

Gofigure: an adequate font for Figured Bass

Gofigure is designed to provide a rudimentary set of stacked bass figures, covering the most common combinations, in a conventional fashion, in any text environment. It is also designed to work in Dorico as a *partial* replacement for Figurato, a font designed by Florian Kretlow to be a comprehensive figured bass text system, but which no longer works in Dorico 4.1 or later. It is released with the SIL open font licence.

History, Background and Mission Statement

Gofigure has been created primarily for use in Dorico beyond the limitations of the figured bass system, such as on the upper staff of a keyboard instrument. Its *secondary* function is to ‘stand in’ for Figurato in legacy documents; which it does at the cost of being much less comprehensive.

Ideally, old documents using Figurato as Lyrics should have them replaced with ‘real’ bass figures where possible, and Gofigure should be used only where this is not possible, or as a temporary fix *in extremis*.

Usage

Gofigure deliberately uses a similar syntax to Figurato and Dorico. Valid characters are the numbers **0** to **9**; **b**, **n**, **s**, **#**, **x**, **bb** for accidentals; **d** or **endash** for dash. You can also use single-row parentheses and square brackets. Curly brackets { } create double-row square brackets, and Angled brackets < > create double-row curved brackets.

To create stacks of figures, Gofigure uses font ligatures. In the same way that the sequence of characters **f f** and **f f i** are substituted by the combined forms **ff** and **ffi** in a text font, Gofigure substitutes known sequences of characters with stacked forms. Thus **54** becomes $\frac{5}{4}$. (*The first, longest sequence is used, hence **6b5** ‘trumps’ both **6b** and **b5**.*) You can break a ligature sequence with **Space** or **Period**. Every stack of numerals, with accidentals, must be created individually, and assigned a unique sequence. As a result, it does not support as many possible syntax combinations as Figurato or Dorico, but it should still be possible to create the desired visual result for most two-row figures.

Use the comma

For best compatibility with Figurato and Dorico, Gofigure understands the comma to force a new line. So **5,#** will be interpreted as 5 over #. As of version 1, Single figures may have accidentals before or after them: e.g. **b6** or **6b**. Accidentals within stack sequences are assumed to come BEFORE the numeral. This is the major difference between Gofigure and Figurato. Figurato interprets **6s4** as $\frac{6\#}{4}$. Gofigure interprets **6s4** as $\frac{6}{\#4}$. (In the absence of a comma, Dorico interprets where the accidental goes by harmonic context..!) However, all of them interpret **6,s4** unambiguously as $\frac{6}{\#4}$. It’s therefore always best to use a comma to specify the line break.

You will need to check your documents to ensure that no existing figures are misinterpreted.

If you want an accidental to the right-hand side of the top number in a group, type the group first, then simply add the accidental as the start of a new column/sequence, e.g. **65b**.

Gofigure also understands **,#**, **,s**, **,n**, **,b** and **,3** by themselves as figures on the lower row. These can be used either for the resolution of, say, a preceding **54** figure; or to add an accidental to the right-hand side of a figure on the second row: e.g. **65,b** to get a flat after the 5.

The plus sign after **2**, **4** or **5** will produce the 2+, 4+, and 5+ single figure. **6/** or **6+** or **6'** (single quote) will generate a 6 with a slash. **2**, **5** or **7** followed by a slash **/** will produce the slashed forms of those numbers.

Combinations

The fonts now can display:

5, 6, 7 and 8 with accidentals below:

5 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 7 7 7 8 8 8
 # q b x bb # q b # q b # q b

The following numeral groups:

5 5 6 7 7 8 8 9 9 9 10 7 6 6 6 6 8
 3 4 5 3 4 3 6 4 5 7 9 4 4 4 4 4 5
 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

64, 75, 74 and #,2 with accidentals beside either numeral:

6 6 7 6 6 6 7 7 # 6 6
 q4 b4 b5 #4 b4 4+ q4 q5 2 b5 5

(Also 65 figures as shown.) Any accidental can precede the top numeral in any group. You can also place additional accidentals on the right hand side, as a new glyph on the first or second row.

Please let me know if there are any glaringly commonplace combinations that should be included.

Dashes

You can create a dash line on the top, lower, or both rows using **d**, **d** or **dd**. (Not in conjunction with other figures yet, e.g. **d,s** is not recognized.)

SMuFL

Gofigure also contains glyphs in the SMuFL range for bass figures, so it can be used as the standard Figured Bass font in Dorico and other SMuFL-compliant apps, (thus maintaining consistency between real figures and text ones). The characters are based on those in Figurato, with some modifications to the accidentals for improved stacking.

French plus

Gofigure has limited support for the French system of bass figures that uses the plus symbol. A plus can be used before any single figure or before the top figure of any stack, e.g. **+64**. There is also support for **7+**, using **7+** or **7,+**. Accidentals on the first or second row can be added using ligatures that precede or follow, e.g. **,s7+** will put a sharp before the +. (Essentially two columns of separate figures.)

Gofigure v1.2: Several glyphs added. Error for **6n42** corrected.

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