

# Basic Music Theory MUSIC 073 (Fall 2024)

Tuesdays and Thursdays

10:05 – 10:55

Room 351

**“Persevere, do not only practice your art, but endeavor also to fathom its inner meanings;  
*it deserves this effort.*”**

**Beethoven, July 17, 1812; letter to Emilie M.**

Instructor: Eric Chernov  
Office: 211  
website: <http://www.ursatz.com>

Office phone: N/A  
email: [eric.chernov@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:eric.chernov@qc.cuny.edu)

**Office hours:** Fridays, 10:00-11:00 and by appointment.  
Information will be sent to the class with a back-up Zoom link and password soon after the first class of the semester.

class open forum address: [73@lists.ursatz.com](mailto:73@lists.ursatz.com)

## Supplies (bring with you to all classes)

### Textbook:

Harmony and Voice Leading (4th Edition). Edward Aldwell & Carl Schachter.  
(ISBN: 0-4951-8975-8). 3rd edition is also acceptable (ISBN: 0-1550-6242-5).

*The textbook will be shown to the teacher in the second week of the class.*

### Other:

Music paper, pencil with eraser.

You may not use writing implements other than pencils.

Homework, quizzes, or exams done in anything except pencil will not be marked and will receive a failing grade.

## Grading

The course will be graded in the following manner:

Homework assignments, quizzes, participation (see below): 50%

Midterm exam: 20%

Final exam: 30%

Participation: [see Attendance Policy, below]

As a matter of policy, I drop the lowest quiz *or* homework grade.

Final letter grades are assigned according to the following scale:

A+ = 97-100	A = 93-96	A- = 90-92	D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- = 60-62
B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	F = 0-59		
C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76	C- = 70-72			

Course material is presented in three forms: textbook readings, handouts/downloads, and lectures. You are responsible for all material, regardless of the medium of presentation. It is of utmost importance that you bring music paper to class and *take notes*. In the event that you are absent for a lecture, be sure to get the notes for that class from a classmate.

Please note that homework assignments will be posted on my website in the "courses" section. I do not accept late homework if the assignment is available to the student (e.g., via download), even if the student was absent when the assignment was given. Please see "Homework Policy," below, for additional information.

**FAILURE TO APPEAR FOR YOUR MIDTERM or FINAL EXAMINATIONS WILL RESULT IN A FAILURE OF MUS 73 (regardless of your average).**

*ACSM Policy mandates that a final grade of B- or better is required in order to continue to the next course in the sequence.*

## **Calculations**

All written work is graded mathematically. The following is a partial list of errors to be on the listen for in written work; more severe infractions are in *italics*.

### *Incorrect notation*

*including, but not limited to:*

Incorrect stemming  
wrong note values  
misplaced accidentals

*Doubled 7th or leading tone*

*Use of chord not in directions*

Parallel perfect 1, 5, 8

Contrapuntal ending

Not starting/ending on tonic

Incorrect diss leaps or

extended bass embellishment (e.g., trill)

Syntactic error (e.g.,  $V^7 - V$ )

Harmonic syncopation

Non-resolution of diss

Incorrect resolution of diss

Voice overlap

Voice crossing

Incorrect spacing

Misspelling

Intrusive similar motion to a 5th or 8ve

Intrusive antiparallel 8ves

*Adding to the figure*

Missing note required by figures

Note out of range

Missing a voice

Unless otherwise specified, all chords *must* be labeled with Roman Numerals and figures in chorale work.

## **Material Covered / Course Objectives**

MUS 73 is designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of music theory and to guide them to develop a mastery of this material. This material includes, but is not limited to: an understanding of fundamentals of notation, including the reading of clefs, and knowledge of rhythm, meter, and related concepts; the identifying and writing of: key signatures, intervals, triads, 7th chords, and scale degrees.

## **Quiz Policy**

A student who is absent when any quiz is given must schedule a time to take an *equivalent* quiz within one week of the original quiz date. *It is the student's responsibility to arrange the make-up quiz.* Failure to take a quiz will result in a grade of "0" being entered for the quiz.

## **Participation / Attendance Policy**

Class attendance is expected of all students.

Students are expected to show up to class on time. A 2-point reduction on the student's final grade will result for every 2 instances of tardiness.

## **Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to adhere to the college's academic integrity policies. A copy of those policies may be found here:

<https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/academic-integrity-policy/>

## **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office, Kiely 171; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of classes.

For more information about services available to Queens College students, contact:

Mirian Detres-Hickey, Ph.D., Special Services Office; 171 Kiely Hall; 718-997-5870 (8:00am to 5:00pm); email: [mirian.detresHickey@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:mirian.detresHickey@qc.cuny.edu)

## In-Class Technology Policy

Students are expected to have cell phones, digital cameras, laptops, etc. put away during class time (though they may be kept on). During quizzes and exams, these devices are to be put away and *turned off*.

NO so-called “wearable” computers (e.g., Apple Watch™) are allowed to be used in the classroom.

Audio recordings of the class are permitted. Please inform the instructor if you are doing this.

NO videos may be taken during class. Videos taken in class will result in failure on all work for that day (first offence) or failure of the course (second offence).

Photographs of the material on the board may be taken *with the permission of the instructor*. This permission must be acquired for each instance. The taking of photographs without permission will result in failure on all work for that day (first offence) or failure of the course (second offence).

## Email

Students are *strongly* encouraged to enter my email address and the class open forum address into their email address book and/or on their "safe list." Notifications from ISPs that legitimate emails sent from me or the class open forum have been tagged as spam will result in the removal of the student's address from the open forum list. This could result in missing important class announcements, for which I take no responsibility. STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO CHECK THEIR EMAIL REGULARLY.

## Homework Policy

If the student is PRESENT when the assignment is due and fails to hand in the homework, it will NOT be accepted late.

If a student is ABSENT on the day the assignment is due, the student MAY hand in the assignment at the next class. If the student is absent at the next class, they must make arrangements to have the homework handed in (for example, give it to a friend to hand in; you may also scan it into a computer and send it, or make special arrangements with me).

Regardless of absence or presence, no homework will be accepted three or more class days after the due date.

THIS HOMEWORK POLICY WILL BE *STRICTLY* ADHERED TO.

## SOME IMPORTANT DATES

### NO CLASS:

Oct 03 (Th) Rosh Hashanah  
Oct 15 (T) Monday Schedule  
Nov 28 (Th) Thanksgiving

### LAST CLASS OF THE SEMESTER:

Dec 12 (Th)

### MIDTERM EXAM:

Oct 24 (Th)

### FINAL EXAM:

Dec 14-21 (exact date/time TBA)

While my philosophy of teaching is rather complex, it can most easily be summarized by the following seven broad, interrelated topics: The Study of Music Must Encourage Musical Processes; Teach for Distance: Teach Via Principles and Examples, Not Via "Rules;" Avoid Issuing Fiats or Leaning on Rote Learning; Incorporate an Integration of Elements; Nurture Students by Encouraging Curiosity, Imagination, and Enthusiasm; Avoid Rigidity for Its Own Sake: The Teacher as Student; Engage All Students as Musicians, Future Audience Members, and Patrons

### The Study of Music Must Encourage Musical Processes

Too often students in ear training and theory courses are left wondering what the connection is between their coursework and the music they are studying. I work hard to help students understand this connection. In a relaxed, supportive atmosphere, students learn to keep tempi steady, to keep going if they make a mistake, to work with others in ensemble-like situations, etc. The relation to their instrumental or vocal work is both obvious and important.

### Teach for Distance: Teach Via Principles and Examples, Not Via "Rules"

Theory is, by its nature, a study of tendencies. Frequently, students are given ad-hoc lists of purported rules to follow in their exercises. It is pedagogically more fruitful—and musically more sound—not to teach these as independent rules, but as aspects of larger principles, thus placing them in their proper context and giving them their proper weight. Such a pedagogical approach has the added benefits of being more versatile and more readily comprehensible. Further, the careful study of the literature to illustrate concepts is important. This can be done at all stages of study and examples must be chosen carefully to render clear the concept(s) discussed.

While it is important to control the flow of information to students carefully so that they do not become confused or get ahead of themselves, it is important not to impart principles that will be contradicted or refuted by later information—what I call "teaching for distance." The knowledge should build one thing upon another.

### Avoid Issuing Fiats or Leaning on Rote Learning

Students generally learn best when they understand the reasons behind the principles they are learning, and they should learn to question things judiciously. One must encourage students to come to conclusions about music, conclusions rooted in the musical investigations that form the substance of musical coursework. Even lessons which must be committed completely to memory, even if ultimately by rote, should not be presented just as a command ("learn these"), but rather as lessons which integrate their meaning into a larger picture.

### Incorporate an Integration of Elements

The study of music involves widespread cross-pollination of creative ideas, technical and historical information, stylistic insights, etc. For example, through such simple means as asking a student in an ear training class that has been assigned a melody in E-flat Major which Beethoven Symphony is in that key, the students start to see the larger picture in their studies and to understand how things relate to each other. They become aware that they are required to know works that do not involve their instrument. And the idea that theory or sight singing or dictation is somehow separate from their personal musical experience becomes an increasingly absurd idea to them.

### Nurture Students by Encouraging Curiosity, Imagination, and Enthusiasm

To bring out the best in students, one must create an atmosphere where students' enthusiasm is encouraged and lauded. The skillful use of one's curiosity and imagination is not merely a good learning practice; it is a musical practice. Students' performances and analyses should be governed by the controlled use of ear training, knowledge, imagination, and conceptualization; musical teaching should be geared towards increasing students' skills in these areas.

### Avoid Rigidity for Its Own Sake: The Teacher as Student

Malleability in pedagogical approaches is essential. By this I do not mean that one should not have clear ideas or techniques to draw upon, or that one should not have firm beliefs, as should be obvious from the foregoing remarks. Rather, a teacher who cannot or will not continually look for new ways to explain things, for ways to clarify concepts, for ways to keep students engaged, is not executing the duties inherent in the position of a teacher.

### Engage All Students as Musicians, Future Audience Members, and Patrons

The job of a teacher is to foster students' understanding, love, and appreciation for music. While one would like to think that all students will be engaged as performers and scholars, it is important to maintain the enthusiasms of those who will be pursuing alternative career paths. As no one has clairvoyance in these matters, one must regard all students first as musicians, but also as future audience members and patrons. If we do not encourage those who have expressed interest in the arts, whom do we expect to support those arts?