

# **HARMONY ON THE INDUCTIVE METHOD**

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Harmony on the Inductive Method by Hugh A. Clarke

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**HUGH A. CLARKE**

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# HARMONY

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## INDUCTIVE METHOD.

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BY HUGH A. CLARKE,

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## INTRODUCTION.

This book makes no claim to be a new theory of harmony; but merely a new system of teaching harmony, by what is universally recognized as the best method of teaching, viz., the inductive.

The theory of harmony is the province of the acoustician, not of the musician. It is often asserted that music has gained largely by the labors of the acousticians; but this is not so evident, when we remember that all the best music was written before the science of acoustics was born. The instinct of genius discovered, after many trials and mistakes, what combinations and successions of sound were agreeable and expressive, without asking or caring why. And the science of sound has made but little advance in explaining this "why;" and has not added *one* chord or progression that was not known to Bach.

Science can analyze sounds, but not music. It can say to what the various qualities of sound are to be attributed; but can give no explanation of their effect on the emotions. Indeed, the best authorities on acoustics, viz., Helmholtz, Pole, Parry, are agreed that it is useless for the musician to theorize as to the origin of chords. It is enough for him to know what combinations and progressions

practice and experience have proved good. No better proof is required of the uselessness of this theorizing about the origin of chords, than the diversity of views with regard to the origin of the minor chord; owing, to the fact, that its third *cannot* be an overtone of its fundamental.

The object of the writer on harmony and composition ought to be, to reduce, to some system, the mass of facts (for want of a better name) of which our modern music is the outgrowth. These facts are:

1st. A tempered scale.

2d (and resulting from the first). A number of keys related in many ways.

3d. The possible combinations of sounds, called chords.

4th. The seeming rules that govern the successions of these combined sounds. Rules, be it remembered, that are not the expression of some natural fact; but are merely the result of a consensus of the best taste in the art.

These four facts make up the substance of *harmony*, and form the groundwork of composition, which deals chiefly with melody and form.

Many departures will be found in this work from the usual methods of teaching, notably the following:

1st. With regard to the formation of the minor scale.

2d. The referring of all dissonant chords to two roots.

3d. The discarding of the time-honored figured bass.

4th. The formulating of simple rules for modulation.

My reason for the first departure is, that the relationship and signature of the minor scale is thereby fixed at once in the memory of the pupil.

For the second.—That it reduces the confusing multiplicity of rules for the use of chords with the seventh, to four that have no exceptions.

For the third.—That it is a hindrance, rather than a help, to the pupil. The author has had numbers of pupils who could write or play a figured bass; but who were quite in the dark as to the reasons why they used such successions of chords. Many of these pupils had spent one or two years studying with good masters. And have themselves acknowledged that they have learned more in a month, on the plan pursued in this work, than in all their previous studies. It has always been to the author a mystery, why figured basses were used for teaching harmony. They were, originally, a sort of musical shorthand; and, in these days of cheap music, are only a survival of—not by any means—the fittest. The author is often met with the argument that "all the great musicians learned this way." Well, the



pity is, they had not a better and easier way. It is no argument, that because a man is a great poet, therefore the system pursued in teaching him his letters was the best possible.

With regard to the fourth departure from usual practice.—The author feels a pardonable pride in having reduced the art of modulation to four simple, easily understood and comprehensive rules. Hitherto the plan followed in teaching modulation, has been to give the pupil various examples, which were to be transposed to all the keys, until they were fixed—parrot fashion—in his memory. When he wished to make a modulation, he must remember one of his “patterns.” By mastering the rules here given, the pupil can make his own modulations in endless variety, and make them understandingly.

It is well to bear in mind that music is an art, not a science; although the study of harmony is often wrongly called the science of music. The rules of musical construction are not the result of scientific investigation; but are deductions from the practice of those distinguished by their artistic eminence. Many musicians think these rules are the expressions of some natural law. Many, not musicians, think they are the arbitrary and often unreasonabla dicta of musicians. But both are wrong. Good taste is the only arbiter in matters of art. And since the standards of taste vary with every period of the world's history, it is not possible

to give to any of its decisions the stamp of permanency, and say: This is a rule that can never be broken.

In conclusion, the author would express his thanks to his numerous pupils, both present and past, for the warm interest they have taken in the progress of this work, and for their kind wishes and inquiries from all parts of the country.

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*Professor of Music at the University of Pennsylvania.*

PHILADELPHIA, *November 15, 1880.*

## PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS.

1.—A degree means from one letter to the next, whether a whole or half tone.

2.—Chords and intervals are always counted up from the lowest letter. In counting the number of letters in an interval, both letters are included, thus: C—D, is a second, two letters being included; C—F, is a fourth, four letters being included, and so on.

3.—A chromatic change retains the letter, but alters the pitch, thus: C—C#, is chromatic. A diatonic change changes both the letter and the pitch, thus: C—D, or E—F, are diatonic, although one is a whole tone, the other a half tone. An enharmonic change retains the pitch, but changes the letter, thus: C#—Db, F—E#, G—F~~X~~, etc.

4.—The word *base* is used to indicate the lowest note of a chord, without regard to its pitch. The word *bass* (from the Italian *basso*) means a low or deep sound.

5.—A diatonic scale is one that includes all the seven letters, without omission or repetition. (There are various kinds of diatonic scales, viz.: The Greek, the Gregorian and the modern. They differ in the arrangement of the tones and semitones. The modern resemble two of the ancient scales, in their arrangement of tones and semitones; but differ, in being tempered (*i. e.*, a little out of tune). For explanation of tempered scales see Helmholtz, or Stainer's, or Groves' Dictionary).