

Braille Authority of the United Kingdom

Points of contact

a braille approach
to alphabetic
music notation

For further information and advice concerning the use of 'Points of Contact' and the standard braille music code, please contact:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

For further information and advice concerning the use of 'Points of Contact' and the standard braille music code, please contact:

Tel: 0181-968 8600
Fax: 0181-960 3593

© Braille Authority of the United Kingdom, 1996. Registered Charity No. 1001157

Printed by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, London, 1996.

Registered Charity No. 225227



RNIB
challenging blindness

'Points of Contact' is intended to function as an equivalent of 'letter notation' in print. The scheme is a set of guidelines for teachers, which suggest how simple pieces of music can be written in braille. It will be suitable for pupils and students whose grasp of braille is at a preliminary level, and particularly for those who find it challenging. It may also be appropriate for more fluent brailleists whose music-notational needs are limited. Points of Contact should not be used as an equivalent of staff notation.

It is proposed that letter-names are represented by their everyday braille equivalents:

Figure 1



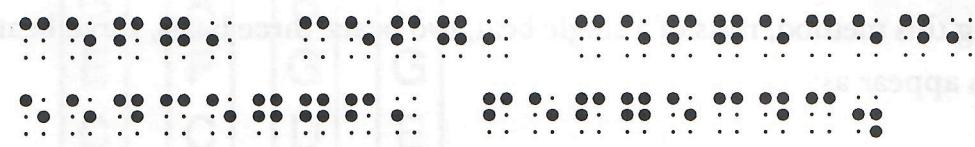
C D E F G A B

For reading and writing music in its simplest form, these signs can be used without any others, although if desired, phrasing can be shown through the use of commas.

In braille, the comma is written: ,

So, for example, *When the saints go marching in* can be written, starting on C:

Figure 2




C E F G, C E F G, C E F G E C E D,
E E D C E G G F, F E F G E C D C.

(Here, the literary parallel is taken further, and a full stop is used to confirm the end of the melody.)

Durations can be shown using a beat-based system, in which each letter-name is assumed to be one beat unless followed by one or more lower Cs, which lengthen letter-names proportionately. Following this principle, Gs that are respectively one beat, two beats, three beats and four beats in length are written:

Figure 3



G G — G — — G — — —

Bar lines (blank cells as in the standard code) can also be introduced to make reading easier. For instance, here is the first section of *Au claire de la lune* starting on C:

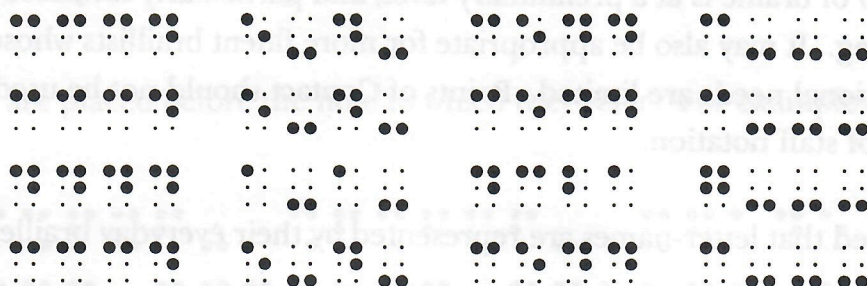


Figure 4

C C C D E - D - C E D D C - - -
 C C C D E - D - C E D D C - - -
 D D D D A - A - D C B A G - - -
 C C C D E - D - C E D D C - - -

Rests can be shown using the letter 'R'  followed by lower Cs as required.

Using this method, rests of a single beat, two beats, three beats, three beats and four beats appear as:





   
 R R - R - - R - - -

Figure 5

Here is a version of *Kum ba yah* which includes rests:

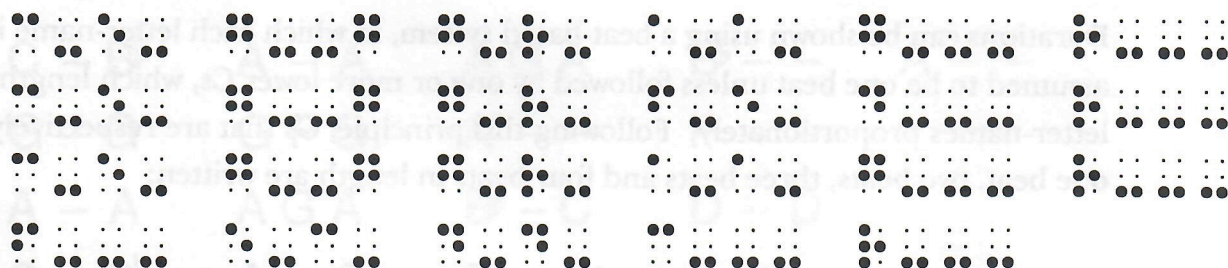


Figure 6

Figure 6
(cont.)

C-E- G--G G-R- A-A- G--- R---
 C-E- G--G G-R- F-E- D--- R---
 C-E- G--G G-R- A-A- G--- R---
 F--- E-C- D-D- C--- R---

Unpitched rhythms may be written using a nominated letter (here, B). For instance:

Figure 7

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

Chords can be shown by enclosing the notes concerned between braille brackets:

Figure 8

⠠⠠ ⠠⠠

For instance,

Figure 9

$\begin{bmatrix} G \\ E \\ C \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} A \\ F \\ C \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} B \\ G \\ D \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} C \\ G \\ E \end{bmatrix}$

can be written:

Figure 10

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

The durations of chords can be shown if necessary using lower Cs. For example:

Figure 11

$\begin{bmatrix} G \\ E \\ C \end{bmatrix}$ — $\begin{bmatrix} A \\ F \\ C \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} G \\ E \\ C \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} G \\ D \\ B \end{bmatrix}$ — — —

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

Accidentals can be added as required using the standard signs, which are as follows:

Figure 12



They are placed before the note to which they refer. For example:

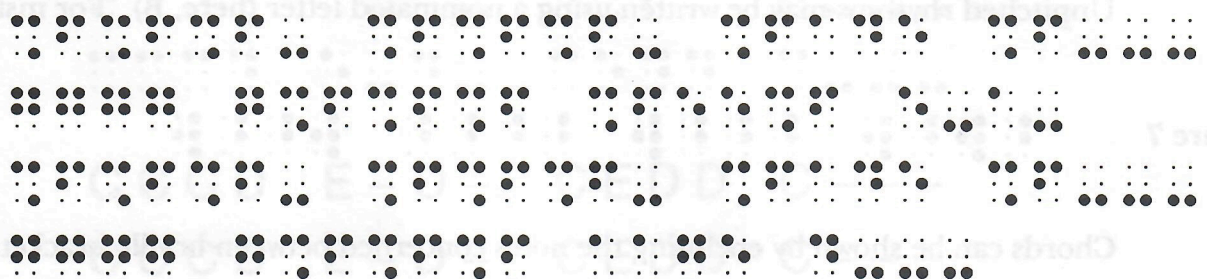


Figure 13

F#	F#	F#	—	F#	F#	F#	—	F#	A	D	E	F#	—	—	—
G	G	G	G	G	F#	F#	F#	F#	E	E	F#	E	—	A	—
F#	F#	F#	—	F#	F#	F#	—	F#	A	D	E	F#	—	—	—
G	G	G	G	G	F#	F#	F#	A	A	G	E	D	—	—	—

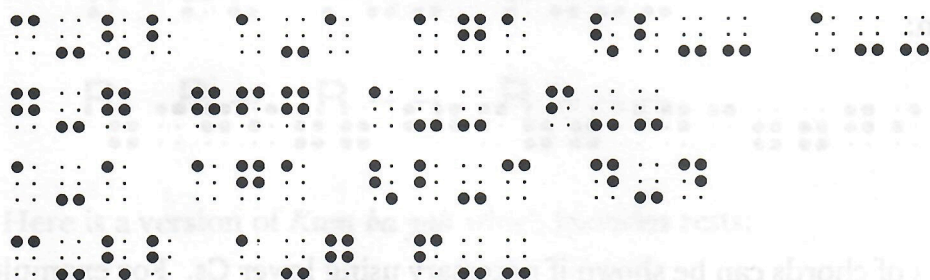


Figure 14

C	—	B♭	A	—	A	A	G	A	B♭	—	—	A	—	—
G	—	G	G	F	G	A	—	—	F	—	—			
A	—	A	A	G	A	B♭	—	C	D	—	D			
C	—	B♭	A	—	G	F	—	—						

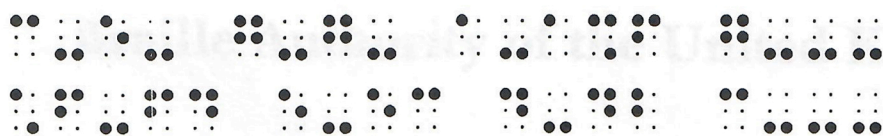


Figure 15

C – E –	G – G –	A – AF#	G – – –
F# – FD	E – EC	D – DB	C – – –

The contradiction between the letter-names inherited from literary braille and their braille music counterparts remains an obstacle to a ready transition between the two systems, and in most circumstances it would be inappropriate to consider a scheme such as that outlined above as a satisfactory introduction to the standard code.

For further information and advice concerning the use of 'Points of Contact' and the standard braille music code, please contact:

RNIB Music Education Advisor
 National Education Services
 Garrow House
 190 Kensal Road
 London W10 5BT

Tel: 0181-968 8600
 Fax: 0181-960 3593

© Braille Authority of the United Kingdom, 1996. Registered Charity No. 1001157.

Printed by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, London, 1996.
 Registered Charity No. 226227