Preface

Although the study of music fundamentals has remained basically the same over the years almost everything else around it has changed. Today's students are vastly different from those of even a decade or so ago. Changes in music education at the high school level have cut many, if not most, music theory and fundamentals courses. Pressure on students as performance standards are raised to higher and higher levels has led many private lesson instructors to focus more on learning pieces and technique and less on music theory and historical background. As a result, many more students hoping to major in music in college find they have the talent and technique in performance needed for admission, but lack the training in music fundamentals needed to excel in a typical college music theory course. Many outstanding musicians are familiar with the repertoire they have performed but outside of this circle of experience may know other major works in the literature only as "... that piece from the light bulb commercial." Today's student is also more at home on a computer than in a library, and in today's media-rich world of the Internet, the use of a static, lifeless, hard-copy text in teaching a living, aural art form such as music may seem archaic at best. Classroom video presentation systems with high quality audio playback have become one of the strongest tools available to help focus attention, lead discussion, and quickly and clearly present new materials.

The study of music fundamentals for a music major or minor is quite different from that of a non-music student seeking only a general education course. Most existing music fundamentals texts were initially written at a time when music fundamentals courses for music students were not common, so the pedagogy, methodology, examples, and techniques are often more general in nature and focused on the use of external crutches and memory aids (like "Every Good Boy Does Fine" to learn staff line note names in treble clef) rather than the formation of a deep, solid foundation for the study of music theory. Although many have added supplemental CDs, computer software, and other external media, we can all agree that learning best takes place when technology is integrated into a single, seamless package without the worries of compatibility or obsolescence.

Fundamentals for the Aspiring Musician is a completely integrated, interactive textbook on CD-ROM with a parallel hard-copy, written for students wishing to study music professionally.

Our goal for this text and method: to use current technology to its fullest to aid students in the preparation for the study of music theory by laying a thorough and solid foundation of basic music fundamentals, and to help the aspiring music student to become familiar with some of the most important and universal works in the common practice repertoire.
What is Different about Our Format and Materials?

*Fundamentals for the Aspiring Musician* is unique in its format and method of presentation. Rather than using separate, independent recording sets or software programs, our method of teaching music fundamentals integrates a parallel textbook with an interactive, electronic version on CD-ROM, which includes links for students to review definitions and composers, and listen to musical examples within the text. This enables both non-linear learning and integration of multimedia. Evolving from “Theory on the Web”—Robert Frank’s MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) acclaimed, interactive website—our book is written to provide a thorough foundation in the fundamentals of tonal music. It is based on hypertext (Hypertext Markup Language, or HTML for short). The electronic version is fully compatible with any desktop, laptop, or tablet computer able to display web pages, and initially requires a CD-ROM drive for installation and use directly off the hard drive.

The two components, the CD-ROM and textbook, work intricately and seamlessly together. Students can hear examples as they see them, practice exercises to master basic skills, and easily review and reinforce terms or delve deeper into a topic with a single click of the mouse, whether in the classroom or at home. It is like having a music tutor beside students as they study. The book has an identical layout to the electronic version for easy reference when away from the computer. This also strengthens learning by allowing note taking, highlighting passages of interest, completing written exercises, and serving as a permanent reference for continued musical studies.

We recommend that instructors use the electronic version as the focus for their teaching via in-class audio/visual playback systems. This is one of the unique instructional features of our method that will make classroom instruction dramatically easier and more effective. The audio files are embedded with the printed examples, rather than in a separate collection. Musical examples are heard as originally recorded (not just a piano realization), without the need to cue up recordings. By allowing the computer to serve as the “class accompanist,” the instructor is free to sing/play/clap along and provide help to the class along with audio playback, without having to play the example on the keyboard.

Once materials have been presented, there are several tools for students to practice and reinforce concepts.

- Terms can be accessed easily via pedagogically placed links in the electronic version and the lookup window, without interrupting the flow of their reading with annoying pop-ups or redirected pages, immediately reinforcing the material.
- An end-of-chapter summary (in both the electronic and printed versions) lists key concepts and terms, with links to definitions to reinforce the concepts.
- Included in the printed textbook are exercises at the end of each chapter, progressing in difficulty. These can be handed in to confirm the mastery of the material.
- Appendices with discussion on music notation and calligraphy, the overtone series, terms and definitions, and supplemental exercises for private or in-class sight singing and rhythmic reading enrich student understanding.

A companion website provides additional “hands-on” drills. We encourage students to practice these and master topics before attempting the written self-assessments in the textbook. The drills allow for immediate feedback and correction of mistakes without the need to wait until the next class period. These exercises include:
pitch identification on the staff and keyboard with numerous drills reinforcing the
grand staff, whole verses half steps, scales and their location on the keyboard
rhythm, with rhythmic exercises for one or two hands that allow students listen to the
correct playback and adjust the tempo, then have their tapping graded)
intervals, both written and aural identification progressing from whole verses half
steps up to the octave, and chords with written and aural identification.

Many of these drills and exercises may be customized by the student (for example, to focus
only on diminished chords, or to include all four triad types,) along with the option to
e-mail the results directly to the instructor and/or to print them out. Additionally, there are
flashcards, quizzes, and supplemental links to additional sites to speed the memorization
process for notes, clefs, key signatures, and the other essential components of a
fundamentals course.

http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/fundamentalsfortheaspiringmusician

What is Different about Our Pedagogical Approach

We take a “linear pedagogy” approach with all topics throughout this text, where every
topic flows smoothly and directly into the next. Every effort has been made to avoid
referring to topics prior to their definition and to constantly reinforce important
principles. This not only creates a more direct and confident means of introducing new
topics, but also builds upon and strengthens each prior skill. For example:

Our new “Key Signature Tool”—A fresh and simple approach to learning key signatures,
it addresses the age-old problem created by the traditional “circle of fifths” tool: students
must memorize their scales and understand intervals and the “perfect fifth” before
being able to accurately recreate the circle of fifths, but intervals are rarely and not easily
covered prior to the study of key signatures, nor are scales mastered by this point in a
fundamentals course. This “chicken-and-the-egg” scenario is avoided by a simpler and
more direct tool based upon the order of sharps in the key signature (reinforcing this
previously covered material).

Chapter 3: Proportional Value, Meter, and Grouping—After note values have been
introduced, but before division and subdivision of the beat in meters can be mastered,
a thorough understanding of how note values relate proportionally to both smaller and
larger note values is essential and covered thoroughly in this chapter. End-of-chapter
written exercises—These progress from simple to complex, allowing both the student and
the instructor to assess the level of mastery of each topic. Then, after each major subject
area is covered, Chapters Four, Nine, and Thirteen are devoted to applying the practical
aural and written concepts to making and analyzing music. This helps the serious music
student by not only making the material more relevant, but also by reinforcing these
materials at a level that goes beyond abstract drill-and-practice.

Musical examples from the classical canon—Rather than relying on folk songs or
examples more appropriate to a general education course, musical examples in this
text are from some of the greatest and richest works of the common practice period.
The links to composer biographies in the electronic version build a basic familiarity
with the master composers whose works led to the development of modern tonal
theory.
To the Teacher

As an aural art form, it is important not only to read about music, but also to hear. Ideally, every music student would read their textbook at a piano or other instrument, playing every single example multiple times, and reinforcing terms with which they are not solidly familiar by looking them up in a glossary or dictionary. However, as any honest student or teacher will tell you, this is rarely the case. In fact, in the early stages of study, hearing musical examples is essential before students have learned the skills needed to play them.

In the past, this has been a major problem in learning music, requiring the constant tutelage of a skilled musician and restricting the review, study, and practice of materials outside of class.

Our use of an interactive, electronic version of the text allows for dynamic discussion and examination, while hearing the basic components of the musical language simultaneously. We recommend that students follow this process:

- Read new materials on the CD-ROM prior to class, frequently clicking and clarifying the highlighted terms and listening to examples.
- Engage in classroom discussion, when the discussion of the materials can go beyond simply defining terms and concepts.
- Practice the interactive drills, and review until confident with the concepts.
- Complete end-of-chapter exercises in the textbook and submit for grading.

This process allows students to learn and practice outside of class at their own speed and by the method that works best for them without penalty, with only the final result—the demonstrated mastery of the materials in the written assignments—being graded. This system of learning directly addresses many of the goals and outcomes required by many accrediting organizations in higher education.

An instructor’s resource is available on the companion website. Instructors will be able to obtain a password to log in and access additional resources, including answer keys for written exercises, quizzes, and sample class plans for quarters and semesters, all designed to make teaching easier, especially for first-time instructors of this course.

Written in today’s language and presented in today’s medium, it is our hope Fundamentals for the Aspiring Musician in a CD-ROM/textbook package will allow for the faster, simpler, and more thorough mastery of the fundamentals of music, and thereby empower students to confidently continue in their study, appreciation, and making of music.

To the Student

If you are reading this, you may already on your way to becoming a professional musician. We are all surrounded by music every day, so many of the topics covered may be aurally familiar to you. Like learning any language, your speaking and listening skills advance much earlier than your reading and writing skills. However, to advance as a musician, as in any profession, you must be more than familiar with your craft. This integrated electronic textbook is designed to provide the solid foundation in the basics of how music is notated and read, plus the terminology and general skills needed to discuss music at a more advanced level with other professional musicians.

This text is designed to be as easy to use as surfing the web or checking your Facebook page (although we don’t recommend doing this during your class!). It is extremely important
that you learn not only how the elements of music look on the page, but also how they sound and are used in actual musical compositions.

As you read new material in the CD-ROM, you will notice that new terms are highlighted in blue. These terms are links that, when clicked, will display the definition or other additional materials in the definitions window of the browser. Anytime you are not completely sure of a term: click it. Reinforce it. Master it. This way, each new page will feel solid and help you build confidence as you progress in your studies. The musical examples have audio playback. Listen to them many times until you really know the material (think of how many times you have to hear a piece or song on the radio or an MP3 player before you really know it). The links and additional materials in the CD-ROM text also allow you to explore familiar topics in greater depth or review new materials at your speed: you are in control of your learning.

In the textbook (hard copy), make notes in the margins, since writing something down is one of the greatest tools for remembering it. Take as much time as you need to master a topic before moving on: your computer is infinitely patient. After studying the materials in the text, work the on-line interactive drills to practice and get immediate feedback to your attempts, then when you feel you are ready, attempt the written exercises that your instructor will assign from the workbook.

Finally, use and apply this new knowledge in your daily musical life. In rehearsals and when talking with your friends and fellow musicians, use the terms you study; in practicing your etudes and pieces on your applied instrument or voice try identifying the materials you are studying and see how they work in that piece; practice the rhythmic reading and sight singing techniques on all your music that you are performing. As you do these activities, you will start to see the music with a greater depth and clarity, and in doing so, bring more to your performances, discussions, and future musical studies.

Robert J. Frank and Ken Metz