

# MUSIC LITERACY

A programme for meeting the need of the  
music illiterate effectively in South Africa

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for the degree of  
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...the need of the  
...in South Africa

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## Abstract

**The purpose** of this thesis is to design a programme in music literacy, a vital workable supporting system, for meeting the basic needs in the various sub-fields in music, in Outcomes-based education as well as the needs of many other learners and music educators in South Africa. Knowingly or unknowingly, the basic need of all concerned, as determined in an informal survey, is to become music literate directly.

**The point of departure** in this thesis is the determining of requirements for a highly effective programme. Effectiveness amounts to a programme which offers learners the obtaining of appropriate knowledge and skills to use sheet music with understanding, and without delay, in music making. The various facets of the programme need to be treated in various components in order to be operative. Specific learning matter is needed in each component. The survey in music literature proved that for no component did any effective material exist. **Original material is thus created in every component for meeting the specific needs of the music illiterate in South Africa.**

**The *modus operandi*** comprises the collecting of remarks, complaints, comparisons, requests and thus, needs of learners and parents, students and colleagues by way of an informal survey. An investigation follows into existing approaches and into materials currently in common use, as well as other approaches and other possible materials not in use. Next follows a report, in the form of requirements, for the much needed programme. The proposed ***Music Literacy*** programme, comprising originally designed material accompanied by specific conventions, was empirically used and adjusted before being finally presented.

This study explores the particular way in which all learners and others in the various sub-fields in music education in South Africa can benefit directly. The proposed ***Music Literacy*** programme offers all concerned a well-tested way of satisfying their basic needs for music making and for serving, eventually, as a life-long investment.

## **Keywords**

Music literacy, Sight singing, Practical harmony, Keyboard, Piano, Tutor,  
Sight reading, Music dictation, Aural training

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## Dedication

To my students and colleagues from whom I learn so much. They motivated me, constantly inspired me and finally triggered this undertaking.

Through their participation I was guided in drawing up and structuring the components, creating and compiling all necessary material and eventually finalizing the *Music Literacy* programme.

Together, my students and my colleagues enjoy with me the success we experience with the programme.

## Preface

This research in music literacy led to the compiling of a programme, comprising various components with originally designed learning material. Each of the components forms an integral part of the *Music Literacy* series developed to meet the need of a broad spectrum of learners in South Africa to achieve basic music literacy. Repeated requests from various parties concerned for a well-conceived set of instruction materials finally prompted this undertaking.

Together the various components in the *Music Literacy* programme constitute a complete foundation course, gradually introducing learners to a full range of essential music literacy skills. The intention with the design of the series is to help enable users to embark with confidence on further studies in a wide range of music fields.

The *Music Literacy* series aims to ensure that, on completion of the course, learners would be able to:

- **sing** from notation in all major and minor keys, diatonically without modulation, in all commonly used metres
- **listen** to a given piece of music with the necessary insight and skill to:
  - **identify** basic elements such as character, form, cadences, harmony patterns, chords, and motif treatment
  - **notate** a simple melody on the staff
  - **read** a simple orchestral/vocal score
- **use the keyboard to:**
  - **play** four-part cadences and elementary harmony progressions in all keys
  - **assist themselves** in independent analysis of music, sight singing activities, as well as theory and harmony
  - **read and play** elementary pieces
- **write general music theory and harmony** at the following levels:
  - **fulfilling pre-requisite criteria** for practical music examinations preceding the final grade
  - **making own elementary arrangements** for practical use
- **analyze** the form, structure, and harmony of an elementary piece of music.

This *Music Literacy* programme was extensively tested and revised with the help of learners and practitioners from diverse backgrounds and fields of activity before being written up in this form.

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