

Improve your sight-reading!

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Stage 1 **Reading ahead and memory**

Stage 2 **More ties and new rhythms**

Stage 3 **Thicker and more complex textures**

Stage 4 **More harmonic and rhythmic patterns
in $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ and $\frac{7}{4}$**

Stage 5 **More harmonic and rhythmic patterns
in $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ $\frac{5}{8}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$**

Stage 6 **Keys with many sharps and flats and
the importance of scales**

Stage 7 **More rhythms in $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{9}{8}$**

Stage 8 **Revision**

Introduction

By now you should be able to read music as easily as you are reading this. If you work through this book carefully – always making sure that you really understand each exercise before you play it – you'll never have problems learning new pieces or doing well at sight-reading in exams!

Using the workbook

1 Rhythmic exercises

Make sure you have grasped these fully before you go on to the melodic exercises: it is vital that you really know how the rhythms work.

2 Melodic exercises

These exercises now have titles and more markings to help you create greater character and atmosphere. Get into the habit of working through each exercise in the following ways before you begin to play it:

- Make sure you understand the rhythm and counting.
- Think about your fingering, particularly position changes and chords.
- Try to hear the piece through in your head. Always play the first notes to get you started.

3 Prepared pieces

Work your way through the questions first, as these will help you to think about or 'prepare' the piece. Don't begin until you are pretty sure you know exactly what you are going to play and how you're going to play it.

4 Going solo!

It is now up to you to discover the clues in this series of practice pieces. Give yourself about thirty seconds and do your best to *understand* the piece before you play. Check the rhythms and fingering, and try to hear the piece in your head.

Always remember to feel the pulse and to keep going steadily once you've begun.

Good luck and happy sight-reading!



Stage 1

Fluent reading of text results from understanding single words or short phrases at a glance. Your eyes see and your brain interprets virtually instantaneously. You hardly need more than a quick glance to read and understand:

'It's a nice day today', or 'Improve your sight-reading!'

Complicated, unfamiliar or indeed foreign words are much less easy to process:

'Verbeter uw lazing.'

... will only make sense to you if you understand Dutch! (It means 'improve your sight-reading!')

So how does all this help your music sight-reading? The answer is simple: music reading depends on **understanding the language**, instantly recognising the symbols and knowing exactly what they mean. You need to know the different keys, spot recurring melodic patterns, really understand how rhythms go and develop an instinct for fingering.

When you prepare to sight-read, if you can say yes to each of the following questions you can be confident that the reading will be accurate and fluent:

- Do I know the key?
- Can I see any familiar patterns (probably based on scale and arpeggio shapes)?
- Do I really know all the rhythms?
- Can I see my way through the fingering?

Memory

Memory is another important factor in sight-reading. You are asking your brain to memorise the beat or bar you are playing while your eyes are looking ahead to the next beat or bar. Work carefully through the next exercises and you will begin to develop this ability.

Look at each exercise for a few seconds only, then either clap or play it straight away, looking away from the music, or closing your eyes. After you've done this, check if you were correct!

Stage 2

More ties and new rhythms

Rhythmic exercises

As well as clapping or tapping both hands, try these exercises tapping one hand and thinking the other.

1

2

3

Melodic exercises

It takes two

Tango tempo

1

Prepared pieces

- 1 In which key is this piece? Can you see any familiar patterns?
- 2 What does the tempo mark suggest about the character?
- 3 Look at the various chords and passages of two-part writing and how they will be fingered.
- 4 Do you feel you understand the piece? Where is the climax?
- 5 Play the first note and try to hear the piece in your head as best you can.

A great sorrow

Molto espressivo

1

The first system of the musical score for 'A great sorrow' is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is 'Molto espressivo'. The piece begins with a dynamic of *f cantabile*. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first bar. The left hand has a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the second bar. The system concludes with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

allargando

The second system of the musical score for 'A great sorrow' continues in 4/4 time. It begins with a dynamic of *f* and includes a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ff*. The right hand has a melodic line with a long note in the final bar. The left hand has a bass line with a fermata in the final bar. The system ends with a double bar line and an 8va (octave) marking.

- 1 Think about how you will finger the opening two bars: right hand first, then left.
- 2 What pattern do the upper notes in the left-hand bars 1-2 represent? Where does this pattern return?
- 3 Which chord are bars 3-4 based on? Can you see a pattern in bars 5-6?
- 4 Play the first notes of each hand and try to hear the piece in your head as best you can.

An impressionist painting

Grazioso

2

The first system of the musical score for 'An impressionist painting' is in 2/4 time. The tempo is 'Grazioso'. The piece begins with a dynamic of *p* and includes a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *mf*. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first bar. The left hand has a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first bar. The system concludes with a dynamic of *cresc.*

The second system of the musical score for 'An impressionist painting' continues in 2/4 time. It begins with a dynamic of *p* and includes a dynamic of *pp*. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first bar. The left hand has a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first bar. The system ends with a double bar line and a *una corda* marking.