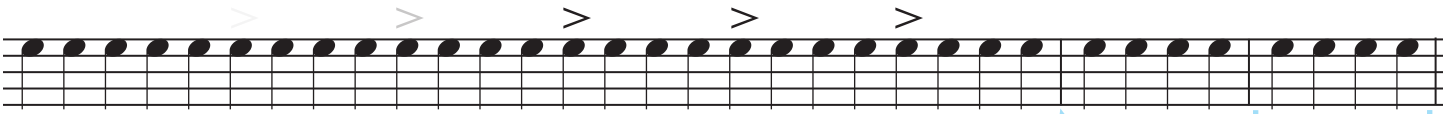
Notation: Meter

A FUNDAMENTAL FEATURE OF MOST PIECES OF MUSIC IS A ***CONSISTENT RHYTHMIC PULSE.*** THIS PULSE IS CALLED THE ***BEAT,*** AND A SINGLE PULSE IS CALLED A ***BEAT UNIT.***

THERE ARE ***TWO*** TYPES OF BEAT UNITS: THOSE CONTAINING ***TWO DIVISIONS,*** CALLED ***SIMPLE*** BEAT UNITS...

...AND THOSE CONTAINING ***THREE DIVISIONS,*** CALLED ***COMPOUND*** BEAT UNITS.

IN MUSIC, BEATS ARE ORGANIZED INTO PATTERNS OF ***ACCENTED*** AND ***UNACCENTED*** BEAT UNITS. IN FACT, IF YOU LISTEN TO A SEQUENCE OF REPEATED NOTES, YOUR BRAIN WILL PROBABLY START TO PERCEIVE THE NOTES AS GROUPS OF ***TWO, THREE,*** OR ***FOUR,*** EVEN IF NO ACCENTS ARE PRESENT!



THESE GROUPS ARE CALLED ***MEASURES,*** AND THEY ARE DELINEATED WITH ***BARLINES.***

BARLINE

MEASURE

THE ORGANIZATION OF BEAT UNITS AND MEASURES IN A PIECE IS CALLED ***METER.*** METER IS DESCRIBED BY TWO NUMBERS PLACED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PIECE: THE ***TIME SIGNATURE.***

SIMPLE TIME SIGNATURES ARE ***EASY.***

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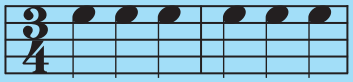
THE TOP NUMBER INDICATES THE ***NUMBER OF BEATS*** IN A MEASURE.

THE BOTTOM NUMBER INDICATES THE ***TYPE OF NOTE*** WHICH SERVES AS THE ***BEAT UNIT.***



THE CODE FOR THE BOTTOM NOTE IS PRETTY EASY: **4** REFERS TO A QUARTER NOTE, **8** TO AN EIGHTH NOTE, **16** TO A SIXTEENTH NOTE, AND SO ON.

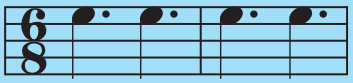
COMPOUND TIME SIGNATURES ARE KIND OF ***LYING TO YOU.***

6/8

THE TOP NUMBER INDICATES THE ***NUMBER OF DIVISIONS*** IN A MEASURE. TO GET THE NUMBER OF BEATS, DIVIDE IT BY ***THREE.***

THE BOTTOM NUMBER INDICATES THE ***TYPE OF NOTE*** WHICH SERVES AS THE ***DIVISION.*** TO GET THE ***BEAT UNIT,*** USE THE NOTE THAT IS EQUAL TO ***THREE*** OF THESE NOTES. IN A COMPOUND METER, THE BEAT UNIT IS ALWAYS A ***DOTTED NOTE!***

2.



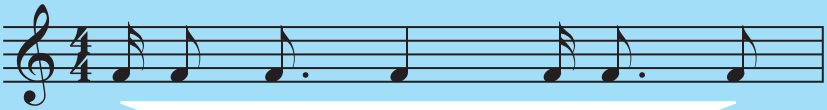
IN FACT, WOULDN'T ***THIS*** BE AN EASIER WAY TO NOTATE ***COMPOUND METERS?***

SORRY... THE ***MAN*** SAYS YOU HAVE TO DO IT THE ***OTHER WAY.***

BY LOOKING AT THE ***TOP NUMBER*** OF THE TIME SIGNATURE, YOU CAN TELL ***TWO*** THINGS ABOUT THE METER: WHETHER IT'S ***SIMPLE*** OR ***COMPOUND,*** AND HOW MANY ***BEATS*** ARE IN A ***MEASURE.***

BEATS PER MEASURE	SIMPLE	COMPOUND
2	2	6
3	3	9
4	4	12

NOTES THAT HAVE ***FLAGS*** CAN BE GROUPED TOGETHER BY USING ***BEAMS*** IN PLACE OF FLAGS.



HOWEVER, BEAMING IS ONLY USED TO GROUP NOTES ***WITHIN BEATS.*** FOR THE MOST PART, YOU SHOULDN'T ***BEAM*** NOTES ***BETWEEN*** BEATS, NOR SHOULD YOU ***TIE*** NOTES WITHIN ***BEATS.***

hey, it's kids! SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!

Q: Dear Sparky:
Since we are supposed to use different approaches for identifying perfect and imperfect intervals, can you summarize them all into one system?

--I.M., Staten Island, NY

A: WOOF!*

TRANSLATION:** THE FOLLOWING CHART SHOWS AN APPROACH FOR ***IDENTIFYING ANY INTERVAL. A SIMILAR APPROACH CAN BE USED WHEN YOU NEED TO ***WRITE*** A PARTICULAR INTERVAL ABOVE OR BELOW A ***GIVEN NOTE:*** FIRST, ADD A NOTE ABOVE OR BELOW THE GIVEN NOTE AT THE CORRECT ***DISTANCE,*** THEN FOLLOW STEPS ***2*** THROUGH ***4*** OF THIS CHART TO ***IDENTIFY*** IT. THEN, IF NECESSARY, ***ALTER*** THE NOTE YOU ADDED WITH AN ***ACCIDENTAL*** TO CREATE THE INTERVAL CALLED FOR.

STEP 1:

DETERMINE THE ***DISTANCE*** OF THE INTERVAL BY COUNTING ***LINES*** AND ***SPACES.***

COUNT THE ***BOTTOM NOTE*** AS ***ONE,*** AND CONTINUE UNTIL YOU REACH THE ***TOP NOTE.***

STEP 2:

COVER UP ALL ***ACCIDENTALS.***

STEP 3:

DETERMINE THE ***INFLECTION*** OF THE INTERVAL IN FRONT OF YOU (THE ONE WITHOUT ACCIDENTALS!) AS FOLLOWS:

IF IT IS A ***UNISON*** OR ***OCTAVE:***

THE INTERVAL SHOWN IS A ***PERFECT UNISON*** OR ***PERFECT OCTAVE.***

REALLY. IT ***JUST IS.***

IF IT IS A ***FOURTH*** OR ***FIFTH:***

IF THE INTERVAL USES THE NOTES ***F*** AND ***B,*** IT IS EITHER AN ***AUGMENTED FOURTH*** OR A ***DIMINISHED FIFTH.***

OTHERWISE, THE INTERVAL IS ***PERFECT.***

IF IT IS A ***SECOND, THIRD, SIXTH*** OR ***SEVENTH:***

IF THE ***TOP NOTE*** IS IN THE MAJOR KEY OF THE ***BOTTOM NOTE,*** THE INTERVAL IS ***MAJOR.***

IF THE ***BOTTOM NOTE*** IS IN THE MAJOR KEY OF THE ***TOP NOTE,*** THE INTERVAL IS ***MINOR.***

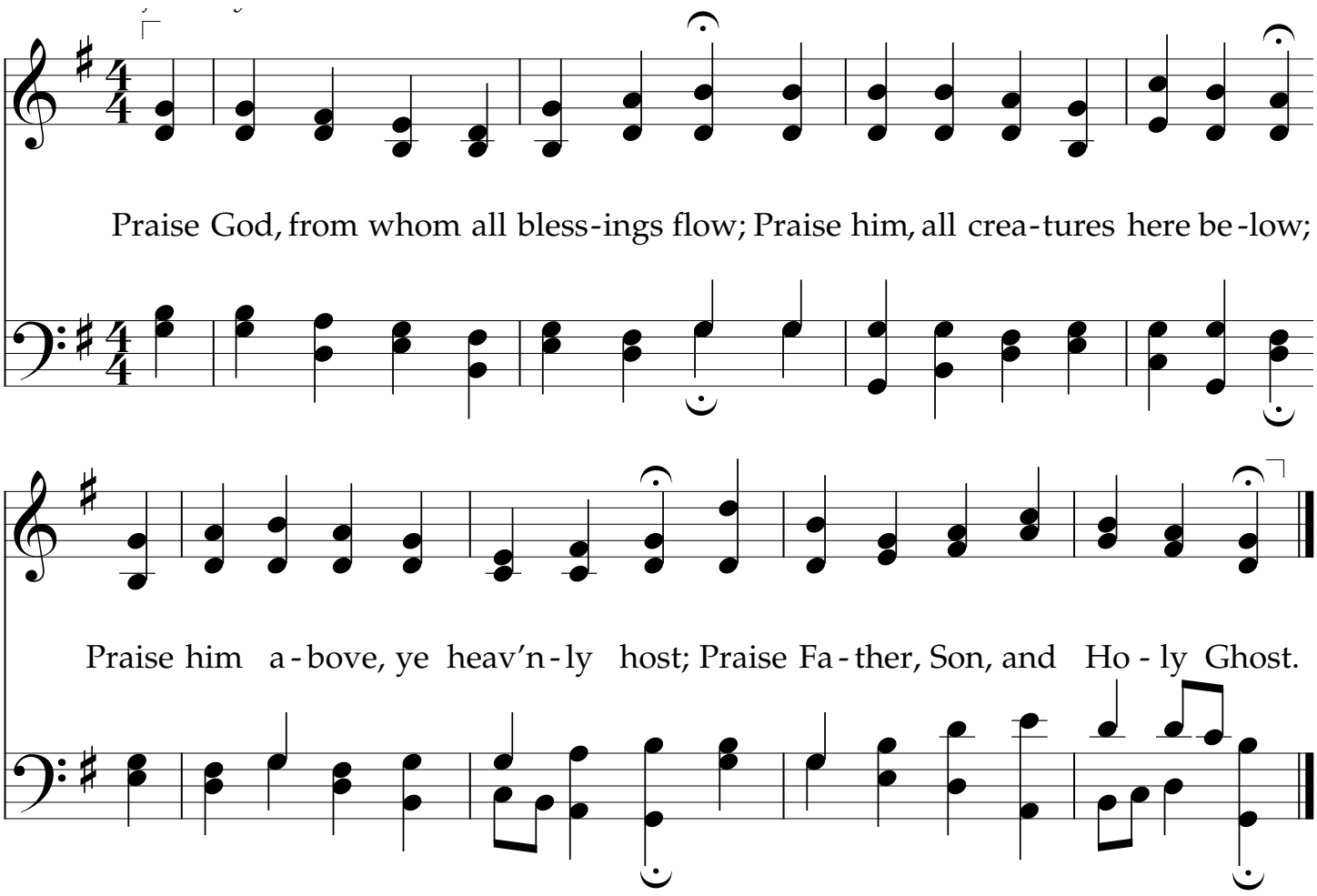
STEP 4:

ADD THE ***ORIGINAL ACCIDENTALS*** BACK, ***ONE AT A TIME,*** AND TRACK HOW THE INTERVAL CHANGES INFLECTION.

REMEMBER: ACCIDENTALS CAN ***NEVER*** AFFECT THE ***DISTANCE*** OF AN INTERVAL... ALL THEY CAN EVER DO IS CHANGE THE ***INFLECTION!***

THIS METHOD MAY SEEM ***COMPLICATED*** AT FIRST, BUT IT BECOMES ***EASIER*** AND ***FASTER*** WITH ***PRACTICE...*** AND IT GIVES YOU THE ***CORRECT ANSWER EVERY TIME!***

DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!


Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise him, all crea-tures here be-low;
Praise him a-bove, ye heav'n-ly host; Praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost.