

The Basics of Reading Music

Week Four: Making Music Sound Musical

Following lines of music which include rests and small leaps; further notation; starting to incorporate expression with basic performance directions.

Recapping

Last week you sang your very first simple tunes, using both pitch and rhythm.
Let's try some more of the same and introduce some simple rests.

EXERCISE: Take a look at the short tunes below. Have a go at clapping them first and then singing your way through them slowly.



Now in week four, we're going to be looking at other signs and symbols that you may see on your music, including more advanced notation and some common musical terminology.

Let's start by looking again at that typical choir music we studied in week one.

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The tempo is "Moderato, molto espressivo". The Soprano and Alto parts have lyrics: "May your hearts be lov-ing and hon-est, Where-ev-er you may roam." The piano part has a curly bracket at the beginning. The score includes measures 1 through 9.

Hopefully by now, the various elements of the music are starting to look more familiar:

- 1) The music has separate lines for the SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR and BASS voices to follow. (Do you know which is the highest voice and which is the lowest?)
- 2) Each line of music starts with a treble or bass clef. This tells you whether the pitches used will be higher or lower. What do you notice about the clef for the tenor voice?
- 3) There are 3 beats in each bar.
- 4) The sopranos and altos have two full bars of rests at the beginning, before they start to sing.
- 5) The tails of the notes are going both up and down, to keep them within the boundaries of the staff (staff), where possible.
- 6) The music also shows the part for the pianist to play. Notice the curly bracket at the start of the piano's music; this shows that the pianist is to read two lines of music AT THE SAME TIME.

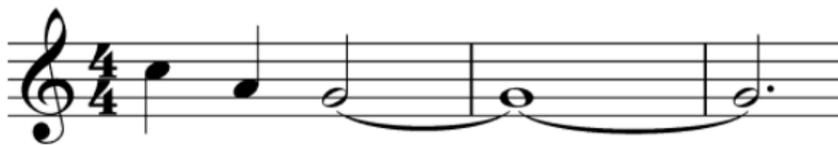
Tied and Slurred Notes

Sometimes, in a piece of music, you want your note to last a long time. For example, for singers this might be at the end of a piece if you hold a really long note or if you are singing "ahh" as a backing under the tune.



The tie is a curved line that joins one note's value to the next, as if they were one continuous note. For notes with an upwards stem (tail), the curve goes underneath; for notes with a downwards stem (tail) the curve goes above – always next to the note head (the circle).

The most important thing to remember is that you sing (or play) the first tied note and then KEEP HOLDING through the value of the next.



That means that this note (G) above is equal to 2+4+3 counts = 9.

EXERCISE: Write the TOTAL VALUE of the tied note by adding up its parts

 = ___ beats	 = ___ beats	 = ___ beats	 = ___ beats
 = ___ beats	 = ___ beats	 = ___ beats	 = ___ beats

You can only tie a note to THE SAME PITCH, otherwise you would automatically break the tie by moving to the next pitch.

If the piece requires you to move to a different pitch, then this is called **a slur**. Again, a curved line is used to signify this.

	
Tie	Slurs

A slur means that you are to move smoothly from one pitch to the next, without separation.



Dotted Notes

Last week you learned about dotted notes: a dot after a note adds on HALF OF WHAT IS THERE ALREADY and so

 =  + 

Now we're going to look at some more complicated dotted notes and have a go at clapping them in a short rhythm.

EXERCISE: Add up the sums in this musical maths:

	DRAW THE ANSWER	WRITE HOW MANY BEATS

EXERCISE: Take a look at the following rhythms which all use dotted notes. Have a go at clapping them – don't forget to check the time signature first!

$\frac{4}{4}$

$\frac{3}{4}$

First Musical Terminology

One of the ways that we learn more about *how* the composer wants a particular piece to sound is by reading other words, signs and symbols on the music. This huge musical glossary tells us all the other information we need to know, outside of what we know from the notes themselves.

For example:

Is the piece loud or is it quiet?

Is it fast or is it slow?

Is it smooth and drawn out or is it detached and jumpy?

At the end of this worksheet you will find a full glossary of musical terms that relate to singing in a choir. Keep them somewhere safe so that you can translate what your conductor is saying!

Dynamics

This is the term that refers to the **volume** of the piece – the louds and softs.

<i>ff</i>	<i>fortissimo</i>	very loud	<i>mp</i>	<i>mezzo piano</i>	moderately quiet
<i>f</i>	<i>forte</i>	loud	<i>p</i>	<i>piano</i>	quiet
<i>mf</i>	<i>mezzo forte</i>	moderately loud	<i>pp</i>	<i>pianissimo</i>	very quiet

You might also see the sign for getting louder: 

The term associated with this is ***crescendo***

And getting quieter: 

The term associated with this is ***diminuendo***

Tempo

This is the term that refers to the **speed** of the piece.

<i>Grave</i>	Slow and solemn	<i>Moderato</i>	Moderately
<i>Largo/Lento</i>	Very slow	<i>Allegro</i>	Quickly
<i>Adagio</i>	Slow and stately	<i>Vivace</i>	Lively
<i>Andante</i>	At a walking pace	<i>Presto</i>	Very fast
<i>Con brio</i>	With spirit	<i>Rubato</i>	Expressive quickening and slowing

You might also see a word for getting faster: ***accelerando*** (or *accel.*)

And getting slower: ***ritardando/rallentando*** (*rit.* or *rall.*).

Other Performance Directions

There is often a term (usually at the start of the music) that refers to the **way the piece is played or sung** - and this is where the composer can really express themselves and get their “vision” across.

The performance directions used to always be in Italian (or German), but English is getting more common. As well as suggesting a possible speed, some ideas include:

Joyously	With Feeling	Sorrowful	Dance-like
Like a fanfare	<i>Dolce</i> - sweetly	<i>Legato</i> - smoothly	<i>Staccato</i> – detached
<i>Animato</i> - animated	<i>Misterioso</i> - mysteriously	<i>Maestoso</i> - majestically	<i>Cantabile</i> – in a singing style

You might also see ***molto*** (much or a lot of) and ***poco*** (a little).

EXERCISE: For each of the following pieces, state whether the piece is loud or quiet and fast or slow, and how it is to be sung or played, by filling in the table.

1: Venite Exultemus

Three Latin Psalms

Con brio, as a fanfare

E Rowland

SOPRANO 1

ff **A**

Come let us sing un - to the Lord! O

SOPRANO 2

ff

Come let us sing un - to the Lord! O

PIECE 1	THE WORD OR SYMBOL I SEE IS	THIS MEANS
DYNAMICS		
TEMPO		
PERFORMANCE		

Farewell Blessing

Emma Rowland

Moderately and with great feeling ♩ = 100

S

p dolce e legato

May your hearts be lov - ing and hon - est, Wher - ev - er

A

p dolce e legato

May your hearts be lov - ing, Wher - ev - er

PIECE 2	THE WORD OR SYMBOL I SEE IS	THIS MEANS
DYNAMICS		
TEMPO		
PERFORMANCE		

Songbird

Emma Rowland

Molto Rubato ♩ = 64 *gently and sensitively*

SOPRANO

She rides on the wind like a soul that's free: _____ the
mp

ALTO

She rides on the wind like a soul that's free: _____ the
mp

Detailed description: The image shows the musical score for the Soprano and Alto parts of the piece 'Songbird' by Emma Rowland. The tempo is marked 'Molto Rubato' with a quarter note equal to 64. The performance instruction is 'gently and sensitively'. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics for both parts are 'She rides on the wind like a soul that's free: _____ the' with a dynamic marking of 'mp' (mezzo-piano).

PIECE 3	THE WORD OR SYMBOL I SEE IS	THIS MEANS
DYNAMICS		
TEMPO		
PERFORMANCE		

This week, why not have a look at some choir music you have at home and see if you can identify the dynamics, tempo and performance directions for the piece?

Next week, we will continue to work on some sight-reading exercises and also introduce the idea of mood in your music with key signatures and major and minor keys!

Glossary of Terms for Singers

Here is a list of some of the terms and symbols you might see on your music or hear in rehearsal:

Soprano (S)	The higher female voice	f	Loud
Alto (A)	The lower female voice	p	Soft
Tenor (T)	The higher male voice	mf	Moderately loud
Bass (B)	The lower male voice	mp	Moderately soft
Clef	The sign at the start of the music to indicate the pitch of notes that will be used	Dynamics	Loudness and softness in a piece
Tempo	The speed of the piece	Crescendo	Getting louder
Legato	Smooth	Diminuendo	Getting softer
Staccato	Short, detached	Ensemble	A group of performers
Cantabile	In a singing style	Unison	All singing the same note at the same time
Moderato	Moderately	Octave	The interval of an 8 th in music, e.g. from C to C
Adagio	Slow	Blending	Asking choir members to match their voices against one another to make one, unified sound
Allegro	Quick	Diction	Clear pronunciation
Presto	Fast	Coda	Closing section
Harmony	Two (or more) different notes sung at the same time	A Cappella	Singing without any accompaniment
Rubato	Pulling the speed of the piece around for artistic expression	Accent	Giving a particular note (or phrase) more stress
Accompaniment	Music that is played to support the choir or a solo singer	Articulation	Forming clear and distinct sounds when singing
Accompanist	A pianist who plays the piano to support the choir	Beat	The pulse of the music; usually what the conductor will mark
Conductor	The leader of the choir	Break	The point at which a singer switches between chest and head voice
(Breath) Support	Using the diaphragm well to control breath efficiently	Chord	When two or more notes are sung at the same time
Pitch	The sound of a particular note	Composer	A person who writes music
Cue	The signal to the choir to begin	Diaphragm	The muscle at the bottom of the lungs which is responsible for inhalation
Diphthong	Two vowel sounds in the same syllable; generally undesirable	Dolce	(Sung) sweetly
Forced	Strained singing which is pushed too hard	Interpretation	The particular expression and performance of a choir
Melody	The tune of the song	Sheet Music	The printed form of musical notation that choirs use for learning
Minor	Music in a minor key usually sounds sad	Major	Music in a major key usually sounds happy
Phrasing	Refers to the words that should be sung in one breath; a phrase is a musical sentence	Part or Section	The particular harmony you sing in choir, with others who do the same

Range	The lowest note you can sing to the highest	Repeat	Perform a section again
Sight Singing	The ability to look at music and sing it (well) straight off	"Note bash"	A term that conductors often use for the sessions when they teach parts over and over
Solo	Sing alone	Tie	To sing the first note and hold it for the length of the second
Stave	The five parallel lines on which music is written	Slur	To move slowly from one note to another
Stagger breathing	When the members of a choir deliberately breath at different places in the song	Time signature	The numbers at the start of the piece that tell you how many beats there are in a bar
Vibrato	When a singer's voice naturally	Warm Up	A series of exercises to help you prepare to sing