

Musical Phrasing

Definition: a *phrase* is a musical thought or sentence

- A phrase like a sentence, expresses a musical thought or emotion and has a **beginning, middle and end**.
- by adding **inflection** to bring out the phrase, we can enhance our musical story-telling.

Guidelines:

- Phrases occur in all types of music and in all tempos.
- Phrases are usually 2,4 or 8 *measures* in **length**.
 - looking for similar **shapes** or **patterns** to determine lengths, can vary within a piece.
- to determine the **melodic contour** (or inflection or shape), start by identifying the phrasal climax, or the most important note (**MIN**). *there are often multiple possibilities, two performers may choose different MINs.
- To find the phrasal climax or MIN - look for the note that all notes lead to or away from.
 - often near the **middle** of the phrase
 - often the **highest** note of the phrase
 - sometimes it will be the **longest**
- phrases are notated by a curved line over the group of measures, called a **phrase marking**.
- phrases are ideally played in one breath, breaths are only taken between phrases. **Breath marks** denote where to breathe.
- a natural **crescendo** should lead to the MIN, and a natural **decrescendo** leads away from it.

Identifying and Marking Phrasing:

1. Identify Phrase length (2, 4 or 8 m.) - look for patterns, ways to group notes
2. Draw phrase markings
3. add breath marks
4. find and circle MIN in each phrase
5. draw crescendos and decrescendos