



WHERE DO I START??

Deciphering "Start on the 3rd measure of 15"

Yes, this can be VERY confusing!!! We use number in so many different ways in music and this is just one of them.

Here is some history from someone who grew up as a musician BEFORE computer use exploded!

It used to be that all music was marked with rehearsal letters, so that

"Please start on the 3rd measure of C"

was simple and easily understood. (Instead of 3rd measure "OF C" conductors often say: "Please start on the 3rd measure **after** C" - this means the same thing.)

The "C" (or other rehearsal letter) is always at the beginning of the first measure of the section, so the first measure of Letter C – or the first measure after C – is the measure under the letter C (or sometimes the letter is placed right above the bar line and the first measure is the measure that follows that bar line).

Fast forward a few decades... With the advent of personal computers and music writing programs, measures could easily be numbered; consequently, with computers, rehearsal sections began to be marked by the measure number. (As players in the old days, we used to write the measure numbers in by hand. The publishers didn't spend the extra time/money typesetting measure numbers!!!)

OK... "Please start on the 3rd measure of section 15" seems confusing,
BUT... here is a way to think about it, whether you have rehearsal letters or rehearsal numbers.

The rehearsal number or the rehearsal letter ALWAYS mark the beginning of a section. Read that again: The rehearsal number or the rehearsal letter ALWAYS mark the beginning of a section. They are there to make it easier for the director to tell everyone where to start!

So, if you think of the request, "Please start on the 3rd measure of C", as actually saying, "Please start on the 3rd measure of section C" that becomes easy! Same with, "Please start on the 3rd measure of 15", it means, "Please start on the 3rd measure of **section 15**" (meaning, the section that starts with measure 15).

Or, other ways of saying it are:

"Please start on... "the 3rd measure after 15"

"measure 3 of 15"

or sometime just: "OK, 3rd of 15. GO!"

Are we all confused now???? 🤔

Just remember:

- The rehearsal number or the rehearsal letter ALWAYS marks the beginning of a section.
- Count the first measure of the section as the first measure of the instructions:
- So... "the 3rd measure after 15" means the same thing as "the 3rd measure of section 15". Section 15 starts on measure 15, so to find the 3rd measure of 15 you count, "15, 16" and start on "17", because "15" is the first measure of 15; "16" is the 2nd measure of 15; 17 is the 3rd measure of 15!) Voila!!

In the example below, what change happens in the 5th measure of 5?

"Pennsylvania Polka"
Polka!

The image shows two staves of musical notation for "Pennsylvania Polka". The first staff starts with a forte (f) dynamic and a rehearsal mark at measure 5. The second staff starts with a forte (f) dynamic and a rehearsal mark at measure 13. The dynamic changes from f to mf at measure 5.

If you said, "it gets louder" or anything that has to do with the forte (f) mark, you are right!
Easy??



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