

Mastering Dynamics: The Volume of Sound

Learning objective: To understand and apply musical dynamics, using Italian terminology to describe and perform variations in volume.

Read the definitions carefully and use your knowledge of musical expression to answer the following questions. Max the monkey is keen to see how you interpret these shifts in sound!

In music, dynamics refer to the volume of a sound or note. Composers use specific Italian terms to tell musicians how loudly or softly to play. A 'crescendo' indicates a gradual increase in volume, while a 'diminuendo' indicates a gradual decrease. Mastering these allows a performer to add emotion and storytelling to their musical pieces.

Word bank: Pianissimo (pp) · Piano (p) · Mezzo-piano (mp) · Mezzo-forte (mf) · Forte (f) · Fortissimo (ff) · Crescendo · Diminuendo

1. If a composer writes a 'crescendo' symbol during a piece of music, how should the musician change their performance? Explain the effect this has on the listener. (2 marks)

2. Compare and contrast 'Piano' (p) and 'Forte' (f). In what type of musical atmosphere might a composer choose to use 'Pianissimo' instead of 'Piano'? (3 marks)

3. Max the monkey is writing a song about a thunderstorm. He wants the music to start as a light drizzle and build up to a crashing storm. Justify which dynamic markings he should use at the beginning and the end of his piece. (3 marks)

4. What might happen to the emotional impact of a lullaby if the performer accidentally played it in 'Fortissimo' throughout the entire song? (2 marks)

5. If a piece of music transitions from 'Forte' directly to 'Piano' without a 'diminuendo', how would the sound change? Describe the musical effect of this sudden shift. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a visual representation of a 'crescendo'. Use shapes or patterns that start small and become larger to represent the increasing volume of sound.



Extension challenge: Compose a short rhythmic sequence using body percussion (clapping, tapping, stomping). Create a score that includes at least three different dynamic changes. Perform your sequence for a partner and ask them to identify the specific dynamic markings you used. Explain why you chose those specific volumes for each section of your rhythm.