

DON'T GET LOST IN THE TRANSLATION

Terms Every Musician Should Know

■ We can thank the Italians for the modern system of musical notation used today. So, it is no surprise that we find many Italian terms peppered throughout our music. To the right are some translations to help you better understand your music.

You may have noticed some suffixes used repeatedly in musical expressions. Knowing the meaning of these endings can help you figure out some terms. Commonly used endings are:

- etto(a) = little (diminutive)
- one = big (augmentative)
- ino(a) = little (diminutive)
- issimo(a) = very (augmentative)

By knowing these endings and the definitions to the right, you also know *larghetto* is a little broad, *adagietto* is a little slow, and *allegretto* is a little bit joyful. Likewise, *prestissimo* is very fast, *pianissimo* is very soft, and *fortissimo* is very loud.

Other commonly used Italian expressions are: *molto* (meaning very), *più* (more), *poco* (little), *poco a poco* (little by little), *ma non troppo* (but not too much), *meno* (less), *con* (with), and *senza* (without). An Italian word ending in *-endo* or *-ando* usually signals the gerund form of a verb, hence a *crescendo* is growing louder and *ritardando* is slowing down.

ITALIAN TERM	LITERAL TRANSLATION	MUSICAL MEANING
a cappella	in the chapel (style)	without instrumentation
accelerando	accelerating	speeding up
adagio	at ease	slow, but not as slow as largo
affectuoso	with affection	tenderly
agitato	agitated	excited and fast
allegro	happy, joyful, fast	moderately fast
andante	going	walking pace, relaxed
battaglia	a battle	music suggesting battle
cadenza	a cadence	solo at the end of performance
coda	a tail	the end of a piece
crescendo	growing	becoming louder
diminuendo	dwindling	becoming softer
dolce	sweet	sweetly
fermata	a stop	a hold or pause
forte	strong	loud
fine	end	end of score or section
largo	broad, wide	slow and dignified
lento	slow	slow
piano	gentle, careful	soft
presto	quick	fast
ritardando	decelerating	slowing down
rubato	robbed	free meter; not in tempo
sforzando	forcing	sharply accented
tenuto	held	hold a note for full value
vivace	vivacious	lively