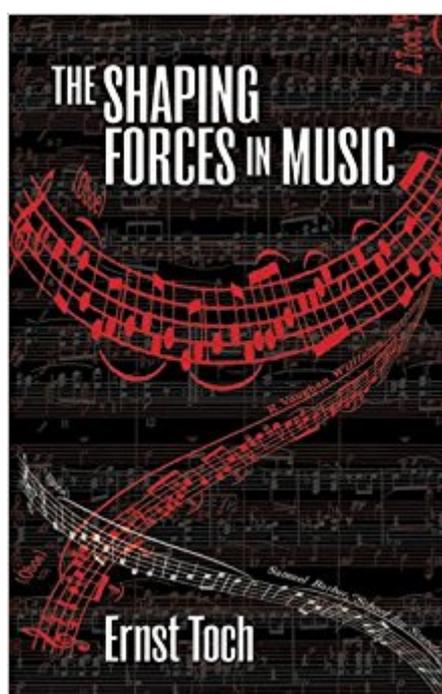


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The Shaping Forces In Music: An Inquiry Into The Nature Of Harmony, Melody, Counterpoint And Form (The Dover Series Of Study Editions, Chamber Music, Orchestral Works, Operas In Full Score)



Synopsis

A masterful and original classical composer as well as a renowned composer of film scores, Ernst Toch (1887–1964) made a permanent contribution to music in this important and widely praised book. Based on a series of lectures given at Harvard in 1944 and first published in 1948, this book is a brilliant examination of the materials and concepts that are the basic building blocks of music—harmony, melody, counterpoint, and form. An admirable reconciliation of traditional and modern (mainly 12-tone) trends in composition, this book shows all types of writing must respond to psychological wants of the listener and how similar goals may be achieved in seemingly opposed styles. Illustrating his discussion with 390 musical examples, Toch not only introduces new ideas and approaches, but examines many age-old problems with clarity and precision—consonance and dissonance, form versus number, and more. His analysis of the expanding harmonic universe, the wave line of melody, and the formative influence of movement are particularly penetrating. New to this edition are a biological introduction by Toch's grandson, Lawrence Weschler; a previously unpublished letter from Thomas Mann to Toch about this book (in English translation); and a complete checklist of Toch's compositions. Intended for all those who have a minimum understanding of musical notation and theory, this book will appeal to music lovers, practical musicians and amateurs, and incipient composers.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications; Revised ed. edition (April 20, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486233464

ISBN-13: 978-0486233468

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.6 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars— See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #552,003 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 in Books > Reference >

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Customer Reviews

A composer friend of mine recommended this book to me as a good introduction to composition.

After reading it, I agree. Have you ever wondered why you can write something that obeys all the rules of classical music theory but has no life to it? Toch takes a good look at the practice of composition through the ages and abstracts a set of principles - the shaping forces in music - that give a composition structure and vitality. The things that I found really interesting about these principles were how universally they apply across all periods and styles of music, and how willing the 'classical' composers like Mozart and Beethoven were to break the rules of classical theory in pursuit of a larger goal. If you have any interest in the principles of music composition, this is a great book. My only comment is that points illustrated by quotations (which is most of them) are not always clear unless you can play or 'hear' the music - easy for Mozart, not so easy for Brahms, Debussy etc. Having a piano handy would help with this. Another solution would be to read this book in a music library and listen to the relevant works as they come up - in fact I hope to do this sometime myself. Overall highly recommended for students of music - it's a breath of fresh air after all the traditional dogma.

This is a great book for a musician who wants to go beyond major and minor triads. This is a discussion book rather than a study of harmony and form. You should have a good understanding of harmony and classical repertoire before venturing reading this amazing book. You should have some information about 20th century music as well as a good foundation in theory. Ideally, you would be able to play some piano at an intermediate level so that you can play the examples in the book. Some examples in the book are from compositions by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Debussy, Mussorgsky, Stravinsky, etc. Be open minded before you open this book. I highly recommended! Enjoy! EB

This book was a bit too philosophical for me. While it contains a wealth of good information, that information is often masked by pedantic writing. I also felt that the musical examples used were not explored enough. In summary, the overall information contained within the book is truly exceptional, and would certainly benefit any aspiring composer. I just found that the "philosophical element" was a bit over-done, and that it often masked what Toch was trying to convey. Nonetheless, for under \$10, it is a book I would, in the end, recommend.

I agree with Music Matt, and I would go further. I don't understand this book's popularity and many editions--maybe it used to be assigned for college courses, but I was not impressed. Everything he says is obvious to anyone who has made any attempt at composition, taken harmony or

counterpoint, and certainly anyone with enough background to read the 290 examples. He states the obvious and then belabors it at length. I'm donating mine to the library's book sale.

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