



Ding Dong Merrily on High

Easy Piano Sheet Music

Thoinot Arbeau (1589)

Level 3 | Full score, fingering, practice tips

Door 20 of the Free Piano Advent Calendar

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Ding Dong Merrily on High

Key	Time Signature	Tempo	Difficulty	Measures
G major	4/4	Allegro mod., 104 BPM	Beginner - Level 3	16

About This Piece

The tune is the Branle de l'Official from Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchésographie*, printed in Langres in 1589. Arbeau was Jehan Tabourot, who died in 1595. As a carol it appeared in *The Cambridge Carol-Book* (SPCK, 1924, No. VIII), with words by G. R. Woodward and a harmony by Charles Wood. The words are not printed here, and Wood's harmony is not used. Arbeau's 1596 edition agrees with the carol note for note, with halved note values. Our score is in G major, a minor third below the B-flat of the carol page, and the melody is unchanged. The Gloria is written once, without Wood's repeat, over a single-note left hand.

Notes and Hand Positions

Fingering Guide

Right Hand: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5

D position for the verse (thumb on D4, 2 on E4, 3 on F#4, 4 on G4, 5 on A4). The Gloria starts with the thumb over G4 and the pinky on D5, moves to a thumb-on-E4 position in measures 12-13, and returns to D position from measure 14.

Left Hand: E2, G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3 (single notes, two half notes per measure)

Pinky on G2 as home note, with 3 on B2, 4 on A2, 2 on C3 and the thumb on D3. In the Gloria the hand moves each bar: G2-D3, A2-E3, then E2 with the pinky and B2 with the thumb in measure 11.

Notes Used in This Piece

Right Hand

Note	On the Staff	On the Keyboard	Finger
D4	Just below the treble staff	Between two black keys above C4	Thumb (1)
E4	Bottom line of treble staff	Right of the two black keys	Index (2)
F#4	First space (F# in key signature)	Black key between F4 and G4	Middle (3)
G4	Second line of treble staff	Between F# and G# black keys	Ring (4)
A4	Second space of treble staff	Between G# and A# black keys	Pinky (5)
B4	Middle line of treble staff	Right of the three black keys	Middle (3)
C5	Third space of treble staff	One octave above middle C	Ring (4)
D5	Fourth line of treble staff	Between two black keys above C5	Pinky (5)

Left Hand

Note	On the Staff	On the Keyboard	Finger
E2	First ledger line below bass staff	Octave and a sixth below middle C	Pinky (5)
G2	Bottom line of bass staff	Octave and a fourth below middle C	Pinky (5)
A2	First space of bass staff	Octave and a third below middle C	Ring (4)
B2	Second line of bass staff	Octave and a step below middle C	Middle (3)
C3	Second space of bass staff	One octave below middle C	Index (2)
D3	Third line of bass staff	Between two black keys below C4	Thumb (1)
E3	Third space of bass staff	Right of two black keys below C4	Thumb (1)

Section A - The Verse (Measures 1-8)

A four-bar tune played twice at mezzo-forte, all in one D position. Two G4s on the ring finger lead into the eighths A4, G4, F#4, E4 (fingers 5-4-3-2) and a long D4 on the thumb. Measures 3-4 answer with E4, G4, G4, F#4 and two half-note G4s. The left hand plays two half notes per bar.

Allegro moderato (♩ = 104)



Ding Dong Merrily on High - Section A - The Verse

How to Practice This Section

Count the eighths out loud, 1-and-2-and, and keep the four eighths of measure 1 even. Play the left hand alone once, G2-B2, D3-A2, C3-D3, G2, so the half notes land on beats 1 and 3.

Section B - The Gloria Refrain (Measures 9-16)

One slurred line at forte: each bar is a dotted quarter and five eighths, D5 then C5, B4, C5, D5, B4, and every bar starts a step lower, down to F#4 in measure 14. A decrescendo to *mp* in measure 12 and a crescendo in measure 14 bring back forte for the last two bars, which repeat the end of the verse.

Allegro moderato (♩ = 104)



Ding Dong Merrily on High - Section B - The Gloria Refrain

How to Practice This Section

Learn measures 9-11 first with fingers 5-4-3-4-5-3, 4-3-2-3-4-2 and 3-2-1-2-3-1. Measures 12-13 repeat the last two patterns a position lower, so move the whole hand down on the bar line.

Full Score

Here is the complete piece with all sections combined.

Allegro moderato (♩ = 104)



Ding Dong Merrily on High - Thoinot Arbeau (1589)

Step-by-Step Practice Guide

Step 1: Right Hand Alone

1. Place the hand in D position, thumb on D4 and pinky on A4, and play measure 1: G4, G4 with finger 4, then A4-G4-F#4-E4 with 5-4-3-2
2. Measures 1-4 as one phrase, holding the D4 in measure 2 for three full beats
3. Gloria, measures 9-11: start with the pinky on D5 and keep the dotted quarter long before the eighths
4. Measures 12-14: move the thumb to E4 for two bars, then back to D4 in measure 14
5. Play the whole right hand at x0.5, then x0.75, with mf in the verse and f in the Gloria

Step 2: Left Hand Alone

1. Two half notes per bar: pinky on G2, middle finger on B2, then thumb on D3 and ring finger on A2
2. Measure 3: index on C3 and thumb on D3, then a whole-note G2 with the pinky
3. Gloria bars 9-11: G2-D3, A2-E3, then stretch down to E2 with the pinky and B2 with the thumb
4. Keep each half note held for its full two beats

Step 3: Hands Together

1. Verse hands together at about 70 to the quarter, left hand on beats 1 and 3 only
2. Gloria hands together one bar at a time, then measures 9-11 as a group
3. Join the verse and the Gloria at measure 8 to 9, where the right hand jumps up to D5
4. Target 104 to the quarter, with the decrescendo in measure 11 and the fermata on the last G



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