

“A Matter of Time”

Exploring Simple and Compound Meter

WITH JAMES ERICKSON
GUITOBERFEST 2024



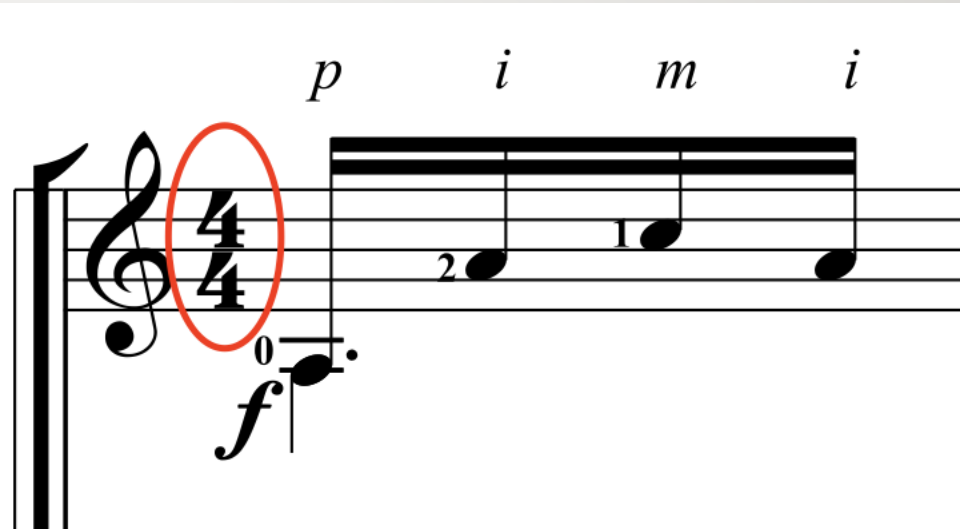
CLASSICAL GUITAR CORNER
ACADEMY

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 

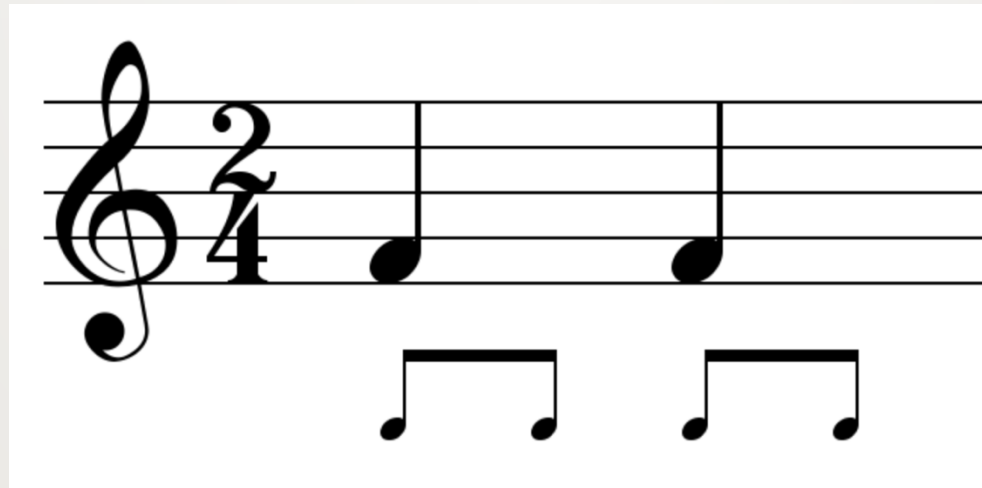


Common Types of Meter:

- 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.

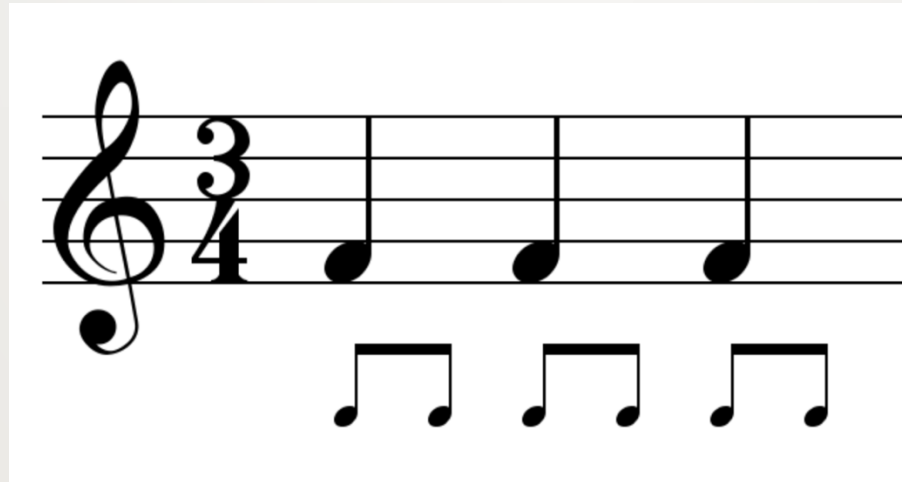




A musical staff in 2/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), C3 (quarter), and B2 (quarter). The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Simple Meter Classification

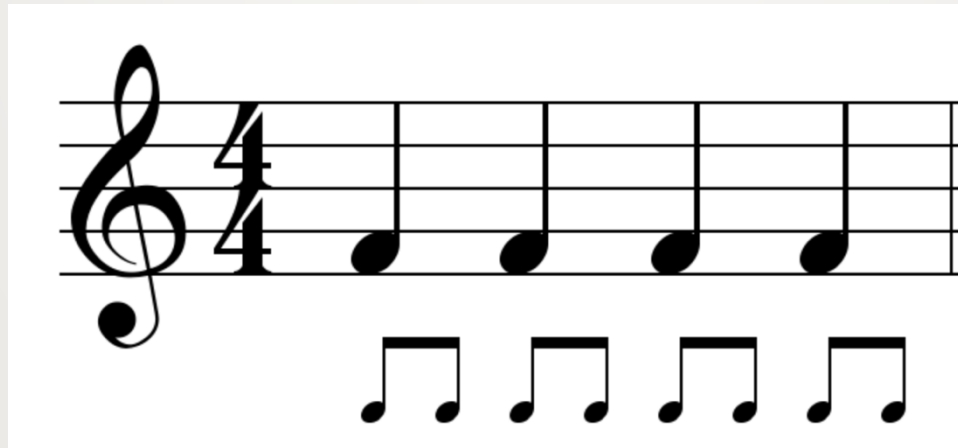
- 3/4 time would be classified as simple triple.
- Triple, since there are three beats in each measure.
- Simple, since each quarter note beat can be divided into two notes.

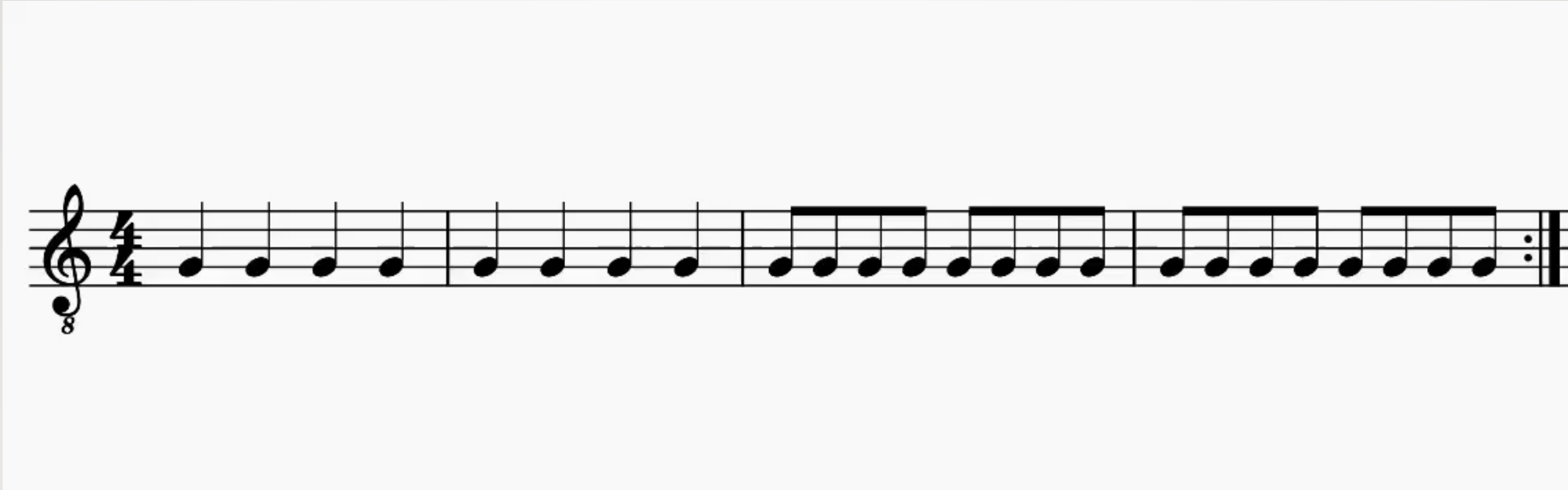




Simple Meter Classification

- 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

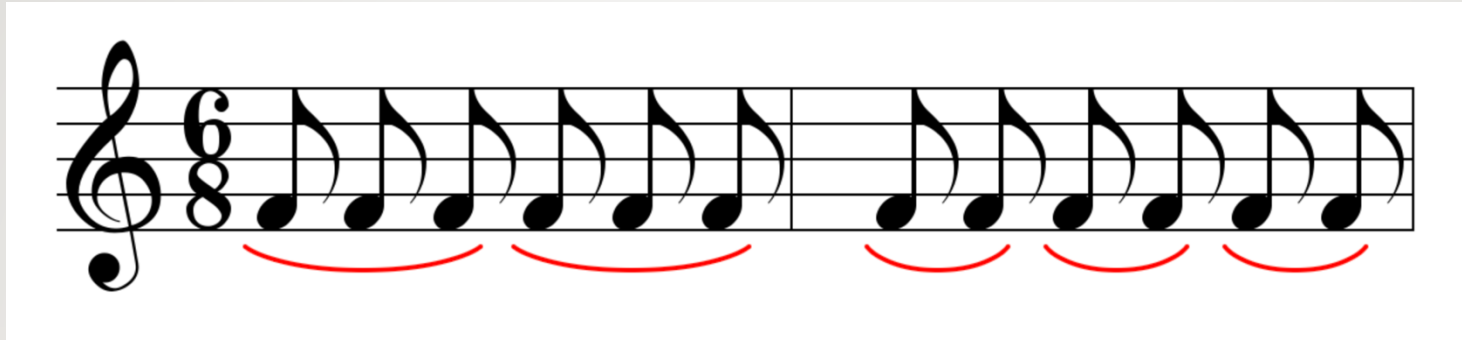
- Simple Duple – *Allegretto No.5 (from Le Papillon)* – Mauro Giuliani (Grade 3)
Caprice No.2 – Luigi Legnani (Grade 7)
- Simple Triple – *Minuet* – Christian Petzold (Grade 4)
Españoleta – Gaspar Sanz (Grade 3)
- Simple Quadruple – *Etude No.1* – Mauro Giuliani (Grade 2)
Largo – J.S. Bach (Grade 4)

Compound Meter Classification

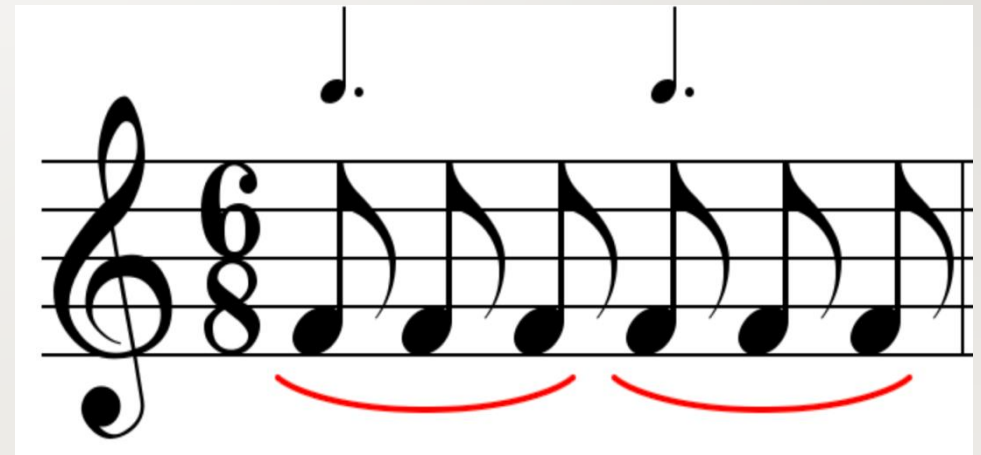
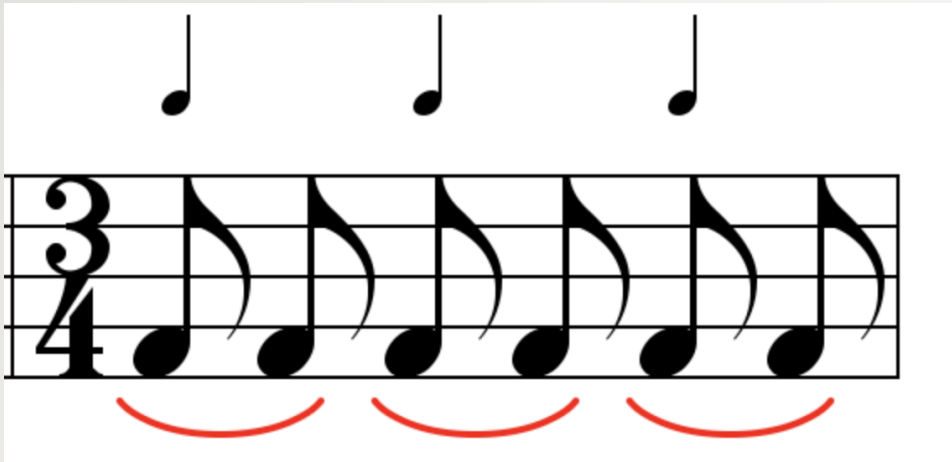
- While beats in simple meter are divided into two notes, beats in compound meter are divided into three.
- Let's examine 6/8 time to demonstrate this.
- The time signature tells us that there are 6 beats in each measure, with the eighth note receiving one count.



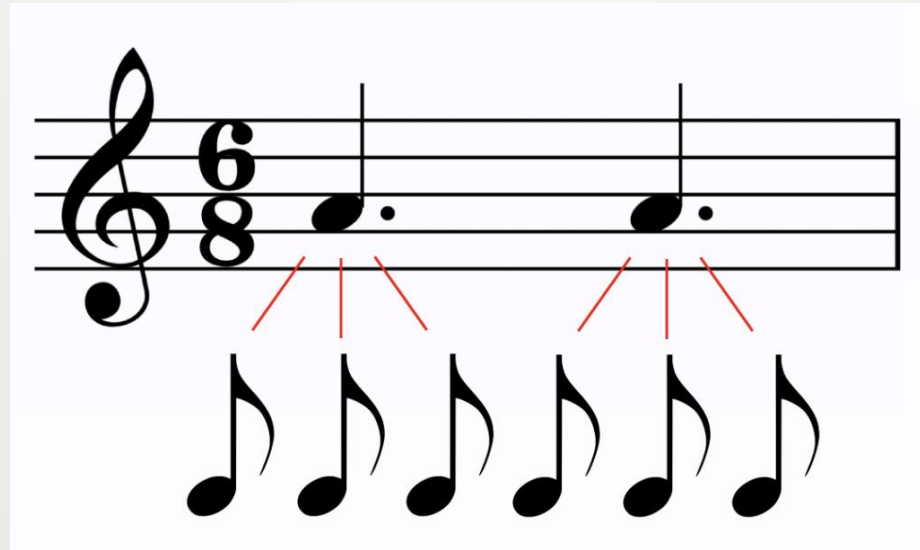
- Notice that the 6 eighth notes can be grouped in two beats or three beats.



- 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)

The image displays a musical score for a 6/8 time piece, *Estudio in D* by Fernando Sor, Grade 3. The score is presented in two systems, each with four measures. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The first system includes fingerings (4, 2, 1, 1, 2, 4, 3, 2) and red annotations: slurs over the upper melodic line and horizontal lines under the lower bass line. The second system includes fingerings (2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 3) and a red circle around the first bass note. The piece ends with a fermata over the final note.

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

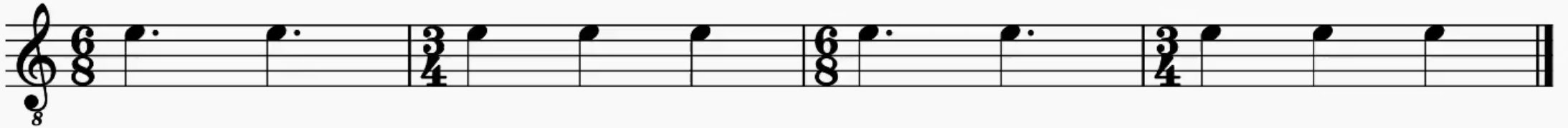
The image displays a musical score for the piece "Brian Boru's March" by Thomas O'Carolan, presented in 6/8 time. The score is written on two staves, both using a treble clef. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 60. The first staff contains the first five measures of the melody, starting with a whole rest followed by a slash and a vertical line, indicating a pickup. The second staff contains the final four measures of the piece, which concludes with a double bar line. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a march.



♩. = 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*.

The image displays a musical score for the song "America" from Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story". It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 6/8 time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody starts with a quarter note on G4, followed by eighth notes on A4 and Bb4, and a quarter note on C5. Above the first two notes are red numbers "1" and "2". The second staff begins with a treble clef, a 3/4 time signature, and a key signature of one flat. The melody starts with a quarter note on Bb4, followed by eighth notes on C5 and Bb4, and a quarter note on A4. Above the first note is a red number "1", and above the second note is a red number "2". The lyrics are: "I like to be in A - mer - i - ca! O. K. by me in A - mer - i - ca! Eve - ry thing free in A - mer - i - ca". The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The numbers "1 2 3" are written in blue above the notes in the first staff, and "1 2 3" in blue above the notes in the second staff. The numbers "1 2" are written in red above the notes in the first staff, and "1 2" in red above the notes in the second staff. The numbers "1 2 3" are written in blue above the notes in the first staff, and "1 2 3" in blue above the notes in the second staff. The numbers "1 2" are written in red above the notes in the first staff, and "1 2" in red above the notes in the second staff.

merica
in 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

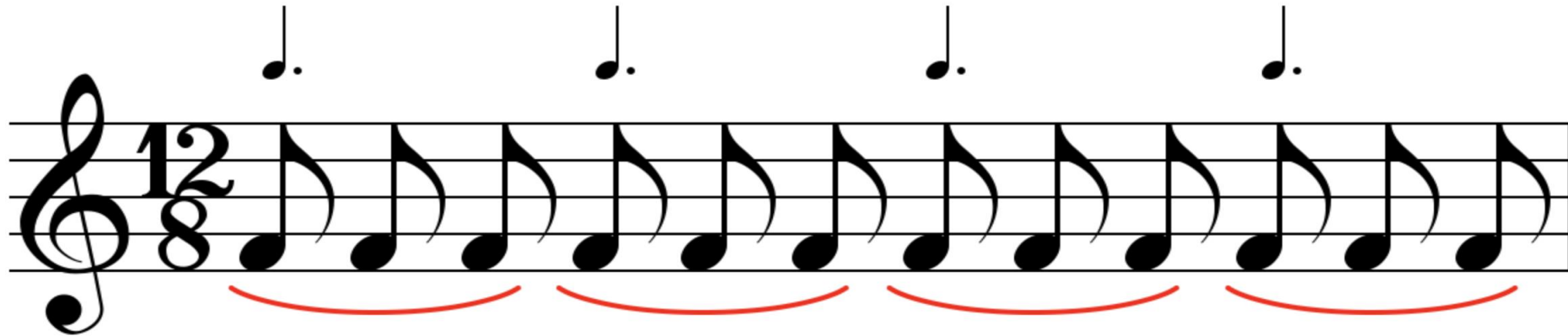
Theme

Johann Sebastian Bach

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" by Johann Sebastian Bach, specifically the "Theme" version. The score is written for guitar and is presented in three systems of music. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The notation includes standard musical symbols such as notes, rests, and slurs, along with guitar-specific fretboard notation (numbers 0-3) placed below the staff. The first system contains 12 measures, the second system contains 12 measures, and the third system contains 12 measures, ending with a double bar line. A section marked "CIII" (Cello III) is indicated above the final measure of the third system. The score concludes with a final chord in the 4/2 time signature.

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

Prelude

The image displays the musical score for the Prelude of BWV 998 by J.S. Bach. It consists of three systems of notation, each with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The time signature is 12/8.

System 1: The first system begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. The time signature is 12/8. The notation shows a series of eighth notes with fingerings: 4, 3, 1, 4, 3, 2, 4, 2, 4, 3. Below the staff, there is a circled '6' followed by '=D', indicating a fingering for the bass line. The bass line consists of a single note (D) followed by a rest.

System 2: The second system continues the melody with fingerings: 4, 2, 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 1, 4, 3, 2, 4, 3, 2, 4. A circled '4' is placed above the fourth measure. Below the staff, there are two circled '8's, indicating a fingering for the bass line. The bass line consists of a single note (D) followed by a rest.

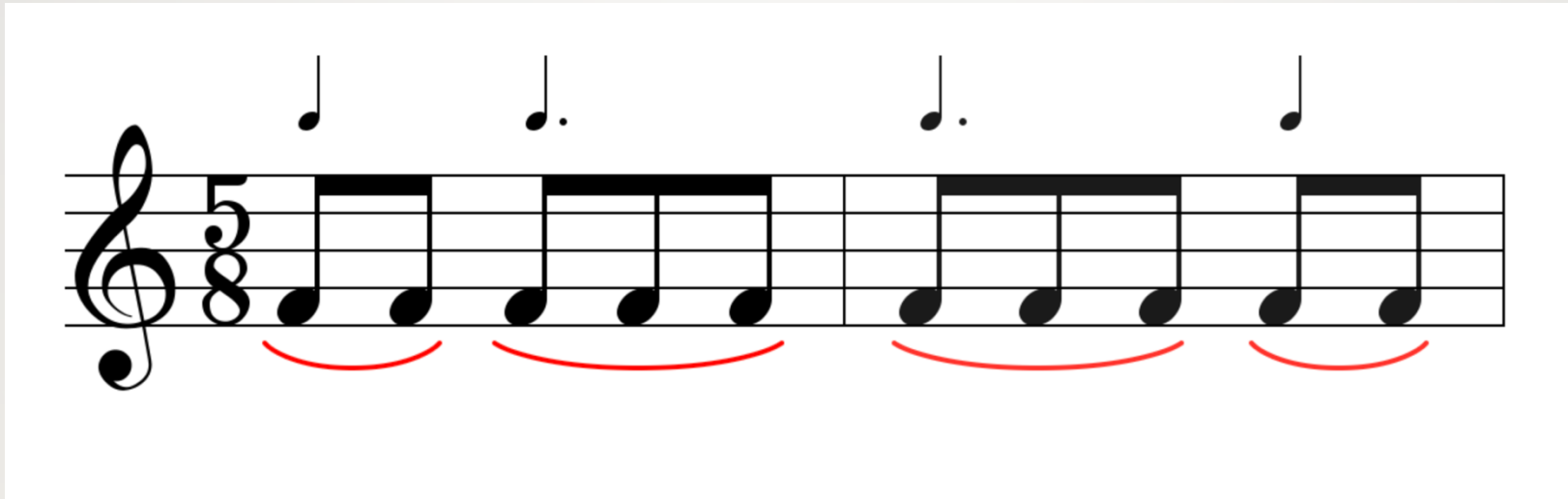
System 3: The third system continues the melody with fingerings: 2, 4, 1, 4, 3, 1, 1, 0, 4, 4, 2, 2, 4, 3, 2, 4. A circled '2' is placed above the second measure. Below the staff, there are two circled '8's, indicating a fingering for the bass line. The bass line consists of a single note (D) followed by a rest.

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

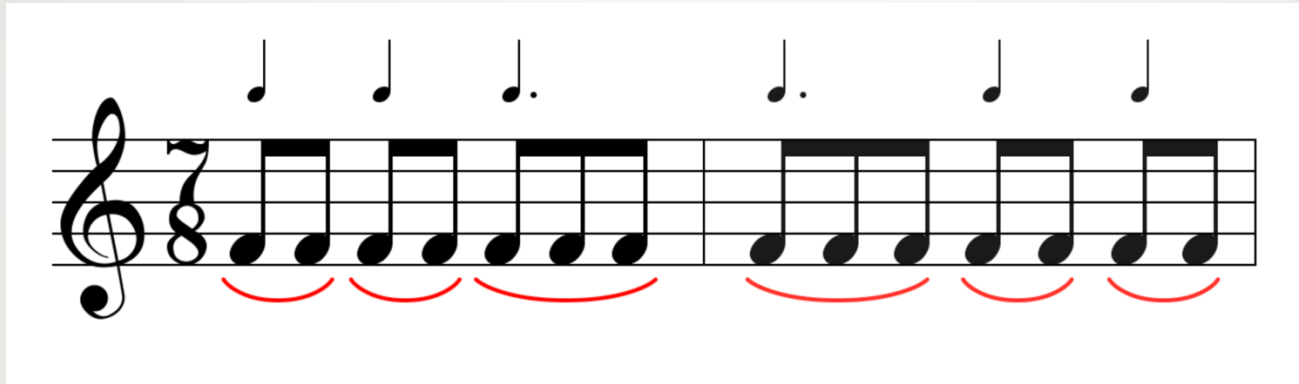
Odd Meter

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

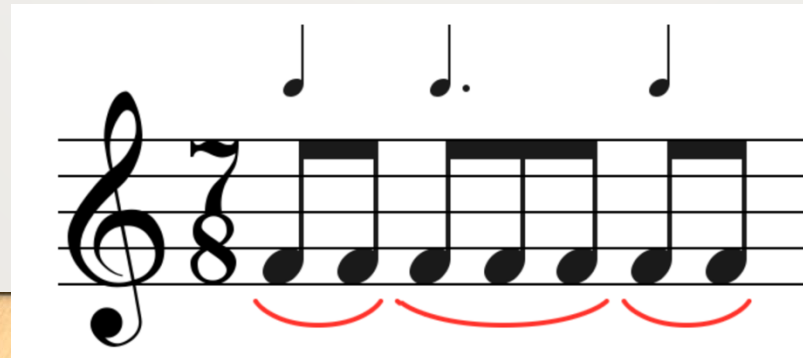


Odd Meter

- 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!!

