LESSON 9

Date: _____

The music for instruments of the concert band is notated involving the concept of transposition. This means that for some instruments the pitches that are notated (transposed pitch) are different than the pitches that sound (concert pitch). When playing in ensemble, this can prove to be a confusing concept to the amateur musician.

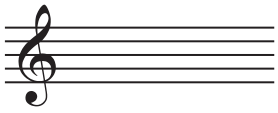
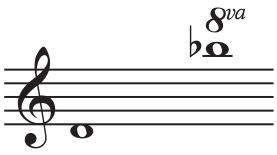
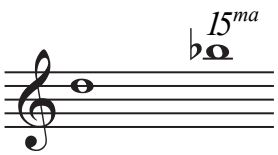
Instruments whose music is notated using transposed pitch are referred to as transposing instruments. Some of the rationale for this practice is rooted in the historical development of instruments, the acoustical properties of instruments, from a practical perspective of maintaining consistency in fingerings between members of the same instrument family, and in some cases simply from the traditions of music notation conventions.

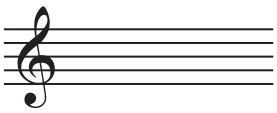
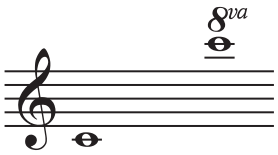
One specific example of the usefulness of transposition can be illustrated with the family of saxophones which consists of soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass saxophones. Each member of this family has the same transposed range and fingerings that are identical between all the members. Each instrument has a unique range. If each instrument was notated at concert pitch, it would require players to connect one fingering to multiple notes. This impracticality is one example of why the convention of transposition is still necessary and useful.

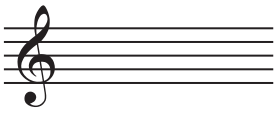
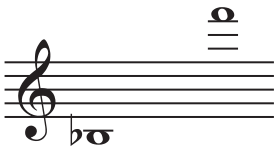
The instruments of the concert band are generally confined to the following four classes: C Instruments, B♭ Instruments, E♭ Instruments, and F Instruments.

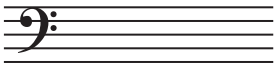
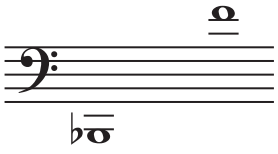
C INSTRUMENTS

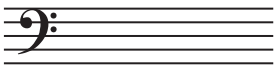
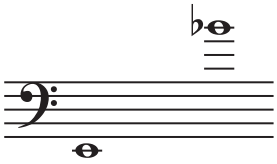
The group of instruments that are considered non-transposing (or those whose transposition only involve octave transpositions). These instruments produce the pitch they read on the page. This is called concert pitch. All other pitched instruments are referenced with respect to C Instruments.

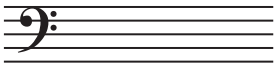
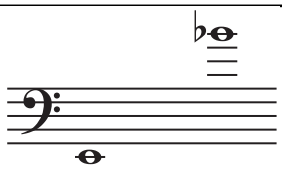
	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Piccolo			
Sounds… 1 octave higher than written Must be transposed… 1 octave lower			
Orchestration notes…			

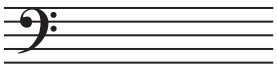
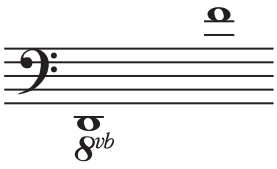
	Concert Pitch Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Flute		N/A	
Sounds… as written			
Orchestration notes…			

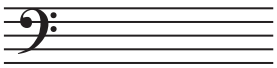
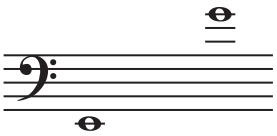
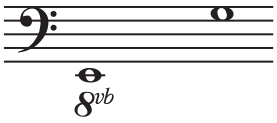
	Concert Pitch Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Oboe		N/A	
Sounds… as written			
Orchestration notes…			

	Concert Pitch Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Bassoon		N/A	
Sounds… as written			
Orchestration notes…			

	Concert Pitch Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Trombone		N/A	
Sounds… as written			
Orchestration notes…			

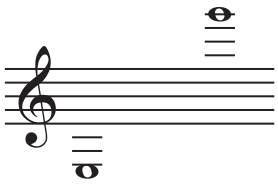
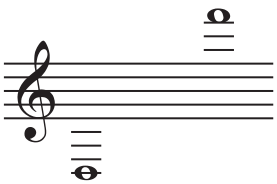
	Concert Pitch Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Baritone/ Euphonium		N/A	
Sounds… as written			
Orchestration notes…			

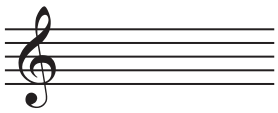
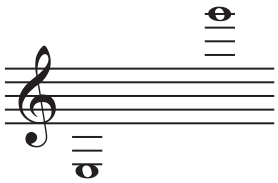
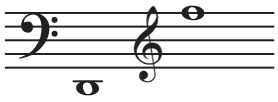
	Concert Pitch Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Tuba		N/A	
Sounds… as written			
Orchestration notes…			

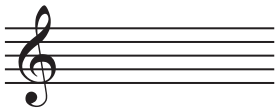
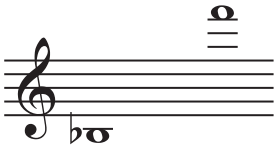
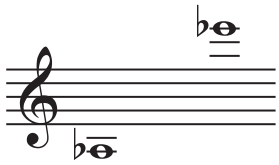
	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Bass **Electric Bass**			
Sounds… 1 octave lower than written Must be transposed… 1 octave higher			
Orchestration notes…			

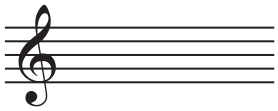
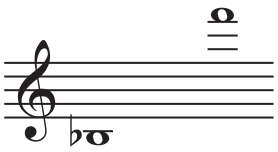
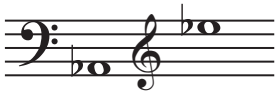
B♭ INSTRUMENTS

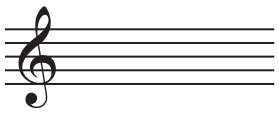
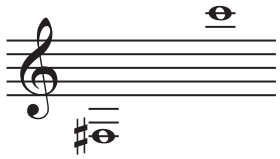
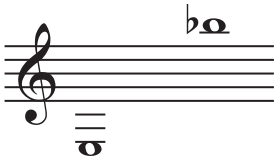
Instruments who sound a B♭ when they play a written C. In other words, they sound a +2 [plus additional octave(s)] lower than written.

	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Clarinet			
Sounds… a +2 lower than written Must be transposed… up a +2			
Orchestration notes…			

	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Bass Clarinet			
Sounds… a +9 lower than written (+2 plus one octave) Must be transposed… up a +9 (+2 plus one octave)			
Orchestration notes…			

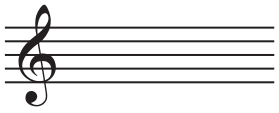
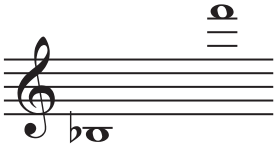
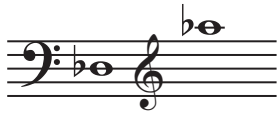
	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Soprano Saxophone			
Sounds… a +2 lower than written Must be transposed… up a +2			
Orchestration notes…			

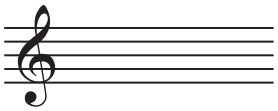
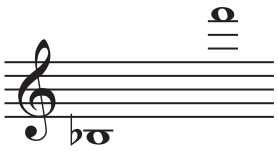
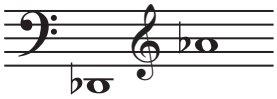
	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Tenor Saxophone			
Sounds… a +9 lower than written (+2 plus one octave) Must be transposed… up a +9 (+2 plus one octave)			
Orchestration notes…			

	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Trumpet			
Sounds… a +2 lower than written Must be transposed… up a +2			
Orchestration notes…			

E♭ INSTRUMENTS

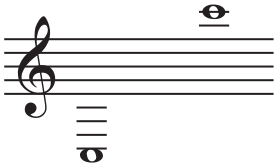
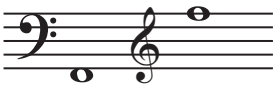
Instruments who sound an E♭ when they play a written C. In other words, they sound a +6 [plus additional octave(s)] lower than written.

	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Alto Saxophone			
Sounds… a +6 lower than written Must be transposed… up a +6			
Orchestration notes…			

	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
Baritone Saxophone			
Sounds… a +13 lower than written (+6 plus one octave) Must be transposed… up a +13 (+6 plus one octave)			
Orchestration notes…			

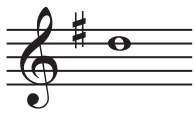
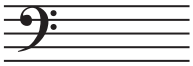
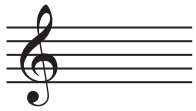
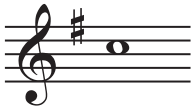
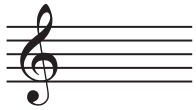
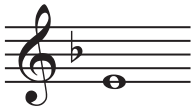
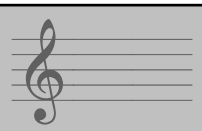
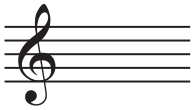
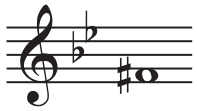
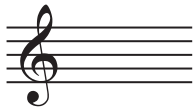
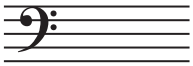
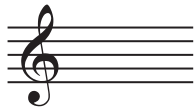
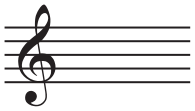
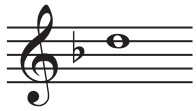
F INSTRUMENTS

Instruments who sound an F when they play a written C. In other words, they sound a P5 lower than written.

	Transposed Range (Practical Playing)	Transposed Range	Concert Pitch Range
French Horn			
Sounds… a P5 lower than written Must be transposed… up a P5			
Orchestration notes…			

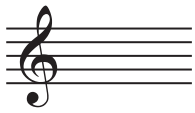
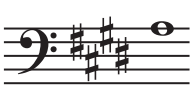
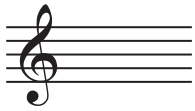
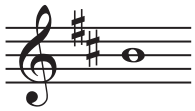
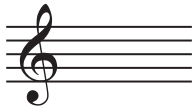
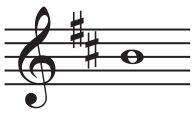
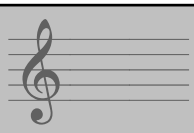
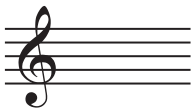
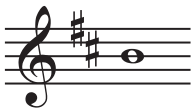
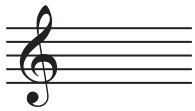
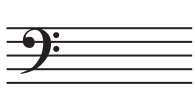
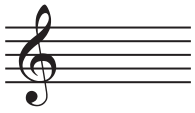
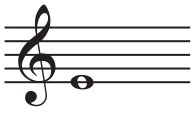
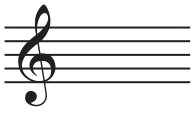
When completing transpositions, always think of transposing the key, rather than transposing a particular note or notes. When the key is transposed, all of the individual notes will be transposed.

Complete the following chart so when all required instruments play simultaneously they sound in unison or at the octave. Transpose each note such that it falls within the playable range of the required instrument.

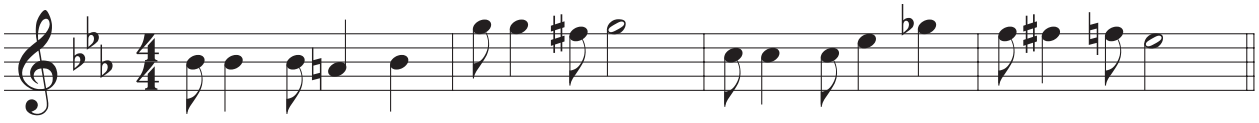
	Flute “C”	Trombone “C”	Clarinet “B♭”	Alto Sax “E♭”	French Horn “F”
:)					
:|					
:(					
>:(					
;)					

PRACTICE

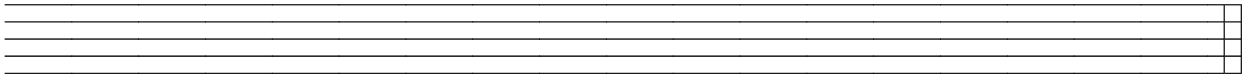
1. Complete the following chart so when all required instruments play simultaneously they sound in unison or at the octave. Transpose each note such that it falls within the playable range of the required instrument.

	Flute “C”	Trombone “C”	Clarinet “B♭ ”	Alto Sax “E♭”	French Horn “F”
:)					
:|					
:(					
>:(					
;)					

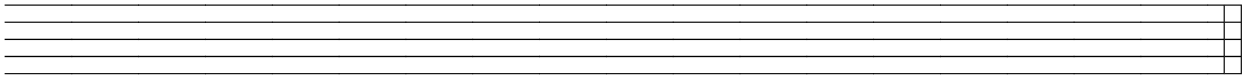
2. Transpose the following music into the playable range for each of the instruments listed.



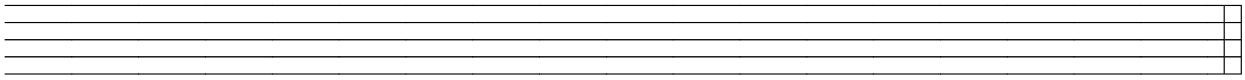
a) trombone



b) trumpet



c) baritone saxophone



d) french horn