

RWCC Music Reading 101: Session 1

How to Find Your Part



Part 1: Who's singing?

At the top of most songs, the publisher indicates what voice parts are required for the piece, and if there is any accompaniment. Common voice part indicators the RWCC uses are:

- SSA – Soprano 1, Soprano 2, and a combined Alto part
- SSAA – Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto 1 and Alto 2
- SA – Combined Sopranos and Combined Altos
- Unison – everyone singing together

Knowing how many voice parts will be listed on the sheet music can help tell you where to find your part!

Ring Silver Bells
For SSA* and Piano with Optional Glockenspiel** and Shaker

This means that there will be lines in the sheet music for **Soprano 1**, **Soprano 2**, and **Alto** voice parts, and also separate lines for a piano part, glockenspiel and Shaker.

Part 2: Finding on YOUR part!

The voice parts may be written all together on one staff, or broken out into one staff for Soprano parts and one for the Alto parts, or with one staff for each individual part! Check the first page, or where the singing part starts, to determine where your part will fall on the page.

A musical score for the song "Ring Silver Bells". It features three staves: Soprano I and Soprano II (top staff), Alto (middle staff), and Piano (bottom staff). The tempo is marked "Barista rock (♩ = ca. 126-144)". The piano part includes chords N.C., F6, and Cm7. The vocal parts have lyrics "Hot! Hot!" and "Hot! Hot!". The piano part has a dynamic marking of "mf".

In this SSA example, the two Soprano parts share the top staff and the Alto part is on the second staff. If there's a solo, it's usually located above the voice parts.

The piano part lives below the voice parts. Other instrumental parts may be above the voice parts or below the piano part.

Part 3: Where are we?

Now that you know how to find your part, the next step is finding where we are in the music!

Sheet music usually has page numbers located at the top or bottom, but more often you will be directed to look at a specific **measure**. Measure numbers (or sometimes letters!) are found at the top of the staff at intervals, and they act as mile-markers in the music.

6 ← Page number

25 ← Measure number

Soprano I *Tutti pp*
Oo

Soprano II *Tutti mp*
For auld lang

Alto I
kind - ness yet, For auld lang — sync. — For auld lang —

Alto II
Oo

(Piano part)

Here's a more complicated example, with additional instrumental parts, SSAA voice parts, a piano part, and measure numbers in the middle of staves:

35 ← Measure Numbers → 37

Hand Drums *mf*

S1 *mf*
out de-spair...
Sing no - el this hap - py

S2 *mf*
out de-spair...
Sing no - el this hap - py

A1 *mf*
out de-spair...
Sing no - el this hap - py

A2 *mf*
out de-spair...
Sing no - el this hap - py

(Piano part) *mf*

"Pick-ups" to measure 37