

MUSICAL NOTES

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Volume 8 Issue 1



Love The Arts!

“Discover The Power Of Christian Music

New Music

When most student musicians look at a new piece of sheet music, they open the page and start playing even without looking at the title. When a musician does this they miss out on some very important cues from the composer. In addition to reading and thinking about the title, we will explore how musicians can use five basic steps that will help them understand a piece of music even before playing a note.

A composer may give a title to a song or tune for many reasons; a song has lyrics while a tune does not, a composer may choose to title a song after a particular lyric in the piece. Think of some Christmas songs: “Silent Night”, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”, “Away in a Manger”, and many more--even popular music composers use this technique to name their songs. Songs like “Tomorrow” and “Over the Rainbow”. A tune may be named for a particular style; our Classic composers are well known for this. Many have used the titles Waltz, March, Bourree, Gavotte, and Polka for the title of their creation. Titles can also be used for a song or a tune; such as, Air--a serious or light song or tune depending on the time period and Opus meaning Work.

The first step in preparing to play a new piece of music is to Read and Understand the title of the piece. The title can help set the mood tempo and style of the music to be played. When you can visualize, in your own head, a setting of the title such as “Silent Night” as being a calm, star filled night the music you play will most likely not sound like a distorted guitar or a blaring horn section. As the performer, painting a picture in your head can give you great insight in making the piece sound the way you and the composer intended. There are times when a title does not tell you a whole lot on its own; such as, Etude which means study. When this occurs step two comes into play.

Step two is to look at the composer and if applicable arranger’s name. If you are familiar with the composer and the time period, you can determine how the music was performed at that time--known as performance practice. An example would be if you are a piano player and playing a Bach piece with some study you would know that Bach did not write for piano. So, are you playing an arrangement of a string quartet, organ, or harpsichord? In this case, you would also be looking at the arranger to see if you are familiar with their work. Understanding the time period of the piece and the unique way a composer writes can help, you understand how and why the piece was written and performed.

The third step is to understand the tempo and style markings. A tempo marking can be as simple as $\text{♩}=120$ or 120 bpm which means a quarter note receives 120 beats per minute. With a metronome set at 120 you are good to go but what if the tempo marking also had a style reference like *allegro con brio*? *Allegro* means fast but *con brio* means with

vivacity, spirited. Now, the tempo gives much more meaning to the piece. Sometimes a simple beats per minute is enough because step one gives you the style of the piece such as Waltz or March.

Step four is to look at the clef, key signature, and time signature. Always make sure your reading the correct clef for your instrument. Key signature tells you which are the most important note, chord, and scale of the music to be played. Most music is in a major or minor key; you must determine if you are in a major key or its relative minor. C major and its relative minor key has no sharps or flats but the most important note in C major is C and in A minor it is A, the most important Chord in C major is C and in A minor--you guessed it A.

The top number of the time signature tells you how many beats are in each measure. The bottom number tells which kind of note receives one beat. This is a simple explanation of the time signature; a music teacher can give you more insight to the strong and weak beats and much more on why a composer chooses a time signature.

Step five is to look through the sheet music and find any terms you may not know. Look up these words as well as phrases, dynamic markings, notation you are unfamiliar with and sections that may be difficult for you.

Completing these five steps before you play a note can give you much insight into how and why you are going to play a particular piece of music.

Happy Birthday

Carly S. , Mary W. , Emmet N. , Maggie R. , Allison D. , Amber M.



Students of the Month

Congratulation to our September and October "Students of the Month":
September - Emily H. is a Voice student and has been studying for two years.
October - Julia B. has been studying violin for three years.

What's New on the Web?

Do you have a My Space page? If you do, check out our pages! You can keep up to date on Love The Arts! and hear the latest recordings from Philip Mancini and do not forget to request to be our friend.

www.myspace.com/PhilipMancini and www.myspace.com/LoveTheArtsInc

Our Web site has been updated! Please check out our home on the World Wide Web and let us know what you think. You can find what Love The Arts! offers in lessons, retail, live music, and our much anticipated Forum. Check us out at www.LoveTheArts.com and become part of our online forum where you can ask questions, give answers, ask for prayer and pray for others, and have fellowship with others that also Love The Arts!

Notes

Give the gift of music this holiday season—Gift Certificates are available for lessons and merchandise by contacting the studio at 451-0248.

There will be no lessons November 22 thru 28. December 22 is the last day of the fall semester, lessons resume on January 2, 2008.

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

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Studio Hours

Monday - Thursday - 10am - 7pm

Friday & Saturday - 10am - 3pm

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