



# Bell Music Reading Course #1 Introduction 101

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# How Music Works

- Music is a graphical presentation of sounds played in a precise, predetermined order.
- Music is one of the few international languages that crosses all continents.
- This means we can read music all over the world and all cultures can come and read our music.

- Music is set out on a staff which is like a ladder. The higher the note is in pitch, the higher the note on the ladder.

## Deep Harmony

Handbells

Handbells

1 2 3 4 5

This musical score is for Handbells, indicated by a blue bracket on the left. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in the key of D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The notes are written in red. Measure 1 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 2 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 3 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 4 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 5 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass.

6 7 8 9 10 11 12

This musical score continues from the previous section, measures 6 through 12. Measure 6 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 7 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 8 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 9 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 10 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 11 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. Measure 12 shows a whole note chord of D4, F#4, and A4 in the treble, and a whole note D3 in the bass. A small number '3' is written at the bottom right of the bass staff in measure 12.

- It starts with 5 lines and 4 spaces. This makes it easy to quickly identify notes.
- We then add the clef to tell us if it is treble or bass.

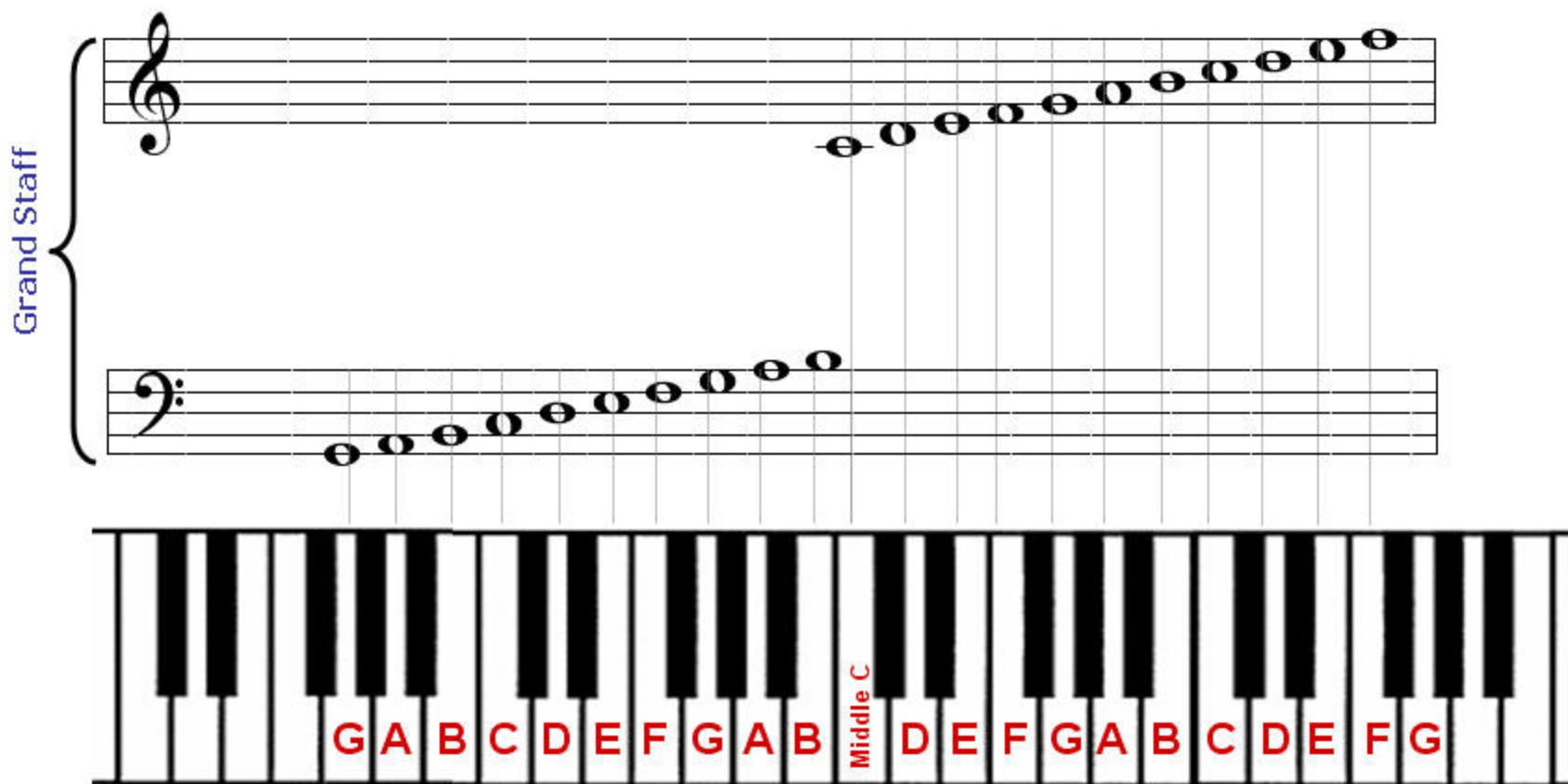


- The scale starts with the low notes at the bottom and the high notes at the top.

The image displays two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The top staff, in treble clef, shows an ascending scale starting on E and ending on F. The bottom staff, in bass clef, shows a descending scale starting on G and ending on A. Each note is represented by a quarter note with a vertical stem and a dot. The notes are labeled with their corresponding letter names below the staff.

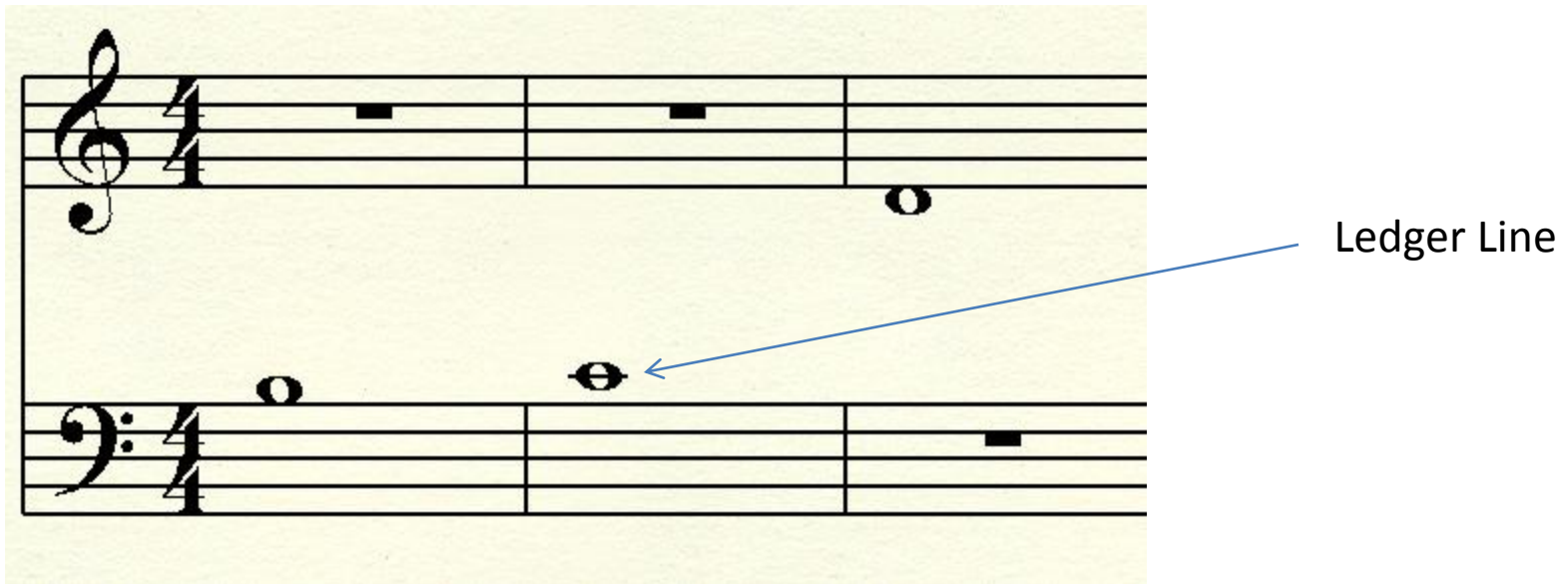
Staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Treble	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F
Bass	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A

- The scale corresponds to the piano keyboard – left end keys are low notes and right end keys are high notes.



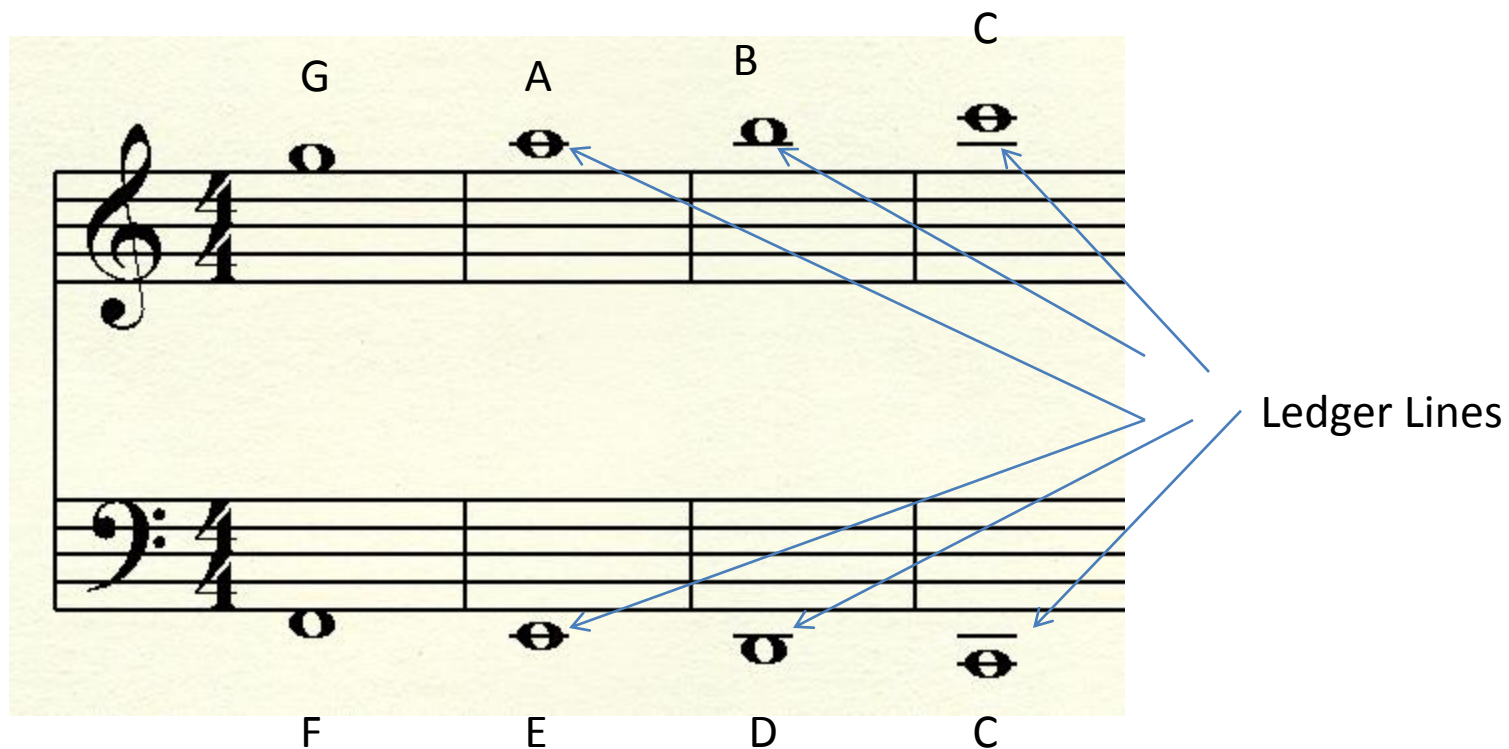
# Ledger Lines

- There are three notes that fall between the 2 staves: B, C and D. Middle C (as it is called) sits on a small ledger line.





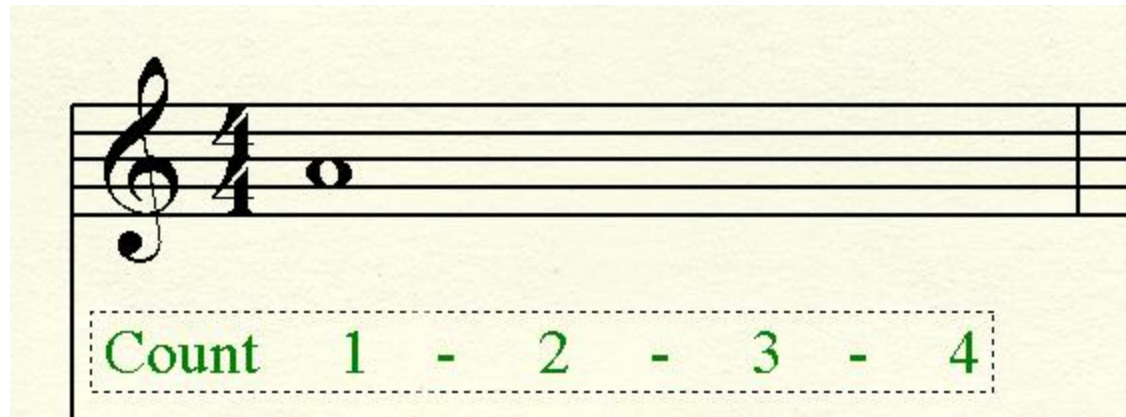
- We also use ledger lines at the top of the treble clef and the bottom of the bass clef.





# Notes Have a Specific Length

- This is a whole note. In most music it lasts for four beats.
- For this note we count 1-2-3-4, in time to the music.



- This is a half note. It usually lasts for two beats – half as long as a whole note.
- For these notes we count 1-2, 3-4, in time to the music.



- This is a quarter note. It lasts for one beat, or a quarter of a whole note.
- For this note we count 1, 2, 3, 4, in time to the music.



The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It contains four quarter notes on the middle line of the staff. Below the staff, the word "Count" is written in green, followed by the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, each with a hyphen to its right, indicating the duration of each note.

- This is an eighth note. It usually lasts for half a beat or one-eighth as long as a whole note.
- For this note we count 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 in time to the music.



# Measures

- To make reading music easier, music is divided into measures.
- Measures are divided by bar lines.
- Each measure is usually numbered.
- Each measure has a specified number of beats.
- In most music, each measure has the same number of beats all the way through, or for each section.

- In this example, each measure is the same length.
- Follow along as the bell plays these four measures.



Musical notation for a bell in 4/4 time, showing four measures. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: Measure 1: a whole note on G4; Measure 2: two half notes on G4 and A4; Measure 3: four quarter notes on G4, A4, B4, and C5; Measure 4: eighth notes on G4, A4, B4, and C5, followed by eighth rests on G4, A4, B4, and C5. Below the staff, the counts are: Count 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

- Notes of different lengths may be mixed together in a measure. That is what makes tunes.
- As you can see, there are four beats to each measure [in this example].
- The beats go on regardless of the number or length of notes.

Count 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 & 4 1 2 & 3 4 & 1 2 3 4



# Reading a Melody

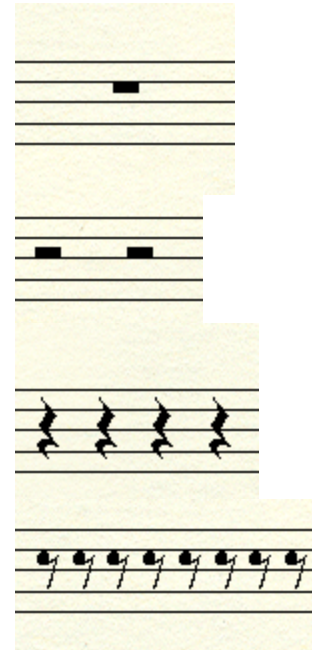
- Can you pick out the melody to this music?
- Try humming the tune.



- Did you get it? It's 'Ode to Joy' by Beethoven..

# Rests

- Whole note = 4 beats
- Half note = 2 beats
- Quarter note = 1 beat
- Eighth note =  $\frac{1}{2}$  beat



- A ringer does not play all the beats, all the time. When you have no notes to ring, you will have a 'rest'.
- Rests are counted in exactly the same way as the notes which they replace.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notation consists of eight measures. The first measure contains a whole rest. The second measure contains a quarter rest followed by a quarter note. The third measure contains a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The fourth measure contains a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The fifth measure contains a half note. The sixth measure contains a quarter rest followed by a quarter note. The seventh measure contains a quarter note and a half note. The eighth measure contains a quarter rest. Below the staff, the following counting numbers are written: 1 2 3 4, 3 4, 1 2 3 & 4 &, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4.

# Damping

- It is just as important to turn off a note on time, as it is to ring it on time.
- Notes left to ring after intended to be stopped create unpleasant, unintended sounds.
- Damp the bell exactly at the end of its note value unless it plays again immediately with no rest between.

# Dotted Notes

- A 'dot' after any note makes it last half as long again (1 ½ times as long as normal).
- A half note normally 2 beats thus becomes 3 beats.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It contains four notes: a quarter note, a half note, a dotted quarter note, and another quarter note. Below the staff, the first two notes are grouped with the number '12' and labeled 'Normally 2 beats'. The dotted quarter note and the final quarter note are grouped with the number '123 4' and labeled 'Becomes 3 beats'. A blue arrow points to the dot on the dotted quarter note, with the text 'Added Dot' written above it.


- A quarter note usually 1 beat becomes 1 ½ beats with a dot after it.
- Dotted quarter notes are best counted with ‘and’ between each beat. You will often find them mixed with eighth notes.

Added Dot

1&                      2                      &                      1&2                      &

Normally 1 beat                      becomes 1 1/2 beats

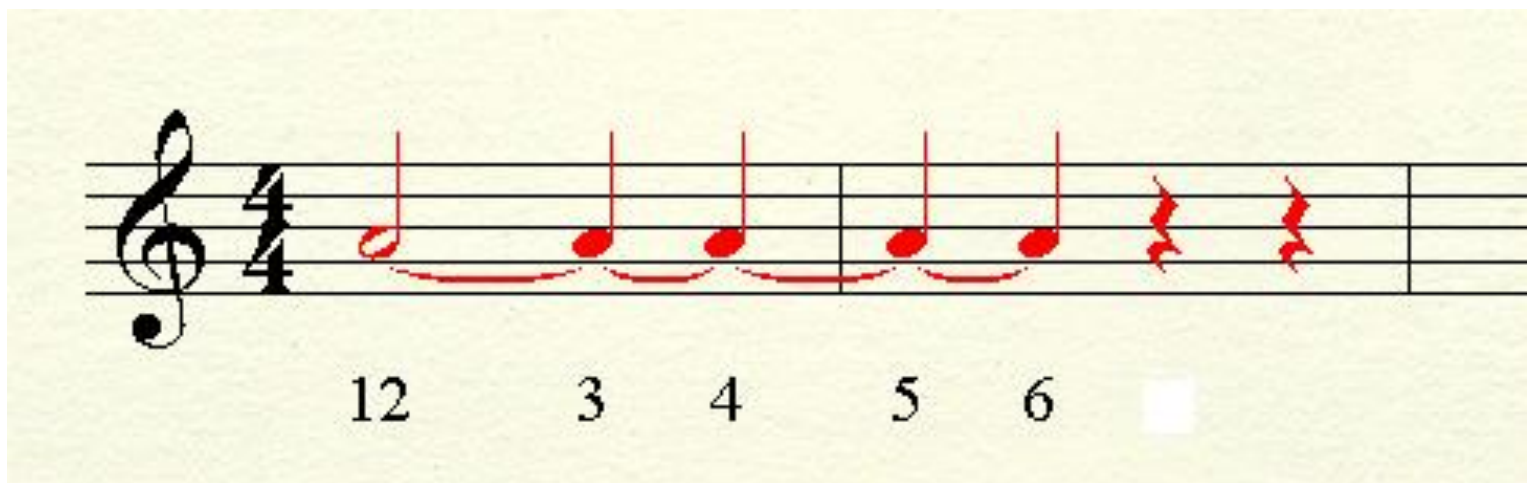
# Tempo

- Note length so far has been relative.
- The speed of the music is usually indicated by  = 60
- This means one  $\frac{1}{4}$  note = 60 beats per minute.
- The director interprets the correct speed for the music and occasion.





- Ties can carry over several notes and into following measures.
- Just count up all the beats and play for that long exactly.



# Chords

- Most of the time all bell parts are shown on each piece of music. This means you need to pick out your notes from the crowd.
- This becomes easy with a little practice.
- See the example on the next slide.
- See if you can pick out the note 'G'.



# Deep Harmony

Handbells

G

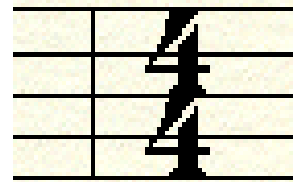
The musical score is for Handbells in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of 12 measures. The notation is split between a treble clef (measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) and a bass clef (measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Red notes indicate specific handbell sounds. A blue arrow points to a G note in the treble clef in measure 1. Measures 2-5 are marked with numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 above the staff. Measures 6-12 are marked with numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 above the staff.

# Time Signature

- So far, we have counted measures in 4 beats. This is the time signature of 4/4 which appears in the staff as

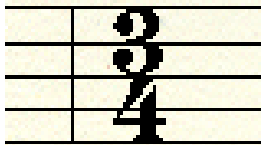
Number of beats in the measure

Type of beat [1/4 note]

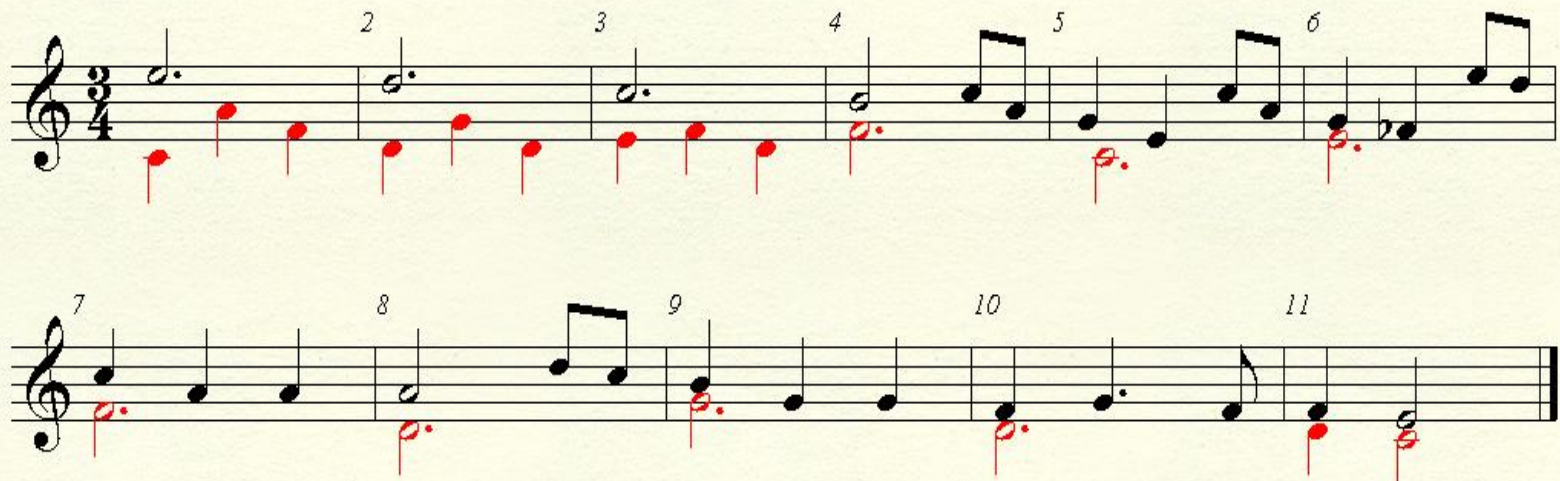


- This means 4 quarter notes in each measure.
- Each quarter note gets one beat.

- The other frequently used time in bell music is 3/4, which is 3 quarter beats per measure.



### Silver Bells



# Sharps & Flats

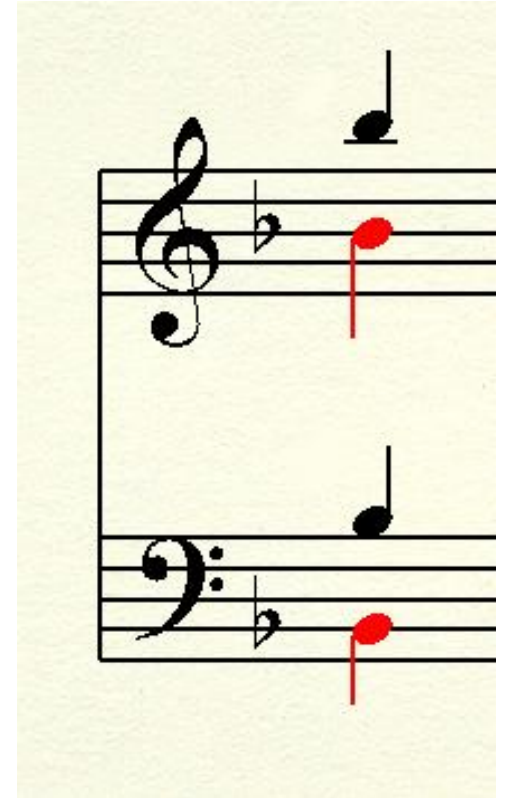
- So far we have dealt with the white keys on the piano (naturals).
- Now we will deal with the black notes.
- Sharps ( $\sharp$ ) & flats ( $b$ ) are half way between two white notes.
- $\sharp C$  is half way between C and D
- $bD$  is the same note between C and D



- When an A (for example) has a *#* or *b* in front of it, you play *#A* or *bA*, not A natural
- When a natural note has been sharpened (*#*) or flattened (*b*) all the rest of this same note stay the same for the remainder of that measure.
- A new measure resets all notes back to natural again.

# Key Signature

- Some music is written in a key that requires all of certain notes to be sharp or flat.
- In this case we create a key signature
- This is the key of F.
- All B's throughout the music would be *b*B, unless changed for a specific measure.



- This is the key of *bE*.
- All E's A's and B's throughout the music would be flat unless changed for specific measures.
- Music can change Key partway through a piece, usually at the end of a phrase or section.
- With bells we can change key by switching the naturals with sharps or flats.



# Dynamics

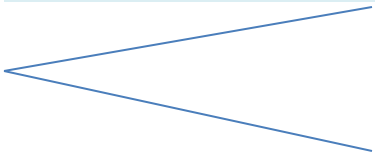
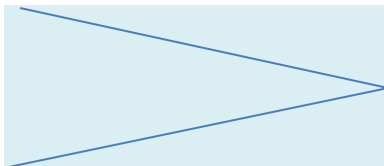
- Music can be played softly, loudly or somewhere in between.
- Music is marked to tell you how loud to play each section.
- The volume can also get gradually louder or softer over several measures.
- Loudness is relative. Ring the same level as the other ringers with the same dynamic.

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<b><i>ppp</i></b>	<b>Pianississimo</b>	<b>As softly as Possible</b>
<i>pp</i>	Pianissimo	Very Softly
<i>P</i>	Piano	Softly
<i>mp</i>	Mezzo-Piano	Moderately Softly
<i>m</i>	Mezzo	Medium
<i>mf</i>	Mezzo- Forte	Moderately Loudly
<i>f</i>	Forte	Loudly
<i>ff</i>	Fortissimo	Very Loud
<i>fff</i>	Fortississimo	As Loud as Possible

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- The volume can also become gradually louder or softer over several measures.

Cres.	Crescendo	Gradually becoming louder
Dim.	Diminuendo	Gradually becoming softer
	Crescendo	Gradually becoming louder
	Diminuendo	Gradually becoming softer

# Repeats

- Many times music has recurring phrases.
- To save writing it out several times, we use repeat signs.
- Repeats are identified by a solid double bar line with double dots

Start Here

when you get here

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Go back to here

Then continue on

- If the repeat goes back to the beginning, the double bar and dots are eliminated at the beginning and only appear at the measure in the piece where you return to the beginning.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Go back to here

Then continue on



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Ending

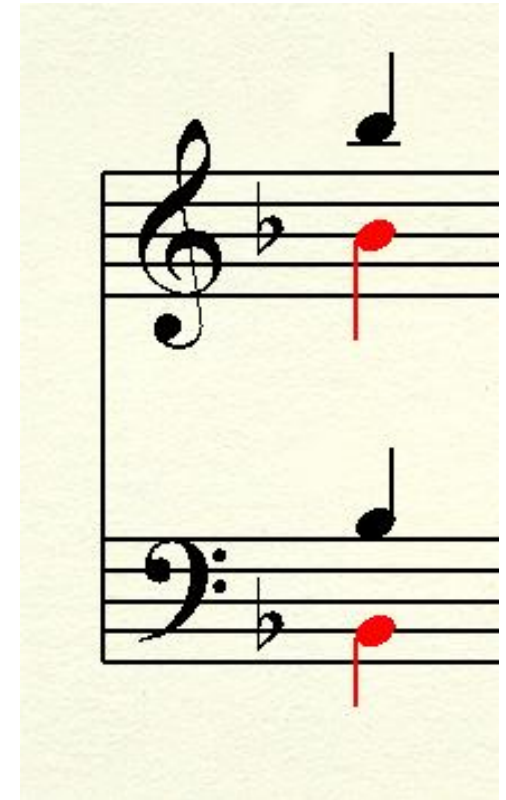
- Sometimes the last measure (or several measures) are different.
- Play the 1<sup>st</sup> time measure and 1<sup>st</sup> time and jump to the second time measure the second time through the repeated section.

The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The staff contains seven measures, each with a single eighth note. Above the staff, the measures are numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Measure 4 is labeled '4 1.' and measure 5 is labeled '5 2.'. A double bar line with repeat dots is between measures 4 and 5. Blue arrows indicate the first time through measures 1-5 and the second time through measures 1-2, 5-7.

The second time skip the measures in 1. and jump to 2.

# Stems – Up and Down

- Most notes have a stem.
- The stem can point either up or down
- Often there will be notes with stems up and others with stems down.
- Sometimes in rehearsal to make practice easier we play only stems up or down.

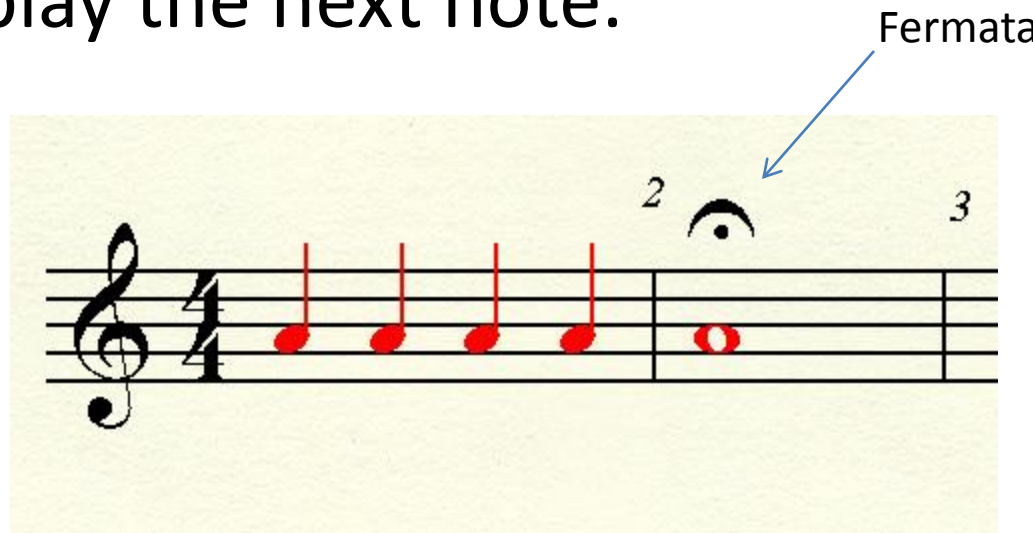


# Retard

- When the word '*retard*' or '*rit*' is written in the music, it means to slow down, following the director!
- This is often used at the end of a piece.
- If it happens in the middle, it is often followed by '*A Tempo*' which means back to the original tempo (or speed).
- You need to watch the director more here!!!

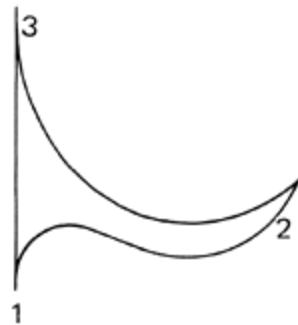
# Fermata

- A fermata placed over a note means to hold the note as long as the director indicates.
- You will need to look up and watch the director to know when to stop the note and/or play the next note.

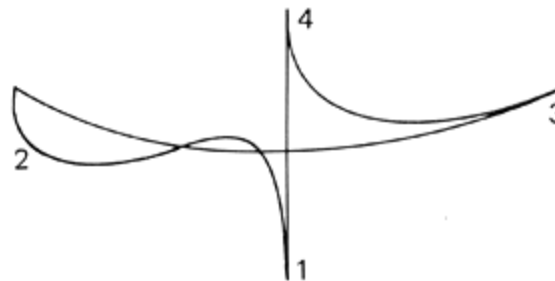


# Understanding the Director

- In order to play bells, it is important to understand what the director is telling us when directing.
- The director displays where the beats come.



3/4 time



4/4 time

- In 3/4 time the bottom of the down beat is 1
- Side ways is 2
- The top of the up beat is 3
- And the pattern repeats through out the piece or section

- In 4/4 time the bottom of the down beat is 1
- Side ways is 2
- Side ways the other way is 3
- The top of the up beat is 4
- And the pattern repeats through out the piece or section

- You cannot watch the director all the time because you must read the music.
- Look up for the down beat 1, occasionally to be sure you are playing note 1 on the down beat.
- Look up if there is a *rit* or *fermata*.
- Arrange your music so you can see the beat pattern in your peripheral vision.



- The director often gives cues when to come in.
- The director also controls increase or decrease in tempo and volume.
- Each director has their own style. Learn how they direct, watch their gestures and follow the cues.

# Practice at Home

- Bells are not normally allowed to be taken home for practice.
- You can usually take your music home to study.
- You can record the rehearsal using a digital recorder and practice with dowels [1 ¼" by 8" closet pole] or similar.
- Often you can find the music on YouTube and you can follow along or shadow with your dowels.

# Seeing the Music

- If your vision is no longer 20/20, reading glasses are not usually the correct focal length for music.
- Try a weaker diopter from the dollar store. Take some music with you and try several on to find the best for you.
- Computer glasses often work for music.
- Or have some glasses specially made up by your optician.