

# **AP Music Theory Syllabus**

## **Course Overview**

AP Music Theory is a year-long course designed to prepare the advanced music student with a theory background that will facilitate a career choice in the field of music. It is highly recommended that students who enroll in this course have either completed the prerequisite semester courses of Theory I and Theory II with grades not lower than a C, or have tested out of these classes at the discretion of the AP teacher. It is also recommended that participants in this class have developed musical and technical proficiency on an instrument (while piano skills will be of the utmost advantage, skills on other instruments or voice is acceptable.) While not required, it is recommended that students who complete this course participate in the AP Theory Exam administered in May. The class meets daily, with 42-minute class periods. Students who complete this course will gain an advanced knowledge and understanding of both the written and aural aspects of music and will become familiar with some literature, composers and style traits of various time periods in Western music history.

## **Objectives of the Course**

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and notate pitch and rhythm according to standard notation practices
2. Identify, notate, and hear simple and compound meters
3. Understand and construct major, minor (all three forms), chromatic, whole tone, and modal scales
4. Identify and notate major and minor key signatures
5. Identify, notate and hear all major, minor, diminished and augmented intervals inclusive of an octave
6. Identify, notate and hear major, minor, and dominant seventh triads and their inversions
7. Identify, notate and hear non-dominant seventh chords, secondary-dominant functions, and borrowed/advanced chords such as Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords
8. Understand, notate and identify the use of cadences, transposition and non-harmonic tones
9. Understand and demonstrate the rules for 16<sup>th</sup> century counterpoint up to species four
10. Understand the stylistic practices for four-part chorale-style writing

11. Realize a figured bass according to the rules of 18<sup>th</sup> century four-part writing
12. Analyze a four-part chorale using Roman and arabic numerals to represent chords and their inversions
13. Harmonize a melody with appropriate chords using good voice leading
14. Understand and recognize basic phrase structures and musical forms
15. Express musical ideas by arranging and composing
16. Write rhythmic, melodic and harmonic dictation

### **Primary Textbooks:**

Benward, Bruce, and Marilyn Saker. 2003. *Music In Theory and Practice, Volume I*, Seventh Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Benward, Bruce, and Marilyn Saker. 2003. *Music In theory and Practice, Volume II*, Seventh Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Ottman, Robert. 2004. *Music For Sight Singing*, Sixth edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.:Prentice Hall, 2004.

### **Other Resources:**

Ottman, Robert. 1970. *Elementary Harmony: Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice Hall. 1970.

Kamien, Roger, editor. 1984. *The Norton Scores: An Anthology for Listening*, Volume I. Fourth Edition expanded. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984.

Kamien, Roger, editor. 1984. *The Norton Scores: An Anthology for Listening*, Volume 2. Fourth Edition expanded. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1984.

White, Gary. 1996. *Music First!*, Third Edition. McGraw Hill, 1996.

### **Student Expectations**

1. Students will participate in all classroom discussions and activities.
2. Students will complete all assigned readings and exercises.
3. Students will maintain and organize a Music Theory notebook, which will include class notes, handouts, assignments, and listening logs.

4. Students will study the AP practice exams and prepare for the AP Theory exam.
5. Students will listen to approximately two hours of music each week outside of class and maintain a listening log, which will consist of written analysis/evaluation of each listening selection. The following items should be considered:
  - a. Melodic characteristics (conjunct/disjunct)
  - b. Harmonic characteristics (harmonic idioms present)
  - c. Rhythm (straight/syncopated)
  - d. Texture (homophonic/monophonic/polyphonic/heterophonic)
  - e. Timbre (instrumentation/tone color)
  - f. Dynamics (contrasts)
  - g. Meter (duple/triple, simple/compound, regular/irregular)
  - h. Tempo (tempo changes, Italian terms)
  - i. Mode (major/minor/modal/atonal)
  - j. Form (binary/ternary/sonata/rondo/concerto, etc.)
  - k. Articulation (legato/staccato, etc.)
6. Students will submit two larger compositions each nine weeks, based on assigned form and content. Other smaller compositions will be required to demonstrate understanding and synthesis of concepts presented. These compositions will include the following characteristics:
  - a. Use of major tonality/minor tonality
  - b. Transposition to relative major/minor
  - c. Transposition to a closely-related key/distant key
  - d. Use of Church mode
  - e. Binary/ternary/parallel phrase structure/rounded binary
  - f. Use of chromatic scale/whole tone scale/pentatonic scale/blues scale
  - g. Use of 2-part counterpoint
  - h. Use of 3-part counterpoint
  - i. Use of 4-part fugue
  - j. Use of 4-part chorale style

**C14** – Musical skills are developed through listening.

**C6** – The course includes analysis of repertoire.

**C16** – Musical skills are developed through written exercises.

**C17** – Musical skills are developed through the use of creative exercises.

- k. Use of tone row or serialism
7. Students will utilize the piano keyboard for a variety of exercises and are expected to have a keyboard available at home for use.
  8. Students will become familiar with internet theory practice sites and music software for notating projects, and are encouraged to download Finale Notepad at home (it is free) if they do not have access to Finale (school software).

## Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the following:

*Timely completion* of classwork and homework assignments (late work has negative effects and will be accepted only with lost points)

Participation in discussion and class activities

Listening log (evaluated every 4-5 weeks)

Ear training Quizzes (in class and recorded)

Unit Exams

Written Projects

Written work will account for 75% of the grade; oral/ear training/sight singing will account for 25% of the grade

C1 – The teacher has read the most recent AP music Theory Course Description

## Course Planner

### First Nine Weeks

*Chapters are from the Benward Text, Volume I*

**Week 1** Overview of Syllabus and *AP Music Theory Course Description* Book

Although students should be aware of the expectations for this course, I clarify the advanced course content with them in terms of the materials provided by the College Board. I administer the sample exam questions found in the AP Course Description during the second class period. We complete the sample free-response questions as a class, including the sight-singing exercises. I copy and give them the checklist of theory concepts and vocabulary

C2 – The course helps students master the rudiments and terminology of music (notational skills, intervals, scales and keys, chords, metric organization, rhythmic patterns).

used on the AP tests to use as a guide and review throughout this course.

Chapter 1 **Notation**

Written Skills:

(staff and its evolution, clefs, pitches, meters, rhythmic duration, enharmonics, half steps/whole steps, accidentals)

**C15** – Musical skills are developed through sight singing.

Week 2  
**Modes**

Chapter 2 **Scales, Tonality, Key,**

Written Skills:

(pitch class, scale degree names, circle of fifths, non-diatonic scales, modes)

**C16** – Musical skills are developed through written exercises.

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major key, 3-5 note diatonic patterns, sing scales, conjunct melodies using do-la; harmonic dictation - bass voice from 4-part playing

**C11** – This course teaches standard rhythms and meters.

Week 3-4 Chapter 3

**Intervals and Transposition**

Written Skills:

(Perfect, Major, minor intervals, aug. and dim. Intervals, enharmonic intervals, inversion of intervals, compound and simple intervals, methods of interval transposition)

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major key, add ti-do, write short stepwise melodies of 7-12 notes, introduce intervals in Benward sequence M-m2,M-m3, etc., sing Interval Song; harmonic dictation – outer voices from 4-part playing

Week 5-6 Chapter 4

**Chords**

Written Skills:

**C18** – Musical skills are developed through use of analytical techniques.

(chord qualities, inversions, primary triads, Roman numeral analysis)

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major key, melodies with skips using do mi so patterns, continue reviewing and adding intervals in Benward sequence, recognize triad quality and inversion, sing inversions; harmonic dictation – outer voices from 4-part playing

Week 7

Chapter 4 **Chords** (cont.)

Written Skills:

(Seventh Chords, Figured Bass, Dominant Seventh chord and inversions, popular chord symbols, analysis)

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing - continue to drill scales and short stepwise melodies in compound meter, recognize triad quality and inversions, drill intervals; harmonic dictation – outer voices

Week 8

Chapter 5 **Cadences and**

**Nonharmonic Tones**

Written Skills:

(harmonic cadence, rhythmic cadence, identifying non-harmonic tones both accented and unaccented, analysis of cadence types)

**C18** – Musical skills are developed through analytical exercises.

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major key, diatonic melodies with scale degree 1,3,5 skips, add

cadential skips from scale degree 5-1; harmonic dictation – outer voices

Week 9 Chapter 5 complete as above

*Chapter 1-5 Exam*

*End of 1<sup>st</sup> marking period*

## Second Nine Weeks

Week 1 - 3 Chapter 8 **Voice Leading in Two Voices**

### Written Skills:

(cantus firmus, species counterpoint, motion between voices, species 1 – 4, identifying errors in voice leading)

### Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – minor keys, intervals from the tonic triad, simple and compound meters; harmonic dictation – outer voices and authentic cadence

C18 – Musical skills are developed through analytical exercises.

Week 4 *16<sup>th</sup> Century Counterpoint Exam*

Chapter 9 **Voice Leading in Four Voices**

### Written Skills:

(four-voice texture, similarities to 16<sup>th</sup> c. counterpoint, qualities of a good soprano line, writing a bass line, writing soprano against bass, Stylistic Practice 1 and 2 for roots a P5 apart)

### Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major and minor keys, intervals from the dominant triad, all meters; harmonic dictation – outer voices, add authentic and plagal cadences

C3 – The course includes composition

Week 5 Chapter 9 **Voice Leading (cont.)**

### Written Skills:

(continue, adding Stylistic Practice 3 for roots a third apart and Stylistic Practice 4 for roots a second apart, understanding the use of a figured bass in terms of chord inversions and doubling)

C4 – The course teaches realization of a figured bass.

Ear training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major and minor keys, further use of all diatonic intervals, all meters; harmonic dictation – outer voices, all cadences, bassline intervals moving by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>

Week 6

Chapter 9 **Voice Leading** (cont.)

Written Skills:

(continue applying Stylistic practices, add Stylistic Practice 5 for repeated chords, 6 for first-inversion triads, and 7 for diminished first-inversion triads, harmonize a Roman numeral progression using correct voice leading and doubling)

Ear training:

continue as above; harmonic dictation – outer voices, all cadences, use bassline with arpeggiated intervals

C5 – The course teaches realization of a Roman numeral progression.

Week 7

Chapter 9 **Voice Leading** (cont.)

Written Skills:

(continue applying Stylistic Practices, add Stylistic Practice 8 for second-inversion triads, review unstylistic departures (never broken), occasionally broken rules)

Ear training:

continue as above

Week 8

*Chapter 9 Exam*

Chapter 6 **Melodic Organization**

Written Skills:

(motive, sequence, period, phrase construction)

Ear training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major and minor keys, use of all diatonic intervals, all meters, melodies with skips and add skips to scale degree 4; harmonic dictation – outer voices, primary and secondary triads

**C12** – The course teaches phrase structure.

Week 9  
**Reduction**

Chapter 7 **Texture and tuxtural**

Written Skills:

(various texture types, melody types, harmonic and rhythmic support types)

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – major and minor keys, diatonic, all meters, melodies with skips to any scale degree; harmonic dictation – outer voices, primary and secondary triads, major and minor

*Chapter 6/7 Exam*

*End of 2<sup>nd</sup> marking period*

**Third Nine Weeks**

Week 1 Chapter 10 **Harmonic Progression and Harmonic Rhythm**

Written Skills:

(root relationships, chord progressions, circle progressions, harmonizing melodies, use of Roman numeral progressions, identifying and using nonharmonic tones)

C9 – The course teaches tonal relationships.

Ear training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – natural minor, all meters, melodies with skips to any scale degree; harmonic dictation – outer voices, primary and secondary triads, minor

C8 – The course teaches functional triadic harmony.

Week 2  
Chord

Chapter 11 **The Dominant Seventh**

Written Skills:

(inversions, resolutions – circle and non-circle, non-resolutions)

Chapter 12 **The Leading-Tone Seventh Chords**

Written Skills:

(half-diminished, fully diminished, resolution of tritones, resolving root and seventh factors)

Chapter 13 **Nondominant Seventh Chords**

Written Skills:

(analysis symbols, use in circle progressions, resolution of the seventh factor)

(ch. 11-13) Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing – harmonic minor, all meters, melodies with skips to any scale degree; harmonic dictation – outer voices, primary and secondary triads, minor

Week 3 - 4 Chapter 14/15 **Modulation, Secondary Dominants and Leading Tone Chords**

Written Skills:

(common chord, pivot chord, closely related keys, phrase/direct/chromatic,

C10 – The course teaches modulation to closely related keys.

C8 – The course teaches functional triadic harmony.

tonicized chord, tritone substitution,  
using and identifying secondary  
dominants in four-part harmony)

Ear Training:

melodic dictation/sight singing –  
melodic minor, all meters, melodies  
with skips to any scale degree;  
harmonic dictation – outer voices,  
primary and secondary triads,  
secondary dominants, major and  
minor

*Chapters from Benward, Volume II*

Week 5                      Chapter 4/5    **Borrowed  
Chords/Neapolitan 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Chords**

Written Skills:

(modal mixture, identifying  
borrowed chords in minor keys and  
major keys, function of Neapolitan)

Ear training:

melodic dictation/sight singing –  
major key, chromatic pitches out of  
the key; harmonic dictation – outer  
voices, all triads, borrowed chords

Week 6                      Chapter 6        **Augmented 6<sup>th</sup> Chords**

Written Skills:

(Italian 6<sup>th</sup>, French 6<sup>th</sup>, German 6<sup>th</sup> –  
uses and resolutions)

Ear training:

melodic dictation/sight singing –  
drill intervals, chord quality;  
harmonic dictation – outer voices, all  
triads, all intervals

Week 7-9                  Chapter 16(Vol. I)    **Two-Part Binary Form**

C13 – The  
course teaches  
small forms.

Chapter 17(Vol. I)	<b>Three-Part Ternary Form</b>
Chapter 7(Vol. II)	<b>Variation Technique (Classical Period)</b>
Chapter 8(Vol. II)	<b>Sonata Form</b>
Chapter 9(Vol. II)	<b>Rondo Form</b>

Written Skills:

(Understand music in it's larger form, identify sections by phrase, cadences and repeated material)

**C12** – The course teaches phrase structure.

Ear Training:

Melodic Dictation/Sight Singing – find 8-bar segments from literature; harmonic dictation – find 8-bar segments from literature

Week 9                      *Student presentations of form projects to class; evaluations*  
*End of 3<sup>rd</sup> parking period*

**Fourth Nine Weeks**

Week 1-4                      Dictation Exercises – melodic and harmonic  
Free-response question exercises  
Recorded Sight singing examples  
In-depth analysis of literature – classwork/discussion  
Students complete teacher-designed exams based on AP sample questions

Week 5                              Students complete AP Theory  
Practice Exams

Students are administered 2 recorded sight singing tests comparable to those used on the AP Theory Exam

Week 6                              **AP Exam is administered**

Week 7-9                      Student choice of following projects:

**C17** – Musical skills are developed through analytical exercises.

## Style Period Overview

Style/Compositional Practices from  
1900 to present

Analysis of symphonic work for  
harmonic context and form

Composition project – student  
special interest

Composition project – 2-part  
invention OR fugue in the style of  
Bach

Composition project – 20<sup>th</sup> century  
techniques

Arranging project – teacher/student  
collaboration for school use

*Throughout the Benward & Saker textbooks, basic music theory elements such as Roman numerals and functional harmonic progressions are addressed in the context of a variety of Western art music. These elements are addressed in classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of the textbook. In addition, there is a section at the end of most chapters (in both volumes) called ‘History,’ which traces, compares, analyzes and maps out the specific concepts of the chapter and the historical value or significance of these concepts, which help students to place each concept in specific historical style periods.*

*Furthermore, elements of twentieth-century music are addressed in the classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of chapters 14, 15 and 16 of Volume II (Benward & Saker). These elements are addressed through discussion of listening logs, students compositions and students’ choice of project following AP Exam in May.*

**C19** – The course includes study of a wide variety of vocal and instrumental music from the standard Western tonal repertoires.

**C7**- The course incorporates a brief introduction to twentieth-century scales, chordal structures, and compositional procedures, either through analysis or original composition.