



# How to Write Music

musical orthography

C. A. Harris

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# **How to Write Music**

**Clement A. Harris**

# Introductory.

1.—It is reasonable to expect that a musician shall be at least an accurate and legible writer as well as a reader of the language of his Art. The immense increase in the amount of music published, and its cheapness, seem rather to have increased than decreased this necessity, for they have vastly multiplied activity in the Art. If they have not intensified the necessity for music-writing, they have increased the number of those by whom the necessity is felt.

Intelligent knowledge of Notation is the more necessary inasmuch as music writing is in only a comparatively few cases mere copying. Even when writing from a copy, some alteration is frequently necessary, as will be shown in the following pages, requiring independent knowledge of the subject on the part of the copyist.

Yet many musicians, thoroughly competent as performers, cannot write a measure of music without bringing a smile to the lips of the initiated.

Many performers will play or sing a note at sight without hesitation, which, asked to write, they will first falter over and then bungle—at least by writing it at the wrong octave. The admirable working of theoretical examination papers is sometimes in ridiculous contrast with the puerility of the writing.

Psychologists would probably say that this was because conceptual action is a higher mental function than perceptual: in other words, that recollection is harder than recognition.

The remedy is simple. Recognition must be developed till it becomes recollection: the writing of music must be taught concurrently with the reading of it.

This was once the case: music-writing was a necessary part

of a musician's education. One may be the more surprised at its falling into disuse, inasmuch as phonography—in the musical sense—is a distinctly pleasant occupation. Without being either drawing or writing, it partakes of the nature of both.

But many points in the writing of music are not now considered to form part of the Rudiments of Music, and are not included in primers on the subject.

Hence the following pages.

While containing some matter which may have escaped the attention of more advanced musicians, they should, in an educational course, either be used along with a Primer on the Elements, or immediately follow it.