Chapter 27

Vocal Music with Chord Symbols

When the printed music includes chord symbols, along with the lyrics and melody for a vocal solo, the line-by-line format is expanded to three-line parallel—sometimes called “short-form scoring.”

The words, uncontracted, appear in the top line beginning at the left margin. The second line is used for the chords, which are carefully aligned with the words so that the braille reader will know how the chords relate to the syllables. Run-overs of the word line or the chord line are not allowed. The notes of the melody are in the third line, indented to cell 3. Run-overs of this music line are permissible and start in cell 5.

27.1 Chord Symbols

Chord symbols are very common in popular, jazz, and folk music. These symbols consist of letters, numbers, accidentals, and other printed characters. The characters of the chord symbol are brailled horizontally and follow the order in print. If numbers in the symbol are arranged vertically in the printed score, they are brailled horizontally from lowest to highest.

Chord symbols are transcribed in uncontracted braille, without periods, grade 1 indicators, or internal spaces. Numeric indicators are used for the numbers. The braille music symbols for accidentals are used where the print symbols appear. Letters are capitalized as in print. The slash and parentheses in chord symbols are considered “special” and do not follow the standard UEB procedure.

Example 27.1.1

(a) Common Signs used in Chord Symbols

See MBC-2015, Table 23 for other signs

Accidentals \( \uparrow \) \( \downarrow \) \( \downarrow \) \( \uparrow \) Circle (diminished) \( \uparrow \)
Plus sign \( \uparrow \) NC or N.C. “No chord” \( \uparrow \)
Minus sign \( \uparrow \) Tacet or Tacet. \( \uparrow \)
Slash \( \uparrow \) Parentheses \( \uparrow \)

(b) Examples of Chord Symbols

G7 \( \uparrow \) Fdim \( \uparrow \) G-9 \( \uparrow \)
D6 \( \uparrow \) Csus \( \uparrow \) Emaj7 \( \uparrow \)
Nonstandard uses of printed characters in chord symbols are usually explained in the publisher’s accompanying text. Include these explanations in the transcriber’s notes of the braille transcription. The transcriber’s notes must also explain any braille symbols which the transcriber has devised as equivalents for unusual printed symbols.

### 27.2 Alignment of Chord Symbols Below the Lyrics

The alignment of each chord symbol depends on whether the chord is to be sounded before, with, during, or after the word or syllable. Word repeat symbols in the word line, as well as apostrophes and all other punctuation, are disregarded in the alignment.

The chord symbols below the word line may follow one another successively, without intervening spaces. The exception is a chord symbol that contains a second capital letter that represents a note name. In this case, the chord symbol must be followed by a space so that the second letter will not be misread as part of the next chord.

**Example 27.2.1**

Because of the length of the chord symbols, extra spaces must sometimes be left between the words or syllables of the word line. When a word must be divided between syllables to accommodate the length of a chord symbol, a hyphen and any necessary spaces are inserted at the point where the word is divided.

Where four or more blank cells must be left between words, or after the hyphen between syllables, a series of two or more dots is inserted in the word line, with a blank cell before and after the series.
Example 27.2.2

\begin{align*}
\text{B}^b, \text{Gm}^7, \text{Cm} & \quad \text{C}^7, \text{C}^\sharp \text{dim}^7, \text{Dm} \\
\text{Roses are red, Violets are blue;} \\
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{B}^b, \text{Gm}^7, \text{Cm} & \quad \text{C}^7, \text{C}^\sharp \text{dim}^7, \text{Dm} \\
\text{Roses are red; Violets are blue;} \\
\end{align*}

27.3 Transcriber’s Notes Concerning Alignment of Chord Symbols

The following explanatory paragraphs must be included on the transcriber’s notes page to explain the relationship between the words and the chord symbols in the braille score. These paragraphs are an excellent summary of the alignment procedure. Details of each alignment will be presented and illustrated in this chapter.

- The chord symbols in this song (or songs, or collection) relate to the words; the position of the initial capital sign in each chord symbol determines whether the chord is played before, with, during, or after the related word or syllable.
- Punctuation marks and repetition signs in the word line have no bearing on the relative position of the initial sign of a chord. When a word is capitalized, the braille capital sign is considered the first character of the word.
- The abnormal appearance and spacing of some words are made necessary by the amount of space required for the correct placement of each chord symbol.

(Some of these paragraphs on alignment can be omitted if not applicable)

- If the chord is sounded before the syllable, its initial capital sign is located two spaces to the left in the line below the initial character of the syllable.
- If the chord is sounded with the syllable, its initial capital sign is vertically aligned below the initial character of the syllable.
- If the chord is sounded during the syllable, its initial capital sign is preceded by a hyphen; when it is the first chord sounded during the syllable, the hyphen is aligned below the initial character of the syllable.
- If the chord is sounded after the syllable is released, its initial capital sign is located one space to the right in the line below the final letter of the syllable.
27.4 Chord Sounded Before Syllable

When the chord is sounded before the word or syllable, the initial capital sign of the chord is brailled two spaces to the left in the line below the initial character of the word. If the word or syllable begins the word line and would therefore be expected to start at the margin, sometimes the preceding parallel can be conveniently shortened or lengthened so that the word no longer appears at the left margin.

If the word line begins with a measure number, there will be space below the word line for the proper alignment of the chord. If a measure number is not necessary or appropriate at that point in the score, two cells of dots 36—followed by one blank cell—are placed at the margin of the word line to provide the necessary spaces for the alignment.

Example 27.4.1

```plaintext

\[ \begin{array}{cccc}
C^7 & F^7 & B^b & Cm \\
\end{array} \]

Ros- ses are red.
```

27.5 Chord Sounded With Syllable

When the chord and the related word or syllable begin simultaneously, the initial capital sign of the chord symbol is aligned below the initial character of the syllable, whether that character is a capital sign or a letter. This is the simplest and most common kind of alignment.

Example 27.5.1

```plaintext

\[ \begin{array}{cccc}
C & \text{Am} & F & G \\
\end{array} \]

His name was Sam and he said: "How are you to-day?"
```

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27.6 Chord Sounded During Syllable

When a chord begins after the syllable has started, the alignment factor is a hyphen. The hyphen is brailled immediately before the first character of the chord symbol. This hyphen is vertically aligned with the first character of the word or syllable.

Special care is required when the chord symbol begins with a hyphen prefix. The immediately following word or syllable in the word line must be aligned at least two spaces to the right of the hyphen so that the new word or syllable will not become accidentally associated with the chord.

When successive chords are sounded during a single syllable, they are connected by hyphens, unspaced, including a chord symbol that contains a second capital letter that represents a note name.

Example 27.6.1

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Roses are red, Violets are}
\end{align*}
\]

27.7 Chord Sounded After Syllable

When the chord is sounded after the word or syllable has ended, the initial capital sign of the chord symbol is aligned one space to the right of the last letter of the word or syllable or aligned with a punctuation symbol at the end of the word or syllable.

Example 27.7.1

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{down by the riverside gonna study war no more.}
\end{align*}
\]
27.8 Word Repetition With Chord Symbols

The device for repeating a word or phrase may be used in the word line if the word or phrase and all repetitions are to be entirely sung within the duration of one chord. The repeat device may also be used if the chord changes are identical within all iterations of the word or phrase. If there are any differences in the associated chord or chords, the repeat device must not be used—all iterations of the word or phrase must be brailled out.

Example 27.8.1

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
have fun, fun, fun! Fun, fun, fun!
```

27.9 Parallel Without Chord Changes

When the same chord continues for a long time, there may be no new chord symbol in a parallel. In that case, the continuing chord symbol from the previous parallel is restated in word signs at the beginning of the chord line.

Example 27.9.1

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>D7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
I remember the night and the stars in the sky, And moon-light as bright as a
```

27.10 Chords in Interludes or Introductions

For passages where there are no lyrics, the expression “no words”—italicized or fully capitalized—is brailled in the margin of the word line. The chord symbols are brailled in the chord line, and the appropriate rests are brailled in the music line to show that the voice is resting.
No attempt is made to show the number of beats or measures for each chord symbol. The chord symbols are brailled successively, unspaced, except that (as previously noted in section 27.2 of this chapter) a blank cell must be left after a chord symbol which contains a second capital letter that represents a note name.

Example 27.10.1

When the chord changes in the passage are short enough to allow for the beginning of the following lyrics, the word line may begin with a measure number or a series of dots at the margin. When a measure number is used in this situation, the gap between the measure number and the beginning of the lyrics is filled by a series of dots. The series is preceded and followed by a space. (See Examples 27.4.1 and 27.11.1).

27.11 Strophic Songs with Chords

In strophic songs, only the first verse is brailled with chord symbols and melody. At the end of the music, the additional verses are brailled in paragraph form as shown in the previous chapter.

Section 36.5 of MBC-2015 states that all additional verses are brailled in a two-line parallel consisting of words and chords, but this is problematic for several reasons. The print will sometimes show a second verse printed beneath the first verse, and the chords are therefore easy to align with the text in a two-line parallel. But if the print shows additional verses in text-only paragraphs beneath the music, transcribers should not be required to add the chord symbols.

For most strophic songs, braille readers memorize the first verse, the chords, and the basic structure of the song. Showing the second verse with chords can be a helpful reminder. Showing other verses with chords becomes unnecessary, since all that is needed is the text. If additional verses are very different, the print publisher will usually write out the music and the transcription would follow the print.
Example 27.11.1

D\(^9\) G\(^7\) C F G D\(^9\) G\(^7\) C

I had a cat named Roo-ve-r, and Roo-ve-r said "Me-ow."
I had a dog named To-ro, and To-ro said "Bow-wow."

The two-line format for second verses, described above, can also be used when the lyrics and chord symbols are printed without a melody. In this case, each line of lyrics can begin at the left margin.

Example 27.11.2

Dm F D7 C A7 D7 G7 C
For it’s one, two, three strikes, “You’re out!” At the old ball game.

27.12 Popularity and Practicality of Short-Form Scoring

Short-form scoring is a compact way to convey a large amount of musical information. Because this abbreviated kind of notation is so useful, various braille systems of short-form scoring have been devised, with varying degrees of success. The system presented in this chapter has proved to be popular, understandable, and enduring, though at first the many rules of alignment may perplex and bewilder the music brailist and the braille reader.
Since 1978, the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), has used this system of short-form scoring for the “popular music lead sheets,” which are produced several times per year. These lead sheets have grown into a substantial collection of well over a hundred issues, each containing four to six songs.

The same system is used for “fakebooks” and other anthologies of popular music from various eras or by individual composers. The system is also workable for hymns and folk songs. Braille-reading singers, guitarists, and keyboardists are constantly asking for more music in this format.

Don’t be overwhelmed or discouraged by the many rules and nuances of the alignment procedure. The more you practice brailling in this format, the more comfortable you will become, particularly as you see how the format applies to many different songs. Whenever you are brailling a chord symbol, be sure that you have determined whether it is sounded before, with, during, or after the affected syllable. If that determination is correct, everything else can fall into its proper place.

**Drills for Chapter 27**

*(Correct transcriptions of these drills are at the end of this chapter)*

**Drill 27.1**

**Moderate ballad**

Drill 27.2
Drill 27.3

**Slow waltz**

G            Em       C#°7                 D  D7
Whistle a tune to brighten up the day,
Em           C        G/D          D7                      G
Whistle a merry melody to drive the blues away.

Drill 27.4

**Andante**

A              E7
Once up-on a time, the story goes, an angel fell down from the sky;
A              D          E7        A
'Twas up-on a day, the legend has it, when the king was riding by.

Drill 27.5

G    Em    C#°7    D  D7
Whistle a tune to brighten up the day,
Em    C      G/D    D7        G
Whistle a merry melody to drive the blues away.
Exercises for Chapter 27
(Submit the following exercises to your instructor in BRF file format)

Exercise 27.1

Not too fast

\[
\begin{align*}
A^b &\quad Fm &\quad 3 &\quad D^b &\quad B^b m &\quad A^b &\quad A^b 7 \\
[A^b] &\quad Fm &\quad 3 &\quad D^b &\quad B^b m &\quad A^b &\quad A^b 7 \\
\text{If____ I could spend all my days with you,} & & & & & & \\
\text{Life____ would be sweet as it can be._______} & & & & & & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Exercise 27.2

Moderato

\[
\begin{align*}
F &\quad F/A &\quad Cm^7 &\quad F/C^7 &\quad C^7 &\quad F \\
F &\quad F/A &\quad Cm^7 &\quad F/C^7 &\quad C^7 &\quad F \\
\text{I dream of Jea-nie with the light brown hair,} &\quad \text{Borne, like a vapor,} &\quad \text{on the summer air:} &\quad \text{I see her tripping where the bright streams play,} &\quad &\quad \\
\text{Hap-py as the daisies that dance on her way.} &\quad &\quad &\quad &\quad \\
\end{align*}
\]

Exercise 27.3

\[
\begin{align*}
D &\quad G/D &\quad D &\quad A^7 \\
\text{Way down upon the Swanee River, Far, far a-way,} & & & & & \\
D &\quad G &\quad D &\quad A^7 \\
\text{There's where my heart is turning ever,} & & & & & \\
D/A &\quad A^7 &\quad D &\quad A^7 \\
\text{There's where the old folks stay.} & & & & & \\
\end{align*}
\]
Exercise 27.4

Gioioso

Ah! to be a vagabond, to roam the countryside.

without a care or a fear! Ah! to take the world as it comes and goes, and never look to the rear!

Exercise 27.5

1. Robin Redbreast sang to the wiggle-worm:
2. Bucky Bluejay sang to the butterfly:

"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle diddle diddle dum dee day."

3. Card'nal Redbird sang to the ladybug:
"Fiddle diddle dee, diddle diddle diddle dum dee day."
Correct transcriptions of the Drills for Chapter 27

DRILL #85:
MODERATE BALLAD MOUTH.
Maiden is a word that rhymes with
morn. Turn the note.

DRILL #86:
Maiden is a word that
rhymes with love.

DRILL #87:
Billy Gilley has a silly little
filly. Turn off.

DRILL #88:
Billy Gilley's little filly has no name.

DRILL #89:
SLOW WALTZ: BECOME.
We'll get up and get you in a car.
We'll turn it on.
We'll get up and get you in an hour.
We'll turn it on.

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Drills for Chapter 27 (cont.)

1. **Drill 1: Over You, Over You**
   - Over you, over you, over you, over you!
   - Just as I am, without you I am not.
   - I can do without you by nor:
   - But I am in love with you.

2. **Drill 2: I'll Be Over You**
   - I'll be over you in a little while.
   - Fresh will be over you in a small:
   - We'll be over you.
   - Under you, under you, under you, under you, under you, under you, under you, and here.

3. **Drill 3: Once Upon a Time**
   - Once upon a time, the story goes:
   - In a land far, far away.
   - An angel fell down from the sky:
   - And saved the day.

4. **Drill 4: When the King Was Riding**
   - When the king was riding in:
   - He saw:

5. **Drill 5: Whistle a Tune**
   - Whistle a tune to brighten up the day.
   - He saw:
   - Whistle a merry melody to drive
   - The blues away.