

5 THINGS EVERY MUSIC STUDENT SHOULD KNOW

If you want to go to college!

PART 1

- 1) Key Signatures in treble and bass clef.
- 2) Major Scales
- 3) The Relative Minor Scale from the Major Scale
- 4) The Diatonic Triads and Seventh chords in each of the major scales.
- 5) Develop a greater curiosity of music you are not familiar with. This will help you discover global music that you have been unaware of and also shine light on the origins of the music you like.

I have been a member of the Berklee College of Music Faculty for the past 35 years. There certainly have been many changes in the compositional styles of music and the technology that is used to produce the sounds of this music. Regardless of any of these changes there is still one truth that applies to almost every facet of popular or tonal music. We are all working with the same twelve notes. I know that there are exceptions to any rule, but in popular music they are few and far between. While in high school our students need to understand the importance of working with these twelve notes.

The first four topics are essential information for any music student who will be attending a degree granting institution. I have witnessed an epidemic of this first hand in my classes at Berklee. Very few students have a command of this information; thus the initial problems begin.

There was a time when almost all of this information was taught in the earlier years of school, especially in the United States public school. For reasons too numerous to mention in this brief article, that dispersion of elementary music theory is not being delivered.

The most difficult part, now, is we have to convince our college freshman that they need to know this material to be successful in their chosen curriculum. They have to believe that this is the beginning of learning a new language. The better you speak it the more you will be able to understand as you move through classes.

The practice of these tasks is not glamorous. It is time consuming and tedious, but if you were smart enough to get into college you are smart enough to master this material. There are no excuses. No teacher wants to hear the blues about how hard this is because you play drums, I'm a vocalist.....BLAH, BLAH, BLAH is what I frequently hear.

I ask my students to work on these concepts 15 minutes twice a day. You should pick a manageable amount of material and focus on that for 15 minutes. You will begin to see a major difference in owning this material after a short period of time. If you commit the time your dedication will be rewarded. Write the answers down, sing them or play them at the piano.

Number 5 is about curiosity. There appears to be a fear of the unknown. Every one of us at some point lacked awareness about someone in music. The fight is to be aggressive in this pursuit and enjoy the new experience. If you want to listen to Brahms, Coltrane, Imagine Dragons or Billie Holiday just go to your music library. You should always consult your teachers for possibilities. There should be no fear, only the joy of music.