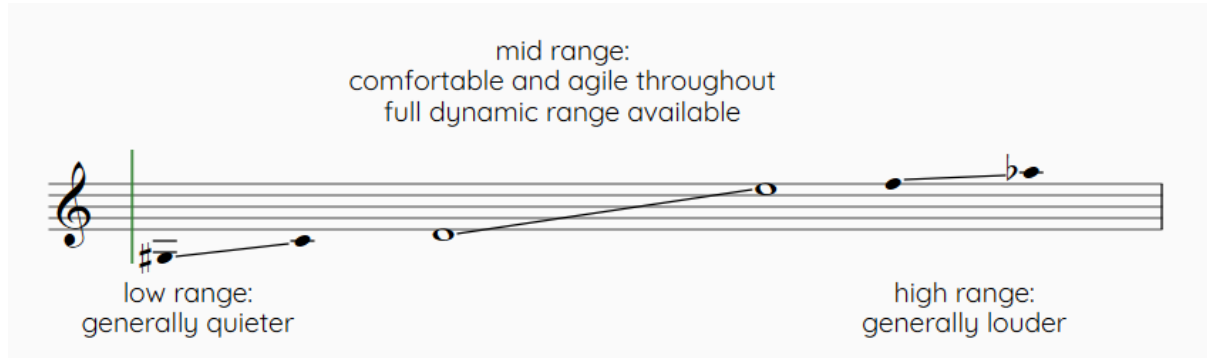


# Writing for Voice & Piano

## Voice

Range (specific to Jessica Summers)



Generally, the voice is best kept to where it is most comfortable for extended periods of singing. The upper and lower ranges are best when used less frequently, but can be very effective for dramatic moments in the music. Extended high or low writing can be tiring on the voice. You might also consider the phonemes that are sung in these ranges: open vowel sounds are best up high.

Term	Notation in score	What it means
Melisma		Sharing a vowel sound across several pitches
Syllabic		Each note has a different word/syllable on it
Glissando	<i>gliss.</i> or a short line	Slide between notes – very effective and easy for voice.
Non-word singing (e.g. humming)	<i>hum</i> or with a vowel as lyrics	This can be closed mouth (e.g. mm) or open mouthed (e.g. ah). A vowel sound can be used as the lyrics e.g. ‘Ah_’ or ‘Ooo_’ or the instruction ‘hum’
Non word consonants	Write the consonant/phoneme as a lyric	Consonants can be held as well as vowels, e.g. the ‘ng’ of ‘sing’ (in which case see above), but consonants can also be used as noises: “sh”, “k”. Do not use international phonetic alphabet, almost no-one can read that!
Speaking	<i>Spoken</i> or x notehead	Write words in the score, these can be given an unpitched rhythm; and roughly pitched rhythm; or just be written as non-metrical prose (although do consider the speech timing )
Hand claps/clicks	x notehead on a chose line	The singers could make percussive sounds using their body or hands, e.g. claps, clicks, chest thumps, or mouth covering.
Whistling	<i>Whistle</i>	Write pitches without words

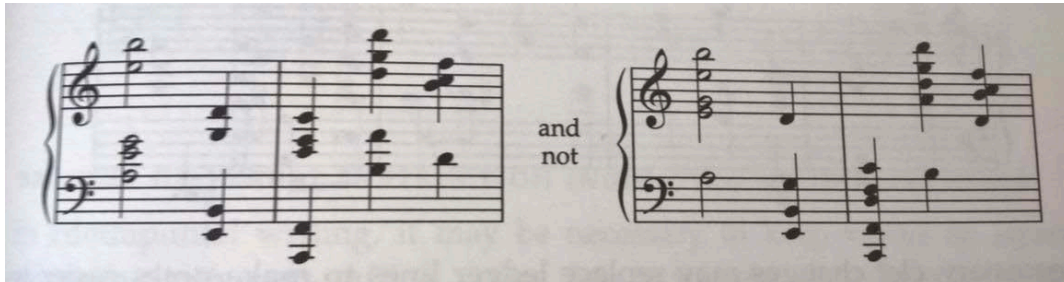
Note: Vocal dynamics go above the music, so as to leave room for the lyrics beneath. Dynamics on the piano go between the staves if they can fit, although they can go above or below as well when being specific to upper or lower voices.

# Writing for Voice & Piano

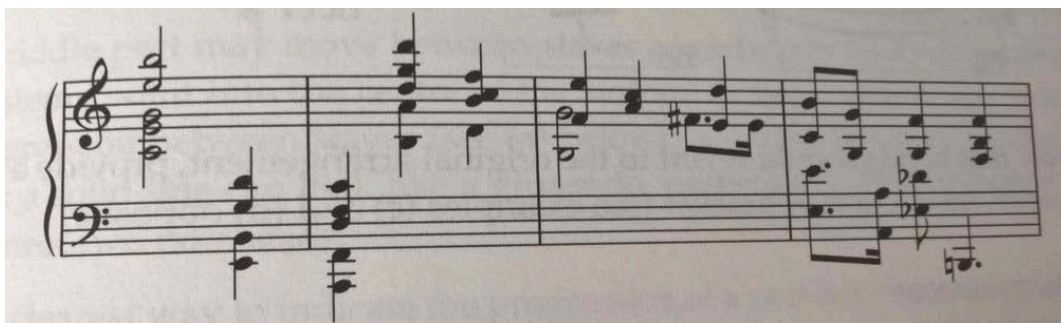
## Writing for piano

Some basics of piano notation:

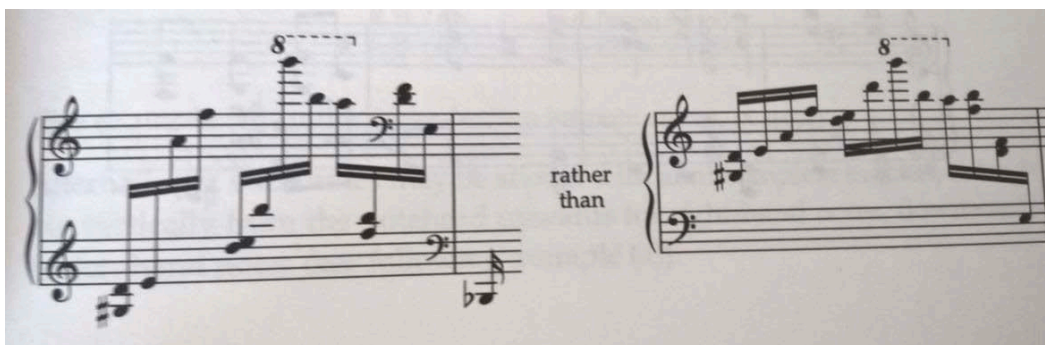
1. Distribution of notes on the two staves indicates which hand is to play them.



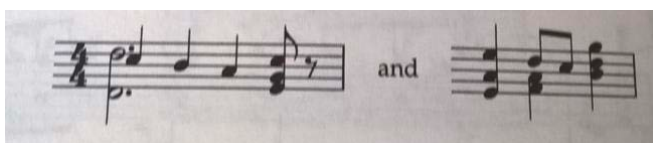
2. Stem direction can also be used to indicate hand distribution, whilst avoiding ledger lines and clef changes.



3. It is important to show how the hands of the player are to move. This also helps with making sure you compose something practical.

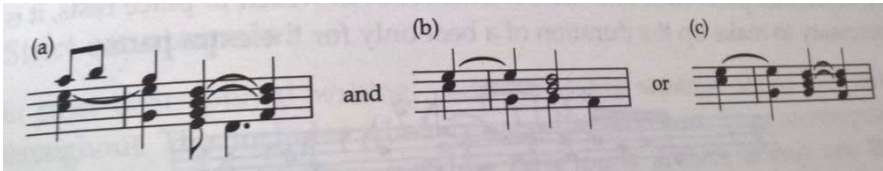


4. There can be multiple parts or voices in each hand, and these should be made clear by using different stem directions. It is possible to revert to single stemming at the earliest opportunity (even in the middle of bars), and rests can be hidden where unnecessary.

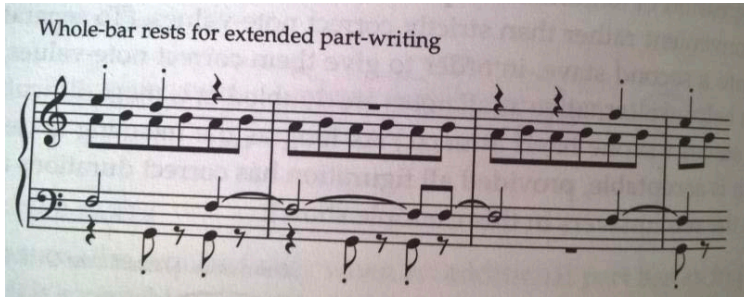


5. It is possible to have chords where only some notes are tied. Where possible use different stem directions, but if this is not possible then ties can be used to break up larger rhythms in order to show some internal part movement.

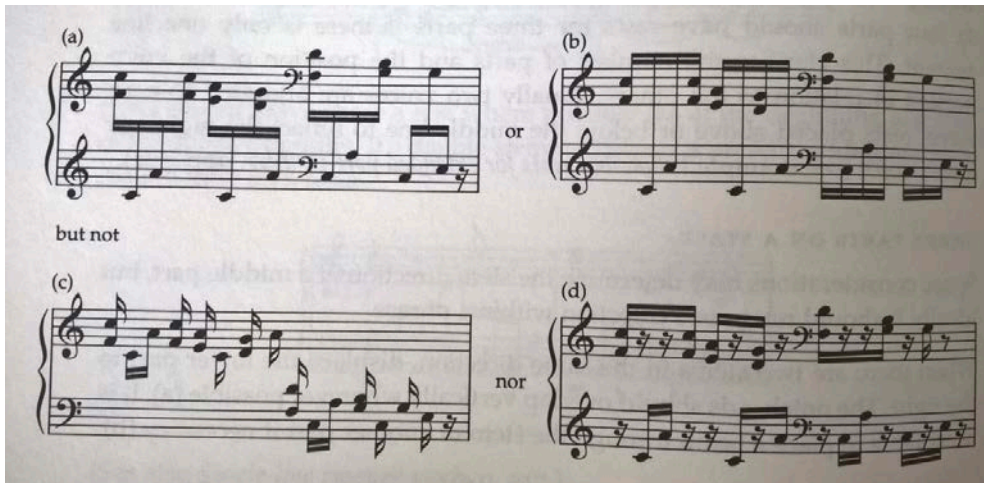
## Writing for Voice & Piano



Here is another example of multiple parts on a staff. There is no need to include whole bar rests where parts stop, unless it has a purpose – as in this example.



Where a line of notes is split between the hands and staves, it is possible to use a single beam across both staves lines. Be careful not to squash the beams in the middle!



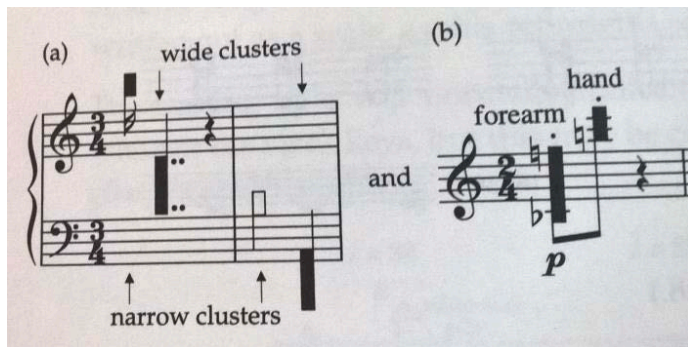
Dynamics in general go in the middle of the staves, if they apply to both hands. Where they do not they can go below each staff, or even above if there is complex part writing.



# Writing for Voice & Piano

## Extended piano techniques

- Silently depress keys (diamond noteheads used)
- Pedal sounds (x notehead)
- Hitting the piano (x notehead)
- Plucking/hitting strings
- Harmonics on strings played with the hand
- Dampening the strings with hand
- Clusters – undefined chords, where the performer places the palm of the hand flat on the keys.



Extracts taken from **Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars***, published by Faber Music.

## Some listening suggestions for Voice and Piano

Franz Schubert	<i>Schwanengesang</i>
Claude Debussy	3 Poems de Stéphane Mallarmé
Lili Boulanger	<i>Reflets</i>
Olivier Messiaen	<i>Harawi</i>
Benjamin Britten	<i>Winter Words</i>
Thea Musgrave	<i>A Suite o' Bairnsangs</i>
Oliver Knussen	<i>Whitman Settings, Op.25</i>