

Introduction

Over the 20+ years that I have been a professional musician, I have found that the most valuable tool in my musical tool box has been a simple understanding of music theory. These universal musical concepts have not only helped me tremendously with learning, arranging, and composing music, but have also enhanced my understanding and appreciation for many diverse forms of music. I am convinced that a basic grasp of the fundamental principles within "Simple Theory for the Mountain Dulcimer" will help you to become a better dulcimer player and all around musician. You will learn a lot about what you've been playing, not just technically how to play it. This will give you the tools you need to not only build a more extensive repertoire, but also develop a lasting appreciation and love of dulcimer music, and music in general.

I believe that the best way to learn music (on any instrument) is one that includes a healthy balance of written and audible teachings; learning to play by ear as well as by written music. Sight reading music is a wonderful thing, but there should come a time to put the music down and just play! One of the most interesting aspects of music theory is that it teaches you a great deal about how to play by ear. Especially when you invest enough time listening to these concepts and learn to build one idea upon another.

By writing this book, my hope is that this information will not only enlighten your musical ear, but will also help you to grow as a musician, not just a technical memorization expert. My goal is that you will become less and less dependent upon tablature, and enjoy being able to just play without having everything written down.

I learned most of this information simply from experience and occasional research. I basically learned to play music by ear and therefore my "education" on this subject is not exhaustive by any means. However, what I have learned, and what is included within these pages, has been extremely valuable to me and I trust will be just as valuable to you. None of the material within this book is anything new. It is simply presented here in perhaps a more meaningful way specifically applied to the mountain dulcimer.

Written music has two basic aspects - harmony (the vertical component) & rhythm (the horizontal component). Harmony includes all the notes, intervals, scales, and chords (sound familiar?), while rhythm involves the time value of notes, beats, etc. This book focuses on the vertical component called harmony, and centers mostly around the usefulness of knowing chord structures. Chord theory is what I think of most when I play music.

Above all else, be sure to have some fun with this stuff! It may surprise you just how creative you can become when you learn to use these musical tools.

Music Theory to the musician
is like a palette of colors to an artist