

Elementary Training for Musicians

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Composed by
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PREVIEW
Low Resolution

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PREFACE

The music student entering a class in harmony is in general insufficiently prepared with respect to basic principles—governing rhythm, Meter, Intervals, Scales, Notation—and their correct application. In all phases of his teaching, the harmony teacher has to find the fact that his students have no solid foundation to build upon. This is the sad fact that, save in a few exceptional cases, the methods by which these basic principles are taught are deplorable. Most music students do not even know of these things at random, along with their own practical knowledge of more "practical" musical matters. One may do so in the course of Elementary Training, but in general, the student entering a course of more than a certain amount of casual information, or who has had no subsequent courses in Dictation, a well-arranged course of instruction to fill the gaps left open in the beginning, no real foundation can be gained by so defective a method.

This book seeks to provide a more complete and correct method of instruction—must infallibly supply such a course of instruction. It is by no means the only book of this kind, but it is the only one of this elementary material. It does not even pretend to be original in an original form. Its content has been a long time in the air, and there are many books on the subject in various languages. But in order to make the work more useful in the field and to make the progress of the student more rapid, the author has written a fairly advanced musician, and has given a fairly good survey of the basic principles of the subject. It will surely be in a position to digest the over-whelming mass of material, and procedures, or to select what is most useful for the student's own use. The exercises given in such books (when any

are given) are, as a rule, no lack of less comprehensive, more specific exercises, full of exercises for the beginner. But here the difficulty is not in the exercises, but in the general theoretical instruction. The books that try to give general theoretical instruction are either insufficient in opinion and approach, or insufficient for a professional's learning; and in most cases their exercises seem to be made for the author's satisfaction and self-assertion rather than for the student's profit, or they are so dry that even the most docile user cannot see their relationship to living music.

There are numerous, highly specialized text-books on Dictation, Sight-Singing and Sight-Reading, Ear-Training, Clef-Reading, and other subdivisions of our subject. But anyone who wished to collect his knowledge

by picking it grain by grain out of comparatively elaborate books on comparatively minor subjects would have to spend years on that part of his musical education—which, after all, is but a preparation for more important things to come.

A musician brought up on the method of *Solfège*, as practised in countries under the influence of French or Italian musical culture, will probably deny that there could be any better method. And if one asks for the comparatively high standard in sight-reading of melody and rhythm patterns (even higher in the rapid pronunciation of single syllables!) reached by students of this method, one is obliged to answer: Yes. But the disadvantages of this method show up later in the course of study: it is extremely difficult to introduce students to a higher conception of harmony and melody, and to give them a certain independence in their own creative work. They are unable to take the step out of their narrow conception of music, and their uniform nomenclature for a tone *and* all its derivatives, and the constant return to the point where reason turns into sense, do not help them more easily than others into what is assumed to be a normal state of mind, but rather lead to disorder and incoherence.

There are still other methods which, besides the narrowness of *Solfège* by expressing through speech (and through the speech, and gesture) the musical ideas, also try to lead from primitive information for materialising the musical ideas to the so-called "functional" systems. These are not suitable for the professional musician—unless he is a teacher of amateurs—since it leads him no further than to a more or less correct and temporal conception of a note. The systems of theory, which are based on (or instead of) our primitive cycles, and which are based on the systems of theory, the assimilation of which is difficult, and which are based on the musician not specialising in any one field.

The author's intentions of its author, and what-
ever of its plan and contents, will remain uncriticized. I can
only say that the reasons to the present book will be,

It is said that the book is too comprehensive to be used by every-
one. The student seeking only some superficial information does not
want to digest too many uninteresting things. The highly specialized
musicians of today, knowing thoroughly the facts and procedures in his
particular field of activity, cannot be expected to know everything.
Helpful as it may be for a future conductor to have some experience in
reading the various clefs, it would be a waste of time for a pianist to
bother with such special problems. To sing the right tones at the right
time may prove valuable for a singer, but when will a violinist ever be
asked to do so? The violinist, in turn, must learn to be fluent in reading

high notes, with many ledger lines, while such fluency can be of no value to a timpanist. Essential prerequisites for a player in an orchestra may be utterly unimportant for a virtuoso; increased knowledge of theoretical facts will not instantly improve a cellist's playing; practical experience in music is not necessarily a criterion for the quality of a composer's or theorist's ideas.

There is only one answer to these objections; they are unfounded. The exercises in this book are, in the first place, not written for a dilettante's superficial information (although this kind of work will do no harm, if he is interested). The words "for musicians" define clearly its purpose. On the other hand, objections against elementary training for musicians—such as is advocated here—may be voiced only by those who acquiesce in the present state of stagnation in musical education.

Apparently the times are gone when one could meet with a good musician who did not possess, beyond his instrumental or vocal achievements, a thorough knowledge of the mechanism of music. Can the majority of today's artists make a comparison of their theoretical knowledge with that of the masters of Bach's or Beethoven's? Do not many of them bitterly complain that they were trained excessively in their special subjects, but that they were ignorant of general musical subjects? Can a violinist, by playing, possibly not directly improve a violinist's fingering, or a pianist's touch, or a singer's voice? Can a composer, by writing, possibly not directly improve a violinist's fingering, or a pianist's touch, or a singer's voice? If our present-day composers and arrangers alike—had a better insight into the mechanism of music, would not be faced with what we find in the scores of the past—the superficially over-polished but essentially empty and shallow work, through of a piece without any real meaning, without any deeper penetration into its content, without any profound feeling, and effect—or the hyper-individualistic and egotistical ideas expressed in a composer's score.

As a result of this, it is obvious that most of them are launched on their careers by accident, and not by any extraordinary musical talents, but by the fact that they happen to have good voices. On account of this advantage a singer is usually excused from any but the most primitive musical knowledge—such as could be acquired by any normal mind in a few weeks of intelligent effort. Rare indeed is the singer nowadays who can do what you would expect to be the most normal of all the activities of a singing musician: hit a tone at any interval, even if it is not part of a simple stepwise progression or an easily understandable broken-chord melody, and even if it is not directly supported by its accompaniment. Would a singer not profit by being led through a severe course of general musical training? It certainly would not hurt his voice to gain some

additional knowledge, which, although it will not immediately further his vocal aims, amounts after all to no more than that minimum of basic facts that a professional musician is supposed to know.

Admittedly, a composer can have wonderful ideas without a background of highly developed practical experience. But is it really imaginable that without such experience he should be able to present his ideas in their strongest form, and exploit them to the fullest extent? Owing to the general decline of such experience, the composer, once venerated as a super-musician, nowadays occupies almost the lowest rung of the ladder of craftsmanship as far as handcraft is concerned. How few are there today whose achievements are based on their acoustical knowledge of the voice—singers—in bygone times considered the only sound basis for all creative work! All too often we see it happen that a composer, who is not good enough—physically or intellectually—to perform himself, even in vocal work still finds a comfortable and profitable way of earning his bread of composition. The decision to become a composer is often made on no better musical talent than that of the inventor of a new machine, and turning them at the right time (when the market is flooded with machines) doesn't eliminate even this last requirement. It is not strange then, that any tootling, key-pressing, and button-pushing, and the radio-active high-school boy who has a few ideas of his own, can make a name for himself through his first compositions. He is looked upon with scorn by his classmates?

I should like to think that in the future it would be welcomed that almost every young man and woman, free of the nitwits and the unfortunates who are the result of a theory teacher who after some years of training has become a pedant, should be able to do in the present book easily what is usually accomplished only after years of advanced theoretical work. It is not to be regarded as an ill for any professional musician that a process of reckless weeding out could only be effected in the sphere of musical culture.

For the student who, by his natural musical gift and intelligence, is able to do away with the theories of musical activity, such a method will be an ideal basis for their further musical development. They will find in this book all a musician needs as a preparation for higher theoretical and practical studies, offered without detours and evasions. The book does not use voluminous syllables, since they are misleading. It avoids special names and fancy symbols, since they distract attention from the main object: the knowledge of all the basic conventions and facts of musical theory and their traditional representation in written form. This knowledge is presented through the most intensive kind of work: exercises. The great number of exercises compels the student to practise seriously. Thus it will be demonstrated that Elementary Theory cannot