

The purpose of this project is to get you started with score reading. It covers essential knowledge and helps you match the sounds you hear with the written patterns. You'll practise following two parts at the same time. No previous knowledge is assumed so no one is stuck. If you know stuff already, you can skip the bits you don't need.

It's impossible to estimate how long it will take any individual to do the whole project. It depends on what you know and can do already, how tricky you find it and how thorough you want to be.

The project is divided into three sections: Getting the Knowledge, Getting the Skill and Add Ons. There are 17 pdf sheets to download altogether, each with numbered, but you may not need them all. You could work entirely on the screen, often you are looking at more than one sheet though, or the video, so print outs would be easier.

There are plenty of performances on line. The most useful one for us goes steadily and you can see the player's hands. It's a playing tutorial – we only need the start. Copy and paste the link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqeDo8e1D0U#https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqeDo8e1D0U>

Getting the Knowledge	It's useful and empowering to recognise, understand and name music notation symbols. When you are learning on your own this knowledge is critical so we can communicate about the music.
101.2	The sheet music
101.3	If you already know about the symbols, do this quiz first to find out if you need to do the other worksheets. If you don't, do it at the end.
101.4A 101.4B	<u>Lines and Symbols needed for navigating the Sheet Music</u> Answer the questions in box 1 on 101.4A. Find the answers in box 2 on 101.4B, and tackle the questions. The answers to those are in box 3 on 101.4A. Carry on alternating between the two worksheets.
101.5A 101.5B	<u>Marks before, above and below the notes that you can ignore at the moment.</u> These 2 worksheets operate like the previous pair.
101.6A 101.6B	<u>The Notes!</u> You'll be used to using the pairs of worksheets now.
101.7	Check your answers to see whether you need to do any of the worksheets, or look at any bits again

Getting the Skill	Practise following the music
101.8	Get the music in your ears and follow each line separately
101.9	Learn how to follow both lines together

Applying the Skill	Combine eye and ear to notice and understand more
101.10	Two activities to practise applying your skill
101.11	Music copy to go with the first activity in 101.10
101.12	Music copy to go with the second activity in 101.10

101.13	Background to the Music
101.14	The Original Music

Score Reading 101.2 Musette in D major

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Musette in D major". The score is written for piano and consists of seven systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The piece begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the first system, which then transitions to mezzo-forte (*mf*) in the second system. The third system starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fourth system features a melodic line in the treble clef with a slur over measures 13-14. The fifth system continues with a slur over measures 17-18. The sixth system returns to a forte (*f*) dynamic, and the seventh system concludes with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score includes measure numbers 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, and 25, indicating the start of each system. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the seventh system.

If you feel you know next to nothing about music notation, skip this and go straight onto worksheets 101.4A and 101.4B. You can do this later to check your learning.

If you know a lot, or even a bit, tackle this quiz. Check your answers on worksheet 101.7, and you'll know then whether you need to look at any of the materials in between or are too good to go.

Print out your copy of the music. 101.2. The Quiz asks you questions about the marks on the sheet. You aren't asked to sing or play the music.

1	How many staves are there on the page?	
2	How many times do you play systems 1 and 2?	
3	How many notes in the bass clef part in bar 1?	
4	How many treble clefs are there on the page?	
5	Half way down the page there's a "13". What's that for?	
6	How many sharps are there in the key signature?	
7	Which piece of information only comes at the start of the piece?	
8	The first notes on the first 2 staves of music are the highest and lowest in the piece. Right or wrong?	
9	The two notes in Q.8 have special extra lines drawn for them. What are those lines called?	
10	Which bar has one accidental written in it?	
11	Which two bars have natural signs in them?	
12	There's a dynamic sign at the beginning. What? What does it mean?	
13	Bar 9 has three different expression marks. What are they and what does each tell you?	
14	The last note in the piece has a different expression mark. What's that and what does it tell you?	
15	The last note in bar 13 has a special curve below it. What's that called and what it is doing?	
16	Describe the pitch of the musical pattern in bar 1, top part.	
17	Describe the rhythm of the musical pattern in bar 1, top part	
18	The whole piece uses notes with three different values or durations. Which three notes are these from longest to shortest?	
19	How many beats are there in a bar in this piece?	
20	In which two respects are both parts in bars 3 and 4 identical?	

Lines and Symbols needed for Navigating the Sheet Music

1. The notes are the symbols made out of blobs and sticks.

The notes are written on patterns of 5 horizontal lines. What are these called?

There are lots of vertical lines crossing the horizontal patterns. What are they?

Find the answers on Sheet **101.4B** in the box labelled **2**.

3. Joined staves are called **systems**. In this piece there are just 2 staves in each system.

That's because it's written for the keyboard and there's one staff for each hand. In a piece written for an orchestra or band there will be lots of staves in each system.

The bits of staff between the bar lines are **bars**.

Once you are comfortable with staves, systems and bars, we can communicate about the geography of the music sheet. At the beginning of each system, apart from the first, there's a little number – 5, 9, 13 etc. Those are **bar numbers**. There are 4 bars in the first system, so the first bar on the second system is bar 5.

What's the number of the first bar in the fourth system down?

What's the number of the last bar in the piece?

5. The two vertical lines and two dots are called a **repeat mark**. It is really common to play a chunk of music twice, and it's more efficient to write it once and say “do it again”.

See how the dots at the beginning of bar 9 face to the right, and the ones at the end face left, embracing the bit of music to be repeated. The ones in bar 9 alert you – “you're going to be coming back to this place in a bit”. The ones at the end say “find that earlier place and go from there again”.

At the end of the second system, there's a repeat mark saying “go back and do it again”.

But there's no earlier repeat mark. This is because there is a convention that if you are going from the beginning again, you don't need to put in a repeat mark – it's taken as assumed.

When you play the piece with both repeats, how many bars will you play altogether?

7. The squiggly shapes are **clefs**. The one on the upper staff is the **treble clef**. The one on the lower is the **bass clef**. For getting started with score reading, all you need to know is that they give the player information about which notes to play, and that the treble clef notes are higher than the bass clef ones.

The hash tag symbols are **sharp** signs. When they are at the start of a system, they are called the **key signature**. As with the clefs, you don't need to know more about them at this stage. They are information for the player about the notes in the piece.

Think of a piano keyboard. The lowest notes are on the left. Which hand plays the treble clef staff?

At the start of the piece, there are numbers that look like a fraction. What's that?

Lines and Symbols needed for Navigating the Sheet Music

2. The pattern of 5 horizontal lines is called a **stave** or **staff**. In the UK people most often call it a stave. But we talk about staff notation – music that is written down on the 5 line pattern. The stave is like a graph. Higher sounding notes are written higher up the graph.

Some notes are too high or low to fit onto the stave. They have an extra little bit of line written in for them. The very first note on the top stave needs one of these. It is called a **leger line**. 5 lines seem optimal for people to be able to navigate, and provide space for most of the notes one needs.

The vertical lines are called **bar lines**. They help the music reader keep their place. You don't hear them and they don't interrupt the flow of the music.

*The bar lines join two staves together. What's the name for joined staves?
What are the bits of stave between the bar lines called?*

Go back to sheet 101.4A for the answers and carry on swopping.

4. The first bar in the fourth system down is number 13.
The last bar in the piece is number 28

At the end of the second system, and the end of the piece there are two vertical lines, one heavy, one light, and two dots. There's a mirror image of this at the start of bar 9. What is this arrangement of lines and dots called?

6. There are 56 bars to play if you obey the repeat marks. The first 8 bars are played twice, and then the second lot of 20 bars are played twice.

While we're on vertical lines, look at the vertical bracket right at the start of each system. It just clarifies for the music reader that both staves are played by one instrument.

While you are looking at the start of each system, what are the squiggly shapes? The one on the upper stave is different from the one on the lower.

And then there are two hash tag symbols. What are they?

8. The **right hand** is going to be playing the higher notes, which are on the treble clef stave.

The pair of numbers are the **time signature**. They tell the player about the beats in each bar – how many there are and what type of note they are. Don't think of them as being like a fraction – you'll get muddled later. The convention is that they are written one above the other.

Unlike key signatures, time signatures help the beginner score reader. It is really helpful to feel and often count the beat as you follow the music.

Marks before, above and below the notes that you can ignore at the moment – but you need to know which they are so you know what isn't so important!

1. You know that the hash-like symbols at the beginning are sharps in the key signature. *Look at bar 13. There's a sharp symbol in front of the second note. What is an additional sharp like that called?*

There's another extra symbol before the fourth note in the same bar. What is that?

3. The left hand doesn't have any accidentals to play. Bar 18 has a sharp and a natural.

Music notation uses dots quite a lot, with different meanings in different contexts. You've already met the pair of dots that is part of a repeat mark.

Look at the dots in bar 1, left hand. There is one for each note, under the blob of each note. What do they tell the player?

Which two bars in the RH have dots above all 4 notes?

What happens to the position of the dots in the left hand of bar 9?

The dot means the same whether it is above or below the blob. Why do you think it is sometimes above and sometimes below?

There is another pair of dots on each system. Where?

5. This line tells the player to hold the note for its full length. It's called a **tenuto** mark – meaning “holding”.

There are curvy lines above or below the notes. They join two or more notes without actually touching the blobs.

This piece has two of three types of curvy line used in music notation: ties, slurs and phrase marks.

Have a go at identifying the two types in the piece. One is in bar 3. The other is from the last note in bar 13 to the first in bar 14 in the top part.

7. *f* and *mf* tell the player how loudly to play. *f* stands for “forte” which means strong – ie loud. *m* stands for “mezzo” or half, so *mf* means half loud. We usually say moderately loud. Nothing in this piece is to be played quietly. That would be indicated by *p*, (piano) which means “soft”. We use the term **dynamics** for the loudness and quietness of the music, so these letters are **dynamic marks**.

You've dealt with all the symbols and marks on the music apart from the notes now. If there are any other marks on your sheet, they must be crumbs or blots.

Marks before, above and below the notes that you can ignore at the moment

2. A sharp symbol that isn't part of a key signature is called an **accidental**. The symbol before the fourth note is another accidental. It is a **natural** sign.

These sharps and naturals – and flats too (there aren't any of those in this piece) tell the player which note to play. The five lines of the stave, and the six spaces between, below and above them give 11 positions where notes can be written. But there are lots more notes than that. Rather than having a stave with numerous lines, we use the same line or space for the natural, sharp and flat versions of a note, and use the symbols to say which version you have to play.

*Does the left hand have any accidentals to play?
Which two accidentals has bar 18 got?*

4. These dots tell the player to make the notes **staccato**. That means make them detached from each other.

Bars 11 and 18 have staccato dots above all their 4 notes in the right hand. There are 4 notes in each of the bars 13 – 16, but they don't have staccato dots.

In bar 9 the dots in the left hand part are written above the notes.

The dot goes the opposite side from the note's stick. If the stick goes down the dot is above. This keeps the dot away from the stick.

Look carefully at the bass clef at the very start of each left hand stave. There are two dots after the curly pattern. They are part of the clef symbol.

*You know about staccato dots. What about the line below the last note in the right hand?
What is that?*

6. The example in bar 3 is a **slur**. The one connecting the last note in bar 13 to the first in 14 is a **tie**. There are no examples of **phrase marks** in this piece.

Ties are always between repetitions of the same note. They tell the player to join the second note to the first – so you don't hear the start of the second note.

Slurs link two or more adjacent notes. They tell the player to move very smoothly between the notes. The technical term for this is **legato**.

There's a very long slur in the right hand linking all the notes in bars 13 and 14. And again in bars 15 and 16.

*All that's left before getting onto the notes are the bits of text: *f* and *mf*. What are these and what do they mean?*

The Notes!

1. If you were having to play or sing the piece you'd have to know about each note. For score reading, you follow the note patterns. The most obvious pattern is the **pitch** – that's the up and down of the music. The higher the note, the further up the staff it is.

Look at the right hand in bar 1. Which direction do the notes go in?

Look at the bar 9, right hand, first three notes. Up or down?

3. In bar 3 the notes move by step – up and then down again. In bar 11 they are jumpy. The right hand goes high low high low, while the left hand goes low high low high.

The other information the notes give the music reader is how long they are – their relative **duration** or **value**. Some notes stand alone, others are joined together – some by one line, others by two. This is the information that tells music readers how long to make them.

There's a basic rule of thumb: the more ink needed to write or print a note the shorter it is. The longest type of note in this piece is one represented by a blob and a stick. There is an example at the very start in the right hand. *What's that type of note called?*

5. The 4 notes in the left hand of bar 1 are **quavers**.

Remember about the time signature? The numbers that look like a fraction?

The lower number represents the type of beat. In this case it is 4, and that represents a crotchet. So the beat is a crotchet. The upper number tells you how many beats there are in a bar – 2 in this case. There aren't any bars made out of two crotchet notes, but all the bars add up to 2 crotchet beats.

Look at that first bar, and this time take notice of both the right and left hand. The notes are aligned vertically – two notes directly in line with each other sound at the same time.

How many quavers does the left hand play while the right hand has a crotchet?

After the right hand has played a crotchet, it has to do 4 notes joined by 2 beams. What are they?

7. In bar three, beat 1 is made out of two semiquavers and then a quaver.

Bars 13 – 16 are made entirely out of quavers in both hands.

In bar 17 the right hand plays semiquavers, grouped into two sets of 4 to help the reader see the two beats.

There is one bar where there are four semiquavers on beat 1, and two quavers on beat 2. Which – and in which hand?

The left hand has a crotchet to play on beat 1 in just one bar. Which?

In most of the piece the two hands play different rhythms. What happens in bars 3 and 4?

The Notes!

2. In the right hand the notes go down in bar 1, and the first three notes in bar 9 go up.

It's also helpful to be able to see whether the pitch patterns are by step or jumpy. The notes you've looked at in bar 1, right hand go down by step. Look at what the left hand is doing – that's really jumpy, from very low to the middle of the stave and again.

In bar 3, both hands, do the notes move by step or are they jumpy?

In bar 11, both hands, do the notes move by step or are they jumpy?

4. A note that is just a blob and a stick is a **crotchet**. There aren't many of them in this piece. Much more frequent are pairs of notes, each with a blob and a stick, joined together by a single line or **beam**. (Think of roofs not smiles). Bar one in the left hand has two pairs of them. *What are they called?*

6. In bar 1 the left hand plays 2 quavers while the right hand plays a crotchet. In music, quavers are half the length of crotchets.

The 4 notes joined by 2 beams are **semiquavers**. 4 semiquavers last as long as 2 quavers or 1 crotchet.

The music reader depends on seeing easily where the beats are so the beams don't cross the beats. You know that each bar begins with beat 1, and the way the notes are grouped means you can see where beat 2 starts.

Look at bar 3 – either hand. What are the values of the three notes on beat 1?

Which set of 4 bars are entirely made out of quavers in both hands?

Which bar has only semiquavers in the right hand, and why are they written as two groups of 4?

8. Bar 12 has 4 semiquavers followed by 2 quavers in the right hand.

The left hand plays a crotchet on the first beat of bar 19.

In bars 3 and 4 the two hands play the same rhythm. They actually also play the same notes an **octave** (eight notes) apart.

You've looked at the music a lot now, checked out a lot of terminology and know which symbols are most significant when you are starting out on score reading.

It's going to be the patterns, of rhythm and pitch, that matter most. It's patterns that make up the musical fabric, and they rarely come just once. Look at bar 1. The same pattern (both hands) comes 7 times more. Look for other patterns that come more than once. They may be identical or similar. You'll hear them when you start listening to the music.

If you like testing yourself do the quiz. That's sheet 101.3. If not, it's time to start learning how to score read.

Check your answers and follow up any information that eludes you in the set of Worksheets explaining all of this – 101.4A – 101.6B.

To enjoy the score reading you do need to have got hold of this knowledge as well as possible.

Do worksheets 4A and 4B if you aren't sure about questions 1 – 9	
1	14
2	twice
3	4
4	7
5	it tells you that bar is bar 13.
6	2
7	time signature
8	right
9	leger lines
The next 6 questions are covered in worksheets 5a and 5B	
10	17
11	13 and 15
12	<i>f</i> it stands for forte, which means strong or loud
13	Staccato dots in the bottom part – detach the notes. Slurs over each set of 3 notes in the top part – play the notes smoothly. <i>mf</i> = mezzo or moderately loud
14	It's the little horizontal line, a tenuto mark. The opposite of staccato, hold the note for its full length.
15	It's a tie, joining the two notes visually and in sound.
You'll find the remaining information covered in worksheets 6A and 6B	
16	It goes down 5 notes
17	There's a crotchet then 4 semiquavers / a longer note and then 4 quicker notes
18	Crotchets, quavers, semiquavers
19	There are 2 beats in a bar
20	Rhythm and pitch

Well done for knowing all of this – whether you needed to use the worksheets or not. You are ready to score read! 101.8 is next!

1. Get the music in your ears. Don't look at the music sheet. Our piece is just the first minute and a half or so of the video. It's the introduction to a tutorial on how to play it. Do listen to the whole thing if you want, but our materials only need the first bit.

Repeat any activities as much as you want or need.

Activity 1a. Just listen to the music so you get the sound of the music into your ears.

Activity 1b. Listen again and this time tap or clap along with the music, keeping the beat. You'll probably find that you can find both a quick beat – at the speed of a jog, and one that's twice as slow. Don't worry about which is the “right” beat, and don't worry if you can't find both. It's good to find one!

Activity 1c. This time watch the hands while you are listening. Hear that the right hand plays the higher sounding notes. Notice that both hands are busy all the time, but that just one finger in each hand is playing a note at any one time. You might be able to see that the player mainly presses on the white notes, but sometimes plays a black one.

2. Follow each line separately. Now you need the music sheet. Ideally have it on a table or something you can rest on. Everyone starts to learn to score read by pointing at the notes with a finger or pencil.

Activity 2a. Follow the right hand part through the whole piece. That means you are only looking at the upper line of each system. Prepare for the repeats by checking you can see the repeat marks. Highlight them if necessary .

Have your finger poised over the first note and press play. Look at the score, not the screen and track the notes as they happen, concentrating on the upper part.

You'll be following longer lasting and quicker notes, highs and lows, ups and downs.

Keep practising until you are completely in time with the player – you need to get to that point before you can get more from the activity. You'll probably find as you go on working on it that you remember where particular bits come. Abandon the finger or pencil, just scan the score in time with the music.

Activity 2b. Follow the left hand part. It's harder follow than the right – we all tune in to the higher notes more easily – that's why the tune is so often at the top. Put your finger on the first note of the lower stave, and use the score to help you hear those low notes. Practise following the left hand part until you can keep in time with the music all the way through.

3. Challenge Yourself

If you listen to “I'm sorry I Haven't a Clue”, you'll know this one! Start the video so you hear the start of the music, then turn down the volume for a bit. Turn it up and find where you are on the score. (Don't worry if the repeats mess you up a bit. The main thing is, can you find a place in the music where the score matches the sound?)

Once you can follow each line confidently, you are ready to go onto 101.9 – both hands together!

Score Reading 101.9 Musette in D major Getting the Skill: Both Hands Together

1. Prepare for following both staves together without listening to the music

Look at the four notes in bar 1 of the left hand.

Remember how they sound – bomp bomp bomp bomp

Notice how often that pattern happens in the left hand, not always on exactly the same notes, but always low, high, low, high (and with those little dots, staccato too).

When you are reading a score you need to focus on the patterns rather than the individual notes. That's just like when we read words – we don't read each letter, and rarely do we stare at just one word. Try to make the shift now to reading that left hand first bar as a pattern, a single unit. This simplifies the amount of information you have to notice.

Look at all the bars where that unit comes – it's most of them.

Tap out the pattern on your thighs or on the table – L R L R.

Now look at the first two bars. You know how the tune goes by now. Choose a note that's comfy for you and sing the first two bars, right hand part.

Finally, the big one! Tap the left hand part with your hands and sing the right hand at the same time.

Trying to do two things at once helps the brain cope with hearing two things. If you want, try doing other bars in the same way.

Look through the whole piece and notice places (mark them if you want) where:

- the left hand has the pattern
- both hands play the same thing
- other places

Sometimes there's a contrast between the two parts, sometimes there's a similarity and sometimes they are identical. Being aware of that is a lot of the pleasure in the music. and see (hear in your aural memory) what the right hand is doing. That's more varied.

2. Following both parts together

You'd go cross-eyed and cross-brained if you really looked at both staves simultaneously. Research on where players' eyes focus while they are reading the music shows they are zig-zagging all the time – taking in the bar for the right hand then checking out the left hand. They rarely focus on just one note – they are reading the patterns.

2a. Start by following the top part. After a couple of bars switch and follow the bottom part. Go on swapping without losing your place.

2b. Aim to scan both parts when you get to the bars where the two hands play in unison.

2c. Scan both parts whenever the left hand has that familiar 4 note pattern.

2d. This is it! Practise keeping an eye on both lines as you follow.

You don't have to be a fluent score reader to tackle the activities on 101.10, so don't be reluctant to move on if you are still finding it challenging.

Score Reading 101.10 Musette in D major Eye and Ear helping each other

Activity 1. One of the benefits of using a score is being able to notice more about the music. Seeing something helps you to listen out for it. This activity helps you hear how musetty the bass line is.

Worksheet 101.11 is another copy of the Musette. It has some markings on it to help you hear more because you can see something. (The dynamic marks have been left off to keep it less cluttered).

Worksheet 101.13 explains about Musettes and how you expect to find drones in them in the bass part. Our Musette doesn't have the same note throughout, but the bass part is mainly made out of just 3 notes – D, A and E. These are marked on 101.11

Don't worry if you don't know the notes in the bass clef, that's why they are marked in for you. In bar 1 both the notes are Ds. They are an octave apart. Alternating between them adds bounce to the music. In all the bars with horizontal lines over them, the notes in the left hand are an octave apart.

Some sections are marked “unison an octave apart”. When you are listening it's quite hard to hear the two parts – they merge – which is what the composer wanted.

There are only 2 bars where the left hand is neither doing octave bounces on a drone nor playing in unison. Find those two bars.

Follow the music again using the annotated score. Concentrate on being able to notice with your ear the aural effect of:

- the unchanging notes in the left hand
- the contrasting sound of unison
- the two different bars

Activity 2. Another benefit is that it is easier to keep track of the structure of the music – especially in longer pieces. You can find by eye bits that look the same or similar, so you can understand how the music has been put together. This activity helps you to do this.

By now you've heard the piece several times, and you can't have missed noticing that some bits come more than once – that's in addition to the sections that are repeated. This Section 1, Section 2, Section 1 structure is very common in all sorts of music. We tend to find it satisfying. It is called Ternary Form – three parts (ABA) as apart from Binary Form (AB).

On a smaller scale though, composers seek to integrate their pieces by making use of a limited amount of musical material – or motifs. Worksheet 101.12 draws your attention to the motifs. Motif B is used quite a lot in different places.

As the piece must be in your ears now, before you listen, hum each of the motifs – out loud or in your head. Listen again using this version of the score, and be aware of how the composer has woven the music out of the motifs.

Score Reading 101.11 Musette in D

The musical score is presented in a system of two staves per system, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) for each system. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into systems of four measures each, with measure numbers 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, and 25 indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The right-hand part (treble clef) contains the melody, often with slurs and ties. The left-hand part (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment. Performance instructions 'unison an octave apart' are placed in the right-hand part of measures 1, 5, 9, 17, 21, and 25. Chord markings 'D', 'A', and 'E' are placed in the left-hand part of measures 1, 9, and 17 respectively. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots in the final measure of the last system.

Score Reading 101.12 Musette in D major

Measures 1-4 of the score. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system is labeled with 'A' above measures 1 and 2, and 'B' above measures 3 and 4. The notation consists of a treble and bass clef with various rhythmic patterns.

Measures 5-8 of the score. The first system is labeled with 'A' above measures 5 and 6, and 'B' above measures 7 and 8. The notation continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

Measures 9-12 of the score. The first system is labeled with 'B' above measures 9 and 10, 'C' above measures 11 and 12, and 'A-ish' above the final measure. The notation includes a repeat sign at the beginning of measure 9.

Measures 13-16 of the score. The first system is labeled with 'D' above measures 13 and 14, and 'D' above measures 15 and 16. The notation features a long melodic line in the treble clef.

Measures 17-20 of the score. The first system is labeled with 'B' above measures 17 and 18, and 'B' above measures 19 and 20. The notation continues with the melodic line.

Measures 21-24 of the score. The first system is labeled with 'A' above measures 21 and 22, and 'B' above measures 23 and 24. The notation continues with the melodic line.

Measures 25-28 of the score. The first system is labeled with 'A' above measures 25 and 26, and 'B' above measures 27 and 28. The notation concludes with a final cadence.

Our Musette has come down to us because it was included in a collection of pieces put together in 1725 and called “A Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach”. There are 42 pieces in the book, by a variety of composers, most unidentified. Anna was J S Bach's second wife. The pieces were written into the book by various members of the Bach family and their friends. This was common practice at the time. Nowadays we buy a compendium of pieces or go on line. Then, you built up a collection of pieces by borrowing other people's copies and writing them out by hand for yourself.

These domestic anthologies give us useful insights into the pieces musical amateurs enjoyed playing at home.

The word “Musette” has several meanings. One is a small, polite bagpipe, very like the Northumberland pipes, that was popular especially amongst the French upper classes in the 17th and early 18th centuries when they wanted to pretend to be pastoral. Search “Watteau Musette images” to see paintings from the time. It was also the name of a type of music slightly influenced by the idea of a bagpipe, and that's what's most relevant to us. The piece would be unsophisticated and at a middling speed, and would imitate the bagpipe way of adding harmony to the tune.

Bagpipes have a chanter – a pipe on which you play the tune and one or more other pipes which can play just one note. They sound all the time. They are called the drones. If you are playing a Musette on a keyboard you expect to have a lot of the same note in the left hand accompaniment and a nice tune in the right, imitating the chanter. Our Musette doesn't have the same note throughout, but several times the note stays the same in the left hand for several bars, slightly disguised by the octave jumps.

You can listen to another Musette, written by Bach, and follow the score, because this Youtube video shows it as you hear the piece. This musette has a full-on drone – one note keeps on being sounded and held on in the left hand – you can see it on the score. It's a movement that is part of a set or Suite of pieces with dance titles. If you go to the video, you can see it is from the third English Suite. It's joined onto a dance called a Gavotte. You have to play the Gavotte then the Musette which goes at the same speed, and finish with the Gavotte again. A time honoured way of making a bit of music go a long way. The Musette is in G major while the Gavotte is in G minor – providing a bit more variety.

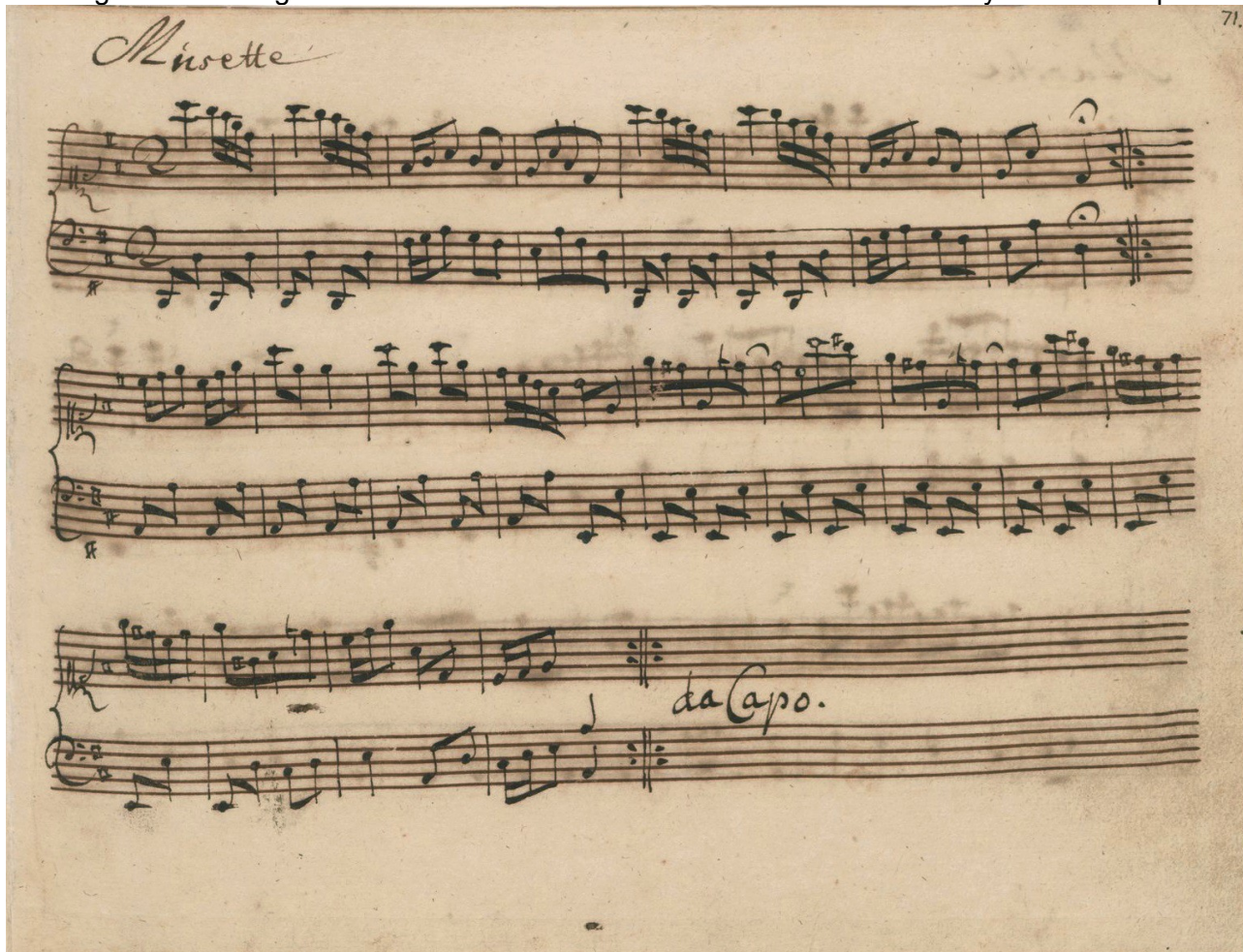
Here is the video of the Musette with the score: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFUbfYUYRo>

If you want to listen to the Gavotte and Musette (called Gavotte II here) in sequence, and have a score to follow, try this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMrJxhYj3tc>

The second recording gives you a chance to hear the harpsichord. The piano, where the strings are struck by hammers, hadn't been invented in Bach's time. Instead, people played keyboard instruments, some quite small for domestic settings, which had quills to pluck the strings. A very different sound. If you are interested in how harpsichords work, try a 5 minutes video from the Handel House in London; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZ6jtieqYIQ>

You'll notice that the harpsichord player includes a lot of decorations – twiddly bits. That's a feature of music of this time. Decorations could get quite elaborate, demonstrating the player's skill. Some were indicated by the composer but players could add their own.

The original Anna Magdalena Notebook of 1725 is held in Berlin's State Library. Here's our piece:



The Bach family could buy manuscript music with the staves printed on, or rule their own. The slight wobbliness is due to the paper being a bit distorted, and you can faintly see the piece on the back.

It's recognisably our piece. The writing is very good and clear. It isn't so long though. At the end it says "da Capo" - back to the beginning. Nowadays we write "Fine" to tell you where to stop once you've gone back. Here a pause mark is used to say the same thing.

Look at the very beginning – before the notes start. Lots of differences here. Starting from the left, there's the bracket showing you play both staves at the same time. Then come the clefs. The bass clef is like the modern one – but drawn the other way round. It is a fancy letter F and points to the line which is F – the two dots help. But there's no treble clef. It's clearer to see the shape on the lower systems. This is a C clef. It has two dots too and is drawn round the line that is to be C. In this case, that's the bottom line. We still use C clefs today – search on line to see them.

Using this clef puts the notes in a different place in the staff. You can see the tune is the same shape, but it's written two places higher.

The key signature has two sharps, in the same pattern as nowadays, and the copyist has put in the low F# in the left hand part as well. The time signature is just a flourish of a 2.

There are a lot of Minuets in the Notebook and only one Musette. What do you think of the title?

Have a go at reading this score while you listen.