

THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC REVEALED

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A Real Easy Way for ANYONE to
Learn to Read and Write Music

Barry A. Kolman



Universal-Publishers
Boca Raton

*The Language of Music Revealed:
A Real Easy Way for ANYONE to Learn to Read and Write Music*

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To My Dad: In His Memory

**And To My Wife, Grace, and My Children, Gabriela, Rafaela,
Emmanuela, and Caio; all who have shown courage, trust, and love.**

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Act I: The Basics

Part I- Melody



Introduction

Don't be afraid; this book won't bite. I will personally take you by the hand and guide you through this new language called *music*. It's just like any other foreign language: you start with the very basics, add a few more rules here and there, and pretty soon, you're understanding terms and ideas that a few days ago may have sounded like gibberish.

Who Should Read This Book?

There are millions of self-taught musicians in this world. They come in all sizes and shapes. Some can't read a stitch of music and can only play by ear. If this describes you and you want to learn how to read and write music in a step-by-step, easy to follow fashion, you have come to the right place. Knowing the fundamentals of music will make playing even more fun. And, more importantly, you will really impress and astound your friends and family with your newly found knowledge.

Or maybe you're taking private lessons on a musical instrument? Perhaps on piano, flute, or violin? Ever hear your teacher say things like *key of C*, *relative minor*, or *dominant chord*? Your reaction: probably a blank stare, right? With this book, all those burning questions will be answered in one neat package. What a great reference tool for you and your teacher!

This book is also designed for all those non-musical types who are taking a music fundamentals course and don't have a clue about what is going on. This book will come to your rescue. Panicked freshman music majors can use this book to look up stuff that their professor said they're supposed to know for a quiz TOMORROW!

How The Book Is Set Up

The book is divided up into two "Acts". **Act I: The Basics** is geared for beginners. It starts off with **Toolbox**, a sort of a musical backpack of equipment that we will need for our journey. We'll start by learning about the building blocks that make up a **melody**. Two chapters will be devoted to **rhythm** or why we tap our feet or clap our hands when we hear music. And the next two chapters will introduce **harmony**-what we get when musical notes are combined a certain way and played at the same time.

Act II: More Advanced Stuff continues with further explanations about **harmony**. Though this section is for the brave and daring, all information is explained in the same step-by-step fashion.

Parlez-Vous Music?

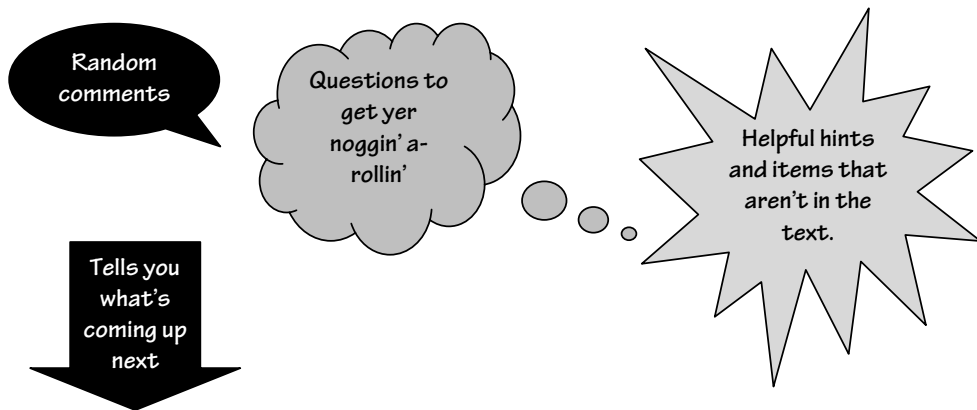
Like learning a foreign language, learning music fundamentals is cumulative. Many terms will be thrown out to you. Some will make a lot of sense right from the start; some you may have to file away for a little while until their usefulness becomes clear.

Cool Icons

Meet our Guide; he will be a big help to you along your journey. He has a great sense of humor and knows a lot about music:



You will also encounter four other icons:



Learn By Doing

Just reading about music fundamentals won't do much for you. You've got to jump in and begin to write music. At the end of each chapter, there are exercises for you to do to see if you're catching on. Don't worry; there is also an answer key to both the odd AND even questions (Don't you hate those math textbooks that give just the answers to the odd numbered questions!).

After an important point is explained you'll see a little box like this:

INTERMISSION:
*Will direct you to exercises to reinforce
what you just learned.*

These helpful **Intermissions** will direct you to a specific exercise or group of exercises that you can complete before going on to something new.

All the new terms explained in each chapter are summed up at the end, so look for this:

Fab Vocab

A list of new terms and their definitions.

Let's Do It!

I will be happy to answer all of your questions; just kindly raise your hand. Don't forget: the word *fundamentals* begins with the word *fun*. OK, bad example... but I hope this book will take the *mystery* out of reading and writing music. It's really not that bad. Here we go.

- The staff
- The Musical Alphabet
- Treble clef
- Ledger lines
- Bass clef
- The grand staff

Chapter 1 Toolbox

Unlike learning brain surgery, learning how to read music is a cinch. You will find all the tools of the trade in this chapter. Read on and you will be reading music in no time.

A long time ago, someone decided that musicians needed a good way to write down the music that they heard and created. After many versions, another someone came up with a kind of musical graph called a **staff** (the plural is **staves**) and it looks like this:

The staff

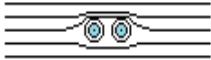
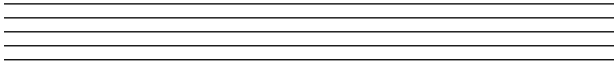


Figure 1.1: The Staff



Someone also came up with a set of symbols or **notes** to visually describe the musical sounds or **tones** that we hear. Here's what some of these symbols look like:

Figure 1.2: Note Symbols

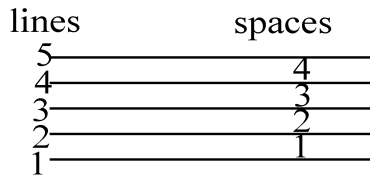


A tone is a sound of definite pitch.

The shape of the note indicates its **duration** (how long the sound lasts—we'll learn about that later) and its position on the staff tells us its **pitch** (how high or low the sound is). Not too surprisingly, high notes hang around the upper part of the staff and low notes live near the bottom.

The *lines* of the staff are numbered from the bottom up, 1 through 5, and the *spaces* are numbered 1 through 4:

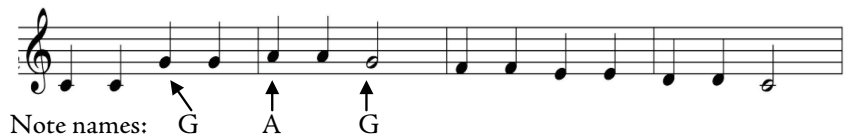
Figure 1.3: Lines and Spaces of the Staff



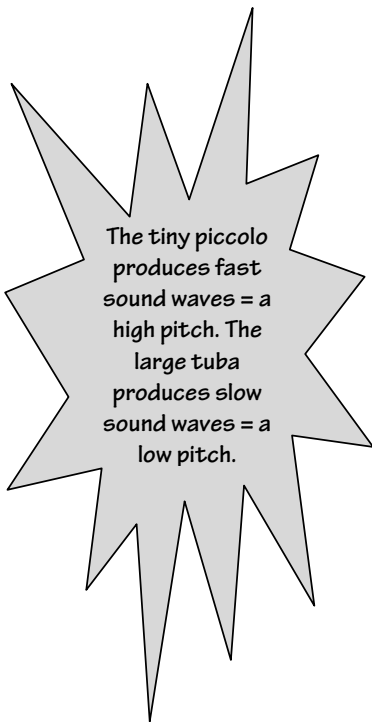
Now, if you happen to know the first seven letters of the alphabet (A, B, C, D, E, F, G), you are ready to learn to read music. That's our **musical alphabet**; just seven letters repeated over and over again. Pretty easy so far.

When we write down a **melody** (a succession of sounds arranged in a special way), each tone or note of the melody is assigned to a letter. Here's a typical melody:

Figure 1.4: A Typical Melody



The very first thing that appears on the staff—the squiggly thing—is called a **clef**, a **treble clef**, or G clef to be exact. See how the clef makes a kind of a circle around line 2 of the staff? That curly-cue shows us where the note G is; so G is located on the second line. If a note were to be placed on the very next space (space 2), that note would be A, starting our musical alphabet over again.



The musical alphabet



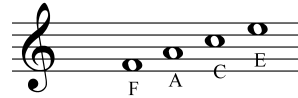
Treble clef





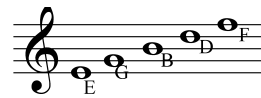
Of course by now, all you over-achievers out there have figured out the names of the notes on the spaces as: F, A, C, E.

Figure 1.5: The Names of the Notes on the Spaces



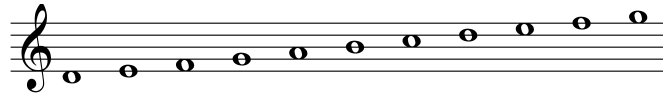
The ones that live on the lines are: E, G, B, D, F.

Figure 1.6: The Notes That Live On The Lines

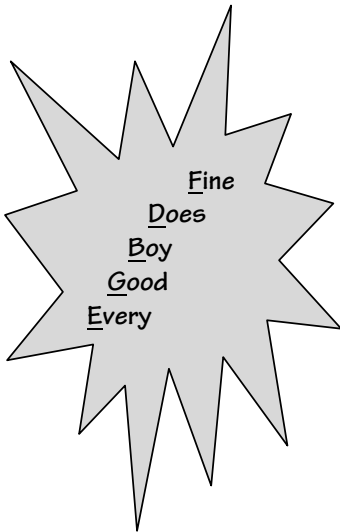


If we combine Figures 1.4 and 1.5, it looks something like this:

Figure 1.7: Where All The Notes Live On The Treble Clef Staff



Note names: D E F G A B C D E F G



Go back and try to name as many notes in 1.4 as you can.

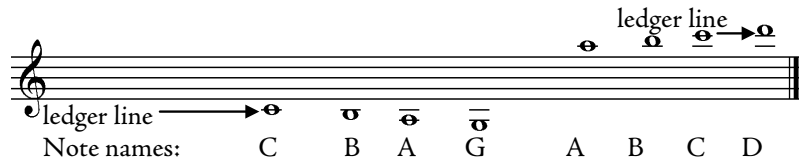
If notes go lower than the first line or higher than the fifth line, it's no biggie. We keep repeating our seven-letter alphabet over and over again, backwards and forwards. The first note, the one that is below the staff, is a D. The note above fifth line F, sitting pretty on the top space, is G.

INTERMISSION
Try Exercise A: 1-10

Ledger lines

When a melody goes higher than G or lower than D, we use **ledger lines** to extend the staff temporarily. The arrows in the treble clef below, point to some examples of ledger lines.

Figure 1.8: Ledger Lines



So now we can *finally* name each note of this particular song about that twinkling star. Go ahead and try it:

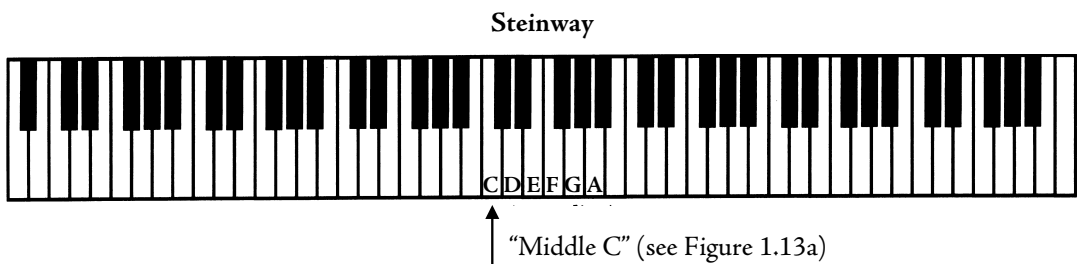
Figure 1.9: Naming Names



Can you figure out how to play the song in Figure 1.9 on the piano?

Let's hope that a picture is worth a thousand words; below is a picture of a piano keyboard. I marked the keys we would use to play the melody in Figure 1.9. In this case, *keys* (on a piano) are the white and black things that make a noise when we press down on them.

Figure 1.10: The Piano Keyboard

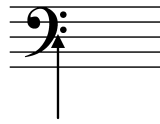


That treble clef only takes care of half of the world. What if we wanted to play the same melody in Figure 1.9 way down near the bottom of the keyboard? Or what if the bass player in your band wanted to play it? What clef would he use? You would need to use a zillion (or at least a lot of) ledger lines to represent the low tones coming out of that instrument. So, we smart musician types invented a clef called a **bass clef**:

Bass clef

Bass cleffers:
trombonists,
string bass
players,
guys who can sing
real low.

Figure 1.11: The Bass Clef



Like the treble clef, the bass clef (sometimes called the F clef) also gives you a hint of how to read the notes. See those two small dots where the arrow is pointing? That is fourth line F. So the space above the F would be a.....that's right, G.

The notes on the lines are:

Always
Fine
Do
Boys
Good

Figure 1.12: The Notes on the Lines

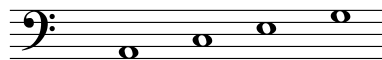


Note names: G B D F A

And for the spaces:

Grass
Eat
Cows
All

Figure 1.13: The Notes on the Spaces

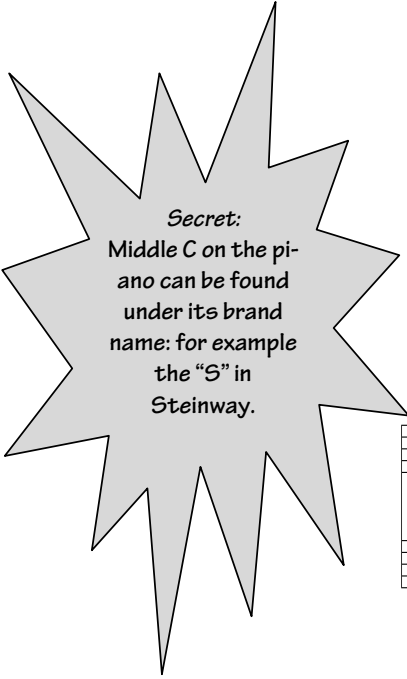


Note names: A C E G

INTERMISSION

Try Exercise B, 1-10
 Exercise C, 1-10
 Exercise D, 1-10
 Exercise E, 1-10

The grand staff



Now for the *pièce de résistance*; creating the magnificent, the stupendous, the one and only: *the Grand Staff*.

The piano uses a full spectrum or **range** of notes, from very very high to very very low. Though pianists are not any smarter than the rest of us, they are taught at a tender age to read two staves (*the Grand Staff*) at the same time; a remarkable feat done without a net. So here is what this King of Staves looks like:

Figure 1.14a: The Grand Staff

Steinway

EFGA BC DE FGABCD EFGABC DEFGABC

My friends call me
Middle C

Figure 1.14b: Treble Middle C

Figure 1-14c: Bass Middle C

I'm Middle C.

No, I'm Middle C!

Cool it yous guys,
 you're both Middle C;
 this is how we write
 Middle C first in treble
 clef, then in bass clef.

Here's what a real piece of piano music looks like (with all the note names labeled):

Figure 1.15: Real Music

I'm Henry VIII, I Am Words and Music by Fred Murray and R.P. Weston

G E E F G E E C C C C D C A C G G G E E F G E E C
 C C C C C C C C F F F F C C C C C C C C C C C C C C

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

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

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INTERMISSION

Try all the *exercises* in F

Ta Da! Now you know how to read music like the pros. Do some of the following exercises for practice and I'll meet you in Chapter 2 in a little while.

Fab Vocab

musical staff	Five parallel horizontal lines and four spaces between them, on which musical symbols are written. The lines are numbered 1 through 5, from the bottom up. The spaces are numbered 1 through 4 from the bottom up.
pitch	How high or low a sound is; a low-pitched instrument produces fewer sound vibrations per second than a high-pitched instrument; the large size tuba is a low-pitched instrument while the tiny piccolo is a high-pitched instrument.
melody	A succession of single pitches heard consecutively and perceived as a unit, as opposed to <i>harmony</i> which consists of pitches sounding <i>simultaneously</i> .
clef	A sign or symbol found at the beginning of the staff that helps us in naming the notes.
ledger lines	Short horizontal lines that extend the 5-line staff so that very low pitches or very high pitches can be notated.
treble clef	(Also called "G clef") a clef sign (see above) that identifies the note on line 2 of the staff as G; it is used when writing music for high instruments or voices.
bass clef	(Also called "F clef") a clef sign that identifies the note on line 4 of the staff as F; it is used when writing music for low instruments or voices.
grand staff	A "super" staff; both the treble clef staff and the bass clef staff are bracketed together. Both staves are read or played simultaneously. Pianists read from a grand staff because they play both high and low notes at the same time.
range	The full set of notes, from the highest to the lowest, that someone can sing or an instrumentalist can play. If you've ever tried to sing "The Star Spangled Banner" along with a crowd at a baseball game, you've probably noticed that it requires a much wider range than most of us have.
middle C	The note "C" found in the middle of the grand staff.



Coming up next:
Are white and
black keys just
friends? Or is
there
something
more?

Exercises for Chapter 1 - We Got Questions, You Got Answers.

A. Read the Notes, Name the Notes.



Sample: G 1. _ 2. _ 3. _ 4. _ 5. _ 6. _ 7. _ 8. _ 9. _ 10. _

HINT: ALL COWS EAT GRASS/FACE

B. More Notes, More Names, Different Clef.



Sample: B 1. _ 2. _ 3. _ 4. _ 5. _ 6. _ 7. _ 8. _ 9. _ 10. _

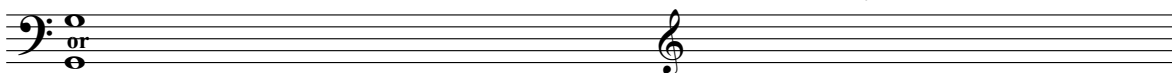
HINT: GOOD BOYS DO FINE ALWAYS?

C. The Highs and Lows, ID These Notes.



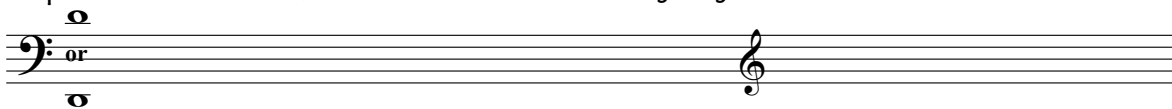
Sample: E (middle) 1. _ 2. _ 3. _ 4. _ 5. _ 6. _ 7. _ 8. _ 9. _ 10. _

D. Your Turn; Write the Following Notes Using Only The Five Lines And Four Spaces of the Staff.



Sample: G 1. E 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. F 7. G 8. D 9. E 10. B

E. Up Above or Down Below; Write the Pitch Indicated Using Ledger Lines Either Above Or Below The Staff.



Sample: D 1. G 2. C 3. E 4. B 5. A 6. D 7. F 8. F 9. D 10. A