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DEDICATION

In Memoriam

Dr. Robert Wayne Ricks

He always compelled me to “take a closer look and let the Music tell its own story.”

FOREWORD

This text is primarily designed to serve as a textbook for a college-level music theory fundamentals course. However, it also has the flexibility to serve equally well for a typical core curriculum college-level Music Theory I or Harmony I course.

Our goal is to deliver sufficient information to enable the student to be able to evaluate and analyze select music from the literature as quickly as is practical. Secondly, we seek to provide sufficient instruction to enable the student to begin writing music as quickly as is practical.

In order to develop a complete argument, it is important that the student understands that this textbook “assumes a blank slate.” No prior knowledge on the part of the student is assumed.

In order to give instructors greater flexibility we have intentionally provided content that may exceed the course objectives in some institutions. We anticipate that instructors may wish to adjust the material in the text to match their current course content, or adjust their courses to make use of all of the content in this textbook.

PREFACE

The manner in which music theory has been traditionally taught is now in a state of flux. Originally, the study of music theory was designed to acquaint the music student or knowledgeable amateur with the composer’s working materials in “Classical” music roughly spanning the 17th- through the 19th Centuries.

The role of music theory has expanded far beyond this mandate: theory training now incorporates greater or lesser explanations of music after 1900, greater or lesser explanations of music before 1600, idiomatic Jazz practices, elements of World Music, and Popular Song idioms.

Such an expansion of means and methods in learning and teaching the fundamental language of music presents a formidable and almost daunting challenge: what to teach, how to teach it, and in what sequence?

Additionally, music theory has become a favored required Arts elective in College and University curricula, and, additionally, most music programs have a developmental (“remedial”) music theory class to address the needs of under-prepared music majors. Often, music theory is required companion material for private instruction as well.

This textbook seeks to address these multiple needs: to serve as a basic to moderate level text for the typical music fundamentals course, and to serve as an introductory text for those interested in acquiring a rudimentary knowledge of the language of music.

The text also provides supplemental information, such as chord symbolization, aspects of Jazz harmony, vernacular song form and its attributes, and so on. Usually when this material is added to existing texts, it is incomplete and delivered in a manner that reflects only limited real-world experience.

This author is fortunate to have had extensive experience as a teacher of music theory at the college and university level, as a teacher of AP music theory in an Arts Magnet high school, as a teacher of the Jazz idiom, as a practicing Classical and Jazz musician, and as a composer in many styles.

Therefore the scope of this text is to:

- ~Provide clear and concise explanations regarding the basic language of music;
- ~Address appropriate subject matter for use by the instructor of college-level introductory/developmental theory courses, as well as typical Music Theory I courses;
- ~Add other relevant information, usually acquired informally by the student outside the classroom;
- ~Support each learning objective or skill set with reinforcement in the form of concise exercises;
- ~Prepare the student for a continuing study of music theory at intermediate to advanced levels.

The format of the text and its scope will easily adapt itself to any of these circumstances for the instructor or for the student.

INTRODUCTION

A definition of Music

In it's broadest possible sense, music is defined as "organized sound." This open-ended and safe definition is coherent regardless of era, style, culture, or the mechanics of musical organization. Each successive historical era produces musically artistic expressions of its own time, its own musical "aura of the era." The study of Music Theory is the means by which we investigate this.

A definition of Music Theory

Music Theory is the study of music and its organizational characteristics. We define and examine aspects of music:

- ~How do we perceive music aurally?
- ~How do we experience music aesthetically?
- ~How do we symbolize music visually?

We learn to associate sound with symbol (or notation), so to increase our ability to perceive music at levels of increasing depth and comprehension, both experientially and analytically.

The purpose of Music Theory

The study of the language of music yields three unshakeable tenets:

- ~We learn to analyze music in order to gain an understanding of the how great composers create. We use it as a "window" into their minds, if you will.
- ~We learn to analyze music in order to deepen our own understanding, either as musicians or consumers of this form of artistic expression.
- ~We employ the knowledge gained in the study of music to stimulate and enhance our own creativity.

Among the community of musicians, the greater our comprehension, the more sublime our interpretation. This creates a more meaningful experience for our audience. This is the ultimate focus of the study of music theory.

As consumers, the more we understand about music, the more refined is our ability to intelligently evaluate what we enjoy. It is the intelligent consumer of Art who is the greatest supporter of Art.