
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!



Going solo

Car chase

Agitato

1



Musical score for 'Car chase' exercise 1. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked *Agitato*. The score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of eighth-note chords, while the left hand plays a descending eighth-note scale. The second system features a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking over a sustained chord in the right hand, while the left hand continues with a descending eighth-note scale. Fingering numbers (2, 1, 3, 1, 1) are indicated for the left hand.

Amazon adventure

Moderato

2



Musical score for 'Amazon adventure' exercise 2. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The tempo is marked *Moderato*. The score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of eighth-note chords, while the left hand plays a descending eighth-note scale. The second system features a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking over a sustained chord in the right hand, while the left hand continues with a descending eighth-note scale. Fingering numbers (4, 4) are indicated for the left hand. The piece concludes with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

The old nursery

Andante

3



Musical score for 'The old nursery' exercise 3. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked *Andante*. The score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of eighth-note chords, while the left hand plays a descending eighth-note scale. The second system features a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking over a sustained chord in the right hand, while the left hand continues with a descending eighth-note scale. Fingering numbers (3, 2, 3, 1, 2, 4, 1, 4) are indicated for the left hand. The piece concludes with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

The golden rules

Get into the following habits before you play a piece at sight and you'll be well prepared:

- 1 Scan the piece and get a feel for the *overall musical shape and idea*. What is the mood? Are there important or recurring melodic or rhythmic patterns? *What is the piece about?* Do you understand it?
- 2 Check the key – look for accidentals that may suggest a modulation.
- 3 Notice recurring patterns – rhythmic and melodic.
- 4 Get a feel for the fingering and try to spot potential hand position changes.
- 5 Notice markings that will help you convey the character and get ready to bring them to life!
- 6 Count yourself in (silently) in the usual way.

When performing your sight-reading piece:

- 1 Maintain a feel for the pulse.
- 2 Keep going at a steady tempo (though some musical *rubato* if appropriate is of course welcome).
- 3 If you make any mistakes, ignore them.
- 4 Look ahead.
- 5 Above all, play musically – convey the mood and character.
- 6 If you've prepared carefully (both over a period of time in your practice and in lessons, and immediately before playing) then simply relax and enjoy the experience.