

A Brief History of Jixis

I was born in 1942. My mother, Mary, was a piano teacher. She taught me the keyboard at an early age. My step-father, Hal Chesters, was a well know jazz guitarist and music teacher in the Chicago area. He began teaching me about stringed instruments when I was eleven. At fourteen I was in a local band, The DETs, playing local gigs, but I was not sufficiently interested in playing music to pursue it further as a career.

I had thought since the beginning of my musical training that there should be a simpler way for a novice student to learn how to read music and locate the correct keying positions on a musical instrument, but as time went on instead of trying to develop a workable system for standard music, I tried to revise the standard music system and developed what came to be known as *The Graphic Music System*, or GMS. I applied for a patent in 1987, and the patent issued in 1989, but no one was particularly interested in it, and so it was never used by anyone. The patent for the system may be seen at <http://www.jixis.com/GraphicMusicSystem.htm>

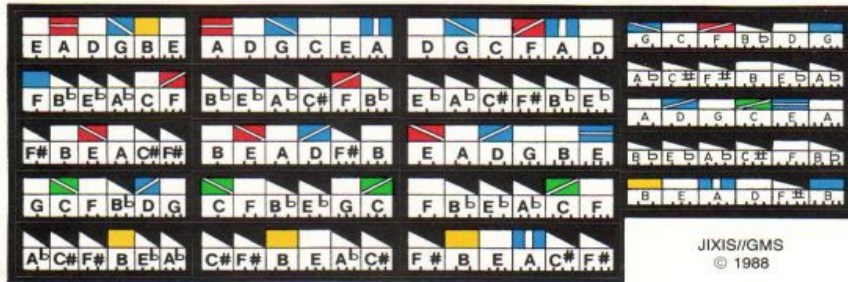
While the patent was pending for the GMS system, and it was becoming clear from all the rejection letters that I was receiving, that the GMS was most likely going nowhere, I decided instead to take the GMS concepts and revise them to fit the standard music system.

The word *Jixis* is no more than a homonym for the acronym *GGCKCS*, for “Graphically Gauged, Color-Coded, Keying Control System.” I applied for patents for Jixis, but they were ultimately rejected based on prior art from the early 1900’s wherein keyboards and fingerboards had previously been coded using black and white markings. The patent office said that adding color to the line/space coding of an instrument was insufficiently novel to allow my patents.

Nonetheless, without any patents, and with only copyrights to protect me, I decided to prepare a working version of Jixis to offer to whomever might want to utilize the system. In the 1980’s, almost all mechanical drawing was done by hand, and all text writing was done using a typewriter. Wherever color was supposed to be present in the drawings, reference letters were used, e.g., R = Red, B = Blue, etc. Letter-sized instruction sheets were prepared for the various instruments, with written instructions on one side and the black and white graphical coding of the staffs one the other side. Labels for the keyboard were done using small, colored, circular labels obtained at an office supply store. The fingerboard label instructions were done only in black and white. This also garnered no interest.

In 1988, I decided to draft label formats for the guitar and bass guitar and then had a local print shop professionally place these designs onto removable-adhesive backed paper. The label sheets were made so that each label could be lifted directly from the sheet and applied to a musical instrument.

Again, no one was interested in developing Jixis as a commercial business.



When the Internet became available in the 1990's, Jixis.com briefly offered the Jixis label system for sale. Sales were dismal over several years, so the business site was discontinued. Moreover, customers were complaining that the label ink would run from sweaty fingertips, the label edges would curl up from being struck by the strings, and the label adhesive was inadequate to keep the labels from side-shifting.

The biggest issue with the labels turned out to be in the way in which the fingerboard coding system had been done. Novice players complained that it was awkward and difficult to distinguish one note symbol from another. But by that time I had lost my enthusiasm for trying to develop a more clear way of redoing the label coding. What I decided to do instead, since there were no issues with the Jixis keyboard system, was to offer the instructions and labels as a free download for whomever might want to learn to play the keyboard, and defer the recoding of the fingerboard labels until a time when I was ready to prepare them.

That has gone well. Thousands of people from all over the world have downloaded the Jixis keyboard system, and hopefully have learned through Jixis how to begin to play their respective keyboards.

It was not until 2009, that I finally decided to take the time to deal with the re-coding of the fingerboard labels. Various color/symbol coding systems were experimented with for stringed instrument fingerboards until I was satisfied that the coding was sufficiently simple that few people would have difficulty understanding how to use the system to locate written music notes on their respective fingerboards.

Once the fingerboard coding was chosen, I began experimenting with various methods of displaying the label sets for use with a staff guide. Initially I chose a format that would display the system in the manner depicted below for a guitar. Portions of this display format are now in PDF downloads as alternate label sets for guitar and for bass guitar.

Jixis™ GMS: Guitar

The image displays 19 fretboard diagrams for guitar, numbered 0 to 19. Each diagram consists of a six-string staff with notes and fingerings. Above each staff is a header with colored symbols (triangles, squares, diamonds) and numbers indicating fingerings. The diagrams are arranged in four columns: Column 1 (0-4), Column 2 (5-9), Column 3 (10-14), and Column 4 (15-19). The notes and fingerings are as follows:

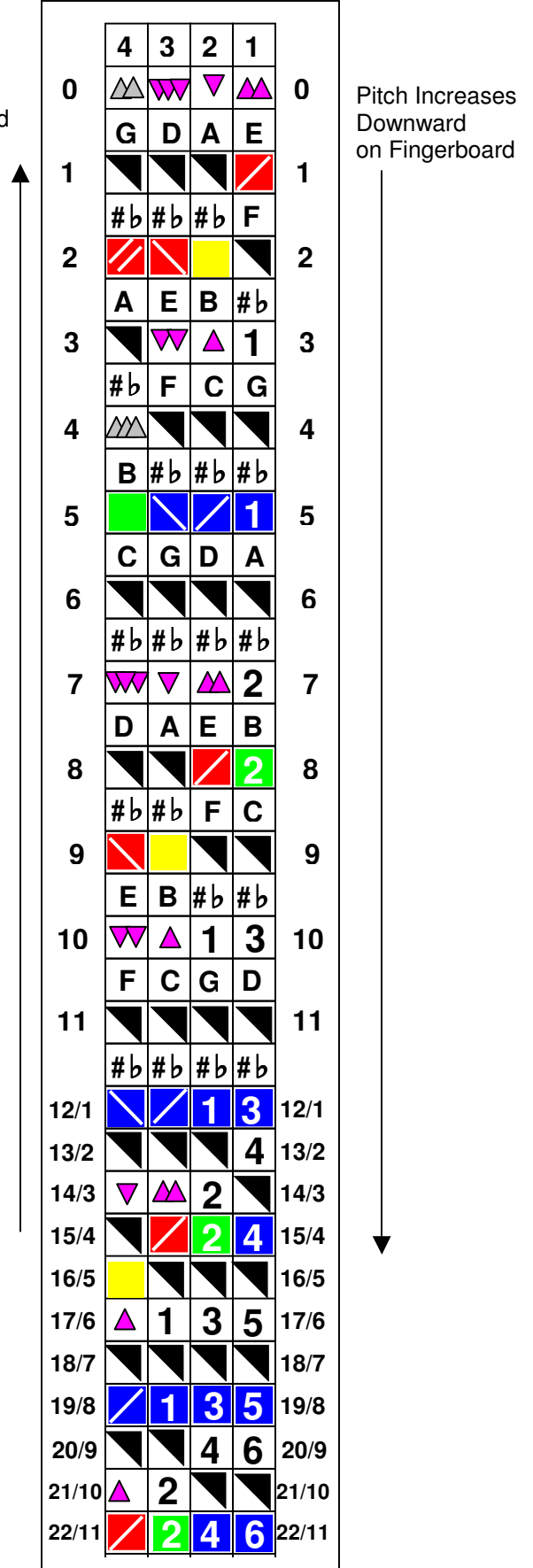
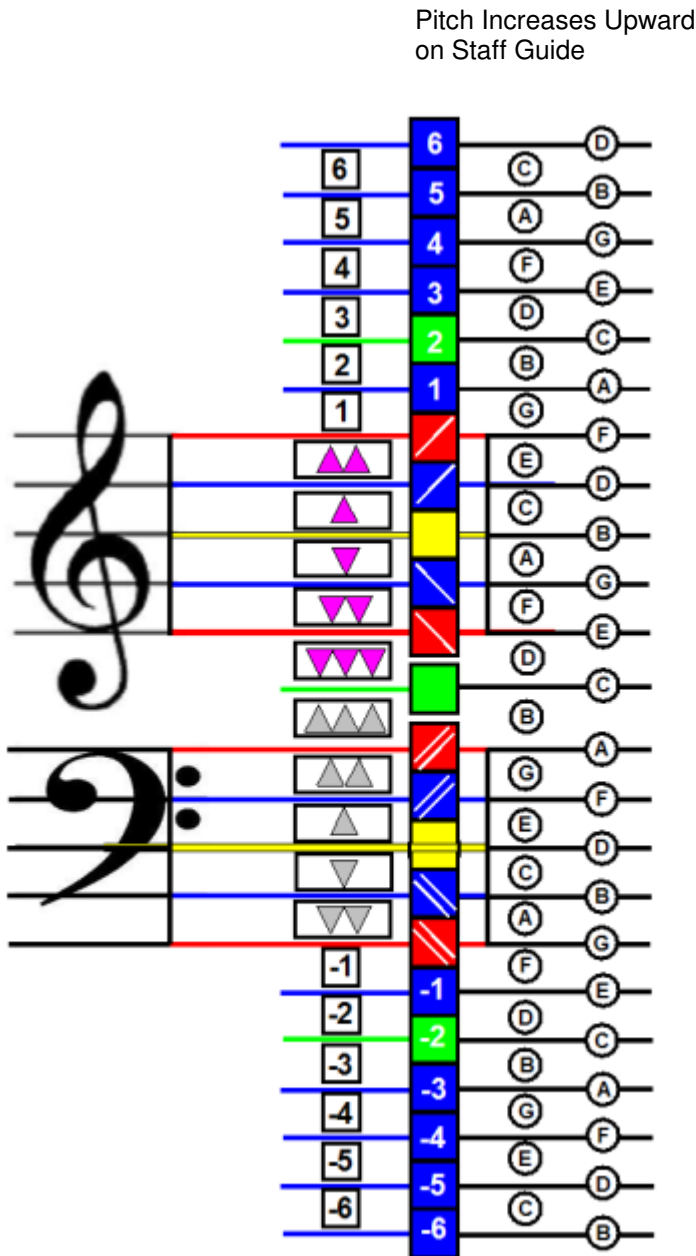
- 0: E A D G B E (Fingerings: 4, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 1: F B \flat E \flat A \flat C F (Fingerings: 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 2: F \sharp B E A C \sharp F \sharp (Fingerings: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 3: G C F B \flat D G (Fingerings: 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 4: A \flat C \sharp F \sharp B E \flat A \flat (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 5: A D G C E A (Fingerings: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 6: B \flat E \flat A \flat C \sharp F B \flat (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 7: B E A D F \sharp B (Fingerings: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 8: C F B \flat E \flat G C (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 9: C \sharp F \sharp B E A \flat C \sharp (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 10: D G C F A D (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 11: E \flat A \flat C \sharp F \sharp B \flat E \flat (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 12: E A D G B E (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 13: F B \flat E \flat A \flat C F (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 14: F \sharp B E A C \sharp F \sharp (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 15: G C F B \flat D G (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 16: A \flat C \sharp F \sharp B E \flat A \flat (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 17: A D G C E A (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 18: B \flat E \flat A \flat C \sharp F B \flat (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)
- 19: B E A D F \sharp B (Fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1)

As it turned out, this format was so tedious to do that I gave up on the project again and did not restart until 2011. The next format I designed, shown below, seemed promising, but was still too visually complex for a beginning student. Leaving in the note letter names for the first 12 positions of the fingerboard, here a violin, and having dual numbers for the remaining positions, to indicate where note letter names repeat, was intended to simplify the system so that when a color/symbol coding was located it would be obvious what its note name was. Instead, the additions made the label set overly complicated.

It was not until I removed the note letter names and the dual numbering system, and just utilized the staff guide to provide the note letter names that the system became simple enough to generate for all possible fingerboards.

Jixis Graphical Music System – Staff Guide and Label Set

For Violin



The design system now in use on the Jixis fingerboard site is far more visually simple than the one shown above. The new design system allows a beginning student of virtually any stringed instrument to easily determine fingering positions by comparing note line/space positions, and as well easily determine note names by using the either staff guide line/space note letter name display, or the note letter name chart.

As I rapidly approach 70 years of age, carpal tunnel and arthritis issues have caused me to refrain from playing music. I have no lasting record of any of my music, except for bits and pieces from my youth. Since the GMS System was never utilized, my seeming legacy to music is Jixis itself.

Hopefully, many potential musicians will download the various fingerboard label sets and instructions and use them to their advantage.

Jixis is as timeless as the standard music system itself. As long as there is a standard music system and people interested in a quick and easy way to learn how to locate the written notes of music on their musical instruments, Jixis Graphical Musical Systems will remain useful.

Tom Chesters

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