

## **AP Music Theory**

### **VOCABULARY/TERMS/SYMBOLS**

#### **Terms and Symbols Used on the AP Music Theory Exam**

The terms and symbols in the list below may appear in the directions or questions on the AP Music Theory Exam, as well as in course instructional materials. As such, the list will be an invaluable guide in the development of an AP Music Theory course, but it is not intended to limit course content — some teachers may choose to include topics not shown here.

It is important to note that the list does not include extremely basic musical vocabulary, even though such widely used terms may be used on the exam — for example, “quarter note” is not listed. Nor is every term of equal importance — for example, “strophic” and “rubato” may not appear on every exam, but “melody,” “phrase” and “texture” certainly will.

Definitions and illustrations of the terms and concepts listed here can be found in music theory textbooks and standard reference works, such as *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.

# LIST 1

## FORM

### Symbols

Lowercase letters indicate musical phrases or subsections: for example, **a b** indicates a contrasting period; **a b a** indicates a phrase, contrasting phrase and return to the original phrase. A prime (as in **a a'**) denotes a phrase and a varied restatement. Capital letters are used to indicate larger sections of compositions.

### Terms

Cadence  
Cadential extension  
Coda  
Codetta  
Contour  
Counter melody  
Elision (phrase elision)  
Fragment (fragmented motive)  
Introduction

### Jazz and pop terms

bridge  
chorus  
song form (AABA)  
turnaround  
twelve-bar blues

### Melodic procedures

augmentation  
conjunct  
diminution  
disjunct  
extension, phrase extension  
fragmentation  
internal expansion  
inversion, melodic inversion  
literal repetition  
motivic transformation  
octave displacement  
retrograde  
rhythmic transformation  
sequence  
sequential repetition  
transposition  
truncation

### Motive

#### Period

antecedent  
consequent  
contrasting period  
double period  
parallel period

Phrase group  
Refrain

#### Small forms

binary  
rounded binary  
simple binary  
ternary

Solo, soli  
Stanza  
Strophic  
Theme  
Thematic Transformation  
Through-composed  
Tutti  
Variation  
Verse

## LIST 2

# HARMONY

### Symbols

#### Roman and Arabic numerals

Capital Roman numerals denote major triads.

Lowercase Roman numerals denote minor triads.

A capital Roman numeral with a “ + ” indicates an augmented triad.

A lowercase Roman numeral with a “ ø ” indicates a diminished triad.

Arabic numerals or figured-bass symbols denote intervals above the bass and hence indirectly indicate chord inversion. Arabic numerals may indicate voice leading and/or non-harmonic tones.

### Triads

6 indicates a first inversion triad

6

4 indicates a second inversion triad

### Seventh Chords

7 indicates a root-position seventh chord

o7 indicates a diminished (fully-diminished) seventh chord

ø7 indicates a half-diminished seventh chord

6

5 indicates first inversion

4

3 indicates second inversion

4

2 indicates third inversion

### Other figures

8–7 indicates melodic movement from an octave to a seventh above the bass.

9–8, 7–6, 4–3 indicate a suspension and melodic resolution.

An accidental before an Arabic numeral indicates alteration of the interval involved.

A figure with a slash (e.g., /) or a plus (e.g., 4+) indicates that the note creating the interval in question is raised a half step.

## Cadence Types

- \*Authentic Cadence
  - Imperfect authentic Cadence
  - Perfect authentic Cadence
- \*Conclusive cadence
- \*Deceptive
- \*Half
  - Phrygian half
- \*Inconclusive cadence
- \*Plagal

## Chord Quality

### Triads

- augmented or +
- diminished or  $\emptyset$
- major or M
- minor or m

### Seventh chords

- major seventh (MM; M7) (“major-major”)
- dominant seventh (Mm7) (used for "major-minor" seventh chords exercising a dominant function)
- minor seventh (m7; mm) (“minor-minor”)
- half-diminished seventh ( $\emptyset$ 7; dm) (“diminished-minor”)
- fully-diminished seventh ( $\emptyset$ 7; dd) (“diminished-diminished”)

## Functions and Progressions

### Scale degrees/diatonic chord names

- tonic
- supertonic
- mediant
- subdominant
- dominant
- submediant
- subtonic
- leading tone

### Functions

- tonic function
- dominant function
- predominant function

### Circle of fifths

Deceptive progression

### Harmonic rhythm

### Modulation

- common tone modulation
- phrase modulation
- pivot chord modulation

### Neighboring chord

### Rate of harmonic change

Realize, realization of a figured bass,  
realization of a four-part Roman numeral progression

### Retrogression

### Secondary dominant

### Secondary leading tone chord

### Tonicization

## Treatment of second inversion ( 6/4 ) triads

### Arpeggiating 6

4—a 6/4 created by arpeggiation of the triad in the bass (e.g., 1a).

### Cadential 6

4—a I 6/4 preceding the dominant, often at a cadence. Although it contains the notes of the tonic triad, it does not exercise a tonic function but rather serves as an embellishment of the dominant. It occurs in a metrically stronger position than the dominant, and the upper voices most often move by step to the tones of the dominant. May also be written as  $V6/4 = 5/3$ , including the resolution of the cadential 6/4 to the dominant (e.g., 1b).

### Neighboring or pedal 6

4 (embellishing 6/4, auxiliary 6/4)—occurs when the third and fifth of a root position triad are embellished by their respective upper neighboring tones, while the bass is stationary, usually occurring on a weak beat (e.g., 1c).

### Passing 6

4—harmonizes the second note of a three-note ascending or descending scale fragment in the bass; that is, it harmonizes a bass passing tone. The usual metric placement is on an unaccented beat and the motion of the upper voices is ordinarily by step (e.g., 1d).

### EXAMPLES

C: I I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> I    ii<sup>6</sup> I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> V I    I IV<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> I    I<sup>6</sup> V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> I

or  
V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> —<sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup> I

I

1a. Arpeggiating 6

4

1b. Cadential 6

4

1c. Neighboring or Pedal 6

4

1d. Passing 6

4

### **Non-harmonic Tones**

- Anticipation
- Appoggiatura
- Embellishment
- Escape tone (échappé)

**Neighboring tone** (auxiliary tone, embellishing tone, neighbor note)

- double neighbor
- lower neighbor
- upper neighbor
- neighbor group (cambiata, changing tones, changing notes)

Ornament

Passing tone (accented, unaccented)

Pedal point

Preparation

Resolution

Retardation

### **Suspension**

rearticulated suspension

suspension chain

### **Spacing/Voicing/Position**

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Close position

Open position

Doubling

Inversion, inversion of chords

Root

Root position

First inversion

Second inversion

Third inversion

### **Voice Leading**

Common tone

Contrary motion

Cross relation (false relation)

Crossed voices (voice crossing)

Direct fifths (hidden fifths)

Direct octaves (hidden octaves)

Oblique motion

Overlapping voices

Parallel motion

### **Parallel intervals**

objectionable parallels

parallel fifths

parallel octaves

Similar motion

Tendency tone

Unresolved leading tone

Unresolved seventh

Voice exchange

### **Miscellaneous Harmonic Terms**

Arpeggio, arpeggiation

Chromatic

Common Practice Style

Consonance

Diatonic

Dissonance

Figured bass

Flatted fifth

Lead sheet

Picardy third

Resolution

### **Intervals**

Compound interval

Half step (semitone)

Interval

Inversion, inversion of an interval

Numerical names (i.e., third, fifth, octave)

Quality or type (e.g., perfect, major, minor, diminished, augmented)

Tritone

Unison (prime)

Whole step (whole tone)

### **Performance Terms**

Antiphonal

### **Articulation**

arco

legato

marcato

pizzicato

slur

staccato

tenuto

Call and response

### **Dynamics**

crescendo

diminuendo

terrace dynamics

pianissimo pp

piano p  
mezzo piano mp  
mezzo forte mf  
forte f  
fortissimo ff  
Improvisation, improvisatory  
Phrasing

### **Tempo**

adagio  
allegro  
andante  
andantino  
grave  
largo  
lento  
moderato  
presto  
vivace  
accelerando  
ritardando  
ritenuto  
rubato

### **Rhythm/Meter/Temporal Organization**

#### **Accent**

agogic accent  
dynamic accent  
metrical accent

Anacrusis (pickup; upbeat)  
Asymmetrical meter  
Augmentation  
Bar line  
Beat

#### **Beat type**

compound  
simple

Changing meter (multimeter)  
Cross rhythm  
Diminution  
Dot, double dot  
Dotted rhythm  
Duplet  
Duration  
Hemiola  
Irregular meter

### **Meter**

duple  
quadruple  
triple  
Note value  
Polyrhythm  
Pulse  
Rhythm  
Swing rhythm  
Syncopation  
Tempo  
Tie  
Time signature (meter signature)  
Triplet

### **Scales/Keys/Modes**

Accidental  
Chromatic, chromaticism  
Diatonic  
Key signature  
Major

#### **Minor**

harmonic minor  
melodic minor, ascending/descending natural  
minor (Aeolian)

#### **Mode**

Ionian  
Dorian  
Phrygian  
Lydian  
Mixolydian  
Aeolian  
Locrian

#### **Modality**

Parallel key, parallel major or minor  
Pentatonic  
Relative key, relative major or minor

#### **Scale degrees**

tonic ^1  
supertonic ^2  
mediant ^3  
subdominant ^4  
dominant ^5  
submediant ^6  
leading tone ^7  
Tetrachord  
Tonal  
Tonality  
Tonic  
Whole-tone scale

**Text/Music Relations**

Lyrics  
Melismatic  
Stanza  
Syllabic

**Texture**

Alberti bass  
Canon  
Canonic  
Chordal accompaniment  
Contrapuntal

**Counterpoint**

imitation  
imitative polyphony  
nonimitative polyphony  
countermelody  
fugal imitation  
Heterophony, heterophonic

**Homophony, homophonic**

chordal homophony  
chordal texture (homorhythmic)  
melody with accompaniment

**Instrumentation**

brass  
continuo  
percussion  
rhythm section

strings  
timbre  
woodwinds  
Melody  
Monophony, monophonic  
Obbligato  
Ostinato  
Polyphony, polyphonic  
Register  
Solo, soli  
Tessitura  
Tutti  
Walking bass

**Other terms that may be used on the AP Music Theory Exam**

Aria  
Art song  
Concerto  
Fugue  
Genre(s)  
Interlude  
Opera  
Prelude  
Postlude  
Sonata  
Song  
String quartet  
Symphony