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Visual represent of music This article is about a notation for music. For the "musical" notation in mathematics, see Musical isomorphism. "Music Markup" redirects here. For the XML application, see Music Markup Language. Hand-written musical notation by J. S. Bach (1685–1750). This is the beginning of the Prelude from the Suite for Lute in G minor, BWV 995 (transcription of Cello Suite No. 5, BWV 1011). Music notation or musical notation is any system used to visually represent aurally perceived music played with instruments or sung by the human voice through the use of written, printed, or otherwise-produced symbols, including notation for durations of absence of sound such as rests. Types and methods of notation have varied between cultures and throughout history, and much information about ancient music notation is fragmentary. Even in the same time period, such as in the 2010s, different styles of music and different cultures use different music notation methods; for example, for professional classical music performers, sheet music using staves and noteheads is the most common way of notating music, but for professional country music session musicians, the Nashville Number System is the main method. The symbols used include ancient symbols and modern symbols made upon any media such as symbols cut into stone, made in clay tablets, made using a pen on papyrus or parchment or manuscript paper; printed using a printing press (c. 1400s), a computer printer (c. 1980s) or other printing or modern copying technology. Although many ancient cultures used symbols to represent melodies and rhythms, none of them was particularly comprehensive, which has limited today's understanding of their music. The seeds of what would eventually become modern Western notation were sown in medieval Europe, starting with the Christian Church's goal for ecclesiastical uniformity. The church began notating plainchant melodies so that the same chants could be used throughout the church. Music notation developed further during the Renaissance and Baroque music eras. In the classical period (1750–1820) and the Romantic music era (1820–1900), notation continued to develop as new musical instrument technologies were developed. In the contemporary classical music of the 20th and 21st century, music notation has continued to develop, with the introduction of graphical notation by some modern composers and the use, since the 1980s, of computer-based score writer programs for notating music. Music notation has been adapted to many kinds of music, including classical music, popular music, and traditional music. History Ancient Near East Further information: Music of Mesopotamia and Hurrian songs A tablet with the Hymn to Nikkal inscribed[1] The earliest form of musical notation can be found in a cuneiform tablet that was created at Nippur, in Babylonia (today's Iraq), in about 1400 BC. The tablet represents fragmentary instructions for performing music, that the music was composed in harmonies of thirds, and that it was written using a diatonic scale.[2] A tablet from about 1250 BC shows a more developed form of notation.[3] Although the interpretation of the notation system is still controversial, it is clear that it notation indicates the names of strings on a lyre, the tuning of which is described in other tablets.[4] Although they are highly fragmentary, these tablets represent the earliest notated melodies found anywhere in the world.[5] A photograph of the original stone at Delphi containing the second of the two Delphic Hymns to Apollo. The music notation is the line of occasional symbols above the main, uninterrupted line of Greek lettered text. Further information: Musical systems of ancient Greece Ancient Greek musical notation was in use from at least the 6th century BC until approximately the 4th century AD; only one complete composition (Seikilos epitaph) and a number of fragments using this notation survive. The notation for sung music consists of letter symbols for the pitches, placed above text syllables. Rhythm is indicated in a rudimentary way only, with long and short symbols. The Seikilos epitaph has been variously dated between the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD. Three hymns by Mesomedes of Crete exist in manuscript. The Delphic Hymns, dated to the 2nd century BC, also use this notation, but they are not completely preserved. Ancient Greek notation appears to have fallen out of use around the time of the Decline of the Western Roman Empire. Byzantine Empire Further information: Byzantine music Byzantine music notation in the first edition (1823) of Macarie Ieromonahul's anastasiatarion, a hymnal with daily chant (including resurrection troparia called apolytikia anastasia) in oktochos order, each section began with the evening psalm 140 (here section of echos protos with Romanian transliterated in Cyrillic script) Byzantine music once included music for court ceremonies, but has only survived as vocal church music within various Orthodox traditions of monodic (monophonic) chant written down in Byzantine round notation (see Macarie's anastasiatarion with the Greek text translated into Romanian and transliterated into Cyrillic script).[6] Since the 6th century Greek theoretical categories (melos, genus, harmonia, systema) played a key role to understand and transmit Byzantine music, especially the tradition of Damascus had a strong impact on the pre-Islamic Near East comparable to the impact coming from Persian music. The earliest evidence are papyrus fragments of Greek tropologia. These fragments usually preserve the lyrics text, followed a modal signature or key (liturgical mode), or both. The notation is usually placed above the lyrics. Notes as pitch classes, or modal keys (usually marked by a number) are represented in a degree, one degree lower, two degrees higher, or in relation to which a clef or modal key (modal signature). Originally, this key or the incipit of a common melody was enough to indicate a certain melodic model, even without the echos. Next to ekphonic notation, only used by lectionaries, to indicate forms used during scriptural lessons, modal notation developed not earlier than between the 9th and the 10th century, when a theta (θ), oxeia (ι) or diple (//) were written under a certain syllable of the text, whereas a longer melisma was expected. This primitive form was called "theta" or "diple notation". Today, one can study the evolution of this notation in Greek monastic chant books like those of the sticherarion and the hermologion (Chartes notation was rather used on Mount Athos and Constantinople, Coislin notation within the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Alexandria), while there was another gestic notation originally used for the asmatikon (choir book) and kontakarion (book of the soloist or monopharis) of the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite. The earliest books which have survived, are "kondakars" in Slavonic translation which already show a notation system known as Kondakarian notation.[7] Like the Greek alphabet notational signs are ordered left to right (though the direction could be adapted like in certain Syriac manuscripts). The question of rhythm was entirely based on cheironomia (the interpretation of so-called great signs which derived from different chant books). These great signs (μεγάλα σημάδια) indicated well-known melodic phrases given by gestures of the choirleaders of the cathedral rite. They existed once as part of an oral tradition, developed Kondakarian notation and became, during the 13th century, integrated into Byzantine round notation as a kind of universal notation system.[8] Today the main difference between Western and Eastern neumes is that Eastern notation symbols are "differential" rather than absolute, i.e., they indicate pitch steps (rising, falling or at the same step), and the musicians know to sing, from the scale, the notes which are signified precisely, which corresponds to the Western system, where the notes are absolute, and the musicians are expected to sing, from the scale, the notes which are signified approximately, which corresponds to the Western system. For example, a similar key/signature system was published in 1997 by Kjell Gustafson, whose method represents a rhythm as a two-dimensional graph.[11] Early Europe Main article: Neume Music notation from an early 14th-century English Missal The scholar and music theorist Isidore of Seville, while writing in the early 7th century, considered that "unless sounds are held by the memory of man, they perish, because they cannot be written down." [12] By the middle of the 9th century, however, a form of neumatic notation began to develop in monasteries in Europe as a mnemonic device for Gregorian chant, using symbols known as neumes; the earliest surviving musical notation of this type is in the Musica disciplina of Aurelian of Réôme, from about 850. There are scattered survivals from the Iberian Peninsula before this time, of a type of notation known as Visigothic neumes, but its few surviving fragments have not yet been deciphered.[13] The problem with this notation was that it only showed melodic contours and consequently the music could not be read by someone who did not know the music already. Early music notation had developed far enough to notate melody, but there was still no system for notating rhythm. A mid-13th-century treatise, De Mensurabili Musica, explains a set of six rhythmic modes that were in use at the time,[14] although it is not clear how they were formed. These rhythmic modes were all in triple time and rather limited rhythm in chant to six different repeating patterns. This was a flaw seen by German music theorist Franco of Cologne and summarised as part of his treatise Ars cantus mensurabilis (the art of measured chant, or mensural notation). He suggested that individual notes could have their own rhythms represented by the shape of the note. Not until the 14th century did something like the present system of fixed note lengths arise.[citation needed] The use of regular measures (bars) became commonplace by the end of the 17th century.[citation needed] The founder of what is now considered the standard music staff was Guido d'Arezzo,[15] an Italian Benedictine monk who lived from about 991 until after 1033. He taught the use of solmization syllables based on a hymn to Saint John the Baptist, which begins Ut Queant Laxis and was written by the Lombard historian Paul the Deacon. The first stanza is: Ut queant laxis, Mira gestorum famula tuorum, Solve polluti labii reatum, Sancte Iohannes. The first syllable of each line, Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, and Si, to read notated music in terms of hexachords; they were not note names, and each could, depending on context, be applied to any note. In the 17th century, it was changed in most countries except France to the easily singable, open syllable Do, believed to have been taken either from the name of the Italian theorist Giovanni Battista Doni, or from the Latin word Dominus, meaning Lord.[16] Christian monks developed the first forms of modern European musical notation in order to standardize liturgy throughout the worldwide Church,[17] and an enormous body of religious music has been composed for it through the ages. This led directly to the emergence and development of European classical music, and its many derivatives. The Baroque style, which encompassed music, art, and architecture, was particularly encouraged by the post-Reformation Catholic Church as such forms offered a means of religious expression that was stirring and emotional, intended to stimulate religious fervor.[18] Modern staff notation Main article: List of musical symbols An example of modern musical notation: Prelude, Op. 28, No. 7, by Frédéric Chopin Play (help·info) Modern music notation is used by musicians of many different genres throughout the world. The staff (or stave, in British English) consists of 5 parallel horizontal lines which acts as a framework upon which pitches are indicated by placing oval note-heads on (ie crossing) the staff lines, between the lines (ie in the spaces) or above and below the staff using small additional lines called ledger lines. Notation is read from left to right, which makes setting music for right-to-left scripts difficult. The pitch of a note is indicated by the vertical position of the note-head within the staff, and can be modified by accidentals. The duration (note length or note value) is indicated by the form of the note-head or with the addition of a note-stem plus beams or flags. A stemless hollow oval is a whole note or semibreve, a hollow rectangle or stemless hollow oval with one or two vertical lines on both sides is a double whole note or breve. A stemmed hollow oval is a half note or minim. Solid circles are always used for notes, and can indicate quarter notes (crotchets) or with added beams or flags smaller subdivisions. Additional symbols such as dots adjust the duration of a note. A staff of written music generally begins with a clef, which indicates the pitch-range of the staff. The treble clef or G clef was originally a letter G and it identifies the second line up on the five line staff as the note G above middle C. The bass clef or F clef identifies the second line down on the note F below middle C. While the treble and bass clef are the most widely used, other clefs, which identify middle C, are used for some instruments, such as the alto clef (for viola and alto trombone) and the tenor clef (used for some cello, bassoon, tenor trombone, and double bass music). Some instruments use mainly one clef, such as violin and flute which use treble clef, and double bass and tuba which use bass clef. Some instruments, such as piano and pipe organ, regularly use both treble and bass clefs. Following the clef, the key signature is a group of from 0 to 7 sharp (♯) or flat (♭) signs placed on the staff to indicate the key of the piece or song by specifying that certain notes are sharp or flat throughout the piece, unless otherwise indicated with accidentals added before certain notes. When a flat (♭) sign is placed before a note, the pitch of the note is lowered by one semitone. Similarly, a sharp sign (♯) raises the pitch by one semitone. For example, a sharp on the note D would raise it to D♯ while a flat would lower it to D♭. Double sharps and double flats are less common, but they are used. A double sharp is placed before a note to make it two semitones higher, a double flat - two semitones lower. A natural sign placed before a note renders that note in its "natural" form, which means that any sharp or flat applied to that note from the key signature or an accidental, is cancelled. Sometimes a courtesy accidental is used in music where it is not technically required, to remind the musician of what pitch is required. Following the key signature the time signature. The time signature typically consists of two numbers, with one of the most common being 4/4. The top "4" indicates that there are four beats per measure (also called bar). The bottom "4" indicates that each of those beats are quarter notes. Measures divide the piece into groups of beats, and the time signature specifies those groupings. 4/4 is used so often that it is also called "common time", and it may be indicated with rather than numbers. Other frequently used time signatures are 3/4 (three beats per bar, with each beat being a quarter note), 2/4 (two beats per bar, with each beat being a quarter note), 6/8 (six beats per bar, with each beat being an eighth note) and 12/8 (twelve beats per bar, with each beat being an eighth note); in practice, the eighth notes are typically put into four groups of three eighth notes. 12/8 is a compound time type of time signature). Many other time signatures exist, such as 3/8, 5/4, 7/4, 9/8, and so on. Many short classical music pieces from the classical era and songs from traditional music and popular music are one time signature for much or all of the piece. Music from the Romantic music era and later, particularly contemporary classical music and rock music genres such as progressive rock and the hardcore punk subgenre moshcore, may use mixed meter; songs or pieces change from one meter to another, for example alternating between bars of 5/4 and 7/8. Directions to the player regarding matters such as tempo (e.g., Allegro, Andante, Largo, Vif, Lent, Modérément, Presto, etc.), dynamics (pianissimo, pianissimo, piano, mezzopiano, mezzoforte, forte, fortissimo, fortississimo, etc.) appear above or below the staff. Terms indicating the musical expression or "feel" to a song or piece are indicated at the beginning of the piece and at any points where the mood changes (e.g., "Slow March", "Fast Swing", "Medium Blues", "Fogueux", "Feierlich", "Gelassen", "Piacevole", "Con slancio", "Majestic", "Hostile", etc.) For vocal music, lyrics are written near the pitches of the melody. For short pauses (breaths), retakes (retakes are indicated with a ♯ mark) are added. In music for ensembles, a "score" shows music for all players together, with the staves for the different instruments and/or voices stacked vertically. The conductor uses the score while leading an orchestra, concert band, choir or other large ensemble. Individual performers in an ensemble play from "parts" which contain only the music played by an individual musician. A score can be constructed from a complete set of parts and vice versa. The process was laborious and time consuming when parts were hand-copied from the score, but since the development of scorewriter computer software in the 1980s, a score stored electronically can have parts automatically prepared by the program and quickly and inexpensively printed out using a computer printer. Variations on staff notation A lead sheet A chord chart. Play (help·info) Percussion notation conventions are varied because of the wide range of percussion instruments. Percussion instruments are generally grouped into two categories: pitched (e.g. glockenspiel or tubular bells) and non-pitched (e.g. bass drum and snare drum). The notation of non-pitched percussion instruments is less standardized. Pitched instruments use standard Western classical notation for the pitches and rhythms. In general, notation for unpitched percussion uses the five line staff, with different lines and spaces representing different drum kit instruments. Standard Western rhythmic notation is used to indicate the rhythm. Figure bass notation originated in Baroque basso continuo parts. It is also used extensively in accordian notation. The bass notes of the music are conventionally notated, along with numbers and other signs that determine which chords the harpsichordist, organist or lutenist should improvise. It does not, however, specify the exact pitches of the harmony, leaving that to the performer to improvise. A lead sheet specifies only the melody, lyrics and harmony, using one staff with chord symbols placed above and lyrics below. It is used to capture the essential elements of a popular song without specifying how the song should be arranged or performed. A chord chart or "chart" contains little or no melodic or voice-leading information at all, but provides basic harmonic information about the chord progression. Some chord charts also contain rhythmic information, indicated using slash notation for full beats and rhythmic notation for rhythms. This is the most common kind of written music used by professional session musicians playing jazz or other forms of popular music and is intended primarily for the rhythm section (usually containing piano, guitar, bass and drums). Simpler chord charts for songs may contain only the chord changes, placed above the lyrics where they occur. Such charts depend on prior knowledge of the melody, and are used as reminders in performance or informal group singing. Some chord charts intended for rhythm section accompanists contain only the chord progression. The shape note system is found in some church hymnals, sheet music, and song books, especially in the Southern United States. Instead of the customary elliptical note head, note heads of various shapes are used to show the position of the note on the vocal scale. Sacred Harp is one of the most popular tune books using shape notes. In various countries, Korea, Jeonggango musical notation system (Jeonggango is a unique traditional musical notation system created during the time of Sejong the Great that was the first East Asian system to represent rhythm, pitch, and time.[19][20] Among various kinds of Korean traditional music, Jeong-gan-bo targets a particular genre, Jeong-gak (正歌). Jeong-gan-bo tells the pitch by writing the pitch's name down in a box called 'jeong-gan' (this is where the name comes from). One jeong-gan is one beat each, and it can be split into two, three or more to hold half beats and quarter beats, and more. This makes it easy for the reader to figure out the beat. Also, there are many markings indicating things such as ornaments. Most of these were later created by Ki-su Kim. India Main article: Swaralipi Indian music, early 20th century. The Samavedya text (1200 BC - 1000 BC) contained notes, melodies, and these are probably the world's oldest surviving ones.[21] The musical notation is written usually immediately above, sometimes within, the line of Samavedya text, either in syllabic or a numerical form depending on the Samavedic Sakha (school).[22] The Indian scholar and musical theorist Pingala (c. 200 BC), in his Chanda Sutra, used marks indicating long and short syllables to indicate meters in Sanskrit poetry. A rock inscription from circa 7th–8th century CE at Kudemuniyannalai, Tamil Nadu contains an early example of a musical notation. It was first identified and published by archaeologist/epigraphist D. R. Bhandarkar.[23] Written in the Pallava-grantha script of the 7th century, it contains 38 horizontal lines of notations inscribed on a rectangular rock face (dimension of around 13 by 14 feet). Each line of the notation contains 64 characters (characters representing musical notes), written in a banner notation. The notation of the Chinese Gungche system of musical notation, which began in the 13th century, is similar to the Indian notation, with little indicating its musical "mode". These modes may have been popular at least from the 6th century CE and were incorporated into the Indian 'raga' system that developed later. But some of the unusual features seen in this notation have been given several non-conclusive interpretations by scholars.[24] In the notation of Indian rāga, a soľe-ga-lke system called sargam is used. As in Western soľe-ga, there are names for the seven basic pitches of a major scale (Shadja, Rishabha, Gandharva, Madhyama, Panchama, Dhavata and Nishada, usually shortened to Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni). The tonic of any scale is named Sa, and the dominant Pa. Sa is fixed in any scale, and Pa is fixed at a fifth above it (a Pythagorean fifth rather than an equal-tempered fifth). These two notes are known as achala svar ("fixed notes"). Re, Ga, Ma, Dha and Ni, can take a "regular" (shuddha) pitch, which is equivalent to its pitch in a standard major scale (thus, shuddha Re, the second degree of the scale, is a whole-step higher than Sa), or an altered pitch, either a half-step above or half-step below the shuddha pitch. Re, Ga, Dha and Ni all have altered partners that are a half-step lower (Komal-"flat") (thus, komal Re is a half-step higher than Sa). Ma has an altered partner that is a half-step higher (teevra-"sharp") (thus, tivra Ma is an augmented fourth above Sa). Re, Ga, Ma, Dha and Ni are called vikrut svar ("movable notes"). In the written system of Indian notation devised by Ravi Shankar, the pitches are represented by Western letters. Capital letters are used for the achala svar, and for the higher variety of all the vikrut svar. Lowercase letters are used for the lower variety of the vikrut svar. Other systems exist for non-twelve-tone equal temperament and non-Western music, such as the Indian Swaralipi. Russia Further information: Znamenny chant An example of Znamenny notation with so-called "red marks", Russia, 1894. "Thy Cross we honour, oh Lord, and Thy Holy Resurrection we praise." Hand-drawn lubok featuring "hook and banner notation" Znamenny Chant in the Russian Orthodox Church which uses a "hook and banner" notation. Znamenny Chant is unique, melismatic liturgical singing that has its own specific notation, called the stoly notation. The symbols used in the stoly notation are called kryuki (Russian: крюки, "hooks" or znameny (Russian: знамена, "signs"). Often the names of the signs are used to refer to the stoly notation. Znamenny melodies are a part of a system, consisting of Eight Modes (intonation structures, called glas); the melodies are characterized by fluency and well-balancedness (Kholopov 2003, 192). There exist several types of Znamenny Chant: the so-called Stolpovy, Malý (Little) and Bolshoy (Great) Znamenny Chant. Ruthenian Chant (Prostopinje) is sometimes considered a sub-division of the Znamenny Chant tradition, with the Muscovite Chant (Znamenny Chant proper) being the second branch of the same musical continuum. Znamenny Chants are not written with notes (the so-called linear notation), but with special signs, called Znamena (Russian for "marks", "banners") or Kryuki ("hooks"), as some shapes of these signs resemble hooks. Each sign may include the following components: a large black hook or a black stroke, several smaller black 'points' and 'commas' and lines near the hook or crossing the hook. Some signs may mean only one note, some 2 to 4 notes, and some a whole melody of more than 10 notes with a complicated rhythmic structure. The stoly notation was developed in Kievan Rus' as an East Slavic refinement of the Byzantine neumatic musical notation. The most notable feature of this notation system is that it records transitions of the melody, rather than notes. The signs also represent a mood and a gradation of how this part of melody is to be sung (tempo, strength, devotion, meekness, etc.) Every sign has its own name and also features as a spiritual symbol. For example, there is a specific sign, called "little dove" (Russian: голубчик (golubhik)), which represents two rising sounds, but which is also a symbol of the Holy Ghost. Gradually the system became more and more complicated. This system was also ambiguous, so that almost no one, except the most trained and educated singers, could sing an unknown melody at sight. The signs only helped to reproduce the melody, not coding it in an unambiguous way. (See Byzantine Empire) China Main article: Gongche notation The Gongche notation system of musical notation, which began in the 13th century, is similar to the Indian notation, with little indicating its musical "mode". These modes may have been popular at least from the 6th century CE and were incorporated into the Indian 'raga' system that developed later. 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