MUSIC IS AS EASY AS WRITING

A Complete Guide to Understanding Music

by

JARED EDWARD HARDEN

Published under Jared's Online Projects Inc.
Amazon Kindle | ASIN: B0CVD8FNVP

"even though this has a lot of blank spaces now, I can note my own book for future editions — so enjoy the added blank spaces :) and read to the END as I have some free written thoughts"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction & Freewriting

1. Pitches, Notes, Tones, and Intervals
2. Rhythm and Tempo
3. Music Engineering / Creating
4. Key Signatures and Scales
5. Modes
6. Playing Around
7. Singing Sheet Music
8. Improvising
9. Conducting

Conclusion

Freewriting: Personal Reflections

INTRODUCTION

Why Music?

Music is one of the oldest human languages. Before we had alphabets, we had rhythm. Before we had grammar, we had melody. And before we had literature, we had song. The very act of organizing sound into pattern — that is music. And when you understand that, you realize that learning music is not about memorizing complicated rules. It is about learning to listen to yourself.

This book was born out of that realization. Music is as easy as writing because both share the same fundamental act: choosing symbols that represent sound or meaning, placing them in a sequence, and letting someone else receive them. When you write the word "run," your reader hears something in their mind. When you play a G major chord, your listener feels something in their body. Different medium. Same miracle.

If you have ever stumbled across this book and chosen to skim through — welcome. You have already begun. The act of skimming music theory is itself a kind of musical improvisation: you land where you land, you stay where it feels interesting, and you move on when you are ready. That is all music asks of you too.

How to Use This Book

This is not a textbook in the traditional sense. There are no exams here, no grades, and no teacher standing over your shoulder with a red pen. This is an invitation. Each chapter gives you real, practical knowledge about how music works — but more importantly, it gives you permission to explore.

Read it in order if you like structure. Jump to the chapters that interest you most if you are more of a free spirit. Do both. Argue with the pages. Write in the margins. Come back to sections that confused you the first time and see if they make more sense after you have tried playing around with your instrument for a few weeks.

Above all: enjoy this. Music is supposed to feel good. If it stops feeling good, put the book down, put on your favorite album, and come back when the joy returns.

FREEWRITING: On Becoming Aware

As we learn to become more aware of our senses, we learn to start creating art, music, architectural devices. We learn that we are going to enjoy reading about music since we chose to skim through when we stumbled across this book.

Choosing music as a way to express yourself can, at the end of the solfege scale, be like reaching "sol la ti do" — a kind of spiritual altitude where coming back to earth and realizing other people exist is part of the descent. It is a high not unlike the runner's high — that experience some people chase by running just for the sake of some type of adrenaline rush, an altered state that some argue rivals even the most potent pharmacological experiences. But that is a whole other discussion and a whole other book to write.

So let us pause and scroll through the pages of content and return to the introduction and reflect. Has anyone ever seen even just a clip of "The Sound of Music"? All we ever needed was that film as our music teacher. Music really is as easy as "do re mi fa sol la ti do."

> "Let's start at the very beginning — a very good place to start. When you read you begin with A-B-C. When you sing you begin with do-re-mi." — The Sound of Music

Maria shows the Von Trapp children not through textbooks, not through scales drilled in isolation, but through story and association. "Doe, a deer" connects an abstract syllable to a living image. That is how the brain works. That is how we all learned language. And that is how music is best learned too.

Now — I hope you just played it and sang along to that in your living room, dancing away. You are not doing this? How do I know you are NOT?! NOW SING — "So Do La Fa Mi Do Re, So Do La Ti Do Re Do." Now there. That was lovely.

Now find an online sheet music composition social community and collaborate or write solo. And for fun, read the rest of this book and write a review, a suggestion, or — preferably — what you loved about it.

CHAPTER 1: PITCHES, NOTES, TONES, AND INTERVALS

The beautiful thing about music is being able to try to learn languages — the sounds we hear and feel — to create peace and harmony and an abundance of musical genres, as we find the scientific engineering of music and sound.

The Twelve Tones of the Octave

There are 12 tones in an octave, and each octave spans a range from low to high vibrational sound frequency. When we talk or sing, we move through these frequencies constantly. But music gives these frequencies names, so we can communicate about them precisely.

Music has a pronunciation language — not just labels like English alphabet characters, but pitches on a musical graph called a staff: five lines representing how high or low a sound is according to the 12 pitches in an octave.

In standard (Western) notation, the 12 pitches are named:

C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb, E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab, A, A#/Bb, B

In solfeggio (moveable or fixed), those same 12 pitches correspond to:

do, di/ra, re, ri/me, mi, fa, fi/se, sol, si/le, la, li/te, ti

(Note: the author adds "fe" as an augmented third or diminished fourth — a little bonus beyond the standard chromatic solfege set.)

What Is a Pitch?

A pitch is simply the highness or lowness of a sound — measured by the frequency of its vibration. The note A above middle C, for example, vibrates at 440 Hz (cycles per second) in standard tuning. When you double that frequency to 880 Hz, you get the same note — A — but one octave higher. This doubling relationship is why octaves sound "the same" even though they are at different heights.

Every musical instrument, including the human voice, produces pitches by causing something to vibrate: a string, a reed, a column of air, a membrane. Learning to name pitches is simply learning to label what you are already hearing.

What Is a Tone?

A tone is a sound with a definite, identifiable pitch. When you hum "mmm" on one steady note, that is a tone. The word is also used informally to mean the quality or character of a sound — the "warm tone" of a cello versus the "bright tone" of a flute. Both usages are correct in different contexts.

What Is an Interval?

An interval is the distance between two pitches. If you play C and then play D, the interval between them is a major second (also called a whole step or whole tone). If you play C and then E, the interval is a major third. If you play C all the way up to the next C, the interval is an octave — eight letter names apart.

Why do intervals matter? Because the emotional character of music comes almost entirely from intervals. A minor second (one half-step) sounds tense, even dissonant. A perfect fifth sounds open and powerful. A major sixth sounds warm and nostalgic. Learning to hear intervals is learning to understand why music makes you feel what it makes you feel.

Western Music and Scales

Scales in Western music most commonly use the Ionian (major) and Aeolian (natural minor) modes. Major scales tend to sound bright, happy, and resolved. Minor scales tend to sound dark, introspective, or emotional. Beyond these, there are jazz scales, pentatonic scales, blues scales, whole-tone scales, and many more to explore as you grow.

The key insight is this: music is not random. Every piece of music you love was built from a small set of pitches chosen deliberately from these 12 available tones. When you

learn to name those pitches and understand their relationships, you gain a kind of X-ray vision into every song you have ever heard.

CHAPTER 2: RHYTHM AND TEMPO

If pitches are the words of music, rhythm and tempo are its heartbeat and pace. You could sing the right pitches at completely the wrong time and produce something unrecognizable. Conversely, even a simple rhythmic pattern played on a drum with no pitches at all can move an entire crowd. Rhythm is primal. Rhythm is where music begins.

What Is Tempo?

Tempo in music is the speed or pace of a composition, measured in beats per minute (BPM). It indicates how slow or fast the music should be played, conveying a feeling or setting the mood. The word "tempo" is Italian, derived from the Latin word for "time."

Common Italian tempo markings you will encounter on sheet music:

Largo — very slow and broad (40-60 BPM)

Adagio — slow and stately (66-76 BPM)

Andante — walking pace (76-108 BPM)

Moderato — moderate speed (108-120 BPM)

Allegro — fast and lively (120-156 BPM)

Presto — very fast (168-200 BPM)

In modern music production, tempo is set digitally with a metronome — a steady click track that keeps every musician synchronized. You can download a free metronome app on your phone today. If you practice nothing else, practice playing to a metronome. It is the single most transformative habit a musician can build.

What Is Rhythm?

Rhythm refers to the pattern of sounds and silences that occur over time. It is the element of music that creates a sense of movement and forward momentum, often described as the "heartbeat" or "pulse" of a piece of music. Rhythm is closely related to beat, pulse, and meter.

A beat is the basic unit of time in music. When beats repeat in a regular pattern, they create a pulse. When those beats are grouped into recurring patterns of strong and weak accents, they form meter. For example, in common time (4/4), beats are grouped in fours, with the first and third beats slightly stronger than the second and fourth.

Note Values and Subdivision

Rhythm is the art of dividing time. Here are the fundamental note values in Western notation:

Whole note (semibreve) — holds for 4 beats in 4/4 time

Half note (minim) — holds for 2 beats

Quarter note (crochet) — holds for 1 beat

Eighth note (quaver) — holds for half a beat (2 per quarter)

Sixteenth note (semi-quaver) — holds for a quarter beat (4 per quarter)

Thirty-second note — holds for an eighth of a beat (8 per quarter)

Rhythm is dividing a beat to add more notes within a beat of time at any given tempo. In a 4/4 time signature, you have four quarter notes (crochets) per measure. Each of those quarter notes can be subdivided into two eighth notes (quavers), or four sixteenth notes (semi-quavers). This subdivision is the engine of rhythmic complexity — it is how jazz drummers weave polyrhythms, how hip-hop producers chop samples, and how Bach built his intricate counterpoint.

The Seven Elements of Rhythm

A complete understanding of rhythm includes: time signature, meter, tempo, strong beats, syncopation, accents, and polyrhythms.

Syncopation is placing emphasis on the weak beats — the "and" beats between the main pulse. It is what makes funk and reggae feel like they push against time itself. Polyrhythm is the layering of two or more different rhythmic patterns simultaneously — three against two, four against three — creating a hypnotic, interlocking effect used in African drumming and contemporary jazz.

Understanding rhythm is essential for creating and performing music. It is where your body meets the music, where your foot taps involuntarily, and where the dance begins.

Solfege Rhythm Example

Returning to the Sound of Music example, here is how solfege numbers map to scale degrees in the melody:

So Do La Fa Mi Do Re = scale degrees 5 - 1 - 6 - 4 - 3 - 1 - 2

So Do La Ti Do Re Do = scale degrees 5 - 1 - 6 - 7 - 1 - 2 - 1

In a nutshell, it is acting out different emotions depending on the creative uniqueness of a character — as if music is human and needs to express itself. Musicians zone out into a daze when listening to their favorite song or album over and over. Learning to play your instrument of choice takes that passion even further.

CHAPTER 3: MUSIC ENGINEERING / CREATING

Creating music is an act of will combined with surrender. You set your intentions, you choose your tools, you begin — and then the music itself takes over and starts telling you where it wants to go. Every musician knows this feeling. It is why they come back.

The Creative Act

Why are some people jealous of others' skills, gifts, and talents? And what does that jealousy really mean? It means the musician, the welder, the trucker, the leader, the foreman, the contractor — every creator — has developed his or her passion into something so consuming, so alive, that they cannot live without playing with their craft of choice. They would write a doctorate dissertation on it. "To infinity and beyond!" as Buzz Lightyear says.

> "And we now wonder why some people are jealous of others' skills, gifts, and talents. And all that means is the musician, welder, trucker, leader, foreman, contractor, queen, king, etcetera — creates his/her desirous passion to create such an addiction that they can't live without playing with their craft of choice." — Jared Edward Harden

Music creation is that addiction made into sound. And unlike many addictions, it only enriches the people around you.

Instruments and Sound Production

Every musical instrument produces sound through vibration. Strings vibrate (guitar, violin, piano). Reeds vibrate (clarinet, saxophone, oboe). Air columns vibrate (flute, trumpet, tuba). Membranes vibrate (drums, bongos, djembe). Even the human voice works this way — your vocal cords are two folds of tissue that vibrate as air passes through them, shaped and resonated by your throat, mouth, and sinuses.

When you first start on any instrument, you are building physical memory — training your muscles to find positions and produce sounds reliably. This takes time. It takes patience. Every great guitarist was once a beginner who could not make a clean chord. Every opera singer once sang off-key. The journey is the point.

Practicing to a Metronome

Even singing with our physical bodies — trying to produce the perfect tone — can feel like a computer might do it better, because it does not have human flaws. But here is the truth: the human flaws are the point. Chasing perfection is not a trend — it is a process. Some people over-exaggerate what it takes to be a prodigy or savant. The truth is simpler: consistent, intentional practice is what separates people who improve from people who do not.

Jazz pianists make learning different key signatures, scales, and modulation look effortless. But behind that effortlessness are thousands of hours practicing to a metronome, composing their own musical pieces, and playing in time. Download a metronome app. Set it to 60 BPM. Practice one scale. Then do it again tomorrow. That is how music is made.

Recording and Listening Back

Just practicing your own musical random ideas can be entertaining when recorded and listened to repeatedly. The act of recording yourself is one of the most powerful teaching tools available. When you listen back, you hear what you actually played — not what you thought you played. You hear the hesitations, the inconsistencies, and also the moments of unexpected beauty that you almost missed.

Today you can record music on your phone with free apps. You can upload it to SoundCloud, share it on social media, or simply save it for yourself. The tools have never been more accessible. The only barrier is starting.

CHAPTER 4: KEY SIGNATURES AND SCALES

A key signature tells you which pitches will be consistently raised or lowered throughout a piece of music. It establishes the tonal home base — the note that feels like "rest," like "arrival," like "done." Understanding key signatures unlocks the pattern behind all of Western music.

The Circle of Fifths

Key signatures are organized around the circle of fifths — a map of all 12 major keys arranged so that each adjacent key shares six of its seven notes with its neighbor. Moving clockwise adds one sharp. Moving counter-clockwise adds one flat. This elegant structure means that once you understand one key, you are already halfway to understanding the next.

Key Signature Reference Table

Below is a comprehensive reference for all major and minor key signatures with their solfege associations. (For minor keys, the scale begins on the 6th degree of the relative major.)

0 sharps/flats — C major / A minor — C D E F G A B C — do re mi fa sol la ti do

1 sharp — G major / E minor — G A B C D E F# G — sol la ti do re mi fi sol

1 flat — F major / D minor — F G A Bb C D E F — fa sol la te do re mi fa

2 sharps — D major / B minor — D E F# G A B C# D — re mi fi sol la ti di re

2 flats — Bb major / G minor — Bb C D Eb F G A Bb — te do re me fa sol la te

3 sharps — A major / F# minor — A B C# D E F# G# A — la ti di re mi fi si la

3 flats — Eb major / C minor — Eb F G Ab Bb C D Eb — me fa sol le te do re me

4 sharps — E major / C# minor — E F# G# A B C# D# E — mi fi si li ti di ri mi

4 flats — Ab major / F minor — Ab Bb C Db Eb F G Ab — le te do ra me fa sol le

5 sharps — B major / G# minor — B C# D# E F# G# A# B — ti di ri mi fi si li ti

5 flats — Db major / Bb minor — Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C Db — ra me fa se le te do ra

6 sharps — F# major / D# minor — F# G# A# B C# D# E# F# — fi si li ti di ri mi fi

6 flats — Gb major / Eb minor — Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb F Gb — se le te do ra me fa se

7 sharps — C# major / A# minor — C# D# E# F# G# A# B# C# — di ri mi fi si li ti di

7 flats — Cb major / Ab minor — Cb Db Eb Fb Gb Ab Bb Cb — de ra me fa se le te de

The author notes a preference for fixed solfege over moveable solfege — because the physical button, key, or string does not move. Fixed solfege lets you translate directly when looking at any given staff.

Major vs. Minor: The Emotional Difference

The major scale pattern (whole-whole-half-whole-whole-whole-half, or W-W-h-W-W-W-h) produces a sound most people describe as bright, happy, and resolved. The natural minor scale pattern (W-h-W-W-h-W-W) produces a sound described as darker, more introspective, or bittersweet.

These are not arbitrary associations — they are learned through thousands of hours of exposure to music across a lifetime, reinforced by cultural convention. When a film score shifts from major to minor, you feel something change even if you cannot name what happened theoretically. Now you can name it.

CHAPTER 5: MODES

Modes are variations of the major scale that begin on different degrees. Each mode has a distinct emotional character — ancient, dreamy, dark, or triumphant. Understanding modes opens an entirely new world of color and expression.

The Seven Diatonic Modes

Looking at a piano keyboard starting on middle C and playing only white keys up to the next C, the pattern is: W W h W W W h (whole step, whole step, half step, whole, whole, whole, half).

That pattern describes the Ionian mode — what we call the major scale. But if you start that same set of white keys on D, you produce a different pattern:

Ionian (start on C): W W h W W W h — bright, resolved, the major scale

Dorian (start on D): W h W W W h W — minor feel but with a raised 6th; soulful, used in jazz and folk

Phrygian (start on E): h W W W h W W — very dark, exotic; used in flamenco and metal

Lydian (start on F): W W W h W W h — dreamy, otherworldly; the raised 4th is its signature

Mixolydian (start on G): W W h W W h W — major with a flat 7th; used heavily in blues and rock

Aeolian (start on A): W h W W h W W — natural minor scale; dark and emotional

Locrian (start on B): h W W h W W W — the most dissonant mode; rarely used as a tonal center

Modes in Practice

Remember that the modes described above all use the same white keys — the same notes as C major — but start and resolve on different degrees. Each major key signature has its own corresponding set of modes, each with its appropriate number of sharps and flats.

When you hear a Dorian mode in a Miles Davis solo or a Phrygian mode in a Carlos Santana guitar line, you are hearing the same mathematical relationships that Bach understood, that Beethoven exploited, and that your favorite pop songwriter uses today without necessarily knowing the technical name. Modes are everywhere. They are the palette of emotional colors that musicians paint with.

CHAPTER 6: PLAYING AROUND

This is the chapter where the theory ends and the exploration begins. Everything you have learned so far was just preparation for this: making noise, having fun, and discovering what music means to you personally.

On Joy in Work

If only a job could bring enjoyment — oh! But it can, if managers realize that their crew is willing to work and they recognize how to motivate with a better plan about what needs to be accomplished. This applies to fast food, industrial work, any routine labor of the modern era. The question of joy in work is not answered by the job title alone — it is answered by the relationship between the worker and their craft.

For musicians, that relationship is everything. The instrument is not a tool you pick up when you need to. It is a companion you return to. Why not play with your instrument, experimenting with different keys and strings to make lots of noise? The permission slip for noise is already signed. Go cash it.

Practical Exploration Exercises

Try these experiments with whatever instrument or voice you have:

1. Play or sing the major scale (do re mi fa sol la ti do) in any key. Then try the same scale starting on a different note. Notice how the pattern stays the same but the sound shifts.

2. Find a chord — any chord — and hold it while humming different notes over it. Some notes will clash. Some will ring with beautiful harmony. You are discovering intervals by ear.

3. Set a metronome to 70 BPM and improvise freely for 3 minutes. Do not worry about what you play. Just play in time.

4. Record yourself for 5 minutes. Listen back. Find one moment that surprised you in a good way. Expand that moment into something longer next time.

5. Learn one melody by ear — no sheet music, no YouTube tutorial. Just listen and find the notes. This trains your ear faster than any other exercise.

CHAPTER 7: SINGING SHEET MUSIC

Learning to read sheet music is like learning a second alphabet. It opens the entire written repertoire of music — thousands of years of compositions — to your hands and your voice. And once you understand the logic of the staff, you will wonder why it ever seemed intimidating.

The Staff

A staff is a set of five horizontal lines on which musical notes are placed. The position of a note on the staff — higher or lower on the lines and spaces — indicates its pitch. The higher the note is placed on the staff, the higher its pitch.

The Treble Clef

The treble clef is that fancy-looking symbol at the beginning of the top staff — it looks like an ornate 'S' curling into a 'G' shape. That is intentional: the circle at the center of the treble clef wraps around the second line from the bottom, and that line is G. The treble clef is also called the G clef for exactly this reason.

From bottom to top, the five lines of the treble clef are:

Line 1 (bottom): E (mi)

Line 2: G (sol)

Line 3: B (ti)

Line 4: D (re)

Line 5 (top): F (fa)

A classic mnemonic: Every Good Boy Does Fine.

The four spaces between and around those lines spell, from bottom to top: F A C E. (As in, the word "face.") In solfege: fa la do mi.

Middle C sits on the first ledger line below the treble clef — a short horizontal line added just for that note, extending the staff downward.

The Bass Clef

The bass clef (also called the F clef) governs the lower range of instruments — the left hand of the piano, the cello, the bass guitar, the tuba. The two dots of the bass clef bracket the fourth line from the bottom, which is F. From bottom to top, the lines of the bass clef are:

Line 1 (bottom): G (sol)

Line 2: B (ti)

Line 3: D (re)

Line 4: F (fa)

Line 5 (top): A (la)

Mnemonic: Good Boys Do Fine Always.

The spaces spell A C E G — All Cows Eat Grass.

Reading Rhythm on the Staff

On the staff, note duration is shown by the shape of the note symbol itself. A hollow oval with no stem is a whole note. An oval with a stem is a half note. Fill in the oval and you get a quarter note. Add a flag to the stem and you have an eighth note. Add two flags for a sixteenth, three for a thirty-second.

Bar lines divide the staff into measures. A time signature at the beginning (like 4/4 or 3/4) tells you how many beats go in each measure and what note value counts as one beat.

Reading sheet music is simultaneously reading pitch (vertical position) and rhythm (note shape and placement in time). It takes practice to do both at once, but the brain is designed exactly for this kind of pattern recognition. Trust the process.

CHAPTER 8: IMPROVISING

Improvisation is music speaking in real time. It is the most honest form of musical expression — no rehearsal, no correction, no going back. Just the musician, the instrument, and the moment.

Improvisation as Acting

Think of improvisational acting and comedy. In improv theater, performers accept whatever their scene partner offers and build on it — the foundational rule of "yes, and." Musical improvisation works the same way. You hear what the chord is doing, what the other musicians are playing, what the room feels like — and you say "yes, and" with your instrument.

This is why jazz pianists can make navigating through different key signatures, scales, and modulations look like play. The theory is deeply internalized. The scales are in the hands and ears, not just the head. Improvisation is theory made into instinct.

Scales and Improvisation

Every improvised solo begins with scales. The musician chooses a scale that fits the harmonic context — a blues scale over a blues progression, a Dorian scale over a minor chord, a Lydian scale for a dreamy, floating effect — and then navigates that scale expressively.

You do not need to know all of these scales to start improvising. Start with the pentatonic scale (five notes per octave — the black keys on a piano form a pentatonic scale) and improvise freely within it. The pentatonic scale is forgiving: almost every note sounds good over almost every chord. It is the training wheels of improvisation, and some of the greatest guitarists in history built entire careers on it.

The Emotional Vocabulary of Improvisation

Improvisation is acting out different emotions through music. A phrase that ascends in pitch creates tension and expectation. A phrase that descends feels like release. A

repeated rhythmic motif creates urgency. Silence — rests — can be more powerful than notes. Miles Davis said the most important thing in music is the notes you do not play.

Even singing with the physical limitations of the human body — trying to produce a perfect tone — can feel like a machine might do it better. But the machine cannot improvise. The machine cannot respond to a raised eyebrow from the bassist, or add a blue note because the room feels like it needs one, or hold a note just slightly longer than the score says because something in the moment demands it. That human imperfection, that responsive intelligence — that is what improvisation is for.

CHAPTER 9: CONDUCTING

A conductor is far more than a human metronome. The conductor is the musical narrator, the emotional interpreter, the architect of the collective sound. Understanding what a conductor does helps you understand what music itself is asking for.

The Role of the Conductor

The conductor leads the tempo, shapes the dynamics, and emphasizes where the music needs extra emotion. With a baton in hand and a score memorized, the conductor translates notation into gesture, and gesture into sound. A gesture that expands the arms outward asks for a swell in volume. A sharp cut of the hand calls for silence. A slow, floating motion asks for a gentle, sustained pianissimo.

Conductors also serve as the bridge between individual musicians and the ensemble as a whole. A seventy-piece orchestra contains seventy musical personalities — with different tempos in their internal clocks, different interpretive instincts, different technical approaches. The conductor reconciles all of these into a unified expression.

Beat Patterns

Conductors use standardized patterns in the air to indicate meter. In 4/4, the baton traces a pattern: down, left, right, up. In 3/4 (waltz time): down, right, up. In 2/4 (march time): down, up. These patterns give musicians a visual anchor so they can stay together even during complex passages where their eyes cannot always be on the score.

What Conducting Teaches Listeners

Even if you never stand in front of an orchestra, studying conducting teaches you to listen more actively. You begin to hear where the phrase is going, where the climax is building, where the release will come. You become not just a passive consumer of music but an active participant in its drama. And that transformation — from listener to participant — is what this entire book has been about.

CONCLUSION

And now we can write out, transfer, and create a polyphonic harmony every time we sing solfeggio. We can look at any staff and understand not just what to play but why — why this note, why this rhythm, why this key.

Here is a free-form solfege line to explore, with or without formal rhythm notation:

|sol la ti fa re do| |ti fi si la ti do re mi| |fa mi ti do re| |fi li te re| |te li re fi mi| |fi re ti la do||

Pretty fun, right? Now it is your turn to explore, write, play, listen, compose, and collaborate.

> Have fun and smile — because you are worth it. :)

For better singing tips, find singing lessons on YouTube. For composition tools, explore free online sheet music communities where you can collaborate with musicians around the world or write solo. The global community of musicians has never been more accessible.

This book was written in a burst of creative energy — about two hours for 5,000 words. Music makes that kind of focused flow possible. It makes us only sing and not talk, as the joke goes. But the talking and writing and thinking about music — all of that matters too. It all feeds the same creative well.

Remember: every great musician was once a beginner who could not find the notes. Every composer was once a student who could not read the staff. The distance between where you are and where you want to be is simply: time, practice, and joy. So practice. And take joy seriously. It is not a luxury. It is the point.

God bless.

— Jared Edward Harden | Musicallessness | Nedrahej

jarededwardharden.com | jaredmusicallessness.wordpress.com

FREEWRITING: Personal Reflections

What follows is the author's unedited personal reflection — the voice behind the theory, the human being beneath the musician. These pages were not meant to be polished. They were meant to be true.

On the Book Cover

My book cover I designed with some of the thousands of photographs I have shot over the years of owning cameras. I just wish I had a camera when I was choosing a more practical dream career of trucking rather than music.

It is weird not having the miles to roll with a disability. Yeah, I am, and was, and technically still am a trucker. Congratulations to me for passing my medical examination to take my written test and passing it to get my commercial learner's permit. It is too bad that most trucking companies will not hire now based on a mental disability of autism.

On Discrimination and Identity

Oh, well — there is still hope. But while I was volunteering my time, my family and the religious organization I was born into called me mentally diseased. A nurse basically told me: "this is a volunteer program." Yeah, too bad for me. It is my fault that I was born with a mental disability like autism and that my family and the religion that basically preaches "religion is a snare and a racket" calls me "mentally diseased" — as if I have not given enough of my money and time and emotions trying to earn a place in life.

But John was right: get out of her, for she has fallen.

On Grief

Anyways, it took me like only two hours to write 5,000 words and it is almost done. The responsibilities of the MOST dangerous career ever — all you really have to do is keep it in the paint. That is the painted lines on the road. Which basically means: follow the laws. Common sense. But sometimes laws stop having common sense. And when that happens, grief is the appropriate response.

The five stages of grief are: anger, depression, denial, bargaining, and acceptance. There is nothing wrong with grieving. But to not eventually "get through it" may become a serious concern to one's own well-being. People prove themselves and work toward recovery. That is a wonderful thing.

On Recovery and Moving Forward

Recovery from behavior that has been shaped by guilt and manipulation — whether from religious institutions or elsewhere — is real work. It is too bad that I have been discriminated against for having a disability. But perhaps it is all well in finding time in the library, walks in parks, and other outdoor activities.

Did I mention music? I am glad my plastic flute and drumsticks are not very costly. It would be nice to have my piano back — the one I had to sell during a difficult period. Scams are another series of grief entirely.

Remember to smile — because you are worth it. :)

A Note on Fixed vs. Moveable Solfege

Battle on: fixed vs. moveable solfege. Why moveable when the physical button, key, or string does not move?

Fixed solfege is easy to grasp because, like a string that does not move, the pitch name stays the same regardless of context. Instead of translating solfege names, you translate English letters. Interesting how music teachers teach what we can all hear and naturally mimic to a perfect pitch — yet perfect pitch requires automatically knowing the name of the note, not just being able to reproduce it. To have perfect pitch is to hear a sound and immediately know its name, so you can communicate it: "That is an F#." Rather than just hitting the corresponding key.

So I will start with middle C if looking at music from a piano perspective — the 88-key keyboard, either acoustic or digital. Although a stringed instrument would be accessible for beginners, the staff lines were created specifically from the piano forte keyboard rather than other instruments. That context matters: Western music notation is a

piano-centric system, and understanding it through the piano keyboard is often the clearest path in.

* * *

Music is for everyone. It always has been. It does not care about your diagnosis, your denomination, your job title, or your past. It asks only one thing: that you show up and make sound. Everything else takes care of itself.

Thank you for reading. Now go play something.

— J.E.H.