

# Advanced Placement Music Theory Course Syllabus 2007-2008 Greenville Fine Arts Center

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**Class Times:** 9:15-10:08, 10:10-11:05, and 1:15-2:08.

## Required Textbook

Each student is given a large looseleaf 3-ring notebook of materials written and compiled specifically for this course by Drs. Grier and Robinson. These include charts, examples, and worksheets, and are organized into 14 topic units. This is used in class every day, and is provided free of charge. The book increases in size through the year as tests, quizzes, and other assignments are added (all are 3-hole punched for easy insertion).

## Suggested auxiliary materials:

Students are strongly encouraged to purchase a copy of the ear-training tutorial program *Macgamut*. It will be offered to the students at standard retail price (\$28), and comes in both Windows and Macintosh versions on CD-ROM. The regular use of *Macgamut* by each student as part of their at-home practice routine will greatly enhance their preparedness for the testing of these skills on the AP Exam.

## Course Description

Successful participants in this class will earn 1 unit of elective AP credit. Though AP Music Theory roughly parallels the content of a college freshman year theory course, some of the topics included are usually covered quite late in the undergraduate course of study. The material is covered very rapidly so that it can all be fit into the course; copious homework and intensive skills practice are required of the student. Significant critical/analytical/creative thinking skills are fostered in most parts of the course, and especially in considerations of texture, harmonic progression, formal structuring, instrument transposition, and style. AP Examination questions emphasize the synthesis of musical knowledge into usable musical understanding; the final question on the test asks students to compose music in an 18th century idiom.

In addition, the Music Department maintains a policy of teaching an advanced theory course that is of significant relevance to students who will not go on to major in music. Thus, the subject matter is much wider than required by the AP Music Theory Examination, and the challenge is all the greater for the inclusion of this material.

**Oral skills:** Sight-singing is taught using solfege, movable "do" system. Melodies, very simple at first, are sung in class as a group and as solos; ancillary drills emphasizing specific problems in sight-singing (larger intervals, difficult rhythms, etc.) as also used. Later in the 2nd semester, melodies in minor mode and sight-singing melodies from AP Examinations of previous years are practiced.

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**Aural skills:** Melodic dictation is begun using very simple 5-7 note fragments; these are notated without rhythm. Gradually, the fragments are lengthened and rhythm added. Later, triads and 7th chords, and modes are introduced for identification by ear. These skills are reinforced by the singing of the same items. Identification of intervals is facilitated by the use of familiar melodies that begin with each interval. Harmonic dictation, in which the student must write down the soprano, bass, and harmonic functions from a brief example played on the piano, is a very advanced skill introduced about 6 weeks before the AP Examination.

**Analytical skills:** Basics of musical analysis are presented in lecture-demo format, with vocabulary introduced as necessary to the discussion. Illustration is provided on the piano and with recordings. Worksheets of practice problems dealing with current topics are assigned almost daily; these are discussed the next day in class. Whenever possible, singing is used to reinforce the concepts. Many writing skills are developed in group efforts on the board and in group critiques of individual exercises. Many AP Examination questions (and similar problems fashioned by the faculty) are covered in the last quarter of the year.

**Objectives** At the conclusion of this course, the student will demonstrate:

- a command of all Theory I & II topics;
- an increase of technical vocabulary to include concepts of texture, meter, orchestration, melodic analysis, and various compositional devices;
- ability to analyze diatonic chorale harmonizations of increasing complexity; command of simple chromatic materials (borrowed dominants);
- ability to identify and spell all types of 7th chords;
- an increase of dictation abilities to include more complex melodies and simple diatonic harmonic function;
- an increase of ability to sight-sing melodies of greater complexity;
- ability to part-write using all diatonic functions and their inversions;
- and an ability to answer AP practice questions.

## Course Requirements

### A. Attendance and Tardy Policy:

**\*REFER TO FINE ARTS CENTER HANDBOOK\***

### **B. Classroom Rules and Expectations:**

- Students should be seated and ready for sight-singing drills at the scheduled beginning of class.
- All students will bring a pencil (NOT pen) and the theory notebook to class every day. Any worksheets assigned for homework will be finished and returned to their proper places in the notebook.
- No food or drink other than water are allowed in any classroom in the Fine Arts Center.
- As with any arts class emphasizing skill acquisition, regular attendance is vital. If you are absent, it is expected that the student will ask for the make-up work.
- The instructor is available on *most* days for extra help from 8:45-9:15, 11:05-11:30 (except Wednesdays), 12:45-1:15 and 4:05-4:20. It is expected that any student requiring extra help will ask for it. Appointments are recommended whenever possible.
- Mature behavior, respectful of instructors and colleagues, is expected at all times.

### **C. Supplies Necessary for Course:**

No other supplies are necessary, though access to a keyboard instrument is vital. Students attendance at FAC concerts and other live events is strongly encouraged, as well as cultural events elsewhere in the area.

### **Assessment Information and Grading Scale:**

Student performance is graded using the mandated South Carolina state grading scale. Specifics of student evaluation:

**Oral skills:** Solo singing quizzes covering a previously announced selection of melodies; these become fairly complex by the end of the year, including minor mode and basic chromaticisms.

**Aural skills:** Dictation quizzes similar in difficulty and identical in format to drills used in class. These include advanced hearing skills such as identifying meter and texture, and harmonic dictation. Students are also required to keep a listening log, in which they will utilize their newly acquired vocabulary and listening skills.

**Analytical skills:** Generally 1-page quizzes identical in format to the worksheets. All students also take the Advanced Placement Theory Examination, given in May of each year by ETS. This is a very rigorous and comprehensive 4-hour examination; for the period 1989-2007, more than 90% of FAC students passed the Examination (scoring 3 or higher on the 5-point AP scale).

#### **Report card grade calculation--**

Quarter grade = average of 10-12 quiz grades (90%) + listening log (10%).

1<sup>st</sup> semester grade = 1<sup>st</sup> quarter grade (40%) + 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter grade (40%) + midterm exam (20%).

2<sup>nd</sup> semester grade = 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter grade (50%) + 4<sup>th</sup> quarter grade (50%). No final exam.

Final course grade = 1<sup>st</sup> semester (50%) + 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (50%). AP score does not affect grade.

## Major Assignments and Projects required

A Listening Log of 10 entries is required each 9 weeks; a major (2-day) midterm exam is given; all students take the Advanced Placement Music Theory Examination at 8 AM on May 14<sup>th</sup>; the exam will be given at the Fine Arts Center.

## Plan for Routine Communication With Parents

- quarterly Fine Arts Center Newsletter is mailed to all parents of Fine Arts Center students.
- parents are contacted promptly in the event of academic or disciplinary problems; a log of parent phone calls is maintained in teacher's office.

## Tentative Course Outline

- WEEK 1 Definition of essential parameters of music (rhythm, pitch, melody, harmony, dynamic, timbre, medium, orchestration, texture, form). Listening exercises with various literature, esp. Ravel *Rhapsodie Espanol*. Introduction to Listening Log assignment (15 entries each quarter). Beginning solfege exercises and 7-note melodic dictation exercises.
- WEEK 2 Review of basics of notational system, terminology, and other items from Theory II. Emphasis on the graphic character of musical notation; introduction of less common clefs
- WEEK 3 Review of major and minor keys, scales, and key signatures; the three forms of the minor scale and their use in the literature. Longer melodic dictations; rhythm (clapping) dictations.
- WEEKS 4-5 Intervals, simple and compound; interval inversion and its applications; introductory acoustics and the harmonic series, including basic vocabulary of the physics of sound, the harmonic series as relevant to the behavior of instruments, and frequency calculations using interval ratios
- WEEK 6 Intervals & harmonic series cont'd. Diatonic modes and their relationships to the major keys; modes as relatives to all major keys and to each other.
- WEEK 7 Modes cont'd; demonstrations of modes in the literature; singing modal melodies; dictation of complete melodies (4 bars, pitch and rhythm)
- WEEK 8 Modes cont'd; aural recognition of modes; parallel alteration of modes
- WEEK 9 Special analysis project: 4<sup>th</sup> mvmt. of *Symphony #41 in C Major*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- WEEKS 10-13 Harmony: triads & 7th chords out of context; functional harmonic analysis, including all basic SATB texture concepts & vocabulary: function and class relationships, inversions, voicing, voice-leading, tendency tones, non-harmonic tones, examples from 18<sup>th</sup> century literature
- WEEK 14 Special analysis project: *Der Erlkönig*, by Franz Schubert
- WEEK 15 Review; midterm exam
- WEEKS 15-16 Harmonic analysis in minor mode; leading tones and V/III
- WEEKS 17-18 Review, Semester exam
- WEEK 19 Textures unit: homophony, heterophony, homophony, homorhythmic, polyphony (imitative, non-imitative, canon), and non-melodic textures identified in listening and score-reading drills with examples from the literature
- WEEK 20 Begin 4-part writing; application of principles acquired in analysis unit
- WEEK 21 Analysis of Bach *Cantata #140, Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*.
- WEEKS 22-24 More 4-part writing of increasing complexity; Cantata #140; suspensions
- WEEKS 25-26 Rhythmic notation & concepts unit; borrowed (applied) dominants

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- WEEK 27 Analysis: Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (or other major work, time permitting)
- WEEK 28 Figured bass harmonization; discussion, with listening, of *basso continuo*
- WEEK 29 Figured bass harmonization cont'd; introduction of harmonic dictation
- WEEK 30 Introduction to melody & phrase structure
- WEEK 31 Melody unit concluded
- WEEK 32 Instruments & transpositions unit; introduction to musical form.
- WEEKS 33-37 Instruments concluded; review & AP test preparation: 1985, 1989, 1993, 1998, & 2003 AP practice exams. AP Theory Examination Wednesday, May 14.
- WEEK 38 Misc. special post-exam listening projects.

This course is relentlessly cumulative: the majority of these topics are referenced repeatedly after they are introduced. Thus, this schedule lists the approximate points at which each topic is introduced, but not necessarily the points at which they are completed. Many topics or skills are NEVER "completed."

The course incorporates numerous cursory analyses of pieces to illustrate current topics. Also sprinkled throughout the AP Theory curriculum are various sight-singing and ear-training (dictation) exercises; these steadily increase in complexity until students are working at a level similar to the sight-singing and dictations on the AP Test. Intensive drilling and testing of musical terminology also occurs throughout the year as new terms are introduced in support of new topics. In addition to their introduction during class time late in the year, AP practice questions are also covered in special optional after-school sessions beginning in April.