MUSICAL TIMING AND THE BEAT

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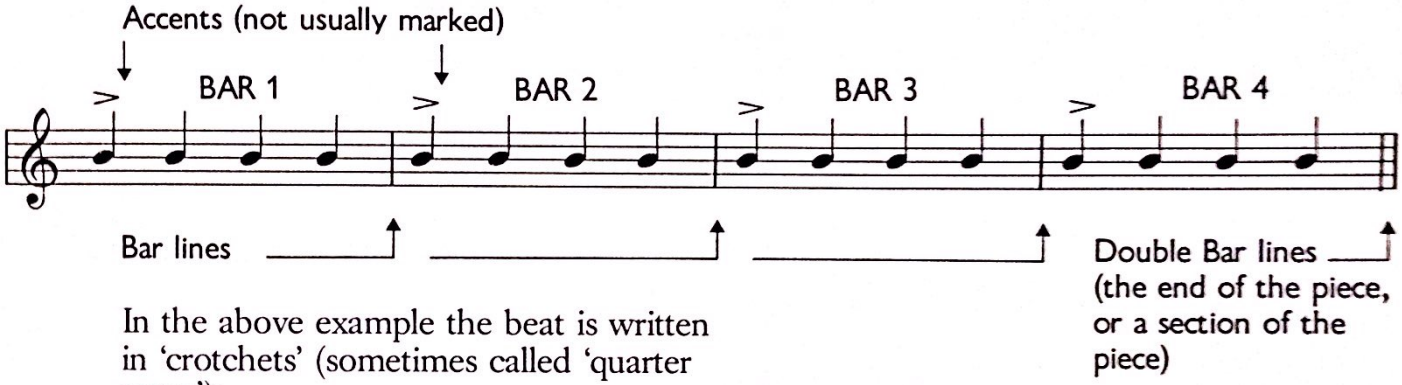
The 'Beat' is the name given to the rhythmic pulse felt behind most music.

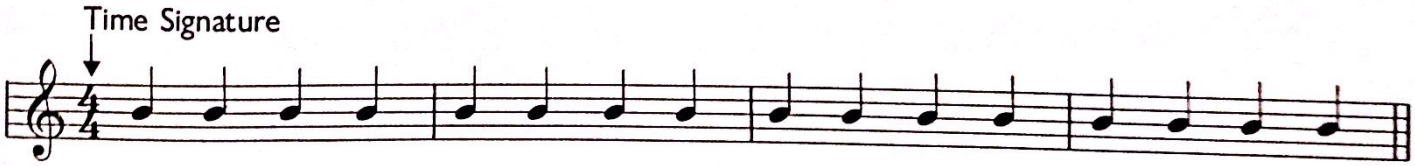
When you were tapping your foot to *When The Saints Go Marching In, Banks Of The Ohio,* and *Rivers Of Babylon,* you were tapping out the beat. In most tunes there is a series of natural 'accents', which recur regularly every few beats. A line called a 'bar line' is drawn in front of every one of these natural accents. These lines divide the music into 'bars' or 'measures'.



In the above example the beat is written in 'crotchets' (sometimes called 'quarter notes'):

(Note that the 'tails' or 'stems' may be written up or down).

Look at the above example again, and you will see that there are four crotchets (quarter notes) to the bar. This is indicated at the beginning of the piece like this:



The above pair of numbers is called the 'time signature'. In every time signature there is:

An 'upper figure': this shows how many beats there are in the bar (four in our example).

A 'lower figure': this shows how the beats are written. In our example the lower figure 4 means that the beats are written as crotchets ("quarter" notes).

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