ACTUALLY USEFUL MUSIC THEORY

"Music with dinner is an insult
both to the cook and the violinist."

-G.K. Chesterton

"If it sounds good, it is good."

-Duke Ellington

The purpose of music theory is...

The purpose of music theory is...
to describe what happens in music.

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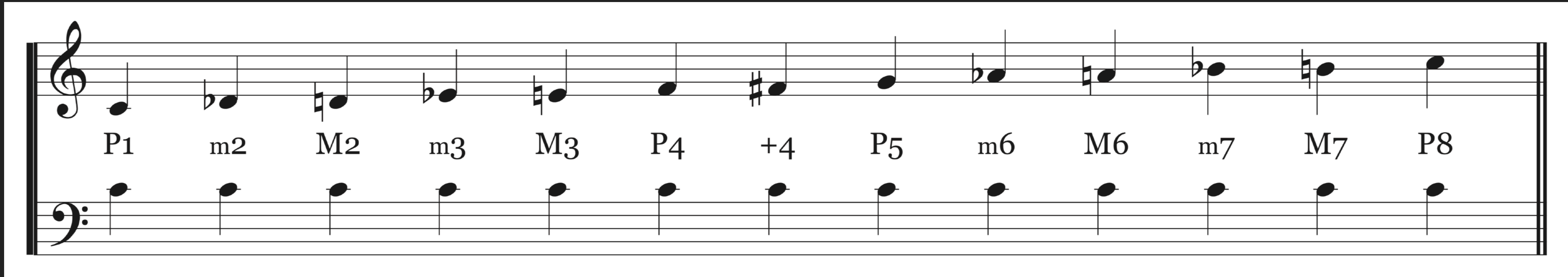
to describe what happens in music.

That's it.

"Descriptive, not prescriptive"

HOW TO SPELL AND RECOGNIZE INTERVALS AND CHORDS
VERY, VERY QUICKLY

Your ability to recognize intervals and chords is only as useful as your ability to do it <u>immediately</u>.

INTERVALS

AN INTERVAL IS THE DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO NOTES.
WE DESCRIBE INTERVALS IN 2 WAYS: (1) SIZE AND (2) QUALITY

INTERVALS

P1   m2   M2   m3   M3   P4   +4   P5   m6   M6   m7   M7   P8

AN INTERVAL IS THE DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO NOTES.
WE DESCRIBE INTERVALS IN 2 WAYS:

(1) SIZE —>

2nd   4th   7th

INTERVALS

AN INTERVAL IS THE DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO NOTES.
WE DESCRIBE INTERVALS IN 2 WAYS:

(2) QUALITY —>

PERFECT
MAJOR
MINOR
DIMINISHED
AUGMENTED

CHORDS
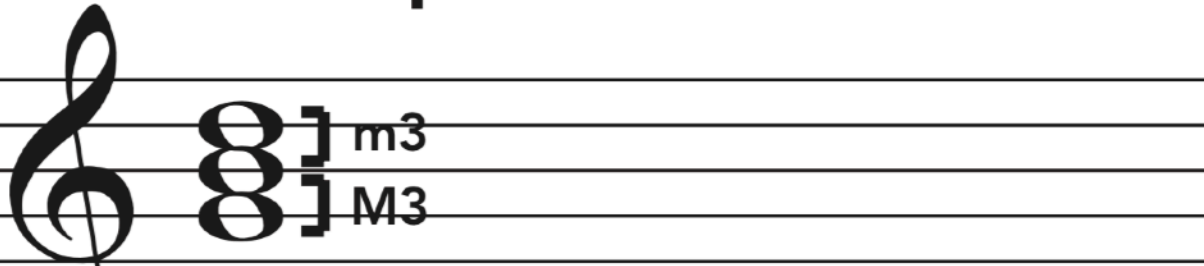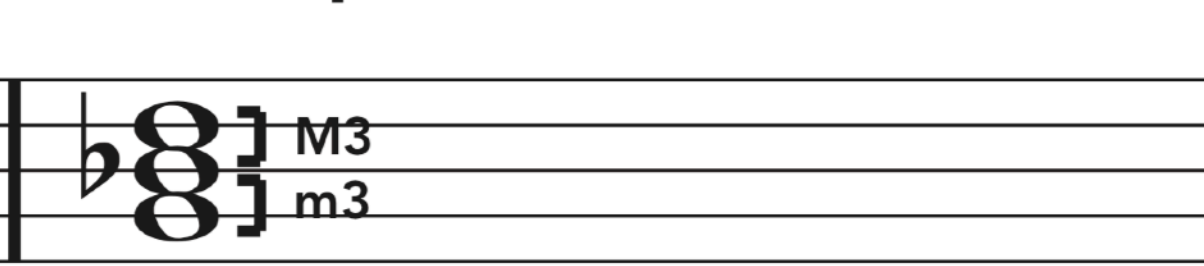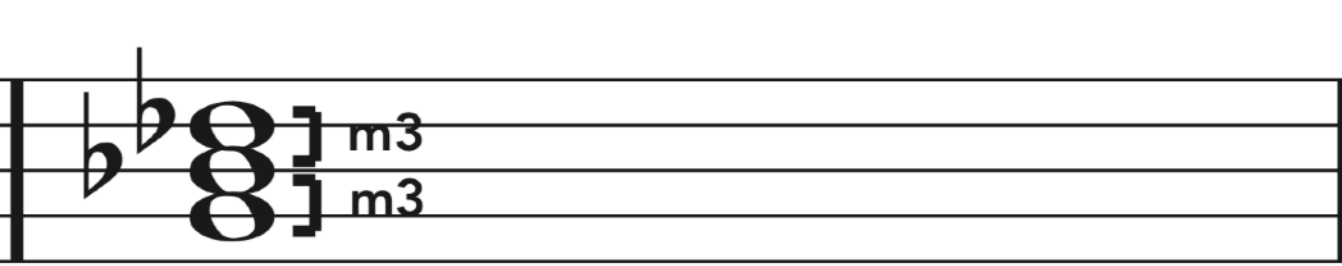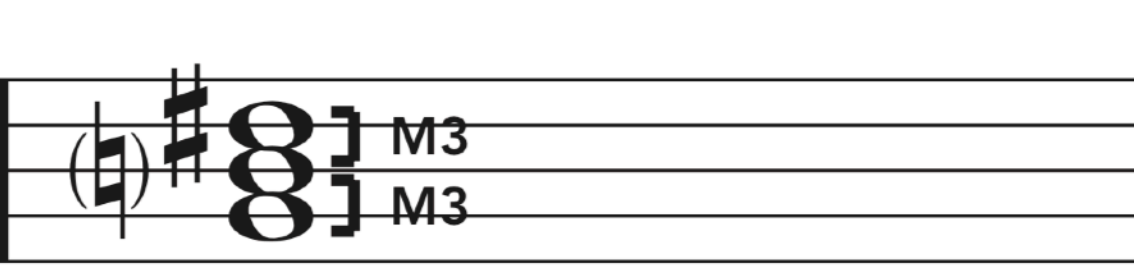
TRIAD:
A 3-NOTE CHORD THAT CAN BE STACKED IN THIRDS

CHORDS

FOUR KINDS OF TRIADS:

MAJOR TRIAD
root position
(G major)

MINOR TRIAD
root position
(G minor)

DIMINISHED TRIAD
root position
(G diminished)

AUGMENTED TRIAD
root position
(G augmented)

SEVENTH CHORDS
4-NOTE CHORDS THAT CAN BE STACKED IN THIRDS
(A TRIAD, PLUS A SEVENTH ABOVE THE ROOT)

3 VERY COMMON TYPES OF SEVENTH CHORDS:

CMA7   C7   Cmi7

major 7th   dominant 7th   minor 7th

SEVENTH CHORDS

SEVENTH CHORDS

INVERTED SEVENTH CHORDS

PRACTICE BUILDING TRIADS AND SEVENTHS AT THE PIANO:

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WHICH PART-WRITING RULES STILL MATTER?
21ST-CENTURY VOICE LEADING

COMMON TONES
& STEPWISE MOTION

WHICH PART-WRITING RULES STILL MATTER? (21ST-CENTURY VOICE LEADING)

2P1s:	Two P1s in succession
2P5s:	Two P5ths in succession, in same pair of voices (by parallel or contrary motion)
2P8s:	Two P8ves in succession, in same pair of voices (by parallel or contrary motion)
2P4s:	Two P4ths in succession, in *bass* and same upper voice (by parallel *or* contrary motion)
XU5s:	o5 → P5 in succession, in *bass* and same upper
D5:	Similar motion into a P5 in B/S, sop leaps
D8:	Similar motion into a P8 in B/S, sop leaps
VO:	Voice crosses over another from preceding chord
VC:	Voices out of order in a single chord

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RESOLUTION RULES

RULE 1: **IF** V (v) goes to I (i) or VI (vi), **THEN** *Ti* resolves upward to *Do.*

RULE 2: **IF** vii°/vii°7 OR V7 goes to I (i) or VI (vi), **THEN** *Ti* resolves to *Do* AND *Fa* resolves to *Mi.*

RULE 3: **IF** you have a seventh chord of ANY kind, **THEN** the 7th of the chord resolves downward, or holds until it can.

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ILLEGAL

5th or 8ve   5th or 8ve

(similar motion into 5th or 8ve)

direct 5th   direct 5th

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D:I   vi $\frac{V^7}{IV}$ IV   iv   i6   iv$^6_5$ V

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2P4s:	Two P
XU5s:	o5 →
D5:	Simila
D8:	Simila
VO:	Voice
VC:	Voice

ILLEGAL

5th or

5th or

Google
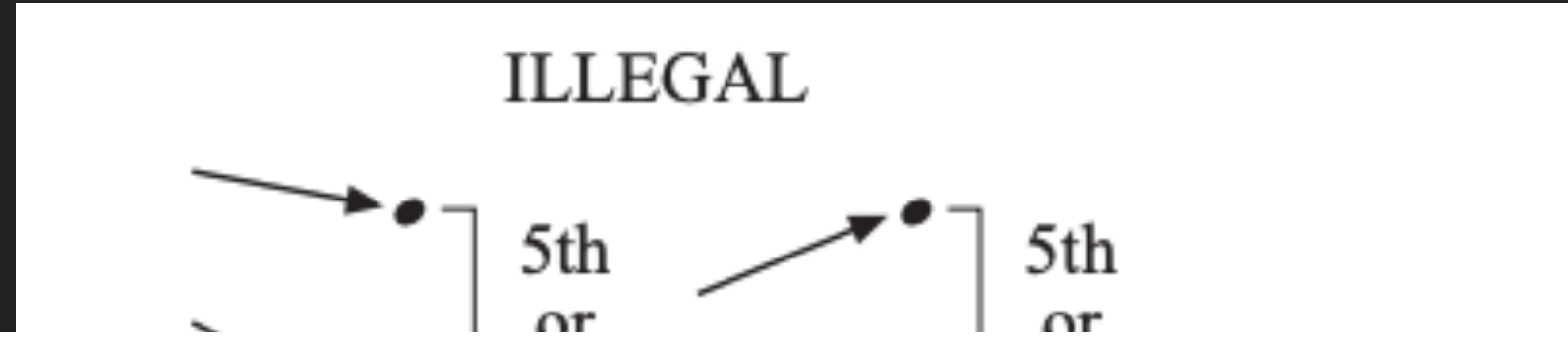
music theory part writing rules

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AHHHHH!
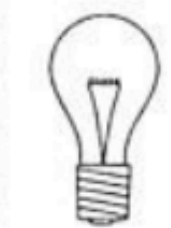
RULE 2: I
Do AND

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SMOOTH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHORDS

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SMOOTH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHORDS

GOOD

LESS GOOD

"The experienced arranger will not be rigidly confined by these rules in all situations, but they should be carefully observed by the beginner. *Gradually he will recognize with assurance those situations in which these principles may be safely disregarded.*"

- Hawley Ades (*Choral Arranging*)

Choral
Arranging
expanded edition

HAWLEY ADES

(maybe buy this)

EXAMPLES OF PARALLEL PERFECT INTERVALS SOUNDING PRETTY GOOD:

"A Boy and a Girl," Eric Whitacre

EXAMPLES OF PARALLEL PERFECT INTERVALS SOUNDING PRETTY GOOD:

"Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing," Stevie Wonder

EXAMPLES OF PARALLEL PERFECT INTERVALS SOUNDING PRETTY GOOD:

"Appalachian Spring," Aaron Copland

EXAMPLES OF PARALLEL PERFECT INTERVALS SOUNDING PRETTY GOOD:

UNEQUAL FIFTHS (DIMINISHED TO PERFECT)

AND REALLY, VICE VERSA

"Mirrors," Justin Timberlake

UNEQUAL FIFTHS (DIMINISHED TO PERFECT)

AND REALLY, VICE VERSA

EXAMPLES OF GREAT VOICE LEADING!

EXAMPLES OF GREAT VOICE LEADING!

"Disney Girls," The Beach Boys

"You can study orchestration,
you can study harmony and theory and everything else,
but melodies come straight from God."

-Quincy Jones

VOICINGS: WHY SOME CHORDS SOUND BETTER THAN OTHERS

GOOD →

(WHY?)

"VOICING" *(noun)*
the way the notes of a chord are distributed

as in: "I like the voicings you're playing"

"VOICING" *(noun)*

the way the notes of a chord are distributed

as in: "I like the voicings you're playing"

"VOICING" *(verb)*

the act of distributing those notes

as in: "how are you voicing that G7#11 chord?"

good

good

=

also
good

SPACING

SPACING

"close" spacing

VOICINGS: WHY SOME CHORDS SOUND BETTER THAN OTHERS

SPACING

"close" spacing   "open" spacing

SPACING

CHORD SPACED TIGHTLY TOGETHER = POWER AND PUNCH

CHORD SPACED FURTHER APART = DEPTH AND BREADTH

SPACING

It often sounds bad if you have vastly different amounts of space between adjacent voices of the chord.

SPACING

SPACING

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COMPARE THE VERTICAL INTERVALS BETWEEN EACH PAIR OF ADJACENT VOICES IN YOUR CHORD

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SPACING

EXCEPTION!
(one of many, I'm sure…)

COMPARE THE VERTICAL INTERVALS BETWEEN EACH PAIR OF ADJACENT VOICES IN YOUR CHORD

SPACING

YOUR EARS SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE FINAL ARBITER OF WHAT VOICINGS WORK WELL FOR THE MUSIC YOU'RE MAKING

MISC. VOICING TIPS

Root up to **5th** up to **3rd**

= good for many open-spaced root position triads and sevenths

MISC. VOICING TIPS

Root up to **5th** up to **3rd**

= good starting place for many open-spaced root position triads and sevenths

MISC. VOICING TIPS

Placement of the **3rd** helps determine character and weight of the chord

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MISC. VOICING TIPS

"LOW-INTERVAL LIMIT"

MISC. VOICING TIPS

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"LOW-INTERVAL LIMIT"

BASIC JAZZ HARMONY
HEAR IT, PLAY IT, WRITE IT.

The foundation of jazz harmony is three chords we've already talked about:

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CMA7 — major 7th
C7 — dominant 7th
Cmi7 — minor 7th

For basic jazz piano voicings, the 5th is not necessary

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"Shell Voicing" - Root, 3rd, 7th

"Shell Voicing" - Root, 3rd, 7th

Play all 3 chords from the same root:

Play all 3 chords from the same root:

Play all 3 chords from the same root:

1. **Play** the chord

2. **Say** the name/quality of the chord

3. **Arpeggiate** (sing) up and down

the **ii-V-I** progression

the ii-V-I progression

the ii-V-I progression

the ii-V-I progression

the **ii-V-I** progression

ii7

(minor 7th)

the ii-V-I progression

ii7
(minor 7th)

V7
(dominant 7th)

the ii-V-I progression

ii7
(minor 7th)

V7
(dominant 7th)

IMA7
(major 7th)

the ii-V-I progression

the ii-V-I progression

the ii-V-I progression

the ii-V-I progression

the **ii-V-I** progression

the ii-V-I progression

the ii-V-I progression

Always move each voice to the nearest member of the next chord!

CHORD PROGRESSIONS
HOW TO MAKE THEM SOUND FRESH (BUT NOT WEIRD)

"All We Ever Do is Say Goodbye" (John Mayer)

"Annie Waits" (Ben Folds)

CHORD PROGRESSIONS: FRESH BUT NOT WEIRD

"Annie Waits" (Ben Folds)

"Annie Waits" (Ben Folds)

"Annie Waits" (Ben Folds)

CHORD PROGRESSIONS: FRESH BUT NOT WEIRD

"Jacqueline" (Sarah Jarosz)

(harmonic reduction)

CHORD PROGRESSIONS: FRESH BUT NOT WEIRD

"Jacqueline" (Sarah Jarosz)

(harmonic reduction)

CHORD PROGRESSIONS: FRESH BUT NOT WEIRD

"Jacqueline" (Sarah Jarosz)

(harmonic reduction)

CHORD PROGRESSIONS: FRESH BUT NOT WEIRD

"Jacqueline" (Sarah Jarosz)

(harmonic reduction)

"Jacqueline" (Sarah Jarosz)

(harmonic reduction)

"Jacqueline" (Sarah Jarosz)

(harmonic reduction)

"Sir Duke" (Stevie Wonder)

"Sir Duke" (Stevie Wonder)

REHARMONIZATION EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

REHARM EXERCISE

WHY COUNTERPOINT MATTERS
(AND HOW TO USE IT)

"Amateur composers write chords…

professionals write **LINES.**"

- James Barnes

Too Much Homophony

WHY COUNTERPOINT MATTERS (AND HOW TO USE IT)

"Every New Choral Work Since 1998"

"COUNTERPOINT"

(this is counterpoint)

BACH

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES

PUNCH BROTHERS

GABRIEL KAHAHE

GABRIEL KAHAHE

GABRIEL KAHAHE

GABRIEL KAHAHE

Our culture treats music so cheaply.

LISTEN WITH PURPOSE.

Focused listening is deeply connected to music theory.

Music is for ears.

Music is for ears.

MUSIC THEORY IS FOR EARS.

Develop the ability to predict what will happen next **based on what has happened so far.**

Strategies for Active Listening

1. Isolate one instrument.

2. Try to hear the harmony.

3. Listen for the form.

4. Describe the texture.

5. Predict what will happen next.

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