



SAINT AGNES
CATHOLIC CHURCH



Choir Handbook 2015-2016

Saint Angles Ensemble Choir
Richard Lolich, Director

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September 2015

Welcome to a new music season at Saint Agnes! We will continue growing as a choir and as a music ministry at large, in song and fellowship, working toward our goal to use our music to pray and to help others to pray.

This handbook will explain some general thoughts, requirements, expectations, and goals for the year ahead. In the back of the handbook, you will find helpful resources for singers.

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this preeminence is that, as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963)

God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song. God dwells within each human person, in the place where music takes its source. Indeed, God, the giver of song, is present whenever his people sing his praises.
- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (2007)

Of all the sounds of which human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are capable, voice is the most privileged and fundamental. Musical instruments in the liturgy are best understood as an extension of and support to the primary liturgical instrument, which is the human voice.
- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (2007)

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
- Matthew 26:30

And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
- Colossians 4:15-16



Goals

- Develop and foster musical skills, including sight-singing, vocal training, ear training, hymn singing, and unison singing
- Grow our choir by welcoming new members
- Increase the choral repertoire of the program, including purchasing new pieces for the library
- Foster prayer and participation in sung liturgy



Members

The Saint Anges Ensemble sings for the 9:00 AM Mass each Sunday. Rehearsals are every Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM in the lower church. All are welcome. Bring your spouse, children, and friends. The ability to read music is not required but is helpful. Those in the parish wishing to join the choir seasonally for Christmas or Easter should contact the director as rehearsals for each season are scheduled (announced on the parish website, Music Ministry blog, in the bulletin and weekly e-newsletter).

Attendance

Consistent attendance is necessary to build the choir community and to develop the sound and musicianship of the ensemble. As a norm, attendance at weekly practice is your ticket to sing on Sunday morning. Regular attendance at Mass is also expected.

From time to time, occasions will arise that will prevent rehearsal or Mass attendance. In such situations, please contact the director as soon as possible via e-mail or phone.

A calendar is posted in the Music Room to mark expected absences.

The choir season will run from **Wednesday, September 9, 2015** until **Sunday, May 29, 2016** (Body and Blood of Christ). Rehearsals will end on **Wednesday, May 25, 2016**.



Rehearsals

Regular choir rehearsals are held on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 - 9:00 PM in the lower church, beginning on **Wednesday, September 9, 2015**. Rehearsals begin promptly at 7:30 PM with a vocal warm-up. Please be punctual and prepared. It is highly encouraged that you arrive a few minutes early so that you will be ready when rehearsal starts. Please have a pencil (or two, so you can share!) ready at each rehearsal. Make marks and notes in your music (octavo, hymnal, etc.) in pencil only.

Extra rehearsals may be added in preparation for Christmas, the Triduum, or other special events. Times and locations for additional rehearsals will be announced as needed.

If you know you will not be present for a rehearsal, please contact the director so he can plan accordingly.

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Liturgy

The Saint Agnes Ensemble normally sings at the 9:00 AM Mass each Sunday. There is a brief rehearsal at 8:15 AM in the lower church each week.

In addition to regular Sunday Masses, the Saint Agnes Ensemble, along with the Parish Choir, sings at other parish liturgies:

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Confirmation | Friday, October 16, 2015 | 7:30 PM Mass; call time 6:45 PM |
| All Souls (Parish Memorial Mass) | TBD | TBD |
| Thanksgiving | Thursday, November 26, 2015 | 10:00 AM Mass; call time 9:15 AM |
| Advent Lessons and Carols | Sunday, December 6, 2015 | 7:00 PM service; call time 6:00 PM |
| Immaculate Conception BVM | Tuesday, December 8, 2015 | 7:30 PM Mass; call time 6:45 PM |
| Christmas Eve | Thursday, December 24, 2015 | 5:00 PM Mass; call time 3:15 PM |
| Christmas Day | Friday, December 25, 2015 | 9:00 AM Mass; call time 8:15 AM |
| Ash Wednesday | Wednesday, February 10, 2016 | 7:30 PM Mass; call time 6:45 PM |
| Holy Thursday | Thursday, March 24, 2016 | 7:30 PM Mass; call time 6:45 PM |
| Good Friday | Friday, March 25, 2016 | 3:00 PM liturgy; call time 2:15 PM |
| Easter Vigil | Saturday, March 26, 2016 | 8:30 PM Mass; call time 7:30 PM |
| Easter | Sunday, March 27, 2016 | 9:00 AM Mass; call time 8:00 AM |



Music

The Saint Agnes music ministry presents a diverse musical program, incorporating music from many different genres and styles, spanning from Gregorian Chant to newly composed music. Saint Agnes has a large music library allowing for flexibility in music selection and room for growth. Through purchases of new music and further exploration of the current library, the Saint Agnes Ensemble aims to expand its repertoire.



Inclement Weather

In the case of bad weather, especially during the winter season, rehearsal will automatically be canceled if Arlington County Public Schools close for the day or have canceled afternoon/evening activities. The Director may choose to cancel rehearsal even if the school systems have not closed. An e-mail or phone call will be sent out no later than 4:00 PM regarding rehearsal status. Safety is the highest priority.



Blog and Social Media

Blog: In addition to regular e-mail communication, information about the choir, upcoming repertoire, important feasts, etc. will be posted on the Saint Agnes Parish Choir blog, www.saintagnesmusic.weebly.com. Included on the blog will be recordings of repertoire, part-learning mp3 files, short blog posts about music and liturgy, and links to helpful resources.

Facebook: Friend us on Facebook to stay connected with your Music Ministry!



SaintAgnes MusicMinistry



Resources

The following pages contain helpful resources for basic music theory, vocal production, liturgy, and prayers for musicians.

CARE OF THE HUMAN VOICE

Of all musicians, singers are the ones whose instrument is a part of the body and not an external contraption of metal or wood. Any instrument needs good care and regular preventative maintenance; the vocal instrument is no exception. Complicating this issue is the reality that we cannot easily examine the inner workings of the instrument for stress or damage; all we can do is evaluate based on how we feel at any given moment. Medications to treat bodily illness, effective as they may be for their intended purpose, sometimes have a negative effect on the voice itself. Therefore preventative maintenance is by far the best route to pursue - take care of your body, head to toe, and your vocal instrument will in most cases take care of itself. You have doubtless heard it before, many times: Eat a sensible and balanced diet, and avoid excessive caffeine, refined sugars and starches, and alcohol. Exercise regularly. Get plenty of rest. Avoid stress. Mental and emotional anxieties have profound and immediate effects on the body in general and tend to manifest very quickly in the voice and throat. Be aware of how you use your voice in non-singing situations. The best vocal singing technique can be completely undone by abuse of the vocal cords and poor vocal speaking technique. Above all, stay well hydrated, all the time, not just when you are singing. It cannot be stressed too much: You cannot care for your voice without caring for your whole self.

Jennifer Kerr Breedlove and Paul Turner. *Guide for Cantors*, 2 ed. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications: 2014. p. 40-41.



THE ROLE OF CHOIRS IN LITURGY

E. The Choir

28. The Second Vatican Council stated emphatically that choirs must be diligently promoted while ensuring that “the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs. . . .”⁴¹ The choir must not minimize the musical participation of the faithful. The congregation commonly sings unison melodies, which are more suitable for generally unrehearsed community singing. This is the primary song of the Liturgy. Choirs and ensembles, on the other hand, comprise persons drawn from the community who possess the requisite musical skills and a commitment to the established schedule of rehearsals and Liturgies. Thus, they are able to enrich the celebration by adding musical elements beyond the capabilities of the congregation alone.

29. Choirs (and ensembles—another form of choir that commonly includes a combination of singers and instrumentalists) exercise their ministry in various ways. An important ministerial role of the choir or ensemble is to sing various parts of the Mass in dialogue or alternation with the congregation. Some parts of the Mass that have the character of a litany, such as the Kyrie and the Agnus Dei, are clearly intended to be sung in this manner. Other Mass parts may also be sung in dialogue or alternation, especially the Gloria, the Creed, and the three processional songs: the Entrance, the Preparation of the Gifts, and Communion. This approach often takes the form of a congregational refrain with verses sung by the choir. Choirs may also enrich congregational singing by adding harmonies and descants.

30. At times, the choir performs its ministry by singing alone. The choir may draw on the treasury of sacred music, singing compositions by composers of various periods and in various musical styles, as well as music that expresses the faith of the various cultures that enrich the Church. Appropriate times where the choir might commonly sing alone include a prelude before Mass, the Entrance chant, the Preparation of the Gifts, during the Communion procession or after the reception of Communion, and the recessional. Other appropriate examples are given in the section of this document entitled “Music and the Structure of the Mass” (nos. 137-199). The music of the choir must always be appropriate to the Liturgy, either by being a proper liturgical text or by expressing themes appropriate to the Liturgy.

31. When the choir is not exercising its particular role, it joins the congregation in song. The choir’s role in this case is not to lead congregational singing, but to sing with the congregation, which sings on its own or under the leadership of the organ or other instruments.

32. Choir members, like all liturgical ministers, should exercise their ministry with evident faith and should participate in the entire liturgical celebration, recognizing that they are servants of the Liturgy and members of the gathered assembly.

33. Choir and ensemble members may dress in albs or choir robes, but always in clean, presentable, and modest clothing. Cassock and surplice, being clerical attire, are not recommended as choir vesture.

41. SC, no. 114.

A Singer's Prayer

Everlasting Father,
in the beginning your Word brought forth life
and called us into being.

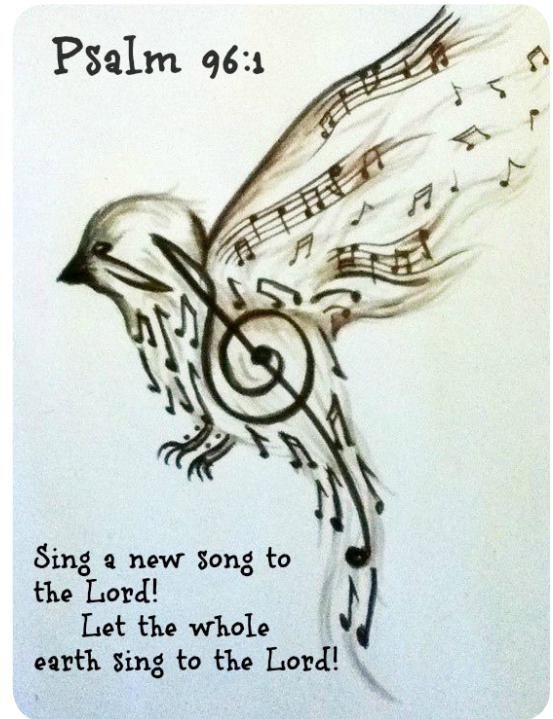
In the fullness of time,
Jesus, your Son, became flesh and lived among us.

In the upper room, after the meal,
He and his apostles sang a hymn
before their journey to the Mount of Olives.

In an act of everlasting love
He opened his arms on the cross
and by his death,
He intoned the primordial song of the liturgy,
the canticle of victory over sin and death.

Lord, you dwell in each human person
in the place where music takes its source.

Open my lips,
that my mouth may declare your praise.
Open my ears,
that I may know the song of your people.
Open my heart and strengthen my mind,
that I may live in the holy words we sing. Amen.



adapted from *The New St. Joseph Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word*
(New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 2003) p 6; and
Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, USCCB 2007.

Bach

gave us God's word.

Mozart

gave us God's laughter.

Beethoven

gave us God's fire.

God

*gave us Music that we might
pray without words.*

From a German Opera House

Prayer of Preparation

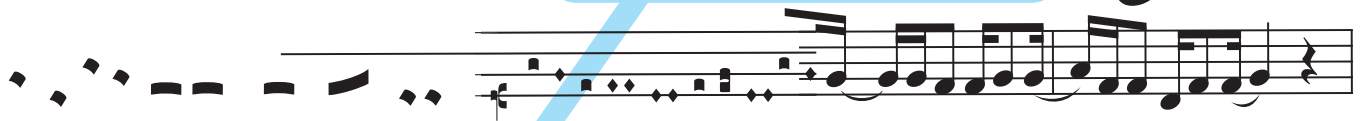
God, the maker of all that is,
of all that can be seen,
of all that can be heard,
hear the prayer of your people,
and make our voices resound
with your praises,
that they might please you
with words and melodies
that seek to show the wonder that is you.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Guide for Cantors, Second Edition, p. 22

Notation: Pitch

MUSIC NOTATION IS THE ART OF RECORDING MUSIC IN WRITTEN FORM.



MODERN MUSIC NOTATION IS A PRODUCT OF **CENTURIES** OF TRANSFORMATION... AND IT IS NEITHER **EFFICIENT** NOR **INTUITIVE!**

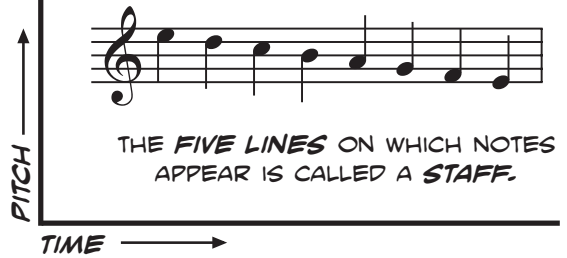
PITCH IS THE HIGHNESS OR LOWNESS OF A SOUND.

FOR EXAMPLE, A **FLUTE** HAS A **HIGH PITCH**, WHILE A **TUBA** HAS A **LOW PITCH**.

A **NOTE** IS A **WRITTEN REPRESENTATION** OF A PARTICULAR **PITCH**.



THE SYSTEM OF MUSICAL NOTATION WE USE IS ESSENTIALLY A **STYLIZED GRAPH** OF **PITCH** VERSUS **TIME**.



THE **FIVE LINES** ON WHICH NOTES APPEAR IS CALLED A **STAFF**.

NOTATION IS BASED ON THE **PIANO KEYBOARD**; **LINE**S AND **SPACE**S ON THE STAFF REPRESENT THE **WHITE NOTES** ON THE KEYBOARD.



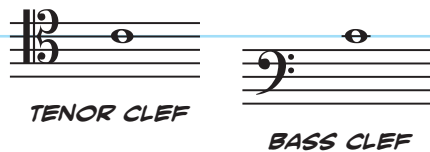
THE **WHITE NOTES** ON THE KEYBOARD ARE LABELED WITH LETTERS FROM **A** TO **G**.

TO DISPLAY NOTES **OUTSIDE** THE STAFF, WE USE **SHORTENED** STAFF LINES CALLED **LEDGER LINES**.



TREBLE CLEF

ALTO CLEF



TENOR CLEF

BASS CLEF

THE **CLEF** DETERMINES WHAT NOTES EACH STAFF LINE CORRESPONDS TO. THE **FOUR MODERN CLEFS** ARE SHOWN HERE; THE NOTE DISPLAYED ON EACH STAFF CORRESPONDS TO **MIDDLE C**.

MIDDLE C IS THE **C** THAT IS CLOSEST TO THE **MIDDLE** OF THE PIANO KEYBOARD.

TO NOTATE THE **BLACK NOTES** ON THE PIANO KEYBOARD, WE USE **ACCIDENTALS**, WHICH ALTER THE NOTE BY ONE OR TWO **HALF STEPS**.

A **HALF STEP** IS THE DISTANCE BETWEEN **TWO ADJACENT KEYS** ON THE PIANO KEYBOARD, REGARDLESS OF WHAT **COLOR** THE KEYS ARE.



THE **DOUBLE SHARP** RAISES THE NOTE BY TWO HALF STEPS.



THE **SHARP** RAISES THE NOTE BY ONE HALF STEP.



THE **NATURAL** CANCELS OUT ANY PREVIOUS ACCIDENTAL.

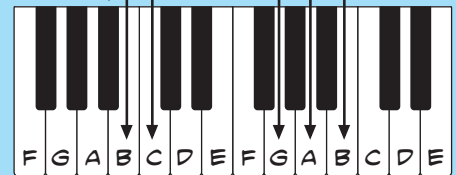


THE **FLAT** LOWERS THE NOTE BY ONE HALF STEP.



THE **DOUBLE FLAT** LOWERS THE NOTE BY TWO HALF STEPS.

THESE SYMBOLS ARE PLACED TO THE **LEFT** OF THE NOTE THAT THEY AFFECT, AND THEY APPLY TO ALL THE NOTES ON THAT LINE OR SPACE FOR THE REST OF THE MEASURE.



TWO **NOTES** WHICH HAVE THE SAME **PITCH** (FOR EXAMPLE, **F SHARP** AND **G FLAT**) ARE CALLED **ENHARMONICS**.

Notation: Rhythm

WHILE PITCH IS PRETTY CLEARLY NOTATED ON A VERTICAL AXIS, **NOTE LENGTH** IS INDICATED USING A SOMEWHAT ARCANE SYSTEM INVOLVING **NOTEHEADS, STEMS AND FLAGS**.

DOUBLE WHOLE NOTE



WHOLE NOTE



HALF NOTE



QUARTER NOTE



EIGHTH NOTE



SIXTEENTH NOTE



THIRTY-SECOND NOTE



SIXTY-FOURTH NOTE



ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-EIGHTH NOTE



IN THIS CHART, EACH SUCCESSIVE TYPE OF NOTE IS **HALF AS LONG** AS THE NOTE TO ITS LEFT. NONE OF THESE NOTES HAS A **STANDARD LENGTH**; A HALF NOTE IN ONE PIECE MAY BE THE SAME LENGTH AS AN EIGHTH NOTE IN A DIFFERENT PIECE.

NOTE LENGTHS IN A PIECE ARE INDICATED BY THE **TEMPO MARKING** AT THE BEGINNING OF A PIECE OR SECTION.

DOUBLE WHOLE REST



WHOLE REST



HALF REST



QUARTER REST



EIGHTH REST



SIXTEENTH REST



THIRTY-SECOND REST



SIXTY-FOURTH REST



ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-EIGHTH REST



A **REST** IS A PERIOD OF **SILENCE** THAT A LENGTH WHICH CORRESPONDS TO A PARTICULAR NOTE.



USUALLY RESTS ARE PLACED ON THE STAFF AT A PARTICULAR VERTICAL POSITION AS SHOWN HERE.

THE **AUGMENTATION DOT** IS A DOT PLACED TO THE RIGHT OF A NOTEHEAD. THOUGH SMALL, THIS DOT WIELDS SOME **SERIOUS POWER**: IT ADDS HALF OF THE ORIGINAL NOTE'S LENGTH!

MULTIPLE DOTS CAN ALSO BE ADDED, EACH ONE ADDING HALF OF THE PREVIOUSLY ADDED VALUE.



ACK! GET IT OFF! GET IT OFF!

TIES ARE CURVED MARKS WHICH CONNECT TWO NOTES TOGETHER TO CREATE A **SINGLE, EXTENDED SOUND**.

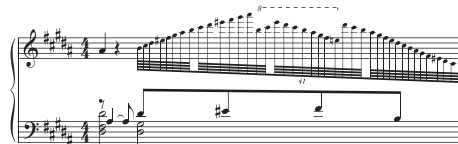
TO TIE **MORE THAN TWO** NOTES TOGETHER, DRAW TIES BETWEEN **EACH NOTE**; DO NOT USE A SINGLE, EXTENDED TIE.



A **TUPLET** IS ANY NON-STANDARD DIVISION OF A NOTE. THESE ARE USUALLY WRITTEN AS A GROUP OF NOTES DELINEATED WITH A **BRACKET** AND A **NUMBER** SHOWING THE DIVISION BEING MADE.

MOST TUPLETS ARE SIMPLE DIVISIONS, LIKE THE **TRIPLETS** TO THE LEFT. BUT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE! **CHOPIN**, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD OFTEN **GO TO TOWN** WITH THESE THINGS.

FOR EXAMPLE, THESE AREN'T EXACTLY **QUARTER NOTES**; THEY ARE EACH A **THIRD** AS LONG AS A **HALF NOTE**.



WHA... GAH! CHOPIN, NO! DOWN, BOY!

Notation: Meter

A FUNDAMENTAL FEATURE OF MOST PIECES OF MUSIC IS A **CONSISTENT RHYTHMIC PULSE.**

THIS PULSE IS CALLED THE **BEAT**, AND A SINGLE PULSE IS CALLED A **BEAT UNIT.**

THERE ARE **TWO** TYPES OF BEAT UNITS: THOSE CONTAINING **TWO DIVISIONS**, CALLED **SIMPLE** BEAT UNITS...



...AND THOSE CONTAINING **THREE DIVISIONS**, CALLED **COMPOUND** BEAT UNITS.



IN MUSIC, BEATS ARE ORGANIZED INTO PATTERNS OF **ACCENTED** AND **UNACCENTED** BEAT UNITS. IN FACT, IF YOU LISTEN TO A SEQUENCE OF REPEATED NOTES, YOUR BRAIN WILL PROBABLY START TO PERCEIVE THE NOTES AS GROUPS OF **TWO, THREE, OR FOUR**, EVEN IF NO ACCENTS ARE PRESENT!



THESE GROUPS ARE CALLED **MEASURES**, AND THEY ARE DELINEATED WITH **BARLINES.**

BARLINE

MEASURE

THE ORGANIZATION OF BEAT UNITS AND MEASURES IN A PIECE IS CALLED **METER.** METER IS DESCRIBED BY TWO NUMBERS PLACED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PIECE: THE **TIME SIGNATURE.**

SIMPLE TIME SIGNATURES ARE EASY.

3
4

THE TOP NUMBER INDICATES THE **NUMBER OF BEATS** IN A MEASURE.

THE BOTTOM NUMBER INDICATES THE **TYPE OF NOTE** WHICH SERVES AS THE **BEAT UNIT.**



THE CODE FOR THE BOTTOM NOTE IS PRETTY EASY: 4 REFERS TO A QUARTER NOTE, 8 TO AN EIGHTH NOTE, 16 TO A SIXTEENTH NOTE, AND SO ON.

COMPOUND TIME SIGNATURES ARE KIND OF LYING TO YOU.

6
8

THE TOP NUMBER INDICATES THE **NUMBER OF DIVISIONS** IN A MEASURE. TO GET THE NUMBER OF BEATS, DIVIDE IT BY **THREE.**

THE BOTTOM NUMBER INDICATES THE **TYPE OF NOTE** WHICH SERVES AS THE **DIVISION.** TO GET THE **BEAT UNIT**, USE THE NOTE THAT IS EQUAL TO **THREE** OF THESE NOTES. IN A COMPOUND METER, THE BEAT UNIT IS ALWAYS A **DOTTED NOTE!**

2



IN FACT, WOULDN'T THIS BE AN EASIER WAY TO NOTATE **COMPOUND METERS?**

SORRY... THE MAN SAYS YOU HAVE TO DO IT THE **OTHER WAY.**



BY LOOKING AT THE **TOP NUMBER** OF THE TIME SIGNATURE, YOU CAN TELL **TWO** THINGS ABOUT THE METER: WHETHER IT'S **SIMPLE** OR **COMPOUND**, AND HOW MANY **BEATS** ARE IN A **MEASURE.**

| | SIMPLE | COMPOUND |
|---|--------|----------|
| 2 | 2 | 6 |
| 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 4 | 4 | 12 |

NOTES THAT HAVE **FLAGS** CAN BE GROUPED TOGETHER BY USING **BEAMS** IN PLACE OF FLAGS.



HOWEVER, BEAMING IS ONLY USED TO GROUP NOTES **WITHIN BEATS.** FOR THE MOST PART, YOU SHOULDN'T **BEAM** NOTES **BETWEEN BEATS**, NOR SHOULD YOU **TIE** NOTES **WITHIN BEATS.**

