MOLA Guidelines

for Music Preparation

Prepared by the Publications Committee

MOLA

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Foreword

These guidelines for the preparation of music scores and parts are the result of many hours of discussion regarding the creation and layout of performance material that has come through our libraries. We realize that each music publisher has its own set of guidelines for music engraving. For new or self-published composers or arrangers, we would like to express our thoughts regarding the preparation of performance materials.

Using notation software music publishers and professional composers and arrangers are creating scores and parts that are as functional and beautiful as traditionally engraved music. A .pdf (portable document format) is the suggested final file format as it is independent of application software, hardware, and operating system. All major notation software has the option to save a file in this format.

As digital storage and distribution of music data files becomes more common, there is the danger that the librarian will be obliged to assume the role of music publisher, expected to print, duplicate, and bind all of the sheet music. Not all libraries have the facilities, staff, or time to accommodate these projects, and while librarians can advise on the format and layout of printed music, they should not be expected to act as a surrogate publisher.

The majority of printed music is now produced using one of the established music notation software programs. Some of the guidelines that follow may well be implemented in such programs but the software user, as well as anyone producing material by hand, will still find them beneficial.

The Performance Material

Full Score   At the beginning of the full score, the full name of each instrument should be listed to the left of the corresponding staff/staves. **(Example 1)**. On subsequent pages, abbreviations of the instrument names should be used. **(Example 2)**.

All instructions for tempi, dynamics, technique, and expression should be in a conventional language such as English, Italian, German, or French. All tempo indications should appear above the top staff and above the first violin line (or similarly positioned staff in the absence of strings) on each score page.

All full scores should include measure numbers, beginning anew with each movement. Placement of measure numbers should be the same throughout the work. If every measure is to be numbered it should be placed below the system. Often just the first measure of each system is numbered, placed in the upper left corner and sometimes additionally, as with tempo indications, on a specific line of the grand staff, such as above the first violins. Ideally, rehearsal letters should be used in addition to measure numbers, their position corresponding to landmarks in the music.

Percussion instruments should be notated on the staff from high to low, according to their relative pitch. Pitched percussion staves should appear adjacent to one another and can be positioned either above or below unpitched percussion. Sometimes it may be more appropriate to notate the percussion lines by player to reflect how the instruments are to be distributed. Whichever system is chosen, these positions must be maintained consistently throughout the work.

The vertical order of instrument staves within a score has evolved over many years. While it is possible to find many exceptions, the generally accepted layout is as follows:

- Woodwind
- Brass
- Timpani/Percussion/Harp/Keyboard instruments
- Vocal
- Strings

Any instrument that does not easily fit in the layout above will usually be placed in the third group. Within these broad categories, instruments should be vertically ordered, for the most part, by sounding pitch high to low. **(Example 1)**. Most music notation software should default to this layout.

Parts   It is strongly advised that parts are computer-engraved and should not include any handwritten additions. Parts for transposing instruments must be written in the transposed key. Clefs and key signatures must appear at the beginning of each line. Care should be taken with the use of the abbreviations *8va* and *8va basso*, avoiding their use if possible. When a clef, key signature, or time signature changes at the beginning of a line, a cautionary warning should be included at the end of the previous line. **(Example 3)**

As in the full score, measure numbers should appear at the beginning of each line. Numbering each measure should be avoided, except in the case of multi-measure rests, where measure number ranges are helpful (e.g., "27–117"). Two further exceptions to this convention occur in Film and Music Theatre compositions where measures are traditionally individually numbered in both score and parts, although once again number ranges are used for multi-measure rests.

The rehearsal numbers or letters and measure numbers in the parts must match the score. Logical cues are expected during long periods of rest, the cues being transposed to the reading key of the instrument. Cues must be audible and obvious to the musician reading the part. Tempo and meter changes must be indicated on all parts, even during periods of extended rest. **(Example 4)**   The use of "Tacet until. . ." is not acceptable unless the player takes no further part until either the completion of the work or an intermission at the end of an act.

If at all possible, instrument doubling (one player covering two instruments) should not be included in a principal part. In any doubling part, clear indications of when to change followed by a statement of which instrument is being played at the next entry should be included. **(Example 5)**

If any parts are reproduced with a popular transposition (for example, Horn in E-flat transposed for Horn in F), a part in the original key should also be included with the set. Traditionally, horns, tuned percussion, and timpani use any required accidentals rather than a key signature.

A notation key printed at the beginning of the percussion part or parts may be helpful to the players if the part is especially detailed. The timpani part should *not* be included in the percussion part and should be printed separately. An exception may be in the instance of chamber music, where the timpani plays a small role or is explicitly required to double on one or more percussion instruments.

Harp pedaling should be left to the performer and not printed. The number of players needed for keyboard parts should be clearly specified.

String bowings should only be printed if the composition is intended for educational use, or if the composer/arranger requires a specific effect and is confident of its method of execution.

Cover and Front Matter

Full Score   Although each music publisher will have its own publication guidelines and style requirements, there is some information that is important to see on the cover of any score. The title of the work and the name of the composer should be printed prominently on the cover and spine of the score. The full title of the work should be printed as it would appear in a formal concert program, to include appropriate capitalization and diacritical markings. If applicable, the name of the arranger or editor should appear, but need not be as prominent as the title and composer. Additionally, the name and address of the publisher should be easily located. It is helpful to add a catalog number, print date, or revision date when applicable.

There should be a page or pages at the beginning of the work to provide basic information about the composition along with movement titles in their proper order. There should be an approximate duration given for each movement and a total duration for the work. This should also include a list of the full instrumentation. If the composition is in multiple sections, movements or acts, a contents list with page numbers should also be included.

Identify use of any optional instruments, doublings, keys of all transposing instruments, and a list of all percussion instruments (including required note ranges). An indication of how many percussionists will be required is helpful, though an orchestra may or may not adhere to that number. Any specific equipment, synthesizer settings, or other electronic instrument requirements should be noted here. These instructions should be as detailed and specific as possible. Any special instructions for "prepared instruments," other uncommon instruments, and extended techniques should also be indicated here.

Any specific staging instructions should also be mentioned on this page or a subsequent page. Detailed diagrams are helpful to illustrate a particularly complex stage set-up. If there are deviations from standard musical notation, an explanation should appear following the instrumentation page.

Parts   Cover pages may be used on parts but are only essential when pagination requires the music to begin on page two in order to accommodate page turns, or when there are additional instructions for the player to follow.

At minimum, the front of each part must include the title, composer, and instrument name (and instrument key where applicable). If multiple instruments are used, all should be indicated on the front page, in addition to any specific equipment, synthesizer settings, or other electronic instrument requirements. Specific instructions for "prepared instruments," other uncommon instruments, and extended techniques should also be indicated here. While not necessarily required, publication information can be included here.

Formatting

Parts and scores should be produced double-sided, with music on both sides of the page. Right-hand pages must be odd-numbered in the upper right corner and left-hand pages must be even-numbered in the upper left corner of the page.

Full Score The minimum legible staff size for scores is 4 mm (measured from the bottom to the top of each staff), and note heads should be large enough for the conductor to read with ease at the podium. The barlines should be continuous within each family of instruments. **(Example 6)**

Parts The most readable staff size for all instruments is 7.5 mm (measured from the bottom to the top of the staff). Although 7.0 mm may be readable for winds as they generally use their own stands, it is less so for strings because they share a stand. Anything smaller than 7.0 mm is unacceptable, and anything larger than 8.5 mm should be avoided.

The page layout should allow each player ample time to turn the page. Consider the tempo of the music and the playing technique of the instrument when determining how many bars of rest must be at the page-turn. It is preferable for a multi-measure rest to be at the end of a page. If this is not possible, be sure that it is in a period of rest and/or an unexposed part of the music. Fold out pages should be avoided if at all possible.

Include instrument names as a header on each subsequent page. Leave a 20 mm (0.75-inch) margin surrounding the image area of the music. The first line of each movement should be indented. No more than eight to ten staves per page should be used for any instrument that is subject to multiple ledger lines (i.e. flute, violin, tuba). Up to twelve staves may be used as long as symbols are not crowded and clarity of the notational elements is maintained. Also avoid over-crowding to provide clarity within each measure.

Do not create wind parts with multiple instruments on a single staff; for instance, flutes 1 and 2 should be separate parts. Percussion parts may be in score form or individual instrumental parts; each has its advantages depending on the requirements of the music, so it is preferable to consult with an experienced orchestral percussionist. When in doubt, produce both options. String parts should be created with one part per section. Avoid dividing the music for the string section into multiple parts unless necessitated by multiple and continuous division of the voices. Complicated string divisions should be written on separate staves. The barline should be continuous between these separate staves.

Wherever possible aim to ensure that the amount of music to be read per system for any instrument is consistent. This helps to ensure a similarly consistent speed of "travel" for the player's eye during performance.

Proofreading

It is strongly advised that prior to reproduction, a qualified professional proofread the score and parts, not just the copyist who prepared them and/or the composer. Orchestra librarians should not be expected to provide additional proofreading services.

Full Score   For scores, equal attention should be given to both the vertical and horizontal lines of music when proofreading.

Parts   It is important to note that simply extracting parts from the score in notation software will not lead to error-free parts. For instance, the placement of any "anchored" markings may not remain positioned as they were in the score, leading to collisions or floating markings. **(Example 7)**

Paper and Binding

The paper for scores and parts should be of substantial quality to avoid show-through of music from the reverse side, to ensure durability, and to stand up to on-stage wind patterns caused by ventilation systems. 60 or 70 lb weight (100-120 gsm) offset paper in white or off-white should be used, and shiny or overly textured finishes should be avoided.

Full Score   In North America, conductor scores should be printed on paper at least 9 x 12 inches but no larger than 11 x 17 inches. In Europe full scores should be printed at either B4 JIS (257 x 364 mm) or A3 (297 x 420 mm). Multiple pages can be set into signatures and saddle stitched or stapled at the spine. Coil binding may also be used.

Parts   In North America, parts should be printed on paper at least 9 x 12 inches but no larger than 11 x 14 inches. If using the A and B JIS paper formats, parts should be prepared on paper no smaller than A4 but no larger than B4, the latter being the most common size. Common page sizes among many publishers are 9 x 12, 9.5 x 12.5, 10 x 13 inches, A4, and B4. While A4 parts are considered the minimum, paper larger than A4 is preferred and recommended among librarians.

Parts should be bound so that they lie flat on the stand. Multiple page parts can be set into signatures and saddle stitched or stapled at the spine. Dependent on weight of paper, coil binding should be considered for parts with more than approximately 40 sides to ensure that they do lie flat. Another binding method uses a single strip of flexible cloth tape affixed to the left margin of the part. (See **Resources** for acceptable tape manufacturers.) All pages should be attached to the center spine. Accordion fold parts (single-sided sheets taped side-to-side) are only acceptable in rare page turn situations, for instance, in some drum set parts.

Ultimately the goal is to provide a set of music that can be easily read and accurately played. Look at the music through the eyes of a player, and consult professional librarians, copyists, or performers when unsure.

Examples

1.

Piccolo	
Flutes 1, 2	
Oboes 1, 2	
English Horn	
Clarinets 1, 2 in B♭	
Bass Clarinet in B♭	
Alto Saxophone in E♭	
Bassoons 1, 2	
Contrabassoon	
Horns 1, 2 in F	
Horns 3, 4 in F	
Trumpets 1, 2 in C	
Trumpet 3 in C	
Trombones 1, 2	
Bass Trombone / Tuba	
Timpani	
Percussion	
Glockenspiel	
Harp	
Piano	
Celesta	
Acoustic Guitar	
Bass Guitar	
Solo Voice	
Soprano/Alto	
Tenor/Bass	
Solo Instrument	
Violin I	
Violin II	
Viola	
Violoncello	
Double Bass	

2.

Picc.	
Fl. 1, 2	
Ob. 1, 2	
E. H.	
Cl. 1, 2 (B♭)	
Bass Cl. (B♭)	
Alto Sax.	
Bsn. 1, 2	
Cbsn.	
Hn. 1, 2 in F	
Hn. 3, 4 in F	
Tpt. 1, 2 in C	
Tpt. 3 in C	
Tbn. 1, 2	
Bass Tbn. / Tba.	
Timp.	
Perc.	
Glock.	
Hp.	
Pno.	
Cel.	
Ac. Gtr.	
Bs. Gtr.	
Solo Voice (Character name)	
S. A.	
T. B.	
Solo Inst.	
Vln. I	
Vln. II	
Vla.	
Vlc.	
D. B.	

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Resources

Adobe Systems Incorporated, PDF Reference, Sixth edition, version 1.23 (30 MB), Nov 2006, p. 33.

Gould, Elaine. *Behind Bars.* Faber Music, 2011.

Powell, Steven. *Music Engraving Today: The Art and Practice of Digital Notesetting.*
    New York: Brichtmark Music, 2002.

Ross, Ted. *The Art of Music En- graving and Processing: A Complete Manual, Reference and Text Book on
    Preparing Music for Reproduction and Print.* 2nd ed., Miami, Fla.: Charles Hansen, 1970. Digital edition
    NPC Imaging (www.npcimaging.com)

Solomon, Samuel Z. *How to Write for Percussion: A Comprehensive Guide to Percussion Composition.*
    New York: SZSolomon, 2002.

Stone, Kurt. *Music Notation in the Twentieth Century: A Practical Guidebook.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1980.

Tape Sources: Vital Presentation Concepts Inc. (www.vpcinc.com), 3-M Corporation's Micropore and
Durapore surgical tape (www.3m.com)

MOLA Publications:

- **What is MOLA?** defines the organization and its goals.

- **The Performance Librarian: A Career Introduction** outlines a variety of duties and skills needed as an Orchestra Librarian throughout different disciplines.

- **Mola Guidelines for Music Preparation** discusses the preparation of music scores and parts and the layout of performance material in our libraries.

- **Opera: Friend or Foe?** is a brochure to aid in the preparation of aria concerts or full operas.

- **The Music We Perform** gives an overview of royalties, rentals and rights.

- **Rights and Responsibilities Concerning Rental Music in North America** is a set of guidelines designed to achieve good communication and efficient service between performance libraries and rental publishers.

- **Ballet Music: A Survival Guide** is intended to serve as a basic map of the wilds of the dance world and to suggest strategies for finding those mysterious lost treasures of 19th century ballet repertoire.

MOLA Guidelines for Music Preparation.

Prepared by the
Major Orchestra Librarians' Association
Publications Committee

1993 edition
Clinton F. Nieweg · *Philadelphia Orchestra*
David Bartolotta · *San Francisco Ballet*
Peter Conover · *Houston Symphony*
Gary Corrin · *Toronto Symphony*
Marcia Farabee · *National Symphony*
John Grande · *Metropolitan Opera*
Robert M. Grossman · *Philadelphia Orchestra*
Paul Gunther · *Minnesota Orchestra*
James Kortz · *St. Paul Chamber Orchestra*
Mary C. Plaine · *Baltimore Symphony*
Rosemary Summers · *Metropolitan Opera*
Lawrence Tarlow · *New York Philharmonic*
John Van Winkle · *San Francisco Symphony*

Revised in 2001
John Campbell · *San Francisco Symphony*
Russ Girsberger · *New England Conservatory*
Margo Hodgson · *National Arts Centre Orchestra*
Carol Lasley · *Florida Philharmonic*
Cathy Miller · *The U.S. Army Field Band*
Patrick Zwick · *Utah Symphony*

Revised in 2006
Stephen Biagini · *Los Angeles Philharmonic*
Russ Girsberger · *New England Conservatory*
Kazue McGregor · *Los Angeles Philharmonic*
Clinton F. Nieweg · *Philadelphia Orchestra*
Gregory Vaught · *San Antonio Symphony*
Justin Vibbard · *Florida West Coast Symphony*

Revised in 2017
Katie Klich · *Dallas Symphony*
Robert Greer · *Fort Worth Symphony*
Tony Rickard · *Royal Opera House*
Sarah Anderson · *Annapolis Symphony*

*For further information about MOLA
visit our website at:*

www.mola-inc.org

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