

Preface

Learn from the Masters has been developed during my years as Professor of Music Theory at the Academy of Music in Malmö, Sweden. This material has been tested over a period of years in teaching situations, both individually as well as in groups at different levels, from beginners to students with a few years of study behind them. It is intended that this book will serve as effective material, for both self study and as a textbook for students in the subject.

For whom is this book written?

The book has been designed with the following in mind:

- beginners, or those who have some basic knowledge in harmony and prefer the do-it-yourself approach.
- music students at secondary and tertiary level, where the book can be used as the principal textbook in the subject on harmony.

What prerequisites are required?

It is an advantage if you can play the piano. If not, it is recommended that you learn the piano while using the book, so that you are able to play through the exercises. As well as this, it is necessary to have some rudimentary knowledge of basic music theory ie intervals, keys and major/minor scales.

What will you learn?

This textbook provides training in 'classical' harmony, which has been used by the great composers during the ages. This book is focussed on harmony that has been developed continually for three hundred years (ca 1650-1950), so you will also learn about the stylistic differences between the musical periods ie Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionistic and 20th century.

As I have designed the book so that it can

be used together with my previously published book 'Learn from the Masters – Arranging for two to five parts', I am not including the study of 4-part harmony that is normally found in traditional harmony textbooks. This is explained thoroughly in 'Learn from the Masters – Arranging for two to five parts'. It must be emphasised that a large number of the 4-part practical and written exercises in this book include playing cadences as well as spacing and voice leading.

Apart from harmonic analysis, which includes both Roman numerals and chord symbols, great importance is attached to harmonization – a topic which is rarely found in traditional harmony textbooks. There are also composition tasks in connection with harmonization and 20th century music.

The reading and understanding of figured bass is included in the book, although there are no figured bass exercises as such. There are many textbooks available if you would like to study this subject in detail.

Practical analysis

Apart from the differences in the method of studying harmony listed above, 'Learn from the Masters – Classical Harmony' is different from other textbooks in that each time you learn about a new chord, you also get the chance to use it in a practical sense. This occurs by harmonizing and then analysing practise examples from the music literature. In this way, you will have an aural experience of each new topic. This is in contrast to the traditional way of reading a score, which is then analysed without an aural experience.

There are also other possibilities to practise analysis using Roman numerals. This includes suggestions for music or sections in pieces containing the current topic. Music has been chosen with regard to the availability of purchase, which restricts the choice to music such as the piano sonatas of Mozart and Haydn, as well as the songs of Schubert, Schumann etc.

How is the material designed?

The main idea behind this book is to use music examples from the classical repertoire to illustrate how *fundamental and universal* part-writing principles are used by the great composers from different periods. You are able to practise these principles in different types of exercises as explained above.

Working with ‘real’ music, instead of specifically constructed examples, is also a central concept in the book. This stimulates the practical application of the knowledge gained at each stage.

Most of the book is designed so that each double page – the left-hand and right-hand pages together – deals with a particular topic. The left-hand pages provide the text which explains the principles relating to the music examples on the right-hand pages. Short textual comments are also included with each music example. This means that *the right-hand pages serve as a summary* and you can return to these without having to read through the text once more.

I have chosen the length of the music example so that it is long enough to form a complete entity in itself (a phrase or period), in order to gain an appreciation of the context in which it occurs. This is important of course as a teacher when playing the example for students, while the excerpts can also provide other items of interest outside of the topic at hand. The disadvantage with longer music examples is that the amount of information becomes large. This is however compensated by highlighting that which pertains to the topic at hand.

The book as a whole is written with a steadily increasing degree of difficulty, but as everything within a given topic is concentrated to one double page, some more advanced techniques are mixed with simpler ones. In this regard, the book can also be considered as a reference book. The workbook, however, is entirely constructed with an increasing degree of difficulty.

Do all the exercises in the book need to be completed?

The book includes a large number of exercises which, especially in combination with exercises in a complementary area of harmony, border on excessive. The intention here isn’t to complete all the exercises in order to be able to go on to the next chapter. You can choose to omit some of the exercises, if you feel you have gained enough proficiency in a certain subject area.

The short technical exercises which are connected to several topics are created in order for you to check your understanding of the content (these can even be used in a group lecture after giving an introduction). If you feel that these exercises are unnecessary, you can skip them and go directly to the harmonization exercises. The exercises generally provide a *suggestion* on how to practise what you have learnt in the textbook.

Hints for exercises in Chapters 2 and 4

Chapters 2 and 4 use a method which is based on the choice of either harmonizing a given melody without preparation, taking advantage of the technical exercises as necessary, or starting with these and then harmonizing the melody. This approach has not been possible in the other chapters because the exercises there are based on specific chord progressions.

Roman numerals

Roman numerals as symbols for scale degrees and triads built on them were used already by G J Vogler (see illustration G J Vogler on p 36). The current use of Roman numerals chiefly derives from G Weber and E F Richter's modification of Vogler's system through the addition of figured bass even for occasional chord formations in relation to nonharmonic notes. Roman numerals were written in capital letters (IV, VII etc) which is customary in other contexts too. In recent years, however, a variant of the current way of writing has come into use, in which minor triads are written in small letters. The minor tonic, for example, is indicated by the symbol 'i' instead of 'I'. Even a diminished triad is written in small letters (vii). The fact that it is possible to tell from the analysis whether a chord is a minor or a major triad, may of course be considered a pedagogic advantage. On the other hand, it may be argued that it is necessary to learn what diatonic triads are minor or major, since this is of such great importance (compare with the considered obvious knowledge of half and whole steps in a scale). When it comes to reading a chord sequence indicated by Roman numerals, for instance in order to play it on the piano, the use of small/capital letters is more direct. Compare: c: i-ii-iv-V-i to c: I-II-IV-V-I. The latter case requires a preunderstanding of the fact that I and IV are minor chords in a minor key and that V is always a major triad. An advantage with the use of capital letters is that chords *differing* from the diatonic tone material are indicated by a symbol that also differs distinctly, for instance the symbol of the subdominant minor: IV^b (in a major key) as well as the subdominant major IV[#] (in a minor key), instead of iv and IV. Symbols with [#] and ^b are also more distinct in a running text, where, for instance, IV^b always means 'subdominant minor in a major key'. The same chord, written in the small/capital letters system, becomes 'iv' which is also used in the sense of 'subdominant minor in a minor key'.

In order to make it possible to use the system of small/capital Roman numerals in the study of this book, the alternative symbols have been indicated within curly brackets {iv} every time a new chord is introduced (mainly in chapter 1 and 4). On p 214 there is a survey, that makes the comparison of the two systems possible.

The diminished triad and the diminished 7th chord based on the 7th degree of the scale are analysed according to J. Ph. Rameau's interpretation, ie the chords are described as an incomplete dominant 7th chord and an incomplete dominant 9th chord respectively (see p 32, 54 and 66). In the book, the symbol V₇⁰ (=VII), V₉⁰ (VII⁷) introduced by W. Piston, is used. The zero in this context signifies that the root is omitted. The symbols VII and VII⁷ respectively are used parallelly throughout the book for those who prefer to interpret the chord in that way. The alternative is indicated within brackets, for example V₇⁰ (VII). As the augmented 6th sounds more like a dominant than a subdominant chord, it is analysed as a VofV chord and the symbol ^{sub}V⁷/V has been used. Here too, the traditional symbols It₃⁶, Fr₃⁴ and Ger₅⁶ (or only It, Fr and Ger) are indicated within brackets for those who prefer that.

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