



TRITON ARTS

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AP Music Theory – Syllabus Sue Densmore, Instructor

Personal Philosophy

To study Music Theory is to study the very building blocks of music, and build a depth of understanding that simply playing an instrument, or singing, or conducting cannot. The study of Music Theory promotes critical listening and thinking, problem solving, and reasoning.

Composers use the tools and concepts of theory to create their works. Understanding these tools and concepts, then, provides performers and listeners with the ability to hear and comprehend more deeply. It is the difference between sounding out poetry and understanding it.

Class Profile

One section of this class is offered, and is open to students in grades 9-12, whether or not they play an instrument or sing or have any background in music. Since some basic familiarity with notation and terminology is helpful from the outset, some summer work in these areas will be assigned. Also, some listening excerpts will be suggested.

Course Overview

This class is a full time class, meeting six out of seven school days in our seven day rotation. Students can make appointments to avail themselves of keyboards in our sound lab and practice rooms, as well as access some music theory web sites for supplemental help and research.

Primary Texts

Harder, Paul, and Greg A. Steinke. 2009. *Basic Materials in Music Theory: A Programmed Course*, 12th ed.; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Steinke, Greg A. 2009. *Harmonic Materials in Tonal Music: A Programmed Course—Parts 1 and 2.*; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Other Resources

Ottman, Robert. 2001. *Music for Sight Singing*, 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Benward, Bruce and Marilyn Saker. 2009. *Music in Theory and Practice*, 8th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the AP Music Theory course, students will be able to:

- Define basic musical terms and theoretical concepts
- Understand and construct major, minor, chromatic, whole tone, and modal scales
- Demonstrate the ability to construct and analyze major, minor, augmented, and diminished intervals and triads
- Recognize, audiate, and sing or play scales, intervals, triads, rhythms, and melodies
- Sing simple conjunct and disjunct diatonic melodies at sight
- Construct compositions in four-part texture
- Analyze harmonic structure utilizing Roman numerals and figured bass
- Identify basic form and cadences

In addition to these concepts, material not strictly part of the test but necessary to depth of understanding will be referenced, such as music history, transposition, conducting, and arranging.

Course Planner

Week	Topic	Reference
1	Time, Sound, Acoustics, and the Overtone Series	BMMT chapter 1
2	Notation, Clefs, and Enharmonics	BMMT chapter 2
3	Meter, Divisions, Subdivisions	BMMT chapter 3
4	Note and Rest Values, Tempo, Expression	BMMT chapter 4
5	Time Classification, Rhythm	BMMT chapter 5
6-7	Harmonic and Melodic Intervals	BMMT chapter 6
8	Basic Scale Structure	BMMT chapter 7
9	Major Scales, Tetrachords, Accidentals	BMMT chapter 8
10-11	Minor Scales, Diatonic/Chromatic Intervals	BMMT chapter 9
12-13	Key Signatures, Relative and Parallel Keys, Circle of Fifths	BMMT chapter 10
14-15	Triads, and Tertian Sonority	BMMT chapter 11
16	Definition of Tonality and Chord Structure	HMTM chapter 1
17	Structure of Tonality	HMTM chapter 2
18	Root Position Triads, Doubling, and Spacing	HMTM chapter 3
19	Voice Leading	HMTM chapter 4
20-21	First and Second Inversion Triads	HMTM chapter 5
22	Phrase Structure and Cadences	HMTM chapter 6
23	Harmonic Progression	HMTM chapter 7
24	Modulation	Other
25	Techniques of Harmonization	HMTM chapter 8
26	Form (Binary, Rounded Binary, Tertiary)	Other
27	Nonharmonic Tones	HMTM chapter 9
28-29	Seventh Chords and Inversions	Other
30	Practice AP Exam	Other
31-32	Secondary Triads and Quadrads	Other
33-34	Music Research Paper and Class Presentation	Other
35-36	Original Composition Performance	Other

The study of scales will include major and minor scales, as noted, but also modal, pentatonic, and whole-tone scales. Supplemental material (Benward, Bruce and Marilyn Saker, Music in Theory and Practice Volume 1, Chapter 2) will be used.

The Benward text also provides a chapter (Chapter 6) on melodic structure, discussing motive, sequence, phrase, and period which will be used in conjunction with teaching on harmonic progressions.

Sight-singing is incorporated on a regular basis, and tested periodically, at least including at the end of each quarter. Listening activities are completed each week, as applicable to the unit being studied, and students should plan to keep a journal of listening excerpts, notes about them, and notes from class discussion. This journal can be electronic or pen and paper.

Aural dictation and interval recognition exercises will also be incorporated and these skills tested, working from single line to four-part dictation. Also, students will be asked to develop some basic keyboard skills, using keyboards in our sound lab and practice rooms.

Quizzes are administered at the end of each unit. Midterm and Final Exams are also given.

A music research paper is written and an outline presented, and an original composition will be arranged and performed, utilizing live musicians when possible.

Teaching Strategies/Student Activities

Class discussion, taking turns writing, singing, or playing examples, and independent practice time will comprise most of our time together.

For instance, positioned at keyboards in the sound lab, students will be asked to perform all major scales and their relative minor scales (harmonic form,) ascending and descending, through the circle of fifths.

Students might be asked to go to the white board and identify an interval, and then write it using enharmonic equivalent notes.

Students will be asked to analyze the harmonic progressions of excerpts from various pieces, labeling chords in keys with roman numerals, and understanding the function of the chords within the progression – recognizing, for instance, the use of secondary dominants. Exercises will be used from various sources from Bach Chorales, to music we are working on in our performing groups, to the workbook accompanying the Benward text Music in Theory and Practice.

Students will be asked to explore the form called Theme and Variations by writing variations on a basic and familiar melody. Then, using those variations, they will explore various ways to harmonize the melody. Building further, students would create a four part arrangement of the work, or some portion of it, for voices or instruments, thus considering instrumentation, arranging, transposition, and preparing to write an original piece.

Students will sing virtually everything we learn – scales, triads, melodies, etc. This will develop their ability to audiate, and to identify errors in a listening example and how to fix them. To see music on paper is one thing – to hear internally what one sees written on paper is another.

Student Evaluation

Tests, quizzes, projects, and homework comprise 70% of a student's grade. The other 30% comes from the midterm, final, and quarter exams.