

Core Spec coverage of glyph variants in U+1D1EE MUSICAL SYMBOL REVERSED FLAT AND FLAT

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I've received feedback on some of the characters adopted with [L2/23-276 Unicode request for Stein-Zimmermann quarter-tone accidentals](#), requesting that a note be added to the character U+1D1EE $\Downarrow$ MUSICAL SYMBOL REVERSED FLAT AND FLAT and derived characters to show a common glyph variant. U+1D1EE is currently in the pipeline for Unicode v. 18. SEW review concluded that an annotation would not work well and suggested that this note be placed in the Core Spec instead.

The representative glyph on the Unicode chart, $\Downarrow$, is a fused *reversed flat* $\Downarrow$ and *flat* $\flat$ that was designed by Mildred Couper (Couper 1937; Secor & Keenan 2021). This joint glyph best illustrates that U+1D1EE is a unitary symbol. However, many scores use a later disjoint glyph that was created by Bernd Alois Zimmermann and is essentially a closely kerned *reversed flat* and *flat*, $\Downarrow$ (Zimmermann 1961; Secor & Keenan 2021). The same pattern holds for the derived arrow glyphs, U+1D1F5..1D1F6.

Some composers, such as John Croft, have used both glyphs in their work: cf. Figure 3 and Figure 4. However, the choice of glyphs in such digitally-generated scores may reflect the software used to create them more than the intention of the composer. A better measure of user preference is predigital and manuscript scores, where both glyphs also occur. For example, the joint glyph was used by Ivor Darreg, an acquaintance of Couper's (Vishnegradski 1976), as shown in Figure 6, while the disjoint glyph was used by Brian Ferneyhough, as shown in Figure 7.

Thanks to Soren Allen for providing the figures.

Core Spec text

We request adding a paragraph and table to section 21.2 Western Musical Symbols, after the first paragraph under the header *Accidentals*:

A few compound accidentals, such as U+1D12B $\flat\flat$ MUSICAL SYMBOL DOUBLE FLAT, have joint and disjoint allographs. With the accidental for three-quarters flat, U+1D1EE $\Downarrow$ MUSICAL SYMBOL REVERSED FLAT AND FLAT, the joint glyph has a single stem while the disjoint glyph has two stems. Two derived accidentals with arrows, U+1D1F5 $\Downarrow$ MUSICAL SYMBOL REVERSED FLAT AND FLAT UP and U+1D1F6 $\Downarrow$ MUSICAL SYMBOL REVERSED FLAT AND FLAT DOWN, are similar. These different forms are shown in Table 21-1.

Table 21-1. Glyph variation of compound accidentals.

Character:	1D12B	1D260	1D1EE	1D1F5	1D1F6
Joint glyph:	$\flat\flat$	$\flat\flat$	$\Downarrow$	$\Downarrow$	$\Downarrow$
Disjoint glyph:	$\flat\flat$	$\flat\flat$	$\Downarrow$	$\Downarrow$	$\Downarrow$

In the following paragraph, *b mollum* should be corrected to *b molle*.

References

Mildred Couper (1937) *Dirge for Violin and Piano*. Mildred Couper Papers, University of California Santa Barbara.

George Secor & David Keenan (2021) *Sagittal: A Microtonal Notation System*. sagittal.org/sagittal.pdf. Last modified March 28, 2025.

Ivan Vishnegradski (1976) *Manual of Quartertone Harmony*. Translated by Ivor Darreg. Glendale.

Bernd Alois Zimmermann. *Sonate für cello solo*. [Munich?]: Edition Modern.

Figures



Figure 1. Steven Daverson (2010), *Halation*, p. 1. stevendaverson.com/halation. The disjoint glyph <♭>.

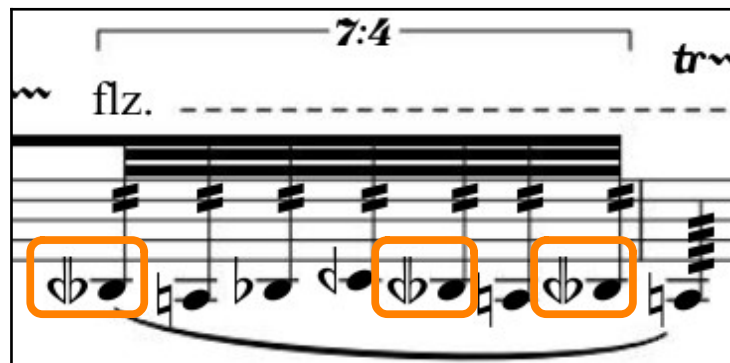


Figure 2. James Dillon (2016–2017) *The Louth Work*, p. 18. Leipzig: Edition Peters. wisemusicclassical.com/work/64301/The-Louth-Work—James-Dillon/. Disjoint <♭>.



Figure 3. John Croft (2015) *...che notturno canta insonne*, p. 9. Disjoint <♭>. Compare Figure 4.



Figure 4. John Croft (2023) *Serenata II*, p. 2. The same composer as in Figure 3 used the joint glyph <♭> in a later piece.

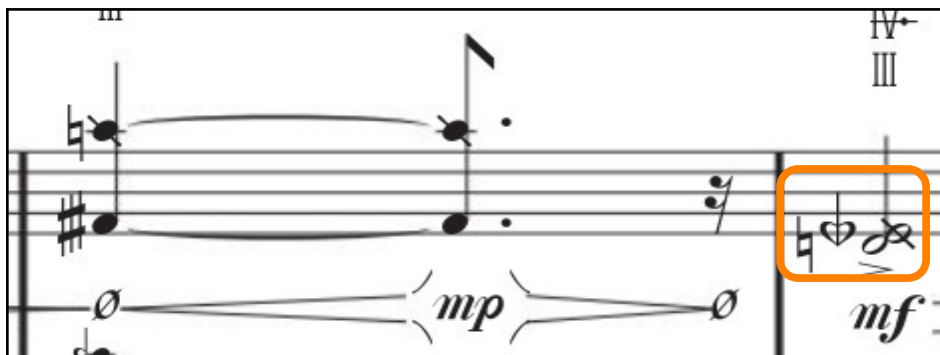


Figure 5. Mauro Lanza (2022) *Gretchen and the Fragment on Machines*, p. 15. Joint <♭>.

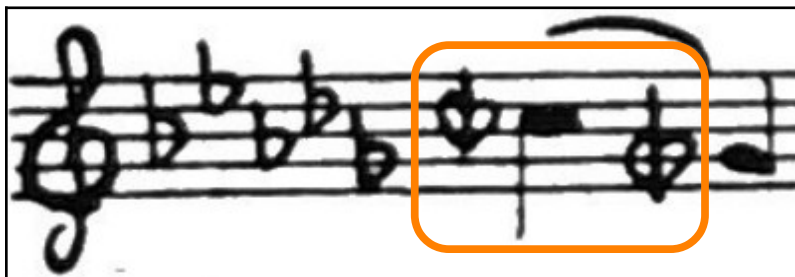


Figure 6. Ivor Darreg (revised 1966) *Five Subminor Sketches*, Op. 51, p. 3. The joint glyph <♭> in a manuscript score.

