

## Writing for Piano Trio

### String instrument ranges

Violin



Cello



### Bowing Techniques

Term	Abbreviation in the score	What it means
Arco	arco	Play using the bow
Pizzicato	pizz	Pluck the strings
Slur	˘ or ˘	Do not change bow
Col Legno	col leg. (c.l.)	With the wood of the bow
Sul ponticello	sul pont. (s.p.)	Near the bridge
Sul tasto	sul tasto (s.t.)	Near the fingerboard (normally understood as 'on' the fingerboard)
Tremolo	trem.	Fast unmeasured bow changes
Legato	legato	Smooth and without silence between notes
Spiccato	spicc.	Bow leaves the string to produce a light bouncing sound
Jeté/Ricochet	Jeté	Bow is 'thrown' at the string to produce a rapid series of notes, normally unspecified and unmeasured
Bartok/snap Pizzicato	a circle with a line	String is pulled away from the fingerboard, so that it snaps against in on release
Left hand pizz	L.H. pizz or +	String plucked with LH, best with open strings

### Harmonics

Natural Harmonics

Musical notation for natural harmonics on violin, viola, and cello strings. The notation shows the sounding notes and the written notes for each instrument.

violin, G-string  
viola, C-string  
cello, D-string

sounding

written

'False' Harmonics

The image shows musical notation for three instruments: violin, viola, and cello. It consists of two staves: 'sounding' (top) and 'written' (bottom). The violin part is in treble clef, the viola in alto clef, and the cello in bass clef. The 'written' staff shows the original notation with stems pointing up for the violin and down for the viola and cello. The 'sounding' staff shows the same music transposed to a common key signature (one flat) and with stems pointing up for all instruments, illustrating how the original notation might be misinterpreted.

Some Basics of Piano Notation

Distribution of notes on the two staves indicates which hand is to play them.

The image shows two piano notation examples. The left example shows a piece of music where notes are distributed across the two staves in a way that clearly indicates which hand is to play them. The right example shows a similar piece of music but with notes distributed in a way that is ambiguous or incorrect, labeled 'and not'.

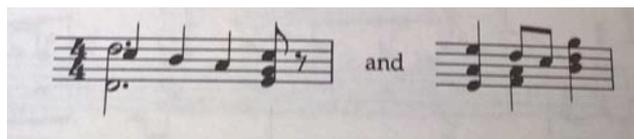
It is important to show how the hands of the play are to move. This also helps with making sure you compose something practical.

The image shows two piano notation examples. The left example shows a piece of music where notes are distributed across the two staves in a way that clearly indicates which hand is to play them, with stems pointing up for the right hand and down for the left hand. The right example shows a similar piece of music but with notes distributed in a way that is ambiguous or incorrect, labeled 'rather than'.

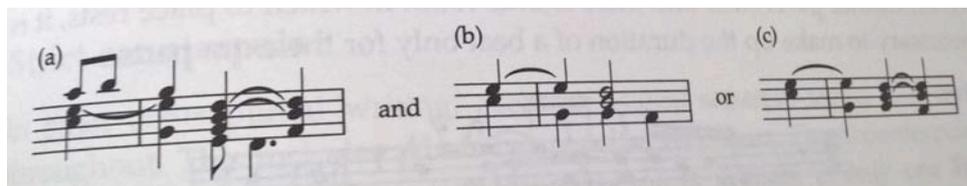
Stem direction can also be used to indicate hand distribution, whilst avoiding ledger lines and clef changes.

The image shows a piano notation example where notes are distributed across the two staves in a way that clearly indicates which hand is to play them, with stems pointing up for the right hand and down for the left hand.

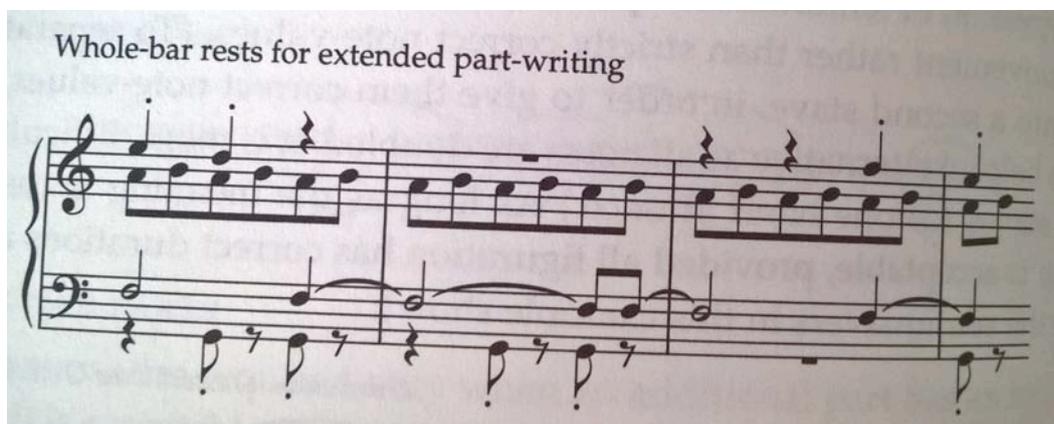
There can be multiple parts or voices in each hand, and these should be made clear by using different stem directions. It is possible to revert to single stemming at the earliest opportunity (even in the middle of bars), and rests can be hidden where unnecessary.



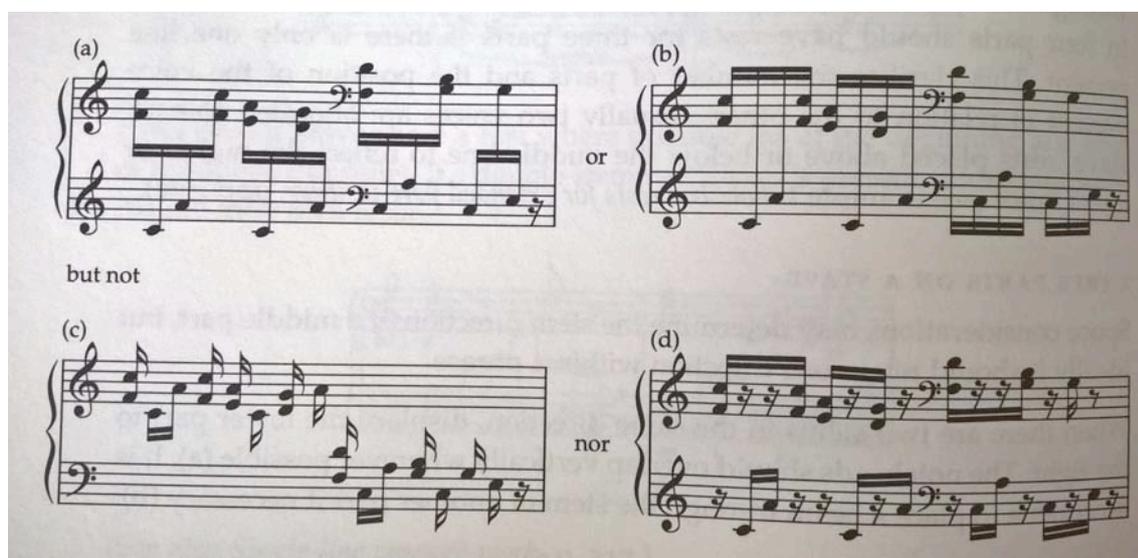
It is possible to have chords where only some notes are tied. Where possible use different stem directions, but if this is not possible then ties can be used to break up larger rhythms in order to show some internal part movement.



Here is another example of multiple parts on a staff. There is no need to include whole bar rests where parts stop, unless it has a purpose – as in this example.



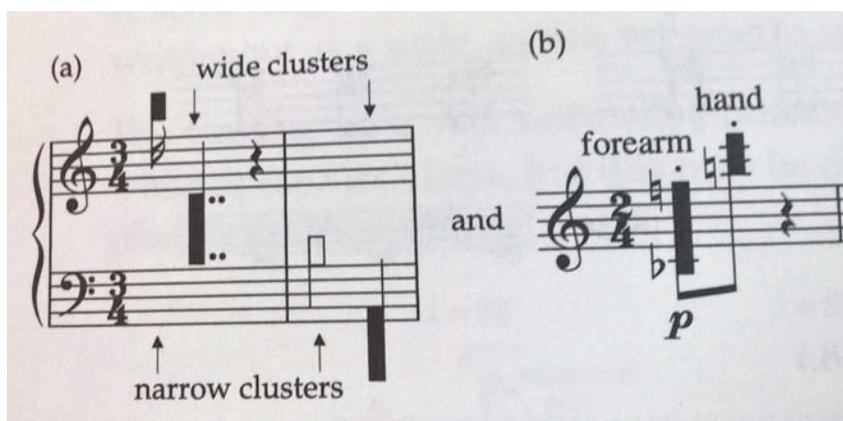
Where rhythms are split between the hands and staves, it is possible to use a single beam across both staves lines. Be careful not to squash the beams in the middle!



Dynamics in general go in the middle of the staves, if they apply to both hands. Where they do not they can go below each staff, or even above if there is complex part writing.



Clusters – undefined chords, where the performer places the palm of the hand flat on the keys.



## Extended piano techniques

- Silently depress keys
- Pedal sounds
- Hitting the piano
- Plucking/hitting strings
- Harmonics on strings
- Prepared piano sounds
- Dampening the strings with hand

## Piano listening

Resonance and range Debussy – *La Cathedral Engloutie*

Schoenberg – *Nacht*, from *Pierrot Lunaire*

Tristan Murail – *Territoires de l'oubli*

Prepared piano John Cage – *Preludes and Interludes*

## Chamber music textures

Homophony	Igor Stravinsky – Three pieces for string quartet, movement 3
Polyphony	Elizabeth Lutyens – <i>Requiescat</i>
Heterophony	Luciano Berio – O King
Melody & accompaniment	Olivier Messiaen – <i>Quartet for the end of time</i> , movement 2
Drone and melody	Maurice Ravel – <i>Soupir</i> from <i>Trois Poemes de Stephane Mallarme</i>
Collage	Igor Stravinsky – Three pieces for string quartet, movement 1
	Olivier Messiaen – <i>Quartet for the end of time</i> , movement 1

## Piano Trio Listening List

<b>Pre-1950s</b>	Mozart – Piano trios (various)
	Ludwig van Beethoven – various trios, including Op. 70, No.1 “The Ghost”
	Gabriel Faure – Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120
	Maurice Ravel – Piano trio in A minor
	Leonard Bernstein – Piano Trio
	Dimitri Schostakovich – Piano trio No. 2, Op.67
<b>Post 1950s</b>	Alfred Schnittke – Piano Trio
	Morton Feldman – Trio
	Hans Werner Henze – Kammersonate
	Krzysztof Meyer – Trio
	Georges Aperghis - Trio
	Nico Muhly – Common Ground