

Music Lab

Formatting Your Song — Unit Six

Formatting a song can seem like a lot of detailed rules to follow with no apparent logic. The point of this exercise is to play with one of your songs and examine different outcomes to gain a feel for the logic behind the formatting guidelines.

Consider some of the following items. Many may be familiar to you already, pick some that are not and try different settings. Examine the outcome.

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Page Margins | Repeats |
| Title | Stanzas |
| Percentage | Measure Numbers |
| System Margins | Rehearsal Letters |
| Page Size | Character Names |
| Page Numbers | Tempo Markings |
| Header | Dynamics & Phrase Marks |
| Footer | Expressive Markings |
| Clefs | Binding |
| Lyrics | Paper Weight |

After you have made some alterations in the above, try to look at your music again from the perspective of someone who has just picked it up to read.

- Are the choices you made completely legible?
- Can you read everything at a glance?
- Have you found a good balance between a “full” page and clarity?
- Have you provided enough markings to clearly indicate tempo, expression, and volume?
- Is it clear who sings what?
- Will your score make good use of rehearsal time?

Obviously it is difficult to answer these questions about your own music since you already know what is written on the page. Compare your score to the printed scores of the shows you have selected as models. What are the similarities and differences? One important thing to remember is that a print score has slightly different objectives in that the publisher is attempting to save costs on ink and paper, so repeats may be more prominent. So, remember that the score you are viewing as a model has already been through the process we are studying before it ever came to print.

Although the guidelines are a bit strict,, hopefully this exercise can help communicate how necessary it is from a production side to conform with a standard format.