

Bass Fundamentals

Column #9 – Reading Notation, Pt. 4

Now that you've gotten your feet a little wet in learning to read, let's pull out some exercises to get you doing some sight reading. You should have most of the bass clef notes memorised by now. If not, this lesson will be a bit more of a struggle. And the note values in the last installment should also be somewhat clearly understood, too.

The first exercise is just to get you moving. The tempo is really fast when played in "real time", but don't worry about that. It is the first 8 bars of the tune "Hot Chocolate", from the film "Polar Express". It is a walking pattern and you'll play just one note per beat, until measure 6, where there are some eighth notes, an eighth rest, and that little smiley looking thing - called a "tie", which means you play the first note attached to it, and hold that note through the value of the second note tied to the first. In this case, the '&' of 2, and the full beat of 3. Get familiar with the passage first. And remember: no open strings! Once you are comfortable with it, add the metronome, starting at about 60 beats per minute (bpm).

FAST SWING ♩ = 224-240

HOT CHOCOLATE

GLEN BALLARD AND ALAN SILVESTRI

Chords: Bb13, 2, 3 F13, 4, Am7, Gmi7/C, F13 7, 8

The second exercise is a Blues progression, so twelve bars long. It's a "walking" bass pattern, so all quarter notes here - one note per beat. As before, play through this before using the metronome. But, definitely use the metronome once you are pretty comfortable playing through this. If you miss a beat, just pick up at the next available beat (and if your metronome has a high pitched first beat, wait until the next 'One' comes along, and start a measure before the one you made the mistake in, to get a running start).

Chords: 1 G, F#7b5, B7, Em7, D#m7, Dm7, Ddim, C, F11, Bm7, Bbm7, Eb11, Am7, D7#9, G, Bb13, Eb7, Ab13

This third pattern is one where you can run up and down the neck of the bass. The "8va" means to play **one octave** above what is written, but only for the section that is covered under the dotted line.

1

Gm7 \flat 5 C7 Fmaj7

8va--

5

Gm7 \flat 5 C7 Fmaj7

8va--

As you are learning to read music, recognize that it isn't going to happen overnight. It takes time to assimilate information. Everyone is different in their ability to memorize things, some quickly, some not so quickly. That's okay. You'll get it if you stick with it. And once you do begin to read with some degree of confidence, keep it up.

Reading music is one of those examples of "use it or lose it". If you don't read regularly, you will begin to slip. You'll still know what the notes are, of course, but your ability to read "on the fly" and play things "cold", with little to no preview, will slip and it won't be a "quick fix".

So because you're taking the time to learn to read music, make it count, make it worth the time you're investing. Don't let it fall by the wayside. There's plenty material out there - and I provided the reference to a great book to keep you reading. Don't let the effort you're putting into this be wasted!

Believe me, it will be worth it, even if you're a recreational player. Knowledge is power. And reading music allows you to be able to absorb a lot of music that does not have the convenience of including Tablature (a real crutch that you should strive to cast away from you), which is pretty much most music you'll run into in the real world.

While I could continue to give you examples of material to read, styles to learn through reading, you need to begin to assemble this material yourself, like creating your own charts now. There's more to reading than what I've covered here. This has been a basic introduction series for you to grasp the concepts.

In the future, I will be presenting some lessons that do not include Tablature, and some that do. Without the limitations Tablature presents, you will not have any problem with the columns that are pure notation driven. That's real power!