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play METHOD

LESSON BOOK

CONTENTS

EVERYONE PLAYS

Play Method™ is a piano playing technique designed to meet everyone's needs. Whether you're five or eighty-five, Play Method™ can bring the joy of playing the piano to your fingertips in a matter of minutes. It's fun, easy to understand and gratifying to be able to play actual songs the first time you sit down at the piano. It speaks to kids, teens, parents, seniors and educators alike.

Kids: Easy to understand, even for young children and fun at the same time. Engages children into learning music in a new exciting way.

Teens: Much like Karaoke, PlayMethod™ can be used for social events where they can emulate their favorite artists. Play Method™ can also help those aspiring to be musicians themselves.

Parents: Play Method™ is a learning experience that parents can share with their children or undertake on their own. It's an activity that can enrich family time, without any difficulty.

Seniors: It's never too late to learn how to play the piano. Play Method™ is easy for all ages to understand as well as fun.

Educators: Play Method™ gives teachers a new way to engage students into playing music. Teaching students in a way that will eventually bring them to reading standard music notation.

INTRODUCTION:

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You made it to the final level - that is great. By the time you finish this Professional Level book, you will have all the tools and skills necessary to read and play standard music notation, or sheet music, the same way it has appeared for the past 700 or so years.

By starting you off with numbers and colors read vertically in the Beginner Level, moving you to horizontal reading and letters in the Intermediate Level, and then transitioning you to dots in the Advanced Level, you are ready to complete the transition.

Here in the professional level you will learn in full about the 5 basic elements of standard sheet music. Some of these have been covered in the previous levels in a simpler form, and some will be new to you.

These elements are ...

1) **Staff** - Lines and spaces with a clef symbol that tells you the note location.

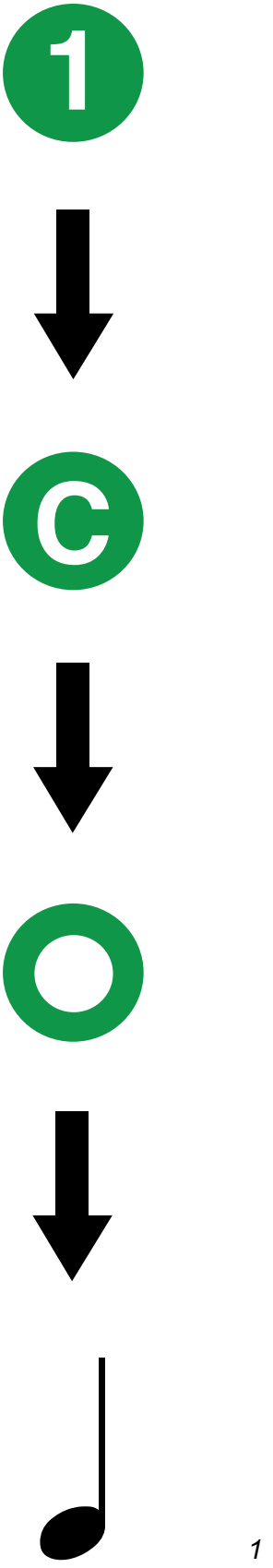
2) **Time Signature** - How many beats are in each measure and what kind of note gets one beat.

3) **Key Signature** - Which notes are raised (sharp #) or lowered (flat b) to the black keys in a song.

4) **Navigation** - The “roadmap” which tells you how to get from the beginning to the end of a song.

Musical Terms and Abbreviations

5) ~~**Ornamentation**~~ - The nuances of music. Includes things like volume, speed, and various ways of striking thenkeys to create different types of sounds.



LESSON 1:
Staff

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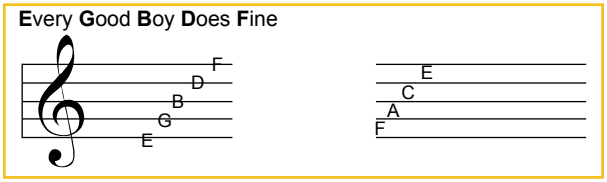
1) The staff is an arrangement of five parallel lines, and the spaces between them. Both lines and spaces are numbered for reference purposes, and are always counted from lowest to highest:

2) Start with the Treble Clef. One of the first things you'll encounter when reading music is the clef. This sign is the legend that tells you approximately what range your instrument will play in. All instruments and voices in the higher ranges use the treble clef as their basis, and for this intro to reading music, we'll focus primarily on this clef for our examples.

The Treble, or G clef, is derived from an ornamental Latin letter G. When notes are added to the staff in the treble clef, they will have the following values:



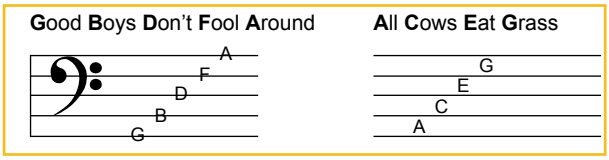
The five lines, from the bottom up, represent the following notes: E G B D F.

The four spaces, from the bottom up, represent these notes: F A C E.

It may seem like a lot to remember, but if you use mnemonics—or word cues—that may help you remember them. For the lines, Every Good Boy Does Fine is the standard, and for the spaces, well, they spell out "FACE." That should be easy enough!

Understand the Bass Clef. The bass clef, also known as the F clef, is used for instruments in the lower registers, including the left hand of the piano, bass guitar, trombones, etc.

The name "F clef" derives from its origins as the Gothic letter F, and the two dots above and below the "F" line on the staff. The staff of the bass clef represents different notes than that of the treble clef.



The five lines, bottom to top, represent these notes: G B D F A (Good Boys Don't Fool Around).

The four spaces, bottom to top, represent these notes: A C E G (All Cows Eat Grass).

LESSON 2:
Time Signature

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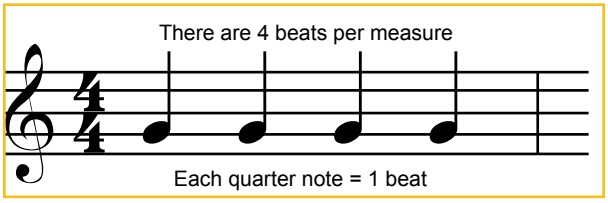
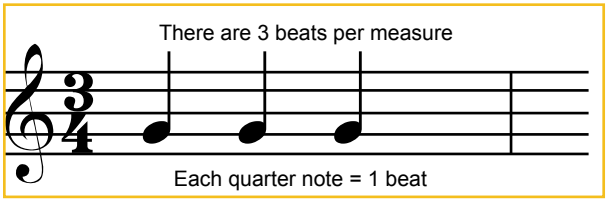
In music notation, beat is expressed by something akin to a fraction. Like any fraction, there is a numerator, and a denominator. The numerator, written in the top two spaces of the staff, tells you how many beats there are in one measure. The denominator tells you the note value that receives one beat (that pulse that you tap your toe to). It looks like this:



By changing the numerator, we change the number of beats in a measure. Another very common time signature is 3/4. If you think of a waltz and its steady 1-2-3 1-2-3 beat, that's 3/4 time. It's notated like this:



Theoretically, any number could be placed here, but you will probably only see a 2, 3, 4, or 6. Marches and ballads typically have 4 counts in each measure. Waltzes typically have 3 counts in each measure, jigs and polkas usually have 2 counts, and reels have 6 counts. Of course, other variations can and do occur. The bottom number indicates what kind of note will receive one count.

Reading music notes means understanding the value of each note (that is, how long each note lasts) and how notes fit together in sheet music. To know how to read music notes, you'll need to learn the different types of notes and their timing. How note values fit against each other in a piece of music is as important as their musical pitches because if you change the note values in a piece of music, you end up with completely different music.

Music notes indicate exactly how long a specific pitch should be held by the voice or instrument. The time value of notes determines what kind of rhythm the resulting piece of music will have, whether it will run along very quickly and cheerfully, or slowly and somberly, or in some other way.

As you may remember from school or music lessons, notes come in different flavors, each with its own note value. The value of a half note is half that of a whole note, the value of a quarter note is a quarter that of a whole note, and so on. Each level of the "tree of notes" is equal to the others.

Each row of this note tree takes up an identical amount of time. From top to bottom, this image shows a whole note, 2 half notes, 4 quarter notes, 8 eighth notes, and 16 sixteenth notes. You can continue this sequence by adding one more flag and doubling the number of notes: 32 thirty-second notes (three flags) and 64 sixty-fourth notes (four flags) each last the same length as a single whole note.

LESSON 2:
(continued)

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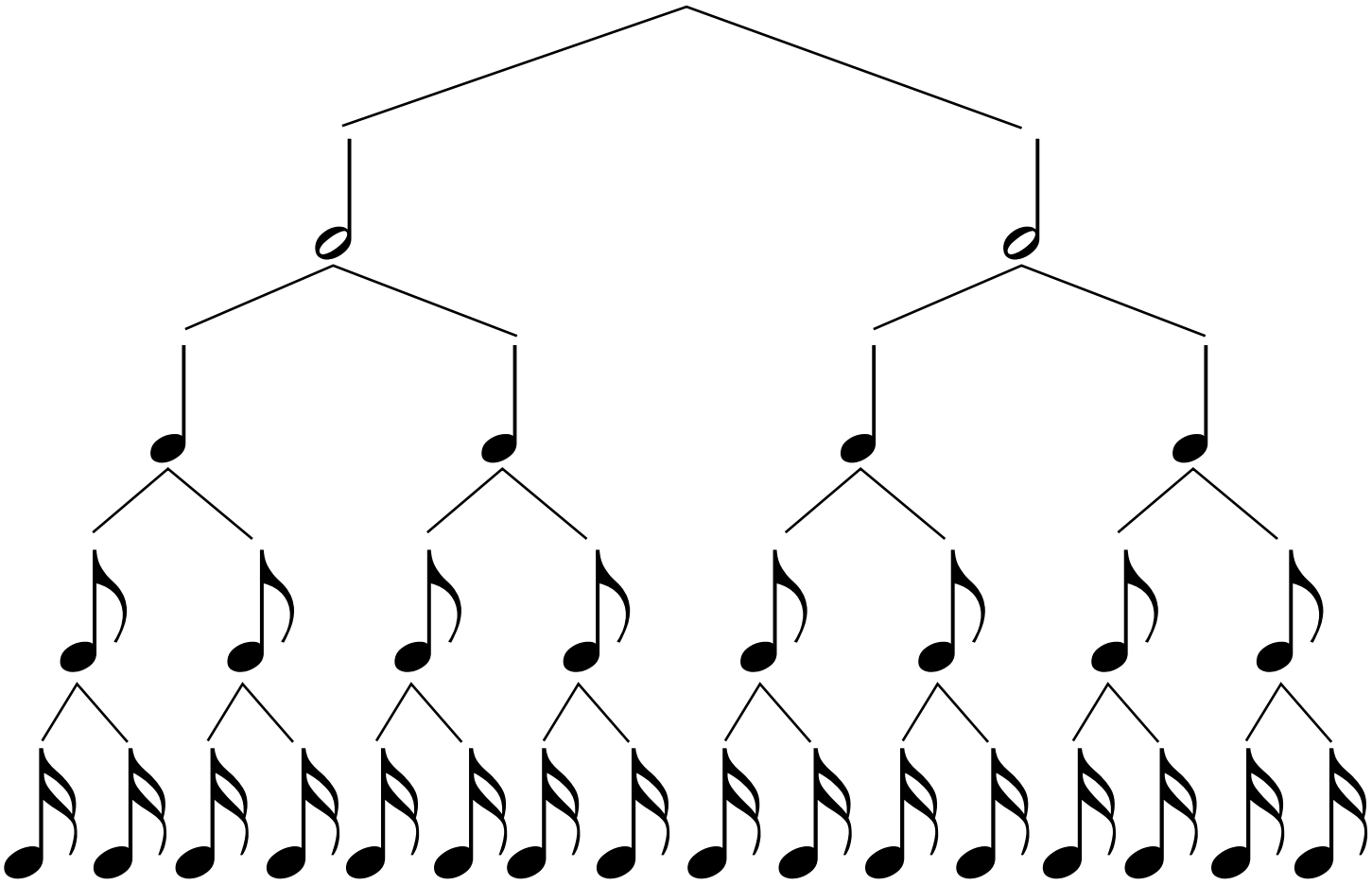
Note Tree



LESSON 3:
Key Signature

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Always start a piece by knowing the key signatures. Check for the beginning and the last notes and chords. They are usually the same chord. The chord of the last note will tell you what key it is. Once you know the key you can anticipate the black keys (sharps or flats of the key).

scope of this book

Now that you have memorized the notes and their placement on the staff, we need to address the topic of key signatures. It is beyond the ~~level of this class~~ to really get into the theory behind the different key signatures, however you do need a basic awareness of why they exist. The reason is that what we have learned so far applies to the key of C. Playing these notes produces a melodic sequence of notes when you begin the scale on the root note of C. If all songs were written in the key of C, it would be really boring.

However, if you start the scale on any other note, it will not sound right. To make it sound right, you have to raise (or lower) certain notes 1⁄2 step to make the required adjustment. Since the notes that have to be adjusted are always the same for the entire song for any particular key, the notes are indicated at the beginning of the song by indications in the key signature at the beginning of the song.

In addition to the key of C, some other common key signatures we encounter in folk music are:

Key of G: 1 sharp (F#) carried through the entire song

Key of D: 2 sharps (F# and C#) carried through the song

Key of A: 3 sharps (F#, C#, and G#) carried through the song

Key of F: 1 flat (Bb) carried through the song~~Note that for songs with sharps, the major key of the song is 1 note up from the last written sharp in the key signature.~~

~~For songs with flats (other than the key of F), the major key of the song is the next to the last flat indicated in the key signature. Identifying Notes (cont.)~~

Often, you will find the composer has decided to artificially raise or lower a note by 1⁄2 step within a song to obtain a particular feeling. This is done by attaching the sharp sign (#) or flat sign (b) next to the note to be affected. The note is now termed an ACCIDENTAL, and the effect remains for the rest of the MEASURE. Beginning with the next measure, the note will revert to its normal value for the key signature.

Much more information is required for a thorough understanding of key structures, but what ~~I~~ have presented will get you started.

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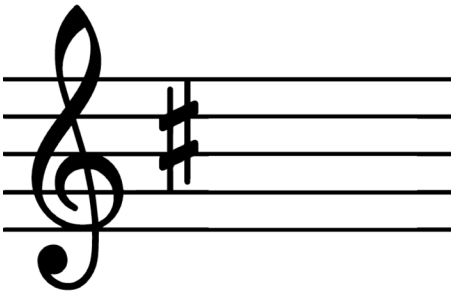
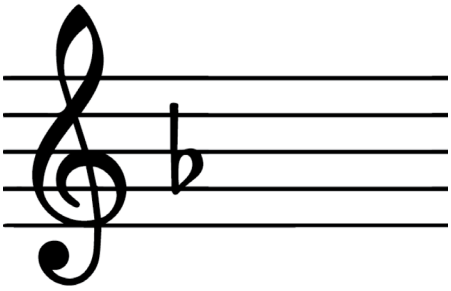
A key signature is a set of sharp



or flat symbols placed together on the staff.



Key signatures are generally written immediately after the clef at the beginning of a line of musical notation.

LESSON 3:
(continued)

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~~A key signature designates notes that are to be played higher or lower than the corresponding natural (regular) notes and applies throughout the piece or up to the next key signature.~~

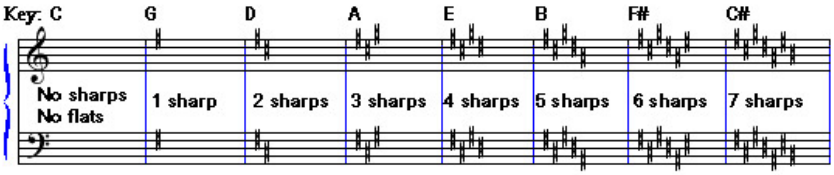
~~A sharp symbol on a line or space in the key signature raises the notes on that line or space one semitone (piano key) above the natural, and a flat lowers such notes one semitone. Further, a symbol in the key signature affects all the notes of one letter: for instance, a sharp on the top line of the treble staff applies to F's not only on that line, but also to F's in the bottom space of the staff, and to any other F's.~~

~~An accidental is an exception to the key signature, applying only in the measure in which it appears, and the choice of key signature can increase or decrease the need for accidentals.~~

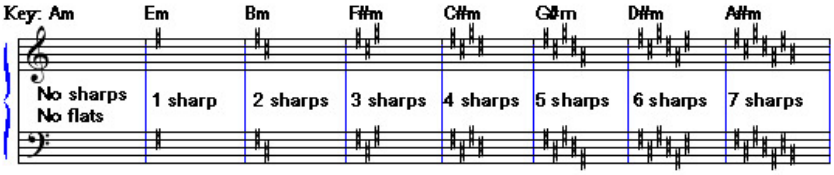
~~Each major and minor key has an associated key signature that sharpens or flattens the notes which are used in that key signature.~~

Table of Key Signatures

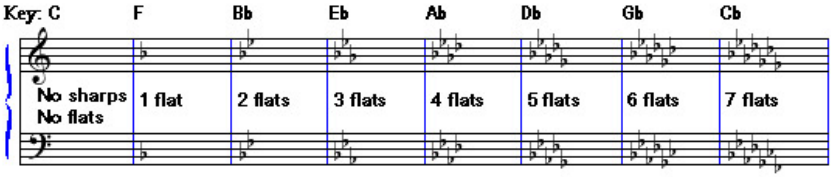
Sharp Key Signatures (Major)



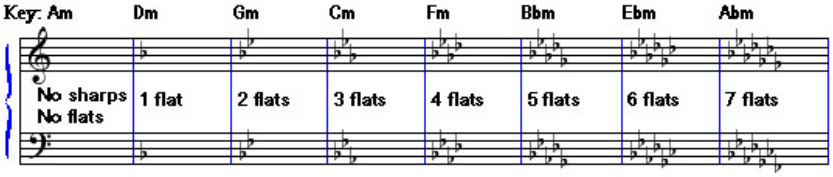
Sharp Key Signatures (Minor)



Flat Key Signatures (Major)



Flat Key Signatures (Minor)



LESSON 4:
Navigation

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Songs are divided into very specific parts, each part conveying a particular idea or feeling to the listener. Let's look at a typical song arranged by parts.

Introduction:

Some songs start with a short introduction to set the mood and get the listener prepared for what is to come. Typical introductions are 4, 8 or 16 measures of music, however any multiple of 4 bars can be used.

Song parts:

Each song part contains a musical thought or statement, and is typically expressed in 16 or 32 measures of music. Each song part is given a letter designation. A very simple song can have just 1 part (Part "A"), and major symphonic works can have a large number of parts. Typically, the folk music we play contains just 2 or 3 parts.

Also, in folk music, the actual musical phrase is only 8 measures long. Since the part is actually 16 measures long, the 8 bar folk phrase is just repeated. The repeated portion is bracketed by what are called repeat signs, and in order to break the repeat loop, an alternate ending to the part is provided which terminates the repeat action and provides the transition to the next song part. Therefore, when playing a folk song, we will navigate the song by playing A A B B. Through the use of the repeat signs, the overall form of the music can be easily changed to any combination of the parts, such as:

AABA

AA B B C C, etc.

Ending:

Some songs employ several measures after the last song part to achieve finality to the song for the listener. Usually this is accomplished in 4 or 8 measures. Many ~~folk~~ songs, however, just modify the last few measures of the last part to accomplish the wrap-up.

this lesson needs graphics to visually demonstrate the concepts

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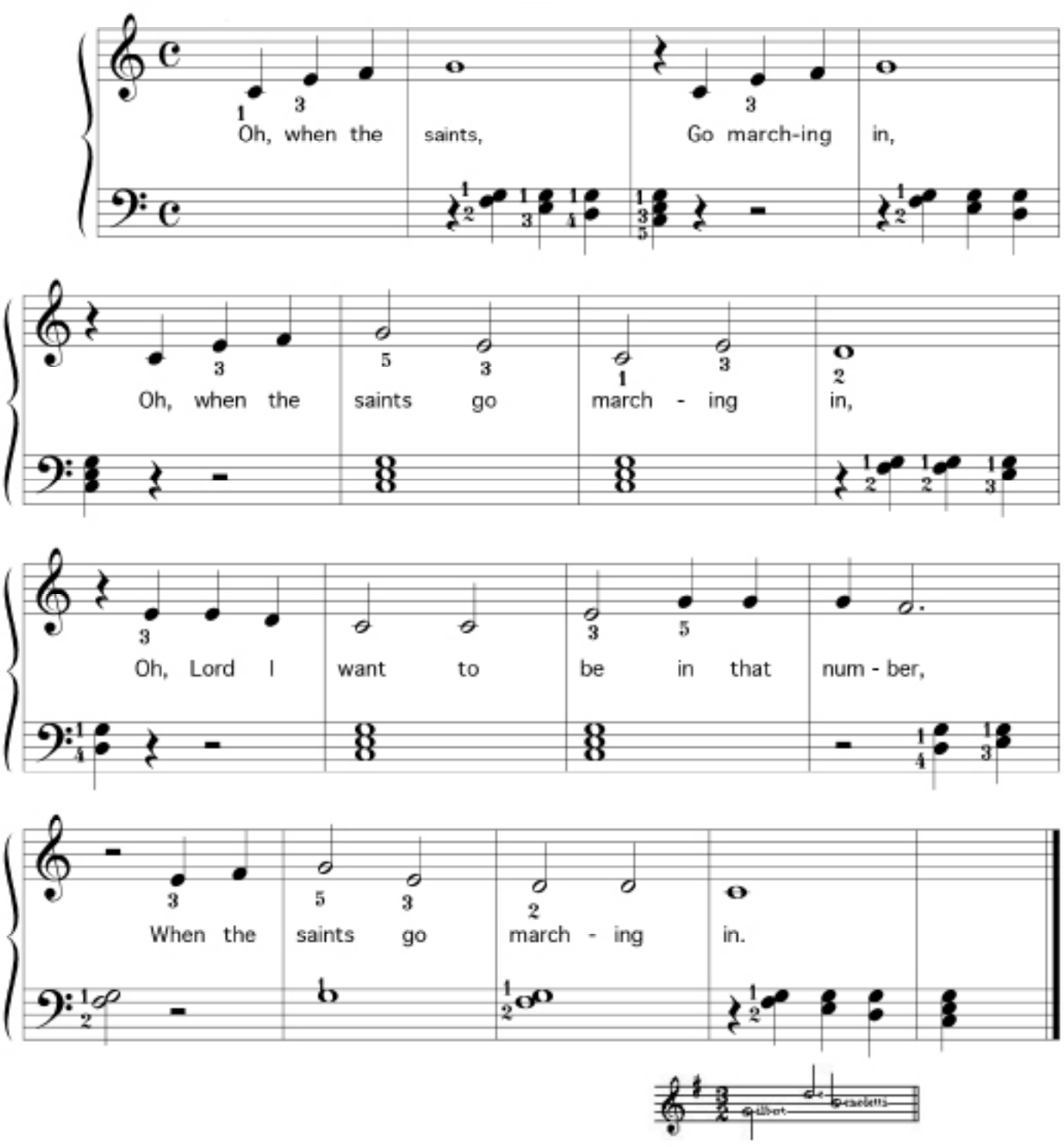
O When The Saints



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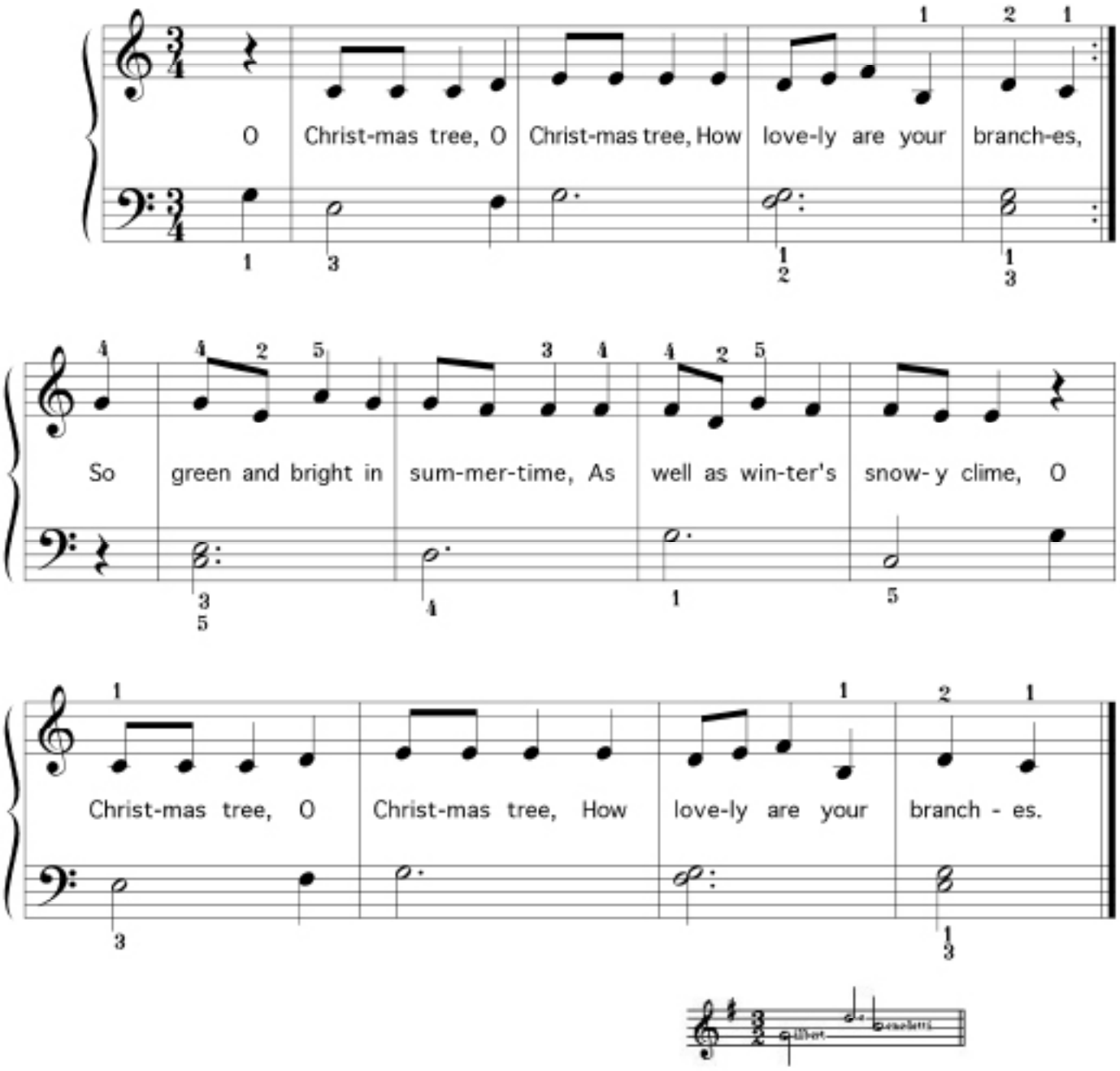
O Christmas Tree

Joachim August Zarnak



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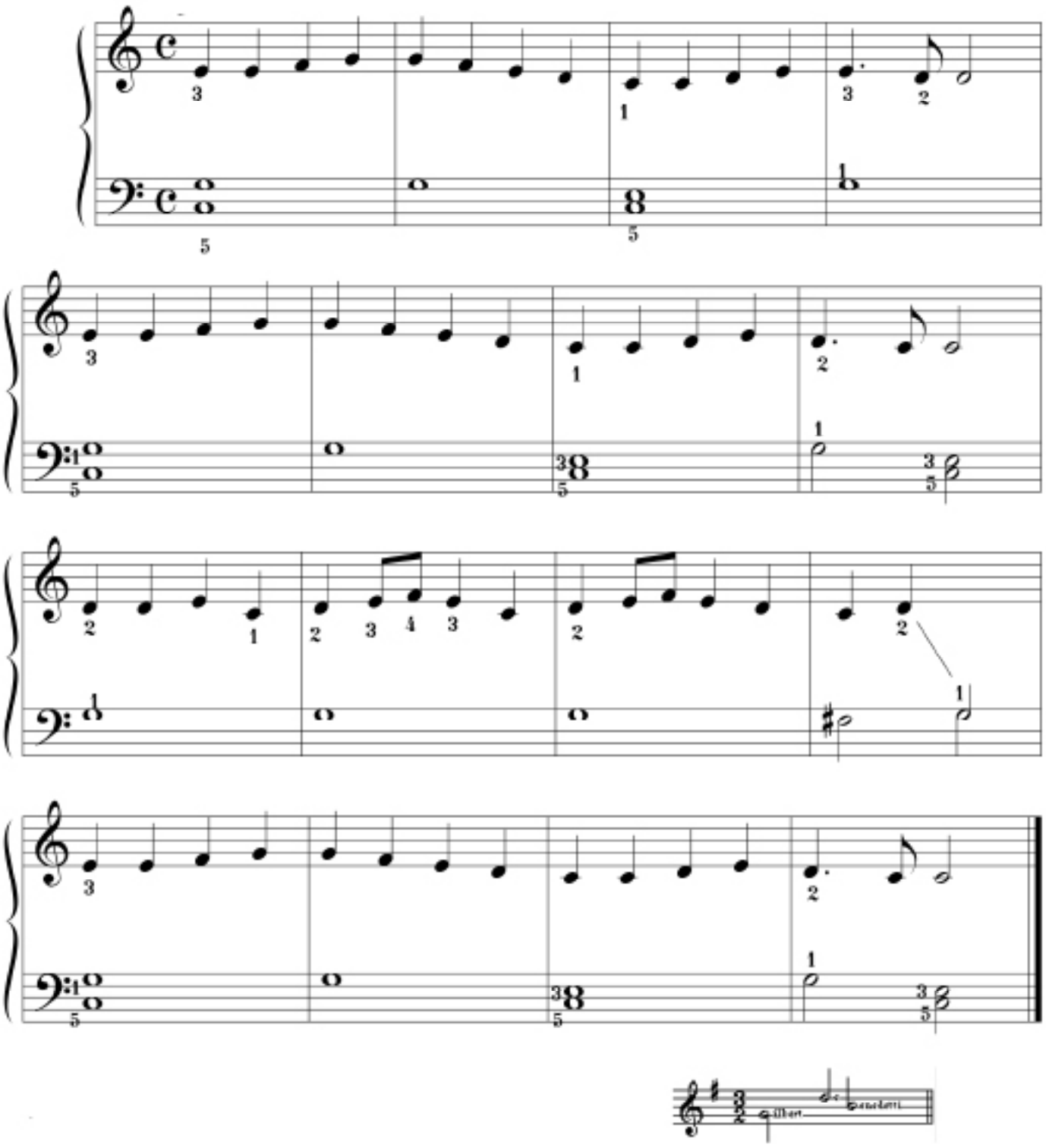
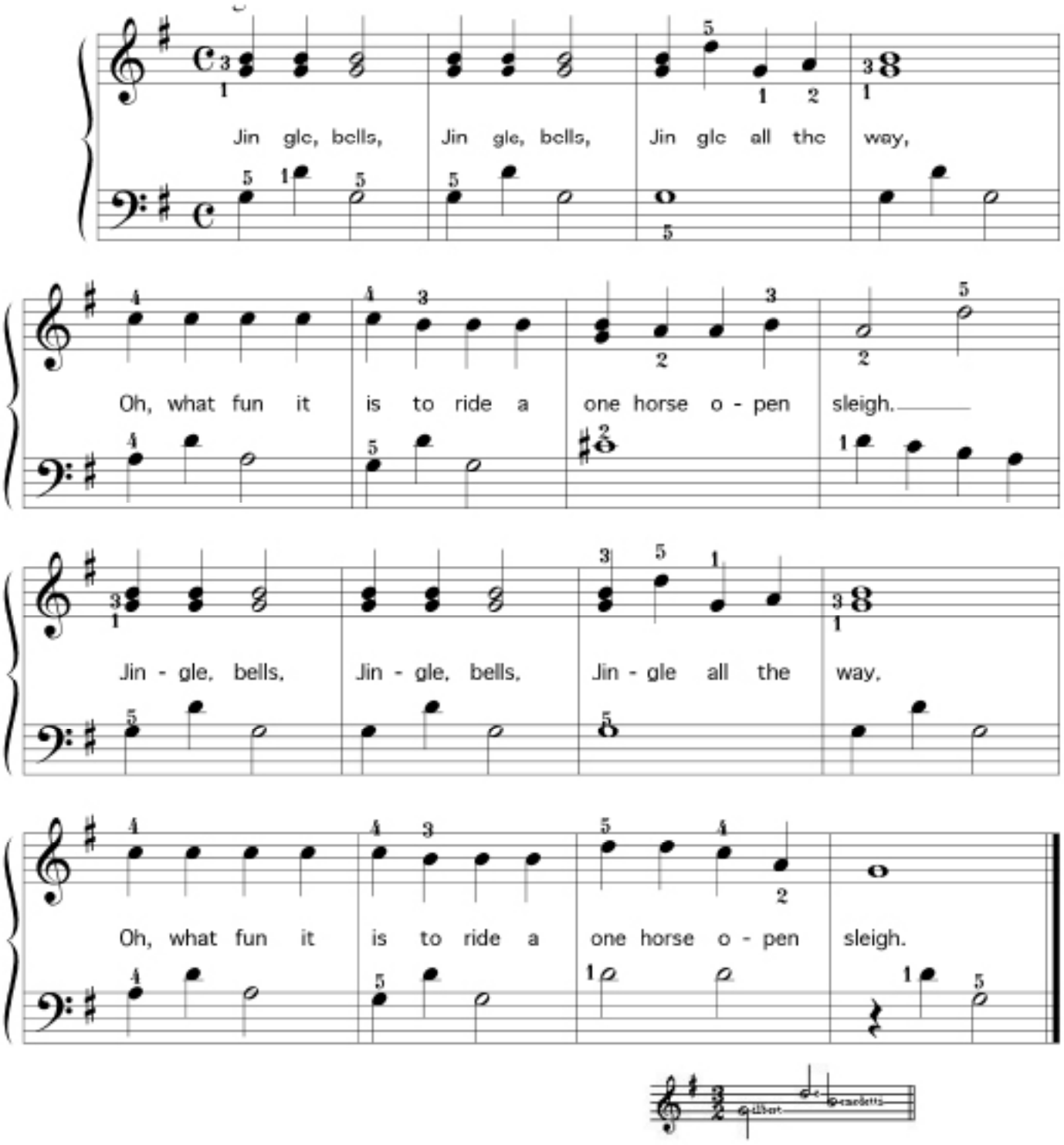
Ode to Joy

L.V. Beethoven



Jingle Bells

James L. Pierpont



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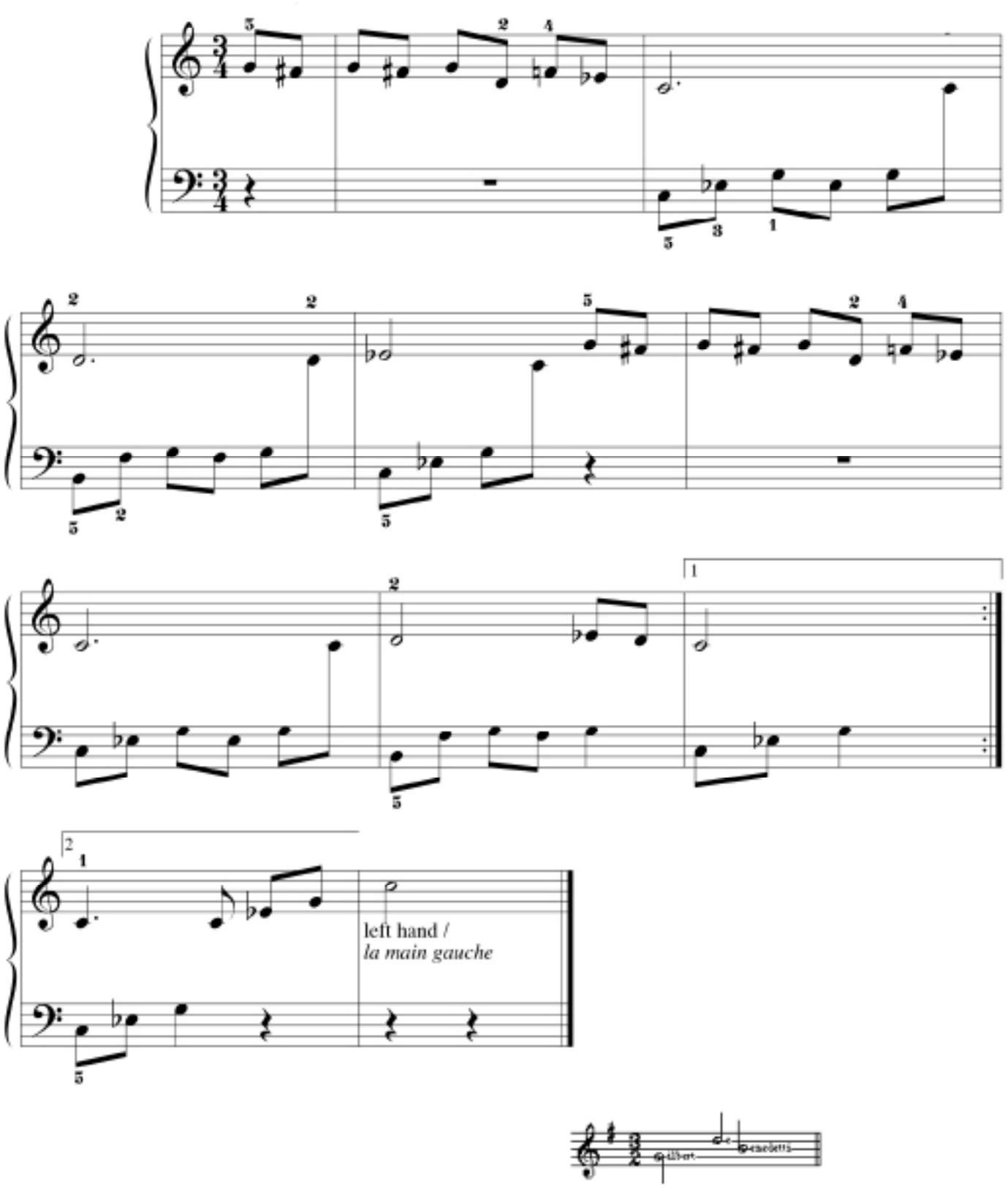
Fur Elise

L. V. Beethoven



A FINAL WORD

You have done it! Hard to believe, but just a short while ago, you were following numbers and colors, and now you can read music. We hope Play Method has given you a tremendous start on your musical journey, but just like anything else, you will need to practice to become proficient. Play lots of different songs. With different key signatures. With different time signatures. WIth different rhythms. With different notes. We are very glad that we have played a role in helping you follow your musical dreams. Keep in touch, and let us know how we can be of help along your journey.