

6/8 and 9/8 Marches

- **6/8 and 9/8 (also 12/8 if applicable) marches are in compound rhythm with each pulse representing the value of a dotted note i.e. a dotted quarter note/ crotchet.** The less advanced piper often finds difficulty in playing the proper compound rhythm in these tunes because each pulse rhythm has the equivalent of three eighth notes or quavers with a basic rhythm of 1--2,3- (compound jig rhythm is more evenly in the pulse, see later). Therefore, 6/8 means six eighth notes to the bar. **To find the number of pulses in the bar simply divide the upper numerator by three. In 6/8 it comes to two pulses in the bar, 9/8 three.**
- **Two extracts illustrate 6/8 and 9/8 marches,** although 9/8 is perhaps not strictly March time. Notice how the pulses are separated from each other in the bar, two in 6/8, and three in 9/8.

6/8 March “Dovecote Park” will be first. The first part will be used to show the basics.

The 1--2, 3- and D/U on some pulses are reminders on pulse rhythm for compound time Marches. Most tied eighth notes have the first one dotted, the second short and slick, although clear, and the third relaxed to complete the rest of the upbeat. *It this upbeat eighth note that some pipers tend to neglect and cause the rhythm to be jerky especially when overdoing the stress on the dotted note.* Some times the first of the tied notes will be short. Simply retain the downbeat on the next dotted note, and the upbeat on the third note. A degree of accent or feeling on the first note in each bar (left foot on the march) can impart expression and control, without being overdone.

Single dotted quarter note pulses must have their full value as in the eighth bar #- then the doubling on “D” spot on.

The dotted “E”* in the seventh bar is effective when felt before executing a clear half tachum. See later on tachums.

Dovecote Park first part

March

J. Braidwood

Refer link.

Continued next page

Comments relevant to the next three parts of Dovecote Park. - Track 1.50 minutes.

In the second part the “Fs” predominate with feeling as advised earlier about expression in these marches.

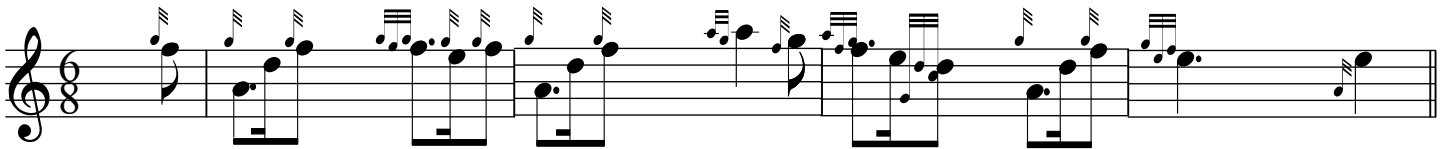
The third part has predominant low “As” with feeling and clean, clear, short “Ds” on upbeats.

The fourth part simply has feeling on the high “As” and odd low “A”, all within the regular flow.

Grace notes in compound time tunes should not be overdone. - Track 4.54 minutes.

When overdone it is usually the “G” grace note applied too often to the upbeat eighth notes. The odd time the “G” grace note is shown on upbeats on the upper hand, say from a short “F” to upbeat “E”, it is normally acceptable. When grace notes are used indiscriminately much of the desired punch on the downbeats is undermined, clarity of execution becomes difficult and can sound clumsy.

The following extract from the third part of Dovecote Park **with too many grace notes** compared with the third part previous page helps to illustrate:



X -----

You should find when playing this way how it is cumbersome with too many grace notes.

Beware that in some music books these tunes are sometimes overloaded with grace notes. When in doubt - leave out. In general grace notes appear much less on upbeats, but essentially on downbeats.

Tachums in these tunes are played in full only on downbeats. Half tachums only are on upbeats, “D” grace note only. Examples follow: Track to 4.10 minutes.



Full tachum on downbeat, **correct.** Half tachum on upbeat, **correct.** Full tachum on upbeat is **wrong** and undesirable and akin to overloading.

Tempos in 6/8 marches

A performance of 6/8 marches in a recital, competition, or in your own music practice, would have a musical tempo of about 84 to not more than 96 BPM.

For others to march to depends on the requirements of the parade organisers in consultation with the band Pipe Major, or piper when only one for very small groups etc. Tempos from about 108 to 116 BPM would be about average. Some times depending on age of people on parade the tempo might be a little bit slower, but seldom much faster than 116 BPM.

All these principles apply to all 6/8 marches. Endeavour to always play with tasteful musical expression/style, good technique, and flowing rhythm appropriate to the tune being played.

When playing two or more marches in a group try to vary the key of each tune, say first tune finishing on its keynote “A”, the next on “D”, and a third on “B”. **Tunes in “A”** normally predominate on “A” low and high “A”, “E” and “C” with third and fourth bar single interval transposition. **Tunes in “D”** predominate on “D”, “B” and “F” in a similar manner. No matter which tune, both low “As” and high “As” usually sing out.