

MUSIC DAFFY-NITIONS

by Arthur Houle

Editor's Note: AMT's "5 Minutes With..." columnist Arthur Houle is, without a doubt, the "punniest" person we know. In 1989, his first set of "Daffy-nitions" were published in Piano Quarterly. Since then, he's often been asked to write more. AMT now presents a second installment of these musical "Daffy-nitions."

Accordion: A hollow device that produces sounds by means of billowing air (see also "game show host" and "politician").

Aide: To consume. (As in, "Let me eat this mint, before Aide-nother").

Bitonality: Music that can't make up its mind whether to resolve to masculine or feminine cadences.

Boogie: (1) Ghost. (2) Nose secretion.

Bourrée: (Fr.) Dull.

Canzone: Medieval pizza.

Clair de lune: (Fr.) "Clear the Saloon," Debussy's most popular work.

Coloratura: (It.) (1) Genetically engineered breed of vocalist capable of emitting sounds audible only to

man's best friend. (2) What you do to a pale-looking Arthur.

Contrapuntal: Nicaraguan post-touchdown kick.

Contrary motion: When the audience leaves over your bad performance.

Counterpoint: Specially designated spot for beer.

Cue: Nervous twitch by the conductor, generally ignored by the orchestra.

Czardas: Smoldering remains of overdone barbecue.

Da capo al fine: That Halloween cape looks really dandy!

Diatonic: Low calorie medicine.

Downbeat: Incomprehensible hysterical gesture by the conductor (see also "cue").

Doux: (Fr.) Early morning grass condensation.

Funky: Favorite key of really cool jazzers.

Furry Leaves: Beethoven's most famous composition for piano.

Improvisation: What your student calls wrong notes.

Interpretation: See "improvisation."

Inverted mordent: Popular baroque ornament executed while seated upside-down on the piano bench.

Jazz: See "improvisation."

Juilliard: The play area behind Julie's house.

Koppel: (G.) Octave doubler on Ted's pipe organ.

Ländler: German dance you should never play, especially if it means taking a bow at the end of the performance. ("Neither a bower nor a Ländler be").

La donna e mobile: What happens when your girlfriend takes your hotrod car.

Largo: Slow beer.

Leading tone: That whistle you hear just before the construction worker gets slapped for being fresh.

Libretto: (It.) Small library.

Lyre: (1) Fibber. (2) Spontaneous combustion of trousers. ("Lyre, lyre, pants on fire!")

Pastorale: Father Bob's beer.

Perfect pitch: Bases are loaded and the umpire cries "Yer out!"

Phrygian modes: What you get when you leave your theory assignment in the freezer.

Pizzicato: Tiny takeout food for kittens.

Presto inarticulato slobberissimo: Favorite touch of intermediate-level students in piano festivals.

Psalterium: Detox facility for victims of sodium overdose.

Refrain: (1) Don't play this. (2) Frain again. (3) Ocean precipitation.

Schenker analysis: When you say "ahhhhh" so the doctor can examine your mouth.

Slur: Nasty comment made by your piano teacher.

Sordino: Small fish from Italy.

Sousaphone: How John Philip keeps in touch from the other side.

Touch sensitive: What you can't get your students to be. See also "presto inarticulato slobberissimo."

Virelai: (1) Pernicious, malevolent. (2) Truly.

Zimerman Toast Crunch Cereal: What Krystian eats for breakfast.

Arthur Houle is founder and director of the International Festival for Creative Pianists (www.pianofestival.org). Houle has taught at the New England and Boston Conservatories, the Universities of Iowa, North Dakota and Texas-Austin and, most recently, at Albertson College.

