

Introduction

Louis Braille and Bettye Krolick The Need for Braille Music Transcription Procedures for the Course

Welcome!

This book is the instructional manual for transcribers who are enrolled in the braille music certification course under the sponsorship of the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS). Prerequisites for the course are United States citizenship, certification in literary braille, and the ability to read print music notation. The book is also designed as a reference tool that will continue to help these transcribers after they become certified in music.

Part 1 teaches single-line instrumental and line-by-line vocal music, and after an exam, enables some students to be certified as an Associate Braille Music Transcriber. Part 2 continues with the study of keyboard music and ensemble scores, leading to a final exam and full certification as a Braille Music Transcriber.

A braille edition is available for blind musicians, who can use this book to expand their knowledge of music codes presented in the BANA Music Braille Code 2015 (MBC-2015). No certification is offered to braille readers, but we hope this book will become a valuable resource for the understanding of the music code.

Both the print and braille editions are provided free, in PDF and BRF file formats, downloadable by anyone from the NLS website. Whatever your musical background or goals may be, you are welcome as a user of this book. You are encouraged to read, ponder, absorb, and enjoy.

Louis and Bettye

Louis Braille (1809-1852) was born into a middle-class family in the French country village of Coupvray, not far from Paris. He lost his sight through a childhood accident and became totally blind by the age of five. His education began in the village school, where he learned by rote as he listened to the lessons and recitations of his sighted classmates. At the age of ten he enrolled at the residential school for the blind in Paris, where (except for brief vacations) he studied and worked for the rest of his life.

Though the academic limitations and unhealthful living conditions at the Paris school must have been discouraging to Louis, he excelled in his studies and became a beloved teacher as well as a renowned cathedral organist. He was also an accomplished pianist, singer, and cellist. In addition, he collaborated on the invention of raphigraphy, a forerunner of the dot-matrix printer.

During Louis' student days at the Paris school, rote learning was the prevailing style of education. Louis learned to read the few books that the school had produced in raised representations of the print characters, but this style of reading was slow, cumbersome, and inefficient. Furthermore, there was no way for the blind students to write down information that they themselves could subsequently read.

In 1821 Captain Charles Barbier came to the Paris school to demonstrate his system of tactile "night writing," which he had invented to facilitate communication among soldiers during military maneuvers. Based on a twelve-dot cell, Barbier's system used raised characters for the phonetic reading and writing of words. Inspired by Barbier's code but aware of its limitations, Louis began developing his own system of six-dot cells to represent literary, mathematical, and musical symbols. The basic design of Louis' braille code was completed by 1825, when he was only sixteen years old; and the code, in substantially the form we know for literary braille today, was published by the school in 1829. Louis continued to revise the musical portion of the code and ultimately gave it the basic form that is now used throughout the world.

Louis Braille and his colleagues began an unbroken line of outstanding blind French organists whose work as performers, composers, and teachers still continues in Paris. In 1863 a braille volume of organ compositions by four of Louis' colleagues, including Gabriel Gauthier, was published by the school in Paris. A copy of this fragile volume has been preserved and restored, and excerpts were published in 2015 for the benefit of all braille readers. It is available online from NLS.

Outside of France, as early as 1866 and as far away as the United States, the merits of Louis' musical code were recognized and celebrated. For some decades thereafter, other systems of dots were devised and advocated for literature and mathematics, but the superiority of Louis' musical system remained unchallenged. Today all aspects of Louis' system have been adopted throughout the world and are used in many languages.

To accommodate various instruments and notational techniques, some additions to the music code have been made from time to time. There are also variations in practice from country to country. Through a series of international conferences, these variations in symbols and format have

been minimized so that today a musically literate braille reader can read a piece of music from any country of the world, even if the language of that country is unknown to the reader. The current international manual of braille music was published in 1996. At almost the same time, in 1997, the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) published an updated edition of the music code for North American readers and transcribers. An even more recent music code, clarifying and updating the 1997 edition, was adopted by BANA in 2015. This new code includes guidance on synchronizing braille music with the recently adopted Unified English Braille (UEB) literary code.

The 1996 and 1997 code books were largely the work of Bettye Krolick (1926-2011), a tireless advocate for the teaching and transcribing of braille music. In addition to her own transcriptions and national and international collaborations, Bettye singlehandedly compiled a comprehensive dictionary of braille music signs and codes. Demolishing the myth that braille music is too "difficult," she visited many schools where, through a short and comfortable demonstration, she proved that a blind child can learn the basics of braille music in just one hour. Bettye also wrote an introduction to braille music for braille readers at the fourth to seventh-grade level. She thus prepared young scholars to participate actively in school bands, orchestras, and choirs.

In the nineteenth century Louis Braille invented braille music in France. In the twentieth century Bettye Krolick popularized and championed braille music in her home country of the United States and far beyond. Our third edition of the braille music transcription textbook is therefore dedicated to Louis and Bettye. He was a frail blind man, destined to live only forty-three years. She was a robust sighted woman whose association with braille music began in midlife and continued into her senior years. He was a cathedral organist who spent his entire life in and near Paris; she was a symphonic violinist and violist who traveled the world.

Both Louis and Bettye worked indefatigably, always manifesting a spirit of grace and good humor. This book has been prepared in that same happy spirit as a tribute to Louis and Bettye.

The Need for Braille Music Transcription

Throughout the twentieth century and even before, braille printing houses around the world produced multiple copies of braille music scores. Many of these precious books have been collected and preserved in Washington, D.C., at the Music Section of the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. Gradually these books are being digitized so that even after the original braille pages and printing plates are gone, the transcriptions will remain available for download and duplication.

The mass-produced books, however, cannot begin to meet the many and varied needs of braille-reading musicians. The work of dedicated individual transcribers therefore remains vital. Decades ago these braillists, often serving as volunteers, laboriously punched out the music, dot by dot, on braille frames called slates. This method yielded only one copy at a time. The process became faster and more efficient as music braillists learned to use the Perkins brailier, a manual typewriter with one key for each of the six dots of the braille cell. A still greater advance was the computer, which enables music braillists to transcribe, correct, duplicate, and disseminate their work. These transcriptions, too, are being incorporated into the permanent archives at the Library of Congress and elsewhere.

The present book was prepared as a manual that the Library of Congress has successfully used in teaching and certifying braille music transcribers. Compiled by Mary Turner De Garmo, the first edition was issued in 1971. Revised by a team under the direction of Dr. Lawrence R. Smith, the second edition was issued in 2005. Studying that second edition, dozens of transcribers have been certified: some in their own homes, some in the special-education offices of school districts, and some as incarcerated members of prison braille groups.

Yet the need for braille music transcribers continues to grow, whether their work is requested by individuals or commissioned by such organizations as the Library of Congress. The present third edition of the De Garmo textbook has therefore been prepared, incorporating Unified English Braille and the 2015 BANA music code (MBC-2015). The principal authors of this revision are Christina Davidson (an expert music braillist and print music copyist) and Karen Gearreald (an enthusiastic user of braille music and an experienced teacher of sighted and blind adults).

Procedures for the Course

If you enroll as a student of braille music transcription, the Library of Congress will assign an instructor to you. You will then communicate directly with the instructor. Besides evaluating your answers or exercises for each chapter of the textbook, your instructor will be available to answer your questions about braille music in general or about specific aspects of the chapters. As you proceed through each chapter, remember that accuracy is even more important in music braille than in literary braille. If a word is misspelled or incorrectly typed in literary braille, the braille reader may be able to guess the word from the context; but in an unfamiliar piece of music, the braille reader is totally dependent on the transcriber for pitches, note values, and all other details.

If your work for a chapter contains more than two crucial errors, your instructor will ask you to resubmit all or part of the lesson. A total of three

attempts is permissible for each lesson. If you fall short of this standard, you will be withdrawn from the course. After a waiting period of at least three months, you will have one opportunity to re-enroll.

As you work your way through the course, you must use MBC-2015 to supplement and complement what you are learning from the textbook. The tables, sections, and indexes of the code will greatly facilitate your learning and understanding. In addition, you will always need to consult dictionaries, music theory textbooks, and other reference books, as well as current guidance on the rules and formats of braille for literary and textbook transcriptions.

This course assumes that you understand the general principles of music notation: the seven tones of the music scale; rhythmic values of notes; pitches in the treble and bass clefs; key signatures and time signatures; basic musical terminology; and expression marks such as staccato, accent, and fermata. For the later chapters of the textbook, you will work with various advanced aspects of such matters as chords, intervals, ornamentation, repetition, vocal syllabication, and orchestral notation.

From the beginning of the course, form the habit of studying each lesson so carefully that you take the time to investigate any musical term or concept that you do not clearly comprehend. If you cannot find the answer by using your own printed, online, or personal resources, you may certainly ask your instructor for help. However, you will better remember and appreciate what you discover through your own investigations.

Most chapters of this textbook contain self-study exercises called drills. Instead of allowing yourself to rush through a chapter as you may be tempted to do, please take the time to transcribe and check each drill with the utmost care. The solutions for the drills are shown at the end of each chapter.

After you complete all the chapters of the textbook, your instructor will assign review work to you and will then send you the print manuscript for your final exam. Usually the exam is a standard piece of music that you will be asked to transcribe in full format, including preliminary pages, just as you would transcribe a request from a client. Upon successful completion of the exam, you will receive your official certificate from the Library of Congress.

There is no time limit for completing the braille music transcription course. A few students have successfully finished within months, but a total time of one to two years is more common. As far as your schedule permits, regular study is the key to success. The same principle, of course, holds true in learning a foreign language, studying a musical instrument, achieving

success in a sport, or developing any other skill. Several relatively short sessions of study and practice per week are far more effective than an occasional agonizing marathon.

As you prepare to begin submitting your assignments, be sure that you have access to MBC-2015 in either hard-copy or downloaded form. Take the time now to familiarize yourself with the organization of the code. Please also read sections 1.1 through 1.17. Again, welcome to the ever-challenging world of braille music!

Questions

Answer the following questions in correct literary braille and submit to your instructor by email. Save the file in "brf" format, which is the universal format for braille files. A variety of braille software programs and embossers can accommodate this format, which you will use when you submit music transcriptions to individual clients, to colleges and universities, and to the Music Section of the Library of Congress, NLS. Review your braille software program for details on saving a file in "brf" format.

1. Describe your musical background.
2. What initially motivated you to learn literary braille? How long have you been certified as a literary transcriber? Describe your experiences as a literary brailist.
3. What has motivated you to study braille music? Upon achieving your certification, how do you plan to use your new skills? If you have already worked with music braille, please describe those experiences, too.
4. In beginning to familiarize yourself with MBC-2015, what have you discovered so far?
5. Mention any other thoughts or questions that this chapter may have brought to your mind.