ALFRED'S ESSENTIALS OF
JAZZ THEORY
A Complete Self-Study Course for all Musicians

■ Shelton G. Berg

FOREWORD

MUSIC IS THE MORTAR OF HUMANITY. It binds people of all backgrounds and experiences, as it poignantly expresses universal human emotions. It is an amazing and elusive complement to our existence. And yet, this spiritual art form is rooted in concepts that are easily explained in the practical realm. Music theory is the study of these concepts. The yin and yang of music results from the fact that it is created out of a limited supply of simple, theoretical formulas, and yet, any piece of music can be entirely unique.

When a musician composes or improvises, the material emanates from two creative wells. There is the "spiritual" well, which houses our emotions and experiences, and also the "technical" well, in which resides the theoretical elements that we have practiced and perfected. Music is at its best when the impetus is from the spiritual well. The technical well will be unconsciously called upon to provide the raw materials of expression. So, a study of theory is not merely a dry analysis of technical functions, but rather an exploration of how the elements can provide fuel to the creative process, an energizing activity toward the goal of meaningful music making.

WELCOME TO JAZZ—welcome to an exhilarating journey to musical freedom!—Shelly Berg

To successfully navigate this jazz theory course, you should be versed in basic music theory concepts, such as those taught in Books 1 and 2 of *Alfred's Essentials of Music Theory*. You are encouraged to play and/or sing the examples in this text, at first along with the enclosed recording, and then on your own.

BOOKS 1, 2, 3: *Alfred's Essentials of Jazz Theory* is made up of three books, 40 pages each, with each book containing six units. A unit consists of four or five pages of instructional material (including written exercises), an Ear Training page and a Review page.

COMPLETE BOOK: *Alfred's Essentials of Jazz Theory* is also available as one complete book of 120 pages that contains all the pages included in the separate books.

COMPACT DISCS: Each book in *Alfred's Essentials of Jazz Theory* is packaged with a CD, allowing students to hear the musical elements discussed, and offering students the opportunity to test their listening skills. Music examples are played by a variety of instruments.

TEACHER'S ANSWER KEY: A *Complete Book* with the answers for the exercises from the Lesson and Review pages and music for the Ear Training pages.

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Book 1

Table of Contents Book 2

Table of Contents Book 3

Review of Basic Music Elements

Music is an intermingling of primary elements that include MELODY, HARMONY, and RHYTHM, and can be said to exist with the singular presence of any of the three. There are also secondary elements, chief among which are TEXTURE and FORM.

MELODY is that musical element that we sing alone. It is a succession of pitches, made memorable by contour and repetition. Melody is a linear (horizontal) musical element.

HARMONY results when two or more pitches (musical notes) are sounded simultaneously. Harmony is a vertical musical element, although it can be implied by melodic construction. The music explored in this jazz text concerns harmonies organized into CHORDS, which are consonant (pleasing) combinations of notes.
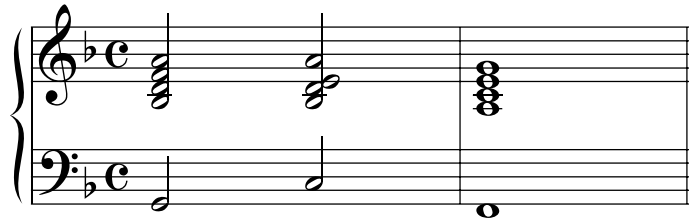
RHYTHM refers to the placement of notes in time, and their relationship to a beat (pulse). Rhythm is a linear element and is the propulsive engine of melody and harmony.

While melody, harmony and rhythm combine to give music its linear and vertical dimensions, it is TEXTURE that provides an aural dimension of "depth." Texture refers to how musical voices are combined into melodic and accompaniment components.

Among textures there is COUNTERPOINT, which is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more melodic voices. In jazz music, there typically exists a counterpoint between melody and bass.
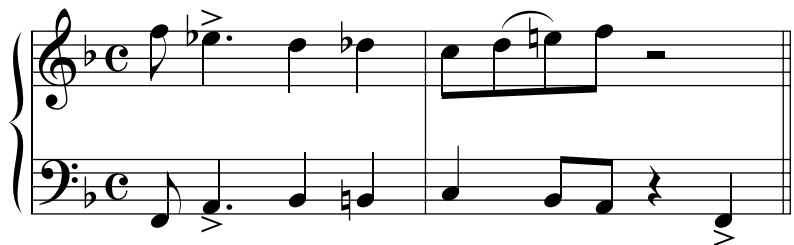
FORM is the organization of musical statements and themes. Form is the "roadmap" of music, and it allows the listener to follow the journey.

Exercises

1 Listen to the three excerpts of CD Track 1 and describe the rhythm for each:

a. Repeated / Varied   **b.** Driving / Calm   **c.** Syncopated (jerky) / Even

2 This excerpt has a form consisting of four musical statements. The first statement (phrase) is labeled "A" and the second is labeled "B." Label the third and fourth statements, using either the letter "A" or "C" for each.