

MUSIC  
for  
SIGHT  
SINGING

*Fourth Edition*

Robert W. Ottman

4<sup>th</sup> edition

# MUSIC FOR SIGHT SINGING

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# PREFACE

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To become successful in reading rhythm and singing pitches at sight, one must have at hand a considerable amount of material, for the simple reason that after the initial performance of an exercise, its repetition cannot again be considered performing *at sight*. To make the study pleasurable, it is important that the music examples illustrating each of the theoretical concepts under study be of the highest quality. With few exceptions, the melodies in this text are carefully chosen from the literature of composed music and from a wide range of the world's folk music.

The materials chosen are so graded that the student is presented with one musical problem, rhythmic or melodic, at a time. No example contains any element not already presented, allowing the student to progress easily from the simplest to the most complex materials. To facilitate each new presentation in either element—pitch or rhythm—the opening exercises make use of the simplest materials in the other element.

Prerequisite to the study of sight singing are some of the simplest aspects of music theory, often taught under titles beginning with “Introduction,” “Rudiments,” or “Fundamentals”.<sup>1</sup> In the area of pitch, the most important of these are knowledge of staff and clef signs; the ability to sing, spell, and write all major and minor scales; the ability to write all major and minor key signatures; and the ability to recognize the key from the given signature. In the area of rhythm, a knowledge of note values and the interpretation of time

<sup>1</sup>This material is covered in these Prentice Hall publications by Robert W. Ottman and Frank D. Mainous: *Rudiments of Music*, 3rd ed., 1995, and *Programmed Rudiments of Music*, 2nd ed., 1994; and by Robert W. Ottman, a condensed version in the opening chapters of *Elementary Harmony*, 5th ed., 1998.

(meter) signatures is necessary. Although many of these skills will be reviewed here during the presentations of rhythmic reading and sight singing, previous thorough knowledge of them will guarantee more immediate accomplishment of sight-reading goals.

The fourth edition of *Music for Sight Singing* retains in general the concepts and the format of the previous editions. These further changes and additions contribute to making the new edition even more attractive, useful, and effective.

*Organization:* The text is divided into four parts: Part I, diatonic melodies with rhythmic patterns containing only beat-note values and their divisions; Part II, diatonic melodies with rhythmic patterns including subdivision of the beat; Part III, chromaticism, including modulation, and more-advanced rhythmic patterns; and Part IV, pre-seventeenth-century music and music from the twentieth century.

Though the use of the materials in the order presented will produce successful results, the organization and grading of materials allow other pedagogical approaches. For example, upon completion of Chapters 3 and 5 (intervals from the tonic triad, major and minor keys, and rhythm in divided beat patterns only), the student may skip to Chapters 9 and 10, where those same intervals are found with rhythmic patterns in subdivided beats. A careful study of the detailed table of contents will reveal many similar possibilities.

*New and reorganized materials:*

1. Over one hundred melodies new to this edition
2. New rhythm drills, including many considerably longer than those in previous editions
3. A greatly expanded chapter on twentieth-century music
4. Preliminary melodic drills in many chapters—for example, in Chapter 2, practice in singing intervals from the tonic triad of a given key
5. Additional discussions to aid in the understanding of particular materials, together with markings on selected melodies to illustrate their application

Major changes made in the second and third editions have been retained in this fourth edition and include scale-line melodies only for the first sight-singing experience, the inclusion of two-voice rhythmic reading and sight-singing examples, exercises and melodies that illustrate secondary dominant harmonies as an introduction to the sight singing of modulation, and finally the rhythmic and melodic exercises prerequisite to study of twentieth-century melody.

*Robert W. Ottman*

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*Robert W. Ottman*

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## MELODY

scale-line movement, major keys

## RHYTHM

simple time (meter);

the beat and its division into two parts

An important attribute of the accomplished musician is the ability to “hear mentally”—that is, to know how a given piece of music sounds without recourse to an instrument. Sight singing, together with ear training and other studies in musicianship, helps develop that attribute. The goal of sight singing is the ability to sing *at first sight*, with correct rhythm and pitch, a piece of music previously unknown to the performer. Accomplishing that goal demonstrates that the music symbols on paper were comprehended mentally before being performed. In contrast, skill in reading music on an instrument often represents an ability to interpret music symbols as fingerings, with no way of demonstrating prior mental comprehension of the score.

To help you become proficient in sight singing, this text provides you with many carefully graded music examples. Beginning in this chapter, you will perform the simplest of exercises in reading rhythm, after which you will perform easy melodic lines that incorporate those same rhythmic patterns.

### RHYTHMIC READING<sup>1</sup>

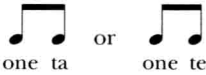
In simple time, the beat is divisible into two equal parts; therefore, any note value so divisible can represent the beat. Most commonly used are

<sup>1</sup> An extensive discussion of meter, meter (time) signatures, and rhythm can be found in Chapter 3 of the author’s *Elementary Harmony: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998).



the quarter note ( $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ ), the eighth note ( $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ ), and the half note ( $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ ), though other values ( $\text{♩}$ ,  $\text{♩}$ ,  $\text{♩}$ ) are sometimes seen. In this chapter, the note value representing the simple division of the beat will be the shortest note value used. In reading, follow these suggestions:

1. *Rhythmic syllables.* Rhythmic reading is best accomplished through the use of rhythmic syllables. Items a through d describe the basic use of these syllables, all of which are illustrated in the music example immediately following item d.
  - a. Each note value appearing on a principal beat of a measure is spoken with the number for that beat (measure 1).
  - b. For a note longer than one beat, hold the number spoken for the duration of the note value (measures 2 and 3).
  - c. Note values shorter than the beat can be read with maximum precision by using a syllable beginning with an explosive consonant. The syllables “ta” (“tah”) and “te” (“tay”) are commonly used (measure 3):



- d. A rest indicates *silence*. Make no sound (measure 4).

Spoken: one two three four one (hold) one ta two ta three te

2. *The conductor's beat.* It should be obvious that only the *first* performance of an exercise can be considered reading at *first* sight. (After that, you are practicing!) Therefore, on the first try, you should not stop to correct errors or to study what to do next. To help you complete an exercise without hesitation, the use of conductor's beats is highly recommended. Shown below are hand-movement patterns for two beats, three beats, and four beats per measure. Successive downbeats of each pattern coincide with successive bar lines.

The Conductor's Beats: two beats, three beats, and four beats per measure

