Introduction

At its most basic level, sight-reading is authentic music literacy, and answers the question: "Can I accurately decode and execute the music before me without assistance?" All directors want their students to be better at this. For directors whose teaching deliberately targets this skill, the most common approach has been to expose students to unfamiliar music, either from repertoire or a book of sight-reading examples. What sets *Sound Sight-Reading* apart is its coupling of numerous practice examples with a collection of music-reading strategies. Students aren't just provided with music for sight-reading practice; they are guided in how to use decoding tools that add accuracy and efficiency to the process of learning to read and interpret music.

You may have heard some form of the old joke, "My child never practices...he's gotten really good at sight-reading!" Of course, we all sense the fallacy of this humorous statement. We know from the field of language arts that children learn to read and understand words through experience with language: hearing it, speaking it, and encountering it in written form again and again in increasingly expressive ways. Contrary to the joke's premise, children don't become better sight-readers by "not practicing" but by engaging with music and gradually acquiring a set of rules and tools to help them make sense of it all. Some language arts reading strategies used in our schools include rote repetition, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, chunking, word walls, comparing known words to new words, learning rules of pronunciation, and more. Likewise, students learn to be better sight-readers of music via musical experience and analogous decoding strategies.

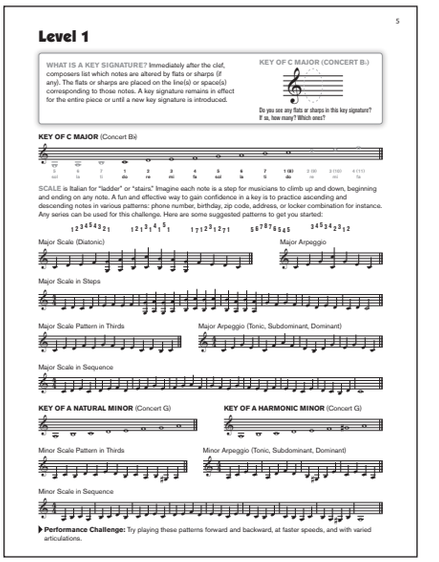
Sound Sight-Reading helps teachers train their students to become better, more independent music readers, while providing the following interrelated benefits:

- **Musical Understanding:** When an ensemble improves in sight-reading, more rehearsal time may be devoted to working on expression, phrasing, intonation, etc. Additionally, some of the book's strategies, such as spotting patterns in music, lead students to a deeper understanding of how music of lasting worth is created.
- **Time Investment and Return:** Maximizing our precious contact time with students is more crucial than ever! This book will help directors become more efficient teachers. Spending a small amount of time upfront working the book's strategies will, in the long run, lead to students decoding notes and rhythms faster and more accurately.
- **Festival and Other Assessments:** Sight-reading is an integral component of the festival experience in many places, where a sight-reading rating can be a significant part of the ensemble's overall score.

What's in Each Level?

Sound Sight-Reading is divided into six successively more complex and expressive levels. Each level introduces and reviews new collections of notes (i.e., key signatures, scales), rhythms, time signatures, and other musical elements through encounters with a variety of performance material. Just as important are the recurring strategies for interpreting these elements used in each level. Many of these tools for decoding and executing music are based on the same concepts used when learning to read the English language!

Each level of the book includes recurring tools and strategies implemented in performance material (i.e., lines) of varying lengths aimed at helping students learn to be better sight-readers. To assist both teacher and student, every line is accompanied by a concise objective (i.e., "What is to be accomplished with this exercise?"). The performance material includes: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Level 1

WHAT IS A KEY SIGNATURE? Immediately after the clef, composers list which notes are altered by flats or sharps (if any). The flats or sharps are placed on the line(s) or space(s) corresponding to those notes. A key signature remains in effect for the entire piece or until a new key signature is introduced.

KEY OF C MAJOR (CONCERT B♭)

Do you see any flats or sharps in this key signature? If so, how many? Which ones?

KEY OF C MAJOR (Concert B♭)

SCALE is Italian for "ladder" or "stairs." Imagine each note is a step for musicians to climb up and down, beginning and ending on any note. A fun and effective way to gain confidence in a key is to practice ascending and descending notes in various patterns: phone number, birthday, zip code, address, or locker combination for instance. Any series can be used for this challenge. Here are some suggested patterns to get you started:

Major Scale (Diatonic)

Major Arpeggio

Major Scale in Steps

Major Scale Pattern in Thirds

Major Arpeggio (Tonic, Subdominant, Dominant)

Major Scale in Sequence

KEY OF A NATURAL MINOR (Concert G)

KEY OF A HARMONIC MINOR (Concert G)

Minor Scale Pattern in Thirds

Minor Arpeggio (Tonic, Subdominant, Dominant)

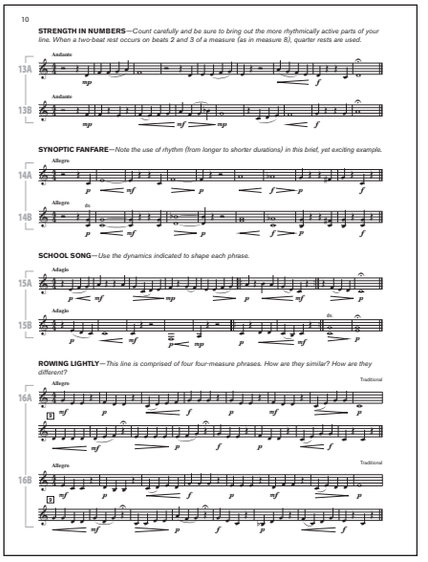
Minor Scale in Sequence

Performance Challenge: Try playing these patterns forward and backward, at faster speeds, and with varied articulations.

1. SCALES AND SCALE PATTERNS

Major and minor scales are presented ascending in whole notes but can be performed ascending or descending and with any rhythm. Notes of the scales are numbered so they can be used like flash cards, with students rapidly naming or playing the numbers called out.

Each scale is followed by accompanying scale patterns featuring some generative musical sequence. Immediately, the notes of the scale are put to work in a musical context.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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS—*Count carefully and be sure to bring out the more rhythmically active parts of your line. When a two-beat rest occurs on beats 2 and 3 of a measure (as in measure 8), quarter rests are used.*

13A Andante

13B Andante

SYNOPTIC FANFARE—*Note the use of rhythm (from longer to shorter durations) in this brief, yet exciting example.*

14A Allegro

14B Allegro

SCHOOL SONG—*Use the dynamics indicated to shape each phrase.*

15A Adagio

15B Adagio

ROWING LIGHTLY—*This line is comprised of four four-measure phrases. How are they similar? How are they different?*

16A Allegro Traditional

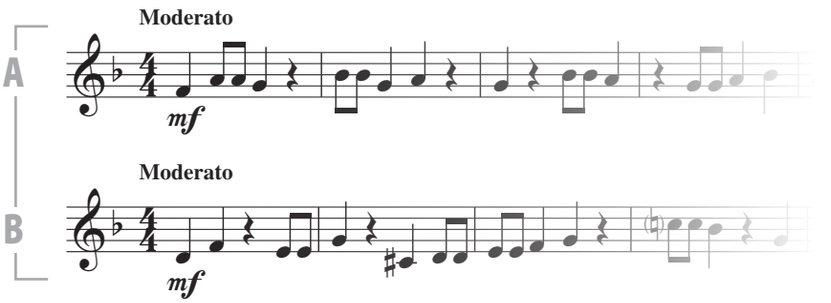
16B Allegro Traditional

2. PERFORMANCE EXERCISES

Lines of music are presented throughout each level with specific music-decoding goals. Most of these lines are two-part duets, allowing each group (or individual) the chance to perform the melody while others accompany:

- Part A: The melody in unison for all brass, woodwind, and melodic percussion (other than in full-band arrangement and "Role Reversal" lines.)
- Part B: An accompanying line employing homophonic (mostly same), complementary (alternating part A and B), and/or independent rhythms.

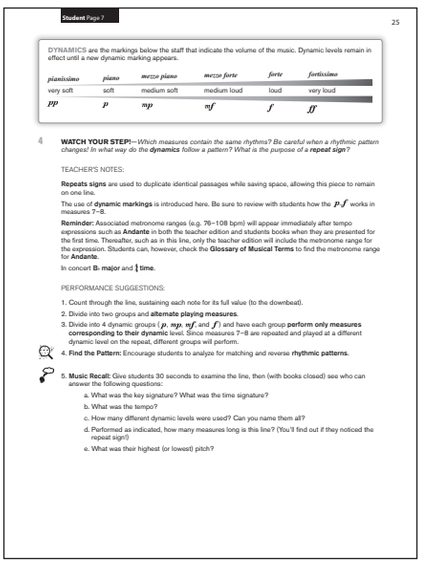
Additionally, where familiar tunes are used as source material, altered or unexpected rhythms and inventive harmonizations have been employed to sequentially expose students to a variety of rhythms and chromatic fingerings. The goal is to always keep students musically alert and decoding thoughtfully!



Teacher Notes and Performance Suggestions: In the Teacher's Edition of the book, helpful Teacher Notes and Performance Suggestions accompany each line.

The **Teacher Notes** share the concepts presented, goals for the line, and other information about the music.

The **Performance Suggestions** are essentially lesson plans for presenting and working on the goals of the line with your students and include, as appropriate, the music-decoding strategies listed below. Key words and phrases throughout the Teacher Notes and Performance Suggestions text have been made **bold**. This was done to help teachers quickly spot concepts and strategies when scanning through the content provided for each line.


Student Page 7

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DYNAMICS are the markings below the staff that indicate the volume of the music. Dynamic levels remain in effect until a new dynamic marking appears.

pianissimo	*piano*	*mezzo piano*	*mezzo forte*	*forte*	*fortissimo*
very soft	soft	medium soft	medium loud	loud	very loud
pp	***p***	***mp***	***mf***	***f***	***ff***

4 **WATCH YOUR STEP!**—*Which measures contain the same rhythms? Be careful when a rhythmic pattern changes! In what way do the* ***dynamics*** *follow a pattern? What is the purpose of a* ***repeat sign****?*

TEACHER'S NOTES:

Repeats signs are used to duplicate identical passages while saving space, allowing this piece to remain on one line.

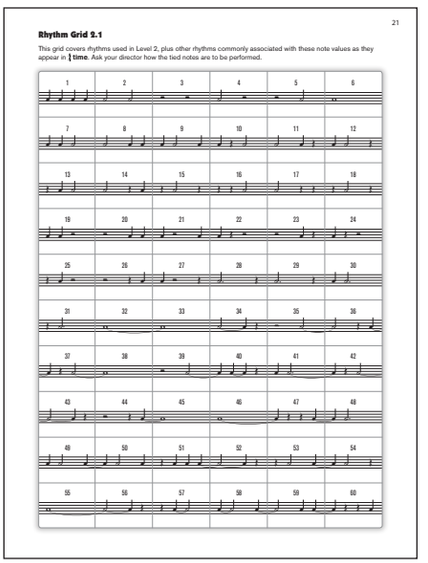
The use of **dynamic markings** is introduced here. Be sure to review with students how the ***p***-***f*** works in measures 7–8.

Reminder: Associated metronome ranges (e.g. 76–108 bpm) will appear immediately after tempo expressions such as **Andante** in both the teacher edition and students books when they are presented for the first time. Thereafter, such as in this line, only the teacher edition will include the metronome range for the expression. Students can, however, check the **Glossary of Musical Terms** to find the metronome range for **Andante**.

In concert **B♭ major** and **𝄵 time**.

PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS:

1. Count through the line, sustaining each note for its full value (to the downbeat).
2. Divide into two groups and **alternate playing measures.**
3. Divide into 4 dynamic groups (***p***, ***mp***, ***mf***, and ***f***) and have each group **perform only measures corresponding to their dynamic** level. Since measures 7–8 are repeated and played at a different dynamic level on the repeat, different groups will perform.
4. **Find the Pattern:** Encourage students to analyze for matching and reverse **rhythmic patterns.**
5. **Music Recall:** Give students 30 seconds to examine the line, then (with books closed) see who can answer the following questions:
   a. What was the key signature? What was the time signature?
   b. What was the tempo?
   c. How many different dynamic levels were used? Can you name them all?
   d. Performed as indicated, how many measures long is this line? (You'll find out if they noticed the repeat sign!)
   e. What was their highest (or lowest) pitch?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Rhythm Grid 2.1

This grid covers rhythms used in Level 2, plus other rhythms commonly associated with these note values as they appear in **𝄵 time**. Ask your director how the tied notes are to be performed.

3. RHYTHM GRIDS

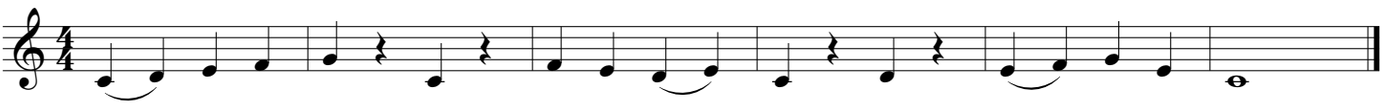
A large matrix (or several matrices) of all the rhythms covered, as well as similar, commonly encountered rhythms, will be presented for each level. This "rhythmic glossary" can serve as a checkpoint to determine if students are ready to progress. In addition, the rhythms in the grid can be read according to a variety of sequential ordering: across, down, diagonally, odd/even, zig-zag…you get the idea! There are almost unending possibilities!

Music Decoding Strategies

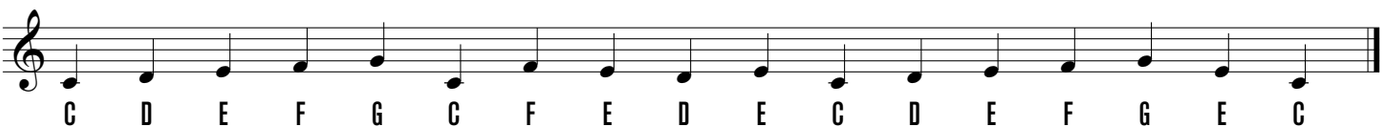
The following strategies will be introduced and used frequently in lines throughout the book. All strategies presented do not need to be implemented for each line. Rather, teachers and students can employ as few or as many of these techniques as is helpful.

Progressive Success: Speak, Count/Clap, Sing, Articulate/Finger, Perform

Any/all of the following five steps may be employed to "break down" the passage below:



1. SPEAK: Say the note names aloud in the order they occur in the music.



Reading aloud has proven to be very successful in remembering information because it engages many of the body's senses: The eyes look at the notes (sight/visual), the mouth speaks the note names (motor/kinesthetic), the ears hear the notes spoken aloud (hearing/auditory), and even the body can finger, etc. notes with instrument in hand (touch/tactile) using proper posture (balance/physical). Here, students focus on the notes, chanting out of rhythm. This technique can be used with students who need help with note recognition.

2. COUNT/CLAP: Speak the counts for the music.

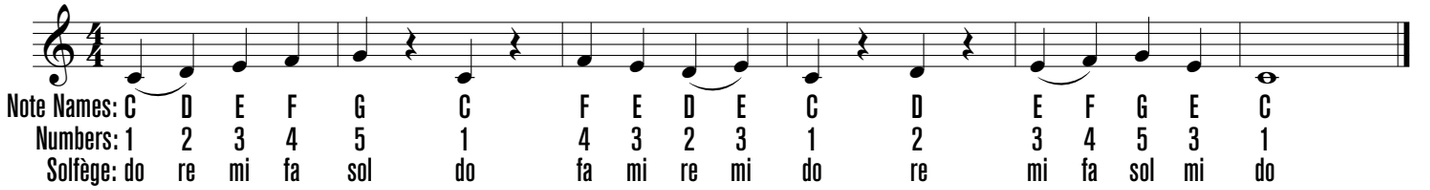
Use of some counting system, whether it is the one presented in this book or another that you prefer, is important because skill in perceiving rhythm plays a significant role in acquiring the ability to decode and execute music at sight.

When counting, we recommend speaking the counts for the notes but whispering the counts for the rests. In this way, something is said for every beat since the beat never stops. Hold out longer notes for their full value. This technique can be used for students who need help with rhythm or rest values.

Once students understand the counts for the rhythm of a line, a logical next step is to clap the onset of each note. This allows students to perform the rhythm without the distractions of fingering notes, using air support, or forming the embouchure. When clapping rhythms, students should show longer, held durations by clasping hands. Students can count aloud or internally while clapping.

A specific technique for emphasizing subdivisions is to divide the ensemble into two groups. Have one group steadily pat a subdivision (such as eighth notes) with two fingers in their opposite palm. The other group claps the normal rhythm of the line, being mindful of the subdivisions they hear being patted softly.

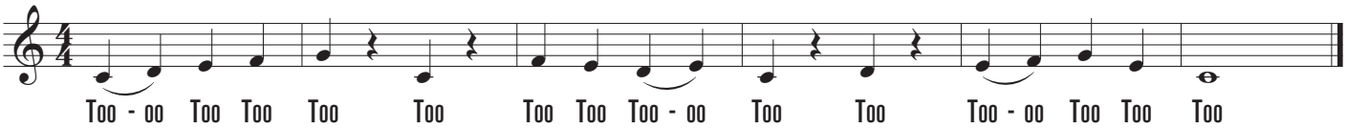
3. SING: Sing or chant the note names while following the general contour of the music. We use note names throughout the book, but scale degree numbers or solfege syllables may be used as well.



* While other instruments finger silently, trombones can move slides to correct positions, and percussionist can move mallets into place without striking the instrument.

Singing can be as simple as chanting the notes in rhythm, holding each note for its full value. As students are able, however, encourage them to match the actual pitches to aid with intervallic relationships (ascending and descending). This strategy allows musicians the opportunity to match pitch and anticipate changes in intervals, especially brass players (and flautists) who require an aperture change to move from partial to partial.

4. ARTICULATE/FINGER: Since every musical sound begins in some way, articulation is integral to performing a line successfully. Students may either tongue a wind pattern (alone or through their instrument, using a neutral syllable such as "Too," "Doo," or "Tee") or sing as they articulate the music. This technique is helpful in learning the proper articulation for what is written.



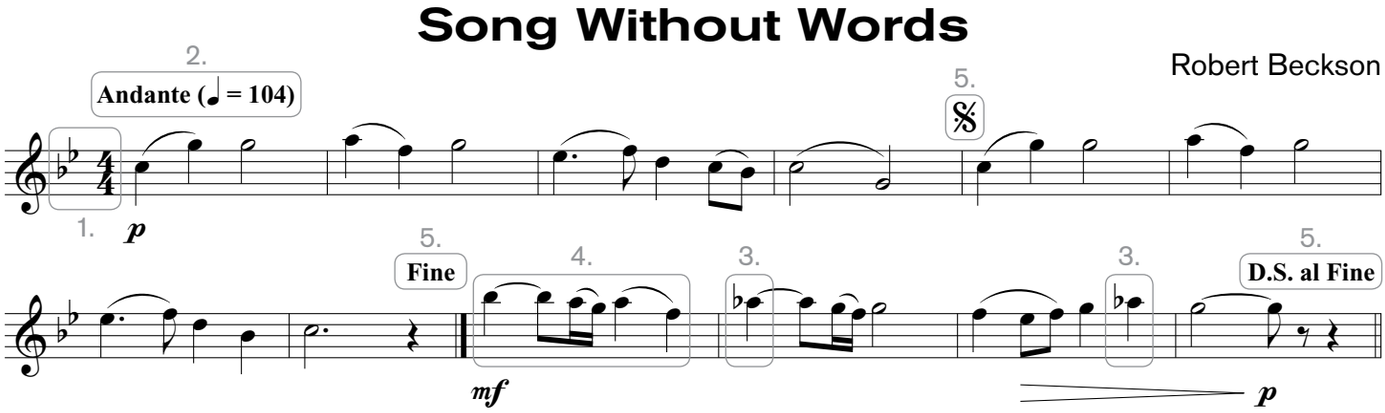
Once students are confident with interpreting the rhythm and reading the notes, a logical next step is to review instrument-specific fingerings. **When the term "fingering" is used throughout this book, it is used generically to mean any physical operation a player executes to change between notes**, including trombonists moving their slides, and percussionists playing silently in the air above their instruments.

5. PERFORM: Time to put everything together! If necessary, have students play slower than the indicated tempo in order to correctly execute the music. After playing, have students reflect on their performance, suggesting the appropriate technique to correct errors (if any).

Aim for the S.T.A.R.S.!

Each level concludes with one or more longer assessment example(s), allowing students to apply reflectively the **S.T.A.R.S.** strategy by observing key musical elements prior to performance attempts:

1. **Signatures (time and key)**—How many beats per measure? What notes in this line are affected by the key signature?
2. **Tempo (and other expressive markings)**—How fast and with what character should the music be played?
3. **Accidentals**—Where do they occur and for how long before returning to the "normal" (diatonic) note(s)?
4. **Rhythms**—Are there any complex rhythms I need to figure out? How will I count rhythmic subdivisions?
5. **Signs (repeats, endings, segno, coda, etc.)**—What is the "roadmap" for this piece?



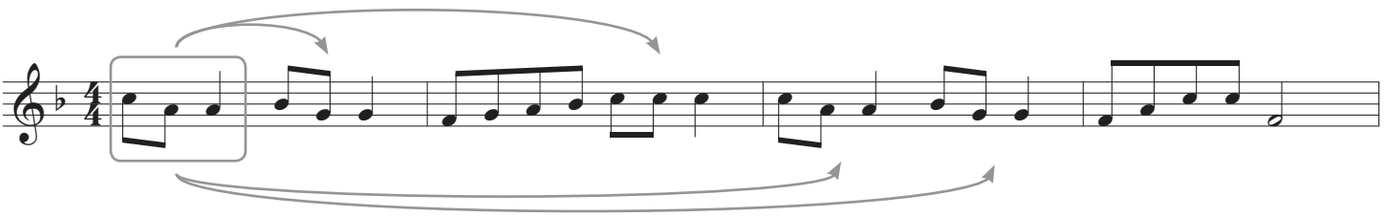
Although brief, these full band arrangements include musical parameters and concepts presented up to that point. In addition, *Sound Sight-Reading* contains a number of selections adapted from some of Alfred Music's most popular published works for concert band. This provides students the opportunity to employ the strategies for sight-reading that they have been learning *with actual band repertoire.*

* Note: Not all music includes each of these five items.

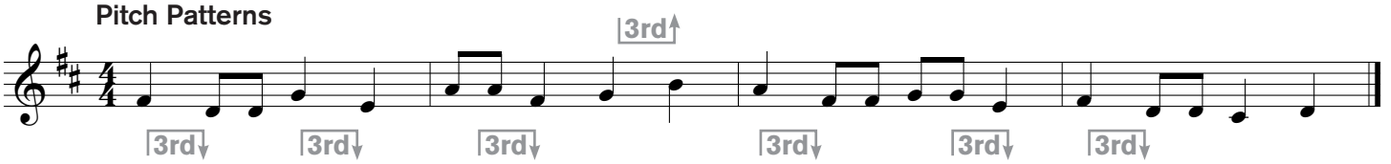
Find the Pattern

Pattern recognition is a key element in comprehending musical statements. Each of the lines in the book contains structural patterns for students to examine and perceive. When patterns are recognized, the music becomes more predictable. Some pattern types include:

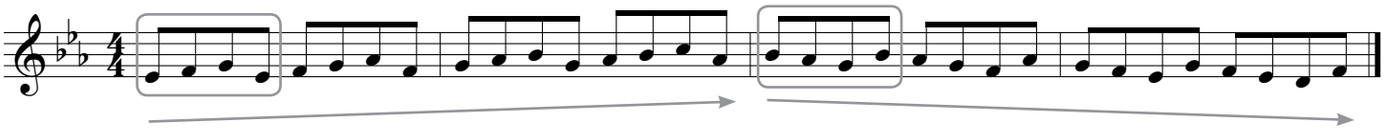
Recurring Rhythms



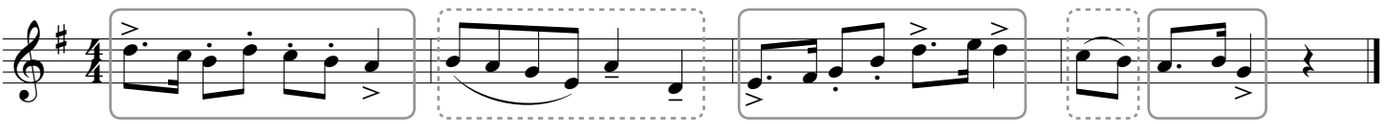
Pitch Patterns



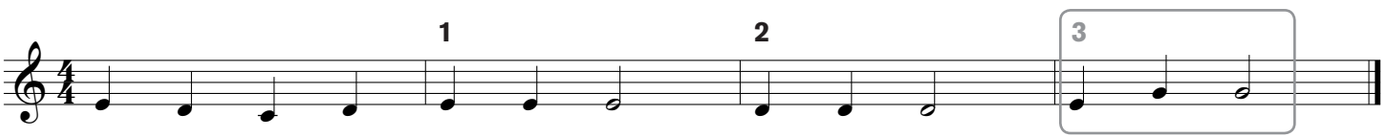
Sequence (rhythmic and/or pitch)



Parallel/Contrasting Period



Rule of 3s (the third occurrence of a motive, measure, or phrase is often varied or special in some other way)



Critical Thinking

Suggestions for questions and thoughts to ponder are offered to lead students to a deeper understanding of how music works. For instance: “How is measure 4 similar to measure 5? How are they different?” “What might be the objective of this line?”

Music Reading Games and Challenges

Suggestions for integrating fun, yet instructive, games and challenges are offered for almost every line in each of the six levels of *Sound Sight-Reading*. Employing these games and challenges regularly in lessons, sectionals, and/or ensemble rehearsals is sure to increase student motivation and engagement! The games and challenges include:

- **Reading Royalty**—How far in the music can students play before missing a pitch, rhythm, dynamic, and/or articulation (or any combination as you deem appropriate)? Each successive player competes to unseat the current champion! Reading Royalty is based on a children’s playground or neighborhood game known in various locales as “King of the Hill” or “King of the Mountain.” If your students are familiar with the game, feel free to use the name known in your area (or an adaptation such as “King/Queen of the Hill”).

- **Name the Measure**—The teacher or selected student performs a measure from an exercise and the other students guess which measure it is. Congratulate those who guess correctly. For wrong guesses, discuss why the guess could not have been the right choice.

- **Music Relay**—Students perform part of an exercise (a measure or a single note) in rotation with one another, passing the melody on in real time.

- **Music Recall**—This is a variation on those "look-and-remember" games. Students are given a short window of time to examine an exercise, then (with books closed) must answer questions from the teacher (or each other) about what they observed: "What was the key signature?", What was the time signature?", "What was the highest (or lowest) pitch?", "What rhythm started each measure?", etc.

- **Rhythm ID**—Select a student to clap one measure from a line while the others listen to discern which it was. Whoever guesses correctly then claps a measure they choose, and so on.

- **Pop Goes the Music**—Have students stand when saying or playing a selected rhythm (e.g., eighth notes, dotted quarters, etc.), note (e.g., accidentals), measure, or any other identified musical elements!

- **Right or Wrong?**—Select and perform a measure of the line for students. Tell them you may intentionally play some aspect of the line incorrectly. Call on students to guess whether you played it "right or wrong." If wrong, students must identify the error. Alternatively, instead of asking individuals, poll the ensemble and have them indicate by showing a thumbs-up (right) or thumbs-down (wrong). For each "wrong," ask an individual to state why.

- **Who Played It Better?**—Divide the ensemble into "teams" (e.g., woodwind vs. brass, upperclassmen vs. underclassmen, girls vs. boys, representatives of each instrument section, etc.) or just choose two individuals. Have each team/individual play this line (parts A and B separately or together) one after the other. The ensemble then votes on who played it better in terms of accurate notes, rhythm, articulation, and dynamics. A point goes to the winner. Repeat with a new excerpt and new players, and so on.

- **Play What You See**—This is a game (or challenge) employing the conductor's body language and chemistry with the ensemble. Ask students to perform the first note, a phrase, or an entire line in a way that matches the expression conveyed by the conductor.

- **Active Listening Challenge**—These will be brief verbal quizzes to see who is the most musically observant. Ask students things such as "Which section's sound was the loudest in that passage?" or "Following the fermata, what was the very last instrument you heard on the release?"

Any one of these games and challenges may be helpful in teaching a line, even if they are not specifically listed for that line.

Additional Strategies

In addition to all of the above, we suggest the following:

Employ **conservative tempos**. Why? Playing music at a slower tempo than indicated affords the brain more time to process the musical notation, and therefore to execute it accurately. It is better to play music accurately at a slower tempo, rather than wrought with error at the indicated tempo. The nervousness that often accompanies performance (especially playing before a sight-reading judge in an adjudication) naturally causes rushing.

Keep calm and carry on (keep playing)! Fear of the unknown can cause much stress. The suggestions listed above are designed to provide students with "advanced knowledge" so they can approach performing music with more confidence. Even when students drop a note or miss a rhythm, it is best that they "put the past behind them" and continue playing, with their minds on what is coming up, not what just happened. Telling one's self that stopping is not an option forces the resolve to be as diligent and observant as possible…and to continue!

Giving Students the Tools They Need to Succeed!

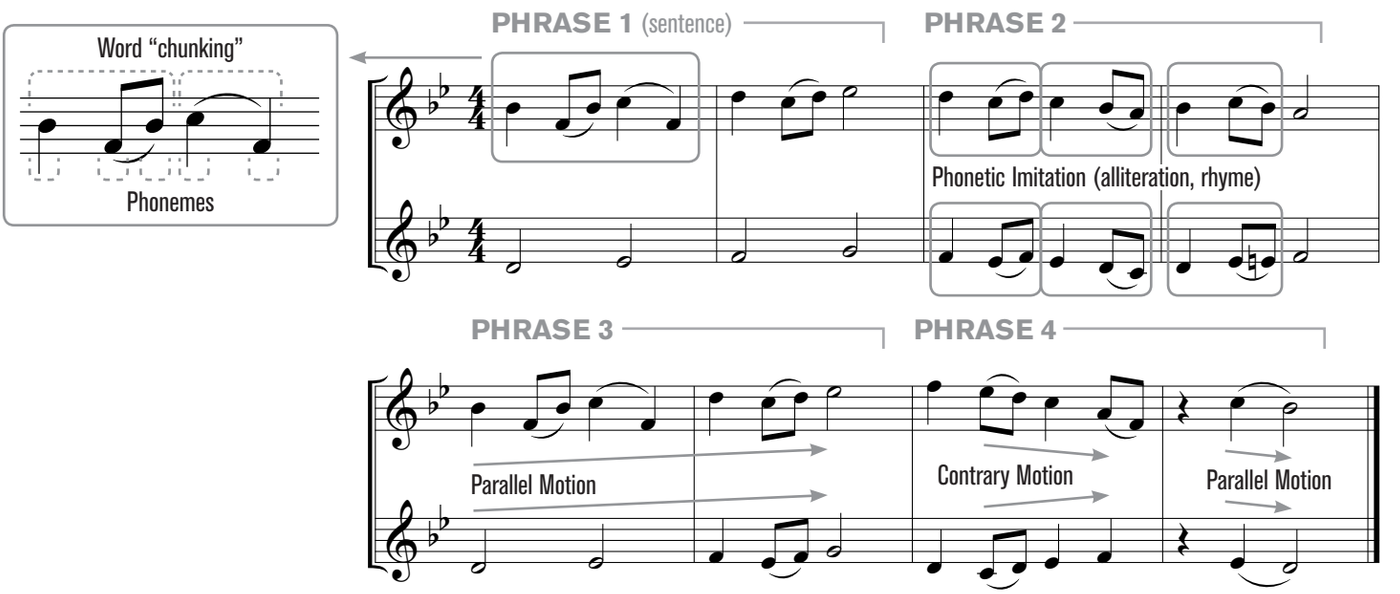
It is important to remember that *more than one* of the above strategies may be used by students to decode all music they encounter, including the material in this book. For instance, students might first examine a new piece for **S.T.A.R.S.** components, then sing the notes (in rhythm), stopping to work out any complex rhythms using counts and subdivisions, then scan for any musical patterns at work.

In addition to the many helpful decoding strategies presented in the book and the wide variety of performance materials offered for application, each student book concludes with a **Glossary of Music Terms** and a **Fingering Chart**, rounding out a comprehensive volume of sight-reading tools.

Reading Theory and Arts Standards Alignment

Several things set *Sound Sight-Reading* apart as a method for developing better sight-readers. First, from its conception, many strategies modeled after those used by reading teachers for increasing proficiency and fluency (the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression) have been adopted.

Phonemes, words and sentences have their musical correspondence in notes, motifs/measures, and phrases:



The helpful reading strategies employed in *Sound Sight-Reading*, applied to a graduated collection of performance material, make the process of music reading more efficient and effective.

Second, an effort has been made to align the exercises and repertoire in *Sound Sight-Reading* to prominent arts standards, including the National Music Standards (1994) still used by many as well as the new National Core Arts Standards (2014). In fact, because of the way this book implements reading theory strategies, students will be reading, singing, playing, listening to, analyzing, describing, evaluating, and responding to music on virtually every page! The "varied repertoire of music" encountered by students throughout the book integrates many customized exercises with examples of folk music from around the world, concert art music over the centuries, and an assortment of interesting and varied concert band repertoire from the Alfred Music catalog!

Help Students Become More Independent Music Readers!

There is an old adage that states: "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for life." The purpose of this book is to teach students to feed themselves by catching musical fish—on their own, and for life—in the waters of music reading!

Student Page 17

34 **EPIC JOURNEY**—*The **melodic** and **dynamic** arc to and from the **climax** in measure 6 creates musical drama.*

TEACHER'S NOTES:

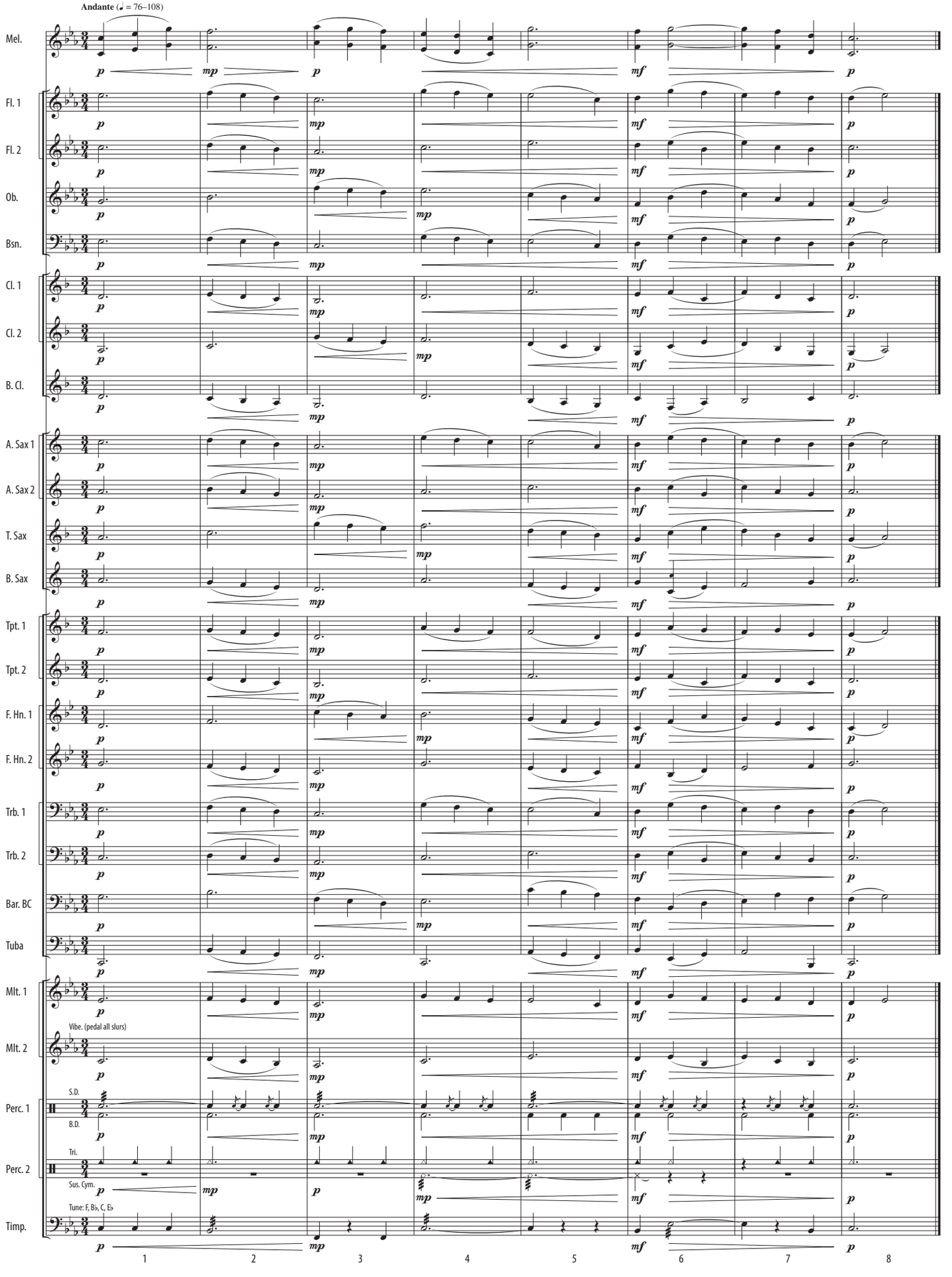
The longer vs. shorter rhythms between parts A and B offer the ensemble the opportunity to work on **rhythmic independence** and **listening** across the ensemble to other parts.

In concert **C minor** and $\frac{3}{4}$ **time**.

PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS:

1. Give students a moment to examine whichever part you assign, encouraging them to use the **Aim for the S.T.A.R.S.** sight-reading strategy.
2. Discuss the tempo indication, using the **Glossary of Musical Terms** (if needed) to look it up.
3. To help make students aware of the **independent movement of quarter notes** against longer (half and dotted half) durations, employ the **tap/clap challenge**:
    a. Have some in the ensemble tap the smallest duration (i.e., quarter notes) lightly with two fingers in the opposite palm.
    b. Have others in the ensemble clap (both hands, more loudly) the rhythm of their part. Some directors may want to have students clasp hands together for held durations (e.g., half notes, dotted half notes, etc.).
4. To help make students aware of the **independent movement of quarter notes** against longer (half and dotted half) durations, have students **chant their parts' rhythmic onsets** (with a syllable such as "Dut" or "Ta"). Alternatively, students could tongue through their part, pushing air with the syllable "Too" or "Doo."
5. **Music Recall:** Give students 30 seconds to examine part A of the line then, with books closed, see who can answer the following questions:
    a. What was the title of the line?
    b. What was the tempo?
    c. What was your starting dynamic? How about the final dynamic? How many different dynamic levels were there throughout?
    d. What was your highest note? What was your lowest note?
    e. Each slur group contained how many notes?
    f. There was at least one dotted half note (in measure 2). How many other times, if any, did the line contain a three-beat held duration?

34


Andante (♩ = 76–108)
Mel.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob.
Bsn.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
B. Cl.
A. Sax 1
A. Sax 2
T. Sax
B. Sax
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
F. Hn. 1
F. Hn. 2
Trb. 1
Trb. 2
Bar. BC
Tuba
Mlt. 1
Vibe. (pedal all slurs)
Mlt. 2
S.D.
Perc. 1
B.D.
Tri.
Perc. 2
Sus. Cym.
Tune: F, B♭, C, E♭
Timp.
p
mp
mf
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

Rhythm Grid 3.1

This grid covers $\frac{4}{4}$ rhythms introduced in Level 3, plus other rhythms commonly associated with duple eighth notes.
Duple eighth notes are eighth notes that appear in groups of two or four and are usually beamed together.