

the **BIG** book of
SIGHT READING
DUETS
for **HORN**
*100 Sight Reading Challenges
for You and a Friend*

David Vining

Edited by Heidi Lucas

The Big Book of Sight Reading Duets for Horn
David Vining
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Foreword

Sight reading expertise is an essential tool in a musician's toolbox, yet it is often overlooked as a skill to be systematically developed. *The Big Book of Sight Reading Duets* by David Vining answers the call admirably to fill that educational gap.

Auditions at all levels from high school to professional are frequently won or lost during a sight reading component in the final round. Free-lance careers can skyrocket when a musician sight reads skillfully during a last minute call to fill in for another player. Even musicians who are members of established ensembles will find themselves occasionally called upon to sight read performances and broadcasts. Excellent sight reading technique is far more than "icing on the cake."

The Big Book of Sight Reading Duets is a thoughtfully conceived method book that approaches sight reading for brass players in a systematic and progressive manner, from easy to extreme levels of difficulty. The introductory insights and rhythm studies build a solid foundation for learning from the duets that follow; collaborating with a duet partner offers an approach that serves to incentivize practicing, increasing both accountability and fun.

Heidi Lucas' horn edition enriches these studies by recommending transpositions and offering several duets in bass clef, important practical considerations for hornists. *The Big Book of Sight Reading Duets* belongs in every brass player's music library.

Enjoy your personal journey through these pages!

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- ♪ Thanks to Andrew Hitz and Heidi Lucas, who were “instrumental” in helping tweak the introduction and editing the book for use on horn.
- ♪ I am grateful to my son, Ben Vining, composer and cellist extraordinaire, who helped me understand a student’s perspective and suggested I put these duets in some sort of logical progressive order.
- ♪ Most importantly, thanks to Leslie Vining, my business and life partner, whose editorial talents and attention to detail keep me grounded and elevate everything she touches.

Introduction

Have you ever choked on sight reading? Many musicians shudder at the thought of having to play something at first sight—especially for an audition. It is extremely frustrating to play prepared excerpts beautifully at an audition only to come unglued when confronted with sight reading.

There is no question that sight reading is a valuable skill for musicians. Many auditions require sight reading and it is a critical technique for a freelancer. Musicians who sight read well tend to think on their feet better than those who don't, and this attribute improves their ability to perform under pressure. Good sight readers have a musical intuition and heightened perception that allows them to understand complicated rhythms, harmonies, and musical forms. Sight reading is essentially the confluence of countless diverse musical skills.

If sight reading is so important, why don't more people take practicing it more seriously? Part of the problem is a lack of guidance. There are few resources devoted entirely to sight reading and even fewer stated strategies for improvement. Considering this, we will first discuss strategies for improving your sight reading, then we will learn how to use this book to maximize your progress.

Suggestions for Improving Sight Reading

We'll start with the obvious, traditional advice that can be applied immediately every time you sight read, and work our way toward the less conventional, long-term strategies. The first two suggestions are to be done before you play and the second two are to be done as you play. The remainder of the suggestions are long term strategies that require attention over time.

Before You Play:

1. Scan Before You Play

Before you begin to play, STOP! Don't just dive in headlong and hope for the best. Hanging on for dear life and guessing at rhythms and pitches is not good sight reading technique. Play smart: before you begin, take a moment to look over the piece, noticing the following critical points:

- Road Map: Are there repeats? Are there first and second endings? Is there a D.S. or D.C. al Coda?
- Key
- Time Signature
- Tempo
- Style
- Articulation
- Dynamics
- Changes in any of the above
- Melodic or Rhythmic Patterns

- Accidentals / Tonicizations (for an explanation of this term, see “Analyze” below)

2. Model for Success

The last thing you do directly before you play is critical to your success. At the end of your scanning session (described above), finger the last sharp or flat in the key signature because this is the note you are most likely to miss when you play. In the key of G-flat major, for example, the last flat is C-flat so you would literally finger that pitch to model the behavior of playing in that key.

In addition, you should sing and finger the first measure in your head before you begin. The pitches needn't be exact (especially if you don't have perfect pitch!), but finger the correct notes and sing the proper rhythms and intervals at the right tempo in your head as best as you are able.

By fingering the last sharp or flat in the key signature and singing the first measure in your head before you begin, you are creating a model that reinforces what you will do when you actually play.

As You Play:

3. Look Ahead

Good sight readers don't necessarily look directly at the note they are currently playing. Instead, they are constantly looking ahead at what is coming up so they are not surprised by an accidental or unusual rhythm.

4. Don't Stop

To be a good sight reader, train yourself to keep going no matter what. This is a difficult technique for most musicians because we spend our practice time stopping and starting in order to fix mistakes, but this approach does not work when sight reading. This book offers a solution to this problem by making players sight read with a partner. Playing duets incentivizes continuing to play no matter what because you don't want to let down your partner. There is a collective obligation to play the music through to the end so it makes sense.

These first four strategies can (and should!) be incorporated immediately. The other strategies, listed below, fall into the category of long term tactics. They are extremely effective but must be developed over time.

5. Interpret and Execute Rhythms at Sight

A fundamental understanding of rhythm and an ability to interpret and execute rhythms at sight is a prerequisite to being a good sight reader. In fact, the best sight readers play rhythms correctly even if they don't always play every pitch correctly. This is particularly important when sight reading in an ensemble situation because it is impossible to stay together if the rhythms are not right.

To improve one's rhythmic acuity can be challenging because often there are too many other musical obligations to effectively isolate rhythmic deficiencies and fix them. In this book, preliminary “Rhythm Duets” are provided in order to cultivate rhythmic

Rhythm Duet #10

♩ = 88

Play

Clap

p

mf

f

mf

mf

p

p

p

p

f

mf

p

f

mf

p

Moderato (♩ = c. 108)
(In E_b)

1. Simple March

The musical score for "1. Simple March" is written for two staves in 4/4 time. The tempo is Moderato (♩ = c. 108) and the key signature is one flat (E_b). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 4, 9, 14, 19, and 24 indicated at the start of their respective systems. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte), *p* (piano), and *f* (forte). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, and rests, as well as slurs and accents. The piece concludes with a double bar line at measure 24.

4 *mf*

9 *p*

14 *mf* *p*

19 *f*

24 *p*

Allegro (♩ = c. 120)
(In F and E_b)

2. Simon Says

The musical score for "Simon Says" is written in 3/4 time. It consists of five systems of two staves each. The tempo is marked "Allegro" with a quarter note equal to approximately 120 beats per minute. The key signature is one flat (F major or D minor). The score includes various dynamics: *mf* (mezzo-forte), *p* (piano), and *f* (forte). The piece begins with a *mf* dynamic in the right hand and a *p* dynamic in the left hand. The first system ends with a *p* dynamic in the right hand and a *mf* dynamic in the left hand. The second system begins with a *mf* dynamic in the right hand and a *mf* dynamic in the left hand. The third system begins with a *p* dynamic in the right hand and a *mf* dynamic in the left hand. The fourth system begins with a *p* dynamic in the right hand and a *p* dynamic in the left hand. The fifth system begins with a *p* dynamic in the right hand and a *p* dynamic in the left hand. The piece concludes with a *p* dynamic in the right hand and a *p* dynamic in the left hand.

7

14

21

28

35

mf *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

71A. Stick to Your Guns
(treble clef)

$\text{♩} = 132$

5

10

15

20

24

f

mp

p

mf

f

p

f

p

f

p

f

p

f

71B. Stick to Your Guns
(bass clef)

$\text{♩} = 132$

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 2/4. The tempo is marked as 132 beats per minute. The score consists of 24 measures, organized into six systems of two staves each. The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and dynamic markings (*f*, *mp*, *p*, *mf*). Slurs and hairpins are used to indicate phrasing and volume changes. The piece begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic in measures 1-4, followed by a mezzo-piano (*mp*) section in measures 5-8. Measures 9-12 feature a crescendo leading to a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, which then crescendos to a forte (*f*) dynamic in measures 13-14. Measures 15-18 are marked piano (*p*), followed by a return to forte (*f*) in measures 19-22. The final system (measures 23-24) shows a crescendo from piano (*p*) to forte (*f*), ending with a double bar line.