



OPENING MEASURES PRACTICE COMPANION



A Cellist's Monthly Guide for Discovering
Mastery Between the Notes

INTEGRATING PRACTICE STRATEGIES INTO BACH'S C MAJOR PRELUDE

ELEVENTH EDITION



DR. SOPHIE'S CELLO LAB

WELCOME



HELLO, CELLIST AND WELCOME TO

the PRACTICE ROOM

Whether you're brand new to the Practice Room or returning for another topical training, I'm so glad you're here.

This practice companion is your musical sandbox for the month: a place to explore, stretch, refine, and occasionally laugh at the strange things our hands do when we aren't paying attention.

You'll find a mix of technical focus, real-world application, and gentle prompts to help you listen more closely as your practice — not just to your cello, but to the areas that help us in connecting more intuitively with our wonderful cellos.

Here, we care about tone and tension, yes — but we also care about joy, curiosity, and the kind of attention that leads to lasting growth and artistry.

This is not about checking boxes. It's about showing up with your whole self (awkward shifts and all) and making real progress between the notes.

Take your time.
Bring your experience.
Invite curiosity.
Leave room for lasting discovery.

Let's begin.

Sophie

“Every note has meaning rather as a look or a touch does;
the resulting conversations she has with the music are endlessly absorbing
~LAURENCE VITTES | GRAMOPHONE ”

WELCOME

ABOUT SOPHIE AND THE CELLO LAB

SOPHIE WEBBER



Dr Sophie has performed across the States and in the UK, has received numerous awards and prizes for her playing, and has released three critically acclaimed albums.

With over 25 years of teaching experience, she is a sought-after pedagogue and is frequently invited to give masterclasses across the USA and beyond.

She is also the Founding Artistic Director of Fused Mused Ensemble, a music and mixed media non-profit organization with a mission to amplify voices too often left unheard.

THE CELLO LAB



Inside the Cello Lab, you'll find two distinct paths to grow your playing and artistry: one for deep, foundational focus (*the PRACTICE ROOM*), and one for expressive exploration with high-level support (*the INNER STUDIO*).

the PRACTICE ROOM: For cellist of all levels seeking fresh, focused and foundational exploration for their “practice room” with access to a community of other adult cellists.

Offers monthly themed practice companions, topical trainings, live Q&A interactions, a supportive community, as well as community cello chats.

the INNER STUDIO: For cellists ready to explore artistry, expressive themes, score analysis, interpretations along with foundational focuses.

Offers a creative growth space in a professional online studio environment that includes master classes, small group instruction, private lessons and performance opportunities.

PRE-WARM-UP:

Mindset and physical warm-up away from cello
(see "Warm Up Preparation")

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THE BACH CM PRELUDE SCORES & APPLICATIONS A-E:

Each day, spend a few minutes either listening to a performance of the C Major Prelude with the score. Some suggestions of focus points for this time: i) close your eyes and enjoy, ii) create your own colour coded breakdown of the movement, iii) think about which of the Applications A through E in this companion might help you most with each section

APPLICATIONS A - E: Choose at least one new application each week for a section (or more) of the Bach. Applications are: the ROPE method; Rhythmic Embodiment; Intonation and Ringing Tones; Hand Coordination; Tone Production

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NOTES & REFLECTIONS:

EXPLORE/LOOK UP SOME RESOURCES: past notes, online videos, etude books, other. (also see "Additional Resources")

REPERTOIRE APPLICATION: Consider applying some of these ideas to sections of music in other repertoire you are currently exploring

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NOTES/REFLECTIONS:

(optional) LISTENING INTEGRATION: 1 x YouTube performance (of your choice).....

(optional) NOTES/OBSERVATIONS: other observations/ any Aha moments:

TIP: Do keep in mind the immense value of taking breaks... standing up, a quick stretch, brisk walk or cup of tea can do wonders for recentering our focus and gaining a fresh perspective

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OPENING REFLECTION

Bringing Our Tools to the Music



Over the past two months, we've been quietly building a toolkit — first the careful arts of **motivation, organization, the "ROPE" method, and self-recording** in our Breaking Down Challenges work; then the music-serving goals of **intonation, tone, and coordination** through our scales and arpeggios. Now — perhaps the most satisfying month of this three-month arc — **we bring it all to the music.**

Do any of these feel familiar?

♪ You know the tools, but when you sit down with Bach, they can feel **separate from the music itself**

♪ You can isolate intonation, or tone, or coordination — but **integrating all three within a single phrase** feels like a different kind of work

♪ The "ROPE" method has clicked in your scales, but bringing it to a real Bach (or other repertoire) passage sometimes feels **overwhelming**

♪ You've colour-coded your sections, but they still feel like **separate islands** rather than a flowing whole

♪ You record yourself, but you're not always sure **what to listen for**

♪ The Prelude is starting to feel clearer in your hands — yet you sense there's **more to integrate**

If any of those feel true, you're exactly where you should be.

This month is about **integration** — not learning new strategies, but learning how to weave the ones we already have into the actual **fabric of our music.**

We'll bring the tools from the past two months — the "ROPE" method, self-recording, identifying root causes, working with colour-coded sections, and music-serving goals — to specific passages from **Bach's C Major Prelude, BWV 1009.**

The Bach itself will guide us. This is where the work gets quietly beautiful: when practice strategies stop feeling like homework, and start becoming the way we listen, the way we breathe with the music, the way we let **Bach speak.**

Let's begin.



OPENING REFLECTION

Let's set your intention and mindset for the month.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH INTEGRATING PRACTICE STRATEGIES INTO THE MUSIC YOU'RE WORKING ON?

WHICH TOOL —FROM THE PAST TWO MONTHS —DO YOU MOST WANT TO WEAVE INTO YOUR BACH THIS MONTH?

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS:



CONTENTS:

05

OPENING
REFLECTION

08

INTRODUCTION
& OVERVIEW

10

BACH C MAJOR
SCORES

11

COLOUR-CODED
BREAK DOWN

14

APPLICATIONS:
ROPE METHOD -
RHYTHM -
INTONATION -
COORDINATION -
TONE

19

LISTENING &
INSPIRATION

20

INTEGRATION
AND CLOSING

24

WHAT'S NEXT

25

ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES



INTEGRATING STRATEGIES FOR PRACTICE INTO BACH'S C MAJOR PRELUDE

Applying Skills to Real Music

Welcome,

Let's bring everything together — **not as separate skills, but as a connected and integrated way of playing.**

Technique no longer sits beside the music, it begins to move within it.

The work you've done so far now moves into real music, where coordination, clarity, and understanding are shaped into musical expression. Rather than focusing on isolated elements, you'll begin to experience how these elements function together within the flow of a phrase.

As you apply these skills to your repertoire, and through our shared work with the Prelude from Bach's 3rd Cello Suite, **you'll begin to notice how technical decisions support musical direction, phrasing, and continuity.**

Each passage becomes an opportunity: to connect movement with sound, to align intention with execution, and to allow the music to unfold with greater ease.

We'll be bringing your knowledge and skills into alignment to allow your understanding guide each decision.

Over time, you may notice a shift — not just in how you play, but in how the music feels.

What once required effort begins to feel more natural, more connected, and more complete.

Let's get started.

Incorporating This Companion Into Your Practice Routine

To get the most out of this companion, approach it with a sense of curiosity and patience.

Treat each section as a building block in your tool kit development. And keep **the value of taking breaks** in mind.

Sometimes the best insights come from those very moments

—because when you pause to reflect and discover what you are actually doing, you allow what you are focusing on to fall into place.



WARM-UP PREPARATION

Preparatory Tips for Body Awareness:

- ♪ Breathe (long, slow breaths out)
- ♪ “Soften” your body (relaxed stomach, arms, neck)
- ♪ Stretch (eg. windmill arms, wriggle fingers, rotate wrists and forearms back and forth, squats, light jogging on spot --get circulation going!)
- ♪ Shoulders should be low and passive throughout the full length of bow (TIP: be especially cognizant of this in the upper half!)
- ♪ Feet should be grounded (like the roots of a tree!)

Tips for Tone Connection:

- ♪ A firmer approach will generally give you a better tone. This tends to mean A LITTLE MORE WEIGHT and, often, A LITTLE LESS BOW
- ♪ Explore finding a NATURAL WEIGHT (vs “pressing down”) with passive heavy shoulders and arms. The bow should feel like it is sinking into the string.
- ♪ We are looking for an “ENGAGED” SOUND rather than a superficial/skating one where the bow is too fast/too light.
- ♪ Careful your bow direction is parallel to the bridge and not moving up and down.
 - On the A string, the point will move a little closer to you (while your arm moves a little further from your body).
 - On the C string, the point will move a little further away from you (while your arm moves a little closer to your body)



PRELUDE
SUITE FOR SOLO CELLO NO.3 IN C MAJOR
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)



BACH C MAJOR PRELUDE SCORES

[BACH ACCOMPANYING SCORES]

- **BLANK Cello SCORE**
- Cello Part with
 - i) **Less FINGERINGS & BOWINGS**
 - ii) **More FINGERINGS & BOWINGS**
- Cello Part with **SHIFTS & POSITIONS** (see *Fingerboard Positions Geography PDFs* below)



For deeper familiarisation with the **Cello Fingerboard Positions and Notation** across the strings, please download the following two PDFs:

1. [Fingerboard Positions Geography Chart PDF](#)

2. [Fingerboard Positions Geography Notation PDF](#)

BACH C MAJOR PRELUDE: A SUGGESTED BREAKDOWN

The image displays a musical score for the C Major Prelude by Johann Sebastian Bach, broken down into four sections for practice. The score is written in bass clef, 3/4 time, and C major. The sections are marked with circled numbers and colored dots:

- Section 1:** Marked with a circled 1 and a yellow dot. It covers measures 1 through 4.
- Section 2:** Marked with a circled 2 and a red dot. It covers measures 5 through 9.
- Section 3:** Marked with a circled 3 and a yellow dot. It covers measures 10 through 18.
- Section 4:** Marked with a circled 4 and a red dot. It covers measures 19 through 24.

25

29

33

37

41

45

49

53

57



61 

65

69 

72

75 

78

81 

84

87

Detailed description: This image shows a musical score for cello, spanning measures 61 to 87. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into eight staves. Measures 61-64, 65-68, 69-71, 72-74, 75-77, 78-80, 81-83, and 84-86 contain continuous sixteenth-note passages, often with slurs. Measure 75 has a red dot above the staff. Measure 81 has a pink box with the number 11 and a red dot to its left. Measure 61 has a pink box with the number 9 and a yellow dot above it. Measure 69 has a pink box with the number 10 and a yellow dot above it. Measure 87 ends with a double bar line.

APPLICATION A

THE ROPE METHOD

The “ROPE” Method

- i) **R-hythm** (clapping/taa-ing/speech cues)
- ii) **O-pen String Bowing** (smooth string changes... shown in **BLUE**)
- iii) **P-izzicato** (LH first, intonation and form)
- iv) **E-everything together** (gradually marking increase in tempo, 3-7 clicks more at a time)

mm.1 - 7 (downbeat)

The musical score is written in bass clef, 4/4 time. It consists of seven measures. The lyrics are: Pine - a - pple, Pea - nut bu - tter, Pea - nut bu - tter, Ta, Pea - nut bu - tter, Pea - nut bu - tter, (etc). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4). Red circles highlight specific fingerings: 2 in measure 1, 2 in measure 2, 3 in measure 3, 1 in measure 4, 2 in measure 5, 3 in measure 6, and 1 in measure 7. Blue vertical lines indicate string changes. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.



APPLICATION B

RHYTHMIC EMBODIMENT

(at different beat levels)

1 in a bar  = ca 20bpm

i) **Measured pacing** around room, **one step per bar**, stately feel
singing the melody or listening to a recording

3 in a bar  = ca 56 - 60bpm

i) **Conducting in a 3 pattern** (triangle pattern: down-to the right-up)
singing the melody or listening to a recording

ii) **Showing beats in your height and arm positioning**
singing the melody or listening to a recording

Beat 1: Knees bend and arms rise out to sides

Beat 2: Knees straighten partway and arms slightly lower

Beat 3: Return to standing straight again with arms down by one's side

iii) **Marching with alternating feet**
singing or playing cello

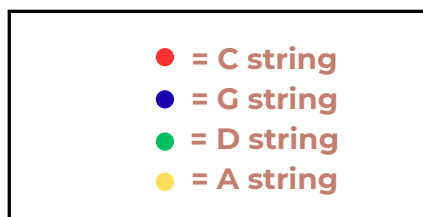
It's good practice to try starting on each foot in turn



APPLICATION C

INTONATION

- Start with **all separate bows**, **cross-referencing all ringing tones** with their correlating open string.
- Next, try playing the same excerpt **with performance bowings** (as shown below).



mm.37 - 44

The musical score for measures 37-44 is presented in four staves. Each staff shows a sequence of notes with colored dots indicating the string to be played: Red for C, Blue for G, Green for D, and Yellow for A. Fingering numbers (1-4) are written above or below the notes. Some numbers are circled in red, indicating specific performance techniques or bowings. The notes are grouped by slurs, and the bowings are indicated by the sequence of notes and the color coding.



COORDINATING THE TWO HANDS: **SET-CROSS** (-GO!)

- **Start at a comfortably slow tempo**, taking a **full 16th note duration for each action** indicated. (eg. "Set-Cross" would be two 16th notes while "Shift-Set-Cross" would three 16th notes). Gradually minimize the amount of time needed for each action.

(Mostly reduced to all separate bows)

mm.1 - 7 (downbeat)

2 SET CROSS SHIFT SET CROSS 2 4 1 4

1 CROSS SHIFT SET 2

4 2 SHIFT SET 3 CROSS

SET CROSS CROSS

SET CROSS CROSS SHIFT SET 1 3 4 1

3 4 3 1 SHIFT SET 2 SET CROSS SET CROSS



APPLICATION E

TONE PRODUCTION

Lower Strings = Less Bow, More Weight
Higher Strings = More bow, Less Weight

BOW DISTRIBUTION

- Start with the first excerpt (**all separate bows**), focusing intently on **which string you are playing** and the small but significant **changes in weight and speed** (amount of bow used) between the various strings
- Next, try playing the same excerpt **with performance bowings**. Note how the performance bowings compliment the general need to use more bow on the A string (more bows also highlight the top of each melodic “arc”)

mm.71 - 77 (Reduced to single note bowing)

mm.71 - 77 (With performance bowings)



LISTENING & INSPIRATION

THE FOLLOWING RECORDINGS ARE SUGGESTED TO ENCOURAGE LISTENING SKILLS, AND TO DEEPEN MUSICALITY.

As you listen, pay attention to how each artist allows us to feel we are in safe, deeply competent hands. Notice how each of these recordings conveys both ease and drama, and is carefully paced with no sense of rushing.

What do you notice, like or dislike about each of these recordings?

This kind of critical listening is a great exercise; feel free to explore other recordings too!

1

Prelude

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

~Suite for Solo Cello No.3 in C Major, BWV 1009.

-Lillian Fuchs, Viola: [\[LINK\]](#)
(luminous sound, lovely flow)

~Benjamin Zander, Conductor, Interpretation Class: [\[LINK\]](#)
(listen for pedal notes, sequences, sense of line etc...)

~Andrés Segovia, Guitar: [\[LINK\]](#)
(resonant glow to the chordal nature of the movement on guitar, coupled with organ-like precision of timing)

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE ABOUT HOW THESE ARTISTS HANDLE CHALLENGING PASSAGES?



INTEGRATION & CLOSING REFLECTION



01 WHAT CHANGED IN YOUR AWARENESS OR SKILL THIS MONTH?

02 HOW WILL YOU CARRY THIS INTO YOUR NEXT PRACTICE CYCLE OR REPERTOIRE?

03 SET 1-2 GOALS FOR REVIEW OR NEXT EXPLORATION





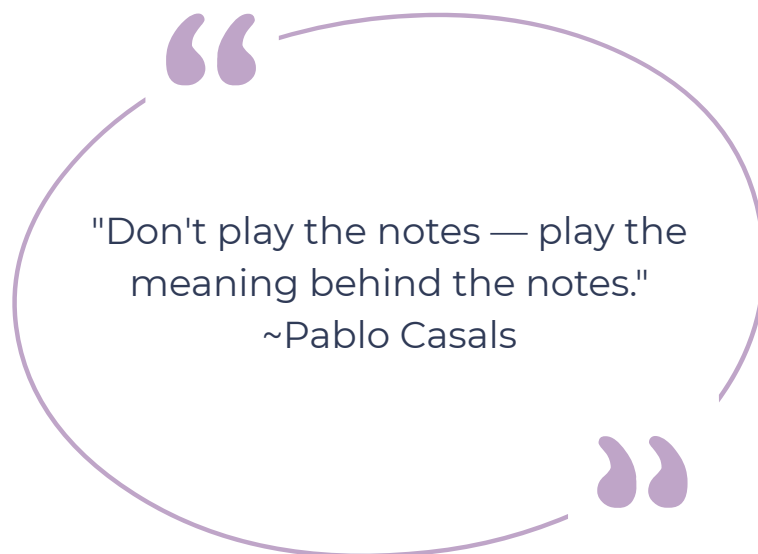
WHAT WERE YOUR BEST PRACTICE OR A-HA MOMENTS AND HOW CAN YOU INCORPORATE THIS INTO FUTURE PRACTICE SESSIONS?



WHAT AREA(S) DO YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON AND IMPROVE?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 18 horizontal dotted lines.



CLOSING

As you come to the end of this month's work, pause and notice how your playing has come together.

Is there is more connection between movement and sound?

Do your **phrases feel more continuous, more shaped, and more intentional?**

Does the **music itself feels more present**, supported by the work you've done?

Carry this forward.

Allow your technique to support the phrase, your awareness to guide each moment, and your attention to remain on the direction of the music.

Remember, **integration is not about perfection.**

It is about allowing what you've skillfully built to function together.

As you continue, notice how your playing begins to settle. How **coordination, clarity, and expression no longer feel separate, but part of the same process.**

It may feel more natural and reliable.

And within that, your playing begins to reflect not just the work you've done — but in the music you are ready to share.

A NOTE FROM SOPHIE:

I believe that playing –and practising –the cello should be a joyous thing. Too often, I hear cellists expressing frustration with their playing and practising, unsure how to move forwards and focus their attention. It is my sincere hope that the PRACTICE ROOM gives you the tools to lean into your practice with intentionality and reflection, at your own pace (which, if you're anything like me, should probably be a little slower). Quality always over quantity...

We all need to make space for ourselves to experiment without judgment (perhaps with a little humour, tho ;)) and to embrace the journey. I hope you enjoy the PRACTICE ROOM experience as much as I have enjoyed –and continue to enjoy, with your help –creating it.

Happy Cello-ing!

Sophie





WHAT'S NEXT

These past three months, every intentional note, question, and breakthrough you experienced is part of something lasting.



If you're ready to keep going, I'd love to have you join us for "**The Quiet Art of a Beautiful Sound**," running August through October (plus a bonus month of preparatory exercises (and more) throughout July).

Let's keep building together — grounded, thoughtful discovery, inside the CELLO LAB.

Thank you!

[Join the waitlist for "**The Quiet Art of a Beautiful Sound**" [here](#)]



WWW.SOPHIEWEBBER.COM



DR. SOPHIE'S CELLO LAB

This curated space is here to support and enrich your monthly practice.

Here, you'll find practical tools, helpful guides, and gentle reminders to help you move forward with clarity and confidence.

Return to these resources as often as you need — they're here to grow with you as you shape your musical journey.

1. Your Monthly Practice Companion

These resources are here to support you every month, no matter the focus. From a structured daily practice plan to helpful notes on play-along videos, these tools are designed to give you clarity, consistency, and confidence in your practice:

- A GUIDE TO OPENING MEASURES –Your Monthly Practice Companion [Page 27](#)
- DAILY PRACTICE TRACKER [Page 4](#)

2. Resources for Current Companion

- AN INTRODUCTION TO FINGERBOARD GEOGRAPHY (1st to 4th POSITIONS) [\[Access It Here\]](#)
- FINGERBOARD GEOGRAPHY CHART and GEOGRAPHY NOTATION PDFs [\[Access It Here\]](#)
- RINGING TONE CHART [\[Access It Here\]](#)

3. Additional Resources on Rhythm

These rhythm-focused tools go beyond this month's core material and are here to deepen your rhythmic awareness across any companion:

- WHAT IS SUBDIVISION? [\[Access It Here\]](#)
- WHAT ARE SPEECH CUES? [\[Access It Here\]](#)
- TIME SIGNATURES/METERS [Page 28](#)



PROGRESS TRACKING

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

QUESTIONS TO BRING TO Q&A:

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



A GUIDE TO OPENING MEASURES PRACTICE COMPANION

I'd like to take a moment to summarize the essence of "Opening Measures," what it offers, as well as a suggestion of a sample daily practice plan.

To start, this is YOUR guide and YOUR practice time, so please feel free to tweak my suggestions or even go in a different direction if that feels right to you.

I highly recommend regular note taking to help you organize your thoughts and practice experience. This will also give your own personalized source of reference material for the future.

Whatever path we each choose, it's important to keep our goals in mind, while staying open to ongoing slight course correction --just like Apollo 11 as it ventured towards the moon!

"Opening Measures" is designed to allow YOU to be at the steering wheel, with a helping hand in terms of...

- **mindset and body preparation** (opening reflection, tips for body awareness and tone connection)
- **practice content and structure** (two core methods to improve rhythm and pulse internalization with exercises and drills in progressive difficulty and optional tempo tracking)
- **mindfulness reminders** (a practice calendar, spaces for notes, observations, reflections, aha moments, and questions)
- **inspiration** (listening integration, quotes from famous cellists and musicians)
- **a companion cellist guide** --that's me! 😊 (lots of play along videos at different tempi --as well as "playing along" with the videos, these are also a great opportunity to observe other aspects of playing that can help, like set up, use of the bow and LH, and entire body, while playing...)



TIME SIGNATURES/METERS

In western music, pieces are typically written with a time signature, dividing the composition into a number of measures. There are two kinds of time signatures or “meters;” simple and compound meters.

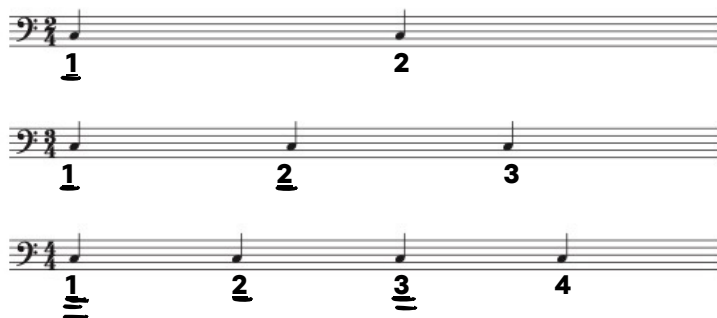
Simple meters are those in which the main beat is divisible by 2. The most common examples are 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The bottom number represents the beat (a quarter note, which is divided by 2 to create two eighth notes). The top number represents the number of beats per measure. So there are 2 quarter note beats in 2/4, 3 quarter note beats in 3/4 and 4 quarter note beats in 4/4.

Compound meters are those in which the main beat is divisible by 3. The most common examples are 6/8, 9/8, and 12/8. For these examples, the beat is a dotted eighth note (which is divided by 3 to create three eighth notes). So there are 2 dotted quarter note beats in 6/8, 3 dotted quarter note beats in 9/8, and 4 dotted quarter note beats in 12/8.

Metrical hierarchy

Within each measure, there is a basic hierarchical importance or “stress” given to the placement of each beat, as below (relative hierarchical stress is represented through the number of lines under each beat number, more lines indicates a stronger beat with more emphasis):

SIMPLE METERS (one beat is a quarter note)



Beats listed in order of importance (stress)

1, 2

1, 2, 3

1, 3, 2, 4

COMPOUND METERS (one beat is a dotted quarter note)



1, 2

1, 2, 3

1, 3, 2, 4

