

This book is dedicated to Deral Johnson. Soon after I began composing music, Deral looked me hard in the eye and said, "What we really need is some good, contemporary sight-singing material. Any chance you might be able to write some?"

Special thanks to Deral Johnson, Victoria Meredith and Carol Rogers for feedback and suggestions.

What Is Sight-Singing?

- reading a piece of choral or vocal music that you have never seen before, without the help of a piano or other singers.
- singing music for the first time with the words, pitches and rhythms as accurate as possible.

POSTURE

Body: balanced (do not lean to either side)

Head: balanced and level (your jaw should not be pointing up or resting too close to your chest)

Arms and Shoulders: relaxed

Music: high enough so that you can see both the music and the conductor without having to move your head

Standing

Feet: 1) spaced the same distance apart as the width of your shoulders;
2) "rooted" in the ground (use the strength of your whole body when you sing)

Knees: slightly flexed (locked knees are too rigid)

Sitting

Body: 1) straight and relaxed (do not lean against the back of your chair)
2) sit "hard on the bones" to keep balanced and centered

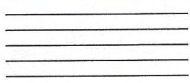
Feet: flat on the floor (legs or ankles should not be crossed)

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1

staff



notes



The higher the notes are on the staff, the higher in pitch they will sound.

tonic

home

dominant

far away from
home



Exercise

1



2

quarter note



one beat

quarter rest

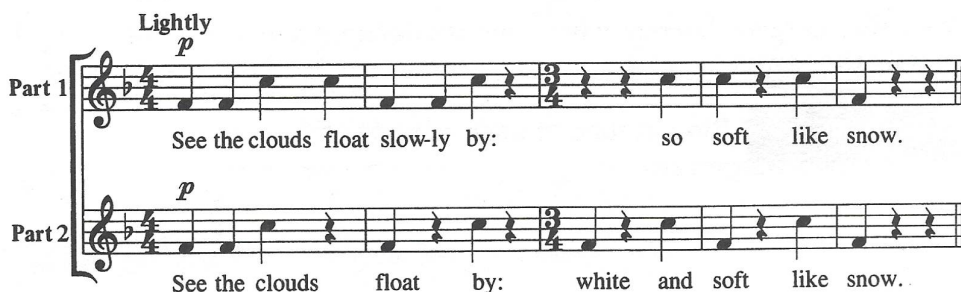


one beat

You do not sing during a rest but the feeling of the music continues, even without any sound. Try to feel the beat in the silence.

Exercise

2



A note may be on a line or a space:

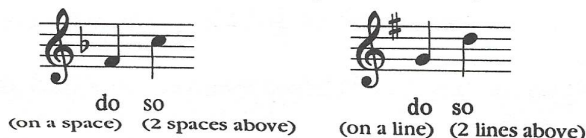


Every note on the bottom space will have the same pitch. Whether it is at the beginning, middle or end of a song, it will still sound at the same pitch.



"Do" is the tonic (home).

"So" is the dominant (far away from home).



Exercise

3

Like a March

Part 1 *mf*

Rum tum, rum tum tum; rum tum, rum tum.

Part 2 *mf*

Rum tum, rum tum tum; rum tum, rum tum.

tempo

speed

Music sounds quite different when sung at a different tempo but still looks exactly the same!

REMINDER

Sing in tune at each tempo!

4

eighth notes



one beat

Notice the horizontal beam joining the two notes; sometimes it is slanted:



The notes look like they are one unit, lasting one beat, sung evenly.

Say this rhythm using "dah" or "loo":



Exercise

4

Part 1 *Slowly mp*

Tick - tock, tick - tock, tick - tick - tock, tick - tick - tock;

Part 2 *mf*

Tick - tock, tick - tock;

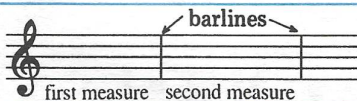
tick - tock, tick - tock, tick - tick - tock, tick - tick - tock,

tick - tick, tick - tick - tock; tick - tock, tick -

tick - tock, tick - tock; tick, tick - tick - tock, tick - tock!

tock; tick - tick - tock, tick - tock, tick - tock!

barlines



Exercise 7

Part 1 Moderately *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Part 2 *p*

Light-house blink-ing, light-house show-ing

Waves come splash-ing on - to the shore- line; White foam, dark wa- ter,

mp *mf* *p*

ships where to go. Light-house blink-ing, blink-ing, blink-ing.

mf *p*

night breeze stiff; Salt air spray; Waves come splash-ing on the rocks.

8



Exercise 8

REMINDER Hold the music up.

Part 1 Gently *mp*

Part 2 *mp*

Come, come, come, come; come, my lit - tle one;

Come, come, come, come; come, my lit - tle one;

come with me now as I lis - ten to your song.

come, come as I lis - ten to your song.

Exercise 9

Moderately

Part 1 *mf*

Waves on the sea- shore, wind from the sea, wind and sand, sea and sky as

Part 2 *mf*

Wind and sand, sea and sky as far as

far as you can see. Far as you can see.

you can see, Far as you can see.

p

p

homophonic

parts sing the same words and different pitches at the same time

p

Far as you can see.

p

Far as you can see.

polyphonic

parts sing the different words and different pitches at the same time

Wind and sand, sea and sky as

far as

When music suddenly changes from polyphonic to homophonic (or vice versa), mark it with a bracket:

far as you can see, far as you can see.

you can see, far as you can see.

10

Exercise 10

REMINDER Hold the music up.

Slowly *p* *pp*

Part 1 Oh, my ba - by, lit - tle ba - by, go to sleep; don't you cry. Your

Part 2 *p* *pp* Oh, my ba - by, lit - tle ba - by, go to sleep; don't you cry. Your

fath - er will hold you; your moth - er's close by.

fath - er likes to hold you; your moth - er is close by.

11

half note

=



=

two beats

=



Say this rhythm using "dah":

TIP

If another part begins on the same pitch as your entry, that pitch will be your cue. Circle the cue and draw a line to your entry.

Exercise 11

Part 2 should sing silently with Part 1 until it is time for their entry.

Gently mp

Part 1: Bird sings cuck - oo on the hour all the day;

Part 2: *mp* Bird sings cuck - oo

Brown door o - pens up when it sings cuck - oo this way: cuck - oo.

on the hour all the day; Bird sings cuck - oo this way: cuck - oo.

Mark Part 1 of Exercise #11 with a vertical line above each beat. The lines should be exactly above each beat:

correct:



incorrect:



Space the lines properly for half notes:

correct:



incorrect:



12

REMINDER

Hold the music up.

Exercise 12

Lightly p

Part 1: Snow - flakes fall - ing round and round to the ground.

Part 2: *p* Snow - flakes fall - ing round and round; no sound.

Danc-ing with the win-ter wind; no sound.

Danc-ing with the win-ter wind; fall-ing to the ground.

13

legato

sing smoothly

eighth note



half a beat

eighth rest



half a beat

Say this rhythm using "dah":

**Exercise 13**

"Du" should be pronounced "doo."

TIP

For a reminder for a quick page turn, mark → above the last beats at the bottom of the page. Use this idea for rehearsal music, too.

Legato

Part 1

mf Da da da da da da; *p* Da da da da; *mf* Da

Part 2

mf Da da da da da da; *p* Da da da da;

da da da da da da; ⑦ Da da da da da. *Lightly mp* Du

mf Da da da da da; Da da da da.

du du du du du du du du du; Du du du du du du du du; Du

mp

Du du du du du du; Du du du du du du, du du du du du du;

du du du du du du du du du; Du du du du du du du.

Du du du du du; Du du du du du.

14

staccato

=



=

Sing for half as long as normal

=



The dot may be above or below a note:



In Exercise #14, the staccatos will sound a bit like rain hitting against the window.

Exercise 14

Lightly
p

Part 1 Rain comes gent-ly fall-ing down. Light-ly land-ing on the win-dow.

Part 2 *p*

Tip tap tip tap; tip tap tip tap

it taps a qui-et song: tip tap, tip tap, tip tap tap, tip tap.


tip, tip tap; tip tip tap tip tip tap tip, tip tap.

Exercise 15

REMINDER

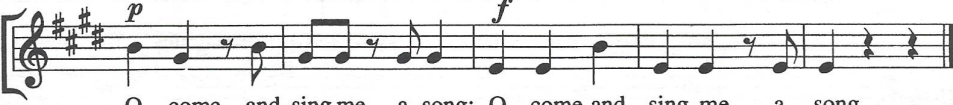
Hold the music up. Stretch out the quarter notes for a full beat.

Slowly *p*



O come and sing me a song; O come and sing me a song;

p *f*



O come and sing me a song; O come and sing me a song.

16

octave



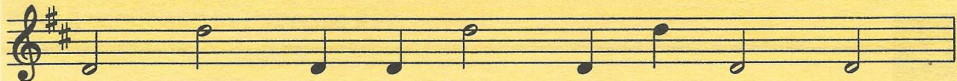
high "do"
low "do"



high "do"
low "do"

One note of the octave is always on a line and the other note is on a space.

Sing on "dah":



High "do" sounds the same as low "do" but higher.

Sing on "dah":



Sing on "dah":




TIP

Mark low and high "do" at the beginning of Exercise #16. Do this for your rehearsal music too, so that each time you sing a piece, you can quickly find low and high "do."

Part 1

Very steadily *mf*



Right

Exercise 16

Very steadily

mf

Part 1
Right on time, pre - cise - ly to -

Part 2
Feet are mov - ing right to - geth - er, march - ing to the

Part 3
Feet are mov - ing right to - geth - er, march - ing to the

geth - er, the ro - bots march on.

cen - ter square; the ro - bot's pa - rade is on.

cen - ter square; the ro - bot's pa - rade is on.

17

Exercise 17

Rhythmically

mp

Part 1
Bing bing, bing bing bing, bing bing bing, bing

Part 2
Bong bong bong

bing bing; bing bing bing, bing bing bing, bing bing bing, bing

bong; bong bong bong bong bong bong

9

bing bing. Bing bing bing bong bong bong

bong bong; bing bing, bing bing bong bong

bing bing bing bong bong bong; bing bing bing bong.

bing bing, bing bing bong bong; bing bing, bing bong.

sequence

a pattern of notes repeated at a different pitch level

The music will sound the same but higher (or lower) each time it is repeated.
Find a sequence in Exercise #17.

accent



Begin an accented note with a quick, sharp push from the diaphragm.

18

repeat signs



Repeat the music between the dotted double barlines.

Exercise 18

REMINDER

Hold the music up.

Merrily
mf

Part 1
Ding dong, ding dong; ding dong, ding dong;

Part 2
mf
Ring, lit-tle bells; ring, lit-tle bells, ring out loud and clear;

ding ding dong, ding dong; ding ding dong, ding dong.

ding dong, ring lit-tle bells; ding dong, ding dong.

19



repeat back to the beginning

Exercise 19

"Du" should be pronounced "doo."

Lightly
p

Part 1
Du du du du dee, Oh, sing gent-ly du du dee.

Part 2
p
Du du du du du du dee, Oh, sing gent-ly now du du dee.

Part 3
p
Du du du du du du dee, Oh, sing gent-ly now du du dee.

Exercise 20

REMINDER

Hold the music up. Move your eyes quickly from the end of the first line down to the beginning of the next line.

Slowly
mp

Part 1
Bron - to - sau - rus and pter - a - dac - tyl, ste - go -

Part 2
Bron-to- sau- rus and pter-a- dac- tyl, ste- go-

sau - rus and ty - ran-no-sau-rus rex, tri - cer-a-tops.

sau - rus and ty-ran-no- sau-rus, ty - ran-no-sau-rus rex, tri - cer-a- tops.

f *p*

21

Exercise 21

With a steady beat
mp

Part 1
Stretch 2 3 4, stretch 2 3 4, stretch 2 3 4; reach for the sky, then

Part 2
Move to the mu- sic; let your bod-y feel a- live. Feel the

bend to the floor. Gent- ly, gent- ly re- lax.

pulse of life in your move- ments. Gent- ly re- lax.

f *p*

unison

Everyone sings the same words and pitches at the same time.