

Basic Music Theory
Handbell Musicians of America Certification Course C1
Course Outline
Instructor: Michael J. Glasgow

- I. The basic anatomy of a score
 - a. Bar line/double bar line
 - b. Notehead
 - c. Stem
 - d. Beam/flag
 - e. Grand staff
 - f. Voice-leading lines
 - g. Handbells/Handchimes Used Charts
- II. Pitch names and how handbells use them
 - a. C3 through C6 (handbell designation C4 through C7)
 - b. Transposing instruments
- III. Rhythmic values of notes and rests
 - a. Sixteenth
 - b. Eighth
 - c. Quarter
 - d. Half
 - e. Whole
 - f. What dots do
 - g. How triplets work
- IV. Common time signatures
 - a. Perfect meter: measure can be divided into equal halves or into equal thirds
 - b. Simple meters (each beat can be divided into two equal parts)
 - i. Simple duple meter
 1. 2/2, 2/4
 - ii. Simple quadruple meter
 1. 4/4
 - iii. Simple triple meter
 1. 3/2, 3/4, 3/8
 - c. Compound meters (each *major* beat [pulse] can be divided into three equal beats)
 - i. Compound duple meter
 1. 6/8
 - ii. Compound triple meter
 1. 9/8 (3+3+3)
 - iii. Compound quadruple meter
 1. 12/8
 - d. Abbreviations for common time and cut time
- V. Basic key signatures
 - a. C major through A Major (3 “sharp” keys and relative minor keys)
 - b. C major through E-flat Major (3 “flat” keys and relative minor keys)

- VI. Basic dynamic markings
 - a. *ppp, pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff, fff*
 - b. *diminuendo/decrescendo, crescendo, mezzo*

- VII. Basic performance markings
 - a. *a tempo, accelerando, adagio, allegro, andante, col/colla/con, da capo, dal segno, fine, legato, lento, ma non troppo, meno, moderato, molto, non, più, poco (a poco), prima/primo, quasi, rallentando, ritardando, senza, simile, staccato, tacet, vivace, optional handbell-note enclosures*

- VIII. Ear-Training: Basic Intervals
 - a. minor/Major third, perfect fourth, perfect fifth, octave
 - b. The difference between “prime unison” and “colloquial unison” (e.g., “unison at the octave”)

- IX. Building Major and Minor triads
 - a. “Tonic” vs. “Root”
 - b. “spell” in thirds (e.g., “skip a letter”)
 - c. Inner intervals (minor and Major thirds, “partition” shift)
 - d. Outer interval (perfect fifth)

- X. Enharmonic equivalents

- XI. Basic score navigation
 - a. repeat signs, basic endings, *D.S.*, *D.C.*, Coda.

HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF AMERICA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

I. BASIC MUSIC THEORY – COURSE C1

Course C1 will ensure a basic working knowledge of music theory, both generally and as it pertains to handbells and handchimes. Covered throughout the Course (general): basic rhythms, pitches, meters, key signatures, dynamics and performance markings, simple intervals and triadic harmonies, score navigation. Covered throughout the Course (instrument-specific): Handbells Used Charts (2-3 octaves), transposition of instrument. Successful completion will entail both written success from an academic knowledge standpoint, and experiential success in ear training situations.

Prerequisites: none

II. COURSE RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

- A. Members with basic certification should have a clear knowledge and understanding of the rudiments of theory and score construction, in order to intelligently and appropriately approach a piece of handbell music with integrity.
- B. The course can generally handle a large (20-30 students) class, though the needs and questions of individual students may cause pacing to vary. Success of the course will require specific equipment:
 - a. a white board and markers (ideally with lines for a grand staff);
 - b. a piano for the instructor, as well as at least one octave of handbells; and
 - c. a screen and LCD projector and appropriate cables to connect a laptop computer for Powerpoint presentation in lecture. (This will lessen, but not mitigate, the need for handouts. It will also allow the pacing of the class to move more quickly, as the instructor may reference areas of a common slide rather than individual handouts.)

III. STATEMENT OF SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. **Concepts, principles and understandings.** *As a result of this course, students will:*
 - a. Know mechanical “parts” of a handbell score (barline, notehead, stem, beam, grand staff, etc.) and pitch names for C3-C6 (handbell designation C4-C7).
 - b. Understand the one-octave aural transpositional nature of handbells and handchimes as instruments.
 - c. Recognize and identify rhythmic values of notes and rests from sixteenth notes through whole notes (including the mathematical comprehension of dotted notes and triplets).

- d. Understand measured construction of music and time signatures related to perfect simple and perfect compound meters (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 6/8, 9/8 (3+3+3), 12/8), including abbreviations for “common time” and “cut time.”
 - e. Recognize key signatures and associated scales up to 3 sharps and 3 flats, inclusive; understand and identify relative-minor equivalencies.
 - f. Comprehend basic dynamic markings (*ppp* through *fff*), *diminuendo/decrescendo*, *crescendo*, *mezzo*
 - g. Understand common basic performance markings:
 - i. *a tempo*, *accelerando*, *adagio*, *allegro*, *andante*, *col/colla/con*, *da capo*, *dal segno*, *fine*, *legato*, *lento*, *ma non troppo*, *meno*, *moderato*, *molto*, *non*, optional note enclosures, *più*, *poco* (*a poco*), *prima/primo*, *quasi*, *rallentando*, *ritardando*, *senza*, *simile*, *staccato*, *tacet*, *vivace*, voice-leading lines
 - h. Aurally recognize intervals of octave, perfect fifth, perfect fourth, major/minor third; understand difference between prime unison and colloquial unison (e.g., “unison at the octave”).
 - i. Have a basic understanding of triadic harmony and chord construction, and the difference/relationship between major and minor triads.
 - j. Recognize and understand basic enharmonic equivalents.
 - k. Comprehend simple score navigation: repeat signs, basic endings, *D.S.*, *D.C.*, Coda.
- B. **Habits, conduct and skills.** *The students also will be able to:*
- a. Evaluate a handbell score and create a Handbells Used Chart for a three-octave piece.
 - b. Tap or sing any rhythm which may appear in a handbell score of Level 1, 2 or 3.
 - c. Demonstrate/describe any of the basic performance markings and tempi as outlined above (see III.A.g.).
 - d. Identify basic intervals (see III.A.h.) played between two handbells or two piano keys, ascending and/or descending, on hearing each interval played no more than twice.
 - e. Identify a triad as major or minor upon hearing it played [*una corda*] no more than twice.
 - f. Identify a scale/key (as both Major and relative minor) upon seeing a key signature or eight-note scale for keys described in III.A.e.
 - g. “Build” any major or minor triad, in root position.
 - h. Write a “navigation map” for a piece of music which includes items described in III.A.k.
- C. **Attitudes, interests and appreciations.** *Further, the students will:*
- a. Approach score study with confidence about basic rhythms and intervals.
 - b. Speak with friendly authority to ringers about basic rhythms, melodies and harmonic sounds.

IV. UNITS OF THE COURSE

UNIT I: THE BASICS

A. **Content description**

This unit will cover (hopefully in review format) the terminology of the “anatomy” of a score, pitch names for C3-C6 (handbell designation C4-C7), and the transposing nature of the handbell/handchime instrument.

B. **Learning activities**

- a. Review/discuss terminology of mechanical “parts” of a handbell score, as well as pitch names for C3-C6 (handbell designation C4-C7).
- b. Play middle C on piano and a C5 handbell (and other such examples) to discuss transpositional nature of the instrument (also reference other transposing instruments).

UNIT II: RHYTHMS AND METERS

A. **Content description**

This unit will cover rhythms, note values and rest values, including how they fit within various basic time signatures.

B. **Learning activities**

- a. Discuss various note values (including dotted notes and triplets) and how they are incorporated into various time signatures.
- b. Corporately and individually tap/sing various rhythmic examples, both single-line and from handbell literature.
- c. Discuss definitions of “perfect,” “simple” and “compound” as these terms pertain to time signatures.
- d. At the whiteboard, students will each create various multimeasure examples of single-line rhythms using the note values described above. These will be tapped/sung by the class and evaluated for accuracy and practicality.

UNIT III: KEY SIGNATURES AND SCALES

A. **Content description**

This unit will introduce the Circle of Fifths and examine major key signatures and scales up to 3 sharps and 3 flats (inclusive), as well as relative-minor equivalencies. Also covers basic enharmonics.

B. **Learning activities**

- a. Students will be given a Circle of Fifths chart to examine. The concept behind Circle of Fifths will be introduced.
- b. Keys as described above will be discussed, as will their relative minor keys (and the minor third relationship between their tonic notes).

- c. Students will be introduced to the concept of basic enharmonic equivalents, and asked to create several “pairs” of enharmonics to share with the class.

UNIT IV: INTERVALS AND CHORDS

A. Content description

This unit introduces basic intervals (both printed and aural), and covers the usage of major/minor thirds in construction of major/minor triads.

B. Learning activities

- a. Using a keyboard handout, students will be introduced to basic intervals as they relate to one another on the keyboard.
- b. Students will listen to different intervals to evaluate them aurally. Memory aids based on common tunes will be brainstormed by the class and/or provided by the instructor to help remember what intervals sound like.
- c. The students will listen to various intervals in ear-training exercises and work to identify them, corporately and individually.
- d. Triadic harmony will be introduced (major/minor), and students will listen to various major/minor triads in root position to evaluate and identify them aurally.

UNIT V: BEYOND THE NOTES

A. Content description

This unit will review/discuss basic dynamics and performance markings.

B. Learning activities

- a. Students will receive a handout with various performance markings and given the opportunity to fill in definitions on their own, individually, for all that they believe they know. The class will then review the document together, each student completing and/or correcting his/her document as required.

UNIT VI: SCORE NAVIGATION

A. Content description

This unit will examine simple score navigation involving repeats, endings, etc.

B. Learning activities

- a. Repeats, endings, *D.S.*, *D.C.*, Coda and such will be discussed.
- b. Various pieces of music will be projected to allow students to practice simple score navigation and create “navigation maps.”

V. RECOMMENDED EVALUATION PROCEDURES

- A. Each component will be in written form and will be evaluated “pass” or “fail” by the instructor based on student’s demonstration of working knowledge for each concept. Testing topics shown below may be combined by the instructor.
 - a. Score “parts diagram” test
 - b. Pitch/range (printed recognition) test
 - c. Definitions test
 - d. Key/scale/chord identification and creation test
 - e. Ear-training test: intervals and chords
 - f. Ear-training test: rhythmic dictation
 - g. Printed rhythm test (completing measures, identifying beats, etc.)
 - h. Score navigation test

- B. All written evaluation components must be successfully passed in a way which demonstrates solid working knowledge of all concepts to complete Course C1, Basic Music Theory.

VI. RESOURCE MATERIALS

- A. For the students
 - a. Required textbook and other materials

Handbell and Handchime Notation. Dayton, OH: AGEHR Music. R101. 2010.

Glasgow, Michael J. It’s Just A+ Theory. Raleigh, NC: Self-published. 2011. Contact michael@michaeljglasgow.com for information.

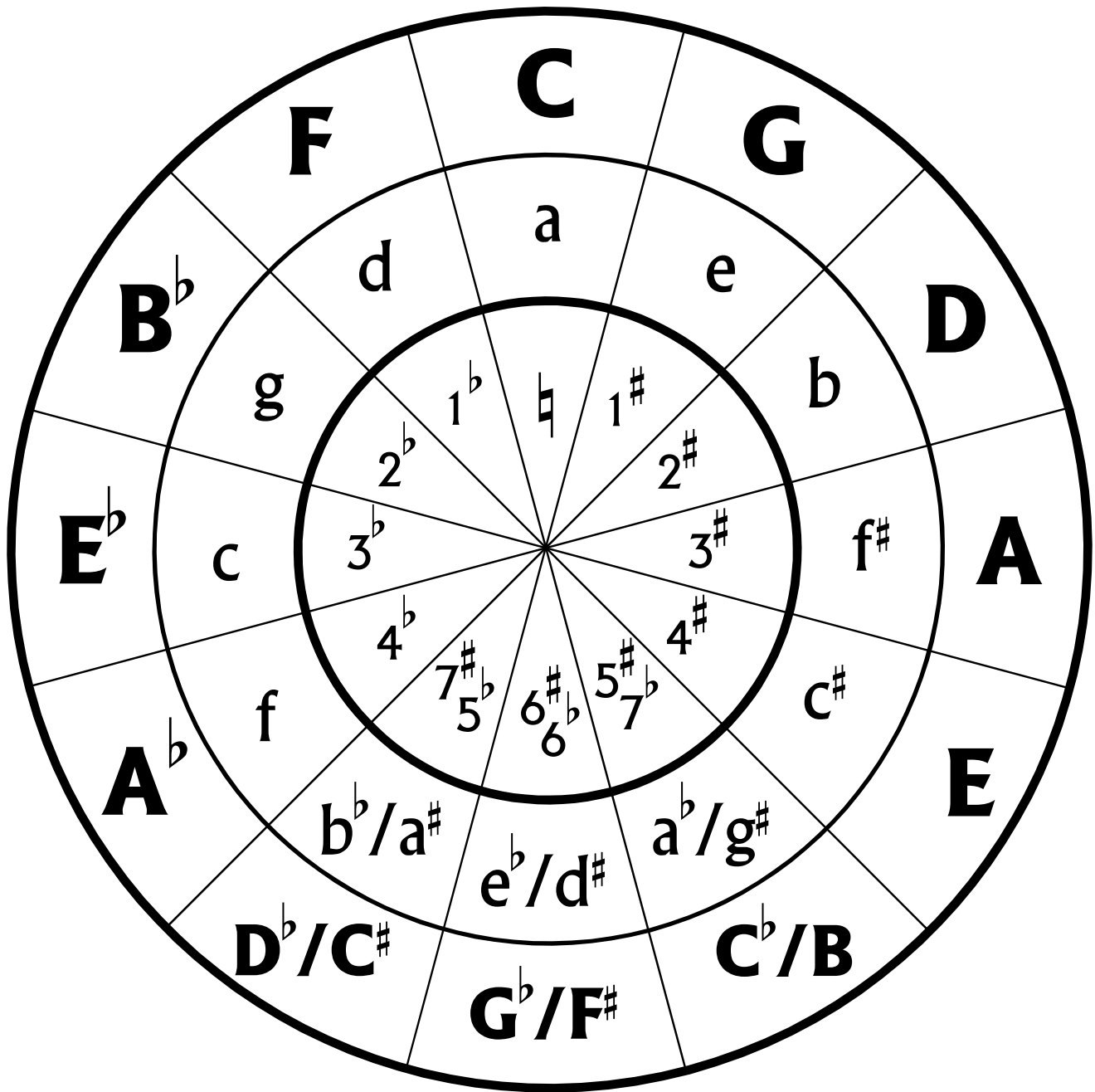
- B. General bibliography (not required; may be recommended)
 - a. Randel, Don Michael (ed.) New Harvard Dictionary of Music, The. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Belknap Press. ISBN 0674011635 (4th edition). 2003.

 - b. Various handbell music as recommended by instructor

Michael J. Glasgow, MCM
October 15, 2010
revised May 24, 2011
revised July 20, 2013
revised May 1, 2015

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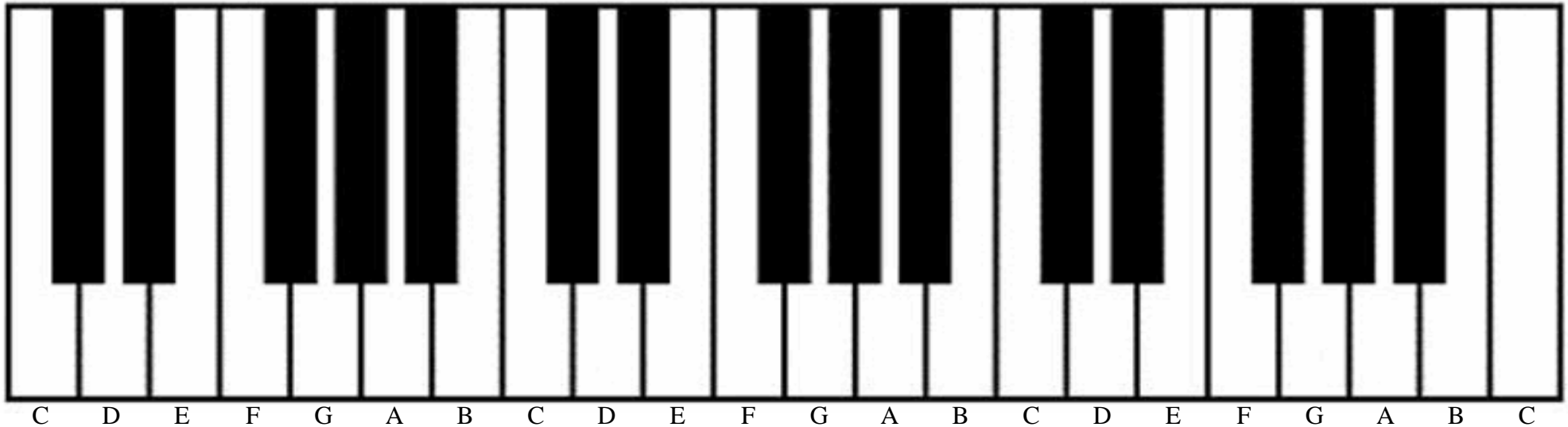
The Circle of Fifths



- Outer circle:** Major keys
- Middle circle:** relative minor keys
- Inner circle:** how many sharps/flats in the key signature
- Order of sharps:** FCGDAEB (*"Fast cars go dangerously around every bend"*)
- Order of flats:** BEADGCF (*"Babies eat and do get creamy foods"*)

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Intervals



Order of Intervals

half steps: 0	unison
half steps: 1	minor second (half step)
half steps: 2	Major second (whole step)
half steps: 3	minor third
half steps: 4	Major third
half steps: 5	Perfect fourth
half steps: 6	Tritone (augmented fourth/diminished fifth)
half steps: 7	Perfect fifth
half steps: 8	minor sixth
half steps: 9	Major sixth
half steps: 10	minor seventh
half steps: 11	Major seventh
half steps: 12	Octave

Take a Step...

A **half step** (also known as a **minor second**) is the distance from one note to the very next note, regardless of if it's a "black key" or a "white key" note. Notice that from E up to F is a half step, and from B up to C is a half step, since these notes have no black keys in between.

A **whole step** (also known as a **Major second**) is the distance from one note up or down two notes, regardless of if they are "black keys" or "white keys." As long as two notes have one single note in between them, those two notes are a whole step apart.

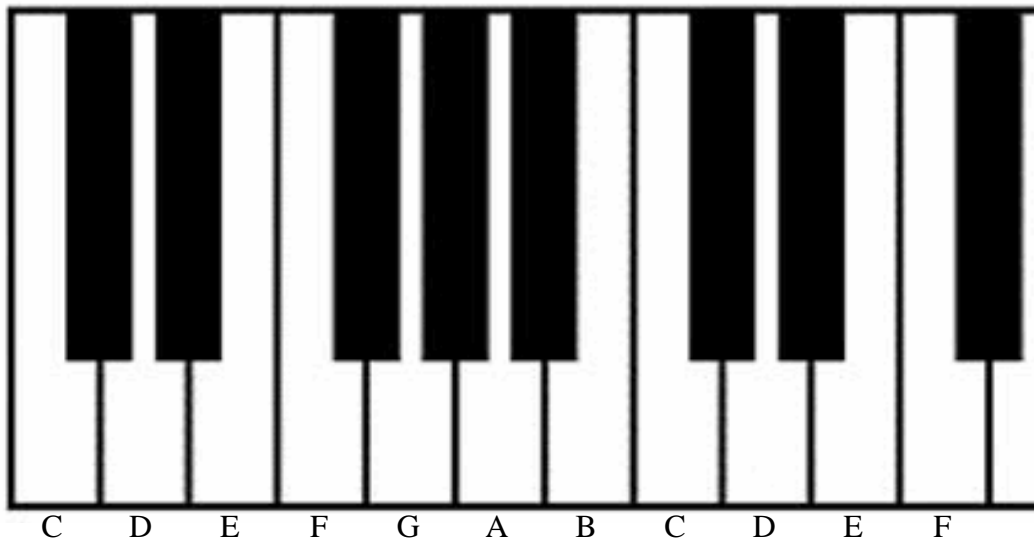
They're playing my song...

ASCENDING

DESCENDING

minor second	
Major second	
minor third	
Major third	
Perfect fourth	
Tritone	
Perfect fifth	
minor sixth	
Major sixth	
minor seventh	
Major seventh	
Octave	

Building Basic Triads



The Rules

1. Always “spell” the chords in thirds (that is, use “every other letter”).
2. See Rule #1.

Major Triads

Start with an interval of a **Major third**: count up four notes from the root note, *not counting* the root note. This gives you the bottom and middle notes of your triad.

From the middle note of your triad, “stack” on top of it a minor third: count up three more notes, *not counting* the middle note of your triad.

Check that the interval from the root to the top note is a perfect fifth (there should be six notes *in between* them, one of which is of course the middle note or the “third” of the chord).

Minor Triads

Start with an interval of a **minor third**: count up three notes from the root note, *not counting* the root note. This gives you the bottom and middle notes of your triad.

From the middle note of your triad, “stack” on top of it a major third: count up four more notes, *not counting* the middle note of your triad.

Check that the interval from the root to the top note is a perfect fifth (there should be six notes *in between* them, one of which is of course the middle note or the “third” of the chord).

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Basic Dynamics and Performance Markings

ppp _____ *pp* _____ *p* _____

mp _____ *mf* _____

f _____ *ff* _____ *fff* _____

a tempo _____ *moderato* _____

accelerando _____ *molto* _____

adagio _____ *non* _____

allegro _____ *più* _____

andante _____ *poco (a poco)* _____

col/colla _____ *primo/prima* _____

con _____ *quasi* _____

da capo _____ *rallentando* _____

dal segno _____ *ritardando* _____

fine _____ *senza* _____

legato _____ *simile* _____

lento _____ *staccato* _____

ma non troppo _____ *tacet* _____

meno _____ *vivace* _____

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Could You Repeat That?

Musical notation for measures 1-5. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). Measures 1-4 are the first system, and measure 5 is the start of a repeat sign. The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a simple bass line.

Musical notation for measures 6-10. Measures 6-8 are the second system, and measures 9-10 are the first ending of a repeat sign. The right hand continues with chords and notes, and the left hand has a simple bass line.

Musical notation for measures 11-16. Measures 11-12 are the third system, and measures 13-16 are the second ending of a repeat sign. The right hand continues with chords and notes, and the left hand has a simple bass line.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. Measure 17 is marked with a section sign (§). Measures 17-19 are the fourth system, and measure 20 is marked "2nd time to Coda" with a Coda symbol (⊕). The right hand plays a melodic line, and the left hand plays a simple bass line.

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CODA \emptyset

Map It!

The piece begins with a four-measure introduction...

We continue on until measure 9...

We take the first ending, which is measures 9-12.

This is the end of one continuous section of measures: **1-12**

We go back to measure 5 and play through measure 8...

Then we take the second ending, so the section just played is: **5-8**

We jump to the second ending at measure 13...

(we ignore the direction at measure 20, as it's the first time)

We continue through measure 24, ending our next section: **13-24**

We go back to the "sign" (*segno*) at measure 17...

This time, we play through measure 20, and then jump,

So this is the end of another continuous section of measures: **17-20**

We play the CODA, and complete the piece: **25-28**

Navigation map: 1-12, 5-8, 13-24, 17-20, 25-28.