

## Lesson 18

# Group of 8th Notes

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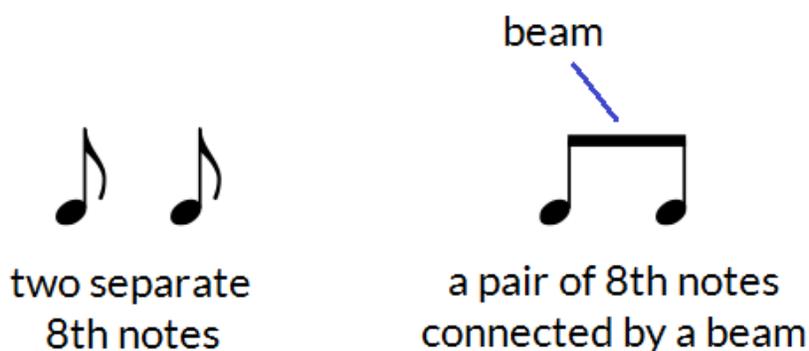
**8th notes printed as a group of four**



## LESSON 18: GROUP OF 8TH NOTES

### MUSIC THEORY BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Earlier, we learned that there are two ways of printing a pair of 8th notes that occur next to each other:



Two ways of printing a pair of 8th notes.

A pair of 8th notes can be shown separately or by connecting them with a beam.

**Definition:** A **beam** is a line or set of lines connecting the stems of a group of notes that are shorter in duration than a quarter note.

It turns out that a beam can also be used to connect larger groups of 8th notes, like this:



Groups of four 8th notes connected by a beam.



Groups of six 8th notes connected by a beam.

As you can see, a group of 8th notes connected by a beam can have the stems going up or down.

You may be wondering why a group of 8th notes is sometimes all connected by a single beam and sometimes shown separately or in pairs. The answer is, all of these forms are OK. There are some conventions about when to use one or the other, but in the end it's up to the chap who prints the music to decide which form to use.

## By the way . . .

In songs, where there are words connected with the music, the convention is to show a single 8th note for each syllable of the words. Here's an example:@

# PRACTICAL

## BUILD YOUR SKILL

### Tune 1:

### A traditional Welsh song

I'm going to show you this tune printed three different ways.

#### *8th notes printed separately*

Read and play this tune now. Apply the Learning Procedure.

### *The Ash Grove*



Notice that the 8th notes are shown as separate, single notes.

### ***8th notes printed in pairs***

Now here is the same tune printed with the 8th notes shown in pairs. A beam connects each pair. Play it now. It should sound exactly the same.



### ***8th notes printed as a group of four***

Finally, here is the same tune printed with a group of four 8th notes connected by a beam. Read and play it. It should sound exactly the same as the above music.



### ***Which do you prefer?***

All three versions of the tune are played exactly the same. The message of this is that you can choose to print it any of those ways. Which do you prefer?

I like the last one, with a beam connecting the four 8th notes. To me, that conveys that the four notes are played as a kind of ripple leading to the two quarter notes in the last measure. The visual appearance of the printed music matches the quality of the tune. But that's just my preference.

## Tune 2:

### Our old favourite again

#### *8th notes printed in pairs*

Read and play this tune now. Apply the Learning Procedure.

### *Waltzing Matilda*

Musical notation for 'Waltzing Matilda' in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody with 8th notes in pairs, indicated by a '4' above the first pair and '1 2' above the second pair. The second staff shows the bass line with 8th notes in pairs, indicated by '2 3' above the first pair and a double bar line with a repeat sign at the end.

#### *8th notes printed as a group of four*

Now here is exactly the same tune printed with groups of four 8th notes connected by a beam, instead of pairs. Read and play it now.

Musical notation for 'Waltzing Matilda' in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody with groups of four 8th notes connected by a beam, indicated by a '4' above the first group and '1 2' above the second group. The second staff shows the bass line with groups of four 8th notes connected by a beam, indicated by '2 3' above the first group and a double bar line with a repeat sign at the end.

It should sound exactly the same as when it is printed with the 8th notes in pairs.

## Tune 3:

### A tune by Bach

Bach was the leading composer of 300 years ago. Amidst a great outpouring of wonderful, mighty, weighty, lengthy, complex compositions, he wrote a set of delightful, simple keyboard pieces for his beloved wife, Anna Magdalena. This collection of compositions is called 'Anna Magdalena's Notebook'.

#### *8th notes printed in pairs*

Here is one of the best-known tunes from Anna Magdalena's Notebook. Play this now. Use the Learning Procedure.

### *Piano piece by Johann Sebastian Bach*

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef, 3/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of music. The first measure has a quarter note G4 with a fingering of 5 above it. The second measure has two eighth notes: A4 and B4. The third measure has two eighth notes: C5 and B4. The fourth measure has a quarter note C5 with a fingering of 3 above it, followed by two eighth notes: B4 and A4, with a fingering of 1 above the B4. The second staff contains four measures of music. The first measure has a quarter note G4 with a fingering of 4 above it, followed by three eighth notes: A4, B4, and C5. The second measure has a quarter note G4 with a fingering of 3 above it, followed by three eighth notes: A4, B4, and C5. The third measure has a quarter note G4 with a fingering of 2 above it, followed by two eighth notes: A4 and B4, with a fingering of 1 above the B4. The fourth measure has a quarter note G4.

#### *8th notes printed as a group of four*

Here it is again using groups of four 8th notes instead of pairs.



I find the groups of four conveys the rippling quality of the music much better.

Notice how the beam can slope up or down, or can be horizontal, as appropriate for each group of notes.