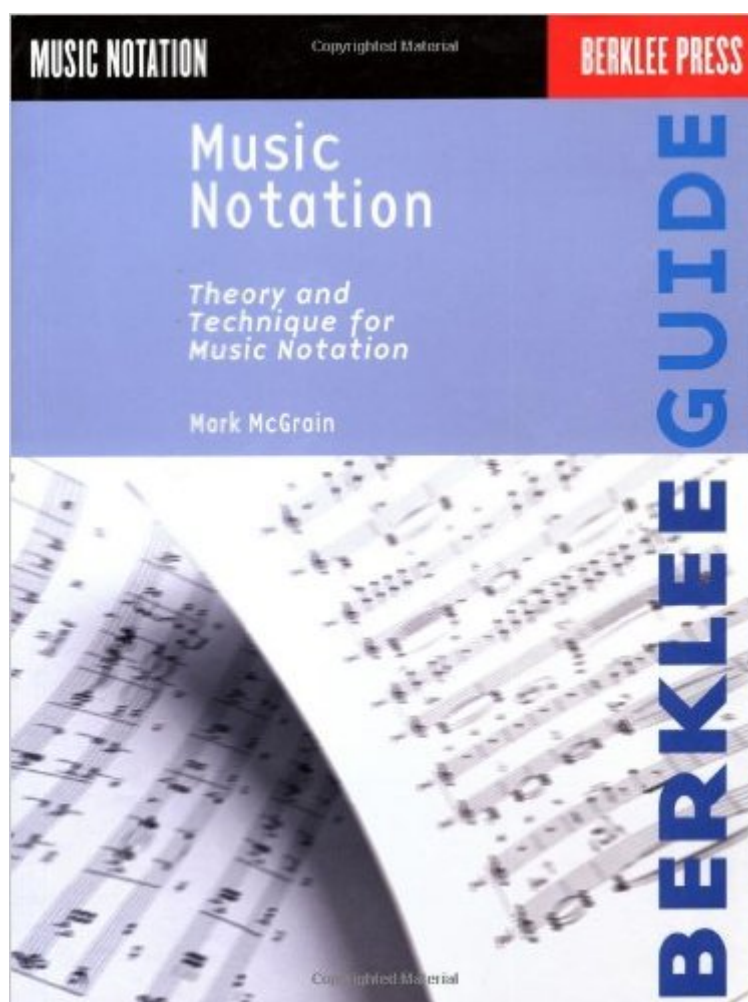


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# Music Notation (Berklee Guide)



## Synopsis

(Berklee Methods). Learn the essentials of music notation, from fundamental pitch and rhythm placement to intricate meter and voicing alignments. This book also covers the correct way to subdivide rhythms and notate complex articulations and dynamics. An excellent resource for both written and computer notation software!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this age of notation software, MIDI event views and direct wave editing, it's reasonable to ask: Is writing music manuscript by hand an archaic, dying art? I like to think not, though I have no illusions about the generation raised with electronic memo pads in their back pockets where I once carried a small spiral one. Call me old-fashioned but the image of someone whipping out a piece of manuscript at a rehearsal or in between sets and suddenly scribbling down an idea for a harmony part or an extended jam interlude is just too familiar. When I'm writing something, with or without an instrument in hand, I find the less I have to "operate" as in clicking mouse buttons or touch pens the less distracted I am. Call it left brain intruding on right brain or whatever, we all have to find our own working path. Mark McGrain's "Music Notation" was written before such electronic possibilities became widespread, when communicating written musical ideas accurately and efficiently demanded correct and legible notation skills. I'd argue it's still a valuable skill to have and this book lays out the principles in a thorough, progressive way, requiring little more than manuscript paper,

pencil and straightedge. Unlike that other notation classic "The Art of Music Copying" by Clinton Roemer, McGrain's book is geared not towards teaching you to be a professional "ink" music copyist for which, frankly, job opportunities are likely non-existent. Rather McGrain views notation skills as a valuable part of musicianship, whether in the context of studying, performing, arranging or composing. Being a Berklee book, it's geared towards jazz instrumentation. I'd recommend Gardner Read if you're searching for a classical text, particularly 20th century techniques. McGrain begins with rhythmic subdivisions and pitch notation within what he calls the notational grid. He combines micro-detail (how to draw note ovals and stems) with the larger context of spacing and beaming notes in bars to achieve a uniform appearance across the score page. Articulation and phrasing markings, tempo, divisi parts, everything you might encounter on a jazz orchestral (and frankly, quite a lot of classical scores) is not just covered, but explained. And that's a key part of the justification here: notation software often provides you with a "how to" but often neglects the "why to", many times forcing you into a particular formatting that's counter intuitive to the way you conceptualize the music. Yes, you can often jump through hoops to get the notes precisely the way you want them, but without the knowledge of why particular conventions are used, it's easy to blindly (blandly?) accept an often compromised solution. Years ago there was an exhibit called "Settling New Scores" in New York at the Frick Library. It included a gallery of music manuscripts from a variety of 20th century composers. The sheer beauty, variety, and personality that came through those pages was as impressive as any "visual art" show I'd been to. Sure, music will always be first and foremost about the ear; but as they say on the Food Network, "Presentation counts".

I was first introduced to this well laid out text as a student at Berklee. I found the step by step guidelines to be very helpful. Mark guides the reader through the process of drawing each notation symbol with a no-nonsense easy to follow approach. Each chapter concludes with a comprehensive exercise sheet. I continue to use the book as a reference text everyday.

Mark McGrain's book is the ideal reference for the musician needing access to the rules of standard musical notation in exact detail. McGrain thoroughly describes the fundamentals of contemporary notation, progressing carefully from the basics into advanced techniques, giving helpful and well-chosen illustrations of every rule along the way. Most critically, the hierarchy of rules and exceptions is laid out in plain English: this is as easy to follow as it gets. Topics covered include: clefs, note-heads, rests, stem length/direction, the logic of accidentals, barlines, time signatures, tempo markings, flags and beams, placement of ties, holds and pauses, repeats, chord symbols,

divisi parts, dynamic markings, articulation marks, ornaments, score layout, instrumental transpositions, and then some. The table of contents is nicely organized so as to allow one to quickly & easily find a specific rule in question while one is writing. This is the kind of guide we expect to be logical, consistent, thorough, and concise, so that our creativity doesn't get delayed by technical questions for too long; this book succeeds admirably on all counts. Indispensable for the working composer/musician. Highly recommended for its practical utility.

This is one of those books you wish you came across twenty years earlier. I am not a professionally trained musician, but have been playing music for nearly 28 years, now, and reading (but not writing) music for the past 15 years. Just like a semi-literate native language speaker who kind of knows what's right and wrong by intuition, but still makes a lot of grammar and style mistakes when writing, I found that I could distinguish well written music from that poorly written, but couldn't tell you why. Recently I was faced with learning five or six tunes and had to make charts for them. Enter this book. It's as thorough a grounding that you will get in terms of the grammar of writing music. The philosophy is that written music is a graphical language, with agreed upon grammar, style, and usage. These rules are spelled out wonderfully in this text, and ample examples of both good and bad practices are shown. Having used the book as a guide in preparing these recent charts, I have noticed an immediate improvement in my copying skills. Highly recommended to both students and professionals alike.

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