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INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COUNCIL

NOTATION OF FOLK MUSIC



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

convened by the INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES OF FOLK MUSIC

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Recommendations of the Committee of Experts convened by the
International Archives of Folk Music
under the auspices of UNESCO

1. RETENTION OF THE STAFF

The retention of staff notation is recommended because of its convenience and universality. The deficiencies which this system presents for the notation of folk music can be overcome by the use of supplementary signs. This is all the more necessary because a notation tending to mathematical exactitude must necessarily depend on physical principles and would therefore entail the use of signs intelligible only to specialists.

Multilinear notation, proposed by M.A.D. FOKKER (Holland), would seem to be impracticable for this very reason.

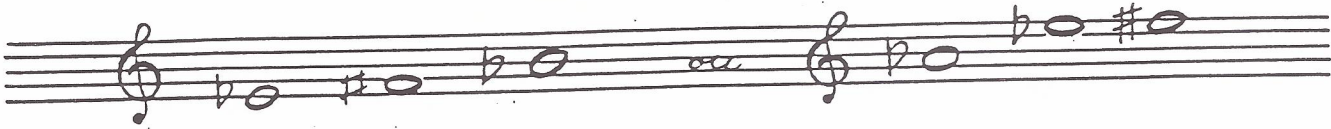
2. PITCH

When intervals unknown to the Western classical system occur, they must be clearly divided into two types : a) those that remain constant thus implying the existence of a definite scale; b) those that vary.

a) In the first case it will be necessary to indicate the exact pitch, preferably by a superscription in the form of a note or staff giving in numbers the exact interval or the numbers of the vibrations of the sounds, provided these indications rest on measurements made by irrefutable mechanical means. When several sounds belonging to a given scale are represented on the staff by one and the same note, a diacritical sign, such as an asterisk, should be used so as to differentiate them. This procedure would obviate the excessive variety of signs employed until now ($\sharp/2$, $\flat/2$, +, -, notes with a stroke through them, accidentals used in Byzantine notation, signs used by the Musée Guimet, etc. etc.).

b) In the case of sounds of unstable pitch, a sign indicating the variable nature of this deviation shall be used. The most appropriate sign would seem to be an arrow placed over the staff pointing upwards or downwards according to the direction of the deviation. It can equally well be used during the piece for

sporadic accidentation as for indicating degrees which are unstable by nature. In certain cases it would be useful to measure the amplitude of the deviation with precision. It is agreed to maintain the established principle of a key signature for indicating permanently modified notes. In order to prevent this signature from evoking the idea of a Western classical tonality, a) no accidental shall be shown affecting a note which does not appear in the written text; b) accidentals shall be used in the ascending order at the actual pitch where they occur. Ex.: according to cases :





Nevertheless, accidentals shall not be placed outside the staff. If the notes affected by an accidental are to be found on the staff in two different octaves, the accidental shall only be marked once in its usual place in the upper part of the staff.

When, in a given system, a note is natural or accidented according to the octave in which it is found, it were best to abstain from indicating it in the key signature. The superscription referred to in paragraph 2 will be sufficient to draw attention to this peculiarity of the scale used.

3. RHYTHM

The precautionary measures necessitated by the retention of the staff are equally imperative with regard to rhythm so that the conventional signs can indicate rhythmical systems founded on principles unknown to Western classical theory.

Simple and regular bars - In the case of simple and regular bars (groups of 2 or 3 beats), whether the beats be even, in the Western manner, or uneven in the commonly called Bulgarian manner, these bars shall be separated by bar-lines. In the case of bars of uneven beats, the subdivisions used in Western notation only indicate the aggregate of the component values and are incapable of showing the number and rhythmic nature of the beats. It seems therefore preferable to discard these subdivisions and to indicate the actual composition of the bar by a superscription above the beginning of the staff, preferably using instrumental notation for this superscription. Thus, instead of indicating

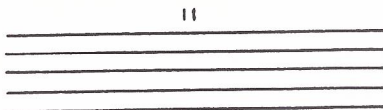
5/16, one will write down, as the case may be :  ou 

Composite bars - In the case of composite bars, that is to say of groups formed of several bars of simple time with two or three beats, the bars shall be separated by proper bar-lines and the simple bars of which they are cons-

stituted by dotted bar-lines. The structure of these regular composite bars can, according to the case, be expressed either by fractions when the beats are even, or by a superscription as in the case of bars of simple time with uneven beats.
Ex. :

$$\frac{2}{4} + \frac{3}{4} \text{ ou } | \text{ J J } : \text{ J J J } |$$

In vocal music, when *non-periodical* rhythms must be noted down, it is recommended that the elementary rhythmic groups (simple time bars) be locked for, basing this search on a careful study of the metrical composition of the texts. In this case the groups will be separated by dotted bar-lines and the rhythmic periods by double-bars. When the caesura which separates two rhythmic groups precedes an anacrusis instead of an accent, it could be indicated by a small double-bar placed over the staff.



When the transcriber cannot find any definite underlying rhythm, it is recommended that he abandon all use of bar-lines with the exception of the double-bar at the end of a period. When a regular rhythm becomes modified by the arbitrary shortening or lengthening of one of its components, it will be sufficient to indicate the shortening by the sign \smile , and the lengthening by the sign \frown or \smile , according to whether this lengthening is less or more than the duration of the note value which it affects. It will sometimes be useful, especially in the case of the second of these signs, to measure these alterations exactly, indicating the actual duration in brackets over the diacritical signs. In other cases it would seem preferable to note them in the staff in actual values, with an indication such as *sic* to underline the change in their character from that of the time indicated at the beginning of the staff.

Polyrhythm - In the case where simultaneous parts produce different rhythms (whether a constant unity of duration recurs in multiple rhythmic patterns, whether each part makes use of a unity of special duration, or whether neither a constant unity nor an exact pattern can be discovered), it will be inevitable, so as to establish a score, to resort to a spatial notation on a more or less closely squared paper, or any other procedure which would accurately recall the special character of the transcribed music. The committee strongly urges vocal notation in preference to instrumental notation for the transcription of tunes carrying words, and recommends that the sign — should be used to bind the constituent elements of a rhythmic group in cases where there could be a misunderstanding.

4. INTENSITY

The notation of intensity is not indispensable except when it is not accidental but characterises the style of the piece in question. Given the lack of

precision of current signs in Western notation, and as long as the precedents of mechanical measurement are not generally applicable, it would be desirable for the signs employed to be completed by a description or graphic representation of the characteristic phenomena. It is recommended that only the more usual of the classical indications or signs (*f*, *p*, *cres.*, *dim.*....) be used, and where accents are concerned only the three following signs, ranging from the simple tenuto stress to an exceptionally marked intensity : - , > , ^ .

5. SPEED AND ITS MODIFICATIONS

The tempo should be given by a metronome mark. In certain cases it would be as well to complement this indication by a term indicating the general speed of the movement. As long as this does not entail difficulty in reading (resulting for example from the use of notes of too small value) it is preferable to transcribe melodies of the same rhythmic structure by means of the same time units (crochet or quaver) whatever the tempo, which the metronome mark is sufficient to establish, may be.

All measurable modifications of tempo should be given a metronome mark. When a modification of tempo is progressive, it will be sufficient to indicate the speed reached at the end of the acc. or rall. Nevertheless, when this process extends over a long period it will be found useful to insert intermediate metronome marks. In the case of a modification which is too short to be measured, the following signs, in the sense established in paragraph 3, shall be used : \cup , \cap . When this modification covers several notes, recourse could eventually be had to the signs \cup and \cap (corresponding respectively to *piu mosso* and *meno mosso*), which should nevertheless be given precision, as far as possible, by a metronome mark.


6. DETAILS OF VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL EXECUTION

a) As a rule it is preferable to write out ornamentation in full. However, when these ornaments are identical with those of Western music, the traditional abbreviations can be used as in the following cases :




Even in these cases it could be useful, in order to make the execution of these ornaments precise, to transcribe them in detailed notation at least once.


Drawn out appoggiaturas shall be given in actual values; short appoggiaturas by small barred quavers.

b) The effect produced by a very light periodic modification of pitch and intensity, called in Western terms a *vibrato*, can be indicated by an undulated horizontal line .

Portamento (or *glissando*) shall usually be indicated by an oblique line between the sounds which it connects. When the pitch of one of these sounds cannot be ascertained, only the direction of the *glissando* and its approximate starting or ending points shall be shown. In the case of a very rapid and light *portamento* which is really only an exaggerated form of *legato*, this duration shall be considered as negligible. In this case it will be indicated by a short dash. In the case of a slower and definitely perceptible *portamento*, its total duration shall be given in brackets above the staff. This will be deducted from the duration of the preceding note, and will be expressed by an undulating line. When notes of a definite pitch can be heard during a *portamento*, these shall be noted down and joined up by one or another of the *portamento* signs.

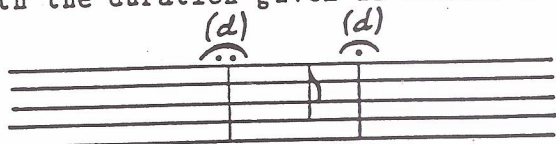
c) *Legato* and *staccato* - The tie  shall be reserved in vocal music for such passages where it is desired to underline the characteristic quality of *legato* vocal line. When this *legato* quality extends over the whole piece, it would be preferable to indicate this at the beginning by the word *legato* or *ben legato*. In instrumental music this sign shall be used in conformity with currently-used bowing or wind instrument slurs. It should not be employed to indicate phrasing and is superfluous in *vocalises*.

The *staccato* dot over a note indicates that it is detached from the next one by a rest of less than half its duration.

The *portato* sign  indicates a series of notes slightly accentuated and separated from one another by a very short but perceptible silence.

Breathing marks are to be indicated by a comma above the staff. Whenever this taking of breath introduces a noticeable break, it should be accompanied by a corresponding rest. It will sometimes be useful to distinguish the cases where the singer only snatches a breath.

d) For cases of *parlanda*, the heads of the notes should be replaced by crosses as long as their pitch can accurately be noted. In other cases stems without heads should be used and durations longer than a crochet shall be expressed by pauses with the duration given in brackets :



Sounds emitted in *falsetto* voice shall be distinguished by a small circle over the note. When the whole of the song or a long part of it is sung in this voice, it should be indicated by the word *falsetto*.

In the same way, humming shall be indicated either by the sign Θ or by the term *bocca chiusa*.

Small notes shall be kept for representing sounds of a very faint nature or those scarcely audible, such as the whispered anacrusis (*Flüster-Auftakte*) described by Bartók.

When the transcriber has recourse to diacritical signs so as to express certain details of emission, he must be careful to define them with exactitude and must avoid employing signs already used for other purposes.

General observations

The additions or interpretations of the transcriber shall be placed between [] .

In cases of doubt the interrogation sign (?) shall be used. When the doubt concerns a whole passage the sign ?_____ could be used.

All additions to the poetic text (whether they be an exclamation, a cut, a complementary syllable, or a refrain proper) shall be written in italics or underlined by a continuous line.

7. NOTATION OF VARIANTS

If the number of strophes (or of instrumental periods) and variants to transcribe is restricted, it will be possible to note the variants by numbers referring to footnotes (Bartók, *Volksmusik der Rumänen*, p. 35, No. 41).

Allegretto ♩ 84.

Dom-*ni* sor-d'e... la o scoa-lă, Dom-*ni* sor-d'e... la o scoa-lă,
Vin a-ca-să și te'n-*soa*-ră, Vin a-ca-să și te'n-*soa*r.

Var. 1)

If the contrary is the case, it is recommended that the strophes be published in a column, and when both varied and unvaried passages alternate, it is preferable to leave blank those which remain unchanged: Variations of intonation and rhythm can be given by their respective signs without using a staff (1).
Example (Brailoiu, *Rocete din Cas*, Eucarest, 1938, Ex. 2 d.).

2 d

BOINEȘTI
(Inf. Mărica Stat
23.8.34)

Fig. 2215 b
J=96

ie Uă găr-du-kă, uă găr-du - kă, ie Lă-sa-tu-m-ai vă du - u - kă.

ie Uă d'e kum că tră i-es-ku-a lu-mu - fă, ie Bu-nu-ljo-ru mi-cu găr-du - fă?

ie Uă d'e spu-né, găr-du - kă dul - ce, d'e Pē ka-ré dru-mu-ti-i du - ce;

ie Uă d'e m-a go-rî un dor me-rî, ie Uă d'e un-dē să tē gîr-du - ta - ri.

ie Uă d'e Bu-nu-ljo-ru mi-cu găr-du - kă, ie Uă d'e De sho-lă tē gîr-du - ko - tu

ie Uă d'e Si tē uî-tă la nă-ro-du ie Uă d'e Kum o vi-ni' la pro-ho-du

It goes without saying that it will sometimes be necessary to transcribe the whole piece.

When a long piece is composed of melodic units which alternate in an irregular order, it might be an advantage to note each of them once only, accompanying it with the variants which it presents during its further appearances, and to give the succession of these units by an indexed series of letters: A F C A² D E E² A³ ...

8. PRESERVATION OF THE ABSOLUTE PITCH OF THE PERFORMANCE

The absolute pitch of the performance shall be maintained when transcribing it, using the clefs of F and C. In vocal music the use of these clefs will make it immediately apparent whether the case is that of a man's voice (♫) or of a woman's voice (♫). In the case of a tenor the ♫ is admissible but 8^a should be avoided as much as possible.

(1) This method of notation will be equally useful for the comparison of differing versions of the same tune

In order to avoid an accumulation of accidentals, tunes can be transposed a semitone at the most, either upwards or downwards, on condition that the exact pitch and time of the original are specified. A transposition to a conventional key cannot be countenanced except when the publication in which it appears presents the form (even if only on a particular point) of a comparative analytical study.
