

Dynamic Signs

DYNAMIC SIGNS indicate the volume, or how *soft* or *loud* the music should be played. Most musical terms are written in Italian since Italian composers were among the first to write such instructions in their manuscripts.

The word *piano* in Italian means soft; the word *forte* means loud.

The most commonly used dynamic signs are:

ITALIAN	SIGN	ENGLISH
<i>piano</i>	<i>p</i>	soft
<i>forte</i>	<i>f</i>	loud
<i>mezzo piano</i>	<i>mp</i>	moderately soft
<i>mezzo forte</i>	<i>mf</i>	moderately loud
<i>pianissimo</i>	<i>pp</i>	very soft
<i>fortissimo</i>	<i>ff</i>	very loud

Mezzo means moderately; *issimo* means very.



Dynamic signs arranged in order from very soft to very loud, are: *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*

A Gradual Change in Dynamics

Terms used to indicate a gradual change in volume, from *soft* to *loud* or *loud* to *soft* are:

ITALIAN	SIGN	ENGLISH
<i>crescendo</i> or <i>cresc.</i>		gradually louder
<i>diminuendo</i> or <i>dim.</i> or <i>decrescendo</i> or <i>decresc.</i>		gradually softer

Exercises

- 1 Write the Italian word for the following dynamic signs:
- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>f</i> _____ | <i>pp</i> _____ |
| <i>mp</i> _____ | <i>ff</i> _____ |
|  _____ | <i>mf</i> _____ |
| <i>p</i> _____ |  _____ |

- 2 Clap the following line, observing the dynamic signs indicated.



- 3 Use every dynamic sign learned above at least once to mark the appropriate dynamic signs on the lines beneath the following story.

"Wake up!" whispered Ron to his brother Steven. The boys walked softly out the door. They heard
 a. _____ b. _____
 the moderately soft sound of a distant airplane, which became gradually louder and roared very loudly as it
 c. _____ d. _____ e. _____
 flew over head, then faded away gradually. Steven said, "Let's play basketball," in a
 f. _____
 moderately loud voice. They shouted a loud "Yes!" as they ran to the park.
 g. _____ h. _____

Dynamic Signs

- 1** Write the Italian word and musical sign for each of the following English definitions.

Italian	Sign	English
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Very loud
Moderately soft
Soft
Moderately loud
Very soft
Loud

5-30

- 2** Arrange the dynamic signs above in order from loudest to softest.

5-30

- 3** Write the Italian word and musical sign for each of the following English definitions.

Italian	Sign	English
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Gradually louder
Gradually softer

5-10

- 4** Name two things that might have the dynamic marking of *piano*:
(Example: leaves moving in a breeze)

a.

b.

- 5** Name two things that might have the dynamic marking of *forte*:
(Example: a roaring lion)

a.

b.

5-10

5-10

- 6** What nationality of composers was among the first to use dynamic signs in their manuscripts?

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