

# Musicianship Self-Evaluation

by Marianne Ploger  
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To be a fully realized musician requires a high degree of craft, not only in the development of the ear and of coordination skills but in the area of literacy – the ability to read, write and comprehend music fluently.

This self assessment is meant to help aspiring musical artists interested in rating their level of literacy at each of many developmental steps, from the simplest to the most complex. From my own experience as a musician and as a teacher of musicians ranging from small children to music students, professional musicians, conductors, composers, educators, and even retired doctors, I can attest to the fact that each of these skills can be developed to a high degree through principled, mindful attention. In doing this assessment, it is important to remember that talent is not a prerequisite to achieve success in each skill, unless by talent what is meant is a deep and abiding interest that propels us to mastery. Therefore, use the assessment as an indicator of how your current skill levels compare with your imagined potential – this imagined potential can propel you toward the goal if you focus upon it with joy.

In creating this assessment, I have imagined for myself the most consummate musician, Johann Sebastian Bach, and the skills he is thought to have mastered, not from talent but from constant application and effort. It was he who said, “Anyone who works as hard as I can do the same.” He did not say, “Nobody will ever be able to be as skillful as I because I am so talented.” We can be thankful to him for his honesty and integrity.

Please rejoice for every point you give yourself – each is crucial in the development of your eventual musical mastery.

The concept of the musical keyboard is, as I call it, “the thinking tool of the musician” because it aids in the perception of music pitch space, it is included in a large number of skills in the assessment. It is not expected that a high degree of keyboard playing skill is expected or required however. The majority of my students have been non-keyboardists yet nevertheless have been successful at achieving high levels of skill with a modicum of practice using this concept.

Rate yourself, on a scale from 0 to 10, in each of the areas listed below. A rating of 100 indicates a level of effortless and reliable fluency.

## **Pitch/Note Skills**

On the keyboard, I can point to any of the seven basic diatonic notes in any octave, naming both by letter and solfege syllable, fluently, in real-time:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) C/Doh
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) D/Re
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) E/Mi
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) F/Fa
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) G/Sol
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) A/La
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) B/Si

On the keyboard, I can point to the sharp manifestations of the seven basic diatonic notes in any octave, naming both by letter and solfege syllable, fluently, in real-time:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) C#/Doh-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) D#/Re-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) E#/Mi-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) F#/Fa-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) G#/Sol-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) A#/La-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) B#/Si-sharp

On the keyboard, I can point to the flat manifestations of the seven basic diatonic notes in any octave, naming both by letter and solfege syllable, fluently, in real-time:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) Cb/Doh-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Db/Re-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) Eb/Mi-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Fb/Fa-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) Gb/Sol-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) Ab/La-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) Bb/Si-flat

I can identify by ear and sing the following pitches in real-time, in either tonal or atonal contexts, indicating both by letter and fixed solfege syllable:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) C/Doh; B#/Si-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) C#/Doh-sharp; Db/Re-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) D/Re
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Eb/Mi-flat; D#/Re-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) E/Mi; Fb/Fa-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) F/Fa; E#/Mi-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) F#/Fa-sharp; Gb/Sol-flat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8) G/Sol
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9) G#/Sol-sharp

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10) A/La
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11) Bb/Si-flat; A#/La-sharp
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12) B/Si; Cb/Doh-flat

I can visually recognize and name notes on a staff in real time in the following clefs and can visualize each in its precise location on the keyboard (in the correct octave disposition):

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) Treble
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Bass
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) Alto
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) Soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) Mezzo Soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) Baritone

I can identify the interval (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th) transposition from the treble clef to each of the following clefs:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) Bass
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Alto
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) Tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) Mezzo Soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) Baritone

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## **Interval Skills**

I can identify by ear and sing the following intervals above and below any note in real time, in either tonal or atonal contexts, whether simple or compound:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) minor 2nd/chromatic half-step; dichord [1]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) major 2nd/ diminished 3rd; dichord [2]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) minor 3rd/augmented 2nd; dichord [3]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) major 3rd/diminished 4th; dichord [4]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) perfect 4th/ /augmented 3rd (optional); dichord [5]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) augmented 4th/diminished 5th; dichord [6]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) perfect 5th/ dimishied 6th (optional); dichord [7]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8) minor 6th/ augmented 5th; dichord [8]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9) major 6th/ diminished 7th; dichord [9]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10) minor 7th/ augmented 6th; dichord [10]
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11) major 7th/diminished 8ve; dichord [11]

I can visually recognize and name the following diatonic intervals between any pair of notes written on a staff in real time:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) 2nds
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) 3rds
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) 4ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) 5ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) 6ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) 7ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) 8ves
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8) 9ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9) 10ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10) 11ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11) 12ths

I can visually recognize and name the exact interval size (major 2nd, minor 3rd, et cetera) between any pair of notes on the staff in real time, averaging your score by giving each specific interval 33% of the total score in each line below:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) major, minor and augmented 2nds
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) major, minor and diminished 3rds
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) perfect, diminished and augmented 4ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) perfect, diminished and augmented 5ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) major, minor and augmented 6ths
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) major, minor and diminished 7ths

I know the number of half-steps between any pair of notes, either written or heard; (i.e. you know the interval class number for any interval).

\_\_\_\_\_

I can identify through reading and through hearing the exact degree of any pitch in one of the following tonal scales, fluently in real time:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) The major scale
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) The melodic minor scale
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) The harmonic minor scale

I can effortlessly imagine the sound of and sing any degree of the following scales:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) The major scale
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) The melodic minor scale
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) The harmonic minor scale

I can read, write and perform the basic division of any given beat into the following number of parts, correctly articulating any combination of those parts within the beat as indicated in rhythmic notation:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) two equal parts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) three equal parts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) four equal parts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) five equal parts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) six equal parts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) seven equal parts

I can accurately perform any single-line rhythm in real time from pieces composed in the following periods:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Renaissance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Baroque
- \_\_\_\_\_ Classical
- \_\_\_\_\_ Romantic/Post-Romantic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Modern/Post-Modern

Using clefs, I can transpose to concert pitch and sing at sight in fixed doh syllables any single part from an orchestral score which is played by one of the following common transposing instruments:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) B-flat instruments
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) B instruments (H)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) D instruments
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) A instruments
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) E-flat instruments
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) F instruments
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) G instruments

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### **Skills needed to read two lines simultaneously**

I can read and play on the piano (play both; sing one, play the other) in real time in two parts

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) Both parts in the treble clef.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Both parts in the bass clef.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) Both parts in the alto clef
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Both parts in the tenor clef
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) Both parts in the soprano clef
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) Both parts in the mezzo soprano clef
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) Both parts in the baritone clef

I can read and play on the piano (play both; sing one, play the other) in real time, in two parts, with each part in a different clef from the other.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) treble and bass
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) treble and alto
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) treble and tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) treble and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) treble and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) treble and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) bass and alto
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8) bass and tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9) bass and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10) bass and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11) bass and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12) alto and tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13) alto and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14) alto and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15) alto and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16) tenor and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17) tenor and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18) tenor and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19) soprano and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20) soprano and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21) mezzo soprano and baritone

I can read and identify the exact interval between any pair of pitches written on two separate staves with the same clef:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) treble
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) bass
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) alto
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) baritone

I can read and identify the exact interval (classic name and/or interval class number) between any pair of pitches written on two separate staves, each in a different clef:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) treble and bass
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) treble and alto
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) treble and tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) treble and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) treble and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) treble and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) bass and alto

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8) bass and tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9) bass and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10) bass and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11) bass and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12) alto and tenor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13) alto and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14) alto and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15) alto and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16) tenor and soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17) tenor and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18) tenor and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19) soprano and mezzo soprano
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20) soprano and baritone
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21) mezzo soprano and baritone

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### **Rhythm skills**

I can read and perform simultaneously a tempo two different rhythms having the same meter signature and the smallest note value is a quarter note:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) when the meter is in 2/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) when the meter is in 3/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) when the meter is in 4/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) when the meter is in 5/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) when the meter is in 6/4 or 6/2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) when the meter is in 7/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) when the meters change from bar to bar (mixed meter)

I can read and perform two different rhythmic lines simultaneously which have the same meter signature and whose smallest note value is an eighth note:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) when the meter is in 2/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) when the meter is in 3/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) when the meter is in 4/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) when the meter is in 5/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) when the meter is in 6/4 or 6/2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) when the meter is in 7/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) when the meters change from bar to bar (mixed meter)

I can read and perform two different rhythmic lines simultaneously which have the same meter signature and whose smallest note value is an eighth note triplet:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) when the meter is in 2/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) when the meter is in 3/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) when the meter is in 4/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) when the meter is in 5/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) when the meter is in 6/4 or 6/2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) when the meter is in 7/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) when the meters change from bar to bar (mixed meter)

I can read and perform two different rhythmic lines simultaneously which have the same meter signature and whose smallest note value is sixteenth note:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) when the meter is in 2/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) when the meter is in 3/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) when the meter is in 4/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) when the meter is in 5/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) when the meter is in 6/4 or 6/2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) when the meter is in 7/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) when the meters change from bar to bar (mixed meter)

I can perform the following polyrhythms:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) 3 against 2 (3:2) or 2 against 3
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) 4 against 3 (4:3) or 4 against 3
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) 5 against 2 (5:2) or 2 against 5
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) 5 against 3 (5:3) or 3 against 5
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) 6 against 4 (6:4) or 4 against 6
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) 7 against 3 (7:3) or 3 against 7
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) others

I can read and perform two different rhythmic lines simultaneously which have the same meter signature with one line subdividing into eighths and the other into triplets (2:3):

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) when the meter is in 2/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) when the meter is in 3/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) when the meter is in 4/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) when the meter is in 5/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) when the meter is in 6/4 or 6/2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) when the meter is in 7/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) when the meters change from bar to bar (mixed meter)

I can read and perform two different rhythmic lines simultaneously which have the same meter signature with one line subdividing into sixteenths and the other into triplets (4:3):

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) when the meter is in 2/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) when the meter is in 3/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) when the meter is in 4/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) when the meter is in 5/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5) when the meter is in 6/4 or 6/2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6) when the meter is in 7/4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7) when the meters change from bar to bar (mixed meter)

Total

\_\_\_\_\_

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From this assessment you can ascertain some of your strengths and weaknesses. On a separate page, write out which areas received your highest ratings, list the areas in which your ratings were the lowest, placing the weakest areas at the top, and outline for yourself, on your own, how you could significantly strengthen the areas of greatest weakness in the shortest amount of time.

After doing this, if you have questions about how to improve these areas, write them down. Seek out guidance from a trusted and respected musician who has mastered that particular weak skill. If no guidance exists, imagine a master musician. What would they do if they had an identical weakness? What exercises might they come up with? From performing this imagination exercise, were you able to come up with more ideas than before for how to strengthen that particular weakness?