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Constructive Harmony and Improvisation

by

Clare Osborne Reed



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CONSTRUCTIVE HARMONY
and
IMPROVISATION

by
CLARE OSBORNE REED

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FOREWORD

The so-called "Dead Languages" are those we learn to read and write but do not speak. They are those we know through the eye rather than the ear, a method just opposite that used by the child in the acquirement of his own tongue.

Because the study of many of the modern languages has often been along these faulty lines, the manner of their teaching has been completely revolutionized during recent years.

No longer does the successful teacher begin with the technic or grammar of his subject. He follows, instead, the process of the child who, correlating some emotion with the sound of a simple word or phrase, repeats it constantly until it becomes his own. As new words and phrases are gradually acquired, not only is his vocabulary enriched, but these additions react upon the phrases previously learned giving them many fresh meanings. By countless repetitions and constant rearrangements made necessary by the use of the new material, words may come to have as many shades of meaning as a rare jewel whose colors change with every angle of refracted light.

It is thus one learns to think and feel in his own language, first by hearing, second by repeating and imitating what he hears, third by rearrangement of the words and phrases in as many original patterns as possible, and finally by classifying what he has so learned under the laws of grammar and rhetoric. This natural method is used in presenting the harmonic material of this book. All the foundational harmony is arranged in carefully graded sequence. Under each subject examples are given to be heard, repeated many times by transposition, rearranged in original patterns, and finally classified under the laws of harmony for clear understanding and retention.

This work was originally begun for use in the primary grades but in presenting the outlines to teachers and advanced students of Normal Training Classes, few were found who were able to make actual use of their harmony except as a theory to be read or written but seldom spoken.

The plan was therefore broadened to aid all those who have not yet experienced the joy that comes from ease in use of the

chords at the keyboard and who realize how greatly the understanding of harmony is simplified, and the musical enthusiasm stimulated, by this ability to play spontaneously with one's harmonic material.

No attempt is made to treat each harmony exhaustively. The idea is rather to prevent confusion by presenting each chord in its many primary relations. When ease in its actual hearing and use is acquired in these forms, freer and more complex associations adjust themselves naturally upon this foundation.

The work has been tested during several years and proved successful with pupils of all grades.

Teachers of Public School Music, singers, and those who study other instruments than the piano have found the playing of the chords and their transposition helpful as it reacts happily upon their own accompaniments.

If but a few are led to greater joy and understanding of music through the lessons here outlined, the writer will feel deeply repaid for the labor spent in their preparation.

CLARE OSBORNE REED.

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CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF KEY FEELING

Music begins only when certain tones are grouped together with a well defined sense of relationship which is the basis of their mutual actions and reactions. Every system of music up to the present time rests upon such a tonal unit. With the Greeks the tetrachord was the underlying root. Modern music was founded upon a group consisting of two such tetrachords one above, one below a center tone toward which all the others gravitate.

Each tone has its own individuality and character. As in every family group, certain primary relations demand definite actions or resolutions of tone. Later, when these tones are influenced not only by their own, but by members of other key groups to which they are less directly related, their resolutions are less arbitrary.

An understanding of these primary tone tendencies develops a strong feeling for key and the simple chord resolutions.

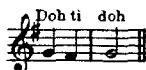
tone tendencies

The tones of the major key group themselves most naturally around I as a center in the form of two tetrachords, one above, one below.

Ex. 1



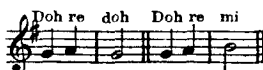
Ex. 2



Sing and play the phrase several times, then sing the first measure only, stopping on Ti, after which the entire phrase should be repeated and the distinctive character of Ti and Doh noted. Doh is a tone of rest upon which the phrase may end with perfect satisfaction while Ti is a tone of action demanding resolution. Doh is thus recognized as a tone of complete repose, Ti is a tone of strong upleading quality that finds its resolution in the rest of Doh.

In like manner the character of the other tones of the key group is indicated.

Ex. 3



In the preceeding example Re is recognized as a tone of action less strongly impelled than Ti. It may resolve to Doh or move up to Mi, which is heard as a tone of rest only little less stable than Doh.

Ex. 4



Fah is heard as a tone of action with strong down leading quality to Mi.

Ex. 5



Lah is another strong down leading tone finding resolution on Sol.

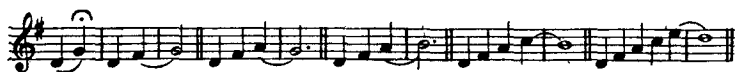
Ex. 6



In the first phrase Sol has the quality of rest, in the second it is an ongoing tone of action resolving to Doh. This difference is due to the underlying harmonic feeling. As a part of the tonic harmony on I, it has the quality of rest, as a part of the dominant harmony on V it has progress quality.

Sing the following phrases by syllable. Play and find by number and letter names in different keys as they are analyzed. The tones of action may move from one tone to another in the same group but finally resolve to one of the tones of rest.

Ex. 7



Ex. 8



CHAPTER II

SCALES

The tones of the key are used to form many patterns. One of the most elementary is the scale or ladder by means of which we run from one key center to another. When slowly played the tetrachordal character is plainly felt, when rapidly played this primal grouping in fours is almost lost in the upward or downward scale impulse.

Ex. 9



PRACTICE OF THE SCALES

Play a major scale as given above. After listening, sing it with the syllables, find and play at the keyboard from a given lower tone. As the tones of C major are more easily found it may be taken first but all other keys are added through the ear without analysis. When the ear successfully guides the hand in finding several of the major scales they may be practiced around the circle of fifths, taking the first tone of the second tetrachord as the key tone of the next scale.

The number of sharps and flats is next noted and the letter names of the keys gradually acquired as the practice is repeated.

Ex. 10

SCALES IN A CIRCLE OF FIFTHS



With very young pupils all of the tones may be played with one finger but the quality should be musical. Four tones may also be taken with one hand and four with the other until scale fingering is acquired.

Find and play the major scale from any given tone and finally practice on each chromatic degree.

Ex. 11 CHROMATIC PRACTICE OF THE SCALES



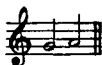
ANALYSIS OF THE SCALE

Only after the scale is heard, recognized as a musical pattern and played in many keys is the analysis given.

Sing and find on the keyboard whole and half steps ascending and descending from many keys.

Whole step ascending.

Ex. 12



Whole step descending.

Ex. 13



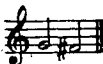
Half step ascending.

Ex. 14



Half step descending.

Ex. 15



Hear and contrast the quality of these two intervals.

The major scale is composed of a series of these whole and half steps, as it is now played listen to these intervals.

Any tone may now be taken as I and the scale formed by degrees as:

I to II a whole step, II to III a whole step, III to IV a half step, IV to V a whole step, V to VI a whole step, VI to VII a whole step, VII to VIII a half step.

WRITTEN WORK

After hearing, playing and analysis, each scale should be written with sharps and flats added before their respective notes, then with key signatures.

SCALE NAMES

Each tone of the scale has a syllable, letter, number and harmonic name. When exercises are sung the syllables are used. As the scales and chords of the key are analyzed the other names should be acquired and applied.

C Major.

C Minor.

C—Doh—I—Tonic.

C—Doh—I—Tonic.

D—Re—II—Supertonic.

D—Re—II—Supertonic.

E—Mi—III—Mediant.

E \flat —Me—III—Mediant.

F—Fah—IV—Subdominant.

F—Fah—IV—Subdominant.

G—Sol—V—Dominant.

G—Sol—V—Dominant.

A—Lah—VI—Submediant.

A \flat —Leh—VI—Submediant.

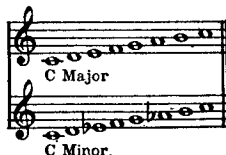
B—Ti—VII—Leading Tone.

B—Ti—VII—Leading Tone.

MINOR SCALES

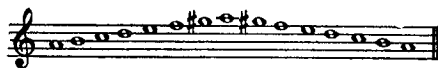
The tonic minor scale is first heard in contrast to the major on the same degree. Later the relative minor and the pure minor in key is explained.

Ex. 16



When the minor scale can be found and played easily in contrast to the major on the same degree, the analysis into the intervals of which it is composed may follow, after which it should be formed on many degrees independently and also written.

Ex. 17



ANALYSIS

Scale of A minor.

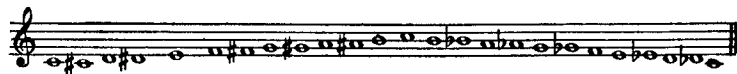
A to B a whole step, B to C a half step, C to D a whole step, D to E a whole step, E to F a half step, F to G \sharp a step and a half, G \sharp to A a half step.

THE CHROMATIC SCALE

The scales including the tones in key i. e., the major and minor, are known as diatonic. The scale including all of the half tones within the octave is called chromatic.

Many of the exercises call for chromatic practice, that is, the transposition to every degree of the chromatic scale.

Ex. 18



PRESENTATION OF THE SCALES

The practice of the scales should be continued until any one within the chromatic octave can be found and played from a given lower tone. This work is supplemented by the analysis which includes the writing of each scale, first with the signs of the sharps and flats placed before their respective notes, then with the proper key signatures.

The number of scales to be analyzed and written must be determined by the age and advancement of the pupil. Only the keys including one or two sharps and flats need be required in an entire first grade, the others to be added in orderly sequence as the pupil progresses.

The playing in all keys however should not be deferred for the analysis.

Our diatonic scales are largely derived from the old tetrachordal system of the Greeks. With different peoples and in different ages various interval sequences have been used as the basis of the scale. At the present time many new interval combinations such as the five tone, whole tone and other scales are being tried out with interesting effect. For our present purpose, however, these are irrelevant, as the foundation of our harmonic system rests upon the diatonic and chromatic scales.

CHAPTER III

TRIADS

Play a major triad in its primary position as, the I, III, V, of the major scale. Listen as the tones are played as melody i. e., consecutively, then as harmony with the tones sounding together. When the musical quality of the triad is heard, sing the tones, then find and play at the keyboard first from C, F, and G, then from all keys black and white.

Ex. 19

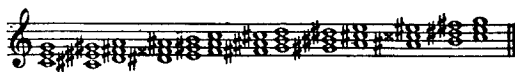


CHROMATIC PRACTICE OF THE TRIADS

This practice should be kept in both melodic and harmonic form until the ear hears easily and a certain keyboard fluency is obtained. It does not include thinking key names however until the analysis is added.

To aid the backward ear the shape of the triad may be formed in the hand and the interval distances in 3rds, noted on the keyboard.

Ex. 20



TRIAD NAMES

When the triads can be played with ease through the chromatic octave they should be found by the letter name of the root tones in all parts of the piano as: triad on C in every octave, E, D \flat , B \flat , F \sharp , etc.

The ear thus becomes accustomed to the sound of the triads in different degrees of pitch and the sound is also correlated with the feeling of the hand as it takes the corresponding keys.

KEYBOARD AND STAFF NAMES

For those without knowledge of the keyboard, beginners in piano study or players of other instruments, the names of keys

are easily learned in connection with the finding of the scales and triads. Knowledge of the staff is also acquired by writing them in various positions.

SPELLING OF SCALES AND CHORDS

The correct spelling of scales and all chords is very necessary and should be required as soon as the analysis is made.

Scales progress from degree to degree with a change of letter name at each step.

Chords in their primary position are made up of superimposed thirds.

Scales and triads should be formed and spelled on G_b , F^\sharp , G^\sharp , A_b , etc. In this practice the meaning of sharp and flat, double sharp and double flat, becomes clear.

MINOR TRIADS

Play the minor triad in first position and contrast its musical quality with that of the major on the same degree.

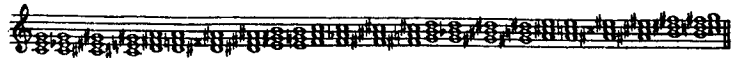
Ex 21



Major and minor triads may now be heard and played on all keys after which the minor should be found and sung from any degree independently as: Minor triad on A, B, E_b , etc.

CHROMATIC PRACTICE OF MAJOR AND MINOR TRIADS

Ex. 22



Listen for the contrasting quality of the triads, played slowly as melody, and then as harmony, after which practice more rapidly for fluency. The hand may outline the form of the triads for surety, and the change from one to the other will show in the 3rds.

hear the melody line by noting which tone of the triad is first, and the direction and distance up and down of the other tones.

INTERVALS

The term interval in music is used to express the written difference or musical distance between two tones. These standards of measurement are derived from the key tone up or down, and range from the prime to the octave of the major scale.

Major and minor scales from degree to degree consist of major and minor 2nds. The minor scale also contains between its 6th and 7th degrees, the larger interval of a step and a half known as the augmented 2nd.

Major and minor triads are composed of major and minor 3rds and an outer interval in both triads of a perfect 5th.

INTERVAL PRACTICE

Distinguish these intervals when heard. Sing from given lower tones, build by letter names and write from different degrees.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS I, II AND III

HEARING

From Dictation:

Distinguish tones of rest and tones of action in the key groups major and minor.

Hear and sing from any one of the rest tones those of action and resolve as: Doh, ti, doh; Doh, re, doh; Doh, re, mi; Doh, fah, mi; Doh, lah, sol. Sing these intervals above and below the given Doh. In the same way begin with Mi and Sol.

Hear and sing, also find at the keyboard from given tones:

Major and minor 2nds.

Major and minor 3rds.

Perfect 5ths.

Perfect octaves.

Major and minor triads in primary position.

Major and minor scales.

Melodies derived from the broken triads major and minor.

ANALYSIS

Form the scales, major and minor, from different degrees at the keyboard and call the interval distance from degree to degree.

Write several or all scales major and minor, depending upon the age and advancement of the pupil.

From given tones find and call by letter names major and minor 2nds, 3rds, perfect 5ths and octaves.

Write 2nds, 3rds, 5ths and octaves from given tones.

Write and call by letter names the major and minor triads on several or all degrees depending upon the age and advancement of the pupil.

Analyze the triad into the major and minor 3rds, and outer interval of the perfect 5th, of which it is composed.

CREATIVE

Break the triads, major and minor, into as many little patterns as possible giving practice to right and left hands as shown in ex. 23.