

Allegro

“Gay; lively” An indication of tempo (“time”), or how fast or slow a piece of music is to be played. Generally taken to mean a fast tempo

Arpeggio

A chord is a collection of three or more notes played at the same time, i.e. vertically. An arpeggio is a broken chord, in which the notes that make it up are played in order, either ascending or descending.

Cadenza

Usually found in a concerto, and typically toward the end of a movement, the cadenza is the opportunity given to a soloist or soloists to improvise or perform pre-composed, usually technically-demanding music using material both new and also borrowed from the preceding music, without the accompaniment of the orchestra. Few baroque cadenzas were written down, but toward the late-18th century and throughout the 19th and 20th, composers and prominent players composed and published their cadenzas, which typically increased in length in comparison with 18th-century models.

Concerto

Stemming from the Latin root meaning “against” or “in conflict with” (as opposed to modern usage of “in concert,” meaning “working together with”), as an instrumental work it features a soloist or group of soloists (as in the “Concerto Grosso,” or “Large Concerto”) playing “against” an accompanying ensemble. Vivaldi composed over 500 of these, both for solo instruments or groups of solo instruments, as well as concertos for string ensemble.

Continuo

As in Basso Continuo, or “Continuous Bass.” Refers to the group of players who play the lowest line of the music, typically a keyboard instrument such as organ or harpsichord, sometimes a plucked instrument such as theorbo (bass lute), and a sustaining instrument such as the cello; bass instruments which provide the harmonic foundation throughout the entire Passion, even in solo vocal movements (for which the rest of the orchestra does not play)

Embellishment

See Ornament

Largo

“Large;” a tempo indication generally taken to mean slow, i.e. making repeated beats “large.”

Ornament

A note or group of notes that is added to the music either by the composer or the performer. It is generally agreed-upon that composers in Vivaldi’s time, and in some arenas in generations after, expected that the performer would “complete” the music and printed more-or-less skeletal versions of their composition with this in mind. Where, when, and how much to ornament were hotly discussed topics both during and after the Baroque period, with few agreements arrived at but for the submission that the performer’s taste is the ultimate arbiter.

Triad

Three notes stacked in thirds, beginning with the root of a given key. In the key of C major, for instance, the pitch “C” is called the root; the third scale degree (scale being a stepwise ascending ordering of notes) is, therefore, “E”, and the fifth is “G,” a third above “E.” C-E-G is a C major triad. In G major, the triad is G-B-D; in F-sharp minor it is F sharp – A – C sharp, etc.