Title: First theory book

Author: Diller Angela

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FIRST THEORY BOOK

By

ANGELA DILLER

G. SCHIRMER, Inc., NEW YORK
PREFACE

Object

The object of this Theory Book is to provide the student with such a background of musical experience, through his sense of hearing, as well as through his intelligence, as shall enable him to study to some purpose Form, Harmony, and the other branches of Musical Theory.

The work covered in this book is, therefore, distinctly preparatory, and is intended to precede, not to replace, more formal study.

Method of Study

The subject-matter of all theory books is approximately the same. The differences between them are largely in the order and manner of presentation of the various topics. In this book, the explanations and directions for practising the Exercises may seem unnecessarily detailed; but, at the risk of being tedious, the author has endeavored to write out the consecutive steps that most students must take in mastering the different subjects.

In the opinion of the author, phrasing should be introduced in music-study at the earliest possible moment; hence its place at the beginning of the book. The experienced teacher will, of course, teach two topics, such as Phrasing and Scales, or Note-Values and Scales, at the same lesson, if it seems advisable to do so.

Ear-Training

The most vital part of the whole subject of Theory teaching is Ear-training. It is impossible to overstate the importance which the training of the ear should occupy in the minds of both teacher and pupil.

It is much more necessary that a pupil shall recognize scale-degrees, intervals, chords, etc., by hearing, than that he shall know them merely by name, or when he sees them on paper.

As far as possible, everything that the pupil learns as an intellectual fact, should first have been registered through his sense of hearing.

Dictation, oral and written, is the surest way for a teacher to discover just how much a pupil hears. It is almost impossible to spend too much time on dictation exercises.

The pupil can train his own ear to a large extent by singing. Therefore, many of the exercises are to be sung.

It is so very possible for a pupil to write a correct exercise without having the vaguest idea of what it sounds like, that the author suggests that the pupil shall sing aloud the pitch of every note while he writes it. All writing should, of course, be done away from the piano.
Necessity of Correlated Study

The author is convinced that the first approach to the theoretical study of music should be through the sympathetic analysis of music itself. It is better for a pupil to discover the fundamental laws of harmonic progression, by analyzing simple melodies simply harmonized, than it is for him to be told about chords that are easy to explain theoretically, but which he will seldom meet in the music he is playing.

Many a student of Harmony who can recognize an intricate series of chords on paper, is quite unable to recognize even the most elementary harmonies when he hears them, or when they are used in connection with a simple melody; to say nothing of being able to harmonize a simple melody on the piano.

Nothing is more deadening than a collection of "inert facts."

The author has endeavored to put into practical and convenient shape some of the material used and developed during many years' teaching. After going through the exercises, the average student should have acquired a fairly good ear, and a general knowledge of the most familiar chords. He should be able to study a book on Harmony with comparative ease and intelligence.

Angela Diller.

New York, Jan., 1920.
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- Necessity of Correlated Study

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PART ONE
CHAPTER ONE

Rhythmic Design

_Rhythm_ is the motion of music.
_Meter_ expresses the way in which this motion is measured.

The simplest meter consists of two beats or pulses, a heavy beat and a light beat. Either of these beats may come first. In each case the meter is the same, because two beats are involved; but the rhythmic feeling of the two is entirely different. Any word of two syllables illustrates this rhythmic grouping. The word "donkey" is an example of the heavy beat coming first. The word "giraffe" is an example of the light beat coming first.

The bar in music is placed before the stressed beat of each measure. This beat is counted "One." If the meter of the words "donkey" and "giraffe" were expressed in note-values, and each syllable were a quarter-note, the bars would be placed before the stressed syllables as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Donkey:} & \quad \underline{\text{\textbullet}} \quad \underline{\text{\textbullet}} \\
\text{Giraffe:} & \quad \underline{\text{\textbullet}} \quad \underline{\text{\textbullet}}
\end{align*}
\]

The meter of both words is \( \frac{2}{4} \) ("two-four"), but the rhythmic feeling of the words is different. This rhythmic feeling, or _Rhythmic Design_, may be expressed in numbers showing which syllable is stressed. The rhythmic design of Donkey is "One-Two," and of Giraffe, "Two-One."

The tune beginning

![Music notation](image)

is a musical example of the rhythmic design "One-Two."

The tune

![Music notation](image)

is an example of the rhythmic design Two-One.

**EXERCISE 1.** Write a list of ten words illustrating the rhythmic design One-Two.

**EXERCISE 2.** Write a list of ten words illustrating the rhythmic design Two-One.

**EXERCISE 3.** Look over the melodies on pages 12 and 13, and find examples in \( \frac{3}{4} \) meter of each of the above rhythmic designs.

The same possibilities of rhythmic design occur in \( \frac{3}{4} \) meter, where we have one heavy beat and two light ones.

In \( \frac{3}{4} \) ("three-four") meter there is the rhythmic design One-Two-Three, illustrated by the word "elephant": \( \frac{3}{4} \underline{\text{\textbullet}} \underline{\text{\textbullet}} \underline{\text{\textbullet}} \)

[1]
Much more common musically is the rhythmic design Three-One-Two, illustrated by the word “mosquito”: $\begin{array}{c} \frac{3}{4} \end{array}$ \g | \g \\

And less frequently there is the rhythmic design Two-Three-One, illustrated by the word “kangaroo”: $\begin{array}{c} \frac{3}{4} \end{array}$ \g \g | \g \\

The following are musical examples of these rhythmic groupings. This melody is an example of the rhythmic design One-Two-Three.

The following is an example of the rhythmic design Three-One-Two:

And this is an example of the rhythmic design Two-Three-One:

EXERCISE 4. Write a list of ten words illustrating the rhythmic design One-Two-Three.

EXERCISE 5. Write a list of ten words illustrating the rhythmic design Three-One-Two.

EXERCISE 6. Write a list of ten words illustrating the rhythmic design Two-Three-One.

EXERCISE 7. Look over the melodies on pages 11 and 12, and find examples in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter of the rhythmic designs One-Two-Three and Three-One-Two.

In $\frac{4}{4}$ meter there are four rhythmic designs, namely, One-Two-Three-Four, Four-One-Two-Three, Three-Four-One-Two, and, very rarely, Two-Three-Four-One.

Words illustrating these rhythms are:  

\begin{align*}
\text{Dromedary} & \quad \text{\g \g \g \g} \\
\text{Rhinoceros} & \quad \text{\g \g \g \g} \\
\text{Anaconda} & \quad \text{\g \g \g \g} \\
\text{Misrepresent} & \quad \text{\g \g \g \g} \\
\end{align*}

The following melodies illustrate these rhythmic groupings. Here is an example of the rhythmic design One-Two-Three-Four:

The next is an example of the rhythmic design Four-One-Two-Three:
This is an example of the rhythmic design Three-Four-One-Two:

Lastly, an example of the rhythmic design Two-Three-Four-One:

EXERCISE 8. Write a list of six words illustrating the rhythmic design One-Two-Three-Four.

EXERCISE 9. Write a list of six words illustrating the rhythmic design Four-One-Two-Three.

EXERCISE 10. Write a list of six words illustrating the rhythmic design Three-Four-One-Two.

EXERCISE 11. Write a list of three words illustrating the rhythmic design Two-Three-Four-One.

EXERCISE 12. Look over the melodies on pages 11 and 14, and find examples in $\frac{4}{4}$ ("four-four") meter* of the rhythmic designs. One-Two-Three-Four, Four-One-Two-Three, and Three-Four-One-Two.

EXERCISE 13. What is the rhythmic design of:

1. Schumann's Soldiers' March.
2. Handel's Largo.
5. "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Tannhäuser.
7. Annie Laurie.

Rhythmic grouping is the most important element in intelligent playing. It bears the same relation to the meaning of music, that correct grouping of words does to the meaning of language.

The most usual rhythmic designs, are those that begin on either the first or the last beat of the measure. That is, in $\frac{2}{4}$ meter the usual rhythmic designs are One-Two, and Two-One; in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter the usual rhythmic designs are One-Two-Three, and Three-One-Two; and in $\frac{4}{4}$ meter the usual rhythmic designs are One-Two-Three-Four, and Four-One-Two-Three.

Many people count "by the measure," always beginning on the first note after the bar, and pausing to take breath before the next bar. That is, they will count any piece written in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter One-Two-Three, quite irrespective of what the rhythm of the piece may be. But, for example, it is as unintelligible to count "The Star-Spangled Banner" One-Two-Three, and to group from bar to bar:

*The term "meter" (in the phrases "two-four meter," "three-four meter," etc.) is used instead of the more generally accepted term "time" ("two-four time," "three-four time," etc.) to prevent the possible confusion of time (rate of speed) with time (division of the measure). Hence, further on, the term "meter-sign" is employed instead of "time-signature."
as it would be to group the words, “Oh say, can you see, By the” in reading the poem.

In general, the same rhythmic design persists throughout a tune. Later we shall find infinite variations within the general rhythmic scheme. For example, the Bach Minuet quoted below is in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter; but if it is phrased as indicated (which makes very good sense), we find the following rhythmic designs: One-Two-Three, then Three-One-Two, then Two-Three-One.

\[\text{}\]

CHAPTER TWO

Phrasing

Phrasing in music means the grouping of tones into phrases and sentences. The rhythmic element plays a most important part in phrasing, although the melodic element (the shape of the tune as regards pitch) and the harmonic element (the combinations of tones heard with the melody) are also to be considered.

As a preliminary study to the phrasing of melodies, we will discuss the rhythm of lines of poetry. We found that the rhythmic character of words can be roughly expressed by note-values. The same is true of simple lines of poetry.

Take, for example, the line:

Sunlight falls on tree and grass.

If a bar is placed before each stressed syllable, and a double-bar at the end of the line, we have:

\[|\text{Sunlight}\ |\text{ falls on }|\text{ tree and }|\text{ grass. }||\]

If the line is repeated aloud in a “sing-song,” it will be noticed that we instinctively pause after the word “grass,” or else hold it twice as long as each of the other syllables. Therefore, if note-values are written under the syllables, we have:

\[\frac{2}{4}\quad \text{Sunlight falls on tree and grass,} ||
\]

with “grass” expressed by a quarter-note and a quarter-rest, or by a half-note

The meter is $\frac{2}{4}$ and the rhythmic design One-Two, that is, $\frac{2}{4}$

The line might also be expressed in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, with the first note of each measure twice as long as the second:

\[\frac{3}{4}\quad \text{Sunlight falls on tree and grass,} ||
\]

In this case the word “grass” fills an entire measure, and has three counts. The bars are in the same places as in the $\frac{2}{4}$ version, but the meter is now $\frac{3}{4}$, and the rhythmic design One-Two-Three:

\[\frac{3}{4}\quad \text{Sunlight falls on tree and grass,} ||
\]

It is simpler, however, to write it in $\frac{2}{4}$ meter.