“A Matter of Time”

Exploring Simple and Compound Meter

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GUITOBERFEST 2024

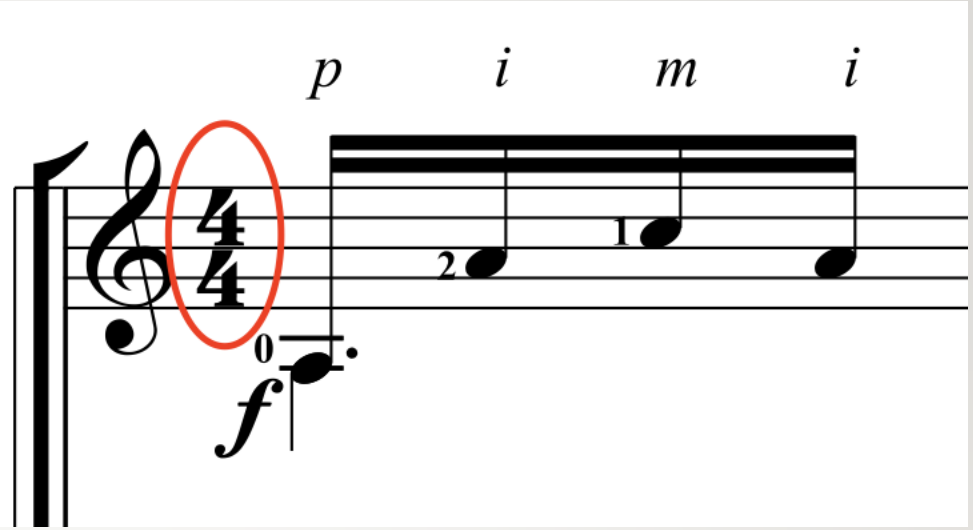
CLASSICAL GUITAR CORNER

ACADEMY

Rhythm vs Meter

- Rhythm and meter are two concepts that help describe the flow of time in music, but they have different roles that they play.
- Rhythm – the variety of note and rest durations. We assign specific beat values to quarter notes, half notes, whole notes etc.
- Meter – how the beats are organized into regularly recurring groups or patterns.
- Syncopation - involves temporarily shifting the regular pattern of accents in a piece of music.
- Tempo - refers to the rate of the underlying beat or pulse.

Time Signature:



- Time Signature - the time signature tells you how many beats are in each measure, and which note value to count as a beat. You can find the time signature at the beginning of a piece of music on the staff after the clef.
- The time signature is a reference symbol, similar to key signatures. Meter is the grouping of beats into recognizable recurring patterns.

How To Read Time Signatures:

Bottom Number Guide

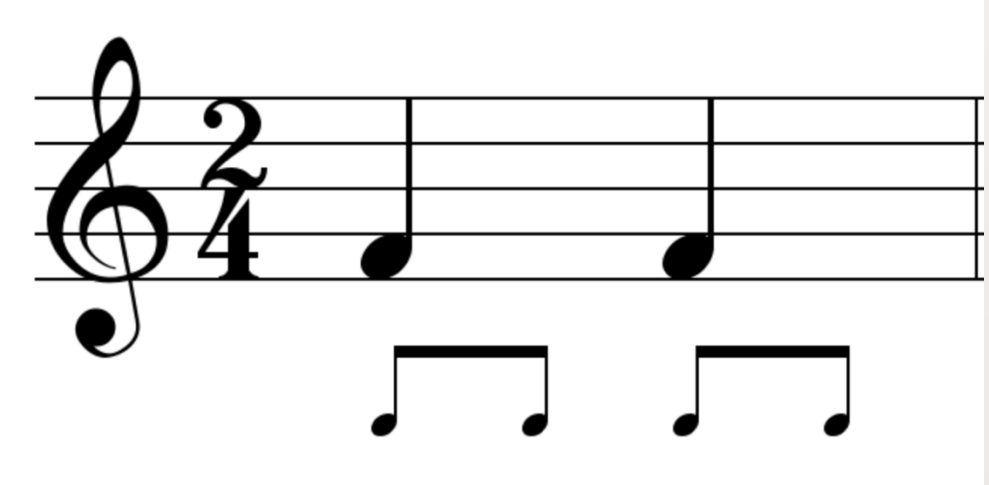
Bottom Number	Note Value
2	Half Notes
4	Quarter Notes
8	Eighth Notes
16	Sixteenth Notes

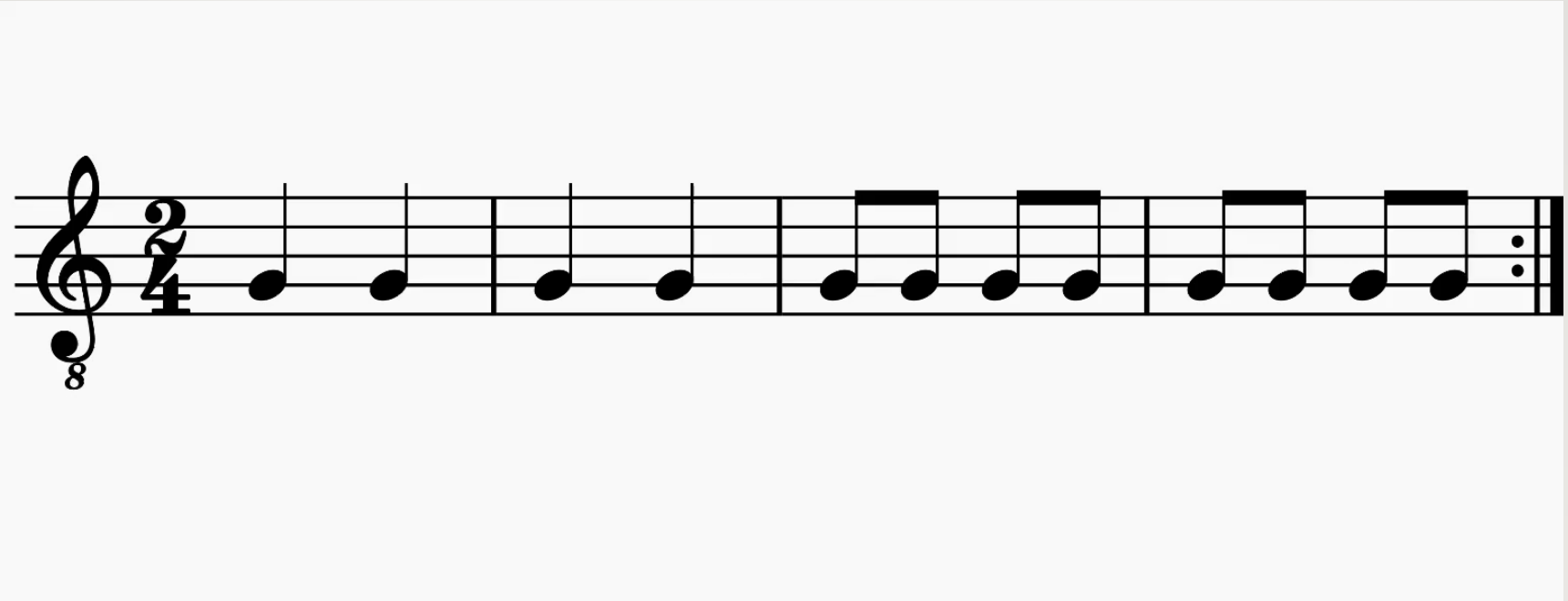
Common Types of Meter:

- Duple – beats grouped in twos.
- Triple – beats grouped in threes.
- Quadruple – beats grouped in fours.

Simple Meter Classification

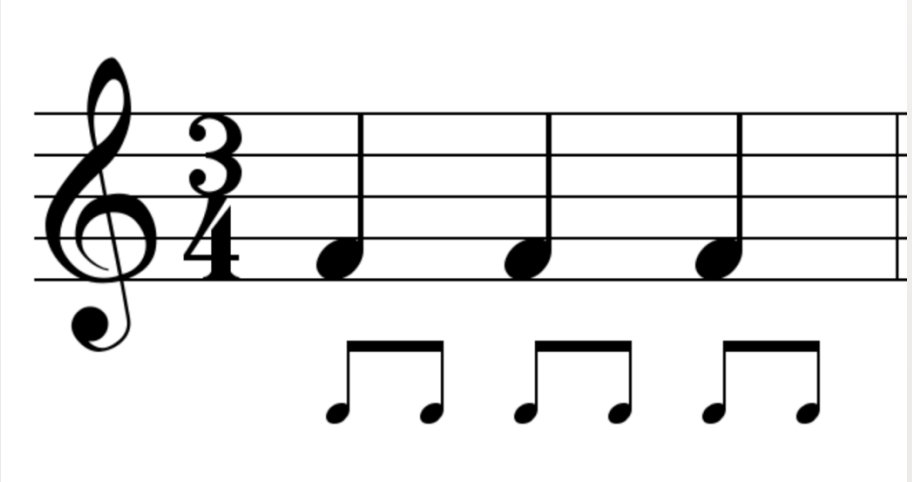
- The term “simple” means that the larger beat is divided into two equal parts.
- For example, 2/4 time would be classified as simple duple.
- Duple, since there are two beats in each measure.
- Simple, since each quarter note beat can be divided into two notes.

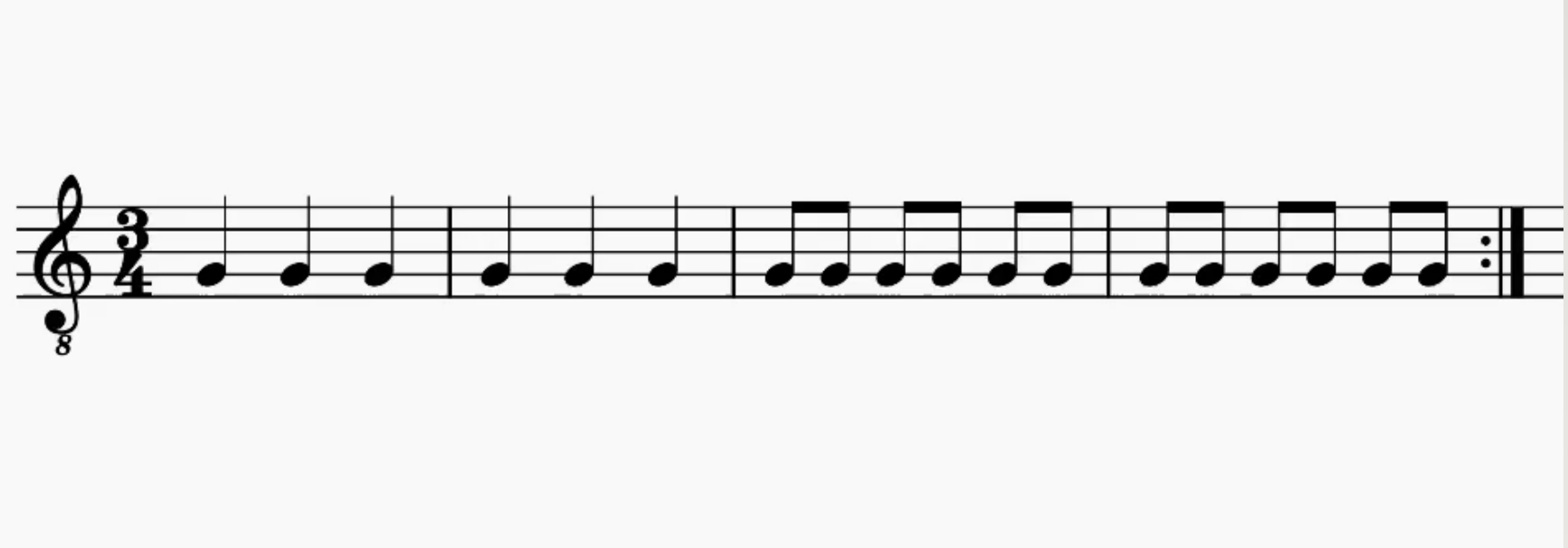




Simple Meter Classification

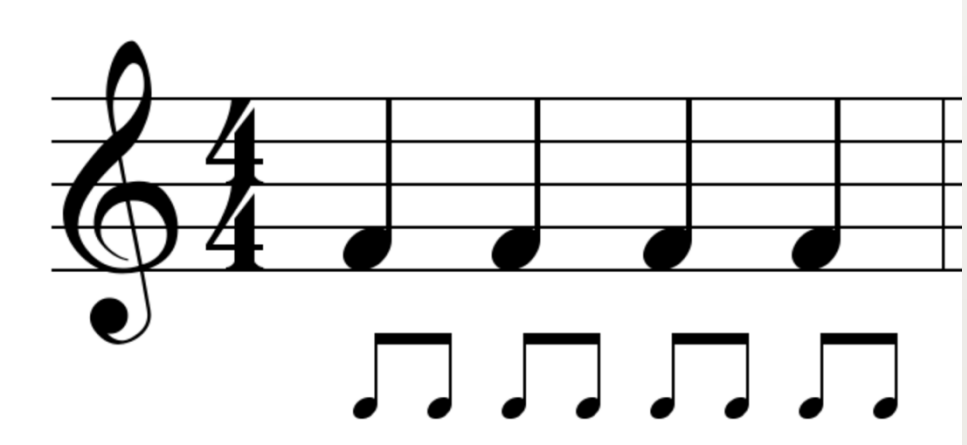
- 3/4 time would be classified as simple triple.
- Triple, since there are three beats in each measure.
- Simple, since each quarter note beat can be divided into two notes.

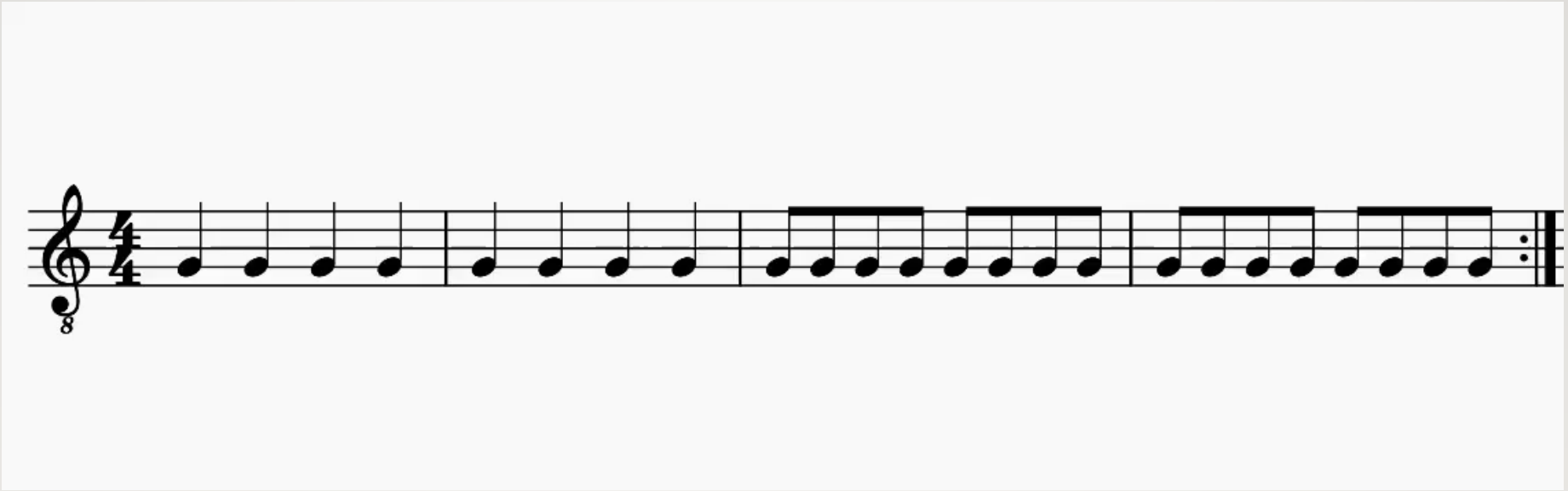




Simple Meter Classification

- 4/4 time would be classified as simple quadruple.
- Quadruple, since there are four beats in each measure.
- Simple, since each quarter note beat can be divided into two notes.





Simple Meter Repertoire Examples

- Simple Duple – *Allegretto No.5 (from Le Papillon)* – Mauro Giuliani (Grade 3)

  Caprice No.2 – Luigi Legnani (Grade 7)
- Simple Triple – *Minuet* – Christian Petzold (Grade 4)

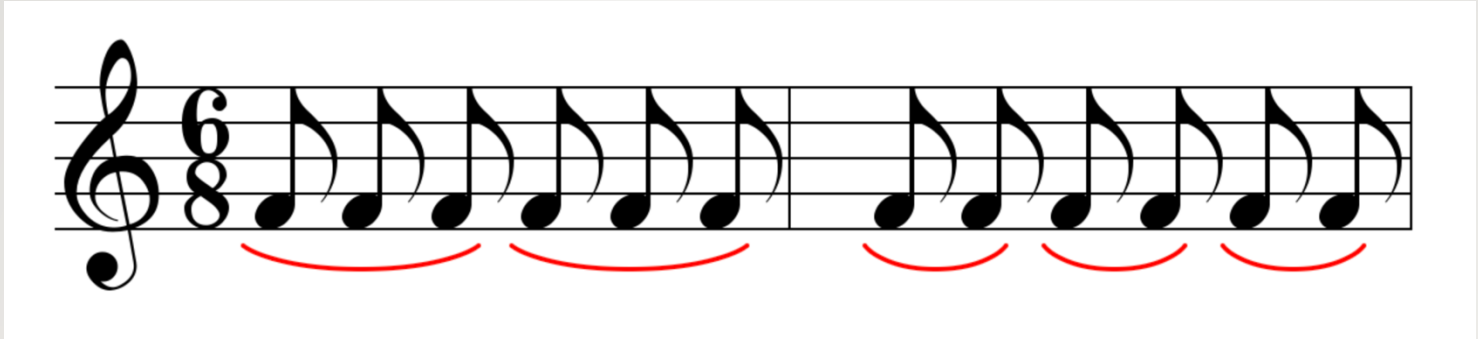
  Españoleta – Gaspar Sanz (Grade 3)
- Simple Quadruple – *Etude No.1* – Mauro Giuliani (Grade 2)

  Largo – J.S. Bach (Grade 4)

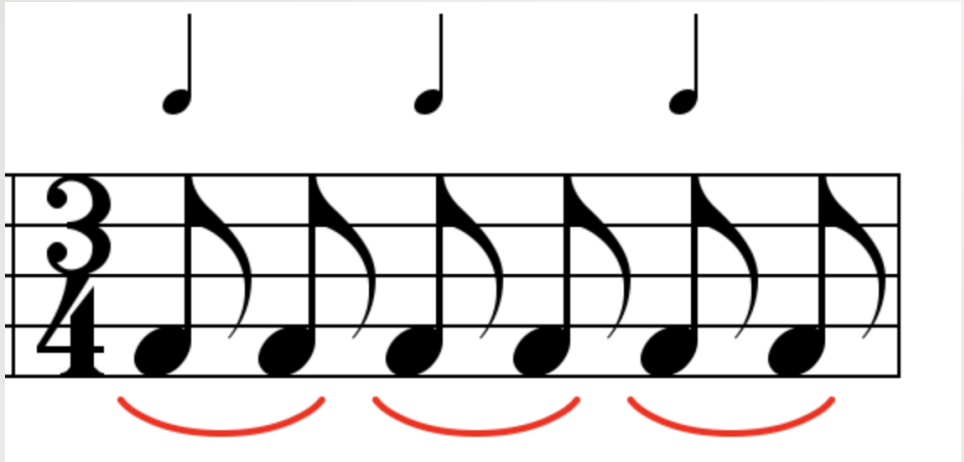
Compound Meter Classification

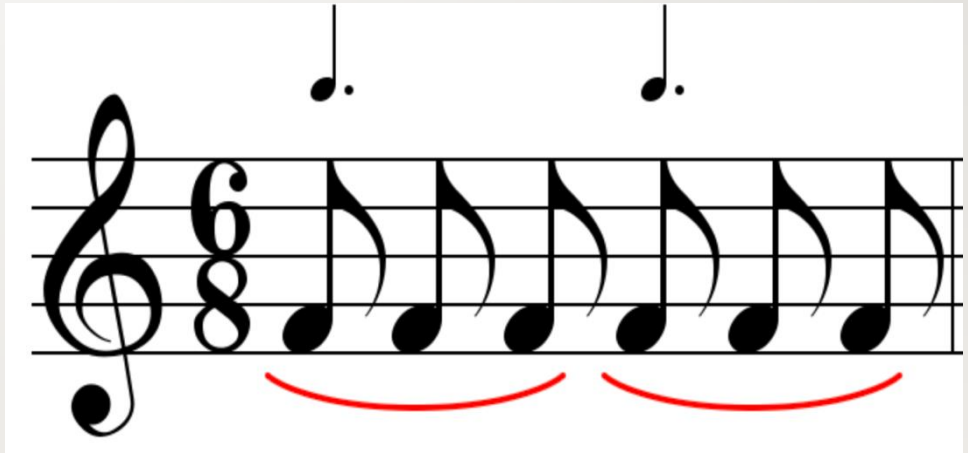
- While beats in simple meter are divided into two notes, beats in compound meter are divided into three.
- Let's examine 6/8 time to demonstrate this.
- The time signature tells us that there are 6 beats in each measure, with the eighth note receiving one count.

- Notice that the 6 eight notes can be grouped in two beats or three beats.

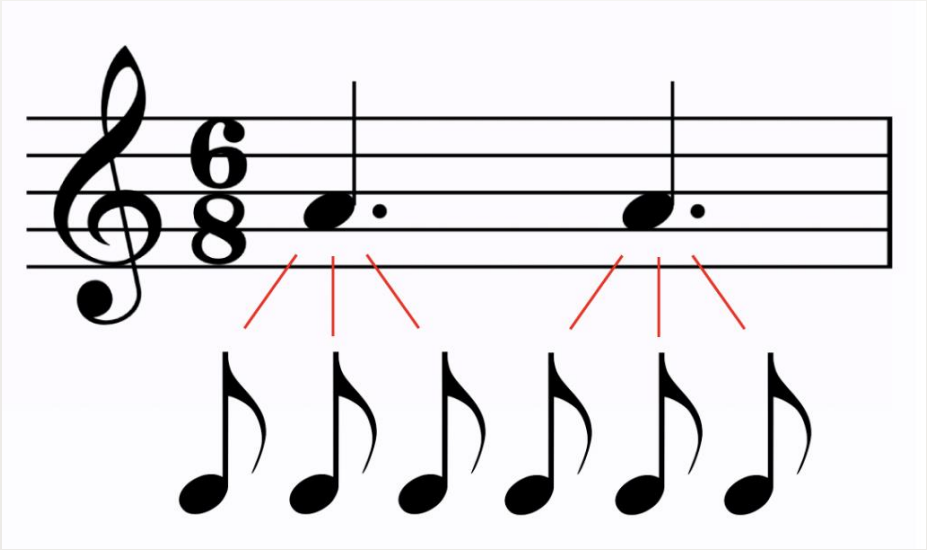


- Since 6/8 and 3/4 have the same number of eighth notes, how they are grouped will play an important role in how we “feel” the difference between simple and compound meter.

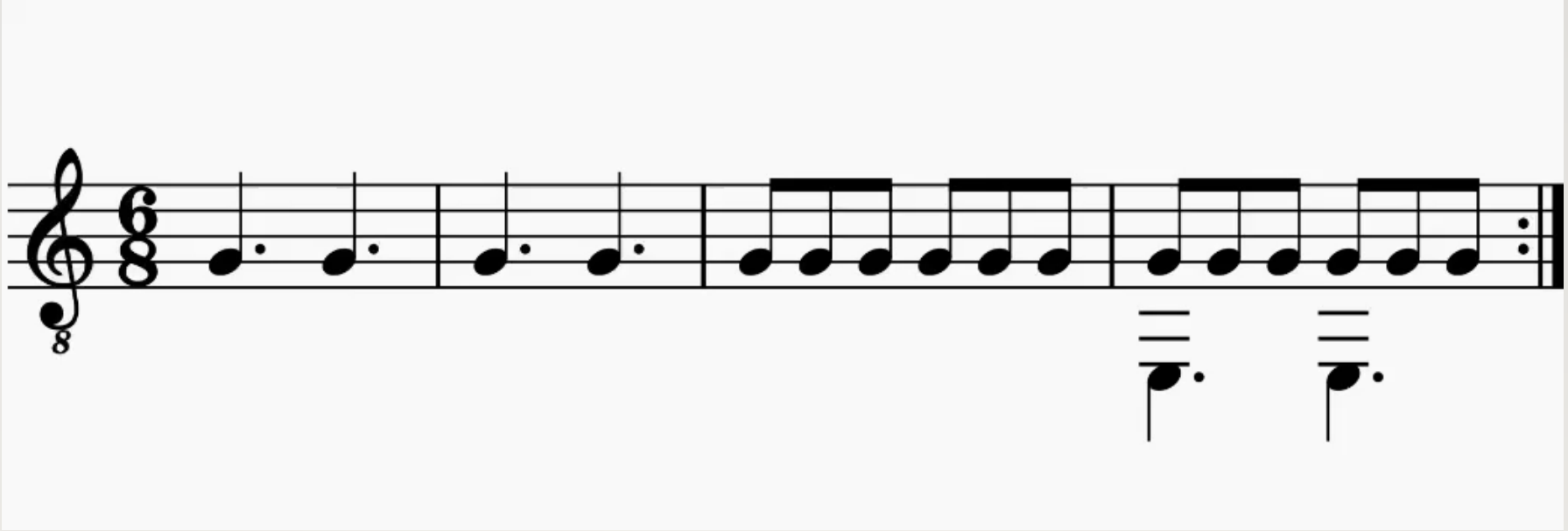




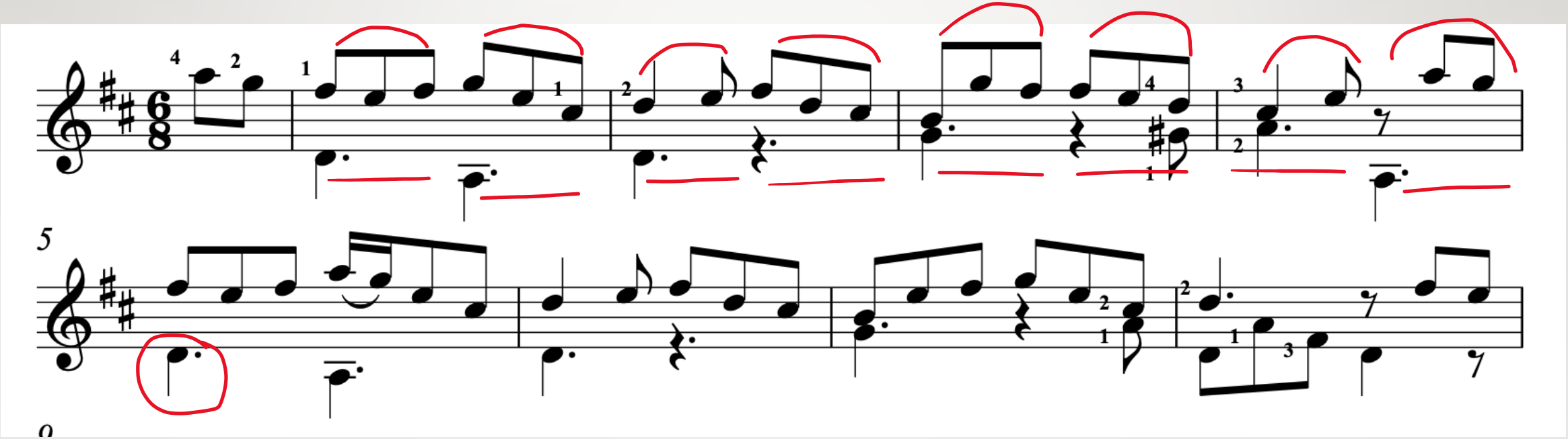
- In compound meter, we replace the larger quarter note beat with the dotted quarter note.
- Since we are grouping the eighth notes in two groups of three, we would classify 6/8 as a compound duple meter.
- There are two larger beats (two dotted quarter notes), thus making the meter duple.
- Since each larger beat is divided into three notes, the meter is compound.



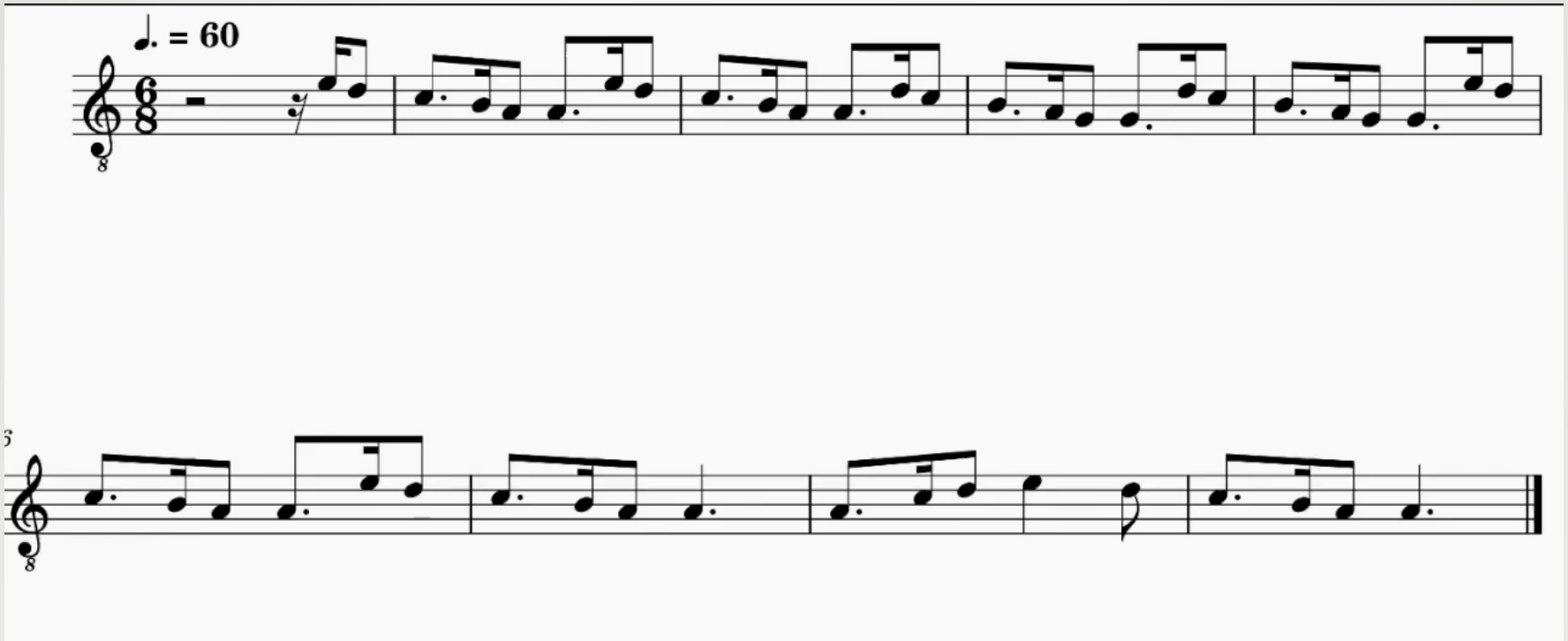
When counting 6/8, it can be very helpful to feel the larger beat. This will accent the duple feel and give the meter its natural sway.

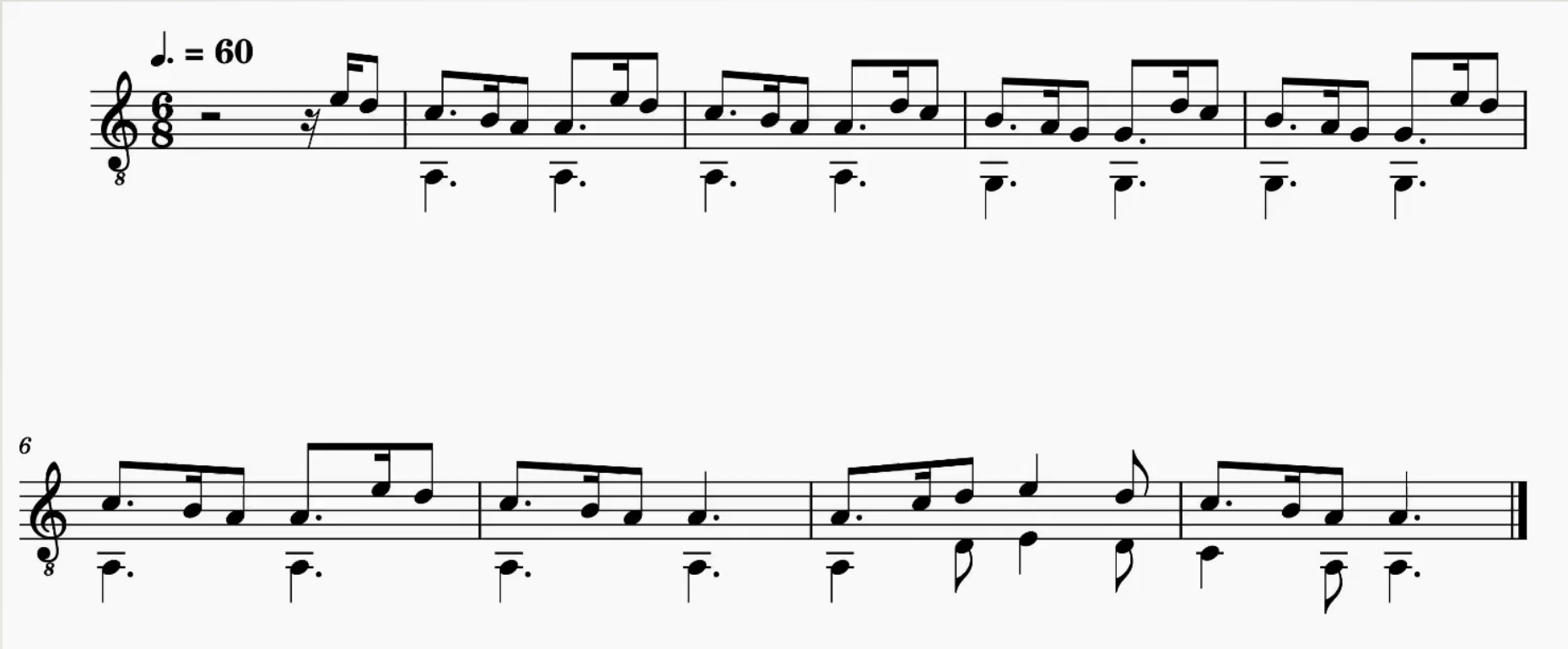


6/8 Example – *Estudio in D* – Fernando Sor (Grade 3)

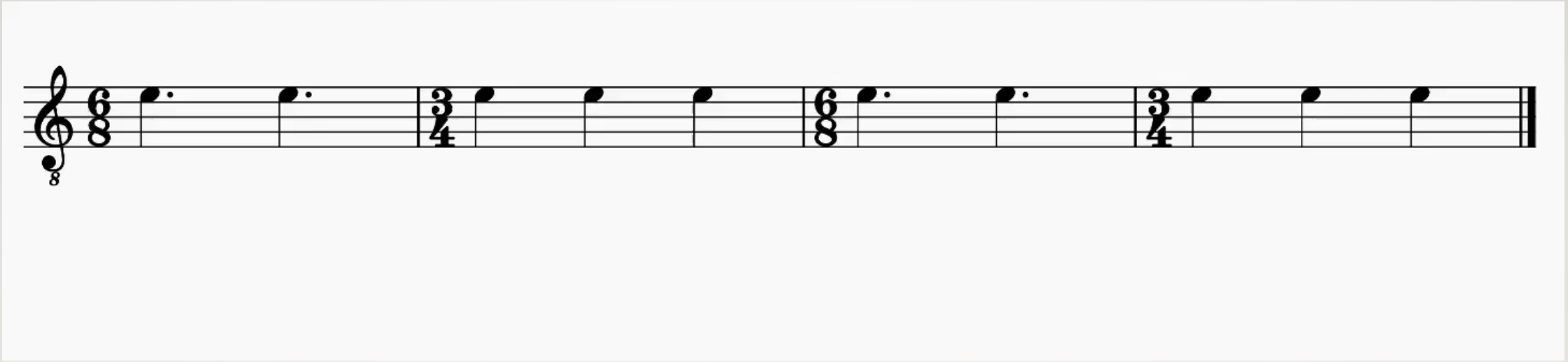


6/8 Example – *Brian Boru's March* – T. O'Carolan (Grade 4)



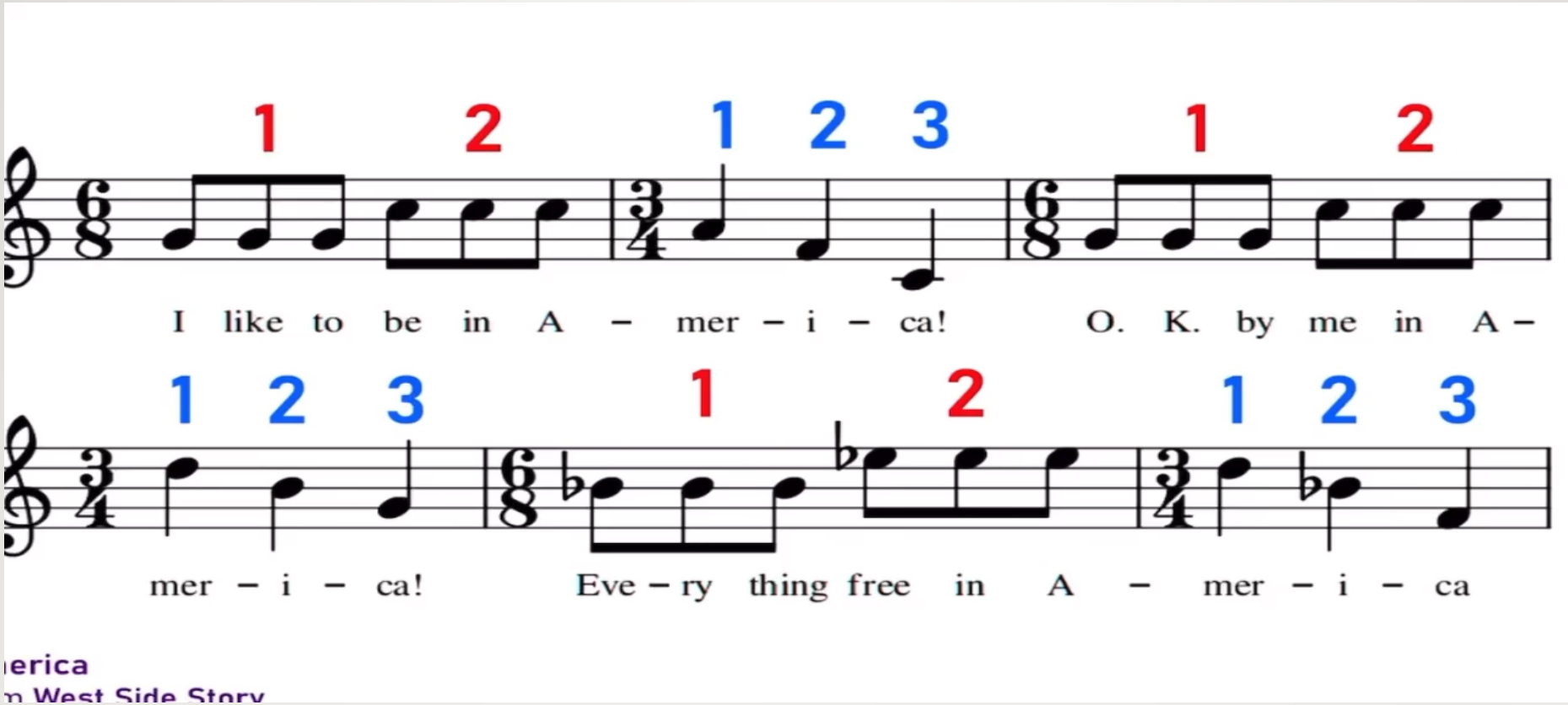

♩. = 60
6

Contrasting 3/4 and 6/8

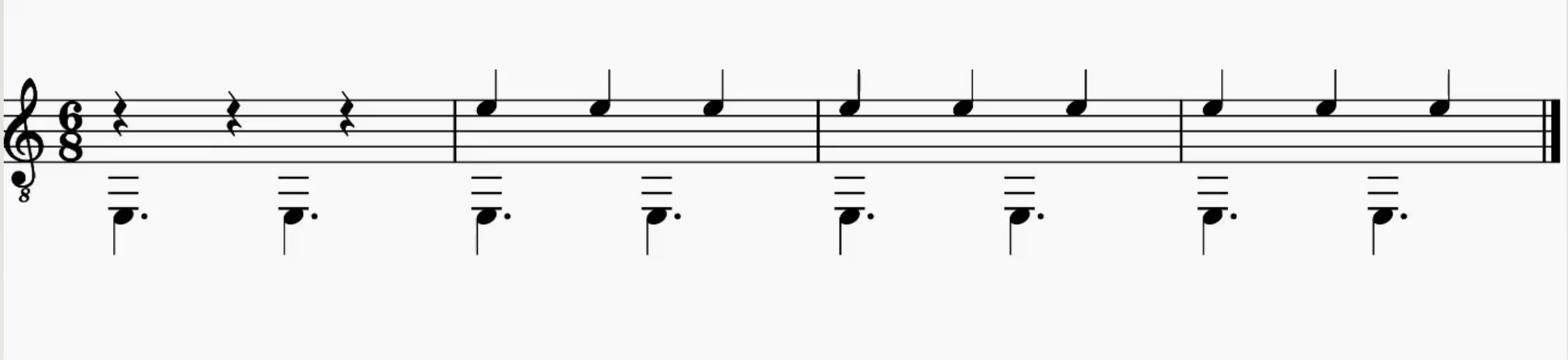


This alternation between simple and compound meter gives the listener the sense that the music is speeding up and slowing down as we jump between meters.

- There is a great example of this in the song *America* from Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story.

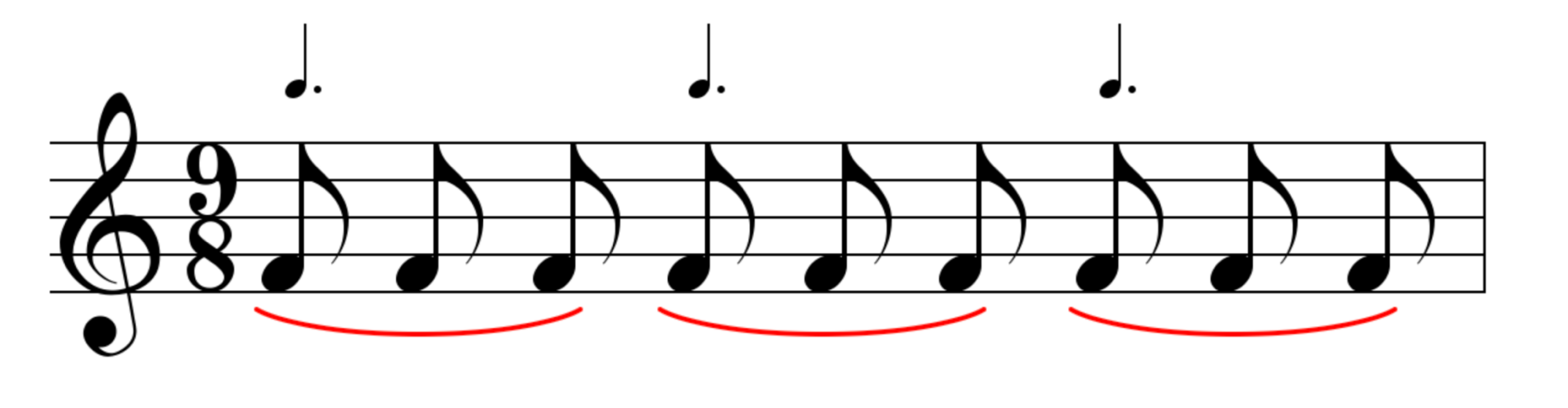


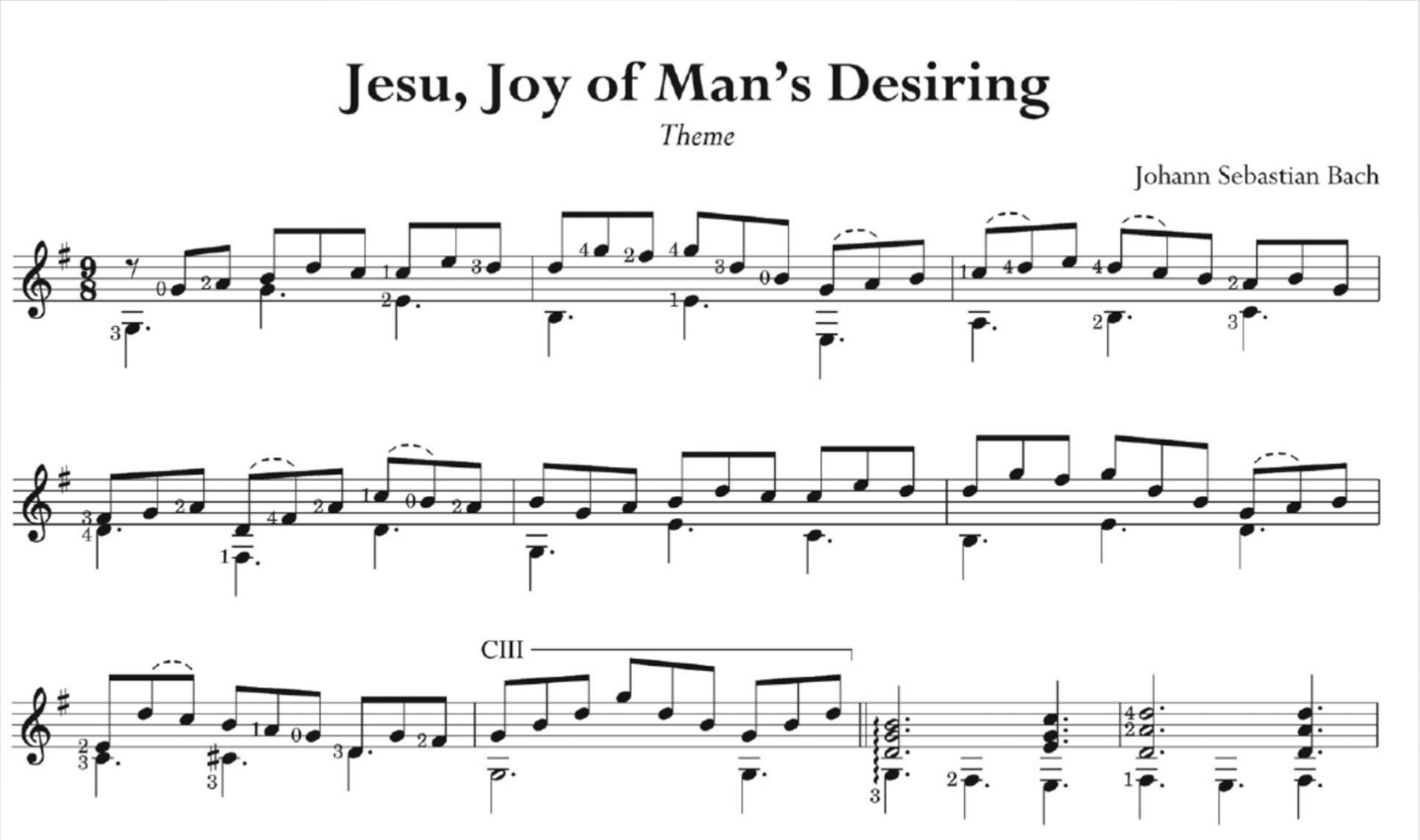
- By having both feels alternating or occurring simultaneously, the result is a Hemiola.
- A Hemiola is a rhythmic device that involves superimposing two notes in the space of three.
- Here is an example of both feels at the same time.



Other Compound Meters – 9/8

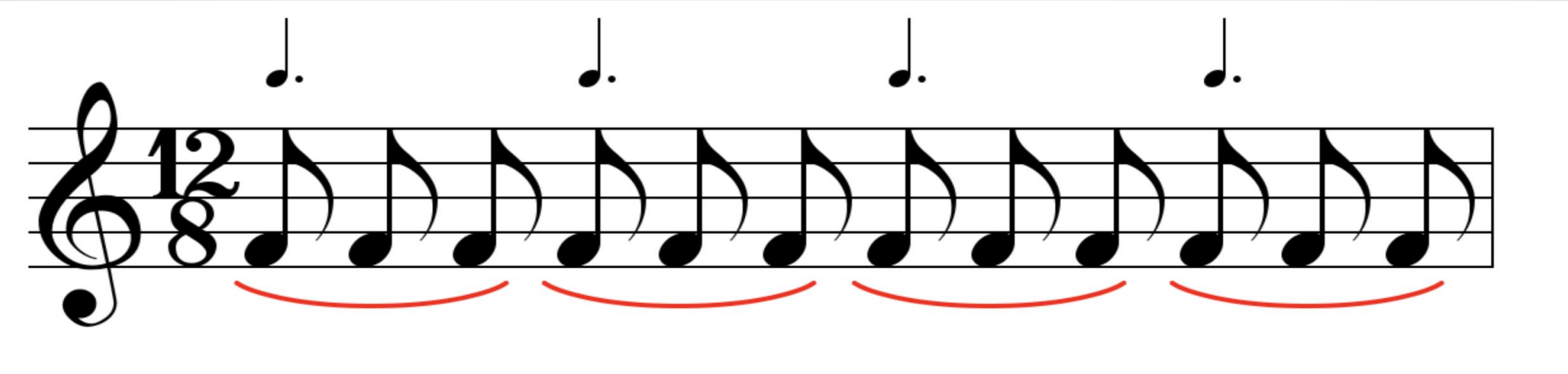
- There are three larger beats (three dotted quarter notes), thus making the meter triple.
- Since each larger beat is divided into three notes, the meter is compound.
- 9/8 would be classified as compound triple.




Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring
Theme
Johann Sebastian Bach
CIII

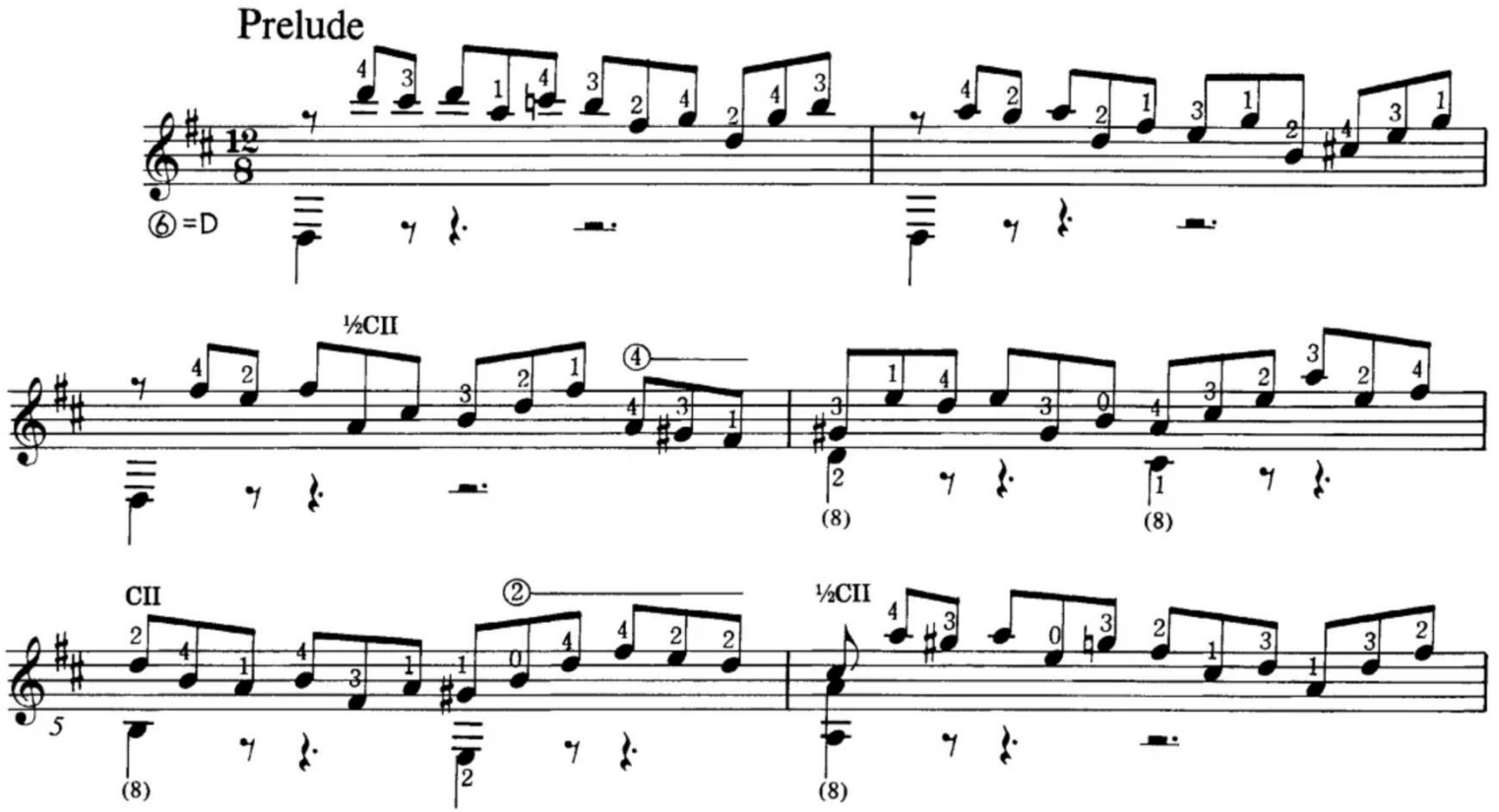
Other Compound Meters – 12/8

- There are four larger beats (four dotted quarter notes), thus making the meter quadruple.
- Since each larger beat is divided into three notes, the meter is compound.
- 12/8 would be classified as compound quadruple.



Prelude, Fuge, and Allegro

by J.S. Bach
BWV 998

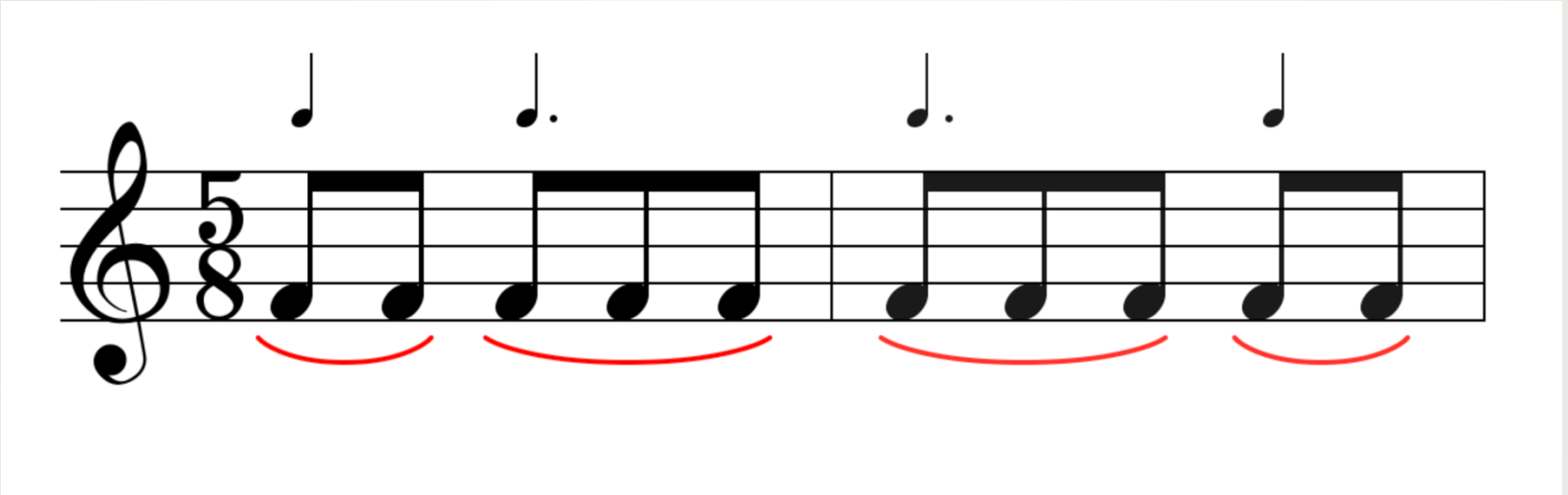


Compound Meter Repertoire Examples

- Compound Duple 6/8 — *Julia Florida* – Agustín Barrios Mangoré (Grade 8)
  Estudio No. 3 – Fernando Sor (Grade 3)
- Compound Triple 9/8 — *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* – J.S. Bach
- Compound Quadruple 12/8 — *Snowflight* – Andrew York
- Mixing meters 12/8 and 9/8 — *Study VII* – Leo Brouwer

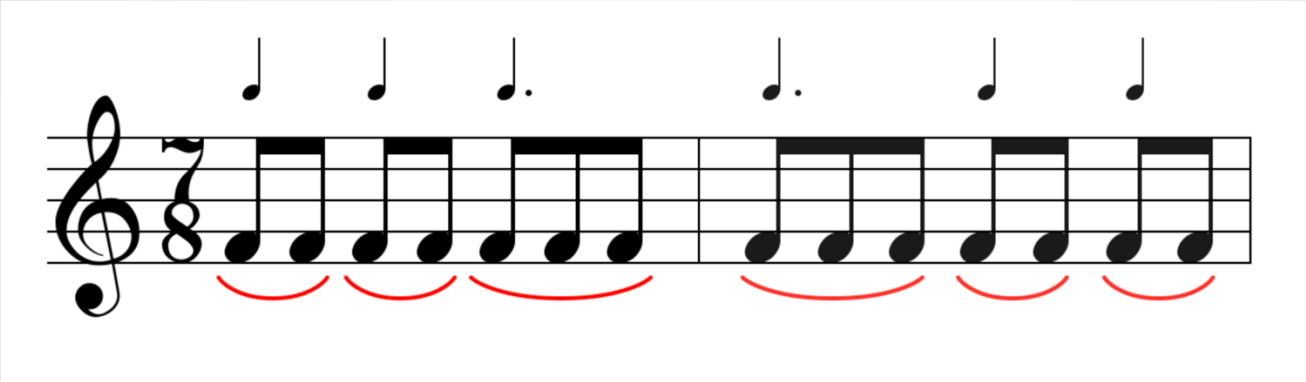
Odd Meter

- Meter that contains both simple and compound beats
- Here is an example of 5/8 – the grouping can be in any order.

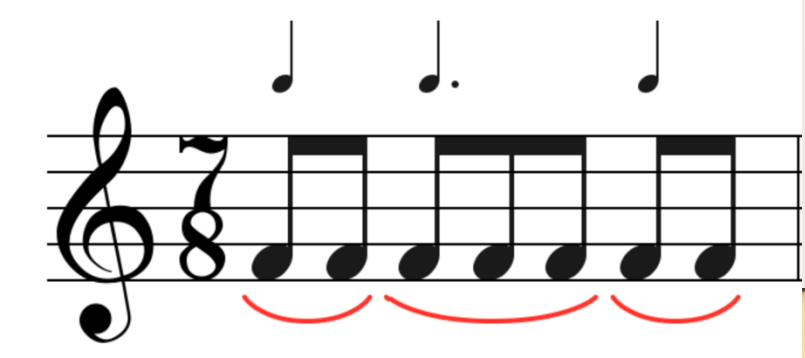


Odd Meter

- 7/8 time contains two simple beats and one compound beat.
- The order of the beats does not matter



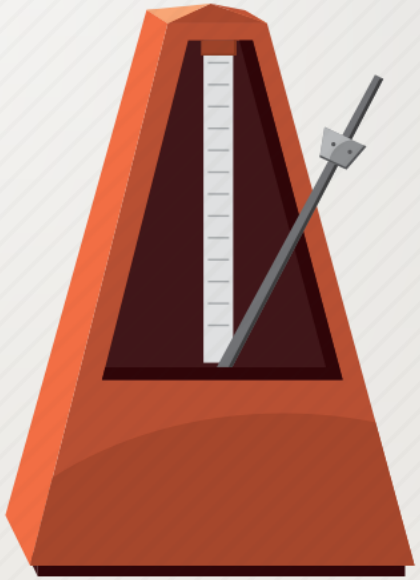
- The compound beat can even be positioned between the two simple beats.



Examples of Odd Meter Repertoire

- 5/8 *El Decameron Negro* – Leo Brouwer

- 7/8 *Spider Dance* – Andrew York

Other composers: Toru Takemitsu, Dušan Bogdanović, Carlo Domeniconi

Keep Counting!!