing great enthusiasm in the audience.
 - b) **With an E:** Another dynamic resources was to imitate physical echoes by playing a musical passage first in **f** and then repeating it in **p**. **echo**
 - c) **With an S:** The Romantic period brought a dynamic resource that consisted in accenting certain, notes, called **sforzando** creating tension at certain points of the music.
 - d) **With an E:** In the Renaissance, certain dynamic changes in interpretation produced greater **expressiveness** in certain parts of the score.
 - e) **With an P:** In the Middle Ages, because Gregorian chants were used for **prayer** melodies presented no dynamic changes that would distract the faithful.
 - f) **With an S:** In the 20th century, composers explored new methods and techniques, and sometimes made dynamic changes that were very **sudden**

2. Write the name of the right period based on the statements given below.

The Middle Ages, Renaissance, The Baroque, Classical, Romanticism, 20th century



- **20th century** New and varied dynamic changes occur as a result of experimentation and innovation.
- **The Baroque** Terraced dynamics appear by using many players for loud and few players for soft.
- **The Middle Ages** No dynamic changes are used in melodies.
- **Classicism** The perfection in the manufacture of instruments favours the appearance of **crescendos** and **diminuendos**.
- **The Renaissance** Some dynamic changes are made but these are not yet indicated on musical scores.
- **Romanticism** Extreme dynamic changes are made, ranging from **pppp** to **ffff**

SECTION 4 MUSICAL CREATION

SYNCOPIATION AND OFF-BEAT NOTES

ACCENTED BEATS

1. Fill in the blanks below.

- Binary time has two beats, with the first beat accented or loud (>) and the second and third soft or weak (-)
- Ternary time has three beats, with the first beat accented or loud (>) and the second and third soft or weak (-)
- Quaternary time has four beats, with the first beat accented or loud (>) and the second and fourth soft or weak (-) and the third (+) medium loud

2. Fit each word into the right beat, based on its syllables and accents.

doggy, tragic, memorable, Malaga, parking, apple, centimetre, operator, majesty, laughable, fortunate, mandatory

DUPLE TIME

doggy
tragic
parking
apple

TRIPLE TIME

Malaga
majesty
laughable
fortunate

QUADRUPLE TIME

memorable
centimetre
operator
mandatory

3. On the following passages, indicate where the accent or stress calls using the marks strong (>) for weak (-). Use the first bar as an example.

Then read them rhythmically.

a)



b)

A musical staff in 3/4 time. Above the staff, there are five groups of rhythmic notation: an accent (>) followed by two dashes (-), then an accent (>) followed by two dashes (-), and so on. The notes below are quarter notes, eighth notes, and a dotted quarter note.

c)

A musical staff in 4/4 time. Above the staff, there are four groups of rhythmic notation: an accent (>) followed by a dash (-) and a plus sign (+), then an accent (>) followed by a dash (-) and a plus sign (+), and so on. The notes below are quarter notes, eighth notes, and a dotted quarter note.

SYNCOPATION



4. Write in the accented and non-accented beats on the following passages. Then indicate the syncopations using an S. Remember that syncopation places the stress or accent in places where it doesn't normally occur, for instance replacing a strong note with a weak note and vice versa.

a)

A musical staff in 2/4 time. Above the staff, there is an accent (>) followed by a dash (-). Below the staff, there are three red 'S' symbols under the second, fourth, and sixth notes, indicating syncopation.

b)

A musical staff in 3/4 time. Below the staff, there are four red 'S' symbols under the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes, indicating syncopation.

c)

A musical staff in 4/4 time. Below the staff, there are two red 'S' symbols under the third and seventh notes, indicating syncopation.

5. Complete the following scores with the symbols you think are appropriate, but include at least two syncopations.

a)

A musical staff in 2/4 time. The first two notes are quarter notes, followed by four empty staves for completion.

b)

A musical staff in 3/4 time. The first three notes are quarter notes, followed by three empty staves for completion.

c)

A musical staff in 4/4 time. The first four notes are quarter notes, followed by three empty staves for completion.

