



# SIGHTREADING

## WHAT IS SIGHTREADING?

- Reading music at 'sight'
- Playing music that is unrehearsed/practised

## WHY IS IT A USEFUL SKILL?

- Gives you the ability to 'try out' and hear pieces before learning them (how did musicians choose music before the days of recordings?)
- Speeds up the learning process as not everything has to be worked out as you go along
- Encourages you to 'hear' the music in your head - excellent aural training (in a music shop and want to buy a new piece of music - how do you know what it will sound like first?)
- Very useful if you wish to sit and play with other musicians (or pianists) just for fun

## WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT?

- Who remembers learning to read? Who remembers how difficult it was, or have we all forgotten? Was it because we were very young and didn't question things then so just got on with it without realising how difficult reading and writing was?
- How often do we read words daily? We don't 'sightread' books or newspapers - we just read them.
- Sightreading is just reading music, as reading is just reading a book
- It's difficult because we don't do it often enough for it to become second nature, or "easy"
- When reading words, without realising it we are always reading ahead - try covering up 3 or 4 words in a sentence and covering them in advance of you reading the sentence - amazing!
- When reading music, we need to be looking and reading ahead.

## HOW DO I GET BETTER?

- Practise practise practise
- Learn to read ahead - one note ahead at first slowly, then 2, etc, and gradually build it up until you are looking one or two bars ahead
- Practise 'hearing' the music in your head before playing it: Start with a single melody of a tune you know and follow the shape and pattern of the notes. Also, learn to sing intervals up and down

- Follow a plan:
  - Clefs - Key – Time
  - Shapes and patterns
  - Character and mood
  - 'Air piano'
  - Go for it, but remember to count yourself in.
  
- Once you start, NEVER STOP! Once you've played a note you cannot change it so move on. If a note is wrong, ignore it and immediately put it out of your mind. Remember - think and look ahead. You are not 'practising', you are just 'reading'. Do you stop when you fluff or mispronounce a word in a book? Mistakes don't matter - continuity and fluidity do.
- Just play ANYTHING. If it's too difficult play it slowly and one hand at a time. Offer to accompany another musician - a singer or an instrumentalist - then you don't have the luxury of being able to stop. Play through an anthology book of random pieces. Play through old ABRSM piano syllabus books of any/all grades. The more you do it the better you will become!