

# SIGHTREADING SUPER POWERS!

Who doesn't want to get the basic idea of a new piece of music – to be able to play something through without a struggle?

The art of sightreading is to be able to competently play a piece of music you have not seen before, to a standard where you can either get the idea of how the piece sounds (in a general sort of way) or to be able to competently play a piece of music at a much easier level.

## General notes:

- We generally sight read successfully at a level below which we are learning at.
- Once you have read that new piece of music through once, you are no longer sightreading. The second time you play it you are starting to learn your way around it. You have already identified signposts – patterns, safe spots and questions about the music.
- There is practicing SR and actual SR – two different end results

## Key factors to aid sightreading:

- You must be able to read notes easily/automatically. (Speedy Notes Resource)
- You must have a firm grasp on counting, timing, rhythm.
- You must be at ease with the technical skills at the level you are sightreading at .... you can't understand what you don't already know.
- Use keywords associated with the shapes in music – chords, scales, step, jump, thirds, triads, 'squidgy' chords, octaves, - hand shapes names... the mitten, the snowman (Carol Kappus)

## Fab Sightreading Resources

If you are not working your way through a progressive sight reading book (by composer/teachers like Harriet Adie UK, or Stewart Green – both from the UK) then you need to have a good range of music that looks pretty easy – a couple of steps below your ability. If you are an intermediate harpist, you will probably be best looking at late beginner music, or in graded terms, you choose music two grades lower than you are studying at – in a grade 4 exam, the sight reading is at grade 2 level.

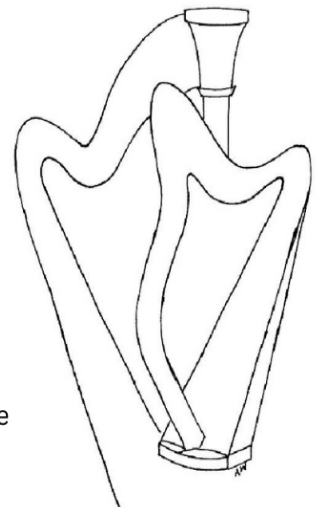
## Sight Reading for Harp – Anna Dunwoodie and Lisa Williamson (NZ)

**Book 1** is absolute beginner to grade 2 (late beginner) 270 exercises from 4-8 bars, in a limited range of keys, time signature and technique, nothing smaller than a quarter note, hands separately at the start, then together by halfway through the book.

**Book 2** is grade 3-5 – Intermediate, 180 exercises and more keys, time signatures and technique, plus pre set levers, pedal changes and later in the book, some straight forward lever changes. 8-16 bars and we've added 8th notes and 6/8 time so things are getting exciting.

**Book 3** – there are two books 3s – one for lever and one for pedal – there are 30 advanced exercises at each level but they explore the full range of technique, time and key signatures, pedal and lever changes and are a full page each.

Sightreading and music books can be purchased from Atlanta Harp Center or my website [www.annadunwoodie.co.nz](http://www.annadunwoodie.co.nz)



# THE NITTY GRITTY STUFF

## How much?

Three minutes each time you practice.

## The other how much?

The length of each exercise is important. There is no point wearing yourself out reading a whole book in one day – you won't take it in. Short chunks – 4-8 bars as a beginner, when the music is the right level, is all you need. Two exercises at your practice level, each practice will see you progress.

## What is the process?

**Hands off!** You need to read every part of the music with your eyes before touching any strings.

### Eyes only

- What is the key signature – set any levers.
- What is the time signature – count a bar or two in your head.
- What is the rhythm of the piece – tap your way through.
- Now look again – can you see patterns? Rhythmic, melodic, chords, scales, arpeggios, repeated intervals... I also take note of the 'not pattern' the things that started out to be like a pattern and changed, or are radically different and noticeable.
- Count in one bar at a slow tempo, then start.
- Don't stop, if it starts falling apart, keep the tempo the same but drop to one hand or other and keep going.
- Then stop and review how you played it – give yourself a mark out of 10.



Be consistent – do it regularly in short bursts for the most progress.

\*Try using your sight reading skills on the pieces you are learning to play. Stop and look at the music, have a little hum of the first few bars, look through and find the tricky parts and acknowledge them 'ah ha – I know you and you won't surprise me this time'

If you spend time looking at it first, you have achieved the equivalent of the first time playing through the piece, before you have played a note. You are much more AWARE of the music you are about to play... that's a SR skill.

Don't think of sightreading as a chore – it is a skill to develop and a means to exploring music more easily. It is a super power and musicians are always impressed by those who can sight read at a confident level and speed. If you know how to easily read the notes of bass and treble clef, you have already conquered the first step of sight reading – onwards and upwards.

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