

Lead Sheet Tutorial

by Barbara Ann Fackler

This issue's featured music includes Three Christmas Lullabies and a tutorial for those new to lead sheets. Lead sheets offer an efficient way to notate music by giving only the outline of the essential components of the melody and harmony, leaving the creative embellishment to the performer.

1) The accompaniment used should reflect your tastes in music and your level of skill. The bottom note (root) of each chord in the LH is sufficient if that's what you can manage. All the chords you need to know for these tunes as well as any other song with the key signature of one sharp are shown below in root position.

G Am Bm C D D⁷ Em Em⁷ F[#]dim G

2) Sparse arrangements can shimmer when played with attention to steady rhythm and good phrasing. One note played with the LH on the 1st and 4th beats of each measure of 6/8 meter (as shown below) can be enough. If a choice must be made, musicality and steady rhythm is always preferable to complexity. The first example below begins with only the root of the chord in the accompaniment, then finishes with the whole triad in root position.

3) Study music you already own that has the meter of 6/8 and a key signature of one sharp for ideas you can use for your own accompaniment. You'll learn a lot by looking at these arrangements and adapting old ideas to new pieces.

4) While it's fine to play each of these lullabies alone, it's also easy to create a medley by adding an introduction, interludes and a coda drawn from any of these melodies. You can also use a common chord progression as your "extra phrases." For example, try using bars 5-8 of *Wiegenlied Der Hirten* as your intro and coda.

D⁷ G C G G D⁷ G

5) The second example uses the same 4 bars for the structure giving just a hint of the original by using only those melody notes that occurred on beats 1 and 4. The LH now outlines a root position triad, a shape most beginners can find easily, this time playing the notes one after another. Compare the last two measures above to the last two measures below to see that the notes you place for each group are the same. This pared down statement makes a nice "connecting interlude" between songs.

D⁷ G C G G D⁷ G

After you've tried this, go to www.hornandharp.com/publications and look for the Great Lakes Harpers Tutorial (with the free music) to find a full version of this. If you're short on ideas of your own, this will give you some more hints. Once you've played through the full version, try the lead sheet again. Notice that nearly everything in the LH of the full version is all or part of a root position triad. With practice, reading lead sheets becomes easier and the ideas come more quickly.