



It is important to learn to control your voice for crescendos and diminuendos across varying number of beats. Sit in an elevated posture with your hands in the position you used to show the compressed energy of piano. Pretend that you have taffy or a chest expander in your hands and gradually pull your arms apart until you reach the forte position. You should experience a feeling of resistance through the stretch and a feeling of relief and/or triumph when you finally get to the forte position. Now it's time to add the voice. In a steady beat, count to various numbers across the exercise, beginning with eight beats. Sing the numbers on one tone from the first piano sound through to the forte ending. Also, be sure that the sound of each number extends to the next; there should be no silences within the exercise. Release the energy gradually as you count and stretch your arms. If you can perform eight beats well, try 12, 16 and 20. You'll have to change the volume and gesture more slowly as the number of beats increases.

To represent the feeling of the diminuendo physically, you must again exhibit resistance. Do not let the imaginary chest expander snap. Or, you could use the imagery of a large foam rubber ball being compressed between your hands. Start with a forte voice and your arms in the forte position. Produce a diminuendo across varying numbers of beats counting backwards. Again, keep the beat steady and your voice on one extended tone during the exercise.

Create exercises that join crescendos and diminuendos. You might begin with an eight-beat crescendo followed by an eight-beat diminuendo and vice versa. Then try a four-beat diminuendo followed by a sixteen-beat crescendo.

You could write the exercises on paper using these traditional notational symbols.



An exercise could look like the one in Figure 4.5.

You could perform the exercise using voice, body percussion, environmental sounds and/or classroom instruments to learn to control performances in various media. Make up a variety of combinations and notice the feelings that the performances elicit.

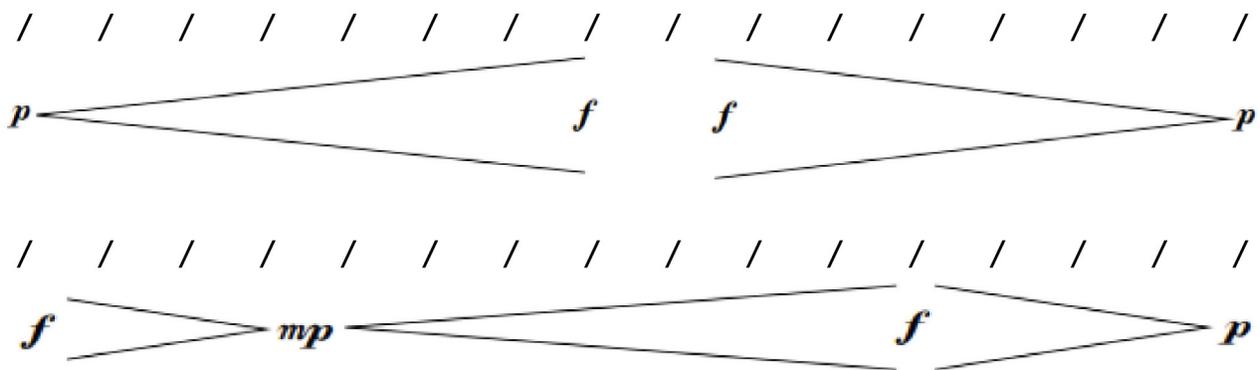


Figure 4.5

Using gradual dynamic changes throughout a song will increase the emotional impact of the performance. Often, musical phrases, which are much like verbal phrases or sentences, are shaped with gradual dynamic changes. Sing “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore” on one mezzo-piano level. Now sing it using the dynamics that are indicated in Figure 4.6.

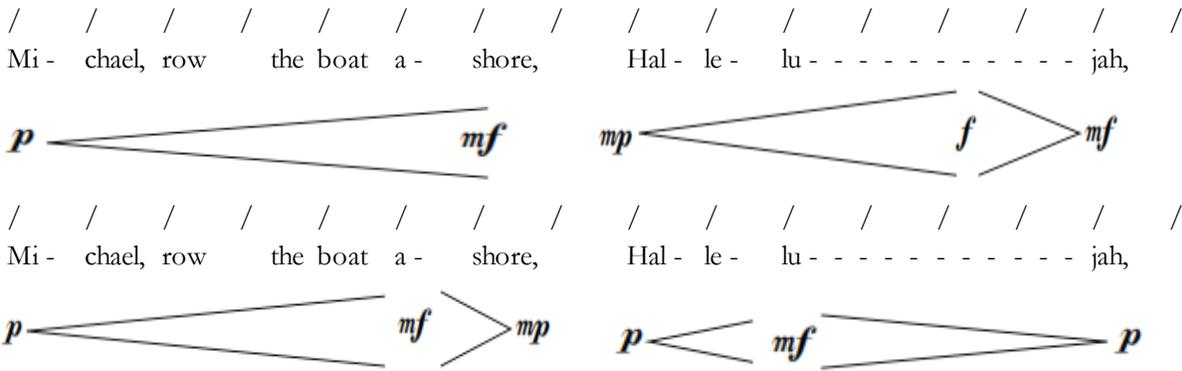


Figure 4.6

You probably noticed that the gradual changes were particularly effective over the long syllables. As a general musical rule, long sounds should change dynamically so that the sound will not become stagnant. Gradual dynamic change across a long tone will result in the effect of movement.

Follow the dynamic markings in Figure 4.7 as you perform "Down in the Valley." The dynamics shape the phrases and give movement to the long tones.

Frequently, gradual dynamic changes occur across a series of repeated tones, again to create the effect of movement. Sing the middle section of "Shoo, Fly" and crescendo across the words, "I feel, I feel, I feel." Contrast it with a performance without a crescendo. Now sing the whole song: Perform the terraced dynamics for the "Shoo, Fly" part and the crescendo for the "I feel" section. Sing some other songs you know and apply the principles of dynamics to increase the musicality of your performances. You can find some examples in the "Appendix."

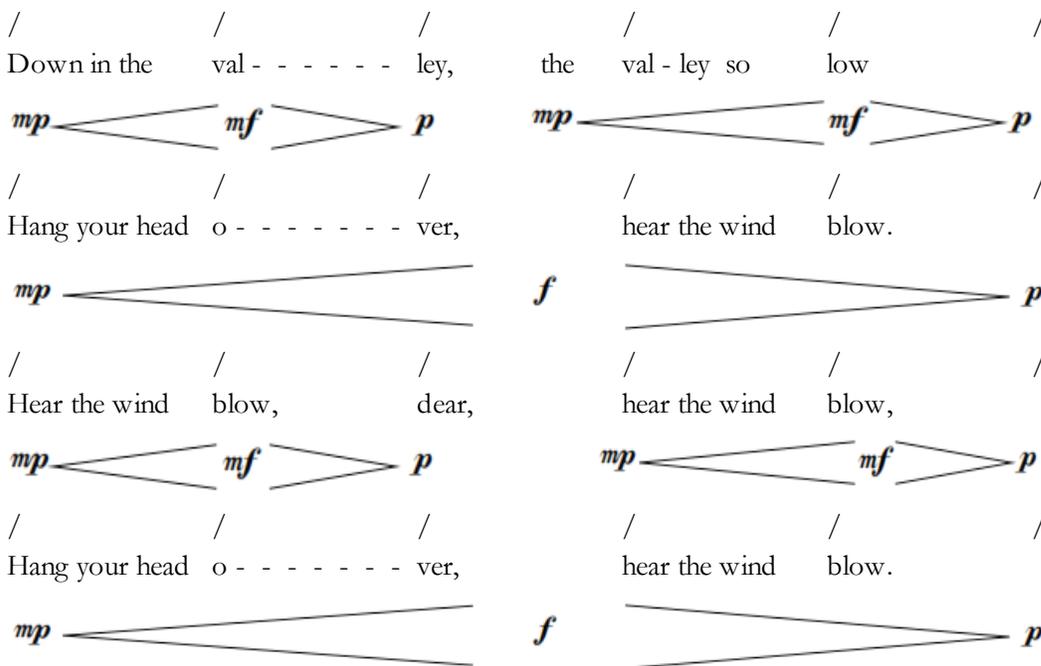


Figure 4.7

As you know, when you perform a song, the beat, melodic rhythm and metric accent occur simultaneously. Because you are singing, tone color is involved. If the song can be heard at all, dynamics also are included. All of these factors occur at the same time. Figure 4.8 combines the notation for the rhythm and dynamics of "Mary had a Little Lamb." Follow the dynamic markings as you sing the song. Your instructor may want you to perform some or all of the rhythm components, too.

Ma - ry had a lit - tle lamb, lit - tle lamb, lit - tle lamb,  
*p* *mp* *mf*

Ma - ry had a lit - tle lamb whose fleece was white as snow.  
*mf* *p*

Figure 4.8

## EXPANDING YOUR PERCEPTION

Dynamics, like rhythm and tone color, are present in all music. Dynamics play a major role in the expressiveness of music. You know that dynamics affected your feelings in the songs you performed. The dynamics in music performed by professionals have the same or an even more substantial effect. Therefore, your instructor most likely will provide an opportunity for you to hear music of different genres and will structure an assignment so that you focus first on dynamics. Probably, he/she will instruct you to listen to more than one minute of music so that you have time to hear dynamic changes. If he/she wants you to describe the dynamics that you hear, these descriptive words could help.

### Descriptive words for dynamics:

*Quiet:* tranquil, faint, hushed, delicate, transparent, serene

*Medium quiet/loud:* comfortable, clear, natural, conversational

*Loud:* pounding, crashing, roaring, screaming, thundering

*Sudden change - loud:* surprising, jolting, shocking

*Sudden change - soft:* cautious, alert, intense

*Gradual changes:* swelling, growing; promising; diminishing, fading; flowing, rolling, coming and going

The following lists of music were taken from two major sources: movies and classical repertoire. Oscars played a role in all of the listed movie pieces. You'll note that one group contains songs from Disney movies. Search using the words in the list. You could add the name of your video server, but it probably will not be necessary. Videos will automatically be included in the results of the searches. Listen and respond according to your instructor's directions.



### From Movies

"Jaws" theme song

"James Bond Skyfall" Adele official theme song

Isaac Hayes "Shaft" theme song

### From Disney Movies

Pocahontas "Colors of the Wind"

Beauty and the Beast "Tale as Old as Time" (begin where they're on the landing of the stairs)

The Lion King "The Circle of Life"

The dynamics in classical music often are complex. The following list includes many pieces so that your instructor can select examples for you to hear different types of dynamics and dynamic changes. Search by "name of composer + name of work + the name of your video service." It will help you to know that an "overture" comes