


P Tagg — HEADWORD for EPMOW

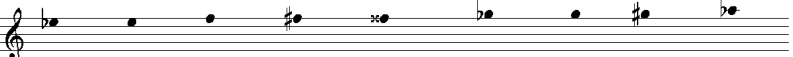
note: (1) any single, discrete sound of finite duration within a musical continuum; (2) such a sound with easily discernible fundamental PITCH; (3) the duration, relative to the music's underlying PULSE, of any such sound, pitched or unpitched.

(1) Although 'note' originally referred to the scribal marking of these minimal elements of musical articulation, the word has come to denote a discrete sonic event on its own, without any reference to musical notation. This terminological practice is illustrated concisely by the notes of MIDI sequencing which are defined by such factors as [i] the point at which a given sound will start; [ii] the type of sound (timbre, volume, attack, envelope, decay) that will occur at that point; [iii] (if pitched) the frequency at which the sound will be articulated; [iv] the point at which the sound will stop. According to this general meaning of the term, a note may be long, short, high, low, pitched, unpitched, loud, soft, sharp, rounded, etc. However, although a note may theoretically have any duration, it is virtually impossible to perceive as such if it sounds for less than 0.1 or for more than 12 seconds. Hence certain types of ornamentation which from a technical viewpoint involve more than one note are perceived as single notes of a particular type (e.g. drum rolls, tremolandi, fast trills), while extremely long notes are heard as pedals or drones.

(2) 'Note' is often used in a strictly tonal sense to refer to the specific pitch of a single sound event. A pitched note name refers to either: [i] an absolute pitch in any octave ('a', 'f sharp', etc.), or [ii] to the particular occurrence of such a sound (e.g. 'high c', 'a low b flat', 'c⁰', 'd³' — see OCTAVE), or [iii] to one pitch in relation to another (e.g. 'a fifth below', 'flat seventh', 'leading note', 'mi-do-so-la'). Pitched notes are named in either absolute terms (*a b c d e f g* etc.) or in relative terms (for example, *doh re mi fa so la ti* or *sa ri ga ma pa dha ni*). In all instances note names are identical from one octave to another. Absolute note names are based on standard concert pitch (*a* at 440 Hz) while relative note names presuppose the fixation of *doh*, *la* or *sa* to any one pitch for the duration of a musical continuum, the other names denoting intervallic relationship to that *doh* or *la* (see TONIC SOL-FA, INDIA). Three main conventions for naming notes of absolute pitch are in everyday use in popular music throughout the world and are displayed in Table 1: (i) the English-language system; (ii) the Latin convention (exemplified by French names) used in Russia and Poland as well as throughout the Latin world; (iii) the German convention used in Scandinavia and in German-speaking areas.










Table 1: Pitched note names

	
English	A B double flat B flat B (natural) C C sharp D flat D D sharp
French	<i>Si Si double dièse Si bémol Si bécarré Ut Ut dièse Ré bémol Ré Ré dièse</i>
German	A Bes B H C Cis Des D Dis

	
English	E flat E F F sharp F double sharp G flat G G sharp A flat
French	<i>Mi bémol Mi Fa Fa dièse Fa double dièse Sol bémol Sol Sol dièse La bémol</i>
German	Es E F Fis Fisis Ges G Gis As

3. As evidenced by German and North American nomenclature, ‘note’ is often used when referring solely to the duration of a minimal musical sound event, for example *ganze Note* = ‘whole note’, *Viertel(note)* = ‘quarter note’ (see Table 2).

Table 2: Note length names

Note	English (UK)	English (US)	German	French	Italian
	breve	double whole note	Brevis	carrée	breve
	semibreve	wholenote	Ganze (Note)	ronde	semibreve
	minim	half note	Halbe	blanche	minima or bianca
	dotted crotchet	dotted quarter note	punktiert Viertel	noire pointée	nera con punto
	crotchet	quarter note	Viertel	noire	nera or semiminima
	quaver	eighth note	Achtel	croche	croma
	semiquaver	sixteenth note	Sechzehntel	double-croche	semicroma
	demisemiquaver	thirty-second note	Zweiunddreissigstel	triple-croche	biscroma
	hemidemi-semiquaver	sixty-fourth note	Vierundsechsigstel	quadruple-croche	semibiscroma

[This entry by Philip Tagg (75%) and Garry Tamlyn (25%)]

[635 words]