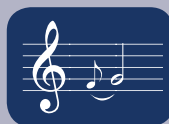


Adding Some Sparkle

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO MUSICAL ORNAMENTS

No, these ornaments aren't miniature drums, horns, or treble clefs to hang from your tree's branches! However, just as a Christmas tree's shiny decorations make it beautiful, musical ornaments, or embellishments, give otherwise simple phrases a special touch. Ornaments will catch your ear when you hear them, but unless you know what you're looking for, they can be difficult to spot and understand on sheet music; most aren't much more than a little squiggle above the note! Follow this guide to decode these mysterious symbols and let your music shine.



Grace Notes

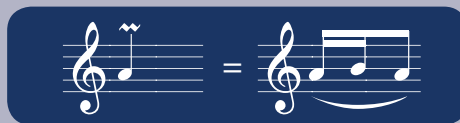
Those itty-bitty notes that you can barely see are called grace notes, and they indicate a pitch that is to be played quickly and slurred into the longer note that follows. Though grace notes are written as eighth notes, they technically do not have a rhythmic value; therefore, they must be "squeezed in" either just before the beat of the longer note or right at the beginning of the beat.

The exception to this rule is music written before approximately 1800, where it is common performance practice to give the grace note and the following note equal value. In other words, a grace note slurred to an eighth note should be played as two sixteenth notes, and a grace note slurred to a quarter note should be played as two eighth notes.

Trills

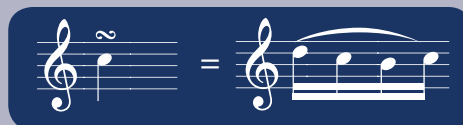
A trill is a rapid alternation between two pitches. Most often, it refers to two adjacent pitches: the note written and one note above. That is, a trill symbol appearing above the note B, as in the example here, calls for a trill between B and C. There is no set rhythm for how fast, or how many times, you move between the two pitches. Generally, you should simply trill as quickly as you can for the duration of the written note.

When playing music written before 1800, the trill should begin with the higher pitch; otherwise, the trill should begin on the note written.



Mordents

A mordent, sometimes called a turn, is like a miniature trill. Rather than alternate between notes numerous times, a mordent simply tells you to move once to the higher pitch before returning to the original one. Since they need to be executed rapidly, the notes of the mordent are slurred together. The rhythm and speed of the mordent will vary based on the context of the music. One example of a mordent rhythm is given above.



Turns

A true turn is more complicated than a mordent. If you see a sideways "S" written above a note, start one pitch above the written note, then play the written note, then come down one pitch below the written note, and finally return to the original note. Therefore, a single note marked with a turn actually indicates four notes. It may seem complicated, but you'll find that this grouping of notes actually sounds quite natural. As with the mordent, all the notes of the turn should be slurred together, and the rhythm varies based on context.

Now that you know you can recognize ornaments, experiment with adding them to your music. You may even want to throw them in where they aren't already written. It's time to start decorating!