

Introduction to the class

Music is truly an art form. Like poetry, acting, and painting, it is a means of communicating the thoughts, feelings, and messages of the author or performer. Music, however, specifically utilizes our sense of hearing to communicate the art form.

Music has been around before the appearance of man on the earth. It has existed as bird calling, the cricket chirping, the wind blowing. Human music has developed from early expressions of grunts and rhythms to speech and then on to melodic expressions. There are some people who believe today's popular music forms like rap are actually a step backwards toward our original grunts, but you must remember that it is music, an oral expression of thoughts, feelings, and messages.

I like to think of music as another language, not unlike Spanish or Greek or English. Take for example the task of communicating in Spanish. If you were able to hear me directly, I could talk to you and if you understood the Spanish language, you would (hopefully) understand what I was saying. Yo hablo español un poquito, pero si lo comprende usted, entonces podemos comunicar. If, however, you could not hear me directly, I could still communicate with you by writing about my thoughts, feelings, messages, and having you read them.

And, that is why we are here today. Evart provides an excellent vehicle for getting together with our fellow artists to communicate using music. Here, we can learn a new song quickly by sitting face to face with another teacher or performer. But, back home, this isn't always possible, and we need to be able to read the language of the music in a written form.

Today's class will be a first step in learning to communicate using written music. This is an introductory class, and we hopefully will get you to first base. We will not have time, however, to go into the depths of music theory. We'll leave the advanced topics such as key and chord structures to another time. Let's now proceed to learn how to read music.

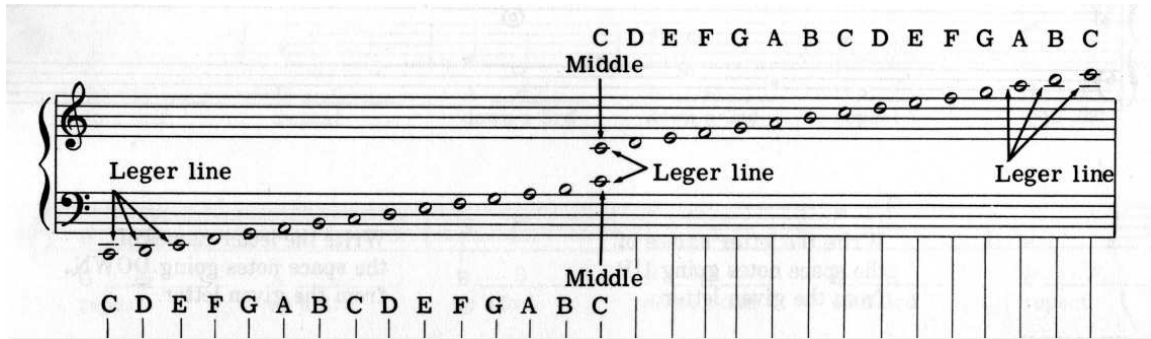
The basic elements of music notation

Today's class will cover the following music notation concepts:

The Staff	The central structure of the music page
Measures	The markers of music which subdivide the song into timed events
Timing	Tells you the duration of each tone
The time signature	Gives information about the meter and note duration within measures
Notes	Tells you what tonal value to play
Key signatures	Tells you which notes are raised or lowered through the song
Song navigation	The roadmap to get from the beginning to the end of the song

The Staff

Let's take a closer look at the staff:



The staff you see above is called the grand staff. It is actually comprised of two staves, one to hold the notes from Middle C upward, and another to hold the notes from Middle C downward. Each staff has 5 lines and 6 spaces. A total of 22 notes can be written on the grand staff without the use of any additional lines. Additional lines can be added, and are called LEDGER LINES. Don't worry about the notes just yet; we will cover them in a minute.

The upper staff is called the TREBLE CLEF staff, and the bottom one is called the BASS CLEF staff. When you look at a piece of music, you may see both staves, or just one or the other. The type of instrument for which the music was written determines which staff arrangement is used. If you are playing a string bass, your music will utilize the bass clef. Most of our melody instruments will use the treble clef. A piano will probably use both (Grand Staff). That strange figurine on the far left of the staff tells you which staff is being represented

Measures



The song is divided into a series of equally timed segments called **MEASURES**. The end of each measure is marked using a vertical line through the staff.

Timing

If you are going to make any sense out of a piece of music, you must be able to understand it's rhythmic notation and figure out the timing (duration of each note).

The first step is to determine the number of counts in each measure of the music, then determine what kind of note receives each count. This can be determined by looking at the time signature of the music. The time signature is on the left side of the 1st staff of the music, and looks like a fraction:




The top number of the fraction indicates how many counts you will have in each measure. Theoretically, any number could be placed here, but you will probably only see a 2, 3, 4, or 6 in our traditional songs. Marches and ballads are typically have 4 counts in each measure. Waltzes typically have 3 counts in each measure, and jigs and polkas usually have 2 counts, and reels have 6 counts. Of course, other variations can and do occur.

The bottom number indicates what kind of note will receive one count. In order to understand this, we first have to look at the different kinds of notes that can be represented. To simplify our discussion, we will assume this is a ballad in 4/4 time. This means that each measure will contain four counts. Try this now by counting:


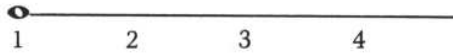

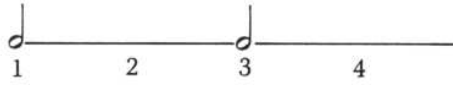






1 - 2 - 3 - 4 / 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 / 1 - 2 - 3 - 4

Timing (cont.)

Now let's see how this translates into the different types of notes:

KIND OF NOTE		METHOD OF COUNTING
whole note	 four counts	

It's very helpful to use your toe to help count out the rhythm. Start with your toe up, and then say the count as your toe taps the ground. Each time you bring the toe back up, say "and". Each of the note types shown above represent 1 measure of the song. Practice each one, tapping your foot and counting out loud.

KIND OF NOTE		METHOD OF COUNTING
whole note	 four counts	
half note	 two counts	
quarter note	 one count	
eighth note	 one-half count	
sixteenth note	 one-fourth count	

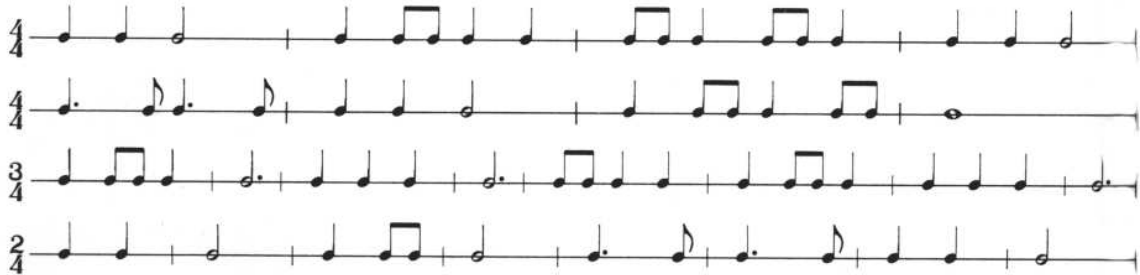
In order to minimize the clutter of notes on a page, a shortcut notation is used which extends a written note by another $\frac{1}{2}$ value. This is accomplished by writing a dot after the note.

A DOT after a note lengthens its duration by half the value of the note.









EXAMPLE:  = 3 counts  = $1\frac{1}{2}$ counts ( )
1 2 &

Timing (cont.)

Now let's practice some rhythm patterns. Remember to use your toe to tap and count out loud.



There is another note type that makes no sound. It is called a rest.

RESTS			
Rests indicate measured silence. They are counted the same as the corresponding note.			
 = 	 = 		
Whole Rest (or whole measure)	Quarter Rest		
 = 	 = 		
Half Rest	Eighth Rest		

Now, let's practice a jig rhythm using a time signature of 6/8. Remember, this means that there are six counts in each measure, and every 8th note gets one count

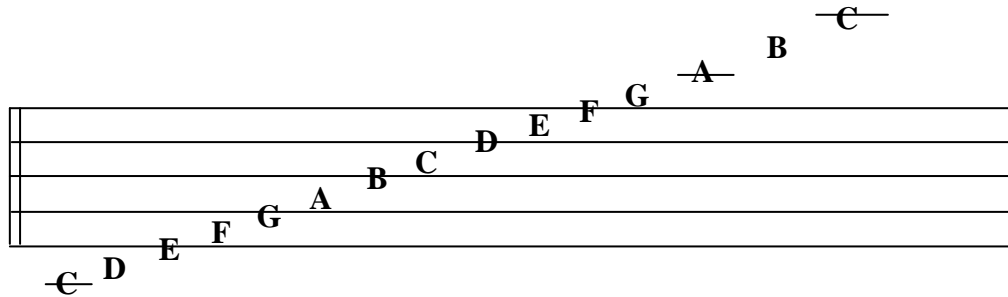


And, how about "March of St. Timothy" in 2/4 time:



Identifying notes on the staff

O.K., now, we have a pretty good handle on how to figure out the rhythm of a song. Now we have to learn how to read the note value that is represented on the staff. This is really just a memorization activity, and you can use any technique that works well for you.



Some people use the following acronyms to remember the notes:

The spaces of the staff spell: **F** **A** **C** **E**

The lines on the staff spell: **E**very **G**ood **B**oy **D**oes **F**ine

I personally like the idea of making up some flash cards. After you have learned the notes, then practice using a simple tune and see if you can name all the notes.

Identifying Notes (cont.)

Now that you have memorized the notes and their placement on the staff, we need to address the topic of key signatures. It is beyond the level of this class to really get into the theory behind the different key signatures, however you do need a basic awareness of why they exist. The reason is that what we have learned so far applies to the key of C. Playing these notes produces a melodic sequence of notes when you begin the scale on the root note of C. If all songs were written in the key of C, it would be really boring. However, if you start the scale on any other note, it will not sound right. To make it sound right, you have to raise (or lower) certain notes $\frac{1}{2}$ step to make the required adjustment. Since the notes that have to be adjusted are always the same for the entire song for any particular key, the notes are indicated at the beginning of the song by indications in the key signature at the beginning of the song.

In addition to the key of C, some other common key signatures we encounter in folk music are:

Key of G: 1 sharp (F#) carried through the entire song



Key of D: 2 sharps (F# and C#) carried through the song



Key of A: 3 sharps (F#, C#, and G#) carried through the song



Key of F: 1 flat (Bb) carried through the song



Note that for songs with sharps, the major key of the song is 1 note up from the last written sharp in the key signature.

For songs with flats (other than the key of F), the major key of the song is the next to the last flat indicated in the key signature.

Identifying Notes (cont.)

Often, you will find the composer has decided to artificially raise or lower a note by $\frac{1}{2}$ step within a song to obtain a particular feeling. This is done by attaching the sharp sign (#) or flat sign (b) next to the note to be affected. The note is now termed an ACCIDENTAL, and the effect remains for the rest of the MEASURE. Beginning with the next measure, the note will revert to its normal value for the key signature.

Much more information is required for a thorough understanding of key structures, but what I have presented will get you started.

Song Navigation

Well, we've come to our final major topic in learning how to read music. Now we will take a look at how to navigate through a song from beginning to end.

Songs are divided into very specific parts, each part conveying a particular idea or feeling to the listener. Let's look at a typical song arranged by parts.

Introduction:

Some songs start with a short introduction to set the mood and get the listener prepared for what is to come. Typical introductions are 4, 8 or 16 measures of music, however any multiple of 4 bars can be used.

Song parts:

Each song part contains a musical thought or statement, and is typically expressed in 16 or 32 measures of music. Each song part is given a letter designation. A very simple song can have just 1 part (Part "A"), and major symphonic works can have a large number of parts. Typically, the folk music we play contains just 2 or 3 parts.

Also, in folk music, the actual musical phrase is only 8 measures long. Since the part is actually 16 measures long, the 8 bar folk phrase is just repeated. The repeated portion is bracketed by what are called repeat signs, and in order to break the repeat loop, an alternate ending to the part is provided which terminates the repeat action and provides the transition to the next song part. Therefore, when playing a folk song, we will navigate the song by playing A A B B. Through the use of the repeat signs, the overall form of the music can be easily changed to any combination of the parts, such as:

A A B A
AA B B C C, etc.

Ending:

Some songs employ several measures after the last song part to achieve finality to the song for the listener. Usually this is accomplished in 4 or 8 measures. Many folk songs, however, just modify the last few measures of the last part to accomplish the wrap-up.

Summary and Review

Well, we've covered most of the basics of reading music. Let's see if we can put it all into action by analyzing Judy Morningstar's great song; The March of St. Timothy.

March of St. Timothy

October 2, 1984 © 1985, Judi Morningstar

The musical score for "March of St. Timothy" is presented in five staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The music begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The first staff starts with a repeat sign and a key signature change to G major. The chords are G, D7, Em, Bm, and C. The second staff has a first ending with chords Am, D7 and a second ending with Am, D7, and G. The third staff starts with a key signature change to B major and has a D7 chord. The fourth staff has a first ending with G, D7, G, X, X, X. The fifth staff has a second ending with G, C, G, Em, Am, D7, and G.

1. What is the time signature of this song? How many beats per measure, and what kind of note constitutes 1 beat?
2. What is the key signature for this song?
3. Sing the rhythm of the whole song, tapping your feet for the count, and counting out the note timing.
4. Find the parts of the song and follow the navigation using the repeat signs and the part endings. What is the form for this song?
5. Name each note in the song.
6. Play the song on your instrument