

**NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL
MUSIC DEPARTMENT**

AP MUSIC THEORY

Syllabus

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COURSE OVERVIEW

General Description:

In this course, students expand their understanding of the basic “language” of music and deepen their appreciation for music as expression. Music theory is taught in a progressive sequence leading to complex musical structures. Class activities facilitate development of the following skills:

- Aural (hearing) skills,
- Sight-singing skills,
- Written/compositional skills, and
- Analytical skills.

Computer and piano keyboard applications are among the many tools used to reinforce rudiments and skills. Course objectives are also reinforced through projects in original composition.

Course Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Read and write music using basic notation in treble, bass, and C clefs.
2. Hear, identify, notate, and apply terminology associated with the following fundamentals of music:
 - a. Pitches
 - b. Intervals
 - c. Scales and keys (major-minor, modes, pentatonic)
 - d. Chords (triads, 7th chords)
 - e. Metric organization
 - f. Rhythmic patterns
 - g. Performance indications (tempo, dynamics)
3. Complete melodic and harmonic dictations.
4. Compose a bass line for a given melody, implying appropriate harmony.
5. Realize a figured bass.
6. Realize a Roman numeral progression.
7. Analyze visual and aural examples of repertoire, including a wide variety of vocal and instrumental music taken from the standard Western tonal repertoires. Analysis to include motivic/melodic treatment, functional harmonic progression,

- rhythmic/melodic interaction of voices, rhythm, texture, form, style, and instrumentation.
8. Sight-sing given melodies.
 9. Identify (aurally and visually) the following common-practice procedures:
 - a. Functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture (with vocabulary including nonharmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants)
 - b. Tonal relationships (e.g., standard root progressions; tonic, dominant, and pre-dominant functions; tonic and dominant extensions and expansions)
 - c. Cadences
 - d. Melodic and harmonic compositional processes (e.g., sequence, motivic development)
 - e. Standard rhythms and meters
 - f. Phrase structure (e.g., contrasting period, phrase group)
 - g. Small forms (e.g., rounded binary, simple ternary, theme and variation, strophic)
 - h. Modulation to closely related keys
 10. Understand introductory concepts of twentieth-century music, including:
 - a. Modern scales (e.g., whole-tone, octatonic)
 - b. Modern chordal structures (e.g., quartal chords, 9th-11th-13th chords)
 - c. Modern compositional procedures (e.g., modality, parallelism)
 11. Demonstrate key musical concepts through performance (using singing, keyboard, and student's primary performance area).

Textbook:

This course uses a teacher-compiled textbook which includes teacher-generated materials as well as materials drawn from the following resources:

Music fundamentals/theory/analysis:

Benward, Bruce and Marilyn Saker. *Music in Theory and Practice, Vol. 1*. 7th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003.

Damschroder, David. *Foundations of Music and Musicianship*. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002.

Spencer, Peter. *The Practice of Harmony*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

Sight-singing:

Berkowitz, Sol and Gabriel Fontrier and Leo Kraft. *A New Approach to Sight Singing*. 4th ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997.

Ottman, Robert W. *Music for Sight Singing*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996.

Score excerpts:

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *The Six Brandenburg Concertos, Vols. 1 and 2*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1968.

Forney, Kristine, ed. *The Norton Scores: A Study Anthology. Vols. 1 and 2*. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995.

Various composers. *Sonatina Album: Piano Solo*. Schirmer Music, 1986.

Software/online resources:

Finale 2011. MakeMusic! Inc., 2011.

MiBAC Music Lessons I. Version 4.0. Northfield, MN: MiBAC Music Software, Inc., 2004. --- AND --- MiBAC Music Lessons II. Version 1.1.1. Northfield, MN: MiBAC Music Software, Inc., 2004.

Various online resources, such as musictheory.net

COURSE PLANNER

Because music is approached from a wide range of perspectives (both visual and aural), there are multiple “strands” that run concurrently throughout this course. These strands are divided below into two categories: 1.) “Written” (i.e., score analysis, part-writing, composition), and 2.) “Aural/Singing” (i.e., ear training, dictation, sight-singing). With respect to “Aural/Singing” entries, only new material is shown; it is assumed that previous items will be reviewed and reinforced as needed.

In our school, each course meets four times per week (average class duration = 50 minutes). On the average, “Aural/Singing” activities comprise the equivalent of one full class period per week, with the remaining time devoted to written/analytical work. However, the proportion of “Written” work to “Aural/Singing” work may fluctuate as topics and/or student needs demand.

Following is an approximate schedule of weekly topics and activities. Some variation in timing is to be expected from year to year.

[Abbreviations used: **ET = ear training; SS = sight-singing.**]

SEMESTER ONE

First Grading Quarter

Week 1

Course overview. Introductory activities in score study and analysis using excerpts from standard Western tonal repertoires. Terminology pertaining to musical performance (i.e., performance indications).

Week 2

Written: Review of musical rudiments and terminology: basic notational skills, note reading, clefs, keys, scales. **Quiz #1.**

Aural/Singing: Introduction of scale-degree numbers for singing. ET and singing of major and minor scales.

Week 3-4

Written: Review of intervals: identification and writing of common intervals.

Quiz #2.

Aural/Singing: ET, singing, and dictation of common intervals. SS of simple, scalar melodies in simple meter (major keys only).

Week 5-6

Written: Review of advanced interval topics: less common intervals, interval inversion, compound intervals. **Quiz #3.**

Aural/Singing: SS as described above, adding minor keys. Dictation of simple, scalar melodies in simple meter (major keys only).

Week 7

Written: Review of triads: triad types, diatonic triads, Roman numeral analysis.

Aural/Singing: ET, singing, and dictation of triads. Dictation as described above, adding minor keys.

Week 8-9

Written: Review of rhythm, including metric organization and rhythmic patterns. Includes analysis of visual and aural examples.

Aural/Singing: SS and dictation as described above, adding compound meter.

Week 10

Written: Introduction to 4-part chorale-style writing, including rules for note spacing and doubling.

Aural/Singing: SS and dictation as described above, incorporating iterations of the tonic triad.

Second Grading Quarter

Week 11-13

Written: Part-writing of primary triads in root position. Includes: rules for voice leading and standard root progressions; cadence types (authentic, plagal, half); tonic, dominant, and pre-dominant functions; and basic Roman numeral analysis. Writing exercises include harmonization of melody (i.e., composition of a bass line for a given melody, implying appropriate harmony, and then adding inner voices). Exercises also include writing upper voices to a given bass line and composition of original phrases. Melodic and harmonic analysis of functional tonal examples in 4-part chorale texture.

Aural/Singing: ET, singing, and dictation of diatonic triads within a key. SS of all voice parts within a 4-part chorale phrase. Introduce harmonic dictation using primary triads in root position (i.e., students notate outer voices and Roman numerals for a short chorale phrase).

Week 14

Written: Review of triad inversions. Introduction of figured bass.

Aural/Singing: ET, singing, and dictation of triad inversions.

Week 15-16

Written: Part-writing of primary triads in first inversion. Writing exercises include harmonization of melody, realization of figured bass and Roman numeral progressions, and composition of original phrases. Melodic and harmonic analysis of functional tonal examples in 4-part chorale texture as well as other musical textures (e.g., piano music). **Quiz #4.**

Aural/Singing: Harmonic dictation using root-position and first-inversion primary triads. SS and dictation of melodies incorporating tonic and dominant triads.

Week 17

Written: Musical texture and style, including terminology and analysis of visual and aural examples.

Aural/Singing: Continued reinforcement of above. Aural identification of standard instrumentation (i.e., timbre) using excerpts from literature.

Week 18-19

Written: Part-writing of primary triads in second inversion (i.e., the passing, pedal, cadential, and arpeggiating 6/4 chords). Writing exercises include harmonization of melody, realization of figured bass and Roman numeral progressions, and composition of original phrases. Melodic and harmonic analysis of functional tonal examples in 4-part chorale texture as well as other musical textures (e.g., piano music).

Aural/Singing: Harmonic dictation using primary triads in all positions.

Week 20

Review and administering of **midterm exam**.

SEMESTER TWO

Third Grading Quarter

Week 21-22

Written: Part-writing of secondary (as well as primary) triads in all positions. Includes rules for harmonic progression and the deceptive cadence. Writing exercises include harmonization of melody, realization of figured bass and Roman numeral progressions, and composition of original phrases. Melodic and harmonic analysis of functional tonal examples in 4-part chorale texture as well as other musical textures (e.g., piano music).

Aural/Singing: Harmonic dictation using all diatonic triads (primary and secondary) in all positions. SS and dictation of melodies with increased difficulty level (e.g., more leaps, syncopated rhythms).

Week 23-25

Written: Nonharmonic tones (e.g., passing tones, appoggiaturas, suspensions, etc.). Includes Roman numeral analysis and nonharmonic tone labeling. Writing exercises include harmonization of melody, realization of figured bass and Roman numeral progressions, and composition of original phrases. Melodic and harmonic analysis of functional tonal examples in 4-part chorale texture as well as other musical textures (e.g., piano music). **Quiz #5.**

- Aural/Singing: SS and dictation of melodies with chromatic neighboring and passing tones.
- Week 26
Written: Seventh chord types and inversions.
Aural/Singing: ET, singing and dictation of seventh chords (root position).
Harmonic dictation incorporating diatonic seventh chords (root position).
- Week 27
Written: Part-writing of diatonic seventh chords (all positions). Includes analysis and writing exercises as described above.
Aural/Singing: ET, singing and dictation of seventh chords (all positions).
Harmonic dictation incorporating diatonic seventh chords (all positions).
- Week 28
Written: Identification and part-writing of secondary dominant chords (all positions). Includes analysis and writing exercises as described above. **Quiz #6.**
Aural/Singing: Harmonic dictation incorporating secondary dominant chords (root position).
- Week 29
Written: Tonic and dominant extensions and expansions. Modulation to closely related keys. Includes analysis and writing exercises as described above.
Aural/Singing: Harmonic dictation incorporating secondary dominant chords (all positions).
- Week 30
Written: Melodic and harmonic compositional processes (e.g., sequence, rhythmic/melodic interaction of voices, motivic treatment). Phrase structure (e.g., contrasting period, phrase group). Includes analysis of visual and aural examples.
Aural/Singing: Continued reinforcement of above.
- Fourth Grading Quarter**
- Week 31-32
Written: Small forms (e.g., rounded binary, simple ternary). Introductory concepts in twentieth-century and jazz music, including modern scales (e.g., octatonic, church modes), chordal structures (e.g., quartal chords), and compositional procedures (e.g., parallelism). Includes analysis of visual and aural examples.
Aural/Singing: Continued reinforcement of above.
- Week 33-35
Administer practice AP Exam. Review and practice.
AP MUSIC THEORY EXAM (date/time according to College Board exam schedule).
- Week 36 to end of year
Final composition project: a short composition in four parts arranged for string orchestra. Includes in-class work time, teacher/peer feedback sessions, engraving with Finale software, and a live reading session with the school Symphony Orchestra.

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND METHODS

The overarching strategy that drives this course is “learning by *doing*.” New topics are explained completely, but effort is made to streamline explanation and engage students with active examples very early in the process. More specifically:

- In the opening weeks (covering music fundamentals), students practice using drill software. This allows them to progress independently and focus on specific weaknesses.
- Once part writing is introduced, the teacher facilitates much guided practice as the class completes examples together on the dry-erase board. Though the major rules of part-writing are covered ahead of time, many smaller rules and considerations are covered as they come up in class examples, allowing these details to have practical and “tangible” significance right from the start.
- Original composition figures prominently throughout the course. As new chords and inversions are introduced, students are asked to incorporate these materials into original phrases (in standard 4-part chorale style). Further, the final project for the course is a multi-phrase composition arranged for string orchestra.
- The “Aural/Singing” portion of the course is by definition extremely active. Students are engaged in the acts of singing, hearing, identifying, synthesizing, and notating as they complete exercises in ear training, dictation, and sight-singing.

Many other strategies are employed to meet various class needs. For example:

- For aural (hearing) skills: To establish key in dictation examples, students are required to first sing the associated scale.
- For sight-singing skills: Before singing any melody or chorale part, students are required to establish the key by singing the associated scale. To further solidify tonality, students are encouraged to improvise short diatonic phrases, arpeggiate I-IV-V-I progressions, and sing tendency tones with proper resolution (all with sung scale-degree numbers). In addition, students are required to circle all instances of the tonic pitch in each melody; this provides visual cues for the aural anchor of tonic.
- For writing/compositional skills: In all part-writing exercises and compositions, the following workflow is used: 1.) complete one outer voice (soprano or bass), 2.) complete the *other* outer voice (applying Roman numeral analysis), and 3.) complete inner voices. This stresses the importance of a strong counterpoint between outer voices and forces students to think linearly as well as horizontally. Students are also encouraged to sing through each voice part to further assess contour and linear effect.
- For analytical skills: For all harmonic analysis, students are encouraged to first determine the “big-picture” (e.g., keys, cadence types, modulations) and then determine the details (e.g., specific chords and inversions, nonharmonic tones).

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to actively perform examples of the material presented. When possible, concepts are sung by the class. For example, to experience the sound of Lydian, the students may echo a short modal phrase sung by the teacher. In addition, our drill software facilitates practice on the piano keyboard (e.g., playing scales and triads). Further, students are encouraged to connect course materials

with their own performance areas (i.e., instrument or voice). For example, students might play or sing through simple melodies and chorale parts as well as analyze their solo/ensemble repertoire for harmonic, melodic, and formal structure.

Active listening also figures prominently in this course. As concepts are introduced, the material is frequently connected to aural examples played on the piano or through sound equipment. Such excerpts and examples are drawn from a variety of sources: vocal and instrumental music from the standard Western tonal repertoires as well as selections from vernacular and nonwestern music. Where possible, written scores of heard excerpts are provided and studied.

Sight-singing examples are performed using scale-degree numbers. Students sing “one” through “sev” (meaning “seven”) to reflect the seven diatonic pitch classes of the associated scale. The principal advantage of this system is that it forms obvious connections to written theory, where numbers figure prominently. To account for chromatic inflections that may come up in a given melody, students are asked to sing the same (unaltered) number while vocalizing the appropriate shift in pitch. Because chromatic tones are introduced only in later melodies, this complication is considered minor compared to the strong benefits of the scale-degree system.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Grading breakdown:

Homework assignments – 50%

Quizzes – 30%

Class participation – 20%

(Total – 100%)

As with any language, music is best learned through daily practice; it cannot be “crammed.” Therefore, homework assignments are frequent (on average, 3 nights per week) and they account for half of the grade. These homework assignments may include written, creative, and analytical exercises as well as sight-singing and listening activities. (For each grading quarter, the lowest two homework assignment grades are dropped.)

Quizzes provide a valuable opportunity for both student and teacher to assess the student’s current performance. Quiz assessments of written/analytical skills are given periodically (approximately 6 quizzes over the year) and a major midterm exam is administered at mid-year. Ear training and dictation quizzes are introduced lightly in the first grading quarter (2 quizzes), and then occur with increased frequency through the second and third grading quarters (3 to 4 quizzes per quarter). Sight-singing quizzes – administered individually in a private setting – are introduced lightly in the second quarter (1 quiz), and then occur with increased frequency in the third quarter (2 to 3 quizzes).

In addition, a class participation grade is assessed. This measures the student's level of active engagement in class discussions as well as the general level of effort and perseverance demonstrated throughout the course.

OTHER ITEMS:

AP Exam:

Students must take the Advanced Placement exam in Music Theory. This exam is given in May and has a registration fee of roughly \$95.

Daily Required Materials:

For each class, students must be prepared with:

The course textbook for AP Music Theory.

All class handouts/assignments contained in a folder or binder.

A working pencil. (Music homework and projects may NOT be completed in pen.)

A working eraser. (Mistakes are part of the learning process.)

Music Lab Rules:

NO FOOD, DRINK, OR WATER PERMITTED IN THE MUSIC LAB.

Students are expected to treat all equipment with care and respect.

No student is permitted in the lab without teacher supervision.