
How Dorico represents pitches and octave transpositions

When importing Finale files from XML you might notice that Dorico moves pitches in the transposed clefs (bass clef for SSAA, treble clef for TTBB) up or down an octave. Dorico handles octave transpositions differently than Finale. Here's a helpful explanation from Jason Loffredo, on the Dorico Facebook group.

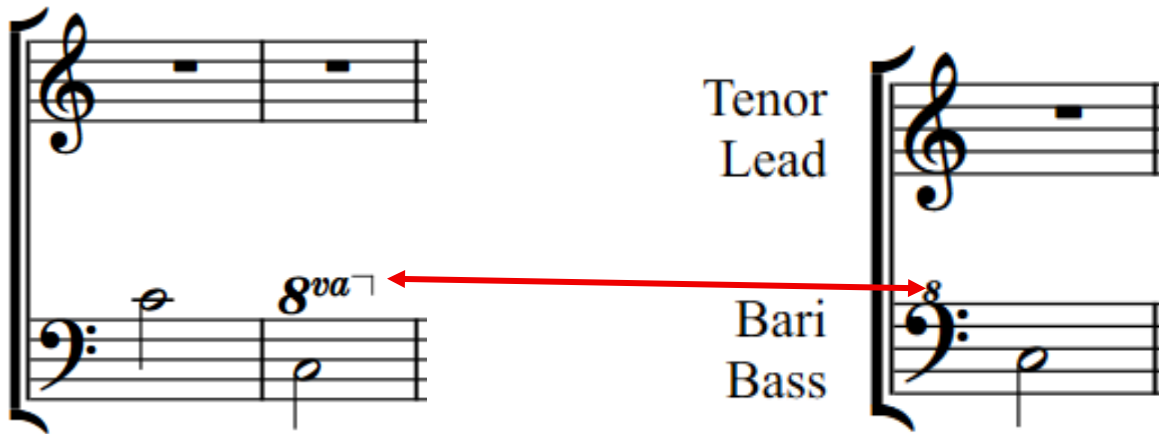
In Dorico logic, the pitches are the pitches. D6 is D6 is D6. What's different is how D6 is represented. Without the 8va line D6 is above the staff, with the 8va line D6 is in the staff with an octave line, but they're both D6. And they will play back the same of course.

In Finale it's like the octave line transposes the pitch. In Dorico it's just representing it differently, there's no transposition under the hood.

This is also why octave lines appear in the clef tool. Think about the fact that you can add a middle C in treble, bass, alto, or tenor clef and it's the same middle C, but in each clef it goes on a different line relative to the 5-line staff. It's basically the same idea with octave lines.

The diagram illustrates how Dorico represents the same pitch (D5) in different clefs. On the left, a treble clef staff shows three measures: Measure 1 (unaltered pitch), Measure 2 (pitch with an 8va mark), and Measure 3 (pitch with an 8ba mark). On the right, a Tenor Lead staff (treble clef with an 8 below it) shows the pitch on the second line, and a Bari Bass staff (bass clef) shows the pitch on the second line. A red arrow points from the Tenor Lead staff to the 8ba note on the left.

<p>On the left: All three of these notes are D5: Measure 1 is the unaltered pitch. Measure 2 has an 8va mark, indicating one octave higher. (8va = ottava, or octave) Measure 3 has an 8ba mark, indicating one octave lower. (8ba=ottava bassa, or octave lower)</p>	<p>On the right: TTBB barbershop uses the transposing treble clef. The 8 below the clef indicates that all treble clef notes are sung an octave lower than where they are written. This note is also D5. It's another way of representing the note in measure 3 on the left.</p>
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On the left: Both measures are Middle C (C4). First measure is the unaltered note. Second measure has the 8va mark indicating one octave higher.

On the right: The note is Middle C (C4) written in the transposing bass clef used in SSAA barbershop. The 8 above the clef indicates that all notes are sung an octave higher than where they are written. The clef with an 8 above is another way to represent the note in measure 2 on the left.

SATB barbershop uses regular clefs with no octave transposition.

Notation Options / Clefs gives this explanation.

Clefs with octave indicators:

Ignore octave indicator **Respect octave indicator**

Clefs with 8 above or below normally indicate that the instrument playing the music sounds an octave higher (for example, piccolo) or lower (for example, double bass, or tenor voice) than written. More recently, some composers have used these clefs as a substitute for octave lines. This option allows you to choose between the two approaches to octave-transposing clefs.

The “substitute for octave line” approach is what barbershop does, and it’s what the “Respect octave indicator” choice does.