

Chapter 14

Word Sign Expressions

In Chapter 11 you learned that the word sign (dots 345) is used to enclose rehearsal letters above the marginal measure numbers of segments in single-line instrumental format. Now you will learn many other uses for this ingenious sign.

14.1 The Word Sign within Music

In print, dynamics and words of expression are written above or below the music staff. In braille, these expressions are included within the music line, preceding the music that is affected.

The word sign alerts the braille reader to the presence of literary characters in the music. This can be a single letter representing a dynamic, or an abbreviation, or several words of expression. When correctly brailled, the word sign provides excellent guidance for the braille reader so that there is never any doubt about whether the braille characters are literary or musical.

The first note after a word-sign expression must always have an octave mark. This mark is crucial in helping to terminate the effect of the word sign.

14.2 Abbreviations and Single-Word Expressions

Abbreviations for dynamics, such as "p" for *piano* and "f" for *forte*, are brailled without intervening spaces at the appropriate point in the music. The word sign introduces the letters of the abbreviation. The first note after the expression must have an octave mark.

Example 14.2.1

The image shows a musical staff in 3/4 time with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of the following notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). Dynamics are indicated as *p* (piano) under the first note, *mp* (mezzo-piano) under the fifth note, and *f* (forte) under the eighth note. Below the staff is the Braille notation for this music. The Braille includes word signs for *p*, *mp*, and *f*, each followed by a dot 3 separator and the corresponding musical notes.

These abbreviations must be followed by a dot 3 separator if the expression is immediately followed by an accidental or any music sign that contains dots 1, 2, or 3.

Example 14.2.2

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (half). Dynamics are indicated as *f* under the first measure, *p* under the eighth measure, and *fp* under the final measure. Below the staff is a line of Braille notation corresponding to the notes and dynamics.

If written out in full, the dynamics "crescendo," "decrescendo," and "diminuendo" are brailled in full. If abbreviated in print, these words are always spelled as follows and ended with a dot 3 period.

- cr. = cresc.
- decr. = decresc.
- dim. = dimin.

These abbreviations are preceded by the word sign and are brailled in the music line wherever they occur. The dot 3 period serves as a "separator" before the music code resumes. The first note must have an octave sign. Refer to MBC-2015, Table 22 (C), for a summary of these modified abbreviations, including the addition of "lvb" for "let vibrate," regardless of the spelling in the printed music.

Example 14.2.3

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: G4 (half), A4 (half), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (half). Dynamics are indicated as *cresc.* under the first measure, *decresc.* under the second measure, and *diminuendo* above the third measure. Below the staff is a line of Braille notation corresponding to the notes and dynamics.

Spell and transcribe all other abbreviations or words of expression according to the printed music, with the following exceptions:

- Braille without capitalization, italics, boldface, or other special typefaces.
- Use literary punctuation except for the period (dot 3).
- If the printed music contains parentheses, use the "special parenthesis sign" (dots 2356) for words or phrases; use the music parenthesis (dots 6, 3) for dynamics.
- Use the Unified English Braille signs for accented letters in foreign words.

Example 14.2.4

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes are: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter). The word *ängstlich!* is written below the staff. Below the staff is a line of Braille notation corresponding to the notes and the word.

Example 14.2.5

57

dolce *(slower)* *(pp)*

14.3 Consecutive Single Expressions

Any number of abbreviations and unrelated single words may be brailled consecutively, without interruption of a dot 3 separator or a space. Each abbreviation or single word is introduced by the word sign and is brailled before the affected note.

When two or more expressions take effect at the same time, they should be brailled in logical order, beginning with the most general expression. For instance, a general direction such as "sweetly" should be brailled first and a tempo indication, such as "slowly," should come next. Dynamics should appear closest to the note but before an opening bracket sign.

Example 14.3.1

softly *pp* *rit.* *sweetly*

Because word-sign expressions are placed according to their meaning, a tempo indication may be brailled before a rest, but an indication of dynamics or articulation should be brailled before a note.

Example 14.3.2

f *pp* *rit.*

14.4 "Hairpin" Symbols

Opening crescendo hairpin	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
Terminating crescendo hairpin	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
Opening decrescendo (diminuendo) hairpin	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
Terminating decrescendo (diminuendo) hairpin	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

Diverging or converging lines, nicknamed "hairpins" because of their shape, are used to represent crescendo or decrescendo in printed music. The braille signs show the beginning and ending of the lines.

The opening hairpin is brailled before the first affected note. The terminating hairpin symbol is brailled after the last affected note or a fingering, slur or tie. The symbol may be omitted in braille if it is immediately followed by a double bar, an extensive rest, or some other definite mark of conclusion or contradiction.

Example 14.4.1

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

Example 14.4.2

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

14.5 Lines of Continuation

Dots or dashes may be used in printed music to show the extent of an expression. Printed music may also show continuation by spreading out the letters of a word such as "ritardando" across several measures. In braille, a word sign expression, followed by two dot 3s, represents the beginning of the line of continuation. A word sign, followed by dot 3, terminates the line of continuation after the last affected note.

Lines of continuation are terminated in the same way as hairpins. The terminating symbol for lines of continuation is brailled after the last affected note. This terminating sign may be omitted if a double bar, extensive rest, or other definitive marking indicates that the continuation has ended. Please refer to MBC-2015 (22.3.4) for examples of overlapping lines of continuation for two separate expressions.

Example 14.5.1

The musical notation shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a series of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. A slur covers the notes from G4 to C5. A hairpin labeled 'cresc' is positioned below the notes from G4 to C5. The notes continue: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. A hairpin labeled 'rit.' is positioned above the notes from G4 to C5. The melody ends with a quarter rest. Below the staff is a two-line Braille transcription of the notes and rests.

14.6 Word-Sign Expressions Brailled at the End of a Note

An expression can occasionally refer to the end of a note, rather than the beginning. An example is the word "niente" ("nothing") that follows a decrescendo, sometimes found in choral or instrumental transcriptions. Such expressions should be brailled after the last affected note and any fingering, slur, or tie.

Example 14.6.1

The musical notation shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a series of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. A slur covers the notes from G4 to C5. A hairpin labeled 'niente' is positioned below the notes from G4 to C5. Below the staff is a two-line Braille transcription of the notes and rests.

14.7 Longer Word-Sign Expressions

In braille, expressions that consist of two or more related words or abbreviations are enclosed within word signs. These expressions are called longer word-sign expressions or expressions that contain spaces. Such an expression must be preceded and followed by a space.

Typical expressions are "poco a poco ritardando" (gradually growing slower), "sempre piano" (softly throughout), "più forte," (more loudly), and "diminuendo e ritardando" or "dim. e rit." (growing softer and slower). If you are unsure about any word or abbreviation, take the time to find the meaning so that you can transcribe the expression correctly.

If the expression occurs at the beginning of a music line, it begins with the word sign or a space after a measure number. If the expression occurs within a measure, it must be preceded by a music hyphen and a space. The music continues after the space that follows the concluding word sign.

language, the alphabet and accented letters of the foreign language are used (to be discussed later).

- A reminder tie, when required, should immediately precede a simple word-sign expression or abbreviation at the beginning of a segment. If a longer word-sign expression occurs where a note is tied over, this is treated as a “major interruption” and the reminder tie should be brailled before the next note.

14.10 A Word of Encouragement

To develop accuracy and confidence, check your word-sign expressions against the bullet points in Section 14.9 of this chapter. Observe the functions of dot 3 as a period and as a separator. Be sure that the first note following a word-sign expression always has an octave mark.

To further minimize any stress, restudy and analyze the examples in this chapter. Realize that the word signs, separators, and octave marks—which may seem cumbersome to you as a transcriber—are essential and virtually automatic for the braille reader.

Use your best judgment in deciding where to begin and end these dynamics and words when the printed music is unclear. Consider the phrasing of the music and place the expressions in a logical location in the music line—usually on the first note of a new phrase, for instance, rather than on the second note. When in doubt, follow print.

You will be most successful if you know the exact meaning of each abbreviation or unfamiliar word that you encounter in the printed score. If an English dictionary does not give you the definition, you can consult a specialized music dictionary, a foreign-language dictionary, a knowledgeable colleague, or the internet. Your research will enable you to decide whether the unfamiliar abbreviation or word refers to general style or specific tempo or dynamics. Such research is time well spent, notably enhancing your understanding and the quality of your transcriptions.

14.11 Order of Signs

As your braille music transcriptions become more complex, the correct order of signs will become increasingly important. The following chart summarizes the signs that you have learned so far. Refer to this chart as you analyze and transcribe music which contains word-sign expressions.

Preceding the note:

- reminder tie
- simple word-sign expression or abbreviation
- line of continuation sign
- opening bracket slur
- signs of expression or execution that precede a note
(staccato or staccatissimo, accent, tenuto)
- accidental
- octave mark

Following the note:

- dot
- finger mark
- fermata
- single slur, opening doubled slur
- closing bracket slur
- tie
- termination sign for line of continuation or "hairpin"
- breath mark
- double bar
- music hyphen

Drills for Chapter 14

(Correct transcriptions of these drills are at the end of this chapter)

Drill 14.1

Tempo di menuetto
staccato

Drill 14.2

Allegro
non legato

Drill 14.3

Larghetto

p

meno p *pp* *ppp* *niente*

Drill 14.4

Andante

distant *pp* *closer* *p*

closer yet *mf* *f* *dim.*

Exercises for Chapter 14

(Submit the following exercises to your instructor in BRF file format)

Exercise 14.1

Lento (♩ = 60)

dolce

pp

p *dim. e rit.* *pp*

Exercise 14.2

Solemnly

espressivo

pp *p*

p

rit. e dim. - - - - -

Exercise 14.3

Andante

p cantabile

pp *mf*

rit. *p*

Exercise 14.4

Tempo di valse

poco cresc.

cresc.

p

Exercise 14.5

Allegretto

mp *cresc.* *f*

p leggiero

f *sost.* *ff* *fp* *ff*

