

hey, it's kids!

# SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!



**Q:** Dear Sparky: What does it mean that certain instruments are “transposing instruments”? Does that affect how I should write music for them?

-A.M., Dana Point, CA

**A: WOOF!\***

**\*TRANSLATION:** *TRANSPOSING INSTRUMENTS ARE INSTRUMENTS WHICH PLAY IN A DIFFERENT KEY THAN WHAT IS ON THE PAGE.*



FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN A CLARINETIST **SEES AND PLAYS A G**, IT ACTUALLY SOUNDS LIKE AN **F!**

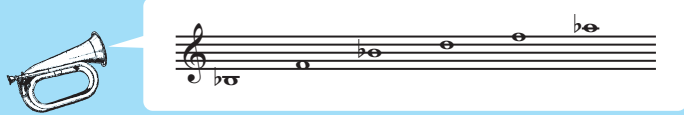
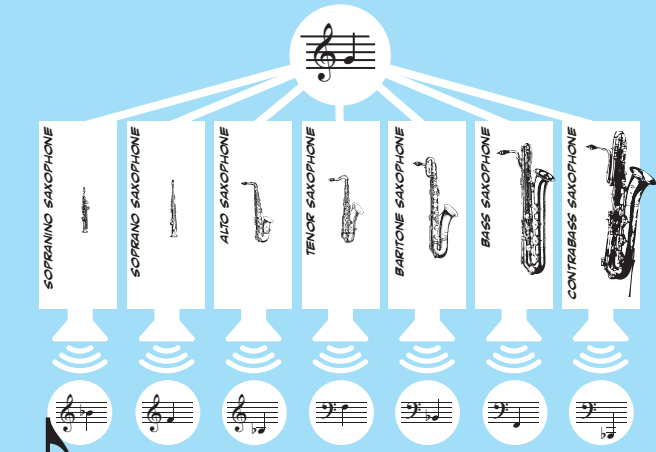
**WOODWIND** INSTRUMENTS COME IN DIFFERENT SIZES TO COVER A **LARGER RANGE**.

RATHER THAN LEARN **NEW FINGERINGS** FOR EACH **SIZE OF INSTRUMENT**, IT'S EASIER TO HAVE ONE SET OF FINGERINGS THAT WORKS ON ALL OF THEM!

**WHY?** THE REASON DEPENDS ON THE **TYPE OF INSTRUMENT!**

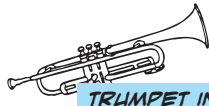
**BRASS** INSTRUMENTS, LIKE WOODWINDS, WERE BUILT IN MANY **DIFFERENT KEYS...**

ESPECIALLY SINCE EARLY BRASS INSTRUMENTS DIDN'T HAVE **VALVES**, AND THIS COULD ONLY PLAY THE **HARMONIC OVERTONES** OF A **SINGLE NOTE!**

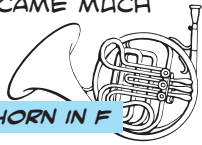


EVEN AFTER VALVES BECAME **COMMON**, INSTRUMENTS WERE STILL AVAILABLE IN A **VARIETY OF KEYS...** AND IT MADE SENSE TO WRITE THEIR MUSIC SO THAT **FINGERINGS** WERE **CONSISTENT** ACROSS THE BOARD!

**EVENTUALLY**, OF COURSE, INSTRUMENTS IN CERTAIN KEYS WERE **PREFERRED** FOR THEIR **TIMBRE** AND **RANGE**, AND BECAME MUCH MORE COMMON!



TRUMPET IN B FLAT



HORN IN F

SO WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN IF YOU JUST WANT TO **WRITE SOME MUSIC?**

FIRST, FIGURE OUT IF YOUR INSTRUMENT **TRANPOSES...** AND IF IT DOES, **HOW:**

| WHEN YOU PLAY A WRITTEN NOTE ON: | BARIT SAX   | BASS CLARINET TENOR SAX | CONTRABASSOON DOUBLE BASS | ALTO CLARINET ALTO SAX | ENGLISH HORN FRENCH HORN | ALTO FLUTE           | B FLAT CLARINET SOPRANO SAX TRUMPET CORNET | FLUTE OBOE TROMBONE TUBA VIOLA CELLO | E FLAT CLARINET    | PICCOLO XYLOPHONE | GLUCKENSPIEL       |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| IT WILL SOUND:                   | FB+M6 LOWER | FB+M2 LOWER             | ONE OCTAVE LOWER          | MAJOR SIXTH LOWER      | PERFECT FIFTH LOWER      | PERFECT FOURTH LOWER | MAJOR SECOND LOWER                         | AS WRITTEN                           | MINOR THIRD HIGHER | ONE OCTAVE HIGHER | TWO OCTAVES HIGHER |

THEN, ACCOUNT FOR IT! IF AN INSTRUMENT **SOUNDS** A PERFECT FIFTH LOWER, TRANPOSE THEIR PART A PERFECT FIFTH HIGHER!



WANT THIS?



WRITE THIS!

THE **GOOD NEWS:** MOST MUSIC NOTATION SOFTWARE CAN HANDLE ALL THIS AUTOMATICALLY!

# DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!