

My personal approach of using the Iranian santour

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December 09, 2018

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The tablature for the santour

A traditional musical staff notation identifies the pitch of a note relative to a key point marked by a clef sign, such as the G clef. The tablature is a notation that identifies the locations on an instrument where the notes are to be played.

I have imagined a tablature for the santour that I use, not to replace the conventional staff notation, but to help me revise the passages of music that I have already memorized or that I am memorizing. The following paragraphs present the different components of my tablature.

The chords

To represent the chords, I use a diagram that presents the **2 principal reference strings** of the santour, the G (SOL) and the C (DO) strings (on the G santour with 9 bridge rows), and the **2 diagonals formed by the rows of the bridges**. The other strings are represented using additional lines, as needed.

Nota bene: The quality (major, minor...) of the chord depends on the accidentals of its notes.

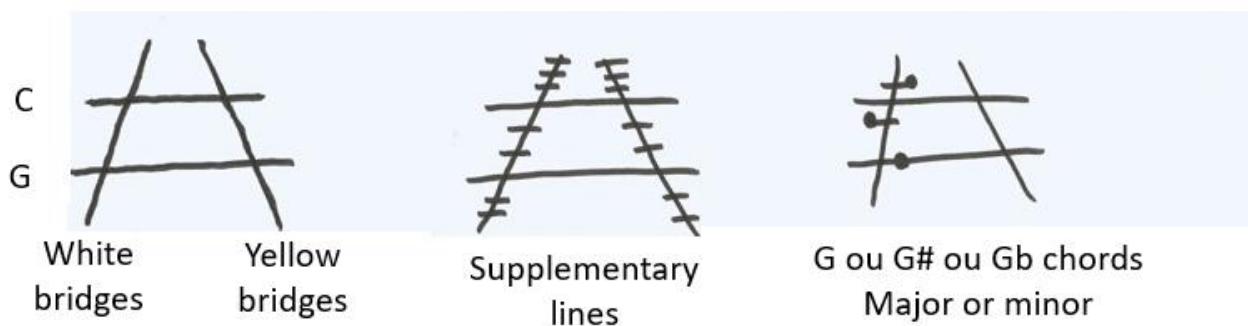
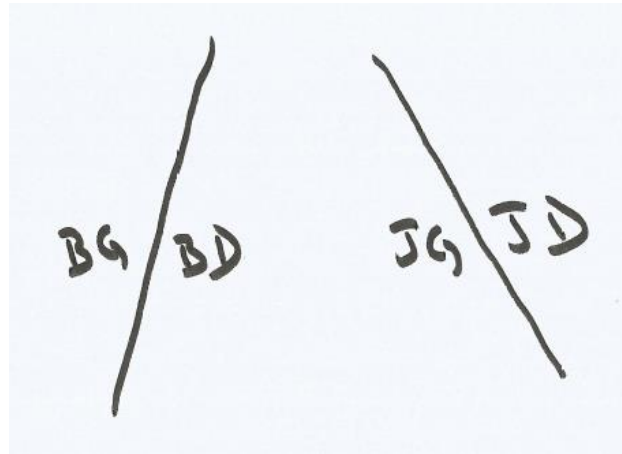


Figure 1

The positioning of the melody notes in relation to the bridges

In order to be able to present the melodies on the tablature it is necessary to identify the position of the notes in relation to the bridges. Four positions must be identified: The left and right of the white bridges (BG, BD) and the left and right of the yellow bridges (JG, JD).



BG = Blanc Gauche = White Left - **BD** = Blanc Droite = White Right
JG = Jaune Gauche = Yellow Left - **JD** = Jaune Droite = Yellow Right

Figure 2

The indication of melodies, rhythms and bar lines

The head of each note on the tablature indicates the string to strike. The indication (BG, BD...) specifies its positioning in relation to the bridges.

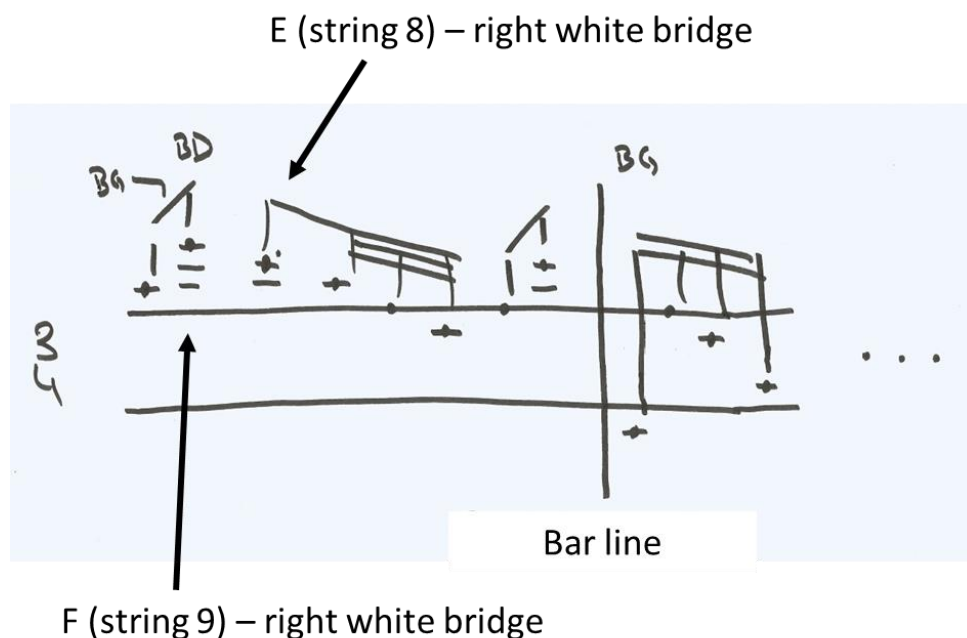


Figure 3

Accidentals

We can indicate the **accidentals of the key signature** at the beginning of the tablature, for example, by indicating "Key signature: F#". The **dynamic accidentals** (whose movements are specified on the universe diagram of the piece) can be shown on the tablature, above or below the concerned notes, by the letters "DA". The **static accidentals** are also provided by the universe of the piece. In the example below, the universe used is the one presented in my text [Managing accidentals on the double bridges santour](#) page 3 Figure 6.

The example

Below we will see the first line of Bach's Sarabande from the Suite No. 1 for cello in the conventional staff and the tablature notation combining the elements presented above.

The chord names displayed in red are not part of the tablature notation properly speaking but can be specified, in the same way they could be in the conventional staff notation.

Sarabande.

The image displays the first line of Bach's Sarabande from the Suite No. 1 for cello. It consists of two parts: a conventional musical staff and a corresponding tablature notation. The conventional staff is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tablature notation is a six-line system with fret numbers and dynamic accidentals (DA) indicated above or below the notes. Chord names are written in red below the tablature: G, C/G, G, B/G, B/G, and D. The key signature is indicated as "Key signature: F#" at the top left of the tablature section.

Figure 4