

**Second Edition: The Bestseller is
Completely Revised and Expanded**

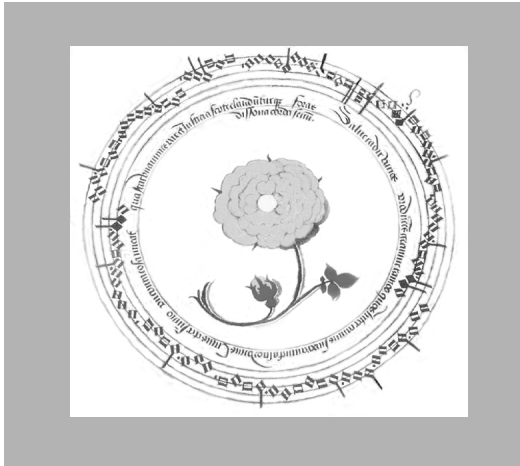


**BASIC
MUSIC THEORY**

**HOW TO READ, WRITE, AND
UNDERSTAND WRITTEN MUSIC**

Jonathan Harnum

Author of Sound the Trumpet: How to Blow Your Own Horn



THE CHAPTER EVERYONE SKIPS

*A journey of one thousand miles
must begin with a single footstep.*

— Lao Tzu c531 B.C.

In This Chapter

- Welcome to *Basic Music Theory!*
- Why this book?
- Book Overview
- How to Use the Special Features
- Moving On

Welcome to *Basic Music Theory*!

If you never thought you would pick up a book on music theory, you're not alone. I never thought I'd write one. But in my experience as a student, a player, and a teacher, I have searched for and used many different methods of learning music theory. Some methods were good, most were okay, and a few were bad, but none of them satisfied me.

I've tried to take all the positive things about teaching theory, thrown in many of the tricks I've used with thousands of students, and tossed in a little humor in an effort to make learning music theory both easier and more enjoyable. These methods and suggestions have worked well with all students of all sizes. I hope they'll work for you too.

What It's All About

Basic Music Theory is your introduction to another language—the rich and often strange language of music. By the time you've completed even two lessons in this book, you'll have made big steps down the path toward understanding written music.

With this language you'll be able to reproduce sounds from nearly a thousand years ago by someone like Guillaume de Machaut. And with this same language you can play music by someone like Alannis Morissette, or Limp Bizkit, or Dave Matthews, or Garth Brooks. Name your favorite artist. If it's written down, you'll be able to understand and interpret it!

But let's not get too carried away. Those musicians you look up to (some of whom have earned millions upon millions of dollars) have spent thousands of hours learning both their instrument and in many cases, their music theory. Learning theory will take some focus and some work, but that work will be clearly explained, and you'll be surprised to find how easy it can be.

Nobody likes to work on a task endlessly. For that reason, the theory lessons are broken up by Interludes every few chapters. These interludes cover things like practice, conducting, Italian terms, and a brief history of musical notation.

So, if you're interested in the music of Mozart or Metallica, Beethoven or B.B. King, Dizzie Gillespie or Vince Gill, you've finally found the right book.

Why *Basic Music Theory*?

Learning music theory doesn't have to be a long and difficult process. It does take some work, but with this book you can make that work much easier. I've suffered through some of the most boring music courses a person should be forced to suffer, and before this book was available I've had experience *inflicting* such boredom on others as well. Believe me, it's not fun on either side! Whether you're a teacher or a student, I'd like to spare you any of that frustration and difficulty.

Music theory is a language that is used by all Western instruments. Whether you play the kazoo or the krumhorn, voice or vibraphone, French horn or nose flute, pignout psaltery or percussion, trombone or triangle, bagpipes or bass fiddle, Sousaphone or Saxophone...you get the idea. Whatever instrument you play, reading music will be a useful tool in your studies, and this book will give you that tool.

What's Inside

Basic Music Theory is divided into seven Parts and in each Part are several chapters.

Between some of the Parts are Interludes — stand-alone sections giving information on aspects of music other than theory.

The Codicil (stuff at the back of the book) contains a musical terms glossary, a book index, the keyboard template, guitar fretboard, practice aids, and blank staff paper for photocopying.

Parts

Each Part is made up of four to seven chapters. The division isn't arbitrary. Information in each Part is related and the reviews come at a point where a review will do the most good.

Part Review

At the end of each Part is a comprehensive review in the same format as the chapter reviews. Cross-references below the questions allow you to quickly find and re-read any section that you haven't quite remembered yet.

Chapters

Each chapter is fairly short and contains detailed information on one or two topics. When an important term appears for the first time, it is in ***bold and italics*** so that when you do the chapter review and need to go back to the chapter, you can find the information easily.

Chapter Reviews

At the end of each chapter is a brief review covering the material in the chapter. The reviews are generally very short, the longest being around fifteen questions.

Practical Use

Also at the end of each chapter is a short list (often only one item) of written exercises to hone your music-writing/reading ability.

About the Reviews

After each chapter and Part is a section which contains questions on the information presented. The reviews are arranged as quizzes, but with one important difference. *The answers are in the margin!* That's right, the answers are right there. How is that supposed to help you? Read on...

The best way to learn is to get immediate feedback. There is no better way to get feedback than to have the answer right there with the question. Of course, this does you no good if you can see the answer before reading the question, so you have to cover up the answers while you give yourself the quiz. In the back of this book is a cut-out bookmark with a piano keyboard on it (if this is a library book, please photocopy the keyboard and leave the original for others to copy as well). Use the keyboard to cover up the answers while you test yourself.

After you answer the question, simply uncover the answer in the margin and kiss yourself on the elbow for giving the correct answer. If you didn't get the answer correct, at least you have the answer right there to remind you.

Voila. Instant feedback, and your memory of the material is sped right along.

Once you're confident you know the information, you can either go on to the next chapter or take the written quiz. You can find the free quizzes and a whole lot more in the *Basic Music Theory Teaching Packet*. For more information go to **www.QuestionsInk.com/classroom1**, (that's the number one, not the letter "l" at the end of the web address).

Basic Music Theory is meant to be used as a textbook and study guide, with written work taking place on the blank staff paper photocopied from the back of the book. That way the book may be used over and over again. Of course, if you've bought this book for your own personal use, mark it up!

The Icons

Memory Tip

This icon is placed near methods to improve your memory of terms, notes, and other fun stuff. These little memory tricks will save you a lot of brain strain.



Take Notice

This icon is placed near information that is particularly useful to know. Heed this information and you'll avoid common mistakes.



Theory Geek Alert

This icon is placed near information that isn't especially necessary, but which you might find interesting.



Chapter 0: The Chapter Everyone Skips

In addition to what you've already read, this part will give you an overview about the book as well as tips on how to study the information.

Part I: Start Me Up

Prelude, Chapter 1. This section is where the fun begins. And what better way to start than with something other than music theory! The first chapter is an ultra-ultra-brief history of written music. It'll be painless, I promise.

In Chapters 2-5 you'll learn some of the most basic terms and symbols (no, not cymbals) of written music, how they look, what they mean, and what they do. Included are note lengths and rests. You'll be reading music in only one or two lessons.

Once you're done with Part I, peruse the Comprehensive Part Review and see how much you remember.

Part II: You Got Rhythm

Chapters 6-10. The party continues. In this section you'll find more symbols used in written music including more note lengths, a counting system, time signatures, dotted notes and triplets. And of course, a Part Review.

Interlude: To Play or Not to Play

Chapter 11 and it's time for a break. This Interlude is all about practice. How to go about it, how to structure it, how to record it in a journal and on a tape recorder, equipment you'll need and how to use it, and how to do what must be done to become a better player.

Part III: Clef Notes

Chapters 12-17. For the first two chapters of this section you'll learn about the letter names for notes and how pitch is shown in written music. The other four chapters are devoted to clefs. You'll learn treble clef, bass clef, percussion clef, and a few other clefs as well.

A Comprehensive Part Review

Interlude: Musical Terms

Time for another break with Chapter 18. This Interlude is all about musical terms, most of which are in Italian. You'll learn the terms, what they mean, and what they tell you to do.

Part IV: See Sharp or Be Flat

Chapters 19-22. Once you've got the basics of reading music down, we go into more advanced concepts. This section shows you how to use the piano keyboard, covers whole

steps and half steps, sharps, flats, and naturals, the chromatic scale, enharmonic notes, and key signatures. A Comprehensive Part Review when you're ready for it.

Part V: Intervals and Minor Scales

Chapters 23-26. In this section you'll learn how to measure the interval from one note to another, and using that information you'll learn how to construct a minor scale beginning on any note. From there you'll move on to modes, and finally to several other types of scales.

A Comprehensive Part Review.

Interlude: Conducting Yourself

Chapter 27 is your final Interlude. In this Interlude you'll learn the basics of conducting, conducting patterns, body and facial language, and the work it takes to become a good conductor. Also learn how to use conducting patterns to enable you to write down what you hear.

Part VI: Chords

Chapters 28-31. Here you'll learn about how chords are constructed and the many different types of chords. You'll also learn about chord extensions and the symbols they use, chord inversions, and several basic chord progressions.

A Comprehensive Part Review.

Part VII: More of the Same

Chapters 32-34. In this final short section are some concepts which go further than when they were originally introduced. Included are double dots, double sharps and double flats, faster notes, 6/8 time and odd meters.

A Comprehensive Part Review.

Codicils

Teacher Information: A quick summation of the free *Basic Music Theory Quiz-Pack*.

Glossary of Musical Terms: Here they are. A quick reference and not exhaustive by any means, but you'll find most of what you might be looking for.

Index: This is a cross-reference to all the terms and concepts presented in the book, so you can find any topic covered quickly and easily.

Blank Staff Paper: To be used for the Practical Use sections at the end of the chapter Reviews. Keep the staff paper in the book so you can photocopy it as often as you need. Give them to your friends.

Piano Keyboard: One side with the note names, one side without. Also used with the End-of-Section Reviews as mentioned later.

Guitar Fretboard: Guitar is one of the most popular instruments around, so here's a fretboard labeled with note names to help you guitarists out there.

How to Use the Special Features

The End-of-Section Reviews

What's different about all the reviews in *Basic Music Theory* is that the answers are right there with the questions. In the end-of-section reviews you will also have a reference, in case you want to go back to review the information, there's a reference (in itty bitty writing) to the page where you can look at the information again.

The answers are on the right side of the page, and the questions on the left. While reviewing the chapter, to cover up the answer, you'll use the piano keyboard in the back of the book.

The Keyboard

In the back of the book is a piano keyboard template, double-sided with the keys named on one side and blank on the other. The keyboard is used as a bookmark, as a cover for the study guide answers and—can you believe it?—also as a keyboard. If you're borrowing this book, please help keep the book useful for everyone and photocopy the keyboard instead of tearing it out.

Practical Use

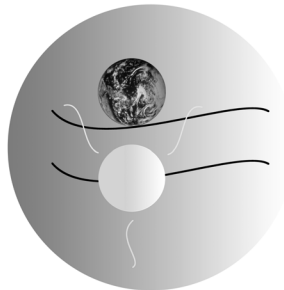
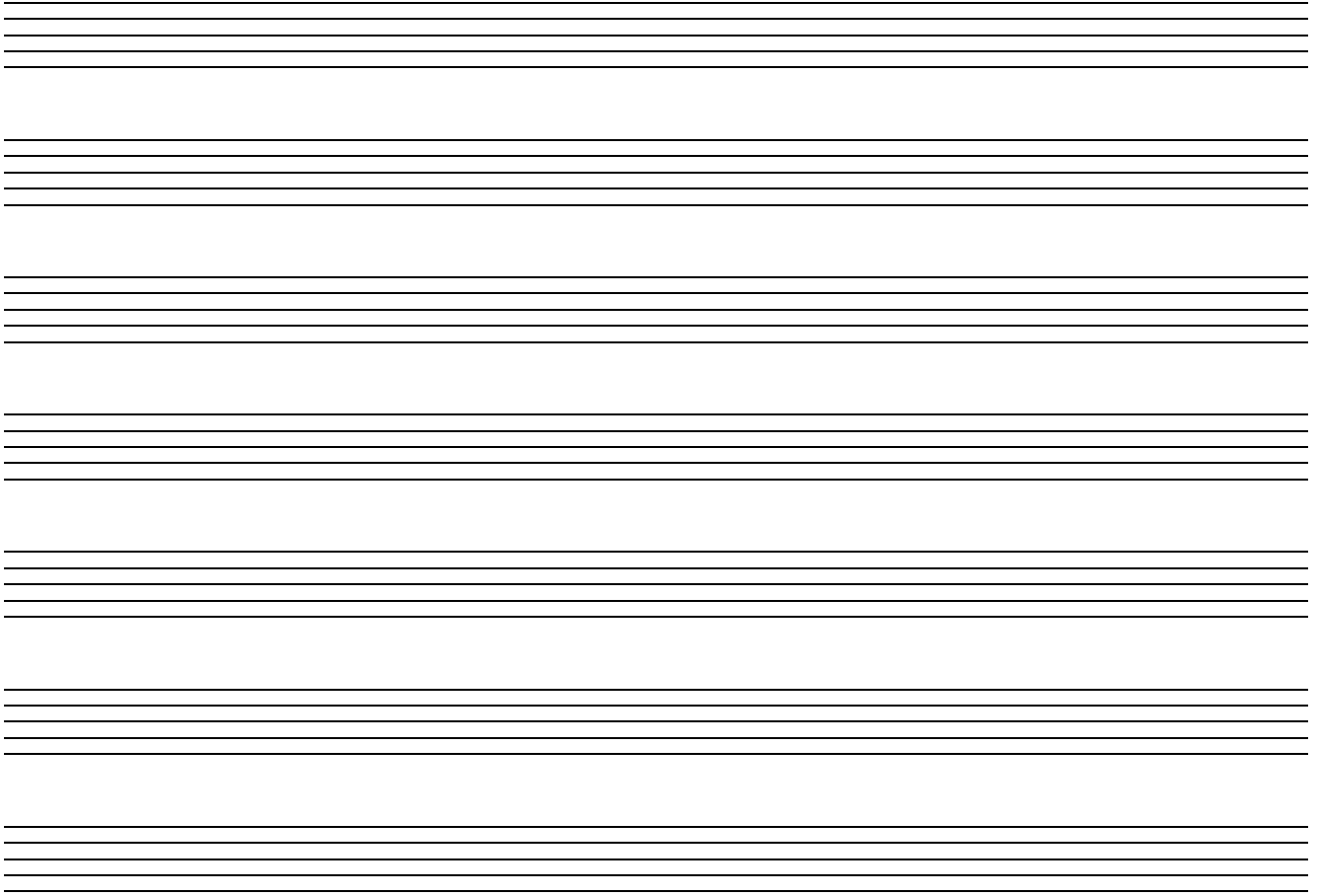
After the chapter Reviews are Practical Use exercises, most of which will be done on the staff paper you've copied from the back of the book. There may be as many as four exercises, or as few as one.

Moving On

Okay, enough details. If you've read them, good job! You'll have a better handle on how to get the most out of this book and you won't be at all surprised or confused about what's next.

Part I: Start Me Up is next, and the first chapter is about how written music came to be. Hope you like it!

In an effort to use all the available space in this book, any blank pages will be filled with staff lines for you to practice your music-writing skills.



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Find links for most instruments.

www.Sol-Ut.com

" DO YOU WANT TO READ MUSIC? "

What do all those lines and squiggles and dots mean?

Basic Music Theory takes you through the sometimes confusing world of written music with a clear, concise style that is at times funny and always friendly.

The book is written by an experienced teacher using methods refined over more than ten years in schools and in his private teaching studio. Lessons are short, well-paced and enjoyable.

Whether you're a beginner of any age, whether you're an experienced player who wants to bone up on your theory, or whether you teach music and need a fun way to do it, you'll find this book valuable and will refer to it again and again.

YOU WILL DISCOVER HOW EASY IT IS TO:

- **Learn quickly** and efficiently with easy lessons designed by a professional teacher.
- **Learn the symbols** used in written music.
- **Understand the terms** musicians use.
- **Use memory devices** to learn terms and symbols.
- **Use the included study guides** to remember it all.
- **Apply** what you have learned with short, easy Practical Use sections at the end of each Chapter.
- **Tune in** to radio shows and the Internet to find musicians demonstrating great music.

WITH INTERLUDES ON:

- **How to practice.** Some topics: where-when-how to practice, how much to practice, equipment, how to improve, ear training, listening, private teachers.
- **Conducting.** What does all that arm-waving mean? How does it help? Find the answers and learn how!
- **Learn Some Italian.** Many musical terms are in Italian. Learn them in this section.
- **Ultra-brief history** of music notation.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- **Piano Keyboard w/ Note Names**
- **Guitar Fingboard w/ Note Names**
- **Specially Designed Reviews**
- **Practical Use Exercises**
- **Practice Aids**
- **Extensively Cross-Referenced**
- **Musical Terms Dictionary**
- **Book Index**
- **Scales in bass and treble clef**

"Loved it! Your sense of humor and ability to simplify sometimes convoluted information makes your book a pleasure to read. I was delighted to find myself reading it instead of wading through it as I would a textbook. Your simple layout is fabulous—thanks for not making it cluttered or confusing."

—Kathy Settevendemie, Music Educator, Kodiak High School

"Fun and engaging. A real winner!"

—Terrie A. Lyons, PH.D., P.C.

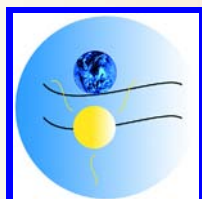
"An ideal and highly recommended text for anyone of any background wanting to become proficient in the reading and writing of written and notated music."

—Midwest Book Review (5 stars, highest rating)

"The more I think about your book the more brilliant it becomes. See, the tough part is knowing how to limit the depth to keep it true to your goal of making {music theory} fun and fathomable. You excelled at it!"

—Charles Reynolds, pioneer music educator, Palmer, Alaska

THIS BOOK HAS HELPED OVER THIRTY THOUSAND PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND WRITTEN MUSIC. IT WILL HELP YOU, TOO!



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