

Ways of notating accordion music

If you have worked through this book, you will be able to play music in other accordion music books.

The notation used here is employed by more and more accordionists all around the world. Still, it is important to know that there are several other notation systems which are also widely in use.

1. The traditional German notation

All the notes of the left hand chords are completely notated. This notation system looks very much like piano music. (It is however not always playable on the piano, as seen in the example “When sailors sway ...” on the next page.) If this notation is used – without the inclusion of chord names – then the accordionist needs very profound knowledge of chordal theory. It is strongly recommended to include the chord names when using music with this notation.

2. The French notation

The chord names in the romance languages

Do = C

Re = D

Mi = E

Fa = F

Sol = G

La = A

Si = B

The naming of accidentals and chord symbols:

Fa#7 = F#7

Rem = Dm, etc.

Many French “musette” collections are notated as simply as possible, because the pieces are often easy to accompany: only the melody with chord symbols. However, these chords are often named with solfeggio: “do, re, mi” instead of “C, D, E”. This notation is also often seen in Italy, Spain and Russia.

Two additional aspects are important:

- If the accompaniment pauses, this is indicated with a 0, followed by a horizontal line which shows the length of the pause. (see in the example right, bars 1 and 2)
- Bass melodies are notated with miniature note heads in the lower half of the G-clef, usually designated with the letter „B.“ (see in the example, bars 3 and 4). Compare this notation with that presented in this book on page 176.

3. Notation without chord symbols

Letters above the notes show these chords:

M = Major chord

m = Minor chord

7 = Seventh chord

dim = diminished chord

This is the most demanding form of notation: it is absolutely necessary to have a good understanding of the bass clef. Bass notes and chords are notated as in this book, but no chord symbol is used to help define what should be played. The note head shows the fundamental tone of the chord; the letter, which would otherwise be used as part of a chord symbol, is written here directly above the note head. In order to signify bass tones which are to be played as counter bass, a short horizontal line is placed directly under the note head (see in the example right, bars 3 and 7). Compare this with the notation in “Greetings from Romania” on page 175.

When sailors sway to and fro - in German notation

①

Musette No. 2001 - in French notation

②

Greetings from Romania - notated without chord symbols

③