Vocabulary

Haunting Music

Articulation - the degree of separation between a series of individual notes; the effect can be either very detached (staccato) or smooth and connected (legato). An example of staccato is when the flutes play the main melody in Danse Macabre. An example of legato is the Death’s theme, played by the solo violin, in Danse Macabre.

Dynamics – degrees of loudness of softness; common markings are piano (soft), forte (loud), and crescendo (gradually increase volume from softer to louder). An example of a piano marking is the beginning of the “March to the Scaffold”, where even the drum rolls are very soft; then the music quickly crescendos

Form – the structure of a music piece. An example of form is a symphony, which usually has several movements, like Symphonie Fantastique. Another example of form is an orchestral tone poem, which only has one movement, like Danse Macabre.

Instrument Family – the orchestra is divided into different instrument “families”, with each family of instruments having specific characteristics in common.

- **Strings**, - violin, viola, cello, and bass; strings can be bowed or plucked, and sounds effects can be created by touching parts of the bow to the wood
- **Woodwinds** – clarinet, flute, oboe, and bassoon;
- **Brass** – trumpet, trombone, French horn, and tuba;
- **Percussion** – timpani, marimba (xylophone), tam-tam (gong), bass drum, and cymbals;

Movement – self-contained section of a larger work, such as a symphony or a concerto.

Pizzicato – plucking of the strings. An example is at the beginning of “Dream of a Witches Sabbath”, when the string section plucks the strings as the music swells and crescendos

Repetition – restatement of a musical idea (theme) or section of music. An example is in Danse Macabre, when the entire string section plays the character Death’s theme, which is previously played by the solo violin

Tempo – the speed at which music is performed; common markings are adagio, andante, and allegro. Examples of these tempos in Danse Macabre: the intro is quite slow (adagio), the music quickly moves to a faster tempo (andante), and then the entire orchestra comes in unison at a more allegro tempo.

Theme – a musical idea, usually a melody, that forms the basis for a composition. An example is the melody, Death’s theme, played by the solo violin in Danse Macabre

Tone Color/Timbre – the unique sound of an instrument.
**Tremolo** – quick and continuous sound on a stringed instrument, produced by an up-and-down movement of the bow on a single note; creates a “trembling” effect. An example is *tremolo* is at the beginning of “Dream of a Witches Sabbath”, when the violins play very softly and mysteriously.

**Sources:**
