



## SCORE READING SURVIVAL GUIDE

AT FIRST



- Familiarise yourself with the structure of the score and the common symbols: systems, system dividers, brackets, braces. There are many textbooks and websites which you can use as reference sources.
- Learn the order in which instruments usually appear on an orchestral, small ensemble or vocal score.
- Learn the names of instruments in German, Italian and French as many scores use these languages. Look at your score; perhaps it is an edition from yet another country, for example Russia.
- Take note of any transposing instruments before you start listening (especially if you have perfect pitch).
- Notice the clefs that each of the instruments are playing in and whether there are any clef changes.
- Look ahead for any key, tempo, time signature and instrumentation changes.
- Especially if it is an orchestral work, notice how many systems there are on each page, as obviously if there are many lines where an instrument group is not playing, there is no point in writing out endless lines of rests.
- Follow the line that has the melody.
- Look ahead for any repeats, and be prepared that the performers might or might not include them in the performance/recording.
- If you get lost, look ahead to identify a section where there might be an obvious change of texture, tempo, etc. and listen out for when that spot comes up so you can find your place in the score again.
- In a particularly fast and dense section, you might want to just keep counting the beats, so you don't lose your spot.
- Start by following scores of pieces for a single instrument, then move on to duets, then to larger ensembles and orchestral pieces. Pieces with a vocal part can also be easier to follow along as there are usually words.