

MUSIC

For The
SIMPLE MAN

Core Concepts & Comprehensive Music Theory
by Dexter Nelson

Music composed, compiled, and arranged by
DEXTER NELSON

One of the most complete instructional music theory courses ever compiled, this course was written in a unique, very simple, and easy-to-learn approach that makes it fun for anyone to learn music.

Published For:

- Beginners
- Professional Musicians
- Students
- Music Instructors
- Anyone Interested in Music

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A word from the author:

Dear Reader:

Hello, and welcome to **Music for the Simple Man!**

It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to write this book. But it has been an even greater honor to work with many talented musicians, artists, instructors and especially students as I was doing my research. The information in this book encompasses the knowledge and experiences of my own sixteen-year music career, including knowledge passed by great musicians and composers from all around the world.

Many music instruction books are designed as an accompaniment to live instruction, whether it is in a classroom environment or private instruction. This book, (although wonderful as a teaching aid), was written as a "stand-alone" instruction guide.

It was specifically written using the information flow and style that I use when teaching my own students, and was written to be one most complete music theory instruction courses you will ever find.

In these pages we will begin by covering the core concepts of music and then back it up with solid theory. From basic and intermediate theory to very advanced techniques and methodology, beginners and professionals alike will benefit greatly from this book.

As a compliment to this book, I have done what many authors have seldom done. I have made myself available to answer questions, as well as give live instruction and recommendations. That is how much I love music.

It is my sincerest hope that this course will educate and help to better equip you for not only music, whether career or hobby, but will bring a higher standard of living through entertainment into your life, and the lives of the ones you touch in your everyday lives.

I wish you all the very best in your music endeavors!

Dexter Nelson
President, CEO - Echoingwalls Music
<http://www.echoingwalls.com>

A brief history about the author:

For several years I have worked as an artist and composer and it has been my career helping other artists to succeed in the music industry. My own music career began at the tender age of twelve. At that age I stood over six feet tall.

The year is 1989. The place is Lincoln Park Academy, Fort Pierce, Florida and I was in the sixth grade wheel program. The wheel program was a program where each quarter, students were taken to try out all the electives, (Band, Choir, Orchestra, etc.). Each quarter after that, the students would rotate to another elective.

My first cycle put me in the strings program. There I sat in the back of the room watching a group of high school students playing and making the most incredible sound I have ever heard - live music. It was incredible! Violins, Violas, Cellos and Basses all in harmony and all directed by my soon-to-be music teacher, Mrs. Float, (now Dr. Float).

I completed the wheel program my sixth grade year and I completed my seventh grade year in the orchestra program.

My very first day of orchestra was by far the most memorable. I sat in the back of the room with a few seventh graders watching the other students play. Then the time came for us to pick out the instruments we were interested in playing. Everyone knew what they wanted to play but me. Call it a disadvantage of being a year younger than every one else. The Wheel Program was for sixth and seventh graders and full electives wasn't an option until the eighth grade.

As I was sitting in the back of the room by myself, (everyone had already picked out their instruments), Dr. Float looked at me and asked me what I wanted to play. Seeing these instruments for the first time in my life and not knowing what they were, I answered, "I don't know."

Dr. Float then asked me to stand up. At the time it was a really odd request, but I complied. "Wow" she exclaimed, and the whole class started to laugh. I was definitely the tallest seventh grader anyone had ever seen. At over six feet tall, I towered over the rest of the class. Once I had stood up, she directed me over to a double bass in the corner of the room.

"This?" I asked as I pointed towards the instrument rack. "Yes. Pick one out and go stand with the other basses" she instructed. The bass was taller than I was and with a bit of instruction from another student, I pulled the bow across the string for the first time and I fell in love with my bass and my music.

That day I became a member of a family. And for the next several years I embarked on an exciting adventure that changed my life forever.

In the years that followed, I studied with some of the most brilliant musical minds and honed my skills with performance, composition, and by educating others. Among those who have helped me to aspire to my highest achievements is Dr. Diane Float for years of core training and methodology on the bass; Dr. Lucas Drew for the countless hours of monotonous instruction; and to my principal chair and section leader of the Bass section all through High School, Joseph Smith. You are an inspiration and a credit to the music culture. That reminds me, you still owe me a play-off challenge.

Kevin Cassidy, (University of Florida), for teaching me how to fine tune finger positions, teaching me the "emotion" of music, and for motivating me through what was a tough time in my music career; Vincenzo Bucci, (classical bassist/composer), for showing me that music is a life unto itself and should be used to enrich lives; the Moody Blues for opening my eyes to a world of

music and culture; and The Palm Beach Pops Orchestra and Walter Cronkite for showing me that dreams do come true with faith, hard work, and dedication. You all are awesome musicians, and I'm sorry I never played the concert after all of that practice.

There is simply not enough room to list the names of everyone who have helped me to succeed in music. You all know who you are and you have my deepest gratitude.

In honor of those who have helped me along the way, and of course because of my love for music, I currently own a music-based business, (Echoingwalls Music), in which I do exactly what others have done for me. That is to help others succeed in music and to enrich the lives of others.

This book is dedicated to all of you who have helped me to success and continue to help others to this very day.

UPDATE: As this is the first revision of this book, it seems fitting that I mention that I update my faithful readers about my career in music accordingly.

It is with great pleasure that I announce that I am officially full time in music as a composer of classical music, a performer, as well as a private tutor, in which I teach the Double Bass, Bass Guitar, and Cello.

I am also proud to announce that my music education is well underway as I am currently pursuing my Masters, (and then my Doctorate), in music education and performance.

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Chapter 1: Notation & Basic Music Theory

Section 1: Staves

In this first chapter we are going to begin building the foundation of what every musician will need - Music Theory. **Music Theory is the study of the theoretical elements of music including sound and pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, and notation.**

You are encouraged to take notes and actually write out the examples used. This will help you to not only understand what you see when you look at sheet music, but it will "back up" in practice, everything that you will learn. So Let us begin with two definitions.

Score: *The notation of a musical work; 2. the written form of a composition for orchestral or vocal parts; 3. the music written for a film or a play.*

Staff: *A set of horizontal lines and intermediate spaces used in notation to represent a sequence of pitches, in modern notation normally consisting of five lines and four spaces.*

Just as every writer needs paper to write on, so does a good composer. Music is written on a special type of paper called a score. The score is made up of a series of lines called a staff, (Figure A). Do not let the definition above throw you off. As you can see, a staff is simply five lines and the four spaces between them. The plural of staff, by the way, is Staves.

Each of the lines and spaces represent a different note. The lines, (from bottom to top), are named **E, G, B, D, and F**. The spaces are named **F, A, C, and E**. An easy way to remember this is with a simple catch phrase, **Every Good Boy Does Fine**, and of course the spelling of the word "FACE". As you advance in this course, you will learn the ability to read and play the note or "pitch" when you see it on a score.



Figure A (The Staff)

Section 2: Pitch

As simple as a definition can be, a **Pitch is a specific musical tone**. There are several notes that you hear when you listen to music. Some are higher and some are lower. Each separate note has a specific tone or pitch. See figure B.

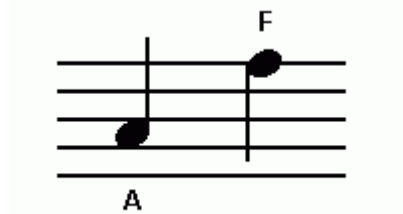


Figure B (Pitches)

The first note indicated in Figure B is an A because it rests on the space that is used to represent an A. The second note is an F. It is important to note that physically, the F is higher on the staff than the A. It is quite obvious that there are many more notes that can fit onto the staff, but when you hear music, there is a vast range of notes.

If the staff was all there was to music, then you would only have the eleven notes that fit onto it. Those eleven notes would be the five lines, and the six spaces, (the four spaces between the lines, and the two spaces above and below the top and bottom lines).

There are two different staves commonly used in music composition. Each one represents a different range of pitches.

Clef: A symbol indicating the pitch represented by one line of a staff, in relation to which the other pitches of the staff can be determined.

The top staff is called the *Treble Staff* and the bottom staff is the *Bass Staff*. If you listen to the notes on the two staves you will soon know why. Pitches on the Treble staff are higher and the pitches on the bass staff are lower. The musician or the songwriter knows which is which by the symbol that is placed on each. This symbol is called a **clef**. A **Grand Staff** is formed when two staves are grouped together by another symbol called a **Brace**, (see Figure C).

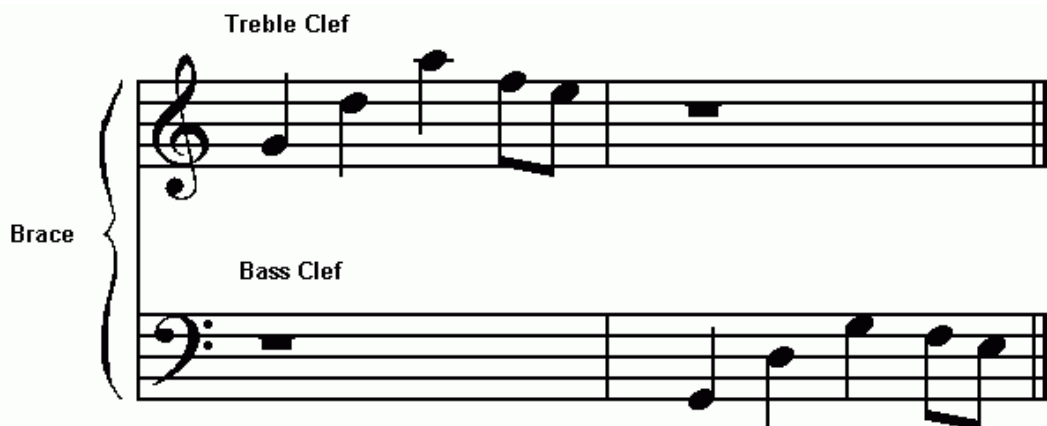


Figure C (A Grand Staff)

In Figure C, the notes you are looking at on the different staves are in fact the same notes. If you look a little closer you can also see that they are not on the same lines. This is because the lines and spaces for the Bass clef are named differently from the Treble clef, (see Illustration A).

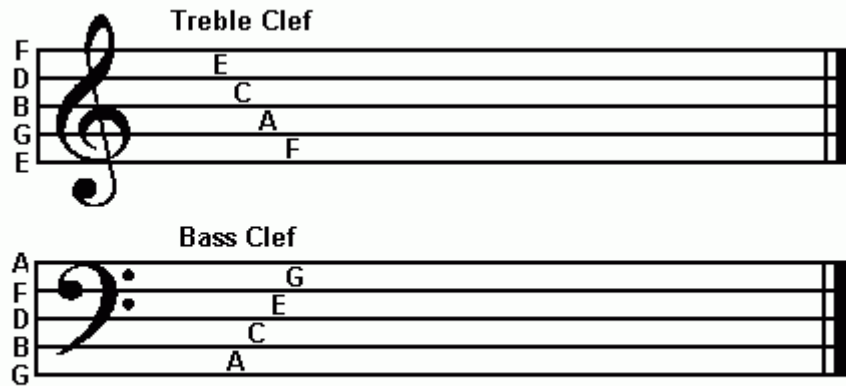
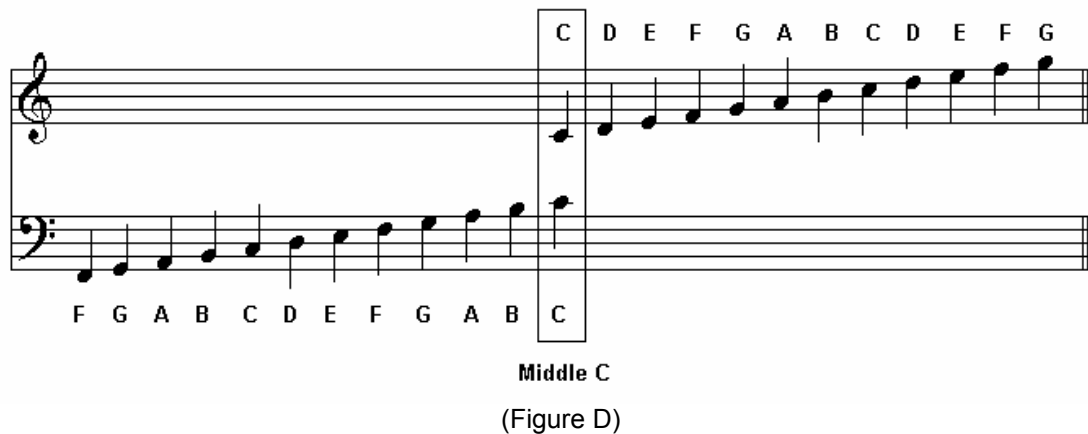


Illustration A. (Comparing Treble & Bass clefs)

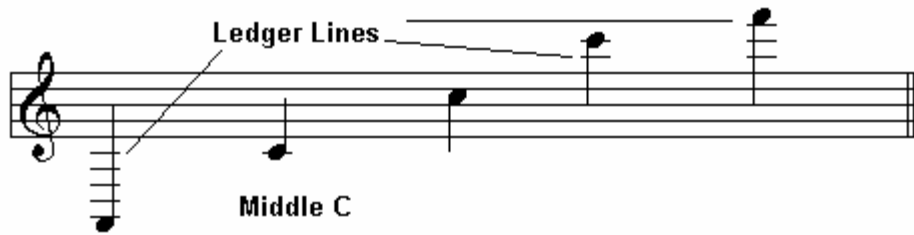
NOTE: It is important to note that the relationships between the notes on the different staves are important to learning how to read music in ANY clef. We will introduce the other two clefs as you advance through this course.

An easy way to remember the Bass clef is with the catch phrase **Good Boys Do Fine Always** to name the lines, (from bottom to top), and **All Cows Eat Grass** to define the spaces between them, (again from bottom to top).

Combining the two staves, you now have the ten lines and eight spaces, plus the four spaces above and below each staff giving you a total of twenty two notes, (See Figure D).



Another way that notes are added is by the use of "ledger lines" or extra lines added above and below the staff, (See Figure E).

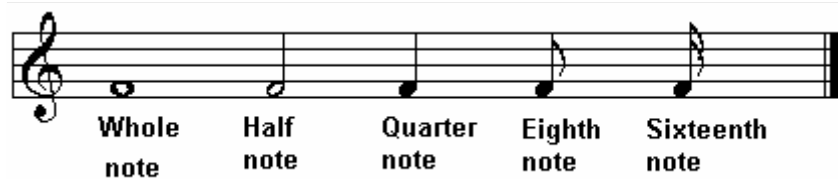


(Figure E)

There are as many ledger lines added above the Treble staff and below the Bass staff as are needed to identify the instrument you are writing for. The ledger line between the Bass and Treble clefs represent a single note between the two staves called *Middle C*.

Section 3: Duration (Note Length)

Duration is the length of time a note is held or played. The length a note is held, names the note, and likewise, each note looks differently, (See Figure F).



(Figure F)

The relationships between the notes are a mathematical one. A whole note for example, can be four seconds long, meaning that a note is played or “held” for four whole seconds, or four beats. A half note, (as it is so named), is half the length of a whole note. If the whole note is held for four beats, then a half note would be held for two beats.

A quarter note would be half the length of a half note, or a quarter of the length of a whole note. Again, if the whole note is held for four beats, a quarter note would be held for one beat.

Progressively, the other notes follow suit. The eighth note is half the length of a quarter note and a sixteenth note is half the length of an eighth note.

Exercise:

Here is a concept-building exercise. We will use this to put into practice what you are learning as you go. As you advance, so does the exercise. Ready?

This exercise is your first lesson in counting and syncopation. We will get into definitions and explanations later, but for right now just do the exercise.

1. Count one through four and repeat. Each number should be one per second. No "one-thousands" in between. Just 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 and repeat.
2. Now that you have a nice count going, clap to the count with one clap per second.
3. Here's the fun part. Sing aloud, "Mary Had A Little Lamb."

As you sing, you will notice that some of the words are held longer than others, and some are shorter than others. We say that each word has a different duration. Between the spaces from one clap to the other, you will find single words that take up the whole amount of time, and you will find that there are two words that take up the same amount of time. Finally, you will notice that some words take up more than the space of time between one clap to the next.

Each of those words could be represented as notes on a staff for an instrument to play, and will have different durations.

NOTE: *This section, as well the next few sections will seem rather vague and may even be hard to grasp. Keep in mind that you are learning the “concepts” that will build the foundation. The exercises used are important to relay the concepts.*

Think of yourself standing at the bottom of an information waterfall and blocks of information are falling down all around you. Instead of trying to piece the blocks together, let the information “sink

in” and as you progress through the next few sections, we will take all of the information and show you how to piece them together.

Please be patient and pay special attention to the exercises given.

Section 4: Rhythm

The five notes shown in Figure F represent the most widely recognized and commonly used notes in music composition. There are notes that are held for even smaller lengths of time. These include thirty-second notes, (half of a sixteenth note), and sixty-fourth notes, (half of a thirty-second note).

The combinations of notes with different duration lengths begin to form what is called **rhythm**. In the last section we had you sing *Mary Had A Little Lamb* to help show you the concept of duration. Sing it again and pay close attention to the pattern of the entire song. That pattern is the rhythm of the song.

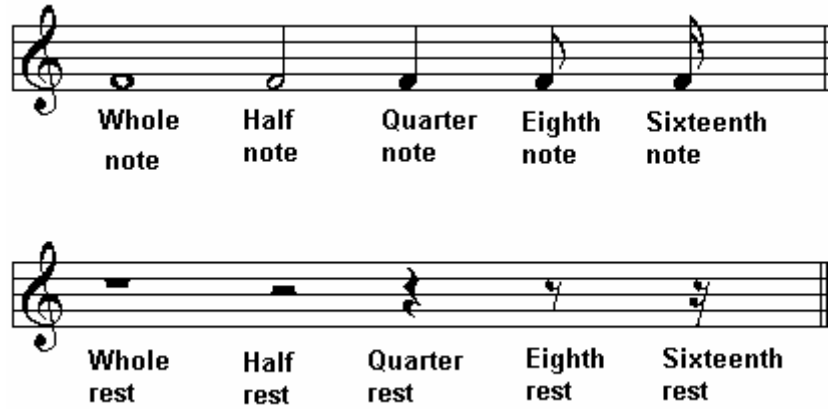
The best way to convey the concept of rhythm is by doing, so here is another concept-building exercise.

Exercise:

Your exercise is to think of, and sing aloud three songs. As you sing them pay attention to the “pattern” of each song. See if you can determine the rhythm or pattern to the song.

Section 5: Rests

Just as there are lengths of time a note is "held" while playing, (note duration), there are equal pauses in music in which there is silence, and no sound is made at all. These "pauses" are called **Rests**, and are also held for similar durations, (See Figure G).



(Figure G)

Notice that the notes and rests are named equally for the duration they are played and the duration they not played.

Section 6: Duration Con't.

The combination of different notes and rest durations create rhythm. Let us break down a simple rhythm and examine it even closer. Take a look at Figure H.



(Figure H)

There are two new elements that you are yet unfamiliar with. If you look closely at the last note and the last rest you will notice that they have a small dot after them. **A dot after a note or rest adds half the value of the note.**

A quarter-note carries one beat, so a dotted quarter note will carry one and a half, ($1\frac{1}{2}$), beats. Similarly, a quarter-rest carries one beat, and a dotted quarter rest will carry $1\frac{1}{2}$ beats. The only difference is that you play on the note and "rest" on the rest. Take a look at Figure I.



(Figure I)

The combination of a quarter note and an eighth note is equal to a dotted quarter note. The combination of a quarter-rest and an eighth-rest is equal to a dotted quarter-rest. The values of dotted notes and rests make music composition much easier.

Exercise:

Here is a fun exercise.

1. Remember the four-count clapping exercise? Clap it out again. (1 - 2 - 3 - 4)
2. This time, we are going to change your verbal count. Instead of counting aloud 1 - 2 - 3 - 4, we are going to add another verbal element to it. Notice that as you clap, the number count, (the down beat), is when your hands are closed. When your hands are all the way open, say "and" to represent the up beat.
3. You keep clapping 1 - 2 - 3 - 4, but you're saying, "1-and, 2-and, 3-and, 4-and." - repeat it a few times to yourself to become familiar with it.
4. Your hands are clapping quarter notes, but your mouth is counting eighth notes.

Now that you are more acquainted with how eighth notes work, let us introduce sixteenth notes. Using the same clapping four-count, we will add another verbal element to your count. This time we are adding 'e' just before the 'and' with an 'ah' just after it.

Your verbal count now becomes, "1-e-and-a - 2-e-and-a - 3-e-and-a - 4-e-and-a". You are now counting the equivalent of sixteenth notes.

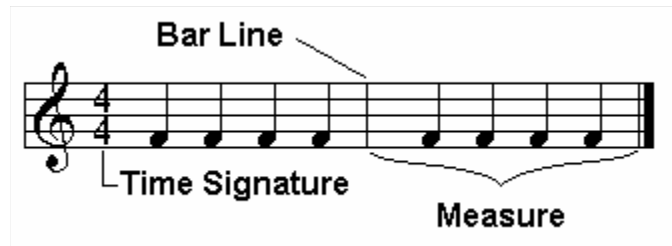
If you look closely you will notice that the 'e' and the 'ah' falls half way between the moment your hands are fully closed and fully open. Moreover, the syllables create specific counts that separate the quarter notes into sections. With the eighth notes, the quarter notes are cut in half, creating two syllables per beat or eight syllables, (hence the name, eighth).

The sixteenth-count, separates the quarter note into four, creating four syllables per beat, or sixteen syllables, (also named a sixteenth note).

Section 7: Bar Lines and Measures

In Figure I, there was another new element that we did not discuss. Go back and look at it again. The vertical line or separator between the notes and the rests is called a **Bar Line**. *Bar lines separate sheet music into measures.*

If you were to look at sheet music without bar lines and measures it would be just a string of notes and rests. Think of bar lines as the punctuation for music, like commas and periods for an essay or story, (See Figure J).



(Figure J)

Time Signature: *A sign placed on a staff to indicate the meter, commonly a numerical fraction of which the numerator is the number of beats per measure and the denominator represents the kind of note getting one beat.*

The segments of separated sections created by the use of bar lines are called **Measures**. They are always equal in count, meaning each measure represents a specific number of beats. Simplifying the definition, the number of beats and the value of the notes in each measure is defined by a **Time Signature**.

In Figure J, the time signature lets us know that there are four beats per measure, (the top number), and a quarter note gets one beat, (the bottom number).

Since a quarter note only gets one beat and there are four beats per measure, there are four quarter notes in a measure.

With an eighth note there will be eight per measure. An eighth is half of a quarter note. Going back up the duration lengths, there can be two half notes per measure since one half note is equal to two quarter notes.

There are many other time signatures as well, but most popular music is written in four-four time. Another more common type of time signature is seen most often in a waltz. It is called three-four time, or 3/4 time, (See Figure K).



(Figure K)

The dotted note comes in to play here. To fill a 3/4 measure with a single note you would not use a whole note, (4 beats), but rather a dotted half note. Remember that a “dotted” before a note or rest adds half the value of the note, so a dotted half-note, (2 beats), plus half of the value of the note, (1 beat), would be three beats in duration, (the second measure in Figure K).

To separate a $\frac{3}{4}$ count into two notes, you would use two dotted quarter notes, (each note having a one and one-half beat duration).

A dotted eighth note is the equivalent of 3 sixteenth notes or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a beat in duration. Since a sixteenth note is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a beat, instead of using four sixteenth notes to represent one beat, you can use a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note. $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ equals 1.

Study Figure J closely and pay attention to how the notes are broken down. Let us take a closer look at some other common time signatures.

Section 8: Time Signatures



(Figure L)

Looking at Figure L, there are four instances of time signatures. Can you break them down? The top left is a standard 3/4 time, indicating that there are 3 beats per measure and the quarter note receives one beat. The bottom left is a six-eighth time, (6/8 time). There are six beats per measure and an eighth note receives one beat.

The time signatures to the right look very different but they mean the very same thing. They are a 4/4 time, (four quarter notes per measure). The "C" used in the bottom right is called the "Common Time" signature.

This concludes the introduction to music theory. Please review these previous eight sections until you are comfortable with the notations, signatures, and pre-concepts before continuing.

Dear Reader,

I hope you have enjoyed the free preview of Music for the Simple Man. As you can see, a lot of care has gone into the completeness and details of this course. The rest of the book is no exception!

In the chapters to come, you will experience a height of education that rivals college-level courses, but with the care and precision of private instruction. The version you are ready now has been enhanced and revised.

As I teach others, I use the information that arises to add to the context of this course to make sure that you get as much information as possible out of every page, and with fun and challenging self quizzes and the live help available on the free forums, it is my sincerest desire that you will achieve more than a simple music course.

When you purchase this course, you will also receive a 50% discount on the online Music Theory Course. It is a semester course, (nine weeks), which follows the Music for the Simple Man music book, and is taught live.

As with everything else, I have taken steps to make sure the classes are recorded in case you happen to miss one of the live classes.

Music has been a passion for the past sixteen years, and I hope it will become one of yours as well!

Best wishes in all of your music endeavors!

To order Music for the Simple Man, visit:
<http://www.lulu.com/echomusic>

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