

**AUGENER'S EDITION, NO.  
9182; HARMONY: ITS  
THEORY AND PRACTICE**

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# HARMONY:

*ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE.*

BY

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"UNTWISTING ALL THE CHAINS THAT TIE  
THE HIDDEN SOUL OF HARMONY."

*MILTON, L'Allegro.*

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## P R E F A C E .

So large a number of works on Harmony already exists that the publication of a new treatise on the subject seems to call for explanation, if not for apology. The present volume is the outcome of many years' experience in teaching the theory of music, and the author hopes that it contains sufficient novelty both in plan and in matter to plead a justification for its appearance.

Most intelligent students of harmony have at times been perplexed by their inability to reconcile passages they have found in the works of the great masters with the rules given in the text-books. If they ask the help of their teacher in their difficulty, they are probably told, "Bach is wrong," or "Beethoven is wrong," or, at best, "This is a licence." No doubt examples of very free part-writing may be found in the works of Bach and Beethoven, or even of Haydn and Mozart; several such are noted and explained in the present work. But the principle must surely be wrong which places the rules of an early stage of musical development above the inspirations of genius! Haydn, when asked according to what rule he had introduced a certain harmony, replied that "the rules were all his very obedient humble servants"; and when we find that in our own time Wagner, or Brahms, or Dvořák breaks some rule given in old text-books there is, to say the least, a very strong presumption, not that the composer is wrong, but that the rule needs modifying. In other words, practice must precede theory. The inspired composer goes first, and invents new effects; it is the business of the theorist not to cavil at every novelty, but to follow modestly behind, and make his rules conform to the practice of the master. It is a significant fact that, even in the most recent developments of the art, nothing has yet been written by any composer of eminence which a sound theoretical system cannot satisfactorily account for; and the objections made by musicians of the old school to the novel harmonic progressions of Wagner are little more than repetitions of the severe criticisms which in the early years of the present century were launched at the works of Beethoven.

It is from this point of view that the present volume has been written. The rules herein given, though in no degree inconsistent with the theoretical system expounded, are founded, not upon that, nor on any other abstract system, but upon the actual practice of the great masters; so that even those musicians who may differ most widely from the author's theoretical views may still be disposed to admit the force of practical rules supported by the authority of Bach, Beethoven, or Schumann.

The system of theory propounded in the present volume is founded upon the dictum of Helmholtz, quoted in Chapter II. of this work (§ 42), that "the system of Scales, Modes, and Harmonic Tissues does not rest solely upon unalterable natural laws, but is at least partly also the result of æsthetical principles, which have already changed, and will still further change with the progressive development of humanity." While, therefore, the author follows Day and Ouseley in taking the harmonic series as the basis of his calculations, he claims the right to make his own selection, on æsthetic grounds, from these harmonics, and to use only such of them as appear needful to explain the practice of the great masters. Day's derivation of the chords in a key from the tonic, dominant, and supertonic is adhered to, but in other respects his system is extensively modified, its purely physical basis being entirely abandoned. It will be seen in Chapter II. (§ 44) that by rejecting altogether the eleventh and thirteenth notes of the harmonic series, and taking in their place other notes produced among the secondary harmonics, the chief objection made by the opponents of all scientific derivation of harmony—that two of the most important notes of the scale, the fourth and the sixth, are much out of tune—has been fully met. In the vexed question of the minor tonic chord, Helmholtz is followed to a considerable extent; but Ouseley's explanation of the harmonic origin of the minor third is adopted.

Truth is many sided; and no writer on harmony is justified in saying that his views are the only correct ones, and that all others are wrong. No such claim is made for the system herein set forth; but it is hoped that it will at least be found to be intelligible, perfectly consistent with itself, and sufficiently comprehensive to explain the progressions of the advanced modern school of composers.

It has been thought desirable to separate as far as possible the practical from the theoretical portions of this work. The latter are therefore printed in smaller type; and it will be found



advisable for beginners, who may take up this work without any previous knowledge of the subject, to omit at least Chapters II. and III., dealing with the Harmonic Series and Key or Tonality, until some considerable progress has been made in the practical part of the volume. The exact point at which the student will do well to return to the omitted portions will depend upon his progress and his general intelligence, and must be left to the discretion of the teacher.

In the practical part of the work an attempt has been made to simplify and to codify the laws. With a view of effecting these objects, many rules now obsolete, and contravened by the daily practice of modern writers, have been altogether omitted, and others have been greatly modified; while the laws affecting the chords, especially the higher discords—the ninths, elevenths, and thirteenth—have been classified, and, it is hoped, materially simplified. It is of the utmost importance that students who wish to master the subject should proceed steadily and deliberately. For example, a proper understanding of the chords of the eleventh will be impossible until the student is quite familiar with the chords of the ninth, which in their turn must be preceded by the chords of the seventh. The learner's motto must be, "One thing at a time, and that done thoroughly."

In preparing the exercises a special endeavour has been made to render them interesting, as far as possible, from a musical point of view. With this object they are, with a few exceptions, written in the form of short musical sentences, mostly in four-bar rhythm, illustrating the various forms of cadence. To stimulate the pupil's imagination, and to encourage attempts at composition, many exercises are in the form of double chants or hymn tunes. Each bass can, of course, be harmonised in several different positions; and the student's ingenuity will be usefully exercised in trying to write as melodious an upper part as possible for these little pieces.

Not the least interesting and valuable feature of the volume will, it is believed, be found in the illustrative examples, considerably more than 300 in number. These have been selected chiefly, though not exclusively, from the works of the greatest masters, from Bach and Handel down to the present day. Earlier examples are not given, because modern harmony may be said to begin with Bach and Handel. While it has been impossible without exceeding reasonable limits to illustrate *all* the points mentioned, it is hoped that at least no rule of importance has been given without quoting some recognised author in its support. It may at all

events be positively said that, had want of space not prevented their quotation, examples might have been found to illustrate every rule laid down in the volume.

It was originally intended to have included in the present work chapters on Cadences, and on Harmonising Melodies. The volume has, however, extended to so much larger dimensions than was at first contemplated, that these chapters, which belong rather to practical composition than to harmony in its strict sense, have been reluctantly omitted. It is intended to follow the present work by a treatise on Composition, in which these and similar subjects will be more appropriately dealt with.

The author desires to acknowledge the valuable assistance he has received in the preparation of his work, first and foremost from his son, Louis B. Prout, to whom he is indebted for a very large number of the illustrative examples, and who has also written many of the exercises. Valuable aid has also been received from the late Rev. Sir Frederick Ouseley, with whom, down to the time of his lamented death, the author was in frequent correspondence on the subject of this work. To his friend, Dr. Charles W. Pearce, also, the author must express his thanks for much generous interest and many most useful suggestions, as well as for his kind assistance in revising the proof-sheets of the volume.

It would be unreasonable to expect that the present work will meet with universal approval; but it may at least claim to appeal to teachers and students as an honest attempt to simplify the study of harmony, and to bring it down to date.

LONDON, *June*, 1889.

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