

Talk the Language of Music with the Keyboard

Volume I

LYLE A STACPOOLE - BA

(music - communication studies)

Learn to play music for fun, or to
become a professional

The 'music easy language' tutorials will help you apply practical lessons in music theory to your musical instrument without the confines of conventional music theory 'levels'.

They will help the beginner, as well as those who may already to some extent play an instrument, understand the structural concepts of music as they apply to their instrument.

This first Volume for keyboards will develop some basic playing skills and some fundamental elements of the language of music, and how it relates to a keyboard.

PUBLISHED BY STACPOOLE MUSIC

E-MAIL: enquiries@stacpoolemusic.com

www.stacpoolemusic.com

RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE \$24.70 INC. GST

3RD EDITION (REVISED) 2009

© Stacpoole Music 2002

FORWARD

The aim of all 'Easy Language' tutorials, is for the student to be able to achieve what THEY WANT to achieve as a musician.

Not everyone wants to become a professional musician. It was found in a survey conducted by Stacpoole Music, that of all those who would like to learn music, or to play an instrument, most wished simply to be able to do so for personal enjoyment. Because of the way music has been taught in conventional courses, most of these people now simply try to learn 'by ear', or pick up what they can from friends. Others may spend hundreds of dollars to get professional tuition that they, or their children, never really end up using when the children tire of the music 'classes' and endless 'scales'.

NOW THERE IS A BETTER WAY!!

The manner in which "Easy Language" manuals are written is to help as many students with their personal ambitions as possible. Parents can even help their own children to learn, and test their readiness to start with music.

The objective of this book is to explain:-

- ✓ music as an easily understood language,
- ✓ some of the basic rules in using the language,
- ✓ how music can be easily understood and played on an instrument,
- ✓ how to read written music in a way that suits your style, as well as being able to write down musical ideas you have created.

These books are designed to help you use the understanding of music structure in your playing, and to give you the enjoyment of being able to understand music better, to play music better, to read and write music better.

LEARN JUST THE 'BASICS' TO BE A BETTER PLAYER OR THE 'ADVANCED FORMAT' TO READ COMPLETE MUSIC MANUSCRIPT!

PLEASE NOTE! The term 'music structure' in these tutorials refers to the assembly of music as an entity of sound, NOT just 'music form' as written in a manuscript.

There is a lot of Music Theory that a student can learn **without** learning to actually read music manuscript.

Nevertheless, it is easier to learn to play a musical instrument by also learning to read, or at least understand, the basic concepts of written music.

So do not be put off by the strange appearance of this 'foreign' vocabulary, the basic principles can be easily understood and you will be soon enjoying your new language.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOTES IN MUSIC AND WHAT THEY REPRESENT

LESSON NOTES:

In our first chapter we talk about how music is written like a language on a page or music manuscript. It may 'look' difficult, but the basic concepts are easy to learn.

***NOTES** are the **core characters** or **alphabet** of music, and for a musician they are the **written instructions** that tell them what to play on their instrument.*

The **Language of Music** is made up of an **alphabet** of characters like any language.

This alphabet, which can be written down on paper, represents what is the **core** of music, the **NOTES**.

In the language of music the **NOTES** are used to depict the **TONES** of sound played on an instrument. It can be a single key struck on a keyboard, a sound produced when a trumpet is blown, or the sound when two sticks are struck together. Each sound has a given **TONE** or **PITCH**, that is, the higher or lower effect, or frequency, of the sound.

Sound and its **PITCH**, or **TONE**, is actually measured in the cycles per second that the sound moves through the air. The quicker it moves, the higher the **TONE**, whereas the slower it moves, the lower the **TONE**.

The **NOTES** in Music are used to refer to and specify the **TONE**, that is, the High or Low Pitch, of Sounds that create the Music we play.

Each is called by one of **seven letters**, called **NOTE-NAMES**.

The **NOTE-NAMES** used are:-

A B C D E F G

It is interesting to note here that, we are talking in this volume about 'western' music and the way it is written and played. A study of nearly ALL music will reveal remarkable similarities in the way the music of different cultures and nationalities has developed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NOTES ON THE BASIC KEYBOARD

LESSON NOTES:

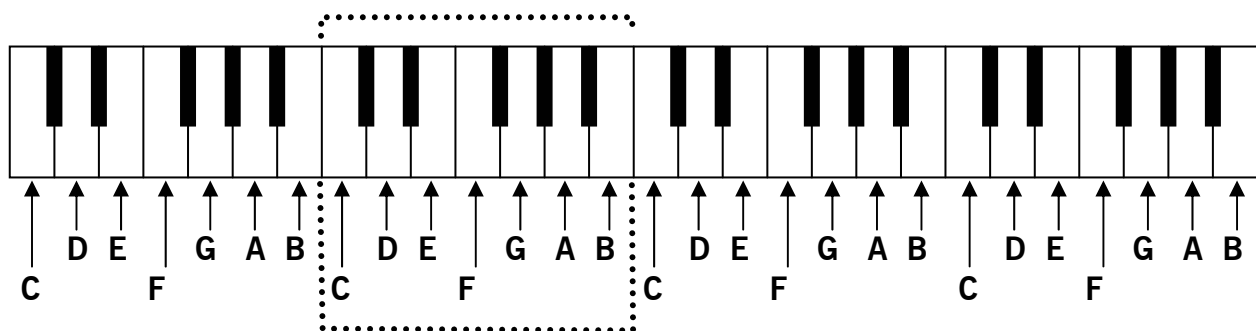
We are now going to look at how the Notes used in music, to identify the Tones of music, correspond to the piano or any keyboard.

The Keyboard, and its variations, is most likely the only instrument in contemporary European / Western music where all the Tones used can be easily identified, and remembered, by their positions together on the instrument.

So as a keyboard player, it is particularly easy to understand the relationship between the Notes as alphabetical names, and the Tones on the Instrument.

The **NOTE-NAMES** are used repeatedly. The relationship of each of the Notes with the same Note-name is explained in the box below.

DIAGRAM 1; THE POSITION OF THE NOTES ON THE KEYBOARD



Only the White keys are given a Note-name in this diagram. They are called the **NATURAL** Notes. What the Black keys are will be studied in chapter 8, page 39.

It can be seen that the Notes are repeated in a pattern, of 7 White keys, and 5 Black keys, marked in the diagram above by the **dotted box**. This means, for example, we can remember that the Note 'C' always appears to the left of each group of 2 Black keys.

Each Tone represented by a Note-name is exactly double in pitch to that of the same Note-name directly below it. To Explain:-

The first 'A' Note below Middle 'C' on the keyboard has a pitch of sound of **220 cycles per second (cps)**. The 'A' Note directly above has a pitch of **440 cps**; whereas the next 'A' above it is **880 cps**, etc. This makes each 'A' on the keyboard, or any other musical instrument **in tune**, because the sound-waves do not clash with each other. The same is true of each of the Notes or Tones on the instrument.

Music being in **harmony** is based on this scientific reality, that is, the harmony of the sound waves of the various Notes played together, or in sequence.

CHAPTER THREE

BASIC KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES

LESSON NOTES:

In this chapter we are going to learn just to have a bit of fun while learning how to finger the keyboard, that is, how to properly place your hands on the keyboard to play it.

In the next chapters we will learn more about what, how, and when to play which notes, but for now just make some noise.

*When learning anything in life, **slowly practise the basics until you get them right**, and then move on. This is so important when learning to play the keyboards, as so much is built upon what has already been learnt. For example, how are you going with the 'counting the alphabet backwards' exercise from chapter one? You will soon find out how important this little, apparently meaningless, exercise really is.*

Here are a few of the basic rules about playing the keyboards.

1. Learn to use **all** the fingers when playing. Do not cut corners because it is easier. It may be now, but later it may be a struggle to play smoothly.
2. Although it will be done sometimes, and it is important to get it right when it is done, at this stage try not to get into the habit of crossing the fingers over the thumb to reach Notes.
Learn to move the hands along the keyboard.
3. The more relaxed you are sitting at the keyboard, the more likely your playing will be relaxed. So sit up straight with a slight lean forward, arms hanging loosely from the shoulders. Keep your feet flat on the floor, and you should be just close enough, and high enough, for your knees to be slightly under the piano. This will make sure the arms and hands are kept at the right angle to play.

DIAGRAM 2; THE CORRECT POSTURE FOR PLAYING

Correct Touch when Playing the Music

Legato

This word means that when a Key or Note is struck, it is held until the next is struck and then released. It is important to learn to play this way right from the start, as it creates the ability to play smoothly. The action can be likened to walking. When you walk, you do not lift your foot until the other has been firmly placed on the ground in front of it. You then make your next step. The action is smooth and constant, only the speed generally changes. So it is with playing the keyboards. Most of the time you will play with a **LEGATO** Touch, and it is important for it to sound smooth.

Staccato

STACCATO on the other hand is where the Notes are played so that there is a definite separation of the Notes. This is generally created by a sharp striking action creating a shortened sound to the Note. It is made however, not so much in the way the key is struck, but **how it is released**. Do not strike it as if it has done something wrong, the effect is rather created by taking the finger off quickly. This actually involves a lifting of the hand and finger so as a definite release is made. The effect is a little like bouncing a bound rubber ball. The type where you do not have to 'push' the ball too hard for it to spring back up at you. Think about imitating the **upward** bounce of the ball, rather than the **downwards thrusting** motion.

Balance

The **BALANCE** of sound between what the two hands are playing is called **VOICING**, or Balancing the Tones of the music. For example, if you are playing **CHORDS**, a Group of Notes played together, explained in Chapter 9, with your left hand and striking three or four Notes at a time, then they could drown out a single note **MELODY** being played with your right hand. You may not be able to hear it. So you need to learn to strike the left hand with less power. Or it may be that you want to highlight a **BASS LINE**, that is, a sequence of lower Notes played with your left hand. And there are many other reasons why you will need to learn to balance the way you play with your two hands. This will simply take practise at **thinking about what you are playing and how you are playing it**.

LEGATO; the Notes are **held** until the next is struck, before being released.

STACCATO; the Notes are played so that there is a **definite separation** of the Notes.

BALANCE; the balance of sound between what the two hands are playing, produced by the weight, or force, in the hands on the keys.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NOTES WRITTEN ON THE MUSICAL STAFF

LESSON NOTES:

Many people are happy to understand, and talk, their native language. The more you understand the language, the more you can talk it.

However, if you can **read** the language, you can use it even more.

The same is true with the language of music. The more you understand its structure, the more you can use and play it.

Learn to read and even write it, and it becomes a creative tool in your hands.

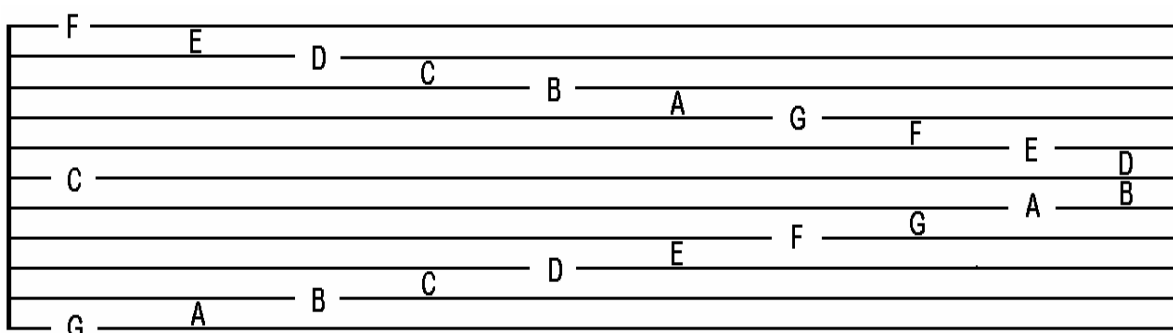
For a keyboard player, reading makes it easier to learn the instrument. To what extent you learn to read though, is really up to you as a student, and your musical ambitions.

The Notes of music are written as dots on a set of five parallel lines, called a **STAFF**. The dots, hereafter called the **HEAD** of the Note, will mostly have a **STEM** attached to it. A Music Manuscript may have a number of Staves.

- ♪ The **Position** of the Notes, that is the **LINE** or **SPACE** where the **HEAD** of the Note is located on the **STAFF**, specifies **which Note** is to be played.
- ♪ The **Type** of **Note**, indicated by its appearance or characteristic including its **STEM**, specifies **how** the **Note** is to be played.

NOTE:- On earlier manuscripts, music was written on just one Staff of eleven lines, called the Grand Staff. Both the melody and the harmonic parts were written together, thus making reading difficult, because there were Notes all over the Staff. Today the original eleven lines are split into two Staves of five lines each.

DIAGRAM 5; THE NOTE NAMES DEPICTING THE POSITIONS OF THE NOTES ON AN ORIGINAL STAFF



Chapter Five - continued; 'Introduction to Intervals'

Play the Fourth Interval from 'A' to 'D' on your keyboard, and then play the two Intervals in sequence, or one after the other. 'A' to 'D' then 'A' to 'E'.

Do you now hear the difference between the two Intervals?

Now play the 'A' Note again, and then this time, play the 'B' directly above it.

This is an Interval of two, a **SECOND INTERVAL**. In this interval we step up just one Note.

Now play the 'A' again, and play the 'C' directly above it.

This is an Interval of Three, and is called a **THIRD INTERVAL**.

☞ **THIRD INTERVALS** are important building blocks for Chords, which we learn all about in chapter eight, and the exercises from Chapter One are designed to help remember the sequence of Notes in patterns of Third Intervals, by skipping every second Note.

Intervals in 'reverse'

Now play an 'A' Note higher up on your instrument and come down, playing the 'A' to 'D' and 'A' to 'E' patterns again, but in the reverse direction.

Although starting with the 'A' Note, and stepping down, it must be remembered that the Interval is the distance from the **lower Note** to the **upper Note**. Whether the Notes are being played Melodically, from the Upper Note to the Lower Note, or visa versa, or being playing Harmonically, the Interval is the same.

For example, step down from the 'A' to the 'G' directly below it by playing the two Notes one after the other.

⇒ The Interval itself is **not**, 'A' to 'G', the way it is played, but 'G' to 'A'. This is a **SECOND INTERVAL** and just a step.

The same is true of the distance from the 'A' Note **down** to the 'D' below it. The Interval from 'A' **up** to 'D' is the Interval of a Fourth. But, in this Interval the 'D' is the lower Note; therefore, it is actually a **FIFTH INTERVAL** because the distance is from the 'D' to the 'A'.

A basic feature of Intervals can be recognized here. The opposite of a Fifth Step **up**, for example from 'A' to 'E', is a Fourth Step **down**. In other words to go **down** from 'A' to a lower 'E' is a **FOURTH INTERVAL**.

In all cases you will find the opposites add up to 9.

The **TOP** number, 4, 3, 6 and 2 in the examples, always tells us the **NUMBER** of **BEATS** that are to be counted in each **Bar**.

The **LOWER** number, 4, 4, 8 and 2 in examples, always tells us the **TYPE** of **NOTE** used, to measure the **BEAT**, that is to be counted in each **Bar**.

The **Lower** number indicates the **Type** of **Note** that will be used to establish the **regular Beat** for the music.

The **Type** of **Note** would most commonly be one of the following three, represented by the **Timing Value** of Notes, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

- 4** identifies a **QUARTER NOTE** Beat; also known as a **CROTCHET NOTE** Beat. This is the most common and is generally called a **regular** beat.
- 8** identifies an **EIGHTH NOTE** Beat; also known as a **QUAVER NOTE** Beat. Just as an eighth is half of a quarter, then the Beat represented by a **Quaver Note** is **half as long**, or **half the value**, of a **Crotchet Note Beat**. It is therefore generally shorter and quicker.
- 2** identifies a **HALF NOTE** Beat; also known as a **MINIM NOTE** Beat. Again, just as a half is twice as much as a quarter, then a Beat represented by a **Minim Note** is **twice as long**, or **twice the value**, of a **Crotchet Note Beat**. It is therefore longer and slower.

Remember that the **Time Signature** does not tell us how fast to play the music, so it does not specify exactly how long, in actual time measurement, each type of beat is. The Type of Note is a value to measure the beat of the music by. We are not going to discuss here the Notes and what they mean, simply how they are used in the Time Signature as a measurement.




So we are talking about a 'Quarter', 'Eighth' and 'Half' of what?

The **Type** of **Note**, to be explained in Chapter 6, indicates **how long** the Note is to be held or played for, that is the **LENGTH** of the Note or it's **TIME VALUE**.

The fraction is measured against what is called a **WHOLE NOTE**. Like cutting up a pie into sections, the **Time Value** of a **Whole Note** is cut into shorter **Note Lengths** or **Time Values** and they are played in unison according to these Time Values.

They are also used in the **Time Signature** as a measuring stick to **measure** the **equally consistent Beat** of the music.

DIAGRAM 18; THE TIMING OR VALUE OF DOTTED NOTES

	Dotted Minim	- 2 beats plus 1 beat = 3 beats / counts
	Dotted Crotchet	- 1 beat plus 1/2 beat = 1 1/2 beats / counts
	Dotted Quaver	- 1/2 beat plus 1/4 beat = 3/4 beat / count

The Beat of the music is indicated by the Time Signature. It is not written as Beats on the Staff. However, you can, and will need to, find where the Beats are in the music. They can usually be more readily recognised on the Bass Staff.

The Time Signature governs the Beat and Rhythm of the music, **not** the speed at which it should be played, so that the regular beat can vary in pace, according to how fast you want to play the music.

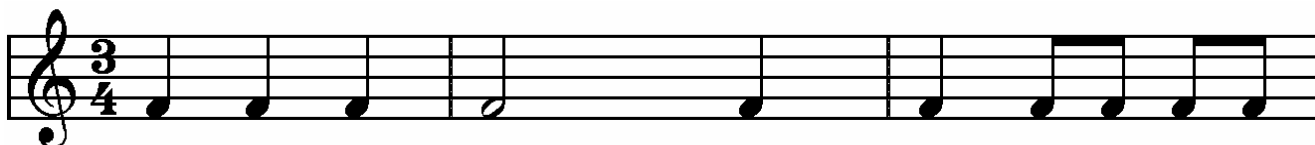
For example then, a quick 2-2 can be the same pace as a slow 4-4, **but** it would have a different **feel**. It really depends on the individual style of the writer and the conductor or player. Both Time Signatures (2-2 and 4-4) bring out in the music their own certain feel, as do all the different Time Signatures, which is what the Timing as indicated by the Time Signature is really all about:- **RHYTHM**

The Type of Beat can also change within the song, and would thus be indicated by an appropriate Time Signature change, at the needed place.

Of course, all this does not mean that there are always literally 3 Crotchet Notes in **each** Bar of **3-4** music. It means that **the Value of 3 Crotchet Notes** are in each Bar of the music so as to be **equal** to the **3 Crotchet beats**. Just as in diagram 17, with the 2/4 Time Signature, the Bars were did not all have 2 Crotchet Notes.

Compare the following two examples.

DIAGRAM 19; EXAMPLES OF COMBINATIONS OF NOTES IN 3-4 TIMING



Beats: 1 + 1 + 1 2 + 1 1 + 1/2 + 1/2 + 1/2 + 1/2

⇒ In all three Bars of the example the total Value or Length of the Notes adds up to 3 Crotchet Note Beats.

Chapter Eight - continued; 'Timing of the Rests'

EXERCISE EIGHT; review / practise: 1 - 2

1) Explain the use of the Rest symbols in this piece of music.

"It's Another"

Musical score for "It's Another" in 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melody with several rests: a quarter rest at the start of the first measure, a quarter rest at the start of the second measure, a half rest at the start of the third measure, and a quarter rest at the start of the fourth measure. The bass staff contains a bass line with chords and single notes.

2) Explain the use of the Rest symbols in this piece of music.

"Amy"

Musical score for "Amy" in 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melody with lyrics: "A - my op - en up your win - dow won't you help me break my fall". There are rests in the melody corresponding to the lyrics: a quarter rest after "A - my", a quarter rest after "op - en", a quarter rest after "up your win - dow", a quarter rest after "won't you help me", a quarter rest after "break my", and a quarter rest after "fall". The bass staff contains a bass line with chords and single notes.

3) Fill in the missing Rests in this piece of music. Can you see where a dotted rest might fit in. Practise playing it.

"Not Right At All"

Musical score for "Not Right At All" in 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melody with lyrics: "let me tell you what it is there's no song not right at all". There are rests in the melody corresponding to the lyrics: a quarter rest after "let me tell", a quarter rest after "you what it", a quarter rest after "is", a quarter rest after "there's no", a quarter rest after "song", a quarter rest after "not right", and a quarter rest after "at all". The bass staff contains a bass line with chords and single notes.

- the answer to question 2 can be found on page 68

Chapter Nine - continued; 'the Scale and Basic Chord'

Although we use only eight Note-names to create the Major and Minor Scales, the first Note-name being repeated, in contemporary western and European music forms **there are actually 13 levels of sound, or pitch, in the distance of an Octave.**

The extra 5 Tones, or Notes, are played on the 5 black keys on the keyboard.

So what are these Extra Notes called?

The **12 STEPS** with-in the distance of an Octave, from its First note to its Eighth, are all called **SEMI-TONE or HALF TONE steps**. So they are also said to be **HALF STEPS**.

⇒ The **extra 5** Notes are called, and written, as **SHARPS** [#] and **FLATS** [b]

A **NATURAL NOTE** is one that is neither, a Sharp, or a Flat, as the seven note names by themselves indicate. (that is; A B C D E F G)

#

A **SHARP** is a **Semi-Tone ABOVE** the **Natural** note specified by the note name. The Note will have this symbol before it.

b

A **FLAT** is a **Semi-Tone BELOW** the **Natural** note specified by the note name. The Note will have this symbol before it.

Therefore, each of the extra notes can be called a:-

#

SHARP of the note below it, or a

b

FLAT of the note above it.

For example 'G[#]' could also be called 'A^b'

Chapter Ten - continued; "the Major Scale"

Do you notice a pattern here?

If the **Dominant** of a Major Scale, the 5th Note is taken, and a new Major Scale is started from it, the new Major Scale will have an **extra Sharp**, it will be the new 7th, or the **LEADING NOTE**, of the new Scale.

Remembering this principle will be helpful in learning the number of Sharps in Major Scales. Notice the new term introduced here.

The **Seventh Degree** of the Scale is called the **LEADING NOTE**.
It is called this because it leads to the Upper Tonic.

Study the following Major Scales. Each new Scale has a Sharp added to the same ones already used. So that the first Sharp used is 'F[#]', the next is 'C[#]' and the next is 'G[#]' and so on.

Tonic Note	5 th or Dominant; - becomes Tonic Note of new Scale							
C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	- no sharps
				<				
G	A	B	C	D	E	F [#]	G	- 1 sharp; F
				<				
D	E	F [#]	G	A	B	C [#]	D	- 2 sharps; F; C
				<				
A	B	C [#]	D	E	F [#]	G [#]	A	- 3 sharps; F; C; G
				<				
E	F [#]	G [#]	A	B	C [#]	D [#]	E	- 4 sharps; F; C; G; D
				<				
B	C [#]	D [#]	E	F[#]	G [#]	A [#]	B	- 5 sharps; F; C; G; D; A
				<				
F[#]	G [#]	A [#]	B	C[#]	D [#]	E [#]	F [#]	- 6 sharps; F; C; G; D; A; E

Chapter Eleven - continued; "the Key Signature"

DIAGRAM 33; KEY SIGNATURES OF MAJOR SCALES WITH FLATS



F MAJOR; B^b MAJOR; E^b MAJOR; A^b MAJOR; D^b MAJOR; G^b MAJOR
start with B^b; add E^b; add A^b; add D^b; add G^b; add C^b

Again we see the pattern created by starting a new Major Scale based on the **Sub-Dominant (4th)** of a previous Major Scale. The new **Flat** made is actually the **Fourth**, which is in turn then used to create the next new Scale.

Here is a sample of tune written in **Scale of C Major** in which there are no Sharps or Flats in the **Key Signature**.

DIAGRAM 34; TUNE IN C MAJOR

"Leaving On A Saturday Night"

A musical score for the song "Leaving On A Saturday Night" in C Major, 2/4 time. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff for the melody and a bass clef staff for the bass line. The lyrics are: "don't crowd me there's no time left for pride", "I've got a lot of lov - ing in - side", and "leav - ing on a Sat - ur - day night". The melody and bass line both start and end on a C note.

Note that both the Melody and Bass Lines, start and end on a 'C' Note. There is no visible Key Signature as there are no Sharps or Flats in the Key of C Major. There are also no sharps or flats in the tune.

Chapter Eleven - continued; "the Key Signature"

Here is another example, in the **Key of A Major**. There are **3 Sharps F[#], C[#] and G[#]**, which means that each 'F', 'C' and 'G' that appear in the tune are played as Sharps.

DIAGRAM 35; TUNE IN A MAJOR

"Short Song" (in A major)

The musical notation shows a short song in A Major, 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of two staves each. The melody is written in the treble clef and the bass line in the bass clef. The melody starts on A4 and ends on A4. The bass line starts on A2 and ends on A2. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

In this example the Melody and Bass Lines of the song begin and end on the Note of 'A'.

Transposing

For the sake of easier playing or singing, the Key or Scale can be changed, or **TRANSPOSED**. Some instruments, for example, Brass and some Reed, also need the music to be **Transposed**, to play them in harmony with other instruments.

Transposing simply means that the Notes are moved from their original position on the staff. This means the tune is played either higher in pitch, or lower in pitch, than its original sound. How?

Move the first Note in the song above, from the 'A', down to the 'F' below it.

This moves it down 2 Whole Steps to the next Space on the staff. Now move **all** the notes down **the same distance, that is, 2 Whole Steps**. The 'E' becomes 'C', the 'D' becomes 'B', and so on for all the Notes.

The Interval being moved here is that of a Major Third Interval, from 'A' **down** to 'F'.

Now the Key Signature needs to be changed, from A Major with 3 Sharps, to F Major with one flat.

The difference now, is that the 'B' is played as a 'B^b', and the 'F', 'C' and 'G' Notes are played as Naturals. The job is done, as simple as that.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SYMBOLS ON THE MUSIC MANUSCRIPT

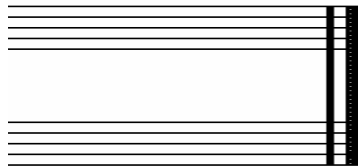
LESSON NOTES:

One of the more common questions when reading a piece of music manuscript is, "where do I go from here?"

The answer lies in the symbols on the staff, which we will now discuss, along with a couple of other more common symbols that you will find on a manuscript.

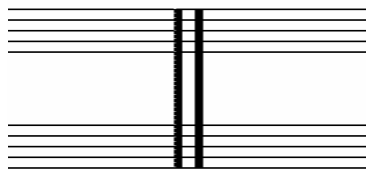
We have often seen the beginning of the musical staff, but now let us look closely further along the pages. It would be advantageous to get some of your music sheets out to follow and compare the use of these signs.

DIAGRAM 43; END BAR LINES DENOTE THE END OF A SONG



This sign, two lines of different thickness, denote the end of the song or music.

DIAGRAM 44; DOUBLE BAR LINES DENOTE THE END OF A SECTION



Usually found somewhere in the middle of a piece of music, this denotes that there is a change in something. It may be a Key Change, and so the first Bar of the new section will have a different Key Signature. If it is a change in Timing, then it will show a different Time Signature. It may though simply be used to separate the Verse and Chorus, or perhaps the **BRIDGE** of a song. The **BRIDGE** is most often a middle section creating some variance to the Verse and Chorus.

Note the difference between the above symbols and remember you will only come across the first one at the end of the song. These signs do not tell us **where to go**, but they tell us **where we are**.