

1. Musical Staff

- Any composition that will be transferred to a written format will appear on pages of musical composition paper, more commonly referred to as sheet music and scores. Each page is formatted the same way, as a series of lines that are grouped by a quantity of five horizontal lines per section, otherwise known as a staff. The staff is the template upon which musical notation is written to guide the musicians and conductors through the composition as it progresses. Vertical lines are placed to subdivide the staff into bars or measures.

Time Signatures

- One of the most basic elements of composition is setting the tempo of the music. This aspect provides the basis for how musical themes are translated to the written page. Melody lines and key modulations that give a piece its unique identity must be regulated by time passage. Time signatures are symbols that appear at the beginning of each staff. They appear as one number over another. The top number signifies how many counts (beats) occur in each bar of the staff, while the bottom number designates which time unit will be used to represent one beat in the bar.

Key Signatures

- The key of a composition is another way to express its overall tonal character. Modern musical composition is based on the octave (from the Latin term for "eight"), which consists of seven different steps, or intervals, with the initial interval repeated at the end to complete the octave (scale). Each of these intervals is assigned one of seven letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F and G. Compositions will be written in a particular key for thematic structure, although the pieces can include other key signatures throughout.

Musical Notes

- The octave intervals are expressed as notes. The shapes and placements of these notes will instruct the reader on how long the note lasts and where it falls on the scale within each staff. The length of the note is distinguished by symbolic representation, in the form of circles and vertical lines. A circle without a line is a whole note, which will last for the entire length of that bar. A circle with one vertical line is a half note (equal to one half of the bar). Filled-in circles with