

The **beat** refers to the basic unit of time. In a **Compound Meter** (upper numbers in the signature are 6, 9, or 12) the beat is divisible by 3. If the beat is a dotted quarter note the following example shows the beat division and the counting of the beat division.

Compound beat = the beat divided into three equal parts

Count: 1 & a 2 & a 1 & a 2 & a 1 & a 2 & a
 (Alternate counting for slow tempo)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6

Alt: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 &

The beat may be a dotted quarter note, dotted eighth note, dotted half note or a dotted whole note. **Why a dotted note?** A dot adds value to the note, it adds to the note half of the note's value. A dotted quarter note is a quarter note plus an eighth note or 3 eighth notes. Thereby these notes are divisible by 3.

Compound Meter signatures do not tell the whole story. If the upper number is a 6 it means two beats per measure, if it is a 9 it means three beats per measure, and if it is a 12 it means four beats per measure. **Compound meters** can't use 2, 3, or 4 as their upper number because those are reserved for **Simple Meters**. If the tempo (speed of the beat, fast or slow) is fast we usually count indicating the division of the beat, or **1 & a**. If the tempo is slow we usually count whole numbers for division of the beat, or **1 2 3**.

Compound Meters are further classified as duple, triple or quadruple. If the upper number in the meter signature is six, the meter is **Compound Duple**. If the upper number is nine, the meter is **Compound Triple**, and if it is 12 the meter is **Compound Quadruple**.

Compound Duple Compound triple Compound quadruple

6/8 - 6/16 - 6/4 - 9/8 - 9/16 - 9/4 - 12/8 - 12/16 - 12/4 -

Until next time,

Dr. P

pinsonoj@gmail.com

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