

# I. BASIC THEORY

## ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

The basics of music are **tone** and **time**. These elements when used without purpose, design or feeling do not constitute music. The sound of aimless banging on a drum or the wail of a siren is not music. **Tones and time, when organized into patterns, become the materials of music** irrespective of whether the patterns are obvious or subtle, conventional or novel. **Organized time becomes rhythm and patterned tones in rhythm become melody and harmony.**

**Rhythm**, a word derived from the Greek, meaning “flow of measured motion,” implies the flow of movement. In its broadest sense, this flow informs the sweeping lines of poetry, the procession of episodes in a drama and the successive sections of a musical work.

On a different level, the term rhythm describes repeated patterns of physical movement, such as dancing or physical labor. Dancing, marching, and work motions, both regular and irregular, are reflected in the time element, or rhythm, of music. Conversely the rhythms in dance and marching music have the power to induce physical, muscular movement in time with the music. We tend to move, sway, or respond with an inner muscular tension and relaxation when watching people engaged in rhythmic occupations. Our response to physical and musical rhythm undoubtedly reflects some of the essential rhythms of our being, such as the muscular tension and relaxation in walking, breathing, the beating of the heart and other involuntary or instinctive motion.

**Tone** is a little more complicated, and is also possibly derived from natural sound--the songs of birds, the moans of mourning, and sounds of wind and water. Most simply put, tone is where sound is located on a scale from very low sounds to very high sounds. Musical sounds are organized into a particular sequence--formally we call the sounds notes.

Thus a melody is a succession of tones and rhythms that creates an identifiable pattern. Melodies can be the simple, hummable tunes of childhood or Broadway, the broad symphonic ideas of Beethoven or Brahms, or the more abstract melodic lines of a jazz improvisation.

Dance and music are inextricably tied together. It is not possible to say which gave birth to which, but it is safe to say that they have woven their way together through cultural history. Most dancing has an essential musical component, and it is certainly a crucial partner to classical ballet. It is therefore necessary to understand a little about exactly how it affects the work we do in training young dancers.

## MUSICAL NOTATION

To paraphrase a famous jazz saxophonist, music is in the air, and then it's gone. When we try to talk about music, we're really talking about memories of sounds we have heard. This is one of things that makes the study of music difficult. It is also one of the reasons for learning the basics of music notation--to be able to picture certain aspects of music and to acquire words to describe the pictures.

Many dancers are also musicians, but it is only necessary for a teacher of dance to be an intelligent listener of music--and for that, all that is needed is a grasp of the basic way in which notation describes two aspects of music: the **location (tone)** and **duration (rhythm)** of musical sounds. The basic vocabulary of music notation makes it possible to picture musical events and to apply them to movement.

As simply as possible, musical notation works like this:

### Location (tone):

Five lines are drawn horizontally. This is called a **staff**. A note can be located either on a line or on a space. Draw a staff and place **notes** on it and you have created a **melodic line**.

### Melodic line



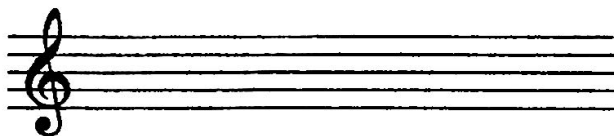
A melody is defined by the relationships between its notes. These relationships can be named. Look at two notes on a staff. Count the line or space on which the first note rests as 1 and count every line and space until you reach the second note, and you will have the name for the **interval** between the two notes.

### Intervals

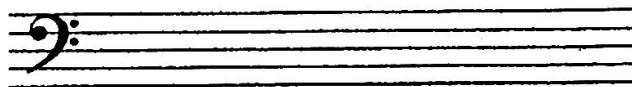


Each of the places notes can be drawn in the staff has a name. The names are defined by **clef (key)** signs. The **treble clef sign** is a large, ornate G; it circles the second line of the staff, defining that line as the one on which the note G will be located. The other most common clef is the **bass clef**. Its sign is a script F with two dots around the line on which the note F will be found.

### Treble clef



### Bass clef



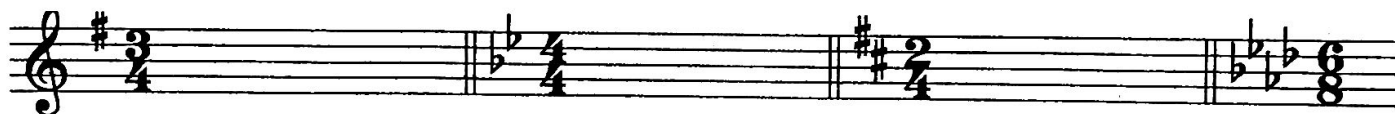
Immediately to the right of the clef sign is the **key signature**, which defines the particular scale the music is written in. This is only relevant to the musician. Immediately to the right of that is the time signature, which brings us to:

**Key of D**  
**3/4 time**

**Key of Bb**  
**4/4 time**

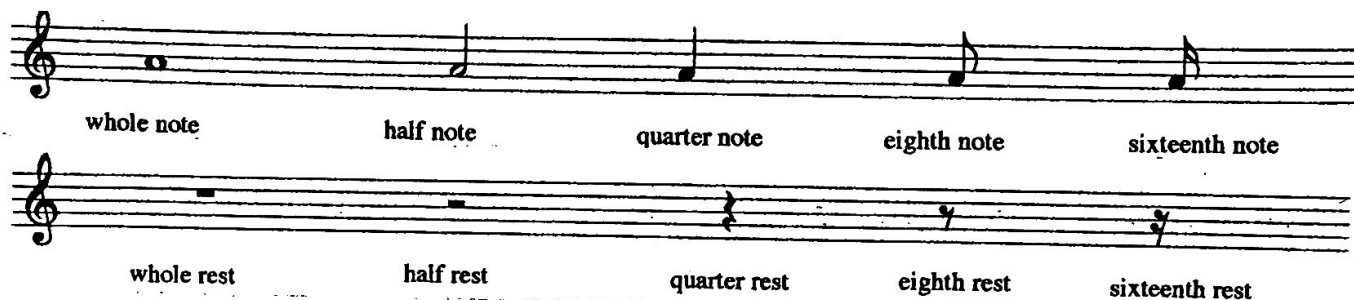
**Key of D**  
**2/4 time**

**Key of Ab**  
**6/8 time**



### Duration (rhythm):

To notate rhythm, music draws the notes that it places on the staff in different shapes and also has signs for when there is no sound.



Again, what the notation describes is relationships. The half note lasts half as long as the whole note and twice as long as the quarter note. These are commonly called durations, but that term is not exactly accurate, since nothing in the system specifies exactly how long a note is to be held. For that, the composer usually gives a general instruction about the speed, or tempo of the piece and trusts the performer to interpret within that direction.

Some of the common tempo indications are:

**Adagio**--very slow

**Andante**--rather slow

**Moderato**--moderate

**Allegretto**--a little fast

**Allegro**--fast

**Presto**--very fast

**Ritardando (rit.)**--gradually slower

**Accelerando**--gradually faster

**Rubato**--variable tempo

**A tempo**--back to original tempo

The **time signature** is what really makes sense of the duration notations. It indicates the kind of beat--the regular, recurring pulse of the music. These beats rarely arrive with equal strength. Usually they break down into patterns of strong and weak. ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three, or ONE-two-three-four, ONE-two-three-four. The composer indicates this relationship with the time signature. A time signature of 3/8 shows that there will be three beats in each measure and that an eighth note will receive one beat. A time signature of 4/4 indicates that there will be four beats in each measure and that a quarter note will receive one beat.

Each measure, or group of beats is identified by a **bar line**. The beats are regular, but a single beat can be supplied by different combinations of notes. A four-beat measure could include four quarter notes, or two quarter notes and a half note, or a half rest and four eighth notes, and so on.

### Possible rhythmic combinations in 4 and 6 beat measures

The image displays two musical staves illustrating rhythmic combinations. The top staff is in 4/4 time, showing four measures with various note values and rests. Below the staff, the beats are numbered 1 through 4 for each measure. The bottom staff is in 6/8 time, showing six measures with various note values and rests. Below the staff, the beats are numbered 1 through 6 for each measure.

These are the basics of location and duration--enough to make some connection between the sounds that you hear and the notes on the page.

## RECOGNISING DUPE AND TRIPLE METER

The patterns into which a stream of beats may be divided are called **meters** from the Greek *metreo*, to measure. As has been shown, the bar line divides the stream of beats into measures, each containing one primary accent and one or more afterbeats. A measure is thus the time interval from one primary accent to the next.

Two beats in a measure--one accented and one unaccented--is called **simple duple meter**; three beats in a measure--one accented and two unaccented afterbeats--is called **simple triple meter**. Simple duple and triple meters are the basic ways to organize beats.

Simple duple meter -- ONE-two/ONE-two/ONE-two

Simple triple meter -- ONE-two-three/ONE-two-three

Hearing these differences is more important to the dance teacher than being able to interpret the musical notation.