Music Theory

Week Three: Dynamics

Dynamics is the fancy term to describe how loud or soft music is played. Musical terms are in Italian, so sometimes it is difficult to remember the words. However, here are some dynamic terms:

- **Piano** - Soft
- **Forte** - Loud
- **Mezzo Forte** – Medium Loud

\[ p \quad \text{f} \quad \text{mf} \]

- **Fortissimo** – Very Loud
- **Pianissimo** – Very Soft

\[ ff \quad pp \]

Music can gradually become louder or gradually become softer. There are dynamic signs to show these changes as well:

- **Crescendo** – Gradually Louder
- **Diminuendo** – Gradually Softer

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Primary Grades

One of the best songs to illustrate dynamics in music is “John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt.” Take two separate pieces of card stock or thicker paper and put an \( f \) for Forte on one and a \( p \) for Piano on another. As you sing the song, hold up the different signs so that your student becomes quite familiar with the symbols. Another really fun activity is for your student to find images from a magazine that illustrate soft sounds (kitten, bunny, sleeping baby) and images that make loud sounds (train, airplane, yelling sibling). In his/her music notebook your student can make two pictures, one depicting loud and one depicting soft; or one picture with two columns depicting loud and soft. Remember to say “piano” and “forte” when you locate the images and place them in the notebook.
Secondary Grades
The Italian Renaissance in Europe became the standard by which others followed. Therefore, the Italians formalized the language used in musical notation. Have your student research other standards the Italians formalized.