Orchestra Vocabulary

1. Arco – To bow
2. Accent – emphasis on a note
3. Accelerando – to gradually get faster
4. Accidental – symbols used to raise or

lower a pitch or to cancel a previous sign.

Notes not within a key signature

1. Arpeggio – The outline of a chord. 1-3-5-1.
2. Tempo – Rate of speed in music. Measured in BPM or tempo markings
3. BPM – Beats per minute. How tempo is measured.
4. Adagio – Tempo marking; slow. ~ 70 BPM
5. Allegro – Tempo marking; fast and lively. ~140 BPM
6. Pizzicato – To pluck.
7. Andante – Tempo marking; walking speed. ~90 BPM
8. Caesura – stop or pause in music.
9. Coda – alternate ending
10. Cantabile – singing; song-like
11. Chromatic – motion by ½ step.
12. Col Legno – With the wood/ stick of the bow
13. Con – with
14. Crescendo – gradually increase volume
15. Decrescendo – gradually decrease volume
16. Da Capo – D.C. Go back to the beginning of the piece/ the head.
17. Dal Segno – D.S. Go back to the sign.
18. Dolce – Sweetly
19. Double bar – the end of a piece or movement.
20. Dynamics – Volume of the music. Loud or quiet.
21. Enharmonic – One pitch spelled two different ways. F sharp and G flat
22. Fermata – Hold until cut off
23. Fine – The end
24. Flat – Lowers a pitch by a ½ step
25. Sharp – Raises a pitch by a ½ step
26. Forte – Loud; strong
27. Piano – Quiet; soft
28. Glissando – Sliding between pitches
29. Harmony – Two or more pitches occurring at the same time
30. Interval – The distance between two pitches
31. Key Signature – Sharps or flats at the beginning of a staff
32. Marcato – Marked; stressed bowing. Louder than an average accent.
33. Martele – “Hammered” bowing with space.
34. Meno – Less
35. Molto – very much
36. Largo – very slow tempo; ~50 BPM

Semester 2

1. Non – “not” as in “non legato”
2. Phrase – A group of consecutive notes that form a musical idea or sentence.
3. Piu – “more” as in “piu dolce”
4. Ritardando – to gradually slow down; rit.
5. Sempre – Always; “sempre marcato”
6. Rubato – Temporary disregard of strict tempo for expressive effect; slight speeding up followed by slowing down
7. Similie – similar; the same. Continue playing the passage with the same style.
8. Ledger Lines – lines that extend the staff above and below.
9. Pesante – Heavy style; ponderous or dragging.
10. Poco – Little; “poco a poco”
11. Sforzando – A sudden emphasis. Sfz.
12. Stringendo – Gradually get faster to the end of a piece.



1. Syncopation – Placing emphasis on a normally weak beat.
2. Tenuto – Dash under or above a note indicating it should be played full value.



1. Tremelo – Rapid rearticulation of a note.
2. Meno Mosso – Less motion
3. Misterioso – Mysteriously
4. Solo – One player performs in the section.
5. Soli – One section in featured in the ensemble.
6. Tutti – Together; indicates the end of a solo.