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Masters of Music in Music Education

Holly Day

Internationally published music writer



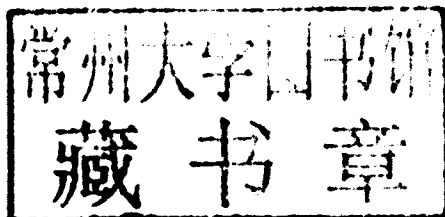
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DUMMIES®

2ND EDITION

by Michael Pilhofer and Holly Day



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Dedication

To Wolfgang and Astrid, with much love.

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Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the phrase *music theory*? Does the image of your elementary school music teacher eyeing you from behind the piano pop into your head? Or perhaps you have flashbacks to a later image of fellow college students in theory classes determinedly trying to notate theremin whistles? If either of these ideas is anything close to your own perception of what music theory is, hopefully this book will be a pleasant surprise.

For a lot of self-taught musicians, the idea of theory seems daunting and even a little self-defeating. After all, if you can already read guitar tabs and play some scales, why would you want to muddle what you already know with theory?

Even the most basic music theory training gives you the information you need to expand your range and abilities as a musician. A decent amount of note-reading ability enables you to play a particular type of music, whereas some basic knowledge about chord progressions can help you write your own music.

About This Book

Music Theory For Dummies, 2nd Edition, is designed to teach you everything you need to know to become fluent at knocking out a solid beat, reading musical scores, and learning to anticipate where a song should go, whether you're reading someone else's music or writing your own.

Each chapter is as self-contained as possible. In other words, you don't have to read every single chapter to understand what the next one is talking about. Reading the chapters consecutively does help, though, because knowledge of music builds from simple concepts to complex ones.

We cover a lot of territory in this book, from discovering the basics of note values and time signatures to dissecting lead lines and adding harmony to a melody to studying the standard forms that much of popular and classical music follow. So if you're new to the world of music theory, pace yourself while reading this book. Read it while you're sitting at your piano or with your guitar or whatever instrument you're working with next to you, and stop every couple of pages to practice the information you read. If you were taking a music class, this book would cover several years' worth of information, so if you don't learn everything in one or two months, you should refrain from self-flagellation.

Conventions Used in This Book

For organizational purposes, the following conventions have been used throughout this book:

- ✓ When we introduce you to a new musical term, we put it in *italics*.
- ✓ Keywords or key parts of lists appear in **boldface**.
- ✓ Websites are in `monospace` to help them stand out. Note that some web addresses may break across two lines of text. In such cases, no hyphens were inserted to indicate a break. So if you type exactly what you see — pretending that the line break doesn't exist — you can get to your web destination.

What You're Not to Read

The historical information and musician quotes contained in the sidebars or preceded by the Technical Stuff icon all make for interesting reading; however, if you never learn why the piano is the preferred tool of most composers or who invented the term *minim*, you can still understand everything else in this book. Unless you're being tested on this information — and we promise we won't show up at your door to administer a test — this information is included for entertainment purposes only.

Foolish Assumptions

We assume that if you're reading this book, you love music, you want desperately to understand music and everything about it, and you're a nut for the complicated dance of perfect timing and arrangement of tones. At the very least, we assume that you have a couple of books of sheet music lying around that have been frustrating you, or you have an old piano in the corner of your house that you'd like to mess around with.

This book is written for the following types of musicians (which, frankly, covers the gamut):

- ✓ **The absolute beginner:** We wrote this book with the intent that it would accompany the beginning musician from his very first steps into note reading and tapping out rhythms all the way into his first real attempts at composing music by using the principles of music theory. Beginning musicians should start with Part I at the beginning of the book and just