

Music Theory (#8667)

Course Information

Music theory introduces the basic rudiments of music, including melody, rhythm, and harmony studies. This course is designed for novice to intermediate music performers who wish to further their musical understanding. The course focuses on the development of fundamental written skills that are based upon a thorough comprehension of basic sounds in music. Music Theory is intended as a precursor to Music Technology and AP Music Theory.

Materials Needed

The music theory course does not utilize a required text book. Therefore it is **extremely important** that students are prepared with a *three ring notebook containing both regularly lined paper and blank staff paper*. In addition to taking regular notes regarding traditional classroom instruction, students will be creating a song notebook using the staff paper. It is extremely helpful to be able to easily switch between standard lined paper and staff paper throughout the notebook.

If staff paper is purchased, it is recommended that students buy paper with three holes punched rather than a spiral-bound notebook. A tablet of paper like this is only \$3.95 at Music and Arts in Doylestown. Blank staff paper is available online at Mr. Morehouse's teacher site under music theory and student documents. Feel free to print copies of the blank staff paper for your notebook.

Students should **complete all work in pencil!** Music is an art and it requires craftsmanship. When you are first learning the craft of music you will make mistakes, and the ability to edit your work is extremely important.

Instructional Elements

The primary goal of the music theory class is to provide students with a well-rounded base of musical skill that effectively coordinates what they know about music with what they hear musically. In essence, music theory strives to improve in each student what Dr. Gary Karpinski refers to as their "hearing eye and seeing ear."

To accomplish this, classroom instruction will include the following elements:

- **Rote song instruction:** In essence, this element of instruction focuses on the immersion of the student in music, and requires them to learn music in the same fashion that a child first learns to imitate speech.
- **Pattern instruction:** Patterns are organized as musical words. Whether these patterns are tonal or rhythmic, the intent is vocabulary instruction. No musical sound consists solely of pitches and rhythms. There is a natural organization of the material, similar to the natural organization and syntax of our spoken language. Pattern instruction is intended

to teach students musical words and phrases to be used in the context of common musical settings.

- **Sight-Singing:** The course includes a sequence of increasingly difficult melodic phrases and larger songs that require the student to perform the music without prior study. Students will conduct and sing rhythmic patterns and solfege syllables as tools to increase their aural understanding of the written material.
- **Written instruction:** When students grasp the sounds of a language, an understanding of the written material allows them to rapidly increase their proficiency and efficiency in learning. At the outset of class, much of the written material will include the extent of what most people consider necessary to read music (basic pitch/rhythm reading). These elements are quite basic to the study of music theory and must be mastered immediately. The overwhelming majority of the class focuses on the use of musical material rather than simple identification and association.
- **Listening examples:** Throughout the course, students will listen to a wide variety of recordings. The primary purpose of these recordings will be the introduction of timbre, texture, and history. Most students lack a mature concept of the characteristic sounds that exist within instrumental and vocal music throughout the major stylistic periods. The listening examples will provide examples of professional musicians performing stylistically accurate renditions of classic musical works.
- **Assessment:** Regular quizzes and occasional tests will be used to assess student progress. Homework will be collected when necessary to assist student progress, but quizzes and tests will be the source of a majority of the class grade. Assessments may be performance oriented, including playing/singing or identification/dictation of example material.

Instructional Comprehension

Learning music can seem to be a daunting task for many people. When we hear recordings of music we appreciate, it is extremely difficult for most people to understand what it takes to develop practical and applicable knowledge and skill in a meaningful way. Therefore, the sequence below is provided to help students understand the method behind the classroom instruction. This material is a paraphrase of Dr. Edwin E. Gordon's music learning theory and compares easily to the process through which most children learn language.

Musical comprehension is based upon the skill of audiation. To audiate is to hear and to **comprehend** music for which sound may or may not be physically present. The eight types of audiation or ways to comprehend music, identified by Dr. Gordon and listed in order of complexity, are as follows:

- **Listening:** To form meaning to the music by audiating and *connecting* to familiar patterns.
- **Reading:** To hear what is seen in notation *before* it is performed.
- **Writing:** To write music as it is heard.
- **Recalling:** To perform silently, vocally, or instrumentally the music that we heard without the aid of notation or familiar patterns.
- **Writing from recall:** To write music that uses familiar and unfamiliar patterns as it is recalled (rather than heard).
- **Creating and Improvising:** To recall and utilize familiar patterns and integrate unfamiliar patterns in an original way.

- **Reading, creating/improvising:** To read through music and create or improvise as it is read. For example, reading and utilizing chord changes.
- **Writing, creating/improvising:** To notate what is originally conceived.

Instructional Sequencing

Most students taking the music theory course clearly desire to understand music at the most complex levels but fail to dedicate sufficient time to the development of the initial skill sets. When sufficient attention is devoted to those initial forms of audiation, a musician can grow exponentially.

To assist in the development of all forms of audiation, the music theory class will present information using the following sequences.

- **Aural/Oral:** Students will listen to and imitate music, especially folk songs, vocally and instrumentally. Music will be provided using neutral syllables, tonal/rhythmic solfege, and instruments (piano and recorder).
- **Verbal Association:** Students will learn patterns vocally and instrumentally. These patterns are intended to provide proper names or musical nouns for musical events. Patterns will be provided using neutral syllables, tonal/rhythmic solfege, and instruments (piano and recorder).
- **Partial Synthesis:** Students will combine tonal and rhythmic patterns and begin to recognize the tonalities of familiar tonal patterns and the meter of familiar rhythmic patterns without the use of notation.
- **Symbolic Association:** Students will learn to associate in audiation the tonal/rhythmic patterns seen in notation with the tonal/rhythmic patterns they learned at the aural/oral and verbal association levels. The goal is to be able to hear the notation without the sound actually present and to see in notation what they perform.
- **Composite Synthesis:** Students will learn to read, write, and perform what they see in notation with an understanding of the musical context and the role of the parts within the whole.

Written Theory Skills Outline

- I. Notation Review: Reading and Writing Skills
 - a. Pitch notation
 - i. Staff Orientation (numbering of lines/spaces)
 - ii. Clefs: treble, bass, C clefs (alto and tenor), the grand staff
 - iii. Octave classification
 - b. Manuscript notation
 - i. Requirements and recommendations
 - ii. Identifying parts of the notes
 - c. Piano and guitar correlation
 - i. Accidentals
 - ii. Enharmonics, diatonic/chromatic half steps
 - d. Rhythm notation
 - i. Basic rhythmic values
 - ii. Dotted rhythmic values
 - iii. Ties (and slurs)
 - iv. Tempo markings
 - e. Expression markings
 - i. Markings related to tempo
 - ii. Markings related to dynamics
 - iii. Markings related to articulation
 - iv. Other markings
 - f. Form markings
 - i. Repeats
 - ii. D.C. and D.S.
 - iii. Coda and Fine
- II. Fundamental Rhythmic Organizations
 - a. Macrobeat and microbeat
 - b. Duple, triple, quadruple
 - c. Simple, compound
 - d. Simple time signatures
 - e. Compound time signatures
 - f. Beaming and note grouping
 - g. Counting systems
 - h. Rhythmic transposition
 - i. Conducting patterns
 - j. Anacrusis
 - k. Syncopation
 - l. Hemiola
- III. An introduction to acoustics and the overtone series

- IV. Fundamental Pitch Organizations
 - a. Whole steps and half steps
 - b. Identifying tonic and the understanding role of tonic
 - c. Scales
 - i. Major scale – whole step/half-step pattern
 - ii. Church modes
 - d. Key Signatures
 - e. Circle of 5ths/4ths
 - f. Scale degrees, Solfege
 - g. Parallel and relative relationships using church modes
 - h. Minor key signatures and minor scale forms
 - i. Leading tone vs. subtonic
 - ii. Raised submediant vs. submediant
 - iii. Aeolian vs. minor
 - i. Circle of 5ths/4ths revisited
- V. Fundamental Pitch Relationships
 - a. Transposition
 - i. Melody transposition
 - ii. Introduction to instrument transposition
 - b. Intervals
 - i. Melodic and harmonic intervals
 - ii. Numeric distance and quality
 - iii. Identification and notation
 - iv. Closed and compound intervals
 - v. Interval inversions
 - vi. Consonant and dissonant intervals
 - c. Chords
 - i. Triads: major, minor, augmented, diminished
 - ii. Chord voicings: open/closed, root position and inversions
 - iii. Figured bass inversion symbols
 - iv. Lead sheet chord symbols
- VI. Fundamental Melodic Techniques
 - a. Elements of a high-quality melody
 - b. Melodic tendencies of scale degrees
 - c. Common melodic pitch patterns
- VII. Basic Chord Progressions – tonic and dominant chords
 - a. Diatonic chords and Roman Numeral Analysis
 - b. The role of tonic and dominant chords – connecting to aural skills
 - c. Melodic analysis for chord implications
 - i. Impact of rhythmic emphasis
 - ii. Non-chord tone concepts

- VIII. Basic form – phrase lengths and cadences
 - a. Authentic and half cadences
 - b. Antecedent consequent relationships
 - c. Accompaniment textures
 - i. Ostinato
 - ii. Alberti bass
 - iii. Arpeggiated bass
- IX. Fundamental melodic embellishment
 - a. Passing tones, neighbor tones, escape tones, appoggiatura
 - b. Suspensions
 - c. Pedal tones
 - d. Analysis
 - e. Implications in three and four part writing techniques
 - f. Chromaticism and melodic embellishment
- X. Connecting chorale technique to basic arrangement techniques through folk songs
 - a. Creating melodic outlines
 - b. Structural voicings
 - c. Embellishing accompaniments with the melody
 - d. Embellishing accompaniments complementary to the melody
- XI. Chorale writing using predominant chords
 - a. Impact of the predominant chord on the phrase model
 - b. Folk melodies using predominant chords
 - c. Analysis of compositions using predominant chords and inversions
 - d. Connecting melody and harmony using predominant chords