

Faking Your Way Through the Holidays

by Frank Levin

The material in the article is taken from Mel Bay's *Complete Traditional Holiday Season Fake Book* by Frank Levin. Along with the standard melody line and chord symbols like those found in other fake books, Frank includes some additional symbols to help the novice arranger. He explains: "These provide assistance in suggesting suitable accompaniment patterns, register for accompaniment chords, special endings and related information required in creating satisfactory arrangement. In fact, by carefully studying the instructions in the following sections [excerpted here], an intermediate level pianist will be able to play an effective accompaniment to these melodies without the need to improvise anything!"

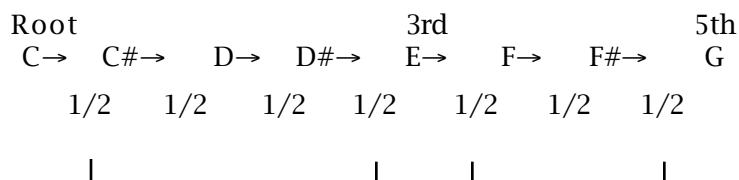
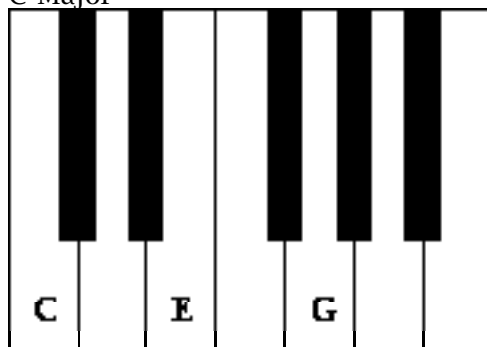
Reading Chord Symbols

To play the accompaniment patterns, you first need to learn the chords from which they are derived. We start with major triads, which provide the basis for all other chords.

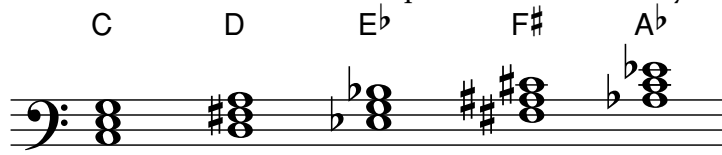
Major Triads

Put the fifth finger of your left hand on the C below middle C and play five successive notes to the right. Lift the second and fourth fingers: you're left with C, E, and G. Play the three notes together. They produce a bright harmonious sound. This is a major triad. The lowest note, which is called the root, gives the triad its name: C major. The middle note of the triad, E, under the third finger, is the third; the top note, G, under the thumb, is the fifth. Between the root and the third are four half-steps, and between the third and the fifth are three half-steps. All major triads have this interval pattern.

C Major



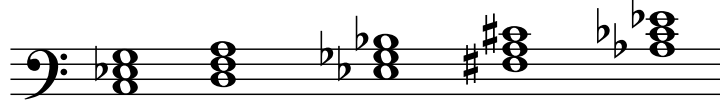
Triads are always spelled with alternate-letter names. Thus the C major triad is spelled C E G, not C F♭ G. Note also that triads are written on successive lines or spaces of the staff. Major triads are symbolized by capital letters based on the root of the chord. The examples below will test your understanding.



Minor Triads

A minor triad is formed by flattening the third of the major triad. Minor triads are symbolized by a lowercase m after the capital — Cm, Dm, E^bm, F[#]m, etc.

Cm Dm E^bm F[#]m A^bm



The image shows five minor triads on a bass clef staff. From left to right: Cm (C, E^b, G), Dm (D, F, A^b), E^bm (E^b, G, B^b), F[#]m (F[#], A, C^b), and A^bm (A^b, C, E^b).

Diminished Triads

A diminished triad is formed by flattening both the third and the fifth of the major triad. Diminished triads are symbolized by a small circle after the capital — C[°], D[°], E^{b°}, F^{#°}, etc.

C[°] D[°] E^{b°} F^{#°} A^{b°}




The image shows five diminished triads on a bass clef staff. From left to right: C[°] (C, E^b, G^b), D[°] (D, F^b, A^b), E^{b°} (E^b, G^b, B^b), F^{#°} (F[#], A^b, C^b), and A^{b°} (A^b, C^b, E^b).

Augmented Triads

An augmented triad is formed by sharpening the fifth of the major triad. Augmented triads are symbolized by a plus sign after the capital — C⁺, D⁺, etc.

C⁺ D⁺ E^{b+} F^{#+} A^{b+}




The image shows five augmented triads on a bass clef staff. From left to right: C⁺ (C, E, G[#]), D⁺ (D, F, A[#]), E^{b+} (E^b, G, B[#]), F^{#+} (F[#], A, C[#]), and A^{b+} (A^b, C, E[#]).

Sixth Chords

A sixth chord is a major or minor triad with the note a whole step¹ above the fifth (i.e. the sixth above the root) added to the triad. Sixth chords are symbolized by a 6 next to the major or minor chord symbol.

C6 D6 E^b6 F[#]m6 A^bm6



The image shows five sixth chords on a bass clef staff. From left to right: C6 (C, E, G, A), D6 (D, F, A, B), E^b6 (E^b, G, B, C), F[#]m6 (F[#], A, C, D), and A^bm6 (A^b, C, E, F).

¹Two half-steps equal a whole step — G to A, A to B, B^b to C, etc.

Seventh Chords

Seventh chords contain four notes: the fourth note is seven letters up from the root. A seventh chord is written on four consecutive lines or spaces. There are six kinds of seventh chords found in these arrangements: major, minor, diminished, half-diminished (also referred to as minor seven flat fives), augmented, and dominant sevenths. Some are rarely found. Dominant and minor sevenths occur most frequently. The following table summarizes the key features of the seventh chords.

Type	Symbol	Formation	Examples
Dominant	7	Add the note a whole step below the root to the top of the major triad.	
Minor	m7	Add the note a whole step below the root to the top of the minor triad.	
Half Diminished (minor 7 flat 5)	m7b5	Add the note a whole step below the root to the top of the diminished triad.	
Augmented	+7	Add the note a whole step below the root to the top of the augmented triad.	
Major	Δ7	Add the note a half step below the root to the top of the major triad.	
Diminished	°7	Add the note three half steps below the root to the top of the diminished triad.	

Note: Most 7th Chords are formed by adding the note a whole step below the root to the top of the base triad. The Major and the Diminished 7th are the two exceptions.

Suspensions

A suspension is formed by replacing the third of a major triad with the note a half-step higher; this note is written as a fourth above the root. Suspensions are symbolized by the abbreviation "sus" after the capital — Csus, Dsus.

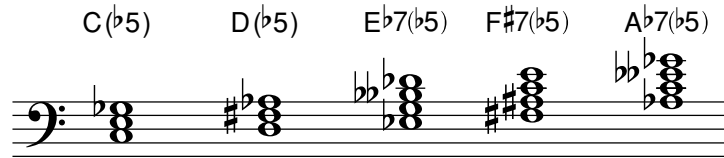
Csus Dsus E^bsus F[#]sus A^bsus

Suspensions may also be found on dominant seventh chords.

C7sus D7sus E^b7sus F[#]7sus A^b7sus

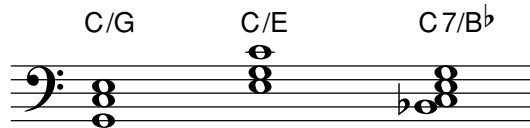
Altered Chords

An altered chord is formed by flattening the fifth of the major triad or dominant seventh chord. Rarely found in these arrangements, altered chords are identified by a bracketed 5 after the major or dominant seventh symbol.



Inversions

The rearrangement of the notes of a chord so that the third, fifth, or seventh is in the bass is called an inversion. It's used to achieve a smoother connection between chords. The chord is symbolized first, followed by a slash and the note that is in the bass:



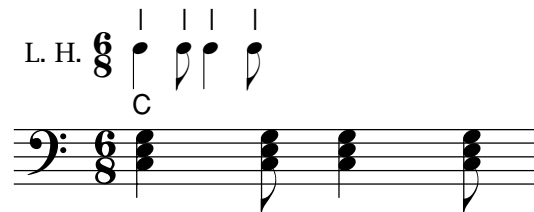
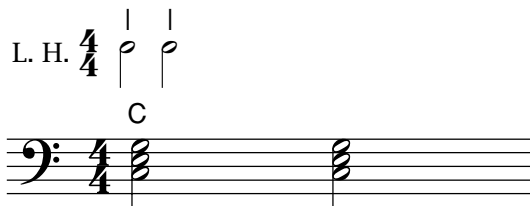
Inversions are employed to re-create, as far as possible, the movement of the original bass line and be in accord with traditional voice leading practices.

Left Hand Accompaniment Patterns

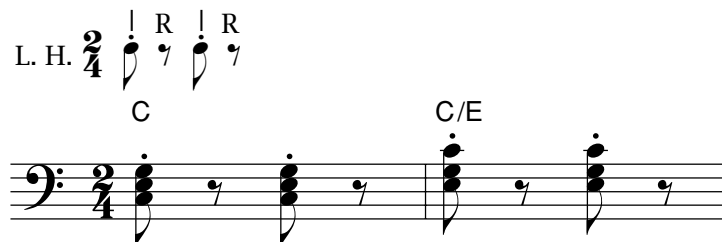
For pianists with limited arranging experience, the lead sheets in this collection have been designed to accommodate one or two of seven different accompaniment patterns as is described below. The symbols for the accompaniment pattern or patterns to be used are located on the top left corner of each selection and occasionally in the middle of the song where the pattern changes.

Block Chord Pattern

This accompaniment pattern is designated by vertical lines. All chords are played as block chords and in the rhythm indicated by the "time value" notes found below the vertical lines. The pattern instructions indicate the number of block chords per bar. L.H. represents "left hand."



Rests and staccato markings may also be featured in the pattern profile.



A horizontal arrow → (duration arrow) is used to represent a chord held longer than the pattern. The point of the arrow indicates the beat at which the chord is released.

L. H. $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\overset{|}{\circ}$ | $\overset{|}{\circ}$ |

C →

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" uses a typical block chord pattern.

Occasionally a bar may contain extra chords. Where their time value is not obvious from their alignment with the melody notes, time value notes are included with the chord symbols to indicate the accompaniment rhythm to be played.

L. H. $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\overset{|}{\circ}$ | $\overset{|}{\circ}$ |

C Em Dm G C

Some pieces employ block chords without a pattern, their placement being indicated by their alignment with the melody notes alone. See for example "The Shepherds' Star." Such pieces are designated, "L.H. Block chords as indicated."

For harmonic reasons or to keep out of the way of the melody line, a note may be dropped from the chord. This is found in other accompaniment patterns as well.

L. H. $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\overset{|}{\circ}$ | $\overset{|}{\circ}$ |

C(no5th) C(no3rd) C7(no5th)/E C7(no3rd)/G

When a block chord is used in a selection with another accompaniment pattern, a vertical line to the left of the chord symbol identifies a chord to be played as a block chord: |C, |A, |Em, etc.

Waltz Pattern

This accompaniment pattern is symbolized by $_ \square \square$, (oom, pah, pah). The oom represents the bass note of the chord and the pahas, all chord notes above the bass. The pattern is accompanied by time value notes below each symbol.

L. H. $\frac{3}{4}$ $_ \square \square$

C C/G C7

The bass note may be held through the bar at the performers discretion.

L. H. $\frac{3}{4}$ $_ \square \square$

C

L. H. $\frac{6}{8}$ $_ \square \square _ \square \square$

C

See "Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas Tonight" for an example of waltz pattern usage.

Other Symbols and Instructions

Chord Symbols

A chord symbol remains in effect until the next chord symbol appears.

Hand Placement Arrows

Arrows are used to identify the appropriate position for a chord on the keyboard. No arrow next to a chord symbol indicates that the bass note of the chord is to be played in the seven notes just below middle C — from low C to B below middle C. A downward arrow \downarrow indicates that the bass note of the chord is to be played between the C and B of the next octave down. Two downward arrows $\downarrow\downarrow$ indicate that the bass note is to be played between the C and B of the octave below that. An upward arrow \uparrow next to the chord symbol indicates that the bass note of the chord should fall in the octave between middle C and the B seven notes above. Two upward arrows $\uparrow\uparrow$ indicate that the bass note is to be placed in the octave above that.

N.C.

(N.C.) means that no chord is to be played. This direction remains in effect until the next chord symbol appears on the music. If the (N.C.) is preceded by a capital, as C(N.C.), the bass note is to be played alone, without a chord. This frequently occurs at the end of a piece and is often accompanied by hand placement and duration arrows such as $\downarrow E\flat(N.C.)\rightarrow$.

Tempo, Expression, and Related Markings

The use of tempo and expression markings, dynamic symbols, and repeat and related structural signs is consistent with that of the standard classical repertoire. For anyone unfamiliar with these terms and

symbols, there are many inexpensive guides available. The *Student's Musical Dictionary*, published by Mel Bay Publications, Inc., is one such example.

Phrasing


As phrasing is not indicated, use your judgement and musical sense in shaping melodic lines. Singing often helps to identify the underlying phrasing or the possible breaks in legato fingering.

Dynamics

Although dynamic markings are provided, remember that an upward moving melodic line often implies a crescendo, and a downward moving melodic line often implies a diminuendo. The dynamic high point is usually at or near the end of the piece. Carefully thought out dynamic variation can be a great benefit in making a performance interesting.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

American: Redner and Brooks

L. H. $\frac{4}{4}$ 

Andante G C#° C+ Am/C D7sus D7(no5th)

1. *mp* O Lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we__ see thee

G GΔ7/F# Dm6/F E7 Am Am/C D7sus D7(no5th)

lie. A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep, the si - lent__ stars go

G F#m G° Am6/C B7 Em Am/C

by. Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth, the ev - er - last - ing

↓B G/D C#° C+ Am/C G/D D7(no5th) G →

light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to-night.

2. For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the king and, and peace to men on Earth.
3. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tiding tell.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

The Shepherds' Star

L. H. block chords
as indicated

Moderately

mf

1. Hail the blest morn, see the great Me-di-a-tor,
down from the re-gions of glo-ry de-scend!
Shep-herds go wor-ship the Babe in the man-ger.
Lo, for his guard, the bright an-gels at-tend!

2. Cold on his cradle the dew drop are shining, low lies His head with the beast of the stall.
Angels adore Him in slumbers reclining, wise men and shepherds before Him do fall.
3. Low at His feet we in humble prostration, lose all our sorrow and trouble and strife.
There we receive His devine consolation, flowing afresh from the fountain of life.
4. Star of the morning, thy brightness, declining, shortly must fade when the sun doth arise.
Beaming refulgent, His glory eternal, shines on the children of love in the skies.

Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas Tonight

L. H. $\frac{3}{4}$

American: Redner and Brooks

Moderately

mf
Christ - mas in lands of the fir three and pine.

Christ - mas in lands of the palm tree and vine.

Christ - mas where snow peaks stand sol - emn and white.

Christ - mas where corn fields lie sun - ny and bright

Ev - 'ry-where, Ev - 'ry-where Christ - mas to - night.