

Woodwind Sight Reading

The ability to confidently 'sight-read' unfamiliar music is a valuable and practical skill for all students to develop, as it enables them to confidently start to learn a new piece of music by themselves.

They don't need to wait until their next lesson for help with sight reading a new ensemble part. Also, for instruments where transposing is required they can play a part other than their own in an ensemble. It is my experience as a clarinet teacher, that students find being asked to sight-read very intimidating, so I try to 'demystify' it for them, and assist them to get better at it.

I incorporate some into every lesson, right from their very first, and ask them to sight-read unfamiliar melodies consisting of notes, note values, rests, articulations etc. with which they are already familiar, and to play to the end without stopping to correct mistakes.

It is also my experience that most students actually read and sightread much more accurately than they think they do, and that they really lack self-confidence rather than music reading and counting and sight reading skills.

So often I have heard students say, when presented with a new piece of music or ensemble part: 'I can't play this, because I don't know how it goes!' – to which I will reply – 'does that mean that you won't read a new book, because you don't know what the story is?'

Being able to sight-read provides students with the skills to be musically independent, and so to explore as they wish the extraordinary range of musical genres and styles available to them today.

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