

PIANO & Keyboard for Beginners

Comprehensive Guide for Absolute Beginners
on How to Play Popular Piano Songs, Read
Music and Master the Techniques



Michael Williams

Piano and Keyboard for Beginners

Comprehensive Guide for Absolute Beginners on How to Play
Popular Piano Songs, Read Music and Master the Techniques with
Ease with Easy to Follow Instructions and Illustrations. Learn to Play
Piano in 14 Days.

Michael Williams

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CHAPTER 2: PLAYING THE C MAJOR SCALE	4
CHAPTER 3: Reading Sheet Easily Music Part 1	11
CHAPTER 4: Reading Sheet Music Part 2	19
CHAPTER 5: Playing Ode to Joy	23
CHAPTER 6: A Short Background in Music Notation	25
PART TWO	29
CHAPTER 7 – The Twelve Musical Keys	29
CHAPTER 8: Rhythm	38
CHAPTER 9: Chord Playing	42
CHAPTER 10: Building Chords	46

<u>CHAPTER 11: Playing Broken Chord s</u>	<u>50</u>
<u>CHAPTER 12: Playing Scales Hands Togethe r</u>	<u>55</u>
<u>CHAPTER 13 – <i>Musical Terms</i></u>	<u>60</u>
<u>CHAPTER 14 – Whole Steps and Half Step s</u>	<u>67</u>
<u>CHAPTER 15: Major and Minor Key s</u>	<u>70</u>
<u>CHAPTER 16: Finger Exercise s</u>	<u>73</u>
<u>CHAPTER 17: <i>Intervals</i></u>	<u>78</u>
<u>CHAPTER 18: Counting Rhyth m</u>	<u>84</u>
<u>Chapter 19: Piano as Percussion and As Melod y</u>	<u>92</u>
<u>CHAPTER 20: Bach’s Minuet in G</u>	<u>94</u>
<u>CHAPTER 21: Playing Arpeggio s</u>	<u>103</u>
<u>CHAPTER 22: The Emotional Minor Keys</u>	<u>107</u>
<u>CONCLUSIO N</u>	<u>118</u>

CHAPTER 2: PLAYING THE C MAJOR SCALE

To pull the idea of 12 notes repeating from the bottom to the top of the keyboard, we're introducing the word **octave**. Recall in geometry there was the study of shapes, and one was the octagon, which had 8 sides. The octopus has 8 legs.

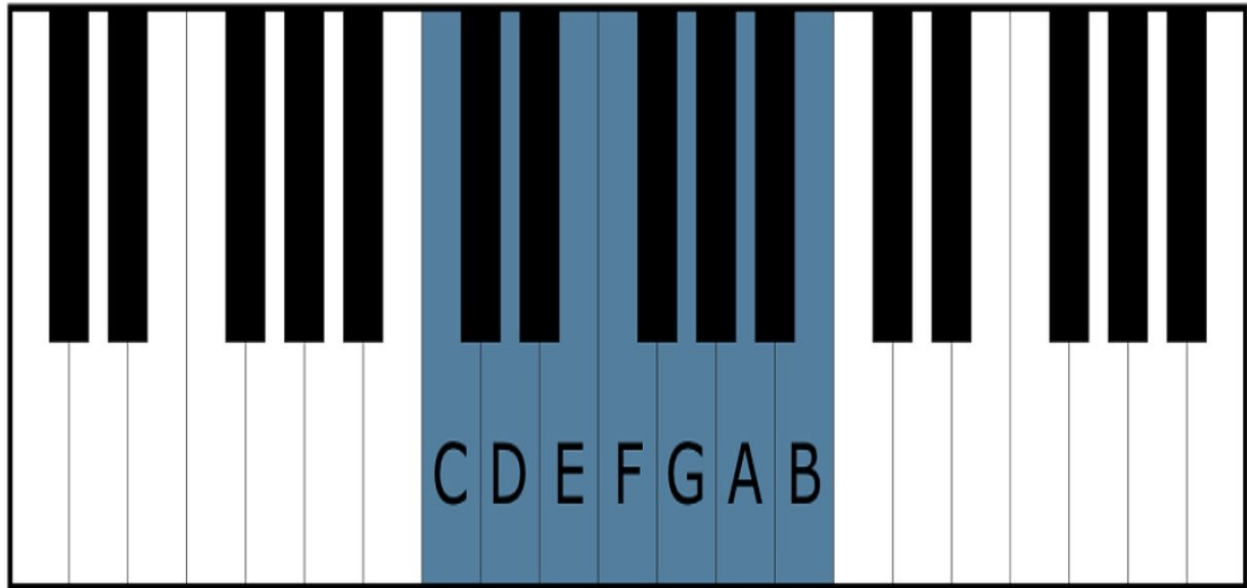
In music, an octave is a series of 8 notes. Looking at the example above, count 8 white keys from the C on the left to the next C. It can be seen that it makes up 8 notes.

Note that the C is located just below the two black keys. Now observe that the next C on the keyboard is also just below the set of 2 black keys. Once you know where C is located, it will be easy to locate the rest of the notes. We will get to that in a moment.

An octave is 8 notes because the bottom C to the top makes 8 notes: C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. 8 notes complete the scale. All scales have 8 notes. Now we can dispose of the number 7 and replace it with 8 permanently.

Now we know that a series of 8 notes in a row, without skipping notes, is an octave. Each octave is called a **scale**. The octave in the example that starts on the note C and ends on the C an octave higher, is called a **C Major Scale**.

Figure 2



You are going to attempt to play a C major scale in a moment. For now, with the index finger of your right hand, start at the bottom of the keyboard and find the lowest C you can, noting it is just below the set of 2 black keys as shown in the example.

Now play each C note from the bottom of the keyboard to the top. (**Hint:** The very top note on any size piano keyboard is C.) Try going in the opposite direction now, from the top C and down to the last one at the bottom.

Now let's try playing an octave with just an index finger. Starting at C, press down on each key until you reach the next C, an octave higher. When you play an octave a few times in a row, you'll become familiar with the sound of the C Major Scale. Soon you will understand that all scales have the same sound, despite the fact they are a different pitch.

Now finally, play the same set of 8 notes from C an octave to the next C, and sound out the names of the notes at the same time you play them:

C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C.

Repeat a few times to get the progression of note names. You don't need to commit it to memory at this point.

Fingering

Now take a look at your hands, palms up in front of you. Note there are 5 fingers on each hand (of course!) with the middle finger the longest and the thumb and little finger the shortest. Remember how many notes there are in an octave? So now there is a problem that must be faced.

A scale is made up of all the notes of an octave, which is 8. To play a scale fluidly that flows from the lower C to the higher C 8 notes away, how is this accomplished with only 5 fingers?

Each of the fingers on each hand has a number assigned to them from 1 to 5.

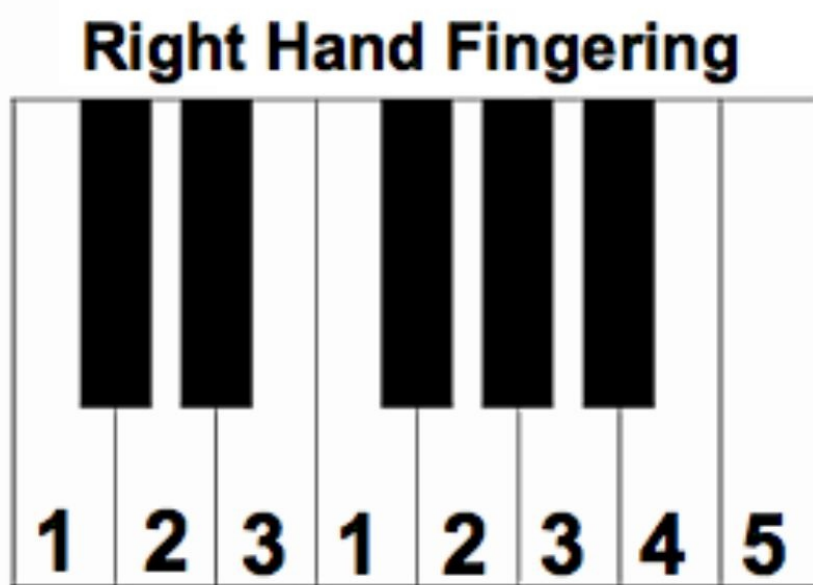
- Thumb: Finger 1
- Index: Finger 2
- Middle: Finger 3
- Fourth: Finger 4
- Little Finger: Finger 5

This numbering system applies to each hand, so the thumb is finger 1 on both the left and right hand, the index is Finger 2 on both hands and so on to the little finger.

Turning the Thumb Under

We still have to determine how to play the 8 notes of the scale with our 5 fingers. Please refer to the example below:

Figure 3



The lowest note in the example is C. Notice it is played with the first finger, the thumb. The next note, D, is played with the second, or index finger. The next note, the E, is played with the third finger.

Then the first finger number appears again for F, the next key. How do we continue playing the scale without lifting the fingers off the keyboard and resetting our hands?

Finding Middle C on the Keyboard

Middle C is located near the center of an 88-key keyboard. If using a piano, Middle C is located 4 C's up from the lowest C. Now locate the lowest C and count to the 4th one until you find Middle C.

On a 76-key or 61-key digital keyboard, Middle C is the third up from the lowest C.

Turning the thumb under the middle finger – Right Hand

Place your right hand above the piano keys, with your thumb above Middle C, 2nd finger above, D, third above E, 4th above F and 5th above G.

Press down on C with your thumb, then move to your 2nd finger. Lift your thumb off C when you play D, the lift-off D to play E. Please refer to the image below.

Figure 4



Turning the thumb under smoothly will take time. Athletes working on improving their skills in sports repeat the same motion until they get it. The same applies to playing the piano. Keep going until you get it.

Once the thumb is turned under, re-center your hand over the rest of the keys by moving your hand slightly to the right. Now you can play the rest of the keys in the scale. Your little finger will end on the C an octave higher than Middle C.

If your little finger doesn't end on C at the end of the scale that means you've skipped a finger playing the scale. Simply start over until you get it right.

Carrying the Middle Finger over the thumb – Left Hand

Now let's play the C major scale with the left hand. Instead of starting with your thumb, you'll begin with the little finger on Middle C. Press on C, then D next all the way up until you're playing G with your thumb.

Now, carry your third finger over your thumb and play the next note with the

third finger, A. Continue upward until your thumb reaches C an octave higher from your starting point.

Review this section a few times to pick up on the key terms from earlier: *Octave, Scale, and Fingering*.

CHAPTER 3: Reading Sheet Easily Music Part 1

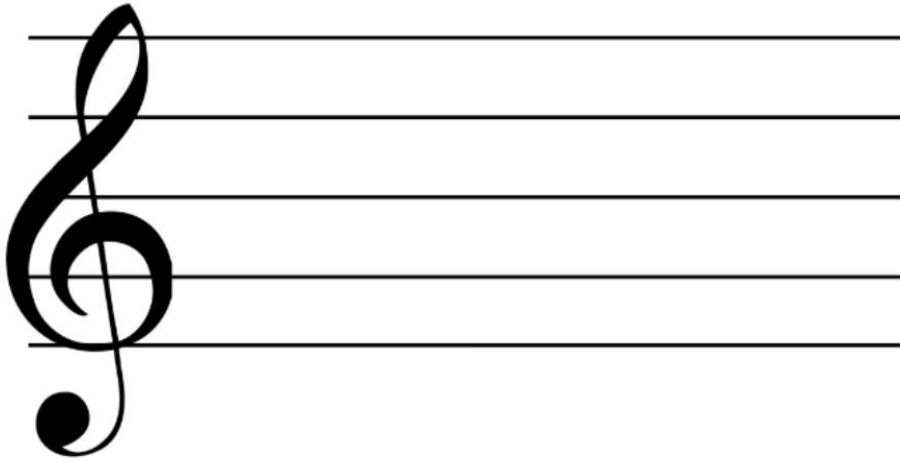
Musicians read music that is written on a **staff**. Each instrument produces different sounds, at a different part of the hearing spectrum. The piccolo produces very high sound frequencies, while the tuba produces sounds at the lower end of our hearing. The piano produces sounds called **pitches**, ranging from very low to very high.

Writing notes on a musical staff is called **music notation**. The instruments listed below produce sounds within the same frequency range as each other.

- Guitar
- Violin
- Flute
- Clarinet
- Oboe

The music for each of these instruments (and more) are written in the **treble clef**.

Figure 5

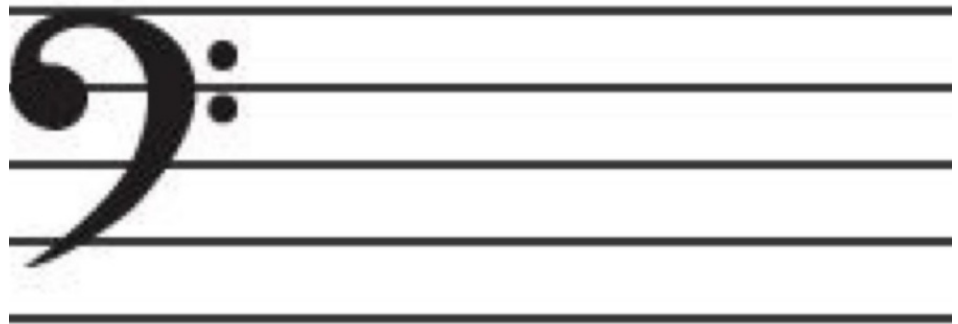


Instruments whose music is notated on the bass clef include the following.

- Cello
- Double bass
- Tuba
- Bassoon
- Trombone

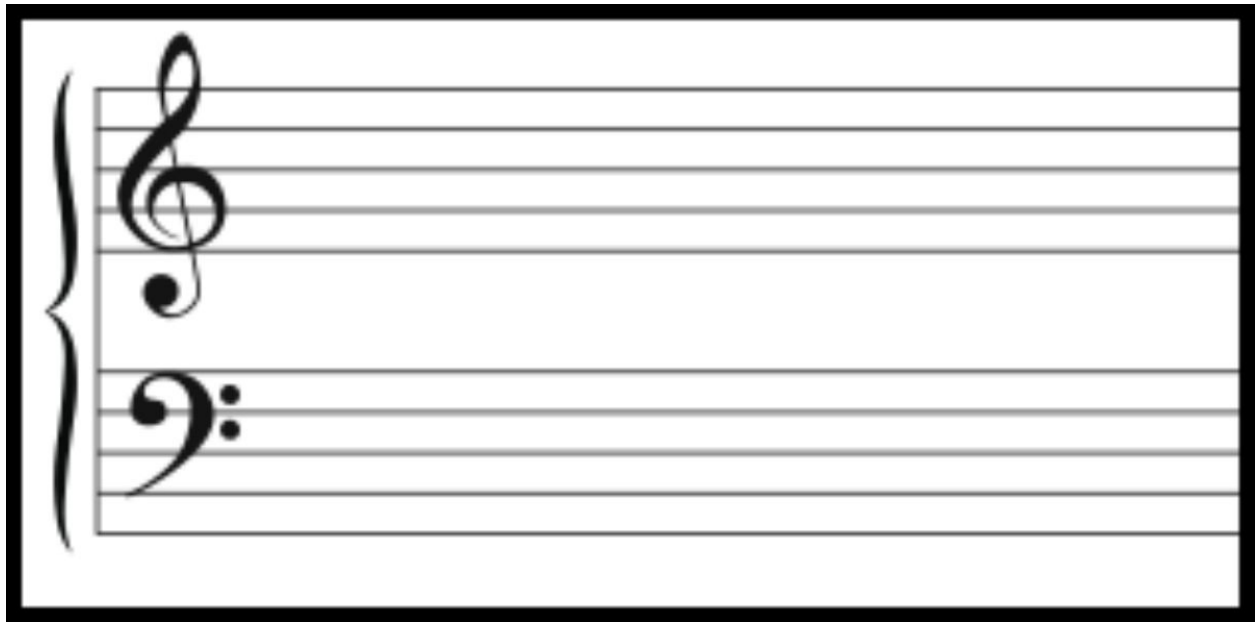
This is what the bass clef looks like.

Figure 6



The piano is played with two hands, and each hand plays notes. Musical notation for the piano is written on the **Grand Staff**.

Figure 7



The notes played by the right hand are written on the treble clef.

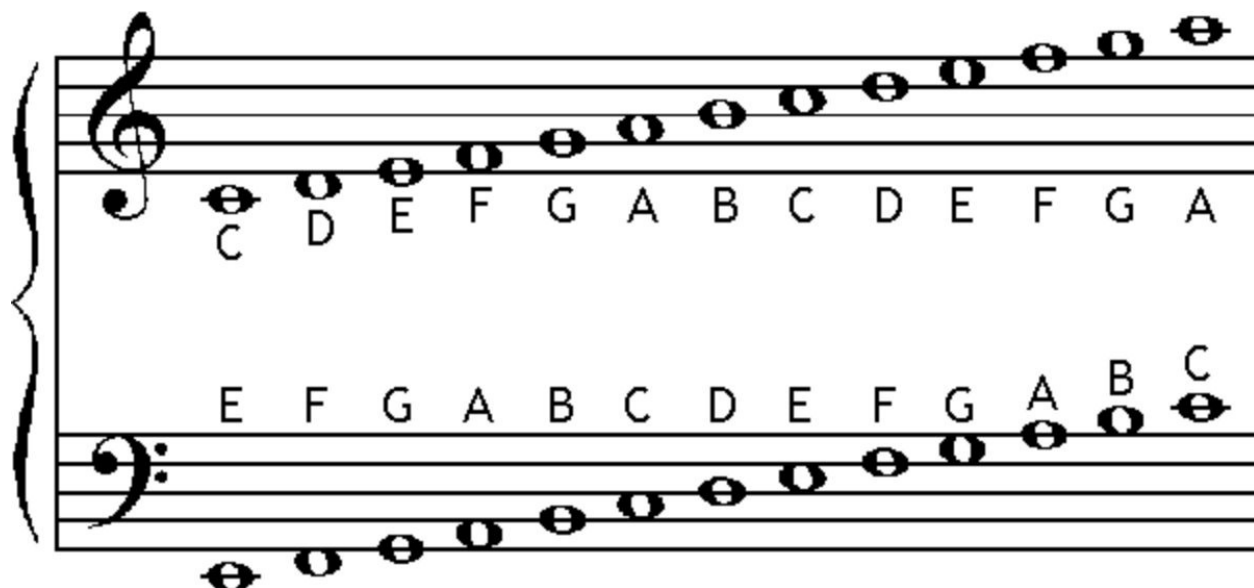
The notes played by the left hand are written on the bass clef.

Take a look at the example and observe that each staff is made up of 5 lines and 4 spaces. The bass clef, played by the left hand, are notes at the lower (to the player's left) end of the piano. The treble clef includes notes from the middle to the high register of the piano (to the player's right).

Imagine a horizontal straight line drawn on a piece of paper. On that line, starting at the left ends and moving right along the line, the 7 letters of the music alphabet are written, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, etc. until the line is full.

Music is notated on the staff the same way, except instead of being written horizontally, from left to right, it is notated *vertically*, from the bottom to the top. It also uses lines and spaces to notate. The notes are written on the lines and in the spaces of the music staff.

Figure 8



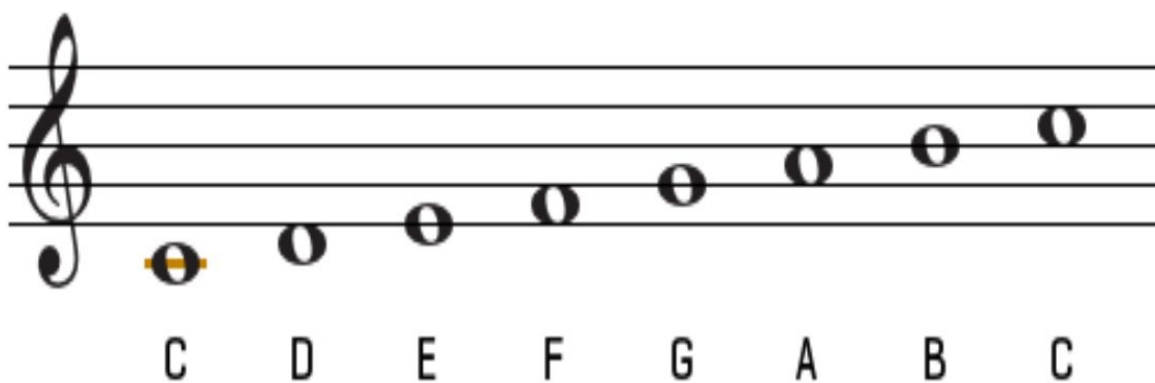
The notes on the bass clef above are found at the lower left of the piano. As the notes ascend on the staff, they are moving towards the center of the piano, towards Middle C.

Then the treble clef continues the upward movement to the right to the top of the piano.

Reading the Treble Clef Staff

Figure 9

C Major Scale Ascending (Treble Clef)



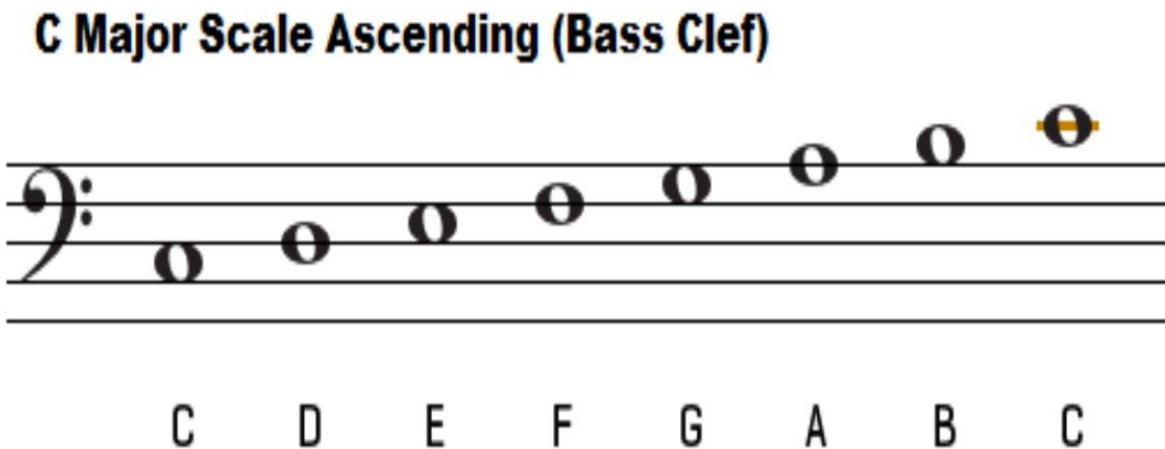
Middle C is located below the staff lines of the treble clef. It is on its own line. Lines drawn below and above the staff are called **leger lines**. Think of them as something like building an extension on a house. More room is needed here than the staff allows, so another line is drawn for the note to be placed on.

The example includes all 8 notes of the C Major Scale, and it spans 8 notes, making it an octave.

Middle C is on a line, the next note D, is in a space. This is followed by E, which is on a line. As the notes ascend they are in spaces and on lines.

Reading the Bass Clef Staff

Figure 10



The notes in the example are one octave below the notes in the treble clef above. The highest note in this example is Middle C. Try playing it as a scale, like before, playing the notes in succession and crossing the middle finger over the thumb on your way to the end.

Shortcuts for naming notes in the Treble and Bass Clef

Remember that when first that reading notes on a staff, move upwards if possible. Recall too that sheet music is merely horizontal lines that number 5, and there are 4 spaces in between. The notes are named in alphabetical order, from Middle C to D, then E, and so on. Getting into this habit allows the reader to see the logic of sheet music and will soon identify note names on the staff on

sight.

In the beginning, though, it is okay to rely on mnemonics to help identify the note names in a pinch.

Figure 11

Note Naming Mnemonics

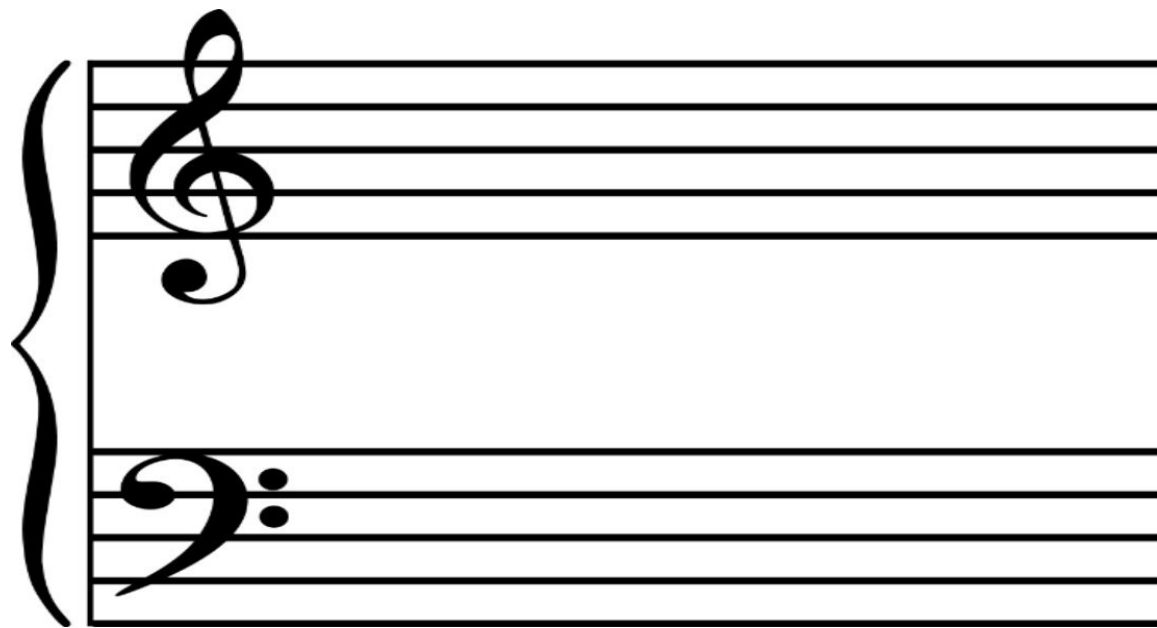


CHAPTER 4: Reading Sheet Music Part 2

Sheet music on the Grand Staff has a treble clef for the right hand and a bass clef for the left hand. In the last chapter, a C major scale was played in the treble and then the bass clef. Now let us look further to see what other information is written on sheet music to guide the player for the performance of musical pieces.

Figure 12

The Grand Staff



On the left side outside the Grand Staff is a large bracket which indicates that both treble and bass clef are played simultaneously and as one piece of music.

Next, to the right of the bracket is the treble clef drawn in its 5 staff lines. Below the treble clef is the bass clef and its corresponding 5 staff lines. Note that there is a space between the treble clef staff and the bass clef staff in the middle. This

area is for adding leger lines. Middle C is located on its own leger line in this space.

To the right of the treble and bass clef symbols and in each staff is **4/4**. Players are only concerned with the top number, which in this case is **4**. This means, “4 beats per measure.” The majority of musical works for the past 400 years are written in “4/4 time.”

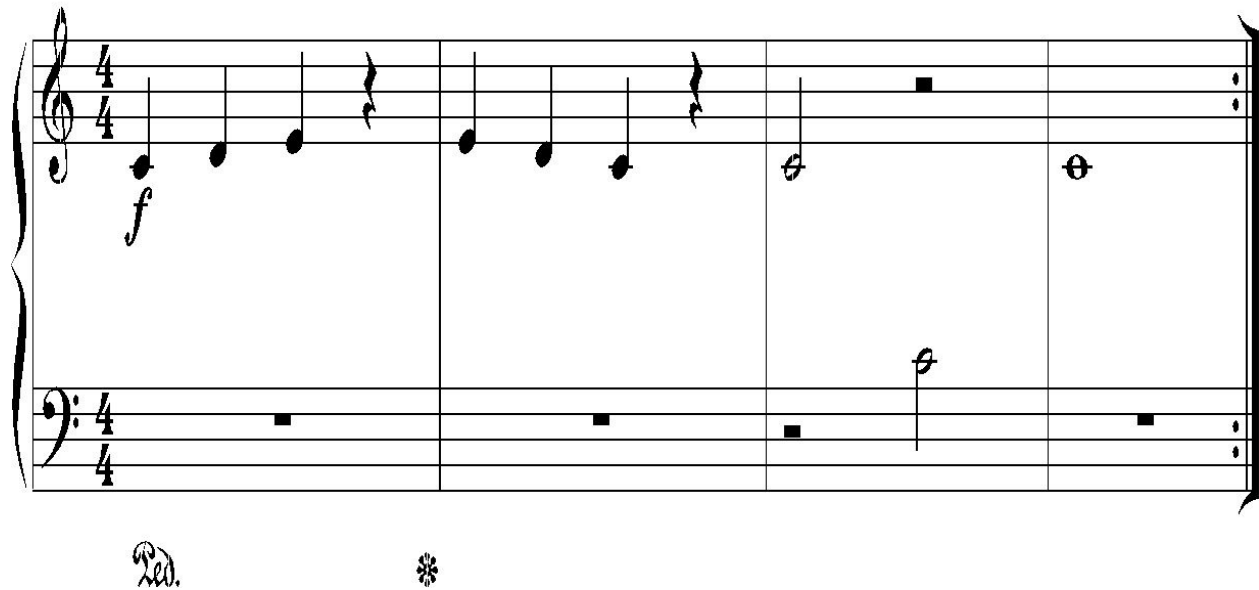
Moving to the right, black rectangles are hanging from a line in each clef. This symbol is called a **rest**. The rests here are called **whole rests** because it lasts the entire measure.

Next is a vertical line that cuts through all five lines of each clef. This line is called a **measure bar**. This bar separates each **measure**. Within each measure in this example are 4 **beats** of music. In the example looking from left to right, there are a total of four measures.

Lastly, at the end of the 4th measure is a thin vertical line, and next to it, a solid vertical line that runs through both measures. This is called a **bold double bar line** and is found at the end of every song written on sheet music. It is used to indicate the end of a piece of music.

More Grand Staff Symbols

Figure 13



Here we have added some more notations onto the sheet music, as well as notes. Take a look in the middle of the first measure of the Grand Staff. There the letter “*f*”, is shown . This stands for **forte**, and it tells the player to play the song *loud* .

Look underneath the first measure of the Grand Staff. There is some writing in a sort of calligraphy. The actual letters are **Ped.** This indicates the **pedal**, and the pedal is located underneath the piano and is pressed down with the right foot. When this pedal is pressed, the notes played hold and make a sound even when the player has stopped playing. The pedal **sustains** the note. Underneath the measure bar at the end of this measure is an asterisk. This is an indication to lift up the foot pedal under the piano; lifting off the pedal will stop the sustained notes from playing.

In the first measure are three notes in the treble clef. These are **quarter notes**,

and each note lasts for 1 beat. The first note is Middle C, the next is D and the next is E. Next in the measure is a symbol in the staff lines. This is a **rest**. A rest is placed there to indicate that there is no music at that point. A rest means *silence*.

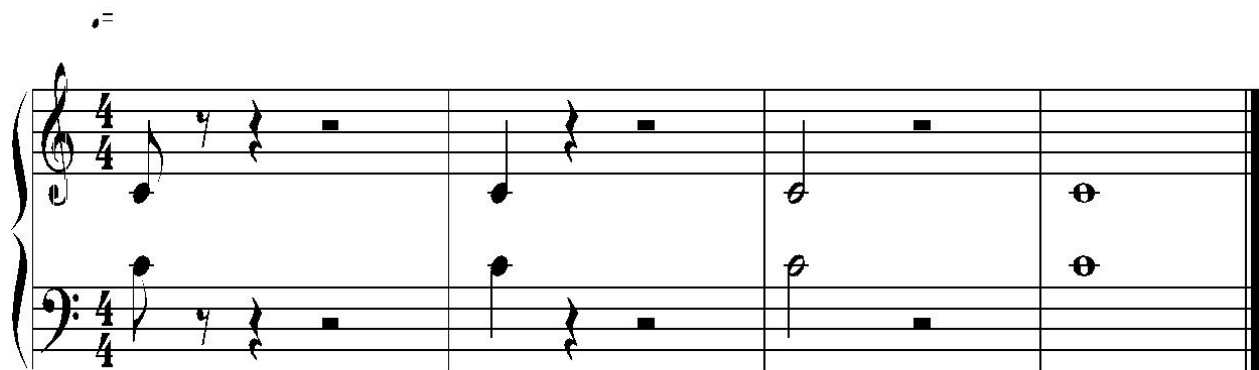
In the next measure the notes E, D, and Middle C move downward, followed by another rest. The third measure contains two clear notes in the treble clef, followed by two clear notes in the bass clef. These are **half notes**, and they each last for 2 beats.

The last measure contains one note that does not contain a stem. This is a **whole note**. It lasts 4 beats.

When playing the keyboard and reading sheet music, the numbers shown in the example will not be visible. Here they are included to indicate each of the 4 beats in each measure. Taking a look at the end of the last measure is the double bar line, but now there are two dots in the middle spaces in each clef. These dots are **repeat symbols**, indicating in this example to repeat playing the previous 4 measures.

Notes and Note Values

Figure 14



CHAPTER 5: Playing Ode to Joy

C Position for the Hands

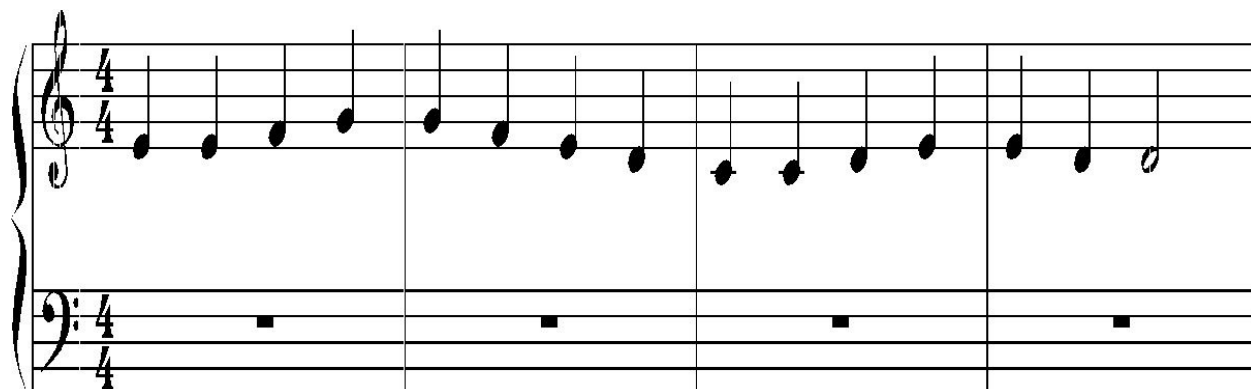
When beginning to play the piano, you will always be oriented at or near Middle C. Now, seated in front of the piano, with the center of your body directly in front of Middle C, place the thumb of your right hand above Middle C and press down lightly. Next, place the rest of your fingers over the next four keys: D, E, F, and G. This is the C position, and you will use the fingers that correspond to the keys. That means you'll play an E with your middle finger, a G with your thumb, and D with your second finger, and so on.

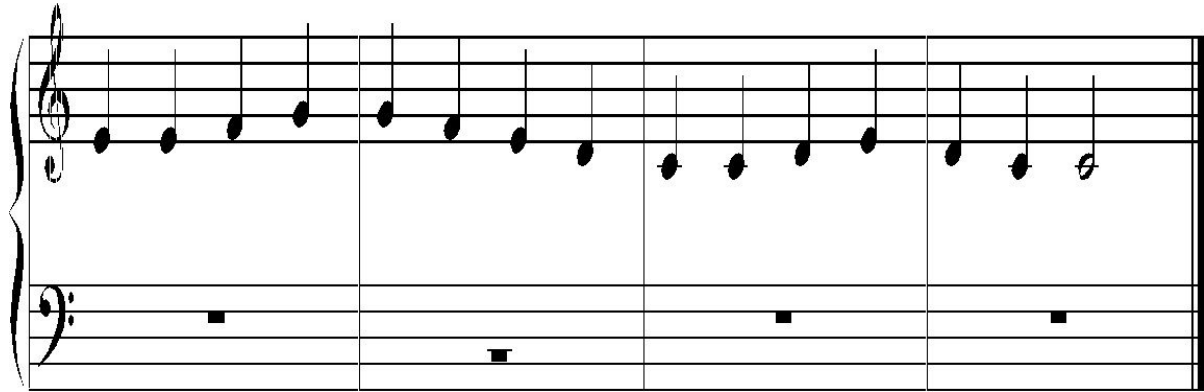
Now, with the right hand in C position, we will try and play *Ode to Joy*. It's not necessary to know the note names. Note that throughout the first part of the book, we will keep adding more notes and challenges for you to the score.

Figure 15

Ode to Joy

L.v. Beethoven





Before playing the piece, place the fingers of your right hand into C position. When you do it, note that your third finger is above the E note that will be played first. The numbers below some of the notes are there to help with fingering.

Note that there is no skipping between notes, so *Ode to Joy* is perfect for playing with your hand in C position. In the next chapter, we will talk about different note values, then return to *Ode to Joy* and include notes of shorter and longer duration.

CHAPTER 6: A Short Background in Music Notation

A window into music history and sheet music

Sheet music includes every piece of information a player needs to know to perform through a piece of music as closely as possible to the intentions of the composer of the music. Because there were no recording devices in the 18th or 19th centuries, we don't know exactly how the musical pieces composed by Bach or Mozart sound like, but decades of musicological research reveal the way a piano sounded 250 years ago. Recent discoveries of letters written by composers discussing their music have also shed light on their playing style and even the meaning of the music they wrote.

Music as an art has reached higher and higher levels of depth and sophistication over the centuries. Western music, the music of Europe, began to be written down about 1500 years ago. Gregorian chant that was sung at Mass was written not in notes, but what is called “neumes.”

Figure 16



Nothing needed to be notated except the melody that was sung by the clergy, which is depicted above. Imagine singing one long note for 60 seconds. Now imagine another singer singing “around” that note, above and below it to form a melody. This kind of singing in Gregorian chant was called **plainchant**. There could be as many as a dozen singers at once singing the same melody while another voice was a **drone**.

After hundreds of years of singing in plainchant style, there was a school of

music in France, really a movement, among composers and musicians to make religious music more expressive. The composer known to have first written multiples lines of melody, called a **harmony**, was Perotin. His most famous piece, *Viderunt Omnes*, was written for a Christmas Mass in the year 1199, displayed this multiple layered melody. This change made a profound impact on music development, its influence felt even to the present day.

Moving ahead 600 years, Johann Sebastian Bach, *Capellmeister* for his Lutheran Church wrote music weekly for church service his entire life, weekly producing cantatas and masses. Bach wrote a revolutionary book for the keyboard called *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, which was made up of 48 Preludes and Fugues. Many piano students today are taught these works. While the works are more advanced, the first Prelude in C Major is popular with first-year piano players.

The Well-Tempered Clavier standardized music into the 12 major and 12 minor scales that are used today to write music. Bach's influence is still strong, almost 270 years after his death. The scales students learn and the chords that are used to accompany the music are based on a system of **equal temperament**, which establishes a distance between each musical pitch. Keyboard today, both acoustic and electronic, establish these "ratios" between the sounds each note makes when played.

Moving forward about 50 years, there was a kind of renaissance in music, and, miraculously, three of the greatest music composers in history all lived and worked in Germany and Austria at the same time. Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and the early music of Ludwig van Beethoven were all written in what is referred to as "The Classical Style." This style is so influential that the most popular music of the last 100 years is written in the form established by these musicians.

Following the Classical Period was the Romantic Period, and included composers such as Frederic Chopin, Johannes Brahms, and Franz Schubert, and many others. This period of music developed the ideas and approach to composition that was found in Beethoven's later work, such as his 9th symphony, his late piano sonatas, and string quartets.

All the music composed up to this point was based on musical **keys** that we'll discuss next. The music is called **tonal music** and is the core style of music that is taught first at music conservatories to this day.

But near the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century there was a new

movement in music, as radical as the **polyphony** of Perotin 800 years earlier, to “think outside the box” of the Classical Style, and to change the way musical keys can relate to each other. Interestingly, many of the modern composers drew heavy influence was Beethoven, Bach, and back to Perotin in the development of this new musical style.

Composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Gustav Mahler, and Bela Bartok propelled forward a new sound that sounds both amazing and frightening.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 7 – The Twelve Musical Keys

Sharps and Flats

We noted earlier that an octave is 8 piano keys in succession. Within each octave in the C Major scale are found 5 black keys, with a space between the first two and the next three. This pattern goes from the bottom of the keyboard to the top.

Black keys are **sharps and flats**. Sharps play the pitch of the note up a **half step**, and flats play the pitch of a now down a half step.

Place a finger on Middle C. Now, play the black key just to the right of C. This note is C sharp. Sharps are notated with a pound symbol, #. The black key to the right of C is called C sharp, **C#**.

Now move to the next key in C position, the D. Play the black key just to the left of the D. This is called D-flat, or **Db**.

You may ask now, “How can the same black key be both C# and Db? The answer to this question is found in music theory and has to do with the key a piece of music is written in. This will be discussed briefly later on. For now, let’s establish the following:

Sharps are to the right. Flats are to the left.

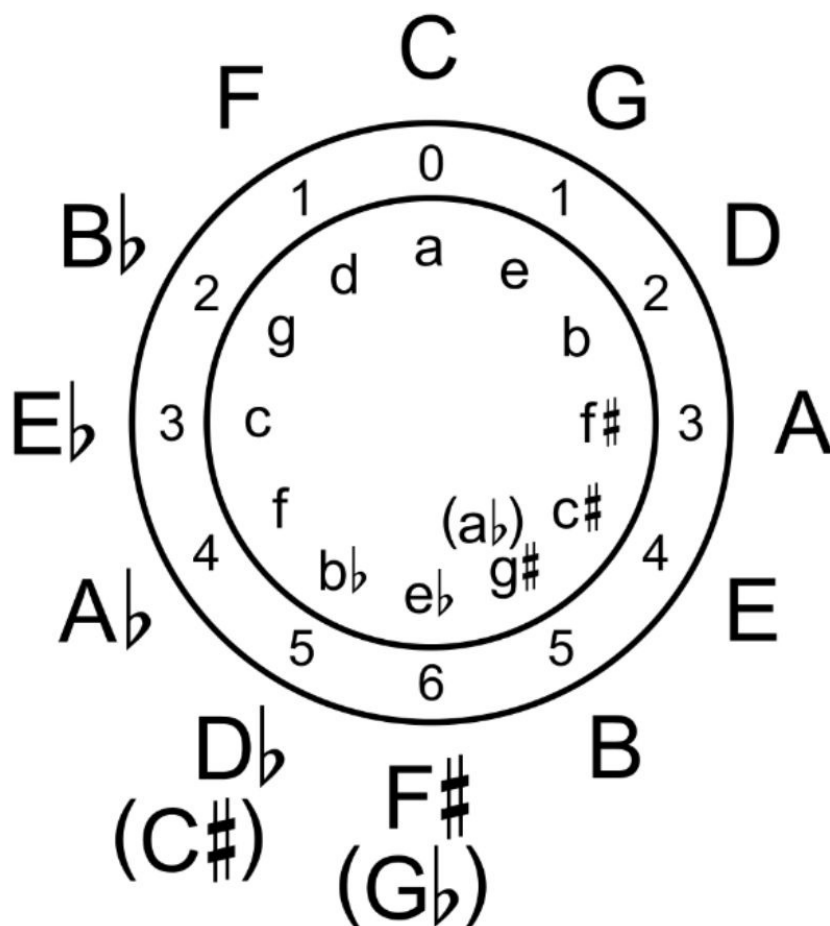
The Circle of Fifths

The first musical key that was discussed is the key of C Major. As we saw, C major is made up of 8 keys, starting on C and ending on C. As you played the scale for the key of C, you may have noticed that only white keys were played. Playing the c major scale is the least difficult for this reason, and why it is taught first to new piano students.

There are a total of **12 Major Keys**. Let’s move back to the keyboard. Starting from middle C, with your right hand play the five keys of C position: C, D, E, F, and G.

One of the well-known examples in music is called the **Circle of Fifths**.

Figure 17



A first glance it will appear complicated, even baffling, but shortly the circle will be deciphered. Now, instead of breaking down the circle of fifths in the abstract, let's decipher it by going to the keyboard and finding the musical keys shown in the circle. These will be important to your progress as a player.

At the piano, start with your thumb on Middle C. Play the 5 notes of C position: C, D, E, F, and G. Your little finger ends on G.

Look at the Circle of Fifths and note that it looks like a clock with 12 points. Note that at the one o'clock position is G.

Now, place your thumb on G and play the next 5 notes in succession, G, A, B, C, and D. You are now on the note D, which corresponds to the two o'clock position on the circle of fifths.

Let's go up 5 more notes, starting with your thumb on D: D, E, F, G, then A,

which corresponds to the 3, o'clock position on the Circle.

If we continue going up five keys at a time, it will always match the Circle of Fifths. You now have a guide when reading sheet music, that when you see the **key signature** of a musical piece, you will be able to tell the key it is in. This will be explained in more detail in a moment.

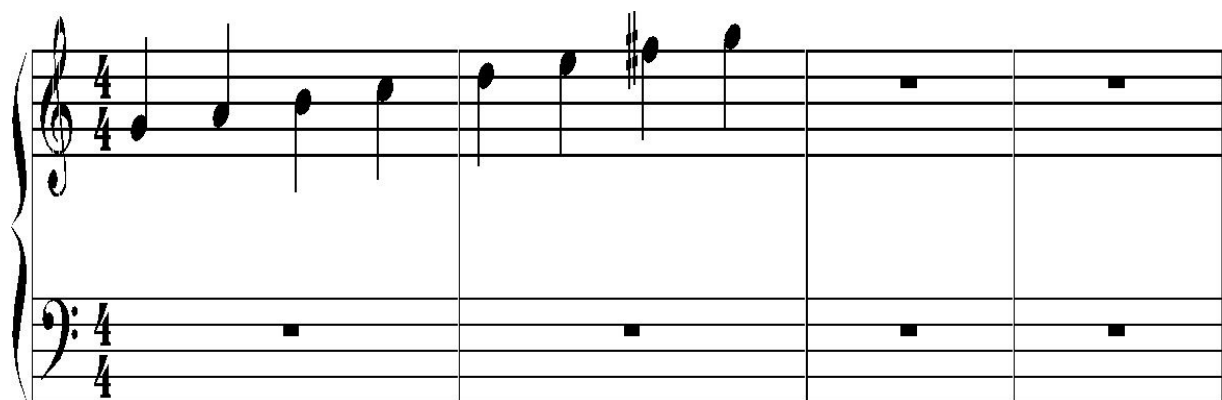
For our purposes and to be able to play scales, we can tell the number of sharps in each scale. Take another look at the Circle of Fifths, under G at one o'clock. You see there the number "1." This number tells the number of sharps in the scale. In this case, we now know that the **key of G Major** has one sharp. But what note is sharped? The Circle of Fifths does not say.

There is a shorthand way to determine which note or notes are sharped in each key. Let's start with the key of G major.

The example shows the G Major scale, from G up to G. Note that the **second to last** note of the scale has 1 sharp. This note is F#. Now take a glance at the Circle of Fifths again, noting that G major only has 1 sharp.

Figure 18

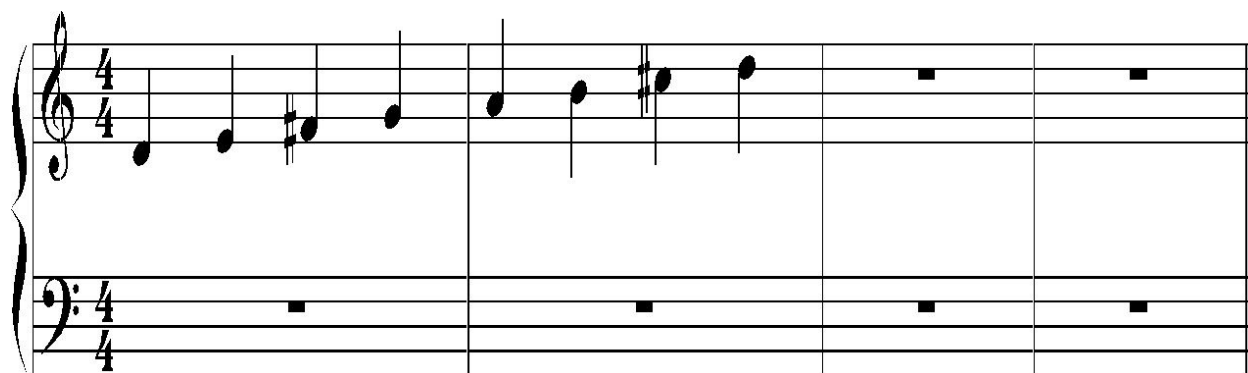
G Major Scale



Now let's move to the next key on the Circle of Fifths clock and note that it is a "D." Notice how the number is now 2, which means there are going to be 2 sharps in the Key of D.

Figure 19

D Major Scale



Looking at the example of the notes in the Key of D major, notice how the **second to last** note is sharped once again. In every major key, the penultimate note of each scale that has sharps will have a sharp sign.

Note too, that the third note of the scale is also sharped. Keep this in mind as we discover more about major key musical scales.

Naming the Key

F-C-G-D-A-E-B, your “cheat sheet.”

Here is another shortcut that will allow you to tell what notes are sharped in every key. At this point, however, it is not necessary to memorize this.

Note that the Key of G Major had 1 sharp, and it was F#.

The Key of D following had 2 sharps, F#, and C#.

Looking at the next key, that of A Major, we know from the Circle of Fifths it is at the three o’clock position, and it has 3 sharps.

Using the shortcut key **F-C-G-D-A-E-B**, can you tell which notes will be sharped in the key of A Major? If you guessed F, C, and G, you would be correct.

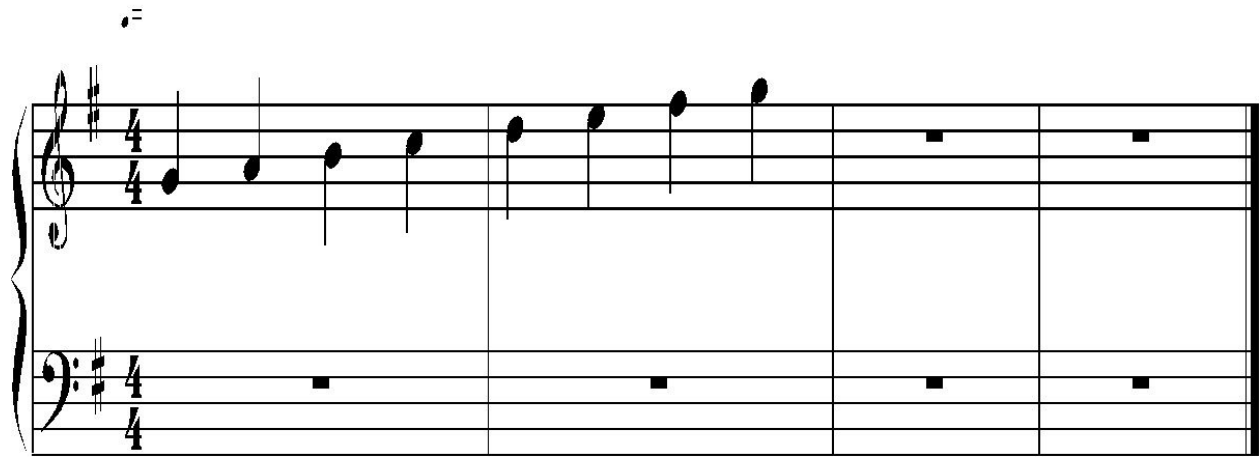
As we move up the Circle of Fifths, we add a sharp to each key. It is called the **Circle of Fifths** because we add a sharp to each key 5 notes from the starting point, as you did earlier.

Key Signatures

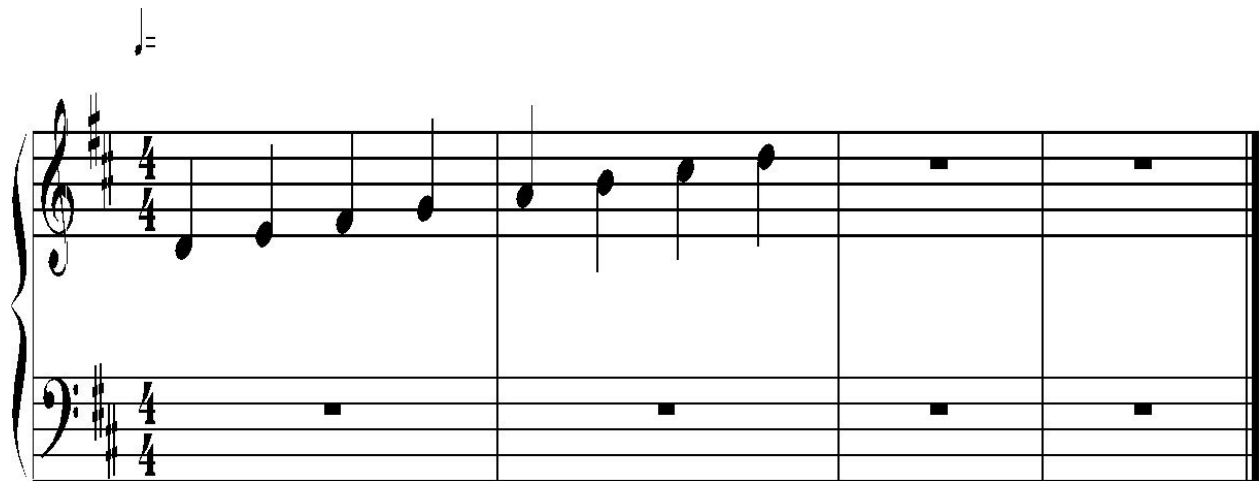
Earlier we saw examples for the Key of G Major written in sheet music, as well as the key of D Major. Now, we are going to show these keys in the next two examples again in the way they will be seen in music books.

Figures 20 and 21

G Major Scale as Written



D Major Scale as Written



These examples show that instead of sharpening the notes in each scale, a **Key Signature** is used. Located just to the right of the bass and treble clef symbols, they serve as a shorthand for those who write music, to keep the musical score less complicated in appearance. Sheet music should be as clean as possible without any unnecessary drawings or symbols.

The sharp sign for the G Major scale in the treble clef is written on the top line

of the staff. The hashtags of the sharp symbol are on either side of the top line. The top line note is F.

In the bass clef, the hashtags of the sharp symbol are on either side of the 4th line of the bass clef. The note that falls on the 4th line is also an F.

The key signature for D Major includes two sharps, F#, and C#. The very same staff lines are used to designate the F# of the scale, but also adds a c#, in the 3rd space of the treble clef and the 2nd space of the bass clef

CHAPTER 8: *Rhythm*

Seasoned musicians can look at a musical score and tell which key it is in simply by looking at the key signature. Also, they know the speed of the piece by the tempo marking above the treble clef staff, as discussed earlier.

Musicians can tell the rhythm of the piece by looking at the **Time Signature**. In the example examples throughout this book, all have been in 4/4 time, also known as **common time**. A lot of Dance music and famous waltzes such as **The Blue Danube** by Johann Strauss are written in **3/4 time**. The musical term is **triple meter**. 4/4 time is known as either **duple meter** or **compound duple meter**.

Time Signatures and Rhythm in Music

What is the difference between $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ time? It has to do with the **downbeat**. In every song, there is a strong beat followed by one or more weak beats. Think of the French – Canadian children’s song, *Alouette*, a tune most of us heard at one time or another in our childhood. If you sing to it and tap, you’ll notice that the first beat is very strong, followed by three softer, weak beats.

*Alouette, gentille alouette,
Alouette, je te plumerai.*

Alouette (in 4/4 time.)

Alouette	gentille	alouette,
1 2 3 4	1	2 3 4

Alouette,	je te	plumerai.
1 2 3 4	1	2 3 4

In $\frac{3}{4}$ time, the 1st bet is the downbeat followed by 2 weak beats. Listen to *The Blue Danube*, and you can hear the “oom-pa-pa, oom-pa-pa” rhythm of the waltz.

Take 5 is a jazz piece originally written for piano and was made famous by the Dave Brubeck Jazz Quintet. The song's title, *Take 5*, has a double meaning. One meaning infers taking a five-minute break. The second meaning is that the piece is in 5/4 time.

5/4 time is not as common as $\frac{3}{4}$ or 4/4 (as mentioned earlier, 4/4 is often called "common time" and is even designated in a piece of music with a large letter C, rather than the 4/4 because of how often it occurs in music. 5/4 time is not a rhythm used in any dance songs, unless as a joke.

5/4 Time: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5.

One of the features of progressive rock music that began in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s and achieved mass popularity in the 1970s, there and in the United States and Europe, is its use of quintuple and septuple meters (7/4 and 7/8). Progressive rock was a complete breakaway from the popular music of the time, and groups like Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Yes, early Genesis, Rush, and King Crimson found great success in performing music of constantly changing time odd-number time signatures.

Figure 22

The example here shows different time signatures as written on sheet music.

Examples of Time Signatures in Music

$\text{♩} = 120$

The image displays a musical score with two staves, treble and bass, grouped by a brace on the left. The score is divided into seven measures. Each measure contains a single quarter note on the middle line of the staff. The time signatures for each measure are as follows:

Measure	Treble Clef Time Signature	Bass Clef Time Signature
1	4/4	4/4
2	3/4	4/4
3	2/4	4/4
4	5/4	4/4
5	6/8	8/8
6	7/8	8/8
7	12/8	8/8

CHAPTER 9: Chord Playing

The piano (and digital keyboard) is unique among all the instruments in the orchestra in that both the melody of a song and the accompaniment of the melody are performed by one player. Think of the song *Happy Birthday to You*. On the piano, the right hand plays the familiar melody while the left hand plays the accompaniment with chords.

We mentioned earlier that when playing the piano, the right-hand plays a melody while the left hand accompanies the melody by playing **chords**. Melodies in songs are most often one voice and are notated on the staff in the treble clef, as single notes, one after the other from left to right.

The same holds in instrumental melodies when there is no singing. The right-hand will carry the melody as the left hand accompanies. The chords underneath provide a base and give the melody depth and even its emotional force.

Famous instrumentals with memorable melodies occur often in movies, the music giving the action in the film added poignancy. Movies such as *The Godfather* and the music to *Jurassic Park* brings the dinosaurs alive and places the viewer in the middle of the action. But there are thousands of more examples, many of them in classical music.

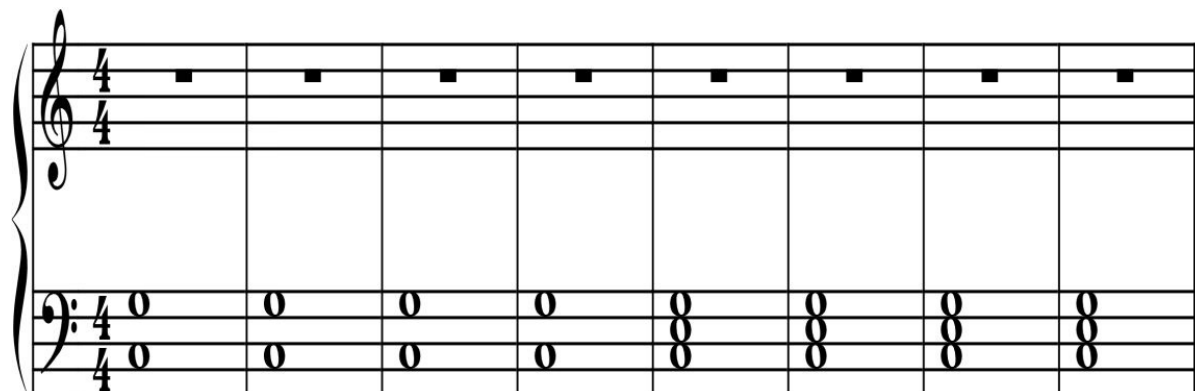
It's recommended to listen to *Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major*, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The Adagio of the work (2nd movement), is recognizable around the world and is beloved for its beauty and simplicity. Here a player can hear the simple familiar melody over a left-hand chord accompaniment to get a great idea of how music is written for the piano.

Now lift all fingers except the 5th finger (little) and the thumb.

Figure 23

Left Hand in C Position

Hold each chord and count to 4



A **chord** is made up of 2 or 3 notes. The 2 note chord above is called an **open chord** since the middle note is missing.

With your left hand in C position, press down on the open chord C and G in the first measure and count to 4. Then lift and press again, counting to 4. Keep playing this until it feels natural.

Next, try the full 3 note chord that follows. The note names are C, E, and G. You will play the E from C position, with your third finger. Now press these three keys down and count to four and continue to do so until it feels more natural.

As you can see, chords are notes that are played simultaneously, whereas a melody is played one note at a time in succession.

Playing with Two Hands

Now we are presenting the next challenge. First, the C Major chord was played, followed by playing the G and D Major chords. This was all done with eh hands separate. Now you will play a piece written with a melody in the right hand and chords in the left.

Recall you played *Ode to Joy* earlier. The sample attached here has the identical melody as the earlier version that was played, but with the addition of two-hand, open chords in the bass clef.

Figure 24

Ode to Joy Two Hands

Beethoven

♩ =

The sheet music is presented in two systems, each containing four measures. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous melody of eighth notes. The left hand (bass clef) plays a simple accompaniment of whole notes. The first system shows the initial four measures, and the second system shows the next four measures, ending with a double bar line.

Before playing, take a look at the sheet music to obtain information. First, notice the melody is identical to what was played early, as we know. The bass clef starts with open chords for the left hand to play.

It's a great idea to listen to a piano version of *Ode to Joy* first before playing. Find the simplest version available, not the orchestral version. As you listen, count to 4, listening for the strong 1st beat downbeat in each measure. Tap your hands or feet to the 4/4 rhythm. After every 4th beat, there will be a strong first beat to start the next measure. It's great to try following along with the sample provided. This is called **sight reading** and is one of the requirements that students at music schools need to fulfill.

After listening and tapping to the rhythm, play it yourself. Take your time, if you keep repeating playing the 8 measures, you will have a breakthrough. Your rhythm will become even, and it will begin to make sense to you. Then, you'll be ready for the next *Ode to Joy* challenge.

CHAPTER 10: Building Chords

An important musical term that's also useful is **scale degree**. Below is a C major scale and a G Major scale, each with numbers underneath each note. These numbers tell what scale degree that note is in the scale.

Figure 25

Scales and Scale Degrees

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 120. The first staff is the C major scale, starting on middle C (C4) and ascending to C5. The second staff is the G major scale, starting on G4 and ascending to G5. Both scales are written in treble clef. Below each staff, the scale degrees are numbered 1 through 8. The C major scale notes are C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The G major scale notes are G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G. The notes are written as quarter notes in the first staff and eighth notes in the second staff.

From the example, we see that in the key of C, that C is the first scale degree, D is the 2nd, E is the 3rd, and so on until we reach the top of the scale in the 8th position.

Looking at the C major scale, can you tell which note is the 6th scale degree?

Following this is the G Major scale. Can you answer what are the 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 7th scale degrees?

Building Three Note Chords

As we know, chords are notes that are played in combination with other notes. Scales are **melodic**, and chords are **harmonic**. A chord can be as little as two notes or as many as six and even eight in some cases.

Most of the chords you will come across at this point are 3-note chords. The bottom note of the chord at the end of almost every piece of music is the same note as the key the music is set in. In the Key of C Major then, the lowest note of the chord is C.

Root chords are made up of the notes of the **1st, 3rd, and 5th scale degrees**. A chord in **root position** means its lowest sounding note will be the same note as the key the song is in. So, in the key of C Major, the lowest sounding note of the chord, will be C.

How do you build a root position chord? In C Major the bottom note is C, and the remaining two are in the 3rd and 5th scale degrees.

C Major root position chord.

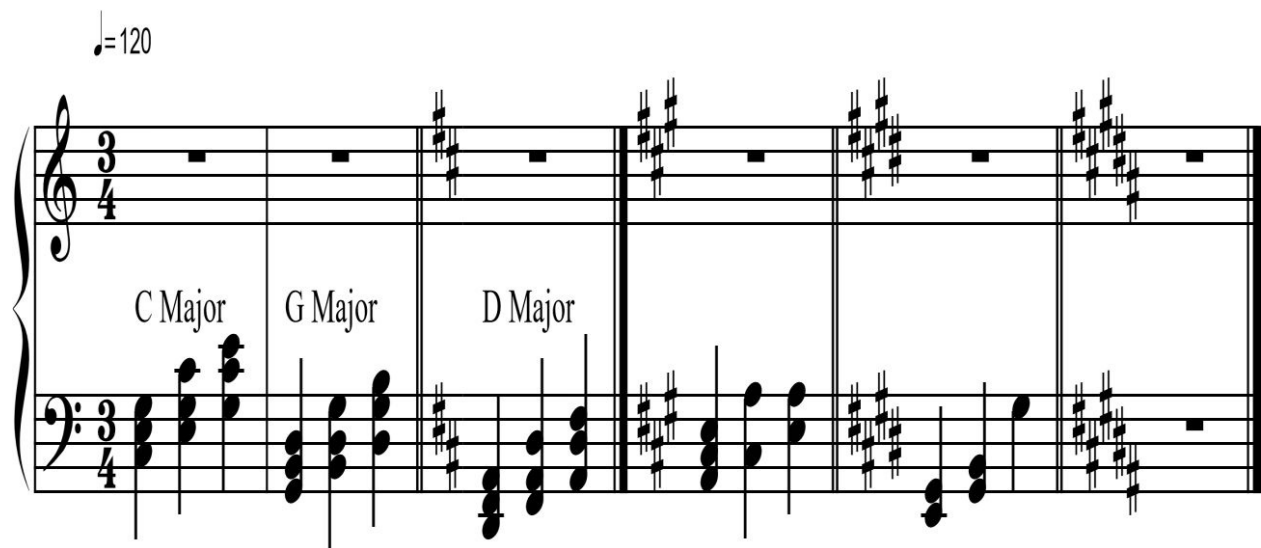
Root: C

Middle Note: E

Top note:
G

Figure 26

Chords and Inversions



Note that the first chord is C Major in root position, C, E, and G.

Chord Inversions

We will be referring to this attachment for the next part of this book. Look at the first measure and note the root position chord. The chord next to it is also C major, but the root note is the note of the 3rd scale degree, E.

This second chord with the E on the bottom is called a **first inversion** C major chord. It's called this because the order of the notes, read from bottom to top, is *inverted*, or changed.

Look now at the last chord in the measure. The bottom note is G, the middle is Middle C, and the top is E. The C major chord is altered once again, and this time it's a **second inversion** C Major chord.

The next measure shows chords built in the key of G major, in their root, first inversion, and second inversion positions, followed by the three D Major chord positions. Look at these closely, taking time to understand how to build root chords and their inversions.

Music without chord inversions would be severely limited in scope. Changing the order of the notes of the chord alters the sound dramatically. A chord

inversion gives the feeling that it is not settled or **resolved**. Chord inversions create dramatic tension, whereas a root chord firmly establishes the major key the song is in. A root chord ends a song, an inverted chord does not.

CHAPTER 11: Playing Broken Chords

We have looked at and played 3-note chords in the last chapter. Musical chords are, by definition, a series of notes that are played all at once to create **harmony**. Recall that a C Major chord has the notes C, E, and G.

Note that when discussing playing notes or reading notes, it is described from the **bottom to the top**. The notes used in the C Major chord as described here starting from the lower note of the chord, C, up to the top note, G. As we progress in this book, we'll always start from the bottom and work up to the top.

Chords can also be played separately one after the other in tandem. This is called a **broken chord, or an arpeggiated chord**. Broken chords occur in a very large percentage of the musical pieces that have been written and is an important skill to acquire when you're ready to take on more challenging pieces. We'll also talk about learning to play complete **arpeggios** in a later chapter. Arpeggios are nothing more than a series of broken chords. They're found in abundance in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven and thousands of musical pieces in current-day music.

Here is a series of broken C major chords.

Figure 27

C Major Broken Chord

Joseph DeGregorio 2019



Note that the broken chord starts in the left hand and then moves to the right hand.

Before playing the attached sample, take a look at a closer look at it first. Observe that the **time signature** is $\frac{3}{4}$. As we know this is referred to as **triple meter**. This means that the strong beat, or **downbeat**, will be on the first beat of each measure.

Note the **fingering** of the broken chords in each hand. Starting from the bass clef, the sequence is 5,3,1. Then the right-hand plays the same C major broken chord, only it's played an octave higher, starting on Middle C.

The music is only a series of C Major broken chords that move from the left hand to the right hand. The intention here is for the player to establish “flow” in his playing and moving gracefully and **in threes** from the left hand to the right. It's a simple and pleasant sounding sample, especially when it's played in time.

Flow in piano playing is an important early skill to develop. Music is in constant movement, even when there are rests. The sample above moves from left to right without stopping or pausing in time. A general rule of thumb is that if there are no rests, do not stop or pause in your playing.

In the sample, each note is a **quarter note**. Each quarter note is one beat in duration. We haven't set a **tempo**, or speed of the music yet, so feel free to play it at the speed you wish so you can establish a smooth and even flow.

For a more lush and resonant sound, try playing it with the **foot pedal** pressed down. You do not need to lift the pedal and can keep it depressed from beginning to end.

Note the last note in the sample is a **dotted half note**. A **half note** is worth 2 beats and a **dotted half note** is 3 beats in duration. We will discuss note values in detail in the following chapter.

There is a performance instruction above the dotted half note, which states “LH over.” This means that to play this note (the C above Middle C), cross your left hand over your right hand to play it.

Left Hand over right-hand crossovers are very common in music and crossing over is easier than you may think. Once you have established smooth and even playing in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, make your crossover to the note, remaining in time. You will play this C note with the 2nd finger of your left hand.

Before playing, clap the beat, emphasizing the strong first beat followed by 2 weak beats. Once you get the feel of it, try to play the broken chords in the

example.

Now, move to play the G major broken chord. The fingering has not been included here since it is the same as the C Major broken chord.

Figure 28

Playing the G Major Broken Chord



Finally, let's play a D Major broken chord. Recall that the key of D Major has two sharps, F# and C#. The D Major chord includes an F#, and the broken chord is made up of D, F# and A. The F# is indicated in the **key signature**, and not on the note itself.

Figure 29

Broken D Major Chord

LH Over

A musical score for the left hand (LH) of a piano, written in 3/4 time and the key of D major (two sharps: F# and C#). The score consists of two staves, a treble staff and a bass staff, joined by a brace on the left. The treble staff begins with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by eighth-note patterns in the subsequent measures, and ends with a half note. The bass staff features a steady eighth-note accompaniment throughout the piece, starting on D2 and moving up stepwise. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

CHAPTER 12: Playing Scales Hands Together

By this time, readers have already played the C, G and D Major Scales with the right hand and the *Ode to Joy* melody with the right hand with an open chord accompaniment in the left hand.

Let's shift back now to melodic playing by playing scales with both hands, (**hands together**), and will be referred to from now on as **HT**.

We're now going to play scales with both the right hand and the left hand. Recall at the beginning the fingering used to play the C Major scale. For the right hand, the thumb was turned under the middle, or 3rd, finger. For the left hand, the third finger is crossed over the thumb.

To play scales with both hands, you will do the following:

Right Hand: Place the thumb under the middle finger and complete the scale.

Left Hand: Cross the middle finger over the thumb as you play through the scale.

From now on, we'll refer to Right Hand as **RH** and the Left Hand as **LH**.

Every scale that is played at this time will have the same fingering as used in the C Major Scale.

You've already played the scale separately, now let's do it with hands together.

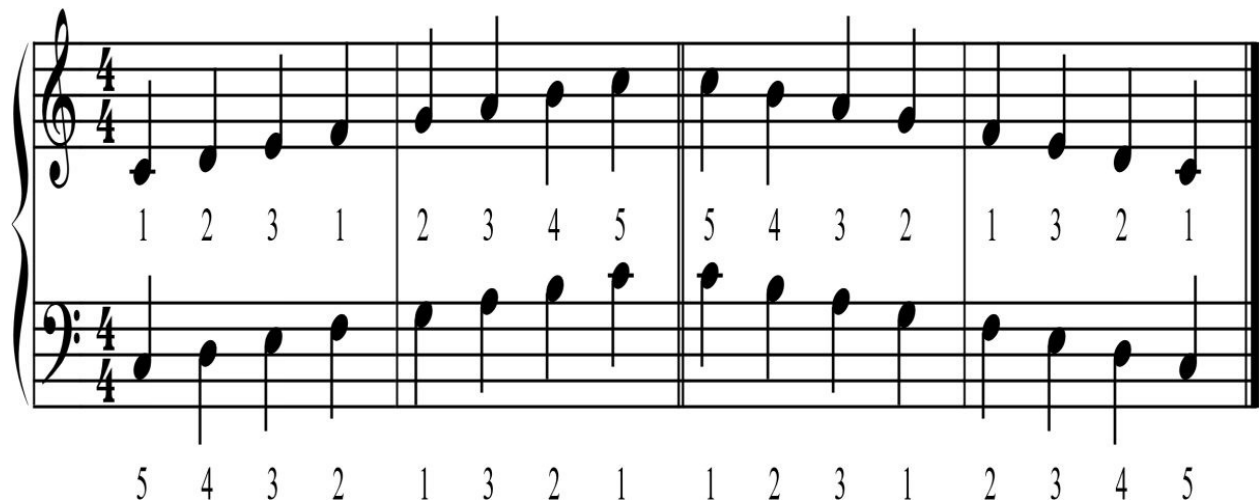
First, play through the scale hands separately, first with the right hand, followed by the left.

When you play with hands together, you will turn the thumb under your RH *before* the third finger of your left-hand crosses over. These two operations occur at different times. Have patience when working on it, and don't rush to get through it. Approaching it slowly and repeating it several times will lead to success and will give you an enormous boost of confidence!

Note in the challenge attachment that the scale is written ascending as well as descending. Once you are proficient in playing the scale going up, you should next try playing it going down. The fingering sequence is merely reversed, and it will take less time to be able to play descending if you can already ascend **smoothly and evenly**.

Figure 30

Ascending and Descending C Major Scale Hands Together



While you are learning to play the C Major scale, you should take up playing the G Major Scale. Remember that the G major scale has an F#, so the second to last note you'll play ascending the scale (**7th scale degree**), will be sharped and played on a black key. Playing the G Major scale and descending, the 2nd note of the scale going down will also be an F# (**2nd scale degree**).

Figure 31

Playing the G Major Scale Hands Together Ascending and Descending

$\text{♩} = 120$

The image shows a musical score for the D Major scale in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. The score is written for piano, with a treble staff and a bass staff. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The treble staff shows the ascending and descending scale with fingerings 1-2-3-1 and 5-4-3-2. The bass staff shows the ascending and descending scale with fingerings 5-4-3-2 and 1-3-2-1. The piece ends with a repeat sign.

Once you've made headway with both the C and G Major scales, it's time to try to D Major Scale. Recall that D major has two sharps, F# and C#.

Figure 32

Playing the D Major Scale with Both Hands Ascending and Descending



Beginner and intermediate players, when being taught by a musically astute piano teacher, will be challenged to play music by classical composers that involve a lot of scales in the pieces. One of the best intermediate-level pieces to learn is Mozart's Sonata in C Major, K 545. This famous piece is rife with **Allegro** (quick, fast), scale playing that prepares students for the challenges of playing the music of Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Schumann, among others.

CHAPTER 13 – *Musical Terms*

There's no doubt that at one time or another you've watched a movie and were taken aback by some part of the music soundtrack. You may have scanned the end credits to see what the name of the music was or found out what the name of the piece was later on.

Some great classical music used in films includes *Adagio for Strings* by Samuel Barber (*Platoon*), the *Andante* movement from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 (*Elvira Madigan*), the *Mesto* by Gyorgi Ligeti (*Eyes Wide Shut*), and the *Adagio un poco mosso* from Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* (*Picnic at Hanging Rock*). These are just a few of thousands of other uses of classical music in film.

Note that each piece here has words in Italian in their title, "Adagio," "Andante," "Mesto" and so on. The practice of using the Italian language in music notation began in the Italian Renaissance of the 15th century. There was an amazing outpouring of music from that period, and composers specified the speed, dynamics, and expression in their native Italian language.

Some of the more common terms in music are:

Crescendo: Gradually play louder. When starting off playing softly, either quickly in the same measure, or for several, play with more and more force to make the notes louder. Symbols look like the greater than > and less than < signs that are used in math.

Diminuendo: The reverse of crescendo, the player gradually softens, and the louder playing becomes softer.

Falsetto: Falsetto singing is when a male vocalist vibrates only half of his vocal cord and is then able to sing at a higher register than other singers in a vocal group. A famous falsetto singer is Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. Beach Boys songs "Good Vibrations," "I Get Around," and "Don't Worry Baby" are great examples of Wilson's falsetto singing.

Glissando: The player slides a finger from one white key in an upward or

downward direction to another. Glissandos can be an octave in length or can go the length of the entire keyboard in either direction.

Legato: This is an important aspect of piano playing. Legato playing is the opposite of *staccato* playing. The objective of piano teachers is to make sure their students can play notes that sound **smoothly connected**. Legato playing is playing without any stutters or unevenness in the notes. Legato playing is stressed for every instrument. Imagine a solo trumpet playing “Taps” at a military funeral, where the notes flow from one to the next unbroken as an example of playing in Legato style.

Libretto: The booklet that contains the words to an opera. Opera-goers and purchase Libretti before the start of an opera and follow along.

Dynamic Markings in Music

During your playing as you discover new pieces to play, you will always see an instruction written in Italian that tells the player how loud to play the music. Here are the most common dynamic markings.

Pianissimo: Play very quietly. The player’s fingers have a light touch on the keys. Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* instructs to use this dynamic marking throughout the piece.

Piano: Play quietly. Not as softly as pianissimo, but still quiet.

Mezzo-piano: The playing dynamic is still soft, but a little louder than *piano*. The player applies more pressure but keeps the notes from becoming loud.

Mezzo-forte: Mezzo-forte means to play *medium loud*. The playing is no longer soft, and the player presses the keys harder, but it is slightly less than loud.

Forte: Play loud. Apply harder pressure to the keys to produce a louder sound. Forte playing is used at points in a musical piece where there is a great deal of emotion. A great example of how loud forte can be is from George Frederick Handel’s well-known *Watermusic*, specifically the familiar section called “Alla Hornpipe” which is known to most listeners upon hearing.

Fortissimo: Play very loud. Usually found at the climax at the end of a movement, or a dance piece.

Tempo markings:

The speed of a piece of music is found above the Grand Staff on the left. Some of the examples here have the speed indicated without the words for different speeds. These speed numbers correspond to a **metronome** setting.

The invention of the metronome goes back to the 9th century, but over a millennium it was perfected, and one was shown to Beethoven by Johannes Maelzel. A metronome clicks out beats in BPMs, or “**beats per minute**.” A metronome is also set based on the **note value**, such as an eighth, quarter note or half note. For example, a note notation will say “quarter note = 120 beats.” This translates to 120 beats per minute. 120 beats per minute is a moderately fast speed that would be used for pieces and melodies that were lively and moved moderately quickly.

Tempo in music can range from extremely slow playing to “as fast as possible.” Here are some tempo speeds, some of which you will come across by playing different pieces. On your phone or computer (or if you have an actual metronome!), you can listen to the different speeds. Several metronome apps can be found online.

Grave : A very slow speed and ranging from 25-45 beats per minute (BPM).

Largo : Also slow but more expressively so (40-60 BPM).

Adagio: slowly and with great expression. *Adagio* was a popular word used to indicate speed and can be found as a tempo marking in some of the great symphonies and piano concertos, especially the second movement, of larger symphonic pieces, which are most often played slowly, countering the usually fast first movement. 66-76 BPM.

Andante: Another popular speed marking, it means to play “at a walking pace” and its range is 76 to 108 BPM.

Moderato : Moderately, as it sounds. It is neither too fast nor too slow, and the movement of the music can be felt when listened to.

Allegretto : This tempo marking is usually associated with music that is *quick*

and lively.

Allegro: The piece is to be played fast and bright. The tempo range is between 120 and 156 BPM. *Allegro* is used to indicating a fast speed more than any other descriptive word.

Presto : Very, very fast, the BPM range is from 156 to 200 beats per minute. Pieces such as *Flight of the Bumblebee* are indicated at this speed, and many, many more.

Words and Phrases used to indicate Tempo

Some composers used multiple words and phrases to describe the speed of their compositions. For most composers, the word used to describe tempo stood by itself. There was no description for the player what kind of feeling (**sentiment**) was to be associated with the music.

Beethoven's late string quartets, composed in the last 5 years of his life, are like no other music written at that time (1823 through 1826). These works changed the structure of the string quartet that was built on three to four movements with these tempo indicators.

1st movement: Allegro

2nd movement: Adagio or Andante

3rd movement: Allegro molto or Presto

Beethoven's String Quartet No. 13 in B Flat Major had six movements, the first three of which are:

1st : Adagio ma non troppo (slowly but not so much so)

2nd : Presto

3rd : Andante con moto (slowly but with motion).

Note how the speed of the movements is the reverse of traditional movements in **sonata form**. The introductory first movement is a slow *Adagio* speed and is associated with the expression of feeling. The second movement is a very fast *Presto*, a movement normally associated to this day with slower and more expressive music.

Beethoven's next string quartet, No. 14 in C# minor, is just as radical as No. 13 above, but in some cases even more so. Here is the listing of each of its seven movements.

1st : Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo : Slowly but not too slow and very expressive

2nd : Allegro Molto Vivace: Fast and Lively

3rd : Allegro Moderato

4th : Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile : Walking pace, not so much so, and very songlike (singing)

5th : Presto : very fast

6th : Adagio quasi un poco andante : Slow and with feeling and just a little like a walking speed

7th : Allegro.

If you see a listing of movements in a symphonic or **chamber** music piece, you should now be able to tell how it's been "put together:" and what to expect in terms of the speed and the feeling being conveyed in each movement.

Beethoven's music allowed future composers to be more expressive and to write with greater flexibility than was seen during the years when Haydn and Mozart were writing music, although those two composers broke boundaries in terms of **key relationships** . Beethoven, however, ushered in a new, more expressively advanced period of music known as the *Romantic Period*, and his influence is felt as much today as it was in his own time.

CHAPTER 14 – Whole Steps and Half Steps

Earlier we said that a C Major Scale is made up of 8 notes, all of which are white keys. The C Major scale as described is called a **diatonic scale**. There are many other types of scales in music, but during music's Classical period (Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven), all composers wrote within the limitations of the diatonic scale.

We'll talk about other scales used in music later, but for now, we'll focus on the diatonic scale that still is the **tonal system** used in most popular music today.

What makes a scale diatonic? The answer has to do with the pitch relationships between notes. Musical pitches exist at specific frequencies in the sound spectrum. For example, the A note below Middle C vibrates at 440 Hertz. Piano tuners use this frequency as a starting point when they tune pianos.

The distance between each pitch is what makes the scale diatonic. So, to create a diatonic scale, the distance between C and D is represented by a ratio. It is not necessary to discuss this in further detail, except to say that each diatonic Major and Minor scale has specific **pitch relationships**.

When teaching this to a musician, scales are described in terms of **whole steps and half steps**.

Go to your piano keyboard and take a look at the C Major scale, starting from Middle C. Now move up to the C one octave higher. It's easiest to understand looking at the keyboard.

There is a distance between each note which is either whole or half steps. Take a look at Middle C and the note next to it on the right, D. Note that the black key, C#, falls between C and D. Because there is a note between them, the distance from C to D is a **whole step**.

Move up now to the E in the scale, and note the next note is F. There is not a black key between the two notes. So the distance from E to F is a **half-step**.

Now, look at the set of 12 notes between Middle C and the C one octave higher.

If C to D is a **whole step**, then C to C# is a **half-step**. C# to D is a half-step, D to D# is a half-step, and so on.

The distance between E and F and B and C in the scale is a half-step.

Half Step and Whole Steps in every Major Scale

The C Major Scale is made up of these notes.

C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C.

Whole steps and half steps occur in the scale in this order. “W” signifies a whole step and “H” indicates half step.

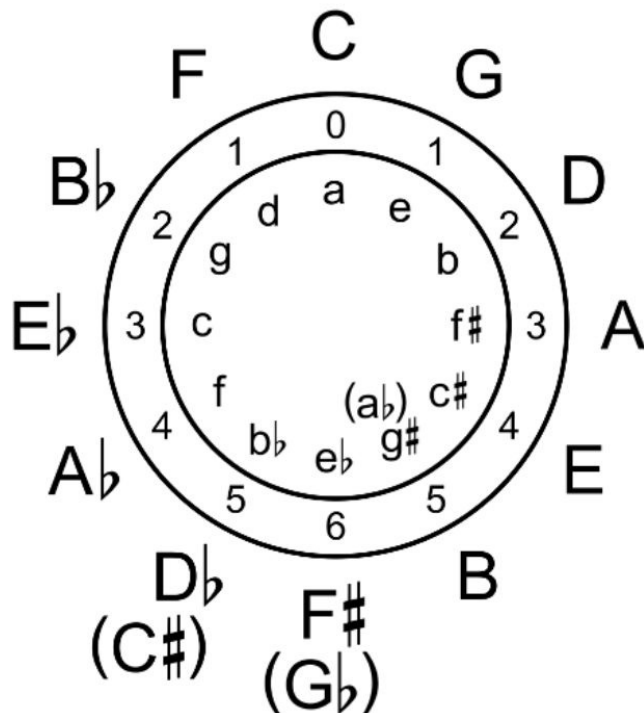
This same ratio of whole steps and half steps is the same on every major scale.

Spoken, the series of steps is ***Whole, Whole, Half, Whole, Whole, Whole, Half.***

CHAPTER 15: Major and Minor Keys

Here again, is the circle of Fifths we discussed earlier.

Figure 33



Let's take now a deeper look and see what information is contained in the circle. If we move in a **clockwise** direction, we see that as we progress from one key to the next, a sharp note is added. From earlier, we know that the sequence of notes to be sharped are **F-C-G-D-A-E-B**.

Moving clockwise, we see now that 8 Major Keys have sharped notes in them.

Now start at C and move in a **counterclockwise** direction. Including F, the 6 flat Major keys include B flat, E flat, A flat, D flat, and G flat.

Each major key, as stated earlier, has the same sequence of whole steps and half steps.

The sequence of flats is **B, E, A, D, G, C, F**. Like the sharp sequence, the first key, F major, has only one **accidental**, B flat. The next key, B flat major, has a B flat and an E flat. Flats are added on in each successive key.

Recall that for sharps, every time we moved **5 steps** to the right, we added on a sharp. Flats are added to the keys as we move every **4 steps** to the right. So, F Major has one flat, B flat Major has 2, E flat Major has 3, and so on.

At some point, when these sequences become clearer, it should be possible for players at this level to play every major key on the keyboard. There are fingering differences for the keys that contain more **accidentals** (sharp and flat keys).

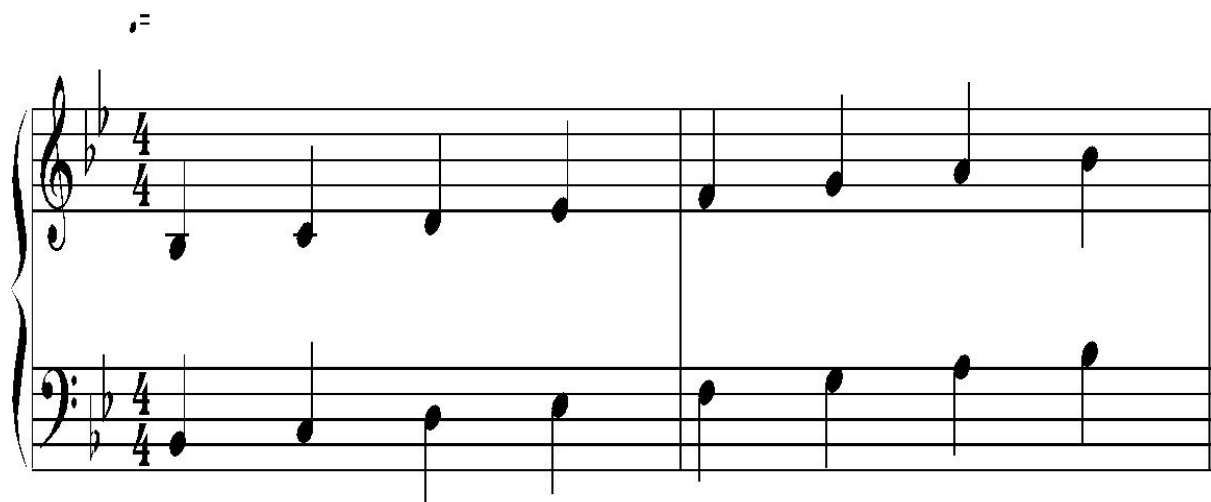
Figures 34 and 35

F Major Scale and Fingering

1

Figure 34 shows the F Major Scale and Fingering. The scale is written in 4/4 time, starting on F2 and ending on D4. The treble staff shows the notes F4, C4, F4, C4, F4, C4, F4, C5. The bass staff shows the notes F2, C3, F3, C4, F4, C4, F4, C5. The fingering is indicated by numbers 1 through 5 above the notes in the treble staff and below the notes in the bass staff.

B Flat Major Scale and Fingering



The Importance of Fingering Technique

If a beginner or intermediate player has well-developed fingering skills, and a decent understanding of music as we have outlined here, she may be able to “jump” past a level and try more challenging musical pieces. Practicing the following scales and their unique fingering and working on them until able to play them smoothly, will pave the way for trying musical pieces a level or two higher. Because the key to great playing is great fingering, greater playing challenges can be more easily overcome.

Work on all the scales, but for now, pay particularly close attention to the following.

D Major

A Major

F Major

B Flat Major

E Flat Major

The next chapter discusses ways to make the fingers more supple and able to move independently of each other.

CHAPTER 16: Finger Exercises

Many musicians have created finger exercises for students to supplement their playing. In 19th Century Europe, students were expected to play pieces by Haydn, Schubert, and Mozart proficiently and at a level that would astonish us today. Children from middle to upper-class families, especially girls, were imposed upon to be extremely good piano players since this skill was an asset in social life, especially when it came to finding wealthy marriage partners.

The reasons for insisting children play instruments very well do not seem agreeable today, but life in the Regency Period, the Victorian Age, and other epochs from the last 200 years are mysteries to us today. We may historically know the social pressures young people had to endure, but unless we lived and understood living it from the inside, we wouldn't know how hard it would be to break out of the demands forced on younger and older men and women.

No matter how we view social life in the 18th and 19th centuries, it is undisputed how much importance music had in daily life. Instead of record company executives signing up artists and beginning aggressive promotional campaigns, live concerts were used as promotional tools. Famous composers and performers were invited by the well to do to royal courts to perform at events.

Popularity grew through word of mouth, and composers relied on sponsorship and the publication of their music. Haydn worked at the Esterhazy court his whole life and served as music director to Prince Esterhazy's musicians. Upon retirement, Haydn moved from Austria to England where he wrote his most famous symphonies.

It was during this period that players sought to learn techniques to help them to play better. There are some very good method books for making fingers play more challenging music, but there are two that have become most popular because of how the exercises are presented, and because of the results obtained by playing through these exercises.

The first is Carl Czerny, an Austrian composer, pianist, and teacher who was a student of Beethoven's at the age of 10. Czerny wrote over a thousand musical works, many of them piano studies. These studies are still in use today for private piano lessons and students studying to improve their performance refer to

his studies often. One of the most popular Czerny wrote is *The Art of Finger Dexterity*.

For piano players desiring to play one or several of Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas or Mozart's

19 Piano Sonatas, or the original version works of Frederic Chopin and Johann Sebastian Bach, are strongly encouraged to practice using one of Czerny's piano teaching methods.

The Art of Finger Dexterity includes pieces designed to improve the ability to play scales and arpeggios at the Allegro tempo found in music, with the resulting sound a smoothly connected legato throughout the passages.

Czerny's *Art of Finger Dexterity* is not intended for beginners, but instead for intermediate and advanced players.

For beginners and intermediate players, it's highly recommended to start with a book almost every piano teacher knows and uses, Charles Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist*. It is a book of 60 finger exercises spread over three sections. I recommend practicing the first 20, in Book 1 of *The Virtuoso Pianist*. These begin with a simple exercise that works the five fingers. The rest focus on individual fingers of each hand. For example, Number 4 focuses on the 4th and 5th fingers of each hand.

The first half of each exercise ascends, and the last half descends back to the starting point. Here is a link to online resources for *The Virtuoso Pianist*, including the actual exercises themselves. They are free and in the public domain.

Holistic Approach to Playing the Piano

Methods designed to improve fingering and playing of scales and arpeggios have their detractors, the argument against made notably by pianist and teacher Abby Whiteside, who believed that performing finger exercises to make the fingers equally strong was an impossible task since some fingers will always be stronger than others. Whiteside instead argues for a more holistic approach, allowing the movement of the shoulders and the arms to dictate the actions of the fingers.

Her argument is not without merit. Studying child prodigies, who were able to play the piano almost perfectly within a year of starting, and whose fingers always played each note with the proper pressure and sound, Whiteside argued that these prodigies “felt” the music instead of practicing playing scales and performing rigorous finger exercises.

Again, Whiteside is correct that we should emulate innately musical talented musicians, who themselves never tried to figure out how to play the way they played. Such people are naturally able to feel the music and by focusing on the sound in a piece of music, they understand the sentiment it is conveying and emulate it.

For beginning players, such a feat would seem near impossible without first understanding scales and how they work, the Circle of Fifths, and getting fingers loose on the keyboard. Students should get their fingers moving on the keyboard on the first day of piano lessons, as outlined here.

At some point, though, despite Whiteside’s arguments, it is beneficial to provide tools such as finger exercises to make fingers strong and independent of each other. When the fingers are limber and flexible, the student has increased confidence in their abilities. At some point, a transition should be made by allowing the arms and shoulders to channel to music through the fingers, but there needs to be a foundation established first.

CHAPTER 17: *Intervals*

Numerical Note Identification

Before talking about intervals in this chapter, we will need to introduce new terminology that will make this discussion much easier to understand.

We have been referring to **Middle C** as the centermost C on the piano keyboard, located almost in the center. This note is also referred to by a more accurate moniker: **C4**. We have been using the term **octave** thus far but will now discuss C and all the notes on the keyboard with their name and number.

Figure 36



This is another diagram of an 88-key piano keyboard. The names of the keys have been left out intentionally. By this time, readers should be able to look at a keyboard and be able to know the names of each key. If some are unfamiliar, spend some time now familiarizing yourself before moving on.

Note that the lowest note on the keyboard is **A**, and the highest note is **C**. The lowest note, A, is referred to as **A1**. Jumping up an octave, the next A is called **A2**. Move up to each successive A note and label them **A3**, **A4**, **A5**, etc, until you reach the highest A, which is **A8**.

Now look down at the lowest C on the piano keyboard and call it **C1**. As you move to the right and label each successive C, you'll note that **Middle C is C4**.

The G below Middle C is **G3**, and the D above Middle C is **D4**, and so on.

From this point forward, we'll be referring to each note on the piano by its numerical equivalent. Middle C is now **C4**.

Definition of Interval

An **interval** is a space between one and the next note in a melodic progression. We can easily understand intervals by using tools we already have, like scale degrees and our knowledge of chords.

One of the first musical terms learned here was **octave**, meaning 8. We said that the number of notes going from Middle C to the next C (C4 to C5), is 8.

Since the distance from C4 to C5 is 8, then what is the distance from C4 to the very next note on the keyboard, D?

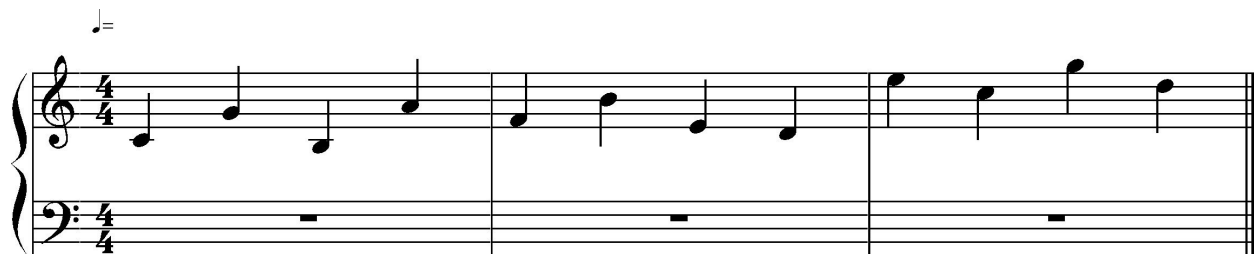
We define an interval as the distance between two notes. If C is the first note, and D is the next note, then **the interval from C and D is 2. They are two notes apart from each other.**

What is the interval from C and E, ascending? It's 3. C to F is 4 and C to G is 5 and so on.

Figure 37

Intervals

Joseph DeGregorio



The notes on the treble clef staff are random sets of intervals. Try to determine the interval number between each. For example, the first note is C4, and the next note is G. The interval is 5. Now, what is the interval from this G to the next note, B?

Try and name all the intervals in the example above.

We have been describing the distance between notes as “5 apart,” “2 apart,” “7 apart” and so on. Following is the way to describe intervals in musical terms.

Distance	Term
1	Unison
2	2 nd
3	3 rd
4	4 th
5	5 th
6	6 th
7	7 th
8	Octave or 8th
9	9 th
10	10 th
11	11 th

It's important to discuss intervals in musical terms since we will be talking about **major and minor keys**, and these terms will be highly useful.

Melodic Intervals and Harmonic Intervals

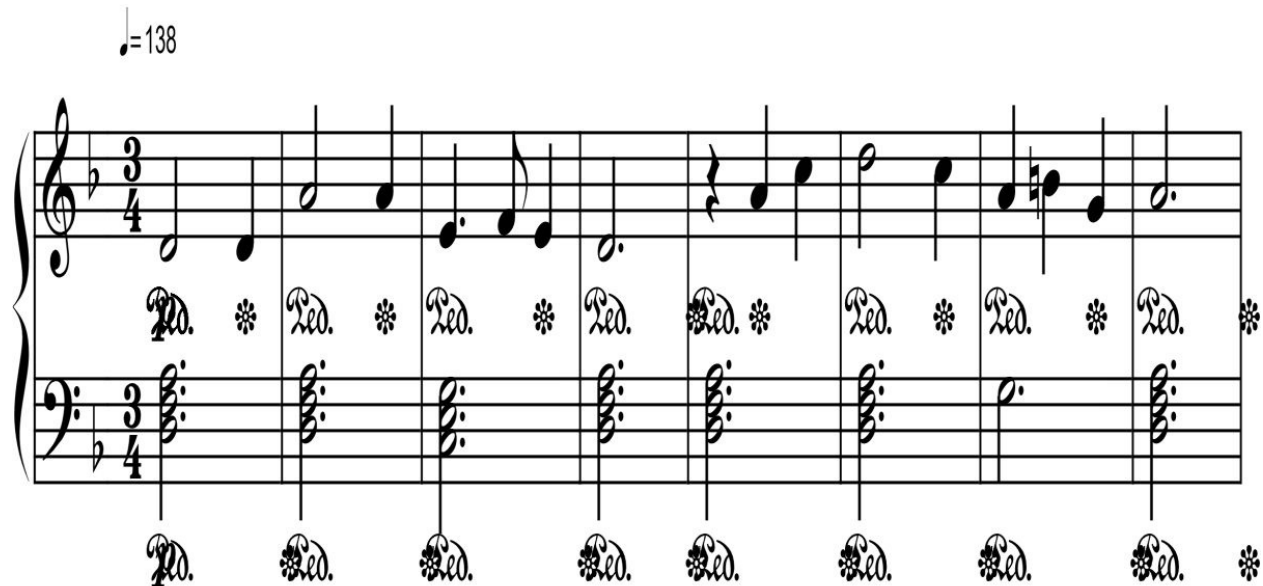
Take a look at a sample from “Scarborough Fair” below which will help to understand the short discussion which follows.

Figure 38

Scarborough Fair

Anonymous, 1550 A.D.

Arranged J. DeGregorio/2015



9

The melody of Scarborough Fair, in the treble clef, moves from the left to the right of the page, or **horizontally**. The chords which accompany the melody in the bass clef, are built from the bottom to the top, or **vertically**.

In the melody, the D jumps up to the A. The interval is a 5th, or **fifth**. Next, the A drops down to an E, an interval of a **fourth**. These are called **melodic intervals**.

The chords in the bass clef are **D Minor** chords. The notes of the chord are D, F, and A. They are each a **third** apart and are read vertically. They are **harmonic intervals**.

We will discuss intervals in greater detail later on. For now, let's move on to a deeper discussion of rhythm and note values. Later we will combine our knowledge of intervals, scales, and rhythm to play a more challenging piece of music later on.

CHAPTER 18: Counting Rhythm

Early on in the book, we talked about rhythm and counting beats. We used simple quarter notes to count three beats in each measure, then 4 beats in a measure.

Now we're going to discuss beats again but using different note values.

Following are all the note values commonly used at this level of playing. Please see example #

Figure 39
Note Values



You will not often see at this stage, 64th notes and 32nd notes, so let's start with the 16th note up to the whole note in the above example.

In music using 1 beat (quarter note) as the standard, then:

A 16th note is one-quarter of a beat;

An 8th note is a half beat;

A quarter note is of course 1 beat;

A half note is 2 beats;

A dotted half note is 3 beats;

A whole note is 4 beats.

Counting Rhythm and Beats

We have all listened to songs that we liked and our fingers or our feet automatically followed the beat of the music. Out of the four main elements of music, **melody, harmony, rhythm, and tone color**, rhythm is a skill we are born with, and it's natural for us to be able to tap out a beat and understand its rhythm immediately.

If we didn't have an inborn sense of rhythm, music would make no sense to us when it is played. It would be a chaotic jumble of sounds and noise and may even be frightening and menacing in such a way that we would feel the need to flee upon hearing it.

Such a thing occurred at the premiere of Igor Stravinsky's 1913 ballet, *The Rite of Spring*. The music was written as a ballet and featured world-famous lead dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. Concertgoers had never heard such intense, brutal-sounding music before. It was barbaric in its sound to early 20th century audiences, and the **meter** and rhythm of the music were unique, using **alternating time signatures**, from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{7}{3}$ to $\frac{11}{9}$ and so on. The performance ended in a large section of the audience yelling, hissing, and rushing out of the theater in terror, as it was reported widely and became infamous.

A concert "riot" is not likely to occur today; however, it speaks to the ability of music to astonish, frighten, make us feel amorous, angry, sad, or joyful. These states of mind are evoked in the music's specific rhythms and melodies.

The next attachment we have is a sample of rhythms often heard in popular and classical music. These rhythms are either in the melody (singing, instrument lead) or the accompaniment (chords, bass, and drums).

Rhythm can be the core of a song or it could serve just to accompany a melody. The rock group Led Zeppelin can be considered to play music where the rhythm of the drums is what propels the songs from beginning to end. A classic example of this is the song, "Kashmir", a steady and regular pattern of rhythm occurring for over seven minutes with very little change.

On the other hand, "Clair De Lune" by Claude Debussy, based on a sparse and

beautiful, lilting melody that seems to suspend a sense of beat altogether.

Figure 40
Three Different Rhythms

$\text{♩} = 120$

The figure displays three musical staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The first staff is in 4/4 time, showing a repeating sequence of a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The second staff is in 3/4 time, showing a repeating sequence of a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The third staff is in 2/4 time, showing a repeating sequence of a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 120$.

The attachment contains C4 notes appearing in different rhythms for 4 measures apiece. The first example shows a **dotted quarter note** followed by an **eighth note**, then back to dotted quarter and eighth in a repeating sequence.

The way to **count rhythm** in music is to assign numbers to each note value. For example, when counting 4 quarter notes, you say, **1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4**, and so on. A quarter note has one beat and the numbers 1 through 4 are counted until reaching the next measure, where the counting would start again on the **downbeat** of the next measure.

The quarter note followed by the eighth note in the example is counted **1, 2 and, 3, 4 and, 1, 2 and, 3, 4 and**.

The dotted quarter note lasts more than one full beat, so must include the 2, the next beat in rhythm. The “and” is counted under the 8th note.

A well-known example of this rhythm is Mozart’s famous *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. The rhythm occurs at the very beginning where the melody first rises and then comes back down. The melody is immediately familiar to every reader once it is heard.

The next example, beginning on measure 4, is in a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, and a half note followed by a quarter note is written. This rhythm is typical of dances, especially waltzes, and is found often in popular music today.

A great example of this is *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*, a waltz made famous by Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In the film, a space shuttle is docking in a rotating space station.

The count is **1, 2** on the half note and **3** on the quarter note.

The third example features a quarter note followed by 2 eighth notes which are **banded**. Quite frequently, when two or more eighth notes or 16th notes are played in tandem, the notes have a band that connects the notes together.

A famous example of this rhythm is Rossini’s *William Tell Overture*, which became popular in modern times as the theme music for The Lone Ranger.

The sample is in $\frac{2}{4}$ time and is counted as **1, 2 and, 1, 2 and**.

It is highly recommended to practice these rhythms by tapping, but clapping the rhythm is best at first so the player becomes familiar with the feel of the rhythm as it moves forward.

It is difficult for the human ear to listening to constantly alternating rhythms in a piece of music, but yet there are many examples of this. One that was used in Stanley Kubrick’s film *The Shining* is Bela Bartok’s *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. In the first movement of four, each measure has a different time signature, and the beat is constantly changing. And yet, the music paradoxically sounds rhythmical and in time despite the constant changes in

time.

Playing two beats at once in music, where the melody is playing or singing in one rhythm and the bass and percussion play in another at the same time is called a **polyrhythm**. Examples of multiple rhythms playing simultaneously occur in a great amount of progressive rock music, with bands such as Kansas, King Crimson, Yes, and especially Rush, combine high-level musicianship and a series of compelling beat changes that make this kind of music listenable a great many times.

Polyrhythms occur a great deal in Beethoven's music the most out of all Classical composers. Almost every one of his 9 Symphonies contains polyrhythmic sequences, and this was quite ahead of its time as listeners were unable to follow the music. Examples can be found in his 3rd Symphony, ("Eroica") third movement, 7th Symphony, 1st movement, and the 9th symphony, 2nd movement (featured in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*).

Playing rhythm in a Melody

It is best to play a piece of music that has a complex rhythm pattern hands separate at first, then to combine them. Players should take their time and repeat each part before playing with their hands together.

When playing with hands together, a best practice is to listen to the music first, if possible, and **feel the rhythm**, then duplicate the sound on the keyboard. Our bodies and minds are already attuned to rhythm, and when playing, stay relaxed and let the rhythm flow from you.

This skill of listening and channeling the music is one of the best ways to improve at playing. It is a more powerful approach than reading up on the magic first or trying to intellectualize the music into dotted quarter notes and eighth notes and so on. Music, whether playing it or listening to it, is not an intellectual exercise. The experience of listening and playing is not like a university lecture reading instructions. Music is 100% sentiment, but the methods to explain it are scientific and involves math as well.

A reminder of the Importance of Reading Sheet Music Well

The best players did not look at the music they performed and tried to understand the flow of notes, the key signature, or the time signature. The former Beatle, Paul McCartney, who was arguably one of the best writers in the famous group, has said often that he never learned to read sheet music or notes on a staff.

This had to do mostly with how the writing process was done, where he and John Lennon, or each alone, sat at a piano and through trial and error, found just the right sound, making reading sheet music unnecessary. However, composers who write for ensembles and orchestras, including jazz ensembles, had to the notes out for each performer to play. The rock group Steely Dan was composed of two men who wrote **lead sheets** for each performer to follow.

Reading sheet music well is becoming a rare skill. As a result, finding someone who can read and understand musical scores or play from sheet music, is in greater demand. In churches, choirs, and even in an ensemble, the ability to **sight-read** music is critical to success in performance.

Chapter 19: Piano as Percussion and As Melody

In the orchestra or a rock band, the only instruments that are percussive in their manner of playing are percussion instruments and the piano. Drummers use drumsticks and mallets and hit a stretched organic material. Some percussion instruments, like the tympani, is a **tuned percussion instrument** that can play different musical pitches. The glockenspiel can play a wide range of pitches.

The shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers “hit” the piano key, which raises a lever that lifts a hammer to contact the strings. The force used behind the impact of the fingers on the keys makes the sound soft or loud.

The music of Mozart is melodic. Mozart’s fingers were small and his focus in his piano concertos was on melody and the interplay of instruments. The piano in his concertos was often like an additional orchestral instrument rather than the lead instrument.

In contrast, in Beethoven’s piano concertos, especially his last three, the piano was the lead instrument in the orchestra, although it would often brilliantly fluctuate from lead to part of the orchestra and even softly into the background.

“Louie, Louie,” by the Kingsmen, is a well-known example of percussion piano playing. The three chords that are played throughout the song, C, F, and G Major, are struck with a strong force and serve a rhythmic role in the song, often mimicking the drum part.

Another example is the Beatles “Getting Better,” where the first notes struck are piano chords that are doubled by electric guitars. The drums mimic the playing of the chords, on the beat.

Billy Joel’s piano playing style leans towards percussive playing. “Allentown” by Joel, a series of 8th notes, is the song’s main **motif** and is heard underneath or at the center of the song from beginning to the end. Indeed, the sound of a shift change factory whistle can be heard at points in the song mimicking and sounding on the same beats.

By Contrast, Elton John plays in a melodic style. His touch is softer and more stylized. “Your Song” and “Honky Cat” display the performer’s light, melodic approach to playing. A glaring exception to John’s melodic style is “Bennie and the Jets,” where the chord is played with force and on the beat, mimicked by the drummer.

One of the most extreme examples of the percussive piano style is Bela Bartok’s *Piano Concerto No. 1*. The concerto begins with the pianist’s left hand pounding notes in the lowest register of the piano, followed by the orchestra playing a loud, jarring **dissonant** chord. For over nine minutes, the pianist hammers out a **chordal melody**, where multiple notes are played most often, with sparse melodic playing in the movement. The mood is savage, with multiple rhythms and changes in time signature throughout.

A fine example of both melodic and percussive playing within a few measures of each other is “Russian Dance in Igor Stravinsky’s *Petrouchka* ballet. The orchestral theme is first repeated on the piano with great force where the pianist plays 8 notes simultaneously. This is followed by light melodic playing moving in and out of the orchestra playing.

Songs you will wish to play at the beginner and intermediate levels will have a melody in the right hand accompanied by chords in the left hand that will have percussive qualities. Once you are comfortable playing with hands together and listen and feel the music before playing, playing a split percussive in the bass and a melodic, legato style playing in the treble will become easier and enjoyable.

CHAPTER 20: Bach's Minuet in G

Note: *Bach's Minuet in G is available online, for free, by doing a Google search.*

The word, “practice” has so many negative connotations that I have never mentioned the word until now. Some piano teachers make playing the piano unenjoyable for both children and adult students by turning practice time into a series of dull, repetitive, regimented drills. At the other extreme, some schools have surfaced that teach group piano lessons. Students are seated in front of their keyboards while the “teacher” plays at the front while the students follow him. Signs on the wall have the international “no” symbol and in the middle is the word “Practicing.” Such schools are run by sales and marketing professionals who are also decent musicians. At best, this is a relaxing pastime, but for anyone who wishes to be good, versatile players, schools like these should be avoided.

We are not seeking a middle ground between these two extremes. An example I love to give to my younger students especially is to consider that playing a musical instrument is more an athletic exercise than “practice.” Perfecting a tune or improving playing skills requires time, and it’s not always going to be fun. But it is *usually* enjoyable when done right.

In baseball, professionals work on their swings, fielding skills, and running skills. To improve batting skills, players will often stand with a batting tee, a bucket of baseballs, and a net, and spend a half-hour or more hitting the stationary ball off the tee and into the net.

Repetition is a great substitute for “practice.” Baseball players, basketball players, runners, tennis pros, all repeat the same moves to improve them. Because playing the piano involves most of the upper body, it, too, is an athletic exercise.

A great to-do list every time sitting at the piano would be the following. Beginners should work at their playing about 4 times per week, at 30 minutes long for each session. Intermediate players should play 4 to 5 times per week, for up to 45 minutes each time.

- 1 Warmup: Hanon's first and second Finger exercise. 5 minutes.
- 2 Playing scales: Beginners play C, G, F, and D major scales twice a week, then play A, E, E and B Minor scales the other two times, for a total of four, 5 to 7 minutes.
- 3 Arpeggio playing (to be discussed in the next section): 5 minutes, C, F, D, and B flat Major
- 4 Song: Approach by first playing the left-hand notes in the bass clef until the rhythm comes to you again. Follow by plying the right hand by itself. Then play with **hands together**.

“Practicing” the Minuet in G

I have observed some of my students working on the entire piece of music all at once, and they become frustrated and feel overwhelmed. Let's take as an example a common beginner piano piece, *Minuet in G* by J.S. Bach.

Minuet in G is an appealing-sounding piece of music. It offers challenges in the fact that the left hand is not chords, but rather individual notes that have as much melodic movement as the right hand. It is a popular piece assigned to piano students and can be viewed as a “gateway” piece; after learning to play the Minuet, students can advance up to music is more demanding.

The Minuet is in the key of G Major. The player should begin by playing the G Major Scale ascending and descending about 5 times. Next, observe that the **time signature** is 3 beats per measure.

Firstly, look at the melody of the right hand. Notice how the melody is a repeating pattern of one-quarter note followed by 4 eighth notes in the measure.

This **motif** is two measures long; it repeats in the third measure, except it is a **whole step** higher. Remember too there is an F# in the key of G Major.

This is an **ascending** motif that is 4 measures in length. On the second line (Measure 5), the same pattern of one quarter note followed by 4 eighth notes continues, except it is moving downward or **descending**.

- Play the right hand melody of the first two lines.
- The beat is $\frac{3}{4}$ time, so repeat the melody until it sounds even, and is three beats per measure.

Now, let's take a look at the left hand.

This is followed by a quarter note, A, on the last beat. Now follow the progression of notes. It moves in **stepwise motion**, the interval through measure 6 of a **Major Second**.

The left hand accompaniment moves from A to B, then, C descends down to B, A and ends on G.

Measure 7 is a reverse **broken G chord (arpeggiated)** that begins on the top note of the G chord and descends through B and G.

Measure 8 is a **half cadence** that begins on the D, drops an octave to D, and plays a series of notes in stepwise descending motion.

It is called a half-cadence because it does not end in the key of G Major. Instead, measure 8, halfway through the Minuet, ends in D Major.

Brief Discussion of Tonic and Dominant

During your beginner music playing, you are going to be playing many songs that primarily move from the **tonic (the key the song is in)**, then to the dominant (**the key a fifth away in the scale,**) return to the dominant.

Think back to *Ode to Joy*. The melody begins on the E note of the C Major chord. The second measure moves to the G, which is the 5th **scale degree** of C Major. It then returns to C Major, but then moves back to G and then **resolves** in the key of C major.

Every single piece of music ever written is based on **tension and resolution**. If you were to listen to a piece of music that does not build up tension, the music would sound pointless and not musical at all.

All the 12 keys in music have a key that builds tension and needs resolution.

Think of a magnet, a force that draws a metallic object to it. This is the case in music. In *Ode to Joy*, the G major is “pulled back” to the root key, C Major.

Not every key has this powerful attraction to other keys. For example, in the scale of C major, recall the notes:

C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

The fifth note G, or chord, in the scale, has the **strongest attraction** to C. The 4th note, F, has the **second** strongest attraction to the root key, C Major.

These three notes, C, F, and G are referred to as follows.

C is the root or tonic.

F is the subdominant.

G is dominant.

We spoke about “Louis, Louie,” by the Kingsmen before, and noted that the three chords played in it from beginning to end, were C, F, and G. Think of the song now and identify the sound of the tonic C, the subdominant F, and the dominant, G. They are played in this succession.

CCC FF GGG FF

CCC FF GGG FF

Listen through from beginning to end (even if you dislike the song as may do!) until you can hear each chord in the sequence detailed above.

Now let’s return to *Minuet in G*. We said that in measure 8, there is a half cadence on the dominant note, D.

G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

The D is the dominant of G major.

Playing hands together

We know the first two lines of the Minuet has 8 measures. Move both hands to the keyboard and begin to play *slowly*. Don't attempt to play the piece at its designated speed until you can play the first 8 **bars** *slowly and evenly without pausing*.

Make it an objective to be able to play the first 4 measures with hands together, and as evenly as possible.

The next time you work at the piano, begin by loosening your fingers as described earlier. Now, *begin NOT on the first line you played the last time, but the second line instead*.

Play through the 4 bars with both hands right away, moving slowly and identifying the greatest challenges. Note that on this line, the half cadence will be more difficult to make even than the rest. You can play this measure only hands separate, repeating the left hand part until it is even.

When you have played through measures 5, 6, 7, and 8, finish by playing all 8 measures with both hands.

Measures 9 through 16

At the start of the bottom 8 measures, note that the right hand of the **third line** (treble clef) is identical to the top line in the Minuet. You're able to focus entirely on the left hand of this line.

The left hand now starts moving in stepwise motion but then, takes jumps. Starting on B it descends stepwise to A, then G. Here it jumps an interval of a **major 3rd** to the B, and back to G.

In the next measure (11), there is a dotted half note, C that is held through the measure. The 12th measure next is similar to measure 8 earlier. When you can play this measure, you will note that it is a **cadence in G, the root key**. However, because of the **pitch location**, it does not feel as if the piece has completely **resolved** to the key of G Major. The full resolution will occur in the

last measure.

Looking at the last line, note again that the melody is almost identical, but is not an exact copy, of the melody in the second line of the Minuet.

The motif is the same, and starts on the same note, C, moving up one note and down 4.

Now take a look at the **penultimate** measure (second to last). Unlike the second line above, here it continues the descending sequence of the motif, until finally resolving on the root note G.

The left hand in the last line of the Minuet is perhaps the most challenging. The first measure on the last line (13), jumps **down a major third** from the A to the F#. You should play this note with your 4th finger.

Final Measure

The key of G Major is restated, and the resolution is strong. Observe that every note in the measure is a G. Three octaves of the G note is played. The G in the treble clef, **G4**, is sounded at the same time as **G3** in the bass clef. On the third beat, the final resolution that reestablishes the key, the release of tension occurs when **G2** is sounded.

Once you can play the *Minuet in G*, you should feel a sense of accomplishment. It addresses challenges that will occur later in your musical development.

A great next piece to attempt is *Fur Elise*, by Ludwig van Beethoven. Following our further discussion of **arpeggios** next, we'll take a closer look at this favorite piece and the simple instructions needed to play it well.

CHAPTER 21: Playing Arpeggios

In a previous chapter, we said that arpeggios were broken chords. The C major chord is comprised of C, E, and G. The chord is built vertically, is **harmonic**, and all three notes are played simultaneously.

A **broken** C Major chord is **melodic** because the notes are played one after the other, starting on the lowest note, C.

Arpeggios are broken chords, but they are a full octave in length. That means when playing a C Major arpeggio, the notes C, E, G, and C are played.

It would take another book to list the number of musical pieces and songs that contain arpeggios. There are too many to count. Like scales, they occur everywhere in both melodies and accompaniment. Numerous classical and popular music examples come to mind. Many songs include partial arpeggios as well as complete ones.

Figure 42

The attached is intended for the student to practice playing arpeggios. It's best to play them HS before trying HT. Once you play them well with both hands, work on increasing your speed.

The first in the diagram is a C Major arpeggio. Note that it begins on Middle C (C4) and moves up 2 octaves to C6.

The fingering is as follows.

C, E, G, C, E, G, C. (Ascending).
1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 5

Upon playing C6 with your 5th finger, you will descend to the starting point. The left hand plays the same notes, but the pitches are an octave lower. The fingering is as follows.

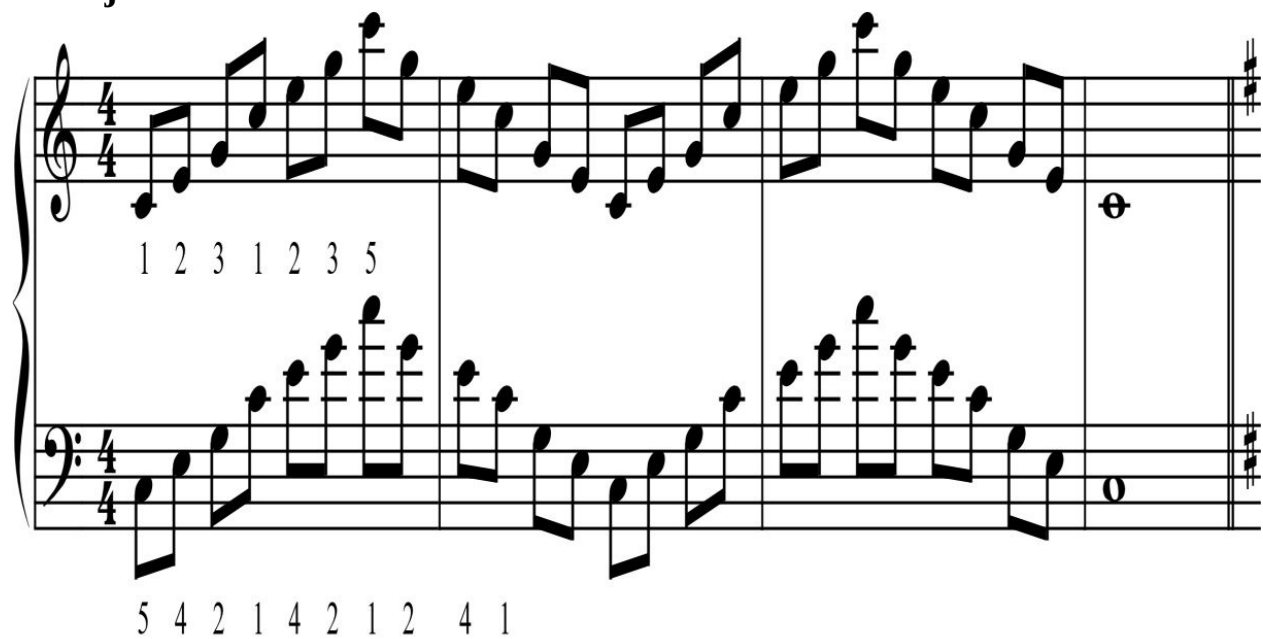
C, E, G, C, E, G, C (Ascending).
5, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1

Play through each arpeggio sequence (C major, G Major, F Major, A Major),
using the same fingering as you use with the C Major arpeggio.

Figure 43

**Arpeggios
Two Octaves**

C Major



5 G Major

Measures 1-8 of a musical piece in F Major. The score is written for piano with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The melody in the right hand consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

9 F Major

Measures 9-12 of the musical piece, continuing in F Major. The melodic and accompaniment patterns are consistent with the previous section. The key signature remains one sharp. The section ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

13 A Major

Measures 13-16 of the musical piece, transitioning to A Major. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#). The melodic and accompaniment patterns continue. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CHAPTER 22: The Emotional Minor Keys

Unlike major scales, there are 3 different kinds of minor scales. The differences lie in the configuration of their **whole steps and half steps**.

Recall that for the 12 Major Scales, the configuration is:

W-W-H-W-W-W-H.

W = Whole Step

H = Half Step

The 3 minor scales are called **harmonic minor, melodic minor, and the natural minor**. We will use the key of **a minor** as examples since it is the relative minor of C Major.

1 **Natural minor**

The natural minor scale is almost an exact duplicate of Major scales in terms of the separation of notes. These are the notes of the “A” natural minor scale.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A.

Like the C Major scale, it is played on all white keys, and the fingering is identical to most Major scales.

RH: 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LH: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1

Note, however, that the whole step and half step configuration is different. Minor scales have the following configuration.

W – H – W – W – H – W – W

Now let’s apply the same whole step and half step configuration for the G natural minor scale.

G – A – B \flat – C – D, E \flat – F – G

RH: 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LH: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1

W – H – W – W – H – W – W

As you can see, the same whole step and half step configurations are used in the G natural minor scale. You can apply this same whole step and half step design to all 12 natural minor scales.

2 **Melodic Minor**

The melodic minor is essentially an **ascending scale**. When playing scales, ascending and descending uses the same note. This is not the case with the melodic minor, in classical music especially. In that case, a melodic minor is played ascending; however, when descending, it converts to a natural minor.

A minor scale ascending: A, B, C, D, E, F#, G#, A

A minor scale descending: A, G, F, E, D, C, B, A

The step configuration for an ascending melodic minor is as follows.

W – H – W – W – W – W – H

When playing the scale descending, you will revert to the natural minor scale:

W – H – W – W – H – W – W

Use the same natural minor fingering shown above to play most melodic minor scales.

3

Minor

Harmonic

Playing a harmonic minor is almost identical to a natural minor, except you raise the 7th **scale degree** a half step.

The C harmonic minor scale is as follows.

C - D - Eb - F - G - Ab - B – C

Note that the distance between the 6th scale degree Ab and the 7th scale degree B, is one and a half steps apart. This scale has an eastern sound to it, and the one and one half step jump is used widely in ancient and modern Middle Eastern

music

Chapter 23: *Improvisation*

One of the most enjoyable aspects of music is how flexible it can be. There is a whole field of music known as **music improvisation**. This occurs often in jazz, but rock musicians also improvise during guitar, bass, piano, and drum solos.

Jazz music pieces often begin with the statement of the main theme. After the theme is played through, each of the players will be showcased and each will improvise on the main theme. First, the saxophonist will, on the spot, play original music while the piano, bass, and drums continue playing rhythm in the background. The theme may be extended by staying in the same key, for example, over a longer period, giving the saxophonist time to improvise. Next, the pianist will improvise, and the saxophone player moves into the background, followed by the bass player with his improvisation, and then finally, the drummer or percussionist. Finally, the main theme returns and all players play together once again to end the piece.

Often, only one member of a band of players improvises over the main theme in jazz. Great improvisational musicians include John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis.

One of the greatest jazz albums of all time is *A Love Supreme* by John Coltrane. The album includes some of the greatest jazz improvisations of all time.

Music is always in stasis. It never sounds the same when performed twice, no matter how music musicians try to make exact duplicates. A fan of Bob Dylan listens to the album *Blood on the Tracks* and then sees the songwriter playing it in concert, and finds it sounds a little different than it does on the album. This is often due to a change in instrumentation, but usually, the reason is that the songwriter approaches the material differently each time it's played. This is what makes music seem organic and alive.

MTV once had a show called *MTV Unplugged*, which required artists to play a mostly acoustic version of songs that were written for electric guitar and other electric instruments. Songs that normally were played at a faster tempo slowed down during these performances, giving the songs a depth and poignancy to the lyrics and to the music itself.

Memorable episodes of the show included performances by Nirvana, Eric

Clapton, and The Eagles.

Cumberland Blues: an example of Music's Flexibility

The Grateful Dead is listed in the Guinness Book of World records as having performed the most concerts in the history of music, In their 30-year career they played in over 2,300 concerts in front of almost 30 million people.

That record is astounding and would make one wonder how they could come up with fresh new material for shows year after year. There's no doubt the Grateful Dead were prolific writers, but the number of actual original songs they wrote is 181, and cover versions of other material are about 250.

So how did they manage to stay original over 30 years? While they did cover versions of songs by Hank Williams, Buddy Holly, Bo Diddley, Blind Willie Johnson, and many others, they also did cover versions of their songs when performing in concert. Many of their popular songs recorded for their studio albums found their way reconstituted, often into something radically different.

Songs such as "Truckin'", about 5 minutes in length recorded in the studio would sometimes stretch as long as 15 minutes in concert, the band playing "rehearsed improvisations" or just plain improvising on the spot.

There's no doubt that the lead guitarist, Jerry Garcia's ability to improvise ranks him among the best musicians of the 20th century, Truckin' is only an extended version of the studio cut. There are other songs they played in a recording studio that given a complete reworking while keeping the spirit of the original version intact.

"Cumberland Blues" is one such song. We are going to compare the original to the version performed in concert. The band did not perform the reworked version more than just a few times, unlike many of their other songs.

Cumberland Blues was written by Jerry Garcia and lyricist Robert Hunter for the album, *Workingman's Dead*, which made it to Rolling Stones magazine list of top 500 albums of all time.

Workingman's Dead was a change for the grateful Dead. Most of the album was recorded using acoustic instruments, with the percussion greatly restrained. What is intriguing about the writing on the album is how all the individual players sound cohesive and tight, with no single instrument taking the lead in most of the songs.

"Cumberland Blues" is a song about coal miners, and the tone suggests

somewhere in Appalachia. It is an acoustic folk song in an **uptempo bluegrass** style. The instruments include Bob Weir and David Nelson, making a guest appearance, on acoustic guitars. Phil Lesh on acoustic bass, Jerry Garcia on electric guitar and banjo, Bill Kreutzmann, and Mickey Hart on drums. Lesh, Weir, and Garcia play harmonized vocals. Cumberland blues is only 3 minutes and 17 seconds in length.

Original, Acoustic Version (1970) (3:15)

The first instrument heard is the bass guitar, followed almost immediately by two acoustic guitars played by Weir and Nelson, and Garcia's lead guitar. Interesting to note that all the instruments, including the bass and lead, are made to sound like acoustic guitars, giving the song its tight cohesion. The drums are light, and the overall sound is like that of a jug band.

The vocal harmonies are unique and barely stay in key, adding to the folksy elements of the song. It is about a coal miner who leaves his lover, Melinda, and is in a hurry to get to the coal mine so he can get paid.

After a solo vocal by Bob Weir, the song's **bridge** follows. The banjo enters and continues to the end of the song. Garcia then sings a short vocal part, and the song enters its **coda** or ending.

The lyrics are sung in the first person and the singers suggest the desperation of the narrator. He asks another mineworker if he can take over his shift at the mine. He earns \$5 a day, and "If I made any more I might move away," suggests his desire to leave the mine country.

Although the lyrics describe leaving a lover, desperation to work at the mine to make more money to leave, the music of "Cumberland Blues" is surprisingly upbeat and spirit-lifting. It's written in the key of G Major and has a fast rhythm. One would think the quick, upbeat music would be a poor match to the darker lyrics. Yet this "ironic" combination works extremely well.

Concert Version (1972) (5:44)

In 1972, the band made an extended concert tour throughout Europe and released a 3-LP set called *Europe 72, 1972*. The first track of the set is "Cumberland Blues" which is the first track on the album.

What is heard here is a driving, faster version of the song, the live recording energetic and powerful. The drums are no longer restrained and the band plays

on electric instruments, unlike the original acoustic version. Jerry Garcia plays lead electric guitar, Bob Weir on rhythm guitar, Phil Lesh, now playing electric bass. Keith Godchaux on a grand piano. Garcia, Weir, and Donna Godchaux are on vocals. The link is below.

Once again, the bass begins the song, with a jug band bass line that **moves from the G down to its dominant, D, and backs up**. Weir's acoustic guitar is heard next followed by the drums and Garcia's lead. So far, the song sounds very much like the original version.

Fifteen seconds into the song, the entire band, including Godchaux on the piano are playing the fast, driving rhythm. But Garcia's lead is a little different, as is Weir's rhythm accompaniment. The drums are also more forceful. Garcia is playing **rockabilly** guitar, freer in its movement than the original. The intro lasts a full 40 seconds, compared to the original version's 15-second intro. The longer-lasting intro of the live version fully establishes a harder beat and a somewhat more forceful rhythm attack.

The lyrics are identical to the original, but the rhythm behind it is much more pronounced. Although the sound is still like a bluegrass jug band, the drumming is played with more force and firmly establishes itself in the foreground with the other instruments. The instruments in the original are laid back, bordering on introversion.

In the original, the instrumental break after the first verse is a mere 9 seconds before the second verse begins. In the live version, the break lasts for 45 seconds and rises and rises in

its **dynamics (volume)**. The players seem to be playing an instrumental free form **jam**, but in reality, it's planned out in advance. The music rises to a climax, the piano rising and increasing in volume along with the rest of the players.

It reaches a climax and then recedes, diminishing in volume to its original dynamic of **mezzo forte (*mf* - medium loud)**.

The second verse begins and at the end of the verse, there is another instrumental. In the original, it is 10 seconds longer than the first instrumental break of 9 seconds.

The second break of the live version follows the same structure as the first but is much longer than the 45-second first break. This time it is 1 minute and 40

seconds in length. It rises and reaches a climax before settling down. The break seamlessly transitions to the solo vocal of Bob Weir, the rhythm becoming more bouncy.

There is a third instrumental before Garcia's solo vocal part, and it's much longer than the original as well.

How can the analysis of Cumberland Blues Improve my Playing?

The main point being made here is that ***there is no single correct way to play any song***. Sheet music at its best is a representation of the composer's intentions. It is not a blueprint. Sheet music is inexact.

For example, there is a range in every tempo marking from the very slow Lento to the hyper-fast Prestissimo. There are also ranges in dynamics from the very soft pianissimo (*pp*) to the very loud fortissimo (*ff*).

As a player, your main task is to interpret the music, then to play it the way you believe it should sound. Of course, you wouldn't play *Happy Birthday to you* very slowly, nor would you play *Fur Elise* at a snail's pace.

Your job as a player is **not** to mimic the song, nor is it to copy the original. Music is malleable, stretchable, shrinkable, and whatever word you can think of to describe something that is in a constant stage of change. For example, uranium is one of the most stable elements. Uranium is used in atomic weaponry. The half-life of uranium is over 4.5 billion years. Music is not like uranium. It is more like Francium, a highly unstable element, whose half life is a mere 22 minutes.

Music occurs naturally in nature, and music that is composed is an attempt to harness it and control it. Of course, without this, we would not have the wonderful music we have today. However, there are composers like Toru Takemitsu who look at music as an organic phenomenon and whose compositions don't have a defined structure.

Leaving unstructured music behind, the point is that players should strive to get to a point where they understand the **sentiment** that is being expressed in the piece. If it is the *Moonlight Sonata* you are learning, try to understand the sentiment first. What feeling is being conveyed? The answer can be expressed as sadness, despair, isolation, and so on. The player must "channel" these feelings and use their shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers to express the feeling on the

piano. Do not copy another's interpretation, use your connection and express it the way you understand it.

CONCLUSION

You should only play for enjoyment. Remember to try and play every day. Even if your fingers just glance against the keys, they are moving on the keyboard.

Muscle memory is how we are able to play music. We are gifted with a central nervous system that “remembers” the movement of each muscle in the body, especially the hands.

Make the piano an oasis, a place to go in a hectic, ever-changing world. Give yourself little challenges and take on musical pieces that are difficult. Mastering these will increase your confidence more than most other activities.

Music is a precious gift from nature. Respect it, and be thankful for each moment you can spend in this uniquely pleasurable world.