

audio CD is a real plus for teachers wishing to build on the strength of MusiCan's melodies away from the computer.

## **Music Ace/Music Ace 2** (Harmonic Vision)

**T**he Music Ace series nicely complements traditional music education by providing paired lessons and games that improve music reading and ear training skills. Using a grand staff and piano keyboard, Maestro Max and his Singing Notes encourage Music Ace users to master basic principles of music notation (the staves, key signatures and accidentals, pitch and interval recognition, and the relationship between written pitch and the key-

board). Music Ace 2 follows the same format, reviewing and expanding on Music Ace's lessons and introducing the three clefs, time signatures, tempo markings, rhythmic notation and discrimination, melody, and harmony. Independent of the lessons, a Music Doodle Pad gives students a compositional toolbox to adapt tunes or to write and hear their own music performed by sampled instruments.

Music Ace offers users great control over their experience. They can adjust the volume of narration separately from the music, and elect to receive information via text balloons, voice instructions, or both. Most importantly, teachers can calibrate latency, the delay in synchronization of animation and graphics. The importance of

this calibration mechanism can't be overemphasized, as timing is a crucial aspect of good musicianship.

Overall, Music Ace and Music Ace 2 are excellently designed. Some students may find the programs' template staid or dated, but the stable, relatively simple interface functions beautifully and allows users to focus on learning new concepts, not new formats, as they progress. While the sound sampling could be improved (aside from the piano, the synthesized instruments sound quite similar), these programs are a practical, enjoyable supplement for ear training and music theory instruction in the classroom, private music studio, and home; preliterate users, with supervision, will enjoy them too.

## In Tune with Music Programs

PRODUCT	<i>Music Ace &amp; Music Ace 2</i>	<i>MusiCan 1</i>	<i>Mozart's Magic Flute: The Music Game</i>
PUBLISHER	Harmonic Vision (800) 474-0903 www.harmonicvision.com	MusiCan (805) 489-9057 www.musican.com	Music Games International (877) 877-1369 www.KidsMusicStage.com
PLATFORM	Mac/Win CD	Mac/Win CD	Windows 98 or higher CD
PRICE	\$79.95 each; lab pack and network configurations available	\$99; five-user and school licenses available	\$19.95
AGE GROUP	8 and up	4 and up	4 and up
NOTABLE FEATURES	Intuitive navigation with clear instructions; detailed lessons in ear training and music theory; games and Music Doodle Pad reinforce skills in the context of play	Accompanying audio CD and songbook; suggested interdisciplinary lesson plans; students can print certificates when they complete lessons	Straightforward navigation with clear directions; includes some music history as well as aural discrimination activities
STRENGTHS	Excellent design; fun graphics; automatically adjusts lessons to user's skill level while playing (using performance as feedback); ability to alter settings, including latency calibration	Outstanding solfege and song completion components; engaging characters and graphics; lovely songs	Fantastic watercolor animation; superb sampling of voices and instruments facilitate the transference of learned skills to live music experiences
LIMITATIONS	The repetitive templates are effective but may become staid over time	Minimal or unspecific prompts may impede use without close supervision	Students may tire of the activities after completing the advanced option
BOTTOM LINE	A highly refined product and a gem for ear training and music theory instruction in the home, classroom, or private music studio; useful for preliterate learners with supervision	A fun, if pricey, introduction to basic music principles; best for individuals and small classes for whom assistance is readily available	A positive, fun, well-designed game and terrific introduction to Mozart and classical music for all ages

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