

Elements of MUSIC



JOSEPH N. STRAUS

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“Over the Rainbow”

Music by Harold Arlen

Words by E. Y. Harburg

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Music by Duke Ellington

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from SOPHISTICATED LADIES

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Music by Scott Joplin

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Preface

Who is this book for?

This book is designed for a one-semester course for two groups of students: (1) Nonmusic majors who are taking a course in music because they want to write their own music or are simply curious about how music is put together; (2) Aspiring music majors who need some extra work in fundamental topics before beginning a sequence of theory courses for music majors.

What topics does this book cover?

This book covers the traditional fundamental topics in tonal music theory: pitch notation in bass and treble clefs; rhythm and meter; major and minor scales; intervals; triads and seventh chords; simple harmonic progressions and cadences.

What makes this book different?

1. **Musical literature.** This book is immersed in musical literature. It includes an anthology of core works in diverse tonal styles (both in score and recorded on CD), and these are the source of all of the musical examples and many of the written exercises. Each musical excerpt is thus understood in its larger context; there are no isolated snippets. The theoretical concepts and musical works are integrated with each other. As students learn each basic concept, they see how it functions in music of high artistic quality. At the same time, they use their newly acquired theoretical ability to come to an intimate understanding of a small group of fine works. They learn the concepts through the musical works, and the musical works through the concepts.
2. **Flexibility.** The book is organized into six chapters: (1) pitch; (2) rhythm; (3) scales; (4) intervals; (5) triads and seventh chords; and (6) harmony. This transparent organization provides instructors with a

significant degree of flexibility. For example, teachers who prefer to teach rhythm before, or simultaneously with, early work in pitch notation will find it easy to do so. The book, with its extensive, imaginative, interactive exercises, is designed as a set of flexible resources for the teacher rather than a prescribed curricular sequence that must be followed in lockstep.

3. **Written exercises and assignments.** For each concept, there are extensive written exercises, both in traditional written and electronic formats. Many of the exercises incorporate music from the anthology and many encourage creative composition. There are far more exercises than any one class could do; the instructor will thus have a wide range of choices. Many of the exercises also work well for in-class drill and study.
4. **In-class activities.** Each lesson is accompanied by suggested in-class activities, including singing, dictation, and keyboard exercises. These activities do not comprise a course in sightsinging, dictation, or keyboard harmony; rather, they are designed to supplement and reinforce the theory lessons. The goal of these activities, and of the book as a whole, is to bring beginning students into close, intimate contact with musical materials, not only to understand them intellectually but to embody them in some way. At every stage, this book emphasizes that music is to be heard and made, not merely seen and contemplated in the abstract.

What is the goal of this book?

Learning music is like learning a foreign language. Some hard work is required to master the basic grammar and vocabulary. But once you gain a reasonable degree of fluency, a whole new world opens up to you. You can express yourself and communicate in a new language, and you can listen with far deeper understanding when others speak to you. Mastery of the basic material of music described in this book will enable you to write your own music in a more thoughtful way, enable you to talk with and learn from other musicians, and give you insight into the uses that master composers have made of these basic materials. A great adventure lies ahead of you in the following pages!

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At an early stage in the writing of this book, I benefited immensely from advice offered by a large number of colleagues and friends around the country: Mark Anson-Cartwright (Hofstra University), Larry Arnold (University of North Carolina at Pembroke), Joseph Auner (State University of New York at Stony Brook), Jean Aydelotte (University of Texas at Austin), James Baker (Brown University), Amy Bauer (University of Missouri at Kansas City), Candace Brower (Northwestern University), Steven Bruns (University of Colorado at Boulder), Poundie Burstein (Hunter College, City University of New York), Eleanor Cory (Queensborough Community College, City University of New York), John Covach (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Walter Everett (University of Michigan at Ann Arbor), Yayoi Everett (Emory University), Cynthia Folio (Temple University), Deborah Freedman (Missouri Western State College), Daniel Harrison (University of Rochester), Patricia Helm (Colby College), Richard Hermann (University of New Mexico), Sara Holtzschue (Queensborough Community College, City University of New York), William Horne (Loyola University), Peter Kaminsky (University of Connecticut at Storrs), Gary Karpinski (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), Stefan Kostka (University of Texas at Austin), Joseph Kraus (University of Nebraska at Lincoln), Philip Lambert (Baruch College, City University of New York), Steve Larson (University of Oregon at Portland), Stephan Lindemann (Brigham Young University), John Link (William Paterson College), Justin London (Carleton College), Elizabeth Marvin (Eastman School of Music), William Marvin (Oberlin Conservatory), John McCann (Tufts University), Jairo Moreno (Duke University), Akane Mori (Hartt School of Music), Shaugn O'Donnell (City College, CUNY), Jeffrey Perry (Louisiana State University), Mark Rimple (West Chester College), Lynne Rogers (Oberlin Conservatory), Michael Rogers (University of Oklahoma at Norman), Dean Roush (Wichita State University), Philip Rupprecht (Brooklyn College, CUNY), Matthew Santa (Texas Tech

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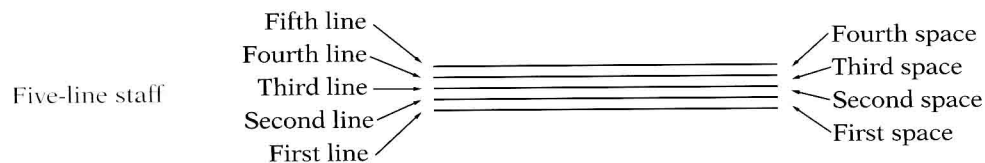
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1 Pitch

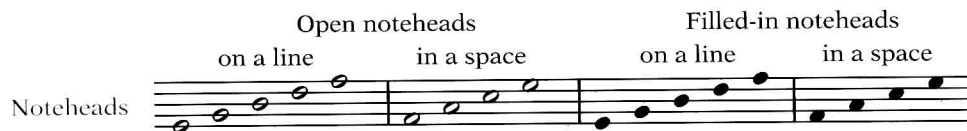
Lesson 1: Staff

In this lesson you will learn about the five-line staff, pitches and notes, noteheads, ascending and descending motion, steps and leaps, ledger lines.

Music is written on a five-line *staff*: five parallel lines separated by four spaces.



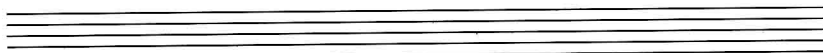
A *pitch* is a musical sound at some particular point along the continuum from the lowest to the highest audible sound. A pitch is written as a *note* placed either on a line or in a space of the five-line staff. A *notehead*, which specifies where on the staff a note is to occur, is an oval shape that may be either open or filled in.



Use the staves below to practice writing noteheads. They should be oval (not round) in shape, and tilted to the right. Noteheads in a space should just touch the lines above and below; noteheads on a line should fill half the spaces above and below.



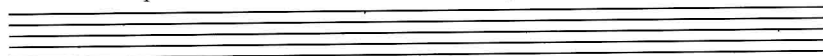
Write 15 filled-in noteheads on the lines and spaces of this staff



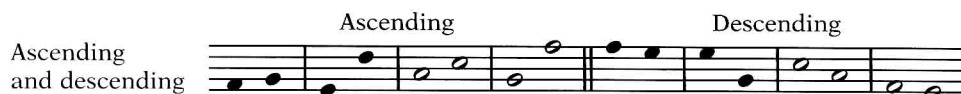
Writing

noteheads

Write 15 open noteheads on the lines and spaces of this staff



To move from a note to a *higher* sounding note, you *ascend* on the staff.
To move from a note to a *lower* sounding note, you *descend*.



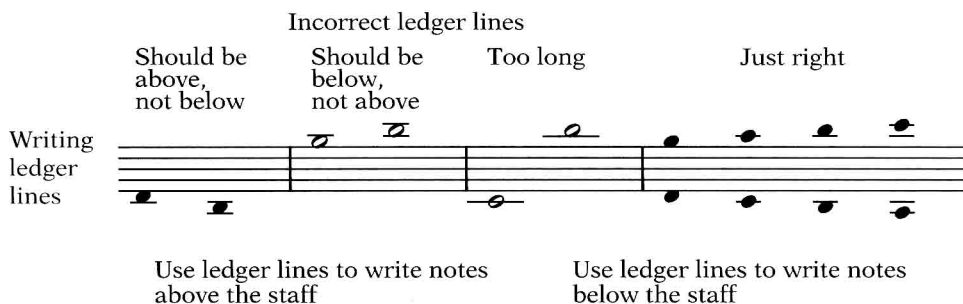
There are two kinds of melodic motion: by *step* and by *leap* (also sometimes called a skip). A step involves motion from a line up or down to an adjacent space, or from a space up or down to an adjacent line. A leap is any motion bigger than a step. Steps and leaps may be either ascending or descending.



For notes that lie above or below the staff, the staff may be temporarily extended by *ledger lines*. These lines function and are spaced just like the lines of the staff, but begin just before an individual notehead and end just after it.



Use the staff below to practice writing noteheads with ledger lines. Notes in the spaces above the staff need ledger lines below (not above) them; notes in the spaces below the staff need ledger lines above (not below) them.



Lesson 1: In-class activities

1. Singing. The instructor will play or sing a note. Sing the note you hear.
2. Dictation. The instructor will play two notes in succession. Identify the melodic motion as ascending or descending, step or leap. Sing the notes.
3. Dictation. The instructor will play three notes in succession. Identify the melodic motion as: (a) low-middle-high; (b) low-high-middle; (c) middle-low-high; (d) middle-high-low; (e) high-low-middle; (f) high-middle-low. Sing the notes.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructor's Name: _____

Lesson 1: Exercises

- 1-1. In these melodies, identify each motion as an ascending step (AS), descending step (DS), ascending leap (AL), or descending leap (DL). Ignore any unfamiliar notational symbols and focus only on the noteheads. Remember that a step involves motion on the staff from a line to the adjacent space, or vice versa. A leap is any motion bigger than a step.

- a. Arlen, "Over the Rainbow" (the first three notes of the melody describe a melodic shape that occurs two more times).

- b. Rodriguez, "La Cumparsita" (the melody involves a contrast between leaps and steps).

- c. Haydn, String Quartet (the descending leaps get bigger and bigger).

- d. Mozart, "Dove sono" (the melody begins mostly with steps and ends mostly with small leaps).

