



Marking Your Music

AKA: Music Was Meant To Be Marked!

STOP!!! Do you have a pencil? (Yes → Go on) (No → Go get a pencil)

Marking your music is a skill that you must learn and practice. Otherwise, it goes from being a help to a hindrance (and ultimately slow you down)! For marking music to be helpful, musicians must realize what they need to mark, and how to mark it so that it does not become a handicap. **Music should always be marked in pencil.** You may change your mind or come up with better ways to mark your music that need changing. Furthermore, directors change their minds all the time! When this happens, so should your music markings.

There are various common strategies of music marking. These are demonstrated on the following page. Look over them and make sure you understand **how** each of them is used, and **why** these elements were marked to help the musician better play the piece.

- **rhythm** – these are one of the most common and helpful markings you can make in your music; musicians can write in actual counts while learning the rhythm such as in measure 11, mark arrows to signify upbeats and downbeats such as in measures 9 and 63, or simply mark downbeats to aim for as in measures 16 and 64
- **circling** – circling draws our attention to elements that we may miss; the key signature and key change is circled as reminders in measures 1 and 45, dynamic changes are circled in measures 8, 60, 64, 68, and 80, and notes/rests that need our special attention due to accidentals and articulations/releases are circled in measures 16, 22, 23, 36, 64, 65, and 74
- **accidental reminders** – these help us remember notes (and therefore fingerings) as in measures 7, 23, and 65; notice, however, that *not all accidentals are marked*
- **breath marks, “no-breath” arrows, and phrase directions** – these help us understand the phrasing of a piece of music and remind us where we should aim to breathe (and not breathe); furthermore, curved arrows can signify how the direction of a phrase should go such as in pickup notes; see how this is done in measures 2, 4, 7, 8 (in which we are reminded to take a BIG breath), 16, and 68
- **releases** – releases can be marked in various ways (I use check marks), but they all serve the same purpose of reminding us to not hold a note longer than it should be; these should be marked especially in places that have notes cut off shorter than we think they will be or where we don’t expect them to; see measures 28, 44, and 84
- **articulations and tongued notes** – this helps a group more uniformly remember to perform the correct style of the piece; note how the musician is to remember to tongue (not slur!) all the notes in the first measure of the piece as designated by the “T” markings, and how the eighth notes should be short (reinforced by the staccato on the very first note); there are various points in the piece where the musician must remember to tongue such as in measures 1, 63, and 82 (most likely because he or she forgot to do so at first)
- **director’s reminders and suggestions** – this helps a group remember, understand, and play more uniformly; these can work hand-in-hand with other markings that you make to reinforce your understanding of the performance of the piece with the rest of the group; notice how the director asked for all eighth notes in the piece to be short so it is written at the beginning of the piece, that this should not cause the short notes to rush (immediately noted

in measure 1), how the musician must especially remember to look up for a cue in measure 60, and how the group must all release the note on count 1 in measures 28 and 84 (as well as which section should be heard the very last at the end of the piece)

- **other written reminders** – you can mark other hints that may help you; for example, in this piece, the musician found it helpful to have a reminder of who is playing at measure 29 so he knows who to listen for during the rests; the musician also wrote a reminder in the four-measure rest from measures 29 to 32 that the measures are in 2/4 (not 4/4!), and to listen for the new flute countermelody beginning in measure 69

You do not have to mark everything in your music. Only mark things that will help you and elements that will prevent you from making a mistake for a second time. If you miss an accidental, mark it! If you miss a dynamic change, circle it! There are various things that you should *not do* while marking your music. For example, **DO NOT**:

- ~~**write in fingerings**~~ – this is a handicap and slows you down!!!; learn fingerings ahead of time individually and practice them through scales, arpeggios, etc. so that when you come across them in music you are able to press down the correct combination of fingers without thinking about it
- ~~**write in every accidental of every note that is changed in a key signature**~~ – this defeats the purpose of a key signature and prevents you from learning to remember the key signature – another handicap; practice key signatures and fingerings in your scales, arpeggios, etc. and only mark the ones you miss due to challenging note combinations and rhythms as reminders, *not crutches*
- ~~**over-mark your music**~~ – there comes a point when there is too much marked on your music that it becomes a distraction rather than helpful hints; this also goes for too much markings of one element in your music – marking every rhythm of every measure makes a mess and does not ultimately make you a stronger and more efficient musician; mark wisely!

Of course, musicians make up plenty of other ways to mark their music. What other markings will help you? Write them down in the space below as they come to you!

ACCENT ON PERFORMANCE

MARCH ONWARD

* short notes throughout



John O'Reilly and Mark Williams

Allegro
f don't rush

8 *BIG* *mf* 9 10 11 1+2+ 12 13 14

15 16 () 17 18 19 20

1. 21 22 23 24 2. 25 26 27 28 ✓ off on 1

29 (trumpets + brass) 4 (in 4) 33 34 35 36 ✓ 37 4

41 42 43 44 ✓ 45 8 53 7 60 look up 61 *mp*

62 63 T T 64 65 66 67 68 *f* *mf*

69 listen for flutes 70 71 72 73 74 F4 75 76 1

77 78 79 80 81 82 T T 83 84 ✓ off on 1
f listen for low brass last