

Vocal Music – Glossary of terms useful when discussing works in NAM

Term	Definition	Example
text declamation	speech-like singing used in opera for dialogue or narration. The notes and rhythms follow the accents of speech.	NAM 36 Bars 1-8
syllabic	one note per syllable	NAM 34
melismatic	more than one note per syllable	NAM 36 Bar 2
word-painting	using music to illustrate the meaning or emotion conveyed by the words of the text. e.g dissonance in an anguished section	NAM 36 Bar 12
votive antiphon	a polyphonic setting of an intercessory prayer (pleading for something)	NAM 26
concertato	a style of contrasts - having a group of solo singers contrasting with the main choir	NAM 27
cori spezzati	'divided choirs' - an antiphonal chorus with the voices divided into groups	NAM 27
sinfonia	'sounds together' - an instrumental movement or section within the context of a larger choral work	NAM 27
chorale	a hymn tune of the Lutheran church	NAM 28 3rd Movement
obbligato	obligatory - an essential section	NAM 28 4th Movement
continuo	a continuous bass part in Baroque music with improvised harmonies by chordal instruments	NAM 28 2nd Movement
figured bass	numbers and symbols indicate the harmonies to be played over a given bass line	NAM 28 4th Movement
quasi-serial	using some serial techniques - note rows, inversions and retrogrades	NAM 32
cantus firmus	a pre-existing melody used as a basis for a polyphonic composition	NAM 28 1st Movement
recitativo accompagnato	expressive vocal solo following the rhythms of speech, accompanied by instruments.	NAM 28 2nd Movement
monody	solo song with accompaniment - a texture with decorated melody and firm bass	
ayre	an English song for solo voice and accompaniment - strophic with the melody always in the highest part	NAM 33
ritornello	an imitative instrumental interlude which often recurs	NAM 36
style galant	18th century term to describe an elegant style, homophonic and elaborately ornamented	NAM 37
strophic	uses the same music for every verse	NAM 37
through-composed	song that uses different music for each verse	NAM 38
ballett	a madrigal to which one would dance. Often has a fa la la chorus	NAM 34
ground bass	a repeating bass pattern over which a melody and chord progression evolves	NAM 36
sprechgesang	'speech song' - half sung, half spoken	NAM 40
false relation	the sounding of a flat and natural, or sharp and natural of the same note simultaneously or in immediate succession	NAM 26 Bars 28-29
terce de picardie	the ending of a piece that has been predominantly minor, with a major chord to give a brighter sounding ending	NAM 38