

---

## 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 and 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 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 readers 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 traditional harmony and arranging harmony.
- teachers in music institutions, schools and colleges who aim to learn to write simple arrangements for student ensembles.

### 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.

As I have designed the book so that it can be used together\* with my latest published book 'Learn from the Masters – Classical Harmony', I am not including the study of basic harmony. This is explained thoroughly in 'Learn from the Masters – Classical Harmony'. *Fundamental knowledge in traditional harmony is of great importance in order to be able to complete the course.* However, this book includes many elements that are normally included in textbooks on traditional harmony, for example:

*spacing of chords*  
*doubling of chord notes*  
*voice-leading*  
*four-part writing*

This book does not deal with:

*construction and naming of chords*  
*harmonizing*  
*harmonic analysis*  
*figured bass*

### What is learnt?

The main aim of the book is to teach how to write small arrangements for everyday use. You learn to arrange melodies in two, three and four parts as well as to design an accompaniment. The linear aspect in writing, ie writing where the melodic line of each individual part is in focus, has a prominent position of importance throughout. You will also learn to write independent parts (simple counterpoint) and to compose melodies.

The process of arranging includes being able to write for different instruments, eg to know the optimal range for an instrument, or how instruments balance against each other. In order to practise this, the exercises suggest arranging for specific ensembles. Furthermore, you will learn to work with form and construction in order to make varying and interesting arrangements using simple tools. Notation, in the form of scores and parts, is naturally included as an important part of the process.

### 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. These principles can then be applied to your own arrangements. *This book should therefore not be regarded as a textbook on eg Baroque or Classical style* (even if stylistic tips are provided in the chapter on

\* see; How do you work using 'Learn from the Masters – Classical Harmony' as a parallel reference? on p 202.

‘Voice-leading rules throughout history’ at the end of the book).

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. Instead of only aiming at a long-term goal, it is intended that each stage achieved should provide useful results. This means that it is not necessary to study the whole book in order to, for instance, write an arrangement for a duo, or for your own ensemble. It is incredibly rewarding to be able to hear your own arrangement.

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 music examples have been chosen in order to be closely related in character to the exercises. Certain preference has been given to the classical repertoire, which is relatively simple and *similar in character to traditional melodic writing*, thereby naturally favouring composers such as Haydn and Mozart. From this restriction follows that composers from the Baroque period are given less attention, as these use a faster harmonic rhythm not comparable to the traditional melodic genre. Apart from this, emphasis has been given to

achieving as great a spread as possible of tonal based periods of western music.

The book as a whole is written with a steadily increasing level 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 level of difficulty.

Chord symbols are used throughout in all the music examples, except at places where the function of the chord is important in the context. Using Roman numerals would in many cases make the analysis too complicated and thereby focus on something that in the context is of lesser importance. Chord symbols have in many cases been included to compensate for omitted parts, so that it is possible to play through the example by filling in the chord notes. In other cases, chord symbols have been provided to help analyse particular chords, eg to show the position of or doubling option within a chord. Chord symbols are fully sufficient in these respects. Analysis with Roman numerals, however, should be practised in connection with studies in traditional harmony.

### What musical style is applied?

As a student, it is important to work with a style that appeals to and inspires you. This creates motivation. Learning to write in such a style provides many opportunities for positive experience of recognition, which stimulates and increases the curiosity to continue. *This means that those interested in eg ‘classical music’, should also study that style.*

This book is designed for those who are interested in arranging melodies, but also for those interested in studying the classical masters. Traditional songs are a suitable material as fundamental repertoire in the subject of part writing since everyone is familiar with them from early childhood. It can otherwise be difficult when teaching a group to match

---

everyone's individual wishes on musical style. The arrangements and exercises which appear in the book are in a typical traditional melodic style. The reason for this is not to make a stance against a more unconventional style of writing, but rather to give the book a concise musical language, so as not to cause confusion. This language is very much alive and the need to learn this style of writing is also great. In order to gain a broader stylistic perspective, this book can be complemented with literature covering other genres.

**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 also 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 arranging. The instruments suggested for the exercises may also be altered, eg so that you may write for your own ensemble. The exercises generally provide a *suggestion* on how to practise what you have learnt in the textbook.

**How does this method differ from common teaching in traditional harmony?**

As with textbooks on the subject of part-writing, **Learn from the Masters** has a methodical structure which differs in many respects

from traditional literature used for teaching the subject. In most books, emphasis is almost entirely given to the practice of four-part writing, where the melody is included as *one* of the four parts. This technique is relatively hard to accomplish and it takes a lot of time before an acceptable result is achieved. The reason for this is that several elements must be applied *simultaneously*, eg chord spacing, harmonizing, harmonic rhythm, voice-leading, bass part, choice of position. If you can't master these elements one by one, it is hard to gain the overview necessary when writing in four parts.

In this book the focus is on working with one or two of these elements by themselves. You begin by learning how to voice-lead and space chords in four parts, in order to practise your ability to deal with harmony\*. This is done in a manner where the four-part writing is an accompaniment or background to a melodic part, ie a total of five parts. The four parts written here are more independent of the melody, which is significantly easier than traditional four-part writing. Next, you learn how to compose a melody. This knowledge is then applied in Chapter 2 on two-part writing, where *one* part is added to the melody which is given. In Chapter 3 you study bass parts. The experience gained from writing in two parts and writing bass parts forms the basis for the study of three-part writing (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5, you study four-part voice-leading of chords in the form of backgrounds and accompaniments.

When you have attained the skills needed to complete Chapters 1–5, you have gained enough experience to make it easier to write *four-part writing with the melody as the upper part* – which is studied in Chapter 6. The part writing studies conclude with Chapter 7, which deals with different ways of writing independent parts, regardless of the number of parts you have access to. This type of contrapuntal study is limited to the techniques applicable to your arrangements.

A linear approach to writing is emphasised throughout, and you are continually exposed to practical situations not found in other traditional textbooks, eg how to write in four

\* see 'Preparatory exercises' in the work book on pages 205–209.

parts when the melody is in a high register – as in arrangements including the flute or violin. The chapters on two, three and four-part writing commence with descriptions on how the timbre and distance between the parts affect the method of arranging. Furthermore, the importance of the rhythmic shaping of the parts and the piece as a whole is also treated.

### What ‘rules’ apply?

In the society we live in it is natural to take a critical standpoint to that which is to be studied. Therefore, it is of great importance that the student *understands* the advice given, as opposed to older textbooks which are based on more authoritarian methods, eg using terms such as ‘forbidden’, ‘avoid’ etc. The ambition here is instead to present the entire range of possibilities for each aspect or principle, eg to discuss *what the consequences are* when parallel octaves are used, and in which contexts they either sound good or bad. **Learn from the Masters** has been designed with a great degree of flexibility in relation to traditional ‘rules’, which have to an extent varied during the centuries. This book favours the voice-leading principles at the start of the 20th century over those of the 18th century – on which the teaching of traditional harmony is often based.

The music student of the 21st century has difficulty in grasping many of the rules that for instance applied during the 18th century, as an aural adherence to this tradition is missing.

The voice-leading principles that are presented in Chapters 1–7 can be described as *universal* for tonal based music from the 18th century up to the turn of the 20th century. They form a ‘lowest common denominator’ for these musical periods. The voice-leading principles studied in Chapters 1–7 also apply for music which has a deeper foundation in this tradition but is composed during the 20th century, eg operetta, traditional entertainment music, traditional jazz – not to mention the folk song tradition which you will work with in the exercises. These voice-leading principles fully suffice for you to be able to write a ‘modern’, traditional arrangement/composition. *There is no reason to include more ‘rules’ than is absolutely necessary!* (See also ‘Voice-leading rules throughout history’ on page 151.)

---

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the students and teachers at the Academy of Music in Malmö for all the assistance provided during my work with the book, as well as extending a special thanks to P-G Alldahl, Björn Martinsson and Rolf Martinsson who helped me with proofreading and good advice. Furthermore I wish to thank Ian Plaude for his translation, and Cecilia Martinsson Emond and Björn-Tryggve Johansson for their review of this edition.

Lund, 15 February 2012

Sten Ingelf





*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756 - 1791*

Incomplete oil-painting by Joseph Lange, approx. 1790. Mozarteum, Salzburg