



Overview of Music Reading for Choral Singers

STAFF, SYSTEM, RHYTHM, PITCH,
AND INTERVALS

Where does notation come from?

1

Notation in Europe was first written sometime between the 6th and 8th centuries

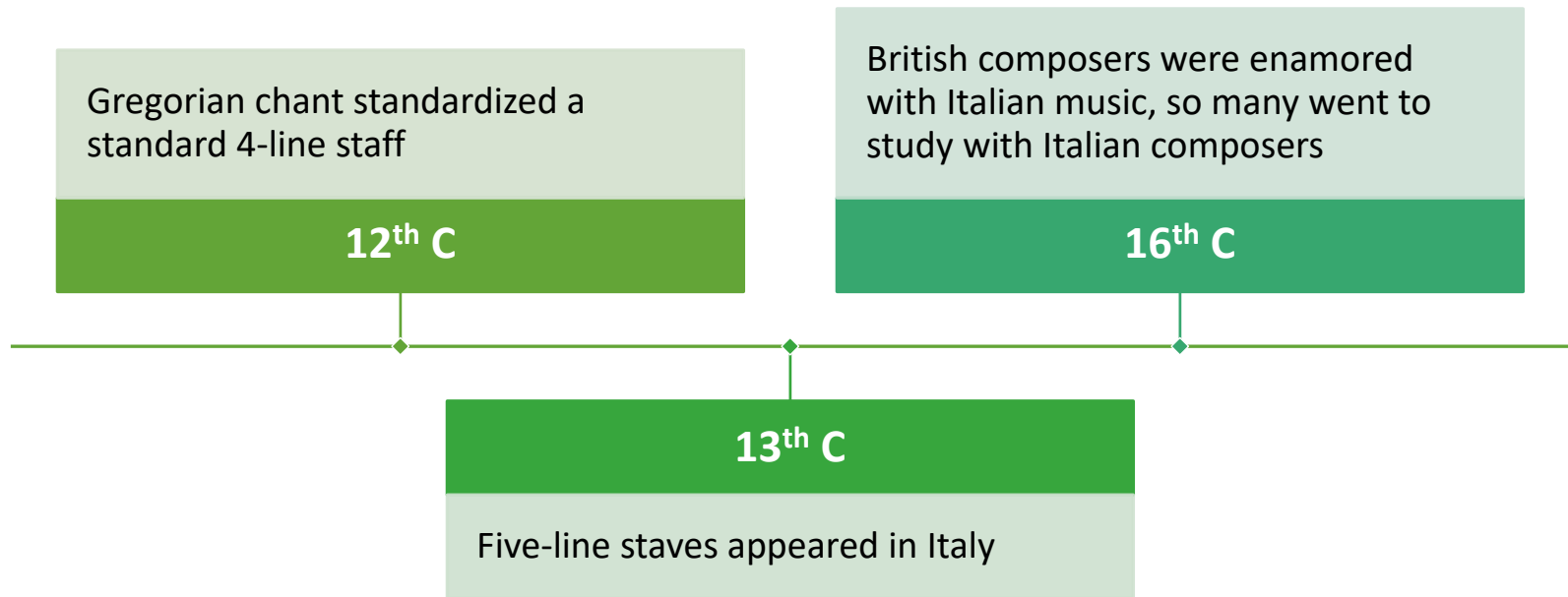
2

The first notation was written on one line, and only showed the contour of the song

3

Gradually, more lines were added

Where does notation come from?



Music notation
in American
choral music is
basically just
16th century
Italian notation.

Starting from zero

SEEING THE
“MAP” HIDDEN
IN THE DOTS

Title

Recorded by TOTO

Africa

For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranger

Arranged by
ROGER EMERSON

Composer

Words and Music by
**DAVID PAICH and
JEFF PORCARO**

With a beat ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$)

Piano

8

8

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

mp

mp

mp

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

Doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

B^b Am Dm

9

Recorded by TOTO

Africa

For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by
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Words and Music by
DAVID PAICH and
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With a beat (♩ = ca. 94)

One Staff

Piano

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

B \flat

Am Dm

Staff System

8

8

9

mp

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

mp

8

Doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

mp

8

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Piano

One measure

8

newTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

8

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

B \flat

Am

Dm

Measure
numbers

Dah dah

dah dah dah dah — dah dah dah

8

8

8

8

8

8

8

8

8

Recorded by TOTO

Africa

For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

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With a beat ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 94$)

Clef

Piano

Time signature

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

Key signature

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

mp

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

mp

B^b

Am Dm

mp

9

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With a beat (♩ = ca. 94)

Piano

8

8

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

Divisi "Split"

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

mp

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.

B^b Am Dm

mp

Reading Tip #1: Highlight your part!!

Digital sheet music or personal copies

Recorded by TOTO

Africa

For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

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Words and Music by
DAVID PAICH and
JEFF PORCARO

With a beat (♩ = ca. 94)

Piano

8

8

ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.

9

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

mp

mp

Dah dah dah dah dah — dah dah dah

Doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo bah.

B^b Am Dm

mp

9

Common “Map” Terms

REPEATS,
ENDINGS, AND
THE “DA’S”

Often, just following along is the hard part!

Repeat Sign

16

The storm is pass-ing o - ver. The storm is pass-ing o -

p *mf*

Front Repeat

The storm is pass-ing o - ver. The storm is pass-ing o -

p *mf*

The storm is pass-ing o - ver. The storm is pass-ing o -

p *mf*

From here to there

Detailed description: This block shows the first system of a musical score, measures 16 through 19. It features a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. A green arrow labeled 'Front Repeat' points to the first ending bracket at measure 16. A green arrow labeled 'From here to there' points from the end of the first ending at measure 19 to the start of the second ending at measure 20. The piano part has dynamics *p* and *mf*.

20

- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu.

f

- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu.

f

- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu.

f

Back Repeat

Detailed description: This block shows the second system of the musical score, measures 20 through 23. The vocal line continues with the lyrics '- ver. The storm is pass-ing o - ver Hal - le - lu.' and the piano accompaniment. A green arrow labeled 'Back Repeat' points to the second ending bracket at measure 20. The piano part has a dynamic of *f*.

Endings

Do these measures once

Then repeat

Skip to here the 2nd time

46

good, good good I feel good. Clap

good I feel good. Clap

good, good good I feel good.

1.

The first ending consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines with lyrics. The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment. The first ending is marked with a first ending bracket and a repeat sign. A green arrow points to the first ending, and another green arrow points to the second ending.

2.

good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...

good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...

good, I feel good, feel-in' good. feel-in' good...

2.

The second ending consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines with lyrics. The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment. The second ending is marked with a second ending bracket and a repeat sign. A green arrow points to the second ending, and another green arrow points to the third ending.

The “Da’s”


Da Segno (D.S.)

Da Capo (D.C.)

DC al Coda

DS al Coda



2nd time to Coda 
(m. 86, p. 7)



Example: Lydia, the
Tattooed Lady



Familiar Dynamic Terms

- *ppp*
- *pp*
- *p*
- *mp*
- *mf*
- *f*
- *ff*
- *fff*

Forte
Piano
Mezzo

Unfamiliar Dynamic Terms

Subito: literal - “suddenly”

- Ex: sub. *p*

Sforzando: literal - “trying hard, struggling”

- Ex: *sfz* or *sf*

Making Changes

VOLUME

Crescendo (“rising”)

- “Cresc.”



Decrescendo (“falling”)

Diminuendo (“getting smaller”)

- “Decresc.” or “Dim.”



SPEED

Ritardando (“delaying”)

- “Rit.”

Rallantando (“slowing”)

- “Rall.”

Accelerando (“quickening”)

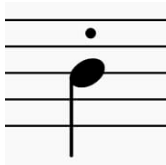
- “Accel.”

Piu mosso (“more motion”)

Meno mosso (“less motion”)

Common Articulations

Staccato (“detached”)



Marcato (“march”)



Fermata (“stop ,



Tenuto (“held”)



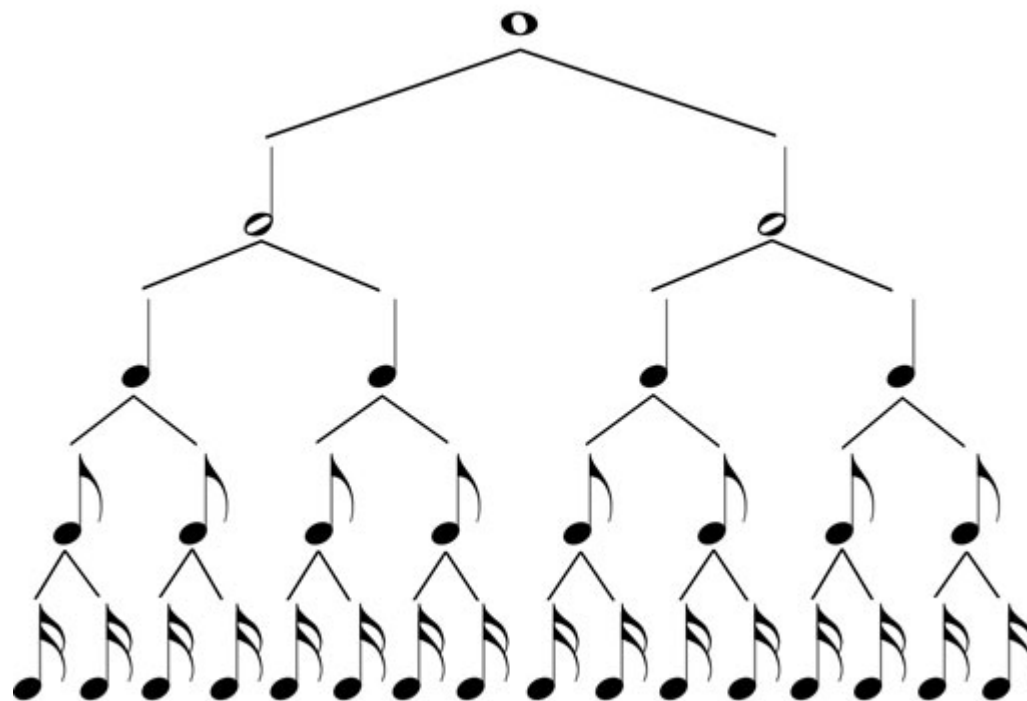
Accent



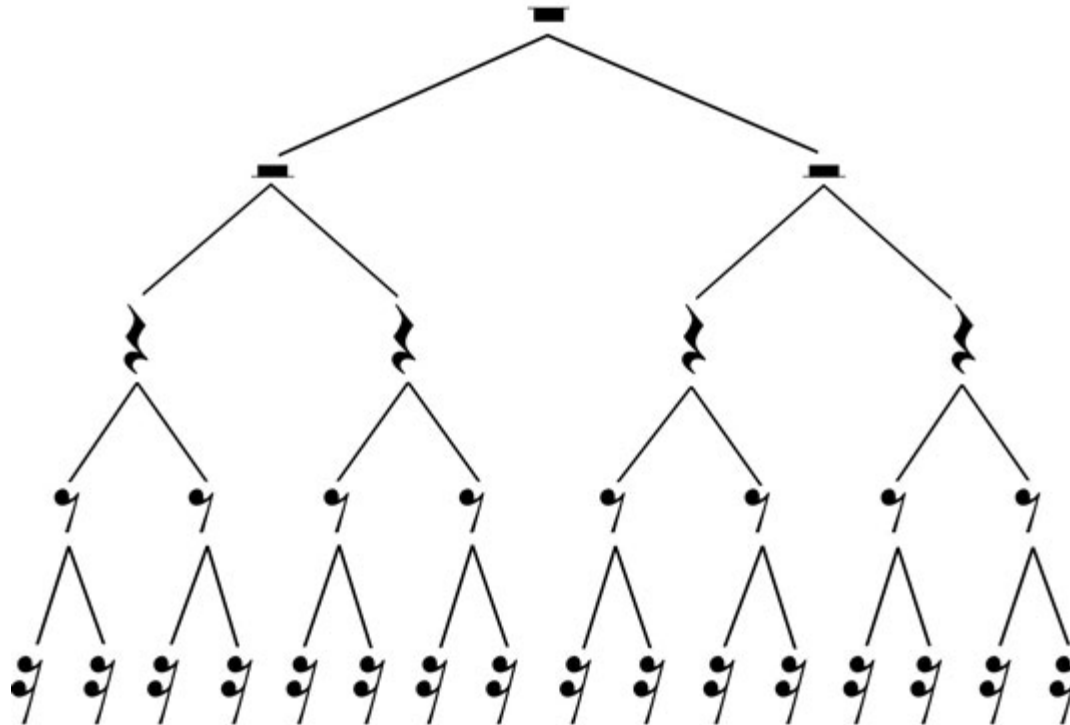
Rhythm symbols

Name	Note	Rest	Equivalents	
Breve (Double Whole Note)			Two Whole Notes	
Whole Note			Two Half Notes	
Half Note			Two Quarter Notes	
Quarter Note			Two Eighth Notes	
Eighth Note			Two Sixteenth Notes	
Sixteenth Note			Two Thirty-second Notes	
Thirty-second Note			Two Sixty-fourth Notes	
Sixty-fourth Note			Two One Hundred Twenty-eighth Notes	

Rhythms are ratios

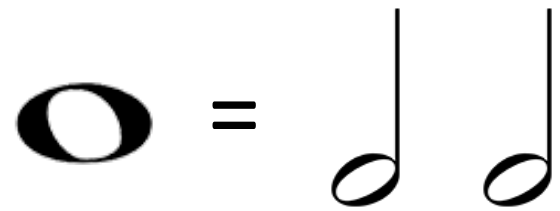


Rhythms are ratios



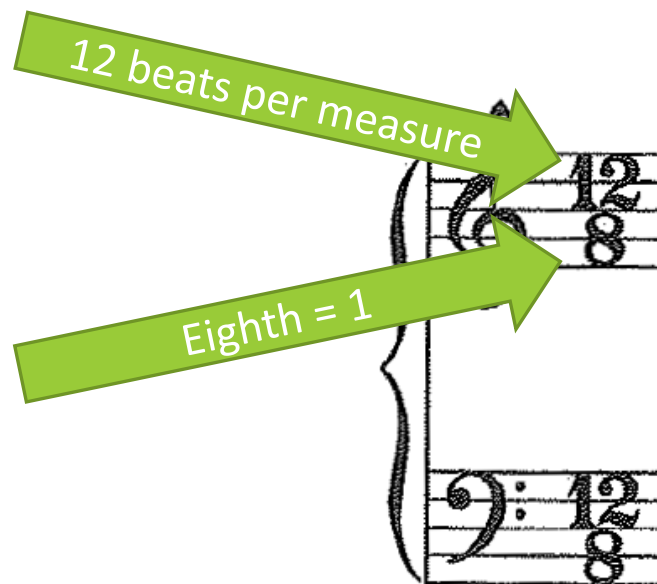
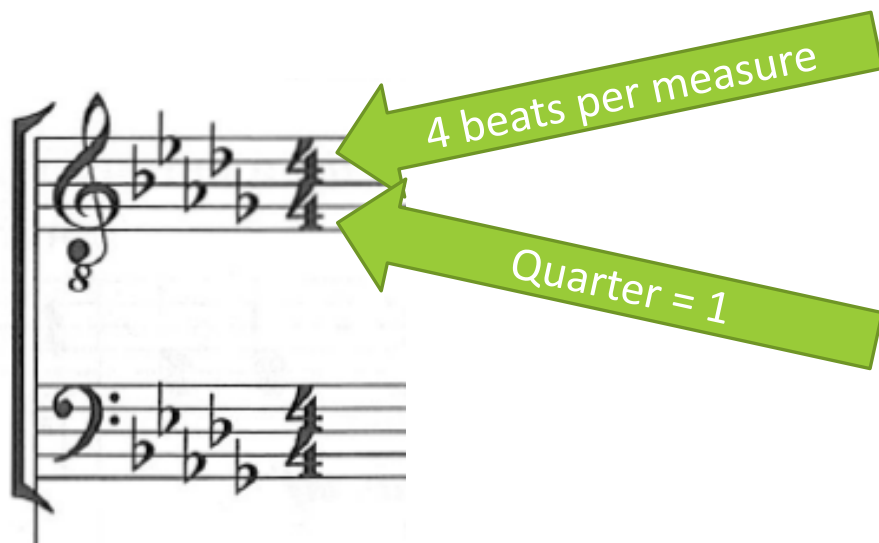
Common rhythm mistakes

Notes are ratios, not specific values



Time Signatures

Assigning specific values the ratios



Counting: Rhythm Reading for Adults

A musical staff in 4/4 time, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The staff contains a sequence of notes corresponding to a 12-measure exercise. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). The notes are grouped into three measures of four notes each. Above the staff, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are written above each note, repeated three times. Two vertical green lines separate the three measures. The staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 4/4 time signature.

2

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

Hills are wear-ing white, white cot-ton blan-kets,

Both at the same time!

37

buds that blossom, blossom flow'rs of white.

buds that blossom, blossom flow'rs of white.

What to do with rests?

34

ooh

Making it harder: Dots and Rests



I was fol-low-ing the pack all swal-lowed in their coats with scarves of red tied 'round their

Pitch

WE ARE NATURALLY DRAWN TO TONIC—LET'S SEE!

Reading Pitch: Stepwise

1



2



3

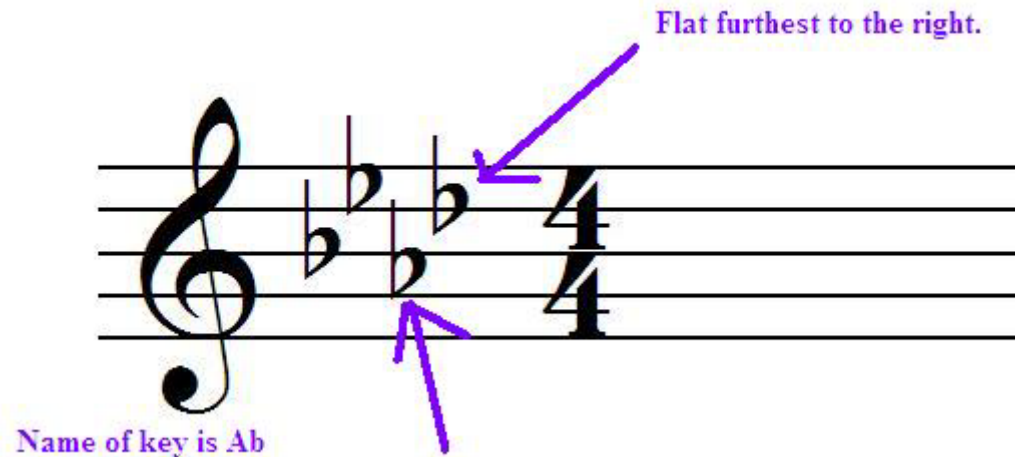


How do you know where 1 is?

For sharp keys, the last sharp is 7



For flat keys, the last flat is 4



Reading Pitch: Intervals

<https://www.sightreadingfactory.com/>