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

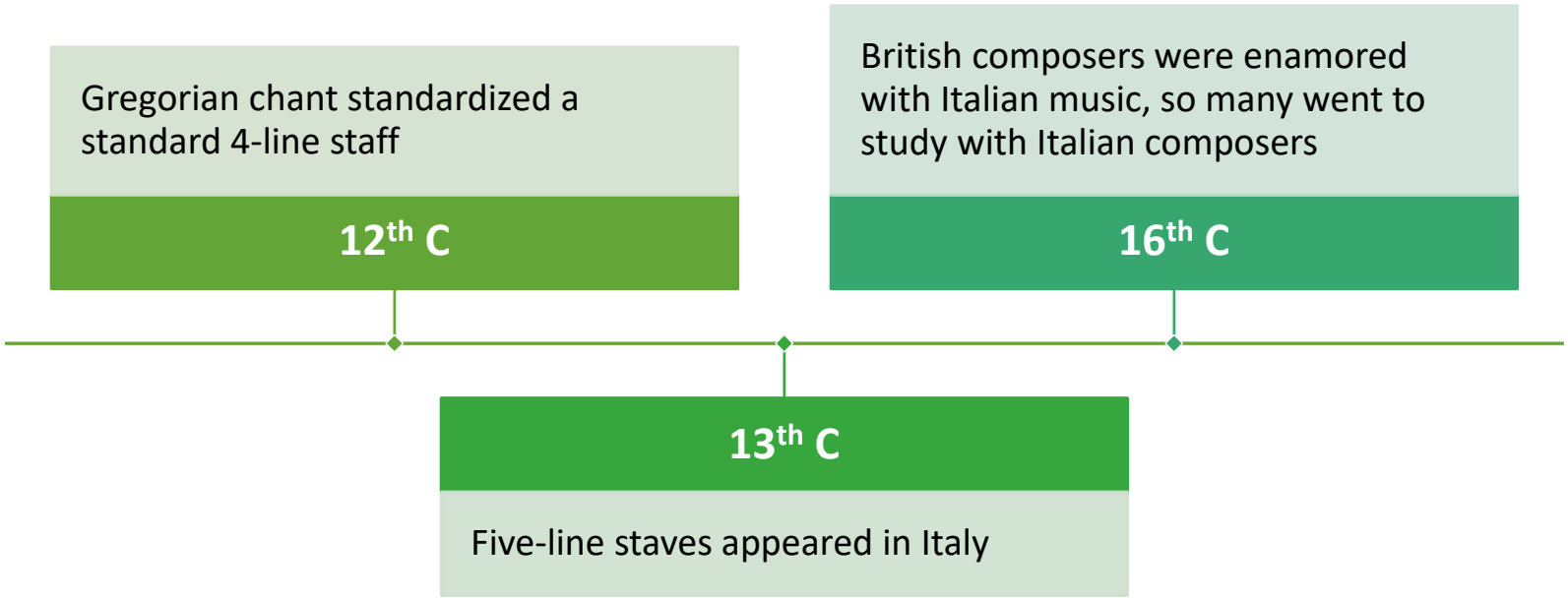
2

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.

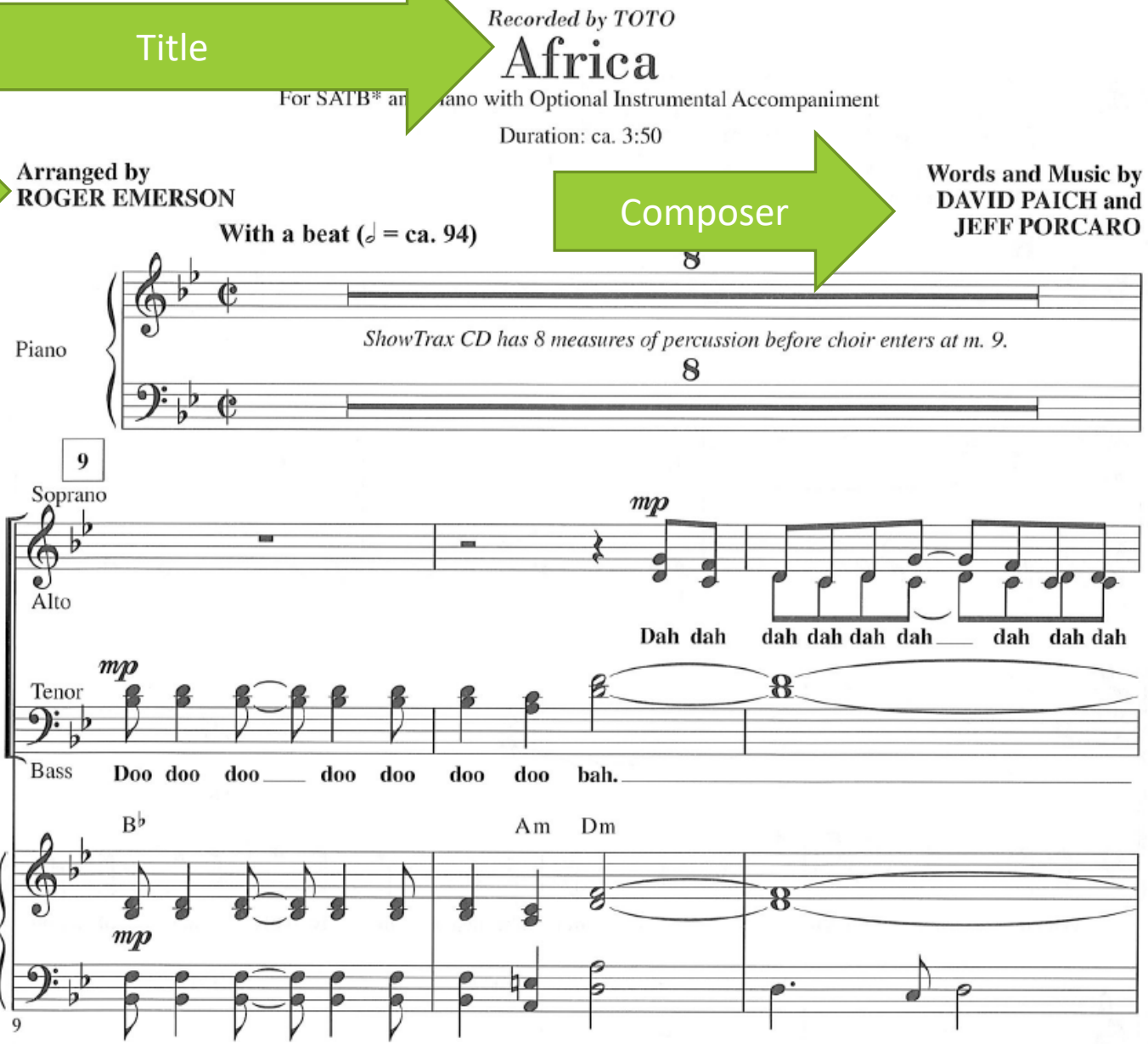
Starting from zero

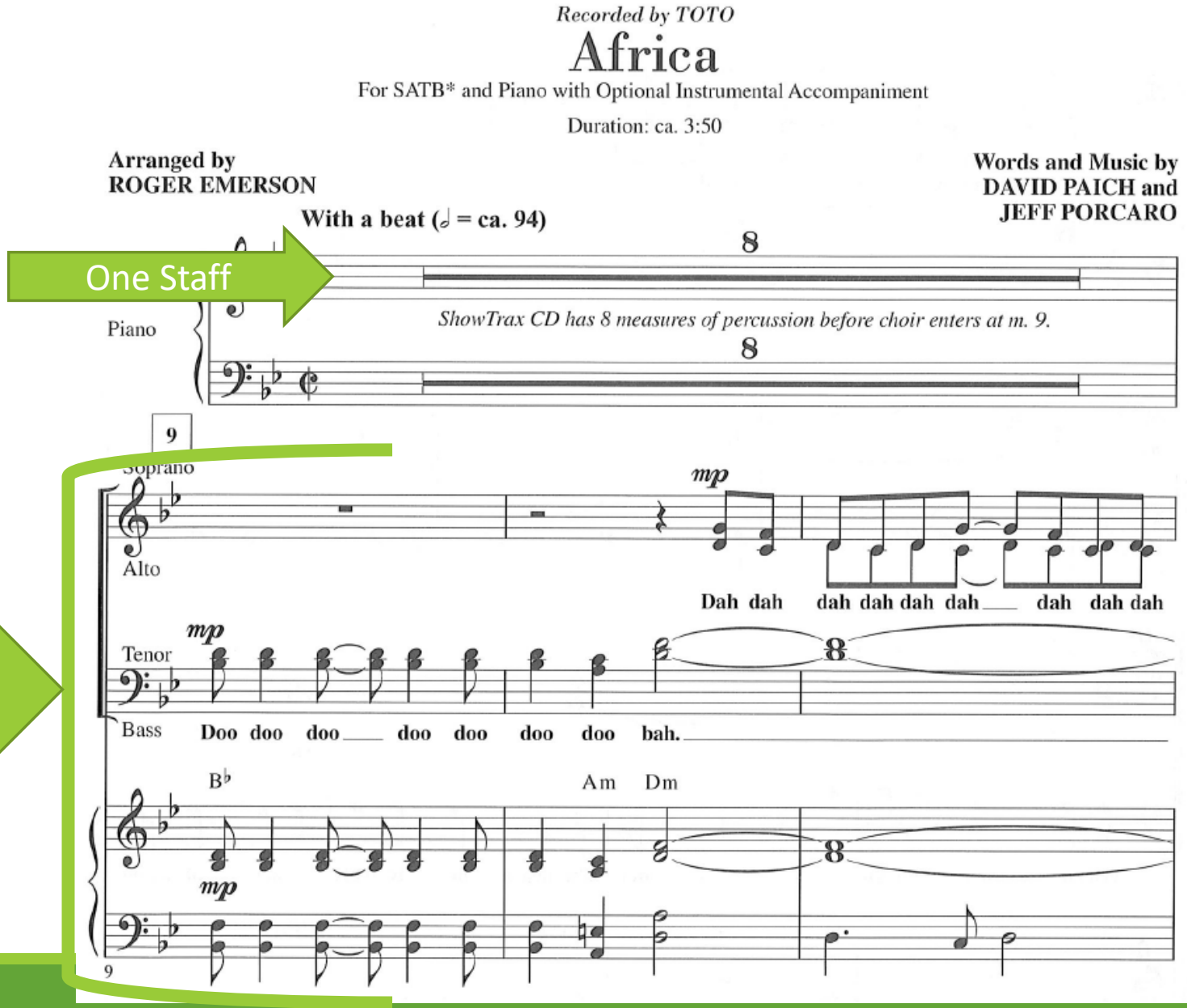
SEEING THE "MAP" HIDDEN IN THE DOTS

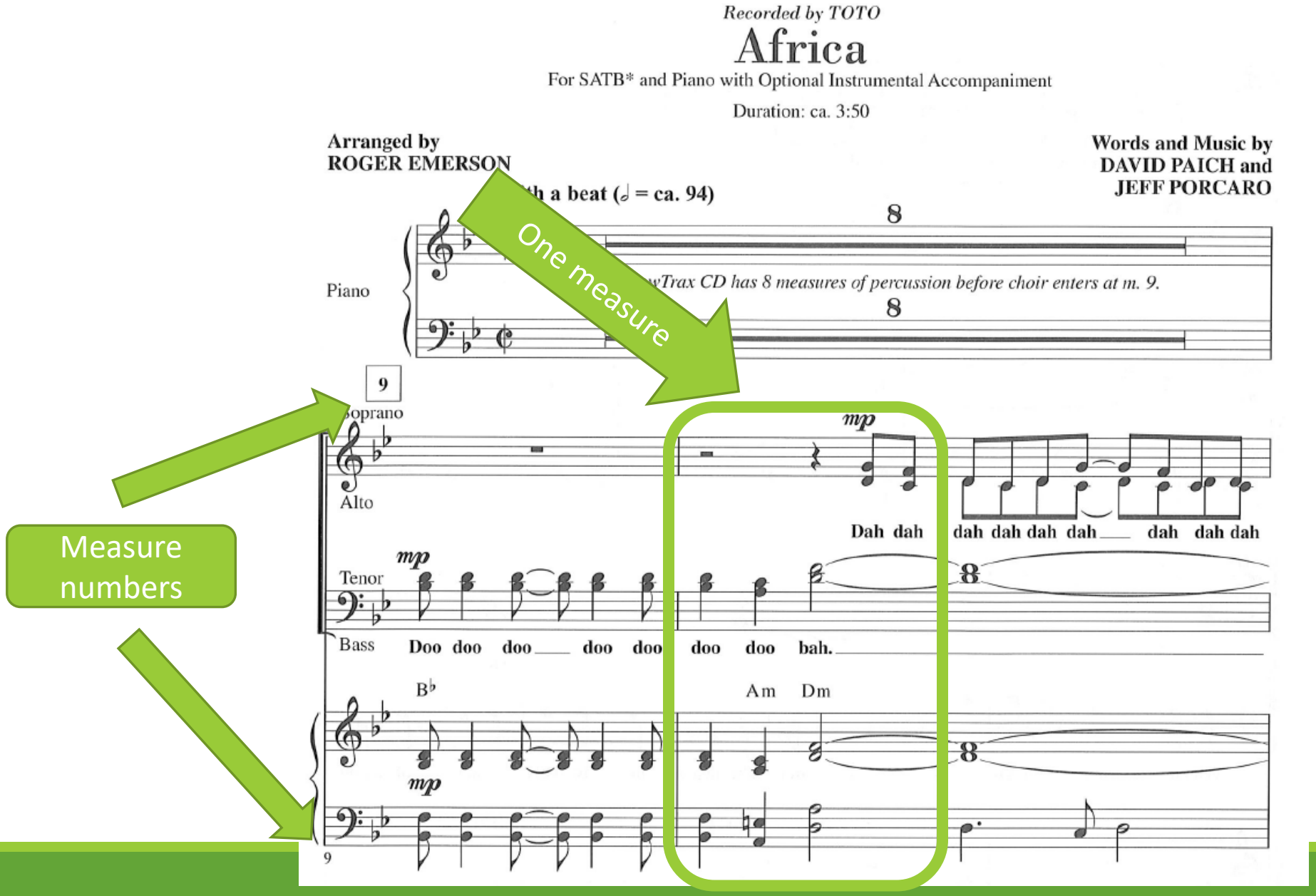
Title

Arranger

Composer




Recorded by TOTO
Africa
For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment
Duration: ca. 3:50
Arranged by
ROGER EMERSON
Words and Music by
DAVID PAICH and
JEFF PORCARO
With a beat (𝅗𝅥 = ca. 94)
One Staff
Piano
ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.
9
Soprano
Alto
mp
Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah
Staff System
Tenor
Bass
Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.
B♭
Am Dm
9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For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment
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ROGER EMERSON
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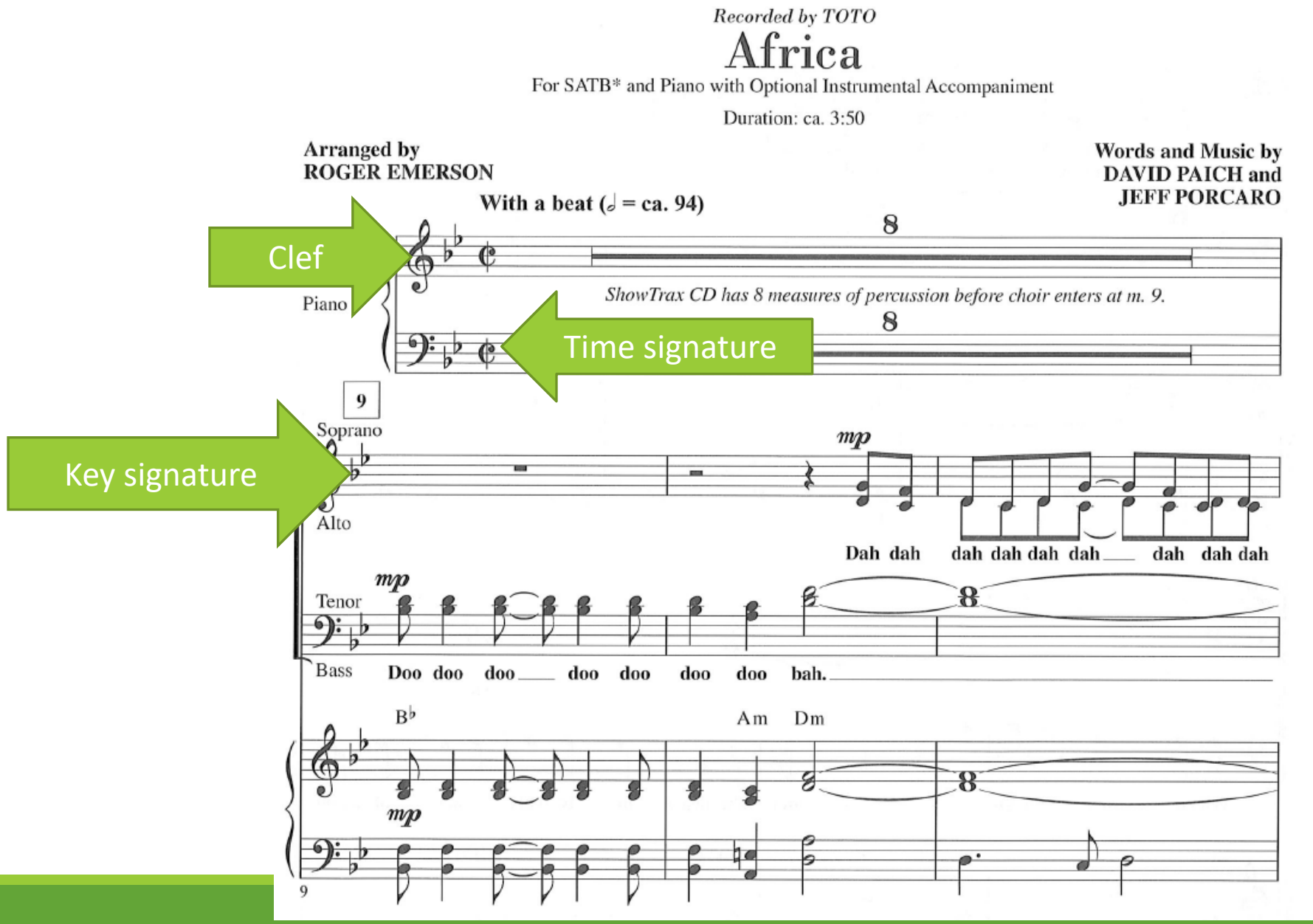
a beat (♩ = ca. 94)
Piano
wTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.
9
Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
mp
Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah
Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.
B♭
Am Dm
One measure
Measure numbers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Arranged by
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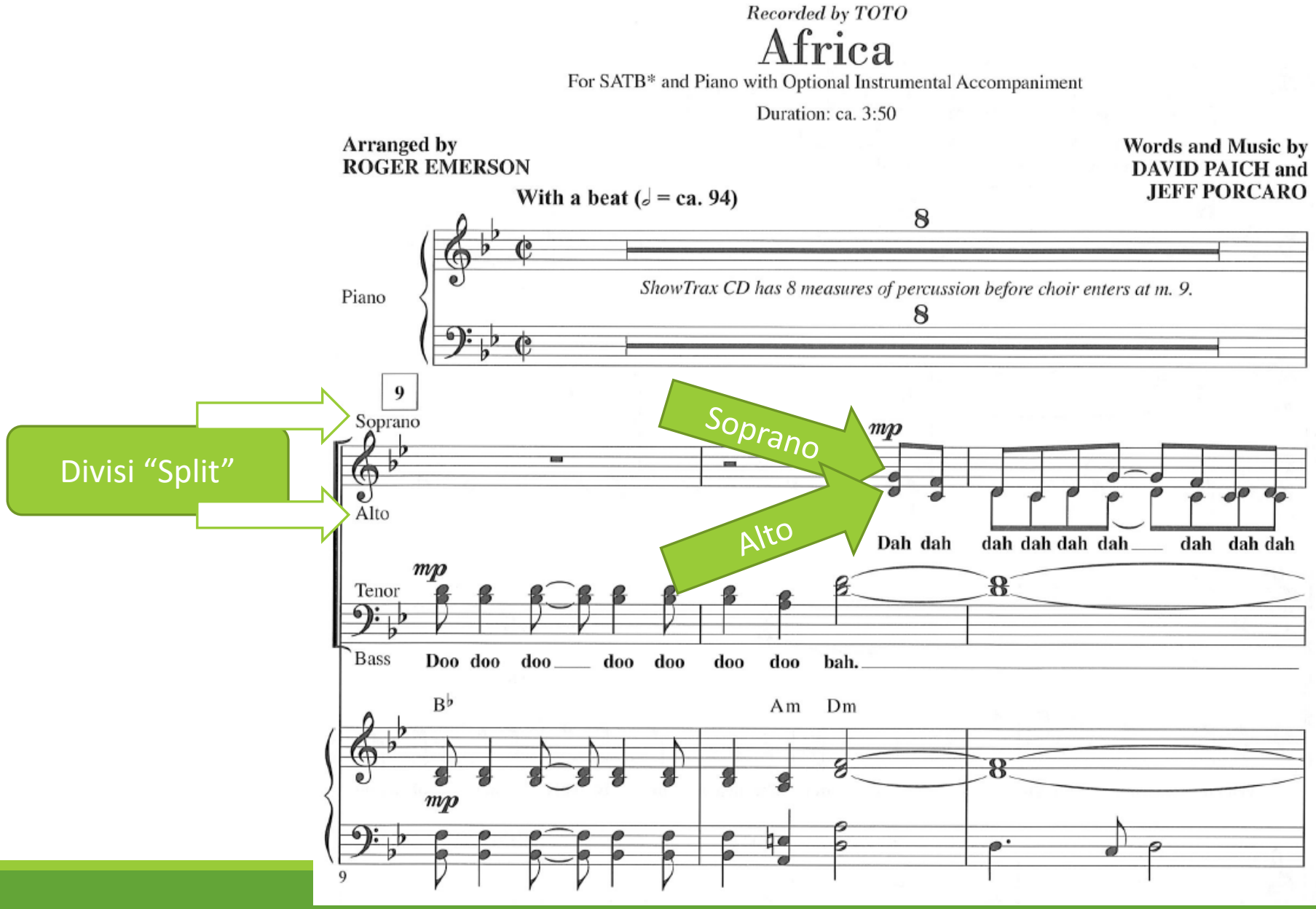
Words and Music by
DAVID PAICH and
JEFF PORCARO
With a beat (𝅗𝅥 = ca. 94)
Clef
Time signature
Key signature
Piano
ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.
9
Soprano
Alto
mp
Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah
Tenor
Bass
Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.
B♭
Am Dm
9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Africa
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With a beat (𝅗𝅥 = ca. 94)
Piano
ShowTrax CD has 8 measures of percussion before choir enters at m. 9.
9
Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
mp
Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah
Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo bah.
B♭
Am Dm
Divisi "Split"
Soprano
Alto

Reading Tip #1: Highlight your part!!

Digital sheet music or personal copies

Recorded by TOTO

Africa

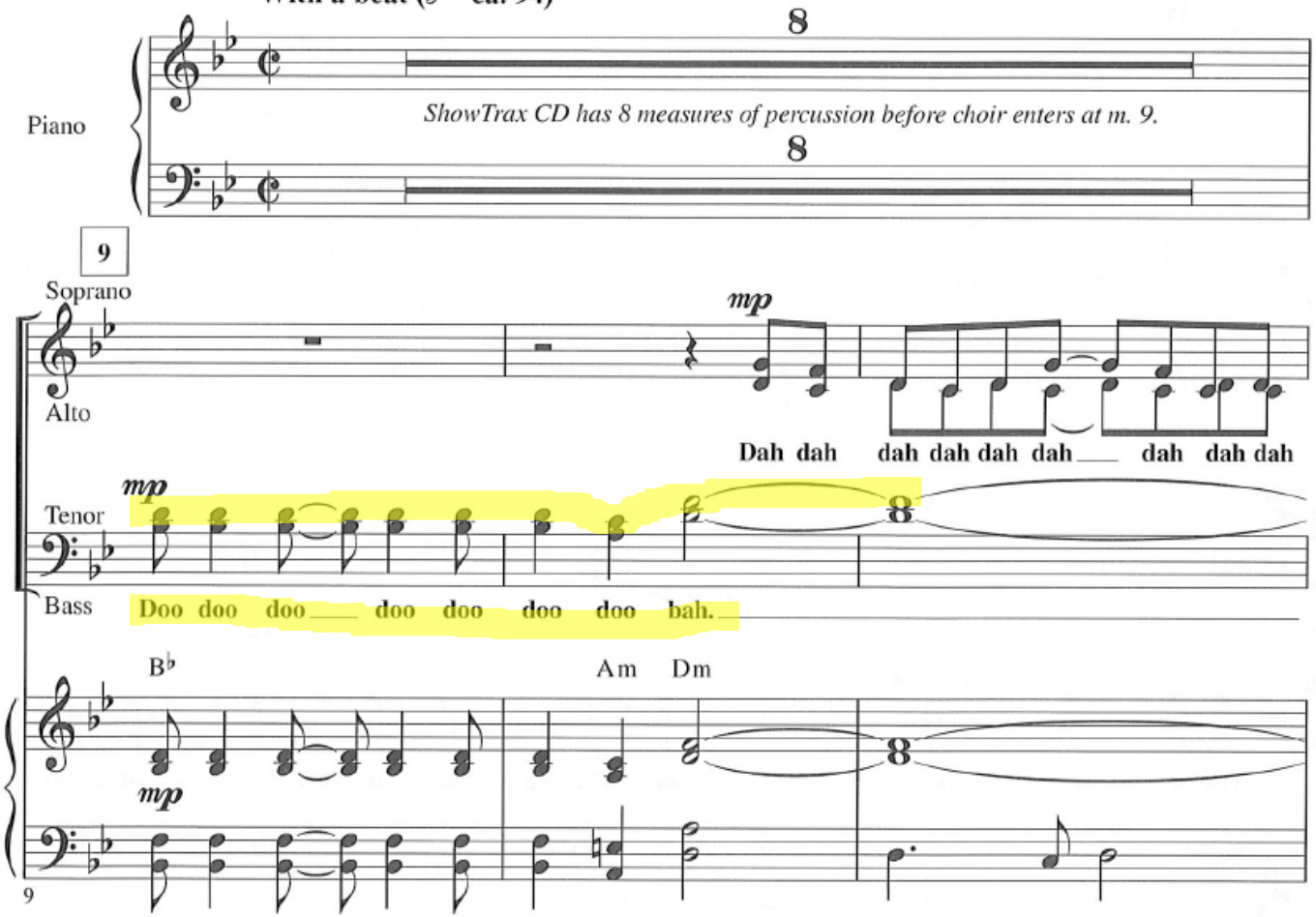
For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 3:50

Arranged by
ROGER EMERSON

Words and Music by
DAVID PAICH and
JEFF PORCARO

With a beat (𝅗𝅥 = ca. 94)

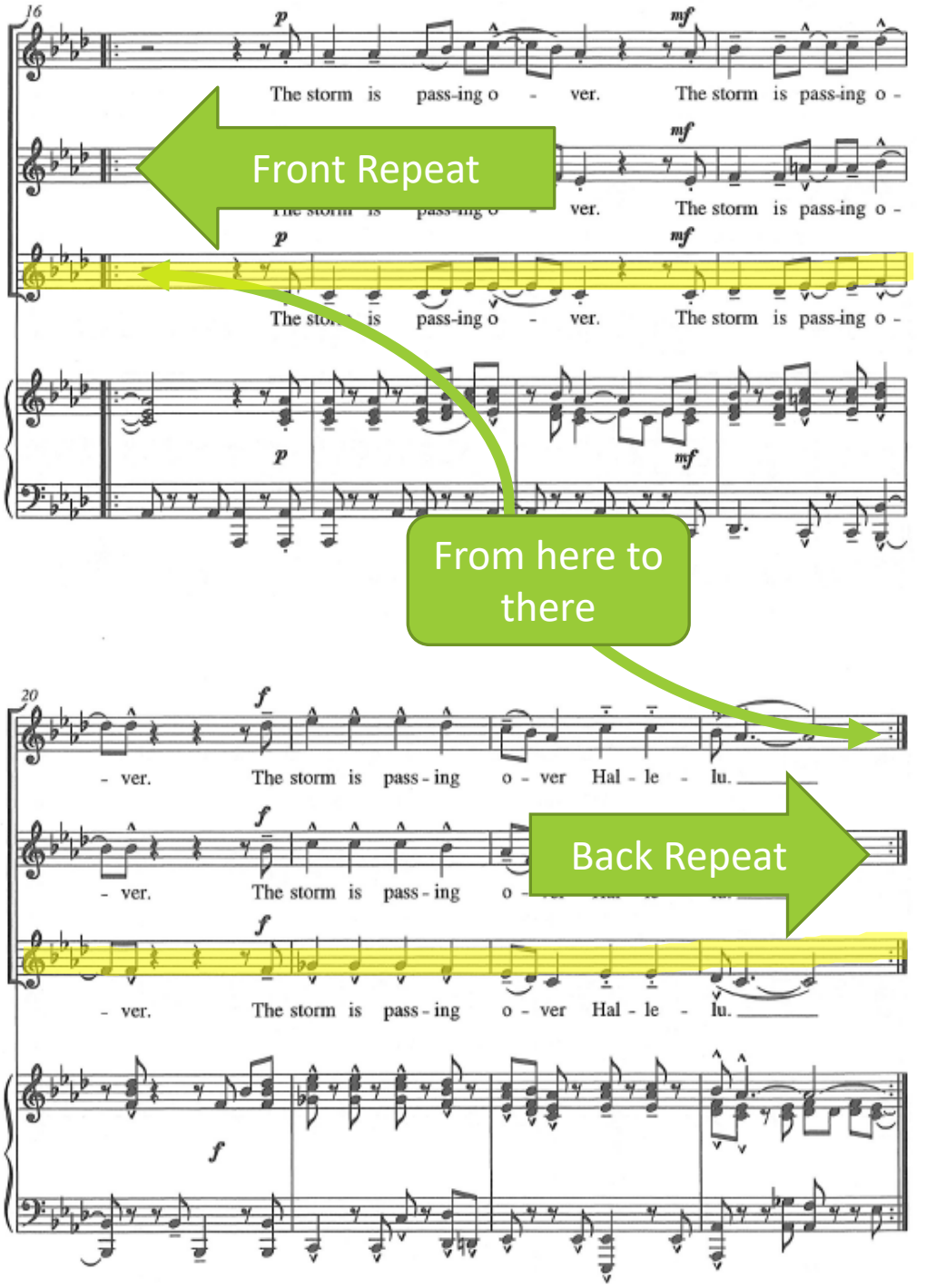


Common "Map" Terms

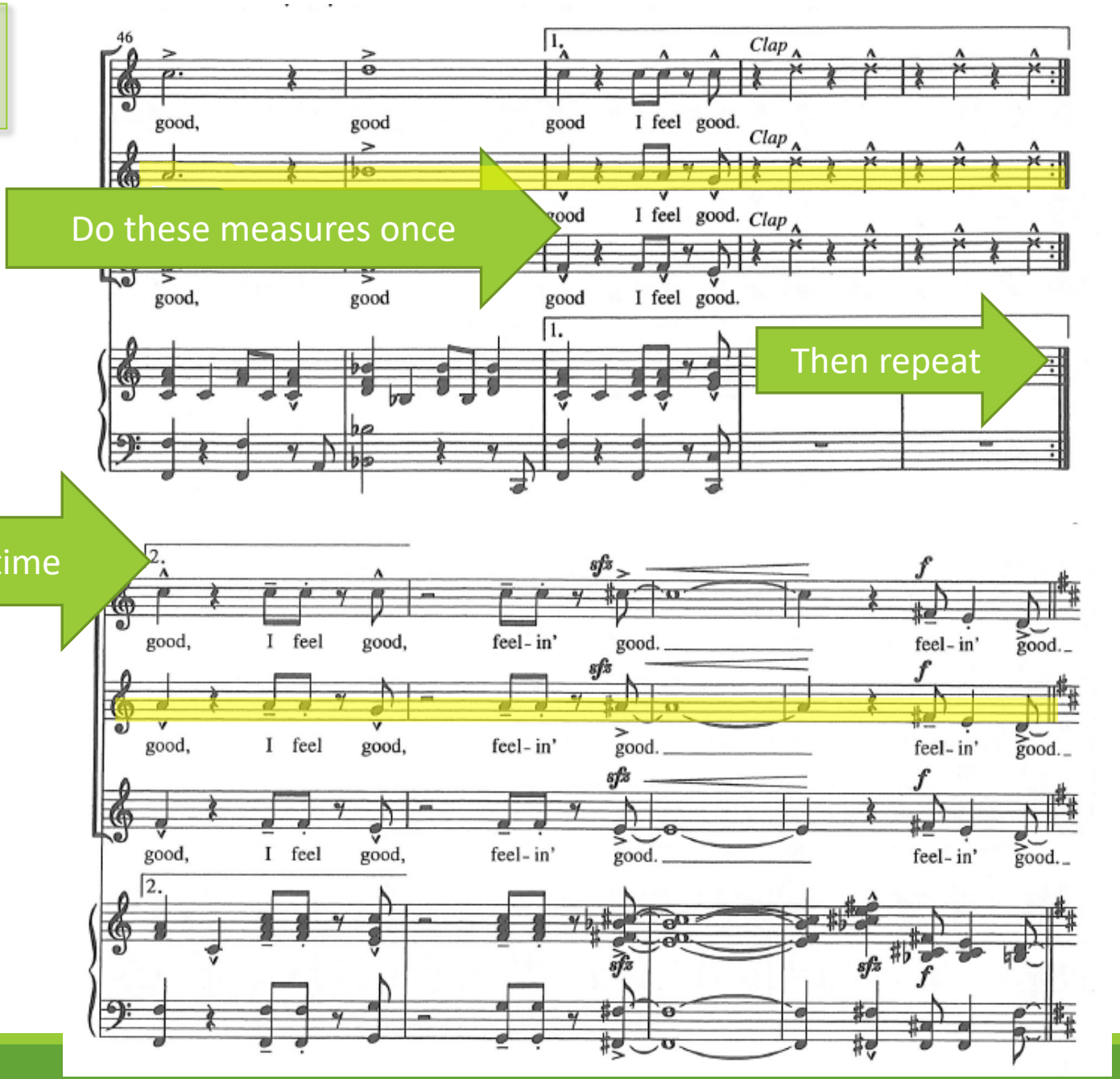
REPEATS, ENDINGS, AND THE "DA'S"

Often, just following along is the hard part!

Repeat Sign



Endings


Do these measures once
Then repeat
Skip to here the 2nd time
46
1.
2.
Clap
good, good good I feel good.
feel- in' good.
sfz
f

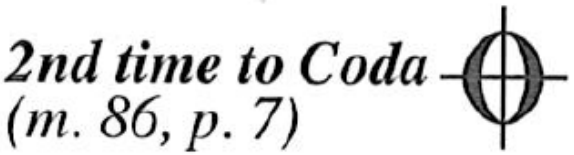
The “Da’s”

Da Segno (D.S.)

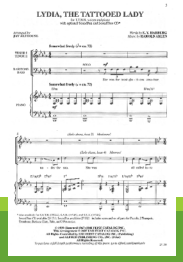
Da Capo (D.C.)

DC al Coda

DS al Coda



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.”

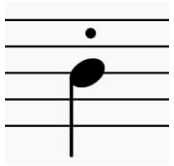
Accelerando (“quickening”)
- “Accel.”

Piu mosso (“more motion”)

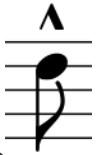
Meno mosso (“less motion”)

Common Articulations

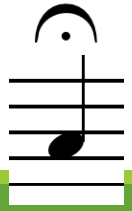
Staccato (“detached”)



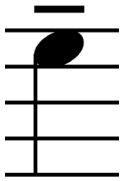
Marcato (“march”)



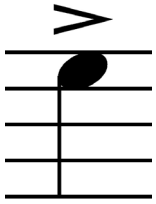
Fermata (“stop”)



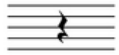
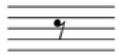
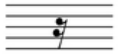
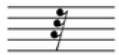
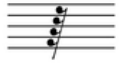
Tenuto (“held”)



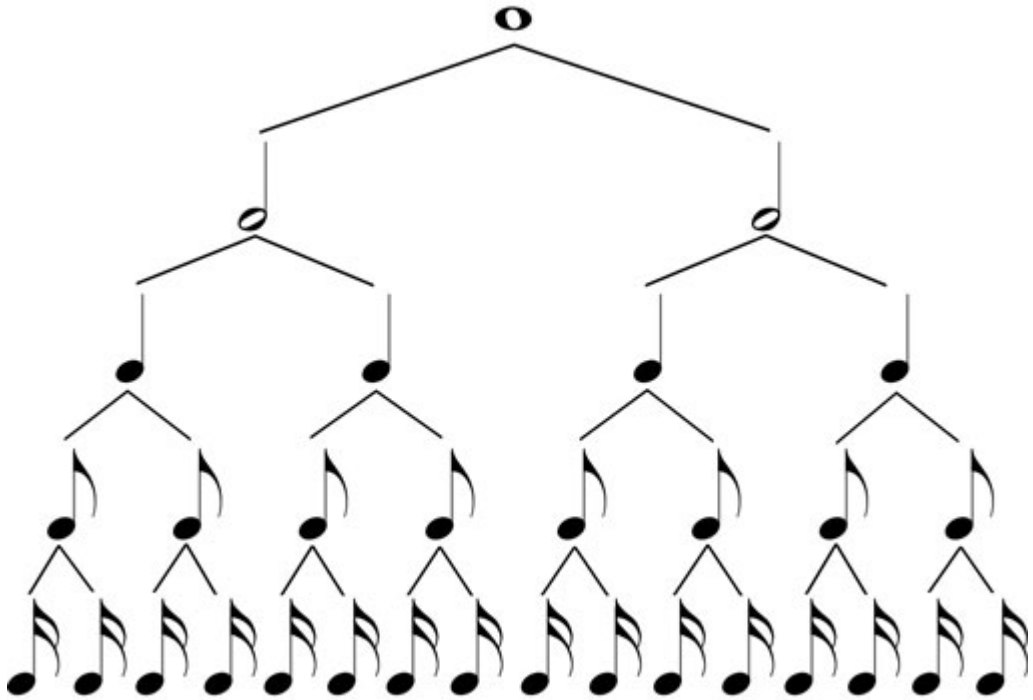
Accent



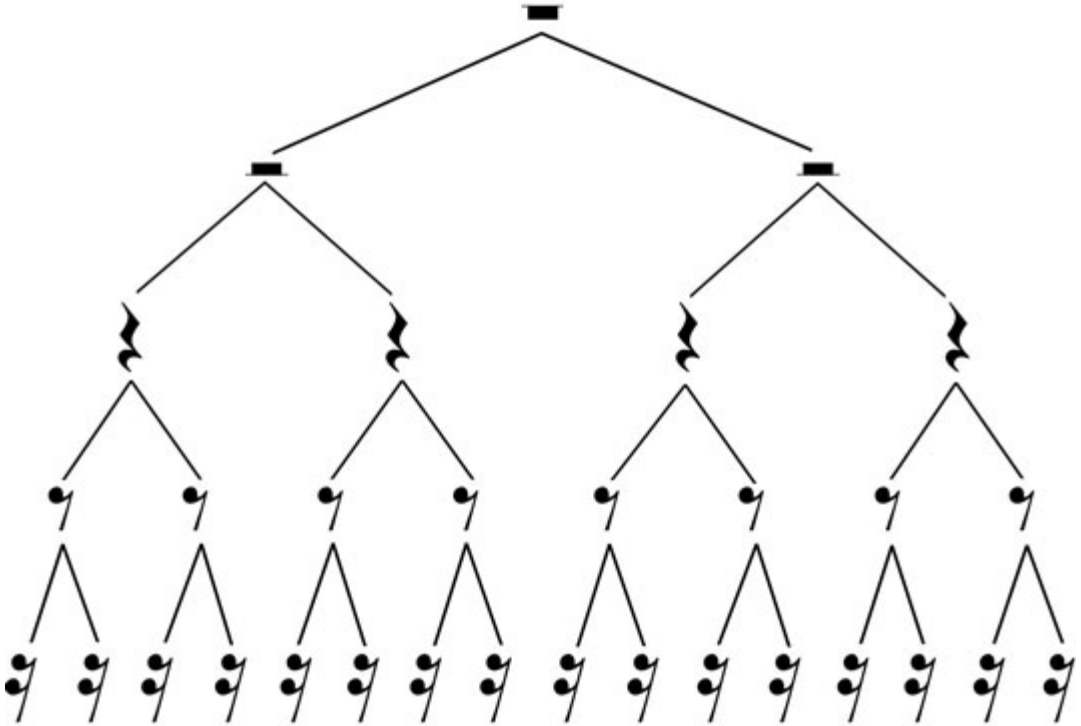
Rhythm symbols

Name	Note	Rest	Equivalents
Breve (Double Whole Note)	𝅜 or 𝅜		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

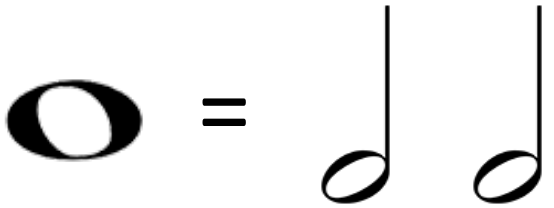


Rhythms are ratios



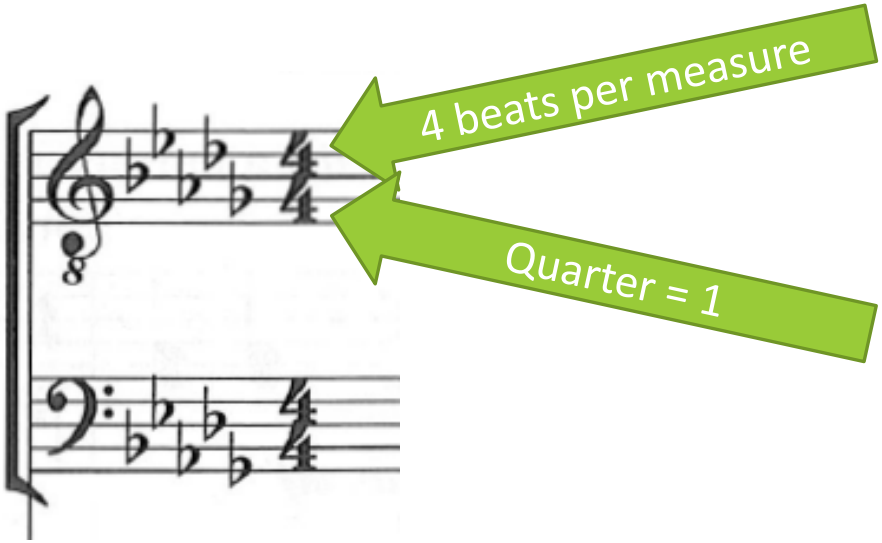
Common rhythm mistakes

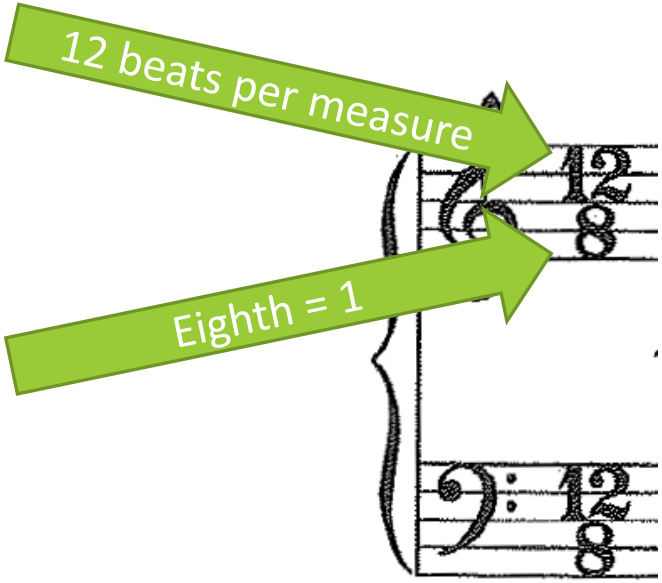
Notes are ratios, not specific values



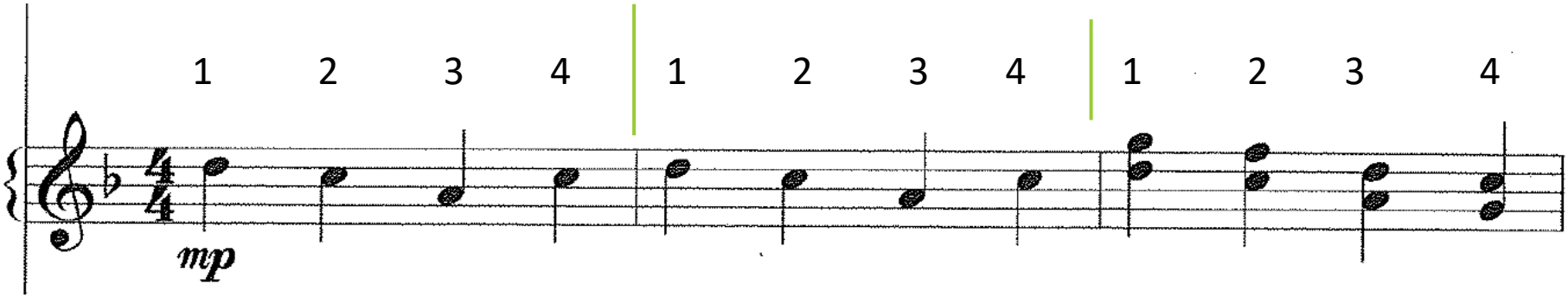
Time Signatures

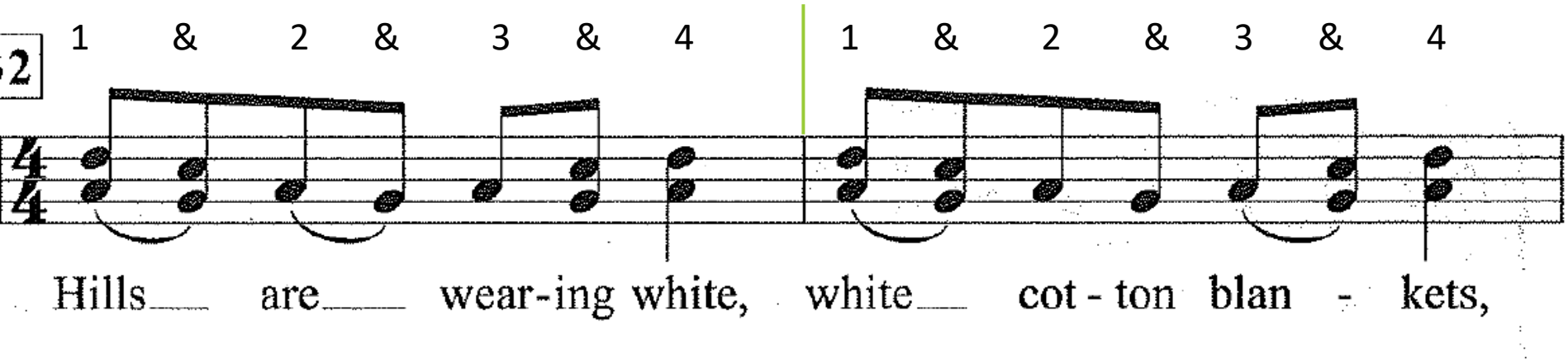
Assigning specific values the ratios



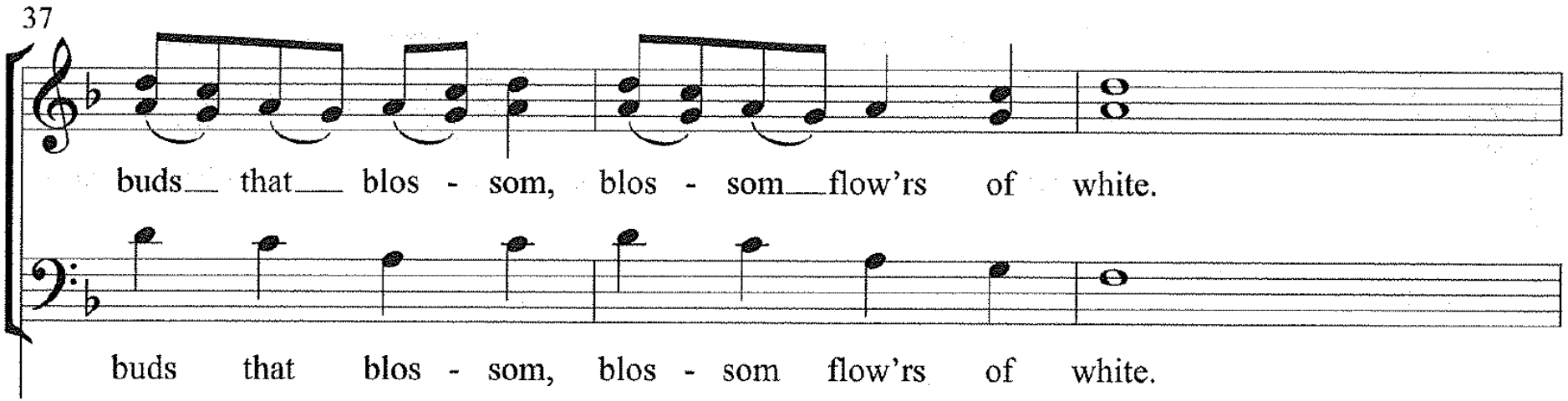


Counting: Rhythm Reading for Adults

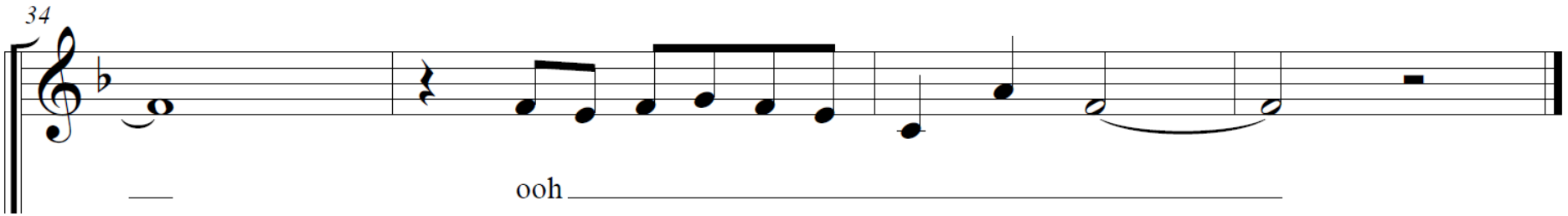



1 & 2 & 3 & 4 1 & 2 & 3 & 4
Hills are wear-ing white, white cot - ton blan - kets,

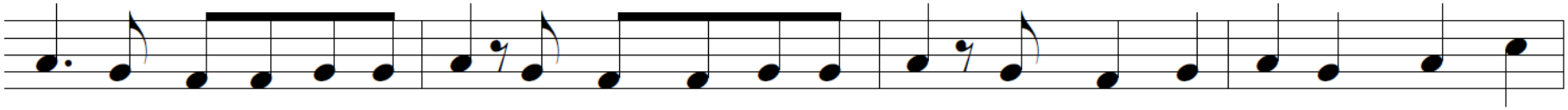
Both at the same time!



What to do with rests?



Making it harder: Dots and Rests

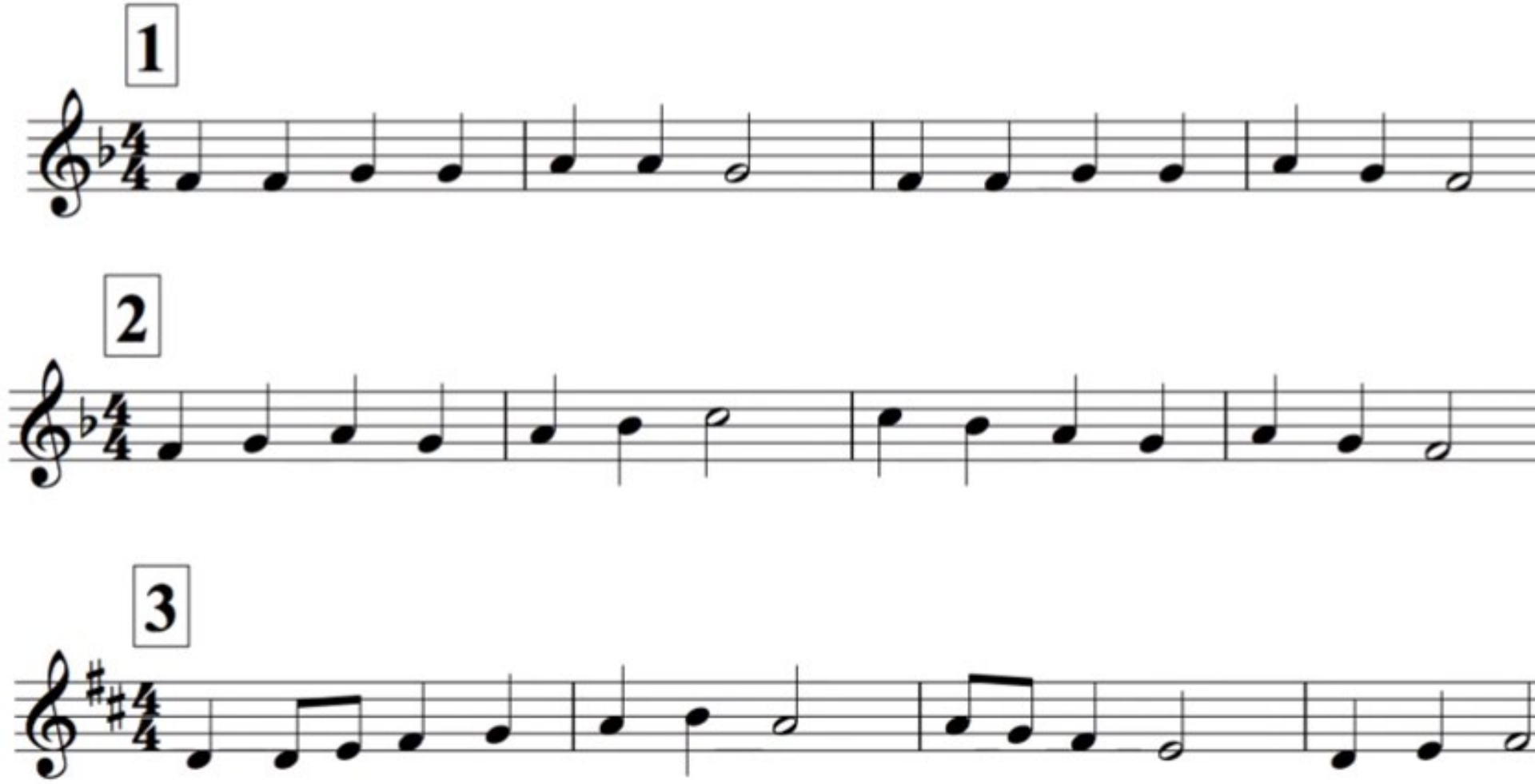


I was fol-low-ing the pack all swal-lowed in their coats with scarves of red tied 'round their

Pitch

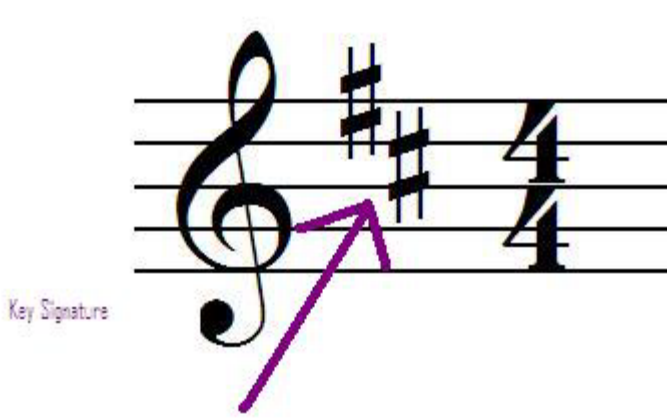
WE ARE NATURALLY DRAWN TO TONIC—LET'S SEE!

Reading Pitch: Stepwise

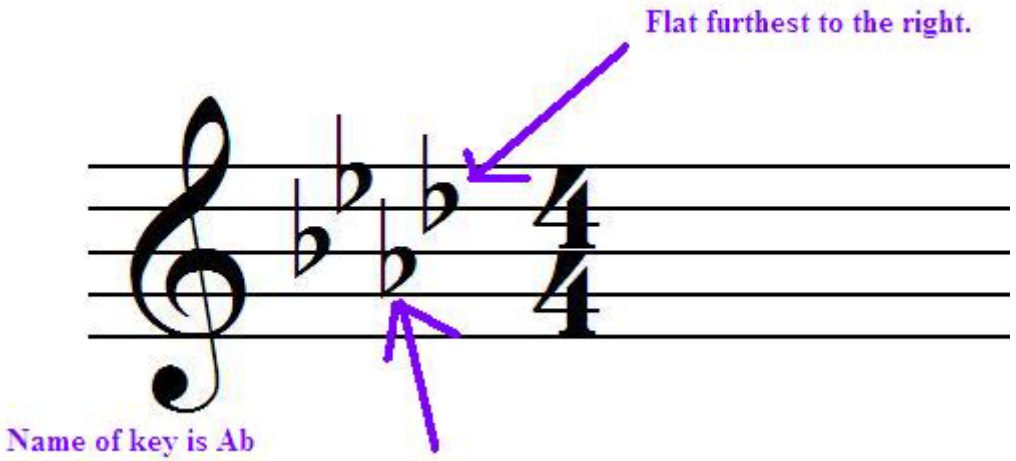


How do you know where 1 is?

For sharp keys, the last sharp is 7



For flat keys, the last flat is 4



Reading Pitch: Intervals

https://www.sightreadingfactory.com/