APP REVEIW: SIMPLE MUSIC APP - FREE
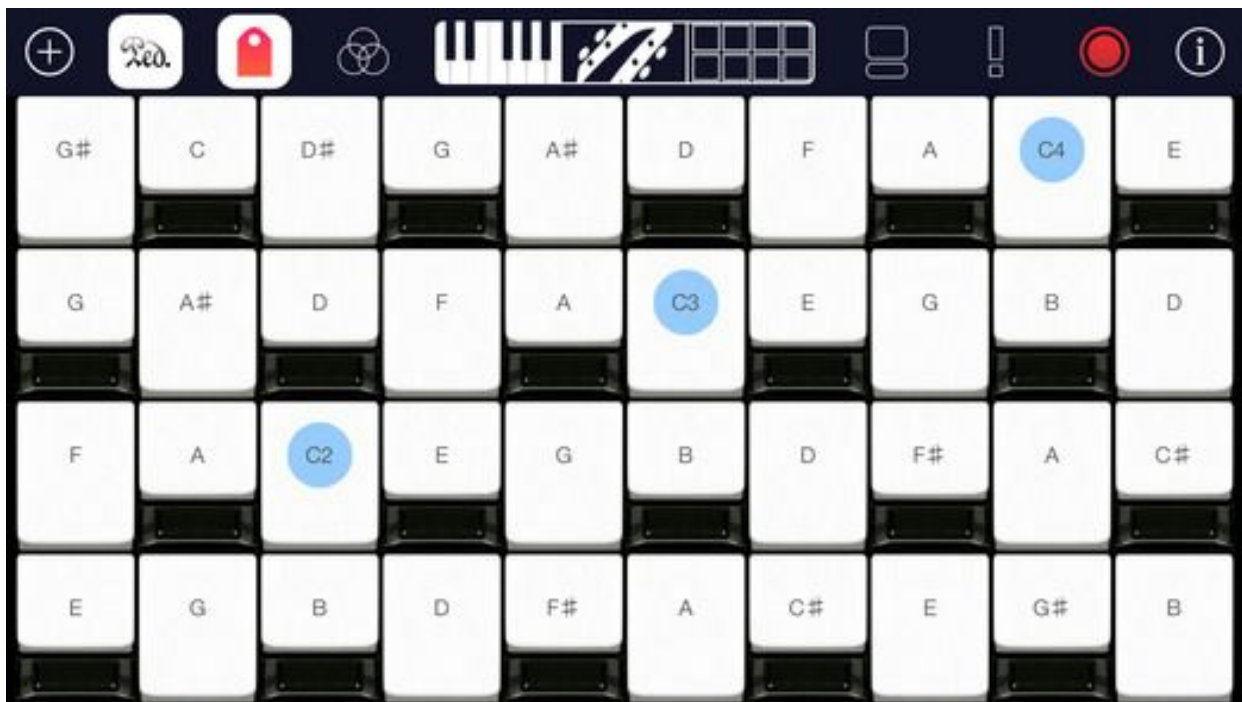
I love a new app...who doesn't! They can be heaps of fun, very rewarding and helpful, or they can be darn right annoying. This one has some potential.

Depending on how you use it, it can either have multiple uses or just one use. What I like about this app is its structure.

As you can see when you look at the opening screen, there is not a lot to this app. It can only record one line at a time. However, it can keep multiple recordings. You can send these recordings to different locations and use them within other programs. It has a selection of keyboards, guitars and some other instrumental sounds to choose from. Discussion of these virtual sounds and the realistic nature of their quality is another whole topic.

What I really like is the intervallic structure of the main frame. As you can see, each line has notes separated by thirds, whether they be major or minor. This creates some interesting harmonic choices when you point out to the students the chord creations within one line. For example take the F line. If you build a chord starting with each new note, you will get:

FAC (F major)
ACE (A minor)
CEG (C Major)
EGB (E Minor)
GBD (G Major)
BDF# (B Minor)
DF#A (D Major)
F#AC# (F# MInor)

SENIOR CLASSES

I work a lot with Senior Classes so I must admit, when I looked at this app, at first, I saw the potential to look into harmonic relationships, to create melodies based around unusual harmonic shifts. When you play three notes together, the app also tells you what the chord could be. This is incredibly helpful when teaching students about "sus" chords or added note chords.

For those studying the NSW HSC Music 2 Program, it is a fabulous starting point for the composition. The students are not limited by harmonic structure. They can create melodic lines and get assistance as to the harmonic structure that lies beneath. This will help them with orchestration or arranging of their ideas.

Axis System is the theory that the Tritone is connected through harmonic shifts of a third and can therefore be used as substitutions. It originated from the analysis work of Erno Lendvai. He developed this during his analysis of the music of Bela Bartok. Lendvai's analyses aim to show how chord and tones related by the intervals of a minor third and tritone can function as tonal substitutes for one another. So in effect C and F# were quite relatable. It is in Bartok's works that you will find these relationships. This app is structured on this principle and can be integrated into work on this topic quite easily. You could easily map one of Bartok's works using this app.

JUNIOR ELECTIVE

Whilst the information above could be touched on in Year 10 perhaps, for Years 7 to 9, you are probably looking at a more watered down version. Well, chord structures are the best way to go. The students can create really interesting chord progressions of major and minor chords. You could get them to create a chord progression and then find a mode that will work with those chords. That is an easy one.

You could divide the class into groups and create an entire composition on this app. Two groups working together. One creates the chord progression, the other the melody. They use the metronome to keep in time and they could try to synchronise their ipads to play both parts at the same time in real time. That is quite the technology challenge.

You could create a minimalist composition on this app quite easily. The possibilities are quite endless, from compositional creation right through to transferring the machinations of the composition onto a real keyboard or onto a staff. When you transfer them to a staff or instrument, you can see the logistics of how they are to be played and written. It can focus on rhythmic elements as well considering that the students created the composition through improvisation.

Transcription is a really interesting skill to have and then there is the discussion of what key signature?

Melodic dictation could also be really useful here. You could have one student create a bar of music that the others are supposed to find aurally. This could move quite easily into written melodic dictation.

Sightsinging the intervals - you could put the panel up on the screen, turn the sound down, point to different intervals and get the students to sing them. Create little melodies and see if they can sing them correctly. Get them to write them down using their memory and then try to sing them from the music.

So many different ways to use this app. Give it a go and report back. Let me know how you got on. kerri@kerrilacey.com.au