ABSTRACT

An Investigation of Pedagogical Methods for Increasing the Perceived Relevance of Music Theory Courses to Undergraduate Music Students

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This thesis investigates three pedagogical avenues toward increasing the perceived relevance of music theory to undergraduate music students. These avenues include exploring the relation of analysis to performance, the use of questions that stimulate critical thinking by allowing multiple analytical interpretations, and the incorporation of a variety of types of assignments and musical genres into the music theory curriculum. In addition to surveying a wide range of literature on these topics, this thesis presents a three-fold assignment that addresses aspects of all three avenues.

An Investigation of Pedagogical Methods for Increasing the Perceived Relevance of Music Theory Courses to Undergraduate Music Students

by

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A Thesis

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My motivation for writing this thesis began several years ago when I was enrolled in the core music theory classes as an undergraduate music major at Baylor University. Although I had minimal instruction in music theory before coming to college, I quickly became intrigued by the analytical aspects of the subject and was encouraged by the creative and methodical teaching of my professors. Conversely, several of my classmates made no secret of their antipathy toward music theory. They grumbled that the homework was hard and the subject was boring, and at least one of my classmates said that she would rather spend her time practicing instead of sitting through music theory classes day after day. Even though I did not share these views, I understood the stress of completing tedious and time-consuming workbook assignments late at night after coming home from long evening rehearsals.

After finishing my required theory classes, I decided to pursue a master's degree in music theory. As a graduate assistant in music theory, I have learned that the formation of firm pedagogical foundations for beginning theory students is paramount to the students' academic success and their continuing engagement with the discipline of music theory. Because I enjoy interacting with students and developing creative teaching methods, I would like to teach music theory at the university level. I frequently remember my own experiences in undergraduate theory courses and find myself grappling with several questions. With so many requirements and responsibilities competing for the attention of music students in the university environment, what sets

music theory apart as a subject that is worthy of multiple semesters of study? What bearing will music theory have on the careers of students whose musical concentrations are not in this area? Inasmuch as I believe that music theory is a pivotal aspect of the education of all music majors, how can I help students to recognize the significance of music theory, and how might I tailor my lesson plans in order to demonstrate its relevance to each student's musical concentration?

In my thesis, I will explore some avenues for increasing the perceived relevance of music theory to undergraduate music students. In the second chapter, I will consider the relationship between analysis and performance. I will identify potential obstacles to meaningful interactions between performers and analysts and will suggest steps to improve these interactions. Related topics in this chapter will include Comprehensive Musicianship, musical intuition, and the idea of music as narrative. In the third chapter, I will discuss the use of musical examples that allow multiple analytical interpretations and will explore several non-conventional teaching methods that might encourage multiple interpretations. I will also address the importance of helping students to enhance their critical thinking skills. The fourth chapter will concentrate on increasing variety in the music theory curriculum by utilizing different types of assignments and by selecting musical examples from a variety of genres. Assignments that are discussed in this chapter include prose-writing exercises, composition projects, and pedagogical games; the discussion of variety in musical genres encompasses both popular music and music from non-Western cultures.

In the fifth chapter, I will present a three-fold assignment that I designed to address each of the three principal areas under consideration in order to provide a

practical application of my research. I will discuss the rationale behind the structure of the assignment and the methodology of administering it in undergraduate theory classes at Baylor University. I will also examine and discuss the written responses of the students who participated.

Finally, the sixth chapter of my thesis will present a brief summary of my research. By investigating a broad range of sources and by synthesizing the information gleaned through my research with new ideas, my thesis will present principles and offer practical suggestions that will inform my teaching and, I hope, prove beneficial to the scholarly community of which I am becoming a part.

CHAPTER TWO

Searching for Common Ground:
Exploring the Relationship between Analysis and Performance

The relationship between the disciplines of music analysis and music performance is a complex one filled with possibilities for both meaningful interactions and unfortunate misunderstandings. In this chapter, I will draw from the academic literature a variety of perspectives on this relationship. I will also synthesize these varying perspectives and share my own thoughts on how to increase the effectiveness of collaborations between analysts and performers. Before beginning, I will clarify my usage of common terms such as "performer," "theorist," "analyst," and "musician" in the context of this study. "Performer" refers to a person whose primary specialization is in the field of applied music, whether in professional performance, applied teaching, or some combination of these activities. "Theorist" refers to a person whose primary specialization is in the field of music theory, whether in research, pedagogy, or both. While "analyst" may sometimes be used interchangeably with "theorist," this term can also represent any person who analyzes musical compositions, even if his or her musical specialization does not lie in music theory. Finally, the term "musician" refers to any person whose vocation is in the field of music, regardless of his or her individual specialization within the field.

Published in 1980, Joseph Kerman's article "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out" proposes a broadening of the activity of musical analysis to form an

effective branch of musical criticism.[1] Kerman criticized analysis for its ideological emphasis on the grandeur of instrumental compositions found in the prevailing German canon of music.[2] According to Kerman, this ideology leads to an excessive preoccupation with the organic content of musical masterpieces that tends to marginalize details and ambiguities that might offer intriguing avenues for examination.[3]

Nearly twenty-five years later, Kofi Agawu responded to Kerman's arguments with an article entitled "How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back In Again."[4] Agawu chides Kerman for overlooking the "ideological biases" inherent in his conflation of analysis with ideology, and addresses several perceived shortcomings in Kerman's arguments.[5] Nonetheless, Agawu embraces the spirit of Kerman's article, which calls for a broader synthesis of analytical approaches. Agawu identifies significant "affinities and structural parallels" between analysis and performance and urges musicians to explore the benefits of analysis as an aid to perception and a guide to the "truth content" or essential meaning of musical compositions.[6]

One of the parallels Agawu identifies between analysis and performance—the nature of analysis as a "hands-on activity"—is especially noteworthy. He explains that musical analysis is inherently subjective because those who analyze the music develop

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[1] Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 311-31.

[2] Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis," 314.

[3] Kerman, 315, 325.

[4] Kofi Agawu, "How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back In Again," *Music Analysis* 23, nos. 2-3 (2004): 267-86.

[5] Agawu, "How We Got Out," 269.

[6] Agawu, 270.

conclusions that are influenced in part by their personal interpretations.[7] Since the notion of subjectivity is also inherent in performance, which relies on the performer's effort and interpretation to give substance to the composer's work, both analysis and performance can be viewed as subjective, hands-on activities.

Cynthia Folio presents another perspective on the interrelation of analysis and performance in the article "Analysis and Performance of the Flute Sonatas of J.S. Bach: A Sample Lesson Plan."[8] She characterizes the relationship between analysis and performance as "tenuous," indicating that the process of exploring the common ground between these musical specializations can be threatening for both performers and analysts. According to Folio,

> One reason *performers* tend to avoid making connections between analysis and interpretation is that many of them view theory as a dull and somewhat abstract exercise; some are even afraid of theory, with memories of unsuccessful experiences in their classes. One reason *theorists* avoid this area of study is the fear of having to make subjective decisions.[9]

Since this area of study falls outside the comfort zone of some musicians, and since questions in this area do not normally yield indisputable answers, Folio concludes that "study in this area [is] exciting, but a little dangerous."[10]

In the dissertation "On the Relationship between Music Analysis and Performance," Alina Voicu investigates the characteristics of both analysis and performance in order to identify potential similarities and differences between these

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[7] Agawu, 276.

[8] Cynthia Folio, "Analysis and Performance of the Flute Sonatas of J.S. Bach: A Sample Lesson Plan," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 133-59.

[9] Folio, "Analysis and Performance," 133.

[10] Folio, 133.

disciplines.[11] Table 1 and Table 2 are adapted from Voicu's tabular representation of similar and dissimilar characteristics of analysis and performance (see table 1 and table 2).[12]

Table 1. Shared features of analysis and performance

Music Analysis	Music Performance
Both start from the "music itself"	
Both are interpretative activities	
Both are marked by the intuition, knowledge, and personality of the interpreter	

Source: Table adapted from Alina Voicu, "On the Relationship between Music Analysis and Performance," 25.

Table 2. Differing features of analysis and performance

Music Analysis	Music Performance
It aims to explaining/understanding the music	It aims to shaping/projecting the music
It does not primarily address external factors	It considers various external factors
It is primarily concerned with structure	It is primarily concerned with character/gesture
It is not limited by temporal duration	It unfolds in real time
It is transmitted verbally/graphically	It is transmitted aurally
It can be selective in its focus	It aims to synthesizing all of the aspects of a score
It is primarily a mental activity	It involves mental, emotional, and physical aspects
Draws generalizations from a score/conceptualizes	It specifies what the score leaves unspecified

Source: Table adapted from Alina Voicu, "On the Relationship between Music Analysis and Performance," 25.

While I do not necessarily accept every detail of the dichotomy that Voicu presents, these tables provide a concise summary of the broad characteristics that analysis and performance have in common as well as the numerous specific instances in which these two disciplines can diverge.

[11] Alina Voicu, "On the Relationship between Music Analysis and Performance" (DMA diss., University of Alabama, 2000).

[12] Voicu, "On the Relationship," 25.

Voicu draws upon a variety of sources—including many books and journal articles that address topics in the areas of music theory, music performance, and the arts—in order to delineate the continuum of perspectives on the interaction of analysis and performance. She also mentions two primary questions—"What kind of analysis is the most beneficial for performance?" and "How exactly should performance be used in analysis?"—that have yet to be answered definitively.[13] Such questions are difficult to resolve conclusively because of the subjectivity that is necessarily involved in answering them.

Despite these lingering questions, Voicu encourages her readers to remember the two foremost conclusions of her research. First, Voicu insists that musicians should refrain from attempting to identify the association of analysis and performance "according to absolute criteria." Instead, musicians should view this association "as a *relative/variable relationship*." Second, Voicu presents the paramount conclusion of her dissertation in the realization "that the relationship between analysis and performance has a great interactive potential."[14]

The exploration of this interactive potential has its roots in research published more than twenty years ago. One significant article from this period is Janet Schmalfeldt's "On the Relation of Analysis to Performance: Beethoven's 'Bagatelles' Op. 126, Nos. 2 and 5."[15] In this article, Schmalfeldt presents a hypothetical dialogue

[13] Voicu, 56.

[14] Voicu, 56.

[15] Janet Schmalfeldt, "On the Relation of Analysis to Performance: Beethoven's 'Bagatelles' Op. 126, Nos. 2 and 5," *Journal of Music Theory* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 1-31.

between a performer and an analyst, both of whom examine the same pieces of music.[16] Schmalfeldt observes that the performer and the analyst both strive for a more complete understanding of the musical work, although one major distinction arises between "the analyst's verbal medium [that] requires a final commitment to a presently held view" and "the performer's non-verbal 'view' [that] must never be taken as final within a live performance" because of physical variables that are inherent in the act of performing.[17] Schmalfeldt concludes her article by urging performers and analysts to increase their commitment "toward a liaison based upon an increased understanding of shared and separate tasks."[18] Although some authors contend that Schmalfeldt's dialogue is weighted more heavily toward the perspective of the analyst than of the performer (as would be expected, given the venue in which it was published), this article is pivotal to understanding the more recent developments in the field of analysis and performance studies.[19]

The insightful discussion contained in Catherine Nolan's article "Reflections on the Relationship of Analysis and Performance" provides clarification of the disjunction that often arises between performers and analysts.[20] In a sobering summary of the disparity between the perspectives of performers and analysts, Nolan explains:

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[16] Schmalfeldt, "On the Relation," 2.

[17] Schmalfeldt, 28.

[18] Schmalfeldt, 28.

[19] John Rink, "Analysis and (or?) Performance" in *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*, ed. John Rink (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35-36; Nicholas Cook, "Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 246.

[20] Catherine Nolan, "Reflections on the Relationship of Analysis and Performance," *College Music Symposium* 33/34 (1993/1994): 112-39.

> For the performer, analysis, as well as any other intellectual study of a work cannot help but be primarily concerned with practical and utilitarian matters, since there is an unequivocally more important goal (to the performer) to be achieved, and analysis is but one of several means to the end. For the analyst, analysis is an end, even a vocation, unto itself, or at least in tandem with music theory, and performance of a work analyzed is unessential to the validity of the analysis. The underlying incompatibility between these positions is at the heart of the antipathy and alienation that exists between many performers and analysts.[21]

Thus, friction between the perspectives of performers and analysts is a direct result of diverging paradigms of thought regarding music analysis.

Despite her somewhat grim assessment, Nolan does not abandon the prospect of a mutually beneficial collaboration between analysts and performers. She advocates a balanced approach that satisfies both "the analyst's need for rigor and the performer's need for a place for intuition."[22] Although Nolan does not offer many specific steps toward achieving this balanced approach, she offers a penetrating diagnosis of the core issue of differing motivations which produces tension between the disciplines of analysis and performance. Nolan encourages her readers to press on toward the goal of a close partnership between analysts and performers that can facilitate "deeper analytical insights and more illuminating performances."[23] This goal, as articulated by Nolan, is indeed worthy of pursuit and perseverance.

It is important to note that, although this diagnosis may pertain to some musicians in the fields of both performance and analysis, the characterizations contained in Nolan's assessment are broad and are by no means representative of all analysts and performers. A number of analysts are interested in the applications of music theory to performance,

[21] Nolan, "Reflections," 121.

[22] Nolan, 138.

[23] Nolan, 139.

and many of these scholars are accomplished performing musicians. One such scholar/ performer is Joel Lester. Through a combination of his skills in music theory with his training as a violinist, Lester's book *Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance* provides a resource that is, in Lester's words, "'in part a performance guide for violinists, in part an analytic study, in part a rumination on aspects of Bach's style, and in part an investigation of notions of musical form and continuity."[24]

Likewise, a growing number of performers incorporate music-theoretical analysis in the preparation of their repertoire and are neither uninterested in nor uninformed about the concepts addressed in the field of music theory. Concert-pianist Murray Perahia exemplifies this type of theoretically-informed performer. In the article "Chopin in Performance: Perahia's Musical Dialogue," John Rink presents portions of a conversation that he had with Murray Perahia in July 2000.[25] According to Rink, Perahia advocates exploring a "*range* of possibilities" when preparing for a performance in order for each performer to determine what interpretative choices suit his or her own perception of the piece.[26] Perahia focuses primarily on broad analytical views of compositions when he begins working with new repertoire. Before including detailed analysis in the learning process, Perahia recommends using a dramatic, story-telling approach to help the performer understand the piece as a whole.[27] When Perahia is ready to focus on musical

[24] Quoted in David Schulenberg, review of *Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance*, by Joel Lester, *Notes* 57, no. 1 (September 2000): 127; Joel Lester, *Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[25] John Rink, "Chopin in Performance: Perahia's Musical Dialogue," *The Musical Times* 142, no. 1877 (Winter 2001): 9-15.

[26] Rink, "Chopin in Performance," 9.

[27] Rink, "Chopin in Performance," 12.

details, he addresses "'simplicities first,'"[28] considering elements such as underlying melodic structure and tonicization of tonal areas.[29] His analytical efforts extend into the realm of Schenkerian analysis; while recovering from a serious hand injury, Perahia spent much time analyzing Bach's music with Schenkerian methods.[30] The time he spent studying music from an intellectual perspective enhanced his appreciation for musical structure and increased his understanding of musical drama, tension, and resolution.[31] As a well-known performer who incorporates theoretical analysis into his repertoire studies, Perahia offers valuable comments and advice for those who are interested in further exploring the relationship of analysis and performance.

Some practical steps toward beneficial interactions between performers and analysts are contained in Joel Lester's provocatively titled article "How Theorists Relate to Musicians."[32] Although this title may seem to imply that Lester does not classify theorists as musicians, this implication is not consistent with his intent. Rather, Lester discusses ways in which theorists can interact and build meaningful relationships with *other* musicians such as performers, composers, and listeners. He attributes the wide-spread indifference with which many musicians regard music theory to a lack of communication among theorists and other musicians. Although Lester does not believe that theorists are entirely to blame for these communication problems, he does believe

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[28] Quoted in Rink, "Chopin in Performance," 12.

[29] Rink, "Chopin in Performance," 12.

[30] Yahlin Chang, "Perahia's Progress," *Newsweek*, January 12, 1998, 64.

[31] Yahlin Chang, "Perahia's Progress," 64.

[32] Joel Lester, "How Theorists Relate to Musicians," in "Music Theory: Practices and Prospects," ed. Lee Rothfarb, special issue, *Music Theory Online* 4, no. 2 (March 1998): pars. 1-37, http://mto.society musictheory.org/issues/mto.98.4.2/mto.98.4.2.lester.html (accessed May 13, 2010).

that it is the responsibility of theorists to initiate increased communication with other musicians.[33]

Lester delves into the heart of potential communication problems with his declaration that "we as theorists miss opportunities to relate to other musicians because we insist on framing issues within theoretical traditions, and not within the ways that other musicians have dealt with those issues."[34] He recommends the establishment of musical discussion forums that create "level playing fields" for theorists and other musicians by avoiding the strictly verbal format of scholarly journals.[35] By intentionally engaging in musical dialogue with methods that provide all parties with clear communication, theorists can foster a new level of rapport between themselves and other musicians. Rather than clinging to the artificial distinctions found in titles such as "theorist" or "performer," Lester encourages members of both the academic and the applied fields to embrace their shared identity as musicians.[36]

As I consider this topic, the disjunction between theorists and performers can sometimes appear insurmountable. When confronted by a tradition of separation between these disciplines, how are musicians to overcome the inertia of long-standing habit? Perhaps a two-fold approach may assist musicians, particularly theorists, to press on toward a more fruitful interaction between the disciplines of analysis and performance. First, theorists can assess their mindsets toward performers and performance. If individuals perceive that changes should be made in their attitudes or their professional

[33] Lester, "How Theorists Relate," pars. 5-6.

[34] Lester, "How Theorists Relate," par. 8.

[35] See also Agawu's comments on analysis being ideally an oral genre, in "How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back In Again," 276-77.

[36] Lester, "How Theorists Relate," par. 37.

interactions with performers, then they can take steps to realize these changes. Second, the most effective way of creating a beneficial collaboration between analysts and performers may be to foster a close connection between analysis and performance in the education of undergraduate music students.

An effort to integrate several subjects at the collegiate level within the field of music can be seen in the Comprehensive Musicianship (CM) programs that flourished during the 1960s and early 1970s. Michael Rogers discusses salient features of these programs in his book *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies*.[37] He explains that the four primary subjects united in CM were music literature, harmony, counterpoint and melody, and formal analysis. Other subjects, such as music history, applied music, conducting, and orchestration, might also have been included.[38] According to Rogers, "the underlying philosophy behind all CM plans [was] to bring together discrete elements and ideas from the various branches of music study so that students [were] taught to understand music as a unified whole rather than as detached fragments."[39]

The CM movement possessed a number of positive traits that have benefited the field of music theory in several ways. Perhaps the most significant for the purposes of my study was the movement's insistence that examples of music from all style periods were equally important and worthy of analysis, thus advocating the inclusion of music from eras and cultures not represented by repertoire from the common-practice period.

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[37] Michael R. Rogers, *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies*, 2nd ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 19-25.

[38] Rogers, *Teaching Approaches*, 20.

[39] Rogers, *Teaching Approaches*, 20.

The program's emphasis on including a wider selection of musical examples may also have inspired the formation of music anthologies, resources that continue to aid music theory instructors today.[40] Other important facets—and positive contributions to music theory pedagogy—of CM included analysis of compositions that represent "a variety of textures and mediums" and the incorporation of creative projects that feature composition and improvisation.[41]

In spite of these positive results, a number of drawbacks to the CM movement are evident. As early as 1977, Leland Bland discussed disadvantages identified by some participants in CM, noting the presence of "too much generalization" and "too many superficial connections…between pieces and between styles."[42] Other disadvantages included a lack of understanding among students and, despite the broadening repertoire, a lowering of musical standards.[43] Rogers also recognized several challenges inherent in teaching from the perspective of CM, including the need for "extensive preparation" and "unusually fine teaching" on the part of faculty and a high level of commitment and sophistication on the part of students.[44] Although Rogers refrained from characterizing these challenges as weaknesses, he argued that they would necessitate careful consideration on the part of programs that wish to adopt the philosophy of CM.

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[40] William Thomson, "The Anatomy of a Flawed Success: Comprehensive Musicianship Revisited," *The Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 26.

[41] Rogers, *Teaching Approaches*, 20-21.

[42] Leland D. Bland, "The College Music Theory Curriculum: The Synthesis of Traditional and Comprehensive Musicianship Approaches," *College Music Symposium* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1977): 167-74.

[43] Bland, "Synthesis," 168.

[44] Rogers, *Teaching Approaches*, 21-22.

Collaborations between analysis and performance may occur through programs that feature CM; however, these collaborations do not constitute the sole focus of the CM approach. While I do not advocate a wholesale return to the tenets of CM, I urge instructors of music theory courses to strive to connect the skills taught in their classes with the goals and experiences of students. Elements similar to those contained in CM programs are often present in primary and secondary music education. The National Standards for Music Education promote the development of holistic musicians by expecting students to sing and play instruments individually and together; to improvise, compose, and arrange music; to read and notate music; to listen to music and learn to describe, analyze, and evaluate it; and to understand music both in relation to other disciplines—whether within the arts or without—and in relation to history and culture.[45] Because the majority of college music students come from programs that integrate these elements (and students who become music educators in public schools will return to similar programs), students may reasonably expect to find clear connections between required music courses and their specific musical concentrations.

Folio observes that students may not comprehend the relevance of music theory to their future careers when they are absorbed in learning fundamental concepts of music theory and becoming conversant with the specialized terminology which is introduced in music theory courses. This problem is augmented if students' applied music instructors neglect to refer to issues of music theory or history during private lessons. Since only limited avenues may be available for reinforcing students' perception of the relevance and importance of music theory, the responsibility of acquainting students with the vital

[45] Colleen Conway, "The Implementation of the National Standards in Music Education: Capturing the Spirit of the Standards," *Music Educators Journal* 94, no. 4 (March 2008): 35-38.

interrelations of music theory, music history, and performance falls to primarily the instructors of music theory and music history courses.[46]

She presents several sample assignments that could be used during theory classes or as homework assignments. These assignments skillfully blend analytical and performance concerns through questions such as "After analysis of a passage, ask the student how the knowledge gained might affect the performance of that passage," and "Find an example of _____ in the literature for your own instrument or voice." Suggested options for the missing item in the latter question include an assortment of musical forms, chromatic harmonies, or compositional devices.[47]

Folio cautions her readers to maintain flexibility when presenting specific "performance suggestions" to their music theory students. Rather than asserting a single viewpoint, the process of discussing analysis and performance should incorporate a variety of ideas and interpretations. She concludes,

> It is this choice among possibilities that can generate lively discussions, even debates, in the classroom. Such exchanges are proof that theory is not cold, scientific, and objective, but relevant and very much alive. As students become aware of the connections between analysis and performance, they not only become more interested in the subject of music theory, they also begin to approach performing and listening more actively.[48]

Although the goal of uninhibited and mutually beneficial interaction between performers and analysts can sometimes appear overly idealistic, I believe that tools such as the classroom exercises that Folio recommends can be helpful in bridging the potential gap between analysis and performance in the minds of music theory students.

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[46] Folio, 134.

[47] Folio, 134.

[48] Folio, 152.

Lester believes that an increase in meaningful interactions between performers and theorists is vital to the process of educating the next generation of musicians. These interactions can demonstrate to young musicians how the combination of expertise in both music theory and performance can facilitate the students' development of their personal performance styles and artistic identities.[49]

Perhaps one forum that could effectively unite analysis and performance is the lecture recital. Combining the academic emphasis of a research presentation with the applied emphasis of a recital, this medium could provide fresh avenues of collaboration between analysts and performers. It would not be necessary for the same person to present both the lecture and the performance; rather, analysts and performers could benefit from one another's perspectives by working in teams. By encouraging students to attend or participate in lecture recitals, either in a formal concert setting or in an informal classroom setting, music theory instructors could reinforce students' perceptions of the benefits of collaborations between analysts and performers.

In the article "Intrinsic Motivation: The Relation of Analysis to Performance in Undergraduate Music Theory Instruction," Elizabeth West Marvin presents supporting evidence to bolster the claim that performance considerations should be included in undergraduate music theory courses.[50] Marvin notes that psychologists and teachers agree that "students learn better when motivated by their own intrinsic interest in a subject, rather than by external systems of rewards and punishments."[51] Marvin cites

[49] Lester, "How Theorists Relate," par. 30.

[50] Elizabeth West Marvin, "Intrinsic Motivation: The Relation of Analysis to Performance in Undergraduate Music Theory Instruction," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 8 (1994): 47-57.

[51] Marvin, "Intrinsic Motivation," 47.

research by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, researchers from the University of Rochester, in her discussion of intrinsic motivation. Ryan strives to foster a classroom environment that engages students in "learning something that has relevance to the here and now in their daily lives…." He explains, "My assumption is that the motivation is already there; it just doesn't always get sparked. A teacher's job is to provide nutriment, so that motivation can take root and grow."[52]

Marvin applies these goals to the music theory classroom through her belief that music theory teachers have the responsibility to establish a connection "between what we do in music theory classrooms and what [students] do on the concert stage."[53] She suggests that theory classes that foster the intrinsic motivation of students should emphasize "practical applications of harmony study in the analysis of music literature, in 'stylistic' composition projects, and (perhaps most importantly) in performance."[54] According to Marvin, instructors should take advantage of opportunities to facilitate in-class discussion among their students and "to explore deeper analytical points with the class" when much of the necessary foundational work has already been accomplished through previous assignments.[55] By maintaining a clear vision of the broad goals of undergraduate training in music theory, teachers can achieve balanced instructional approaches that aid significantly in the formation and training of young musicians.

I find Marvin's ideas intriguing; however, I realize that the process of incorporating performance concerns into music theory courses poses several potential

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[52] Richard Ryan, as quoted in Denise Bolger Kovnat, "Interior Motives," *Rochester Review* (Spring 1991): 5, as quoted in Marvin, "Intrinsic Motivation," 48.

[53] Marvin, 48.

[54] Marvin, 48.

[55] Marvin, 54.

difficulties. For instance, it may be problematic to ask students to prepare excerpts for in-class performances, since many music students already have multiple applied music commitments such as practicing for lessons, participating in large and small ensembles, taking applied methods classes, playing for church services, and giving private lessons. In order to justify adding an additional performance requirement, the process of analyzing and performing various musical excerpts would need to substitute for some of the written music theory homework that would otherwise be assigned. Although these applied projects could be valuable, teachers would need to exercise caution in not neglecting the reinforcement of concepts that are best practiced through written homework. Additionally, grading certain applied assignments could become quite subjective because the students' individual technical difficulties might hinder them from clearly presenting their analytical results. While I believe that it is important to provide students with opportunities to apply their knowledge of music theory to their individual specializations within the field of music, the complexities inherent in beginning such an endeavor would require careful thought and planning.

Another potential difficulty that may hamper the synthesis of analysis and performance in the music theory classroom is the varying level of expertise among instructors of music theory. Although a number of professional theorists are actively engaged in teaching undergraduate music theory courses, many of these courses may be taught by instructors whose specializations are not in the field of music theory. According to the 2009-2010 volume of the *Directory of Music Faculties* published by the College Music Society, the majority of faculty members who list music theory as a

teaching interest have other teaching interests in addition to music theory.[56] As seen in a sample of 1,000 faculty members listed in this directory, only 149 members list music theory as their sole teaching interest, while 659 members have two to four teaching interests outside of the field of music theory. These teaching interests include composition, musicology, conducting, and applied music, among others. [57]

Although it may initially appear beneficial for music theory instructors to have a variety of teaching interests, the breadth of these interests may indicate a lack of depth in the music-theoretical training of some faculty members. For instructors who lack advanced training in music theory, it may be impractical to draw sophisticated parallels between analysis and performance since these instructors may not be prepared to engage in high-level music analysis. Naturally, these suppositions are grounded in broad characterizations; many instructors whose primary emphasis is not in music theory may, nonetheless, be wholly competent teachers of music theory and may even be uniquely qualified to aid students in forming meaningful collaborations between music theory and a wide variety of other musical specializations. However, it is crucial to consider the possibility that some of these instructors may not be the most qualified to incorporate a combination of analysis and performance into their music theory classes. In order to maximize the effectiveness of music theory courses for undergraduate music students, I believe that professional theorists should strive to teach these courses themselves and should consider teaching undergraduate courses in music theory one of the most valuable activities which they could undertake.

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[56] College Music Society, *Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, U.S. and Canada* (2009-2010) (Binghamton, NY: College Music Society, 2010), 453-69.

[57] College Music Society, *Directory of Music Faculties*, 453-69.

While the disciplines of analysis and performance can certainly be intertwined in the field of music theory pedagogy, these disciplines can also intersect in areas that are less overtly linked to the music theory classroom. One such area is the realm of musical intuition. Rogers offers an insightful discussion of musical intuition in his article "Inspired Accidents: Spontaneous Invention in Musical Performance."[58] This article explores the influence of intangible factors on effective musical performances. Rogers defines intuition as "immediate knowing without the conscious application of reason or judgment," or "knowing without knowing how we know." Although decisions that are founded on intuition can be made almost instantaneously, Rogers refutes the notion that musical intuition is merely "an uninformed hunch."[59] Rather, intuition emerges as the culmination of many years of preparation and study.

According to Rogers, two primary misconceptions concerning musical intuition must be addressed. The first of these misconceptions equates intuition with instinct. Rogers distinguishes between the innate behavior of instinct and the learned behavior of intuition, stating, "Instinct is biology driven; intuition is experience driven."[60] This terminological clarification is helpful since these concepts can easily be confused, potentially leading to a disregard for performance decisions that proceed from musical intuition.

The second misunderstanding that Rogers addresses is the idea that intuition and analysis are diametrically opposed. He cites the work of neuropsychologist Elkhonon

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[58] Michael R. Rogers, "Inspired Accidents: Spontaneous Invention in Musical Performance," Master Teacher Column, *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 21 (2007): 123-40.

[59] Rogers, "Inspired Accidents," 132.

[60] Rogers, "Inspired Accidents," 133.

Goldberg who describes intuition as "'the condensation of vast prior analytic experience…analysis compressed and crystallized.'"[61] Characterizing the relationship of analysis and intuition as "complementary" rather than "adversarial," Rogers notes that this paradigm of the interaction between analysis and intuition can result in a clearer understanding of the importance of training musicians in music theory and the long-term effects that this training can have on the lives of musicians.[62]

Rogers views performance as "activated musicianship" that encompasses musical activities other than simply singing or playing an instrument. When viewing performance through the broad lens of activated musicianship, it becomes apparent that, as Rogers concludes, music theory pedagogy can provide a means of "*intuition enrichment*" that benefits music students regardless of their individual specializations.[63] Rogers' article effectively expands the relationship of analysis and performance to include more than an application of music theory skills to individual performances. The crucial formation and enhancement of musical intuition that can result from the synthesis of analysis and performance has the potential to transform struggling music theory students into confident and capable musicians who are equipped to engage every facet of their art. Such potential clearly increases the perceived relevance of music theory courses to the training of undergraduate music students.

Another intriguing strand of the connection between analysis and performance is the concept of musical narrative. In the article "Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative," Michael Klein advocates a view of musical narrative "as an emplotment of

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[61] Quoted in Rogers, "Inspired Accidents," 133.

[62] Rogers, "Inspired Accidents," 134.

[63] Rogers, "Inspired Accidents," 139.

expressive states rather than a sequence of actors and their actions."[64] Klein acknowledges that some people dispute the ability of music to narrate.[65] According to Klein, these objections often "focus on two arguments," namely that "music is incapable of representing the actors and actions deemed necessary for narrative, and/or music fails to project a narrator, who can tell the tale in the past tense."[66] Klein admits that music may be limited in its ability to tell a story; however, he argues that music is "adept at signifying expressive states whose arrangement follows a narrative logic."[67] Although Klein does not explicitly connect musical narrative with performance, it is significant that he distinguishes between the expressive narrative contained in music and the plot-specific narrative associated with literary works, since this distinction emphasizes the identification of music as a unique type of dramatic art.

In the chapter "Translating Musical Meaning: The Nineteenth-Century Performer as Narrator," John Rink presents a similar perspective on musical narrative.[68] According to Rink, an effort to "link the narrative thread that guides a performance to a verbal narrative—a story in words—would miss the point of the metaphor" that describes music as a narrative.[69] Rink concludes that, when a performer follows the overarching temporal line that informs the musical narrative, "the performer acts out the music's drama,

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[64] Michael Klein, "Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative," *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 23.

[65] Klein, "Chopin's Fourth Ballade," 23.

[66] Klein, 24.

[67] Klein, 25.

[68] John Rink, "Translating Musical Meaning: The Nineteenth-Century Performer as Narrator," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 217-38.

[69] Rink, "Translating Musical Meaning," 218.

communicating a kind of meaning which can only be heard…and taking the listener on an expressive journey up and down the emotional peaks charted by the musical materials themselves."[70] This somewhat flowery description of the narrative that is portrayed through performance reinforces the concept of music as an art form that conveys a dramatic narrative in a different fashion from that of a purely literary work.

Charise Hastings connects narrative to musical performance in her dissertation "The Performer's Role: Storytelling in Ballades of Chopin and Brahms."[71] Hastings recommends that musical narratives be viewed as verbal stories similar to ballads that are conveyed orally by the storyteller. According to Hastings,

> The narrator may be elusive so long as one considers music from the score, but in performance the role of narrator or storyteller is ably filled by the performer, who is always present and can stand in a similar relation to the music as a narrator does to a story.[72]

By freeing musical narratives from artificial associations with the narratives of written traditions, performers can achieve increasing flexibility in their musical interpretations.[73]

The narrative view of music may be incorporated in music theory classes by encouraging students to consider potential dramatic implications of the compositions that they analyze. Certain details of these compositions, such as unexpected mode mixture, chromatic harmonies, and deceptive resolutions can contribute to the impression of expressive plot changes in the musical narratives implied in these pieces. An obvious connection between music and narrative can occur in programmatic compositions; class

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[70] Rink, "Translating Musical Meaning," 237.

[71] Charise Y. Hastings, "The Performer's Role: Storytelling in Ballades of Chopin and Brahms" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2006).

[72] Hastings, "The Performer's Role," 40.

[73] Hastings, 41.

discussions of such pieces can identify and examine musical details that contribute to the storylines of these compositions. By remaining alert to possible narrative implications in music, instructors can increase student awareness of the effects of subtle compositional devices and can enhance students' interest in music theory.

As seen in this chapter, the relationship between analysis and performance is filled with complexities. Despite the challenges that may arise when pursuing a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences of these disciplines, the rewards found in collaborations which benefit both performers and analysts are well worth the effort. By creating supportive environments, such as lecture recitals, that encourage both analysts and performers to share their perspectives through their preferred methods of communication, professional musicians can increase their understanding of varying perspectives on music. Furthermore, by fostering the growth of musical intuition and facilitating connections between analysis and performance in music theory courses, instructors can equip their students to fulfill their highest potential as developing musicians.

CHAPTER THREE

Only One Right Answer?
Embracing Multiple Interpretations in Musical Analysis
and Exploring Pedagogical Methods that Can Stimulate Critical Thinking

Many concepts in music theory are concrete. They are easily explained, they follow clear guidelines, and they each present only one correct answer. These concepts form the foundation of music theory instruction, including essentials such as the order of sharps and flats, stem directions for musical notation, and the intervallic content of major and minor triads. Although it is vital for students to grasp these rudimentary principles, the field of music theory has much more to offer students beyond these elementary building blocks. By interacting with ideas and musical examples that are open to more than one interpretation, undergraduate music students can discover more fully the wealth of information available through musical analysis. In this chapter, I will discuss the use of analytical examples that allow multiple interpretations. I will also examine several non-conventional teaching methods that might encourage multiple analytical interpretations, and I will explore the importance of helping students to enhance their critical thinking skills. In addition to examining a number of perspectives from the academic literature, I will share my own thoughts on the process of encouraging multiple interpretations in the music theory classroom.

According to Michael Rogers in his book *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory*, one factor that can impede students' perception of music theory as relevant to their musical concentrations is the tendency to present theoretical concepts as concrete

problems that each allow for only one correct solution.[1] Although Rogers concedes that the "black-and-white" organization of foundational concepts is necessary, he advocates an approach that embraces different interpretations of musical phenomena and nurtures the ability to think actively and to support viewpoints with solid logic and persuasive arguments.[2] Rogers states,

> One of the most important, yet most overlooked, goals of analytical training is the practice it gives in making interpretational decisions—not about performance necessarily but about judging conflicting evidence, measuring significance, discovering appropriate supporting clues, sifting out clutter (knowing what to omit is as important as knowing what to include), and arguing convincingly for a particular point of view. Beyond the descriptive level, almost all good analysis involves interpretation and much of skillful teaching involves searching for classroom opportunities and outside assignments that raise questions permitting two or more analytical solutions.[3]

Although Rogers does not present specific exercises that can be used to facilitate multiple interpretations in analysis, he lists a number of questions that can stimulate students' thinking at various stages of the analytic process. Some of these questions ask students to consider "the proportions of thematic assertiveness vs. areas of transition," the manner in which "the flow of tension [is] regulated," and what factors can cause a musical composition to seem "boring" or "vivid."[4] Rogers' insightful remarks and probing questions suggest the importance of actively engaging students in exploring and evaluating the rich ambiguities found in music theory.

In the article "Contention in the Classroom: Encouraging Debate and Alternate Readings in the Undergraduate Theory Class," Matthew Bribitzer-Stull claims that music

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[1] Michael R. Rogers, *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies*, 2nd ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 5.

[2] Rogers, *Teaching Approaches*, 5.

[3] Rogers, 79.

[4] Rogers, 86, 87, 89.

analysts can use data to support musical arguments without resorting to unilateral conclusions.[5] Three analytic tasks that Bribitzer-Stull recommends as situations in which musical arguments can be supported by empirical evidence while still permitting multiple interpretations are deciding on the tonic key of a passage, making decisions about musical form, and labeling the harmonic function of a chord.[6] Bribitzer-Stull elaborates on each of these analytic tasks throughout his article.

Bribitzer-Stull makes a number of suggestions for revitalizing the analysis that takes place in music theory classrooms. He recommends in-class performances, written prose assignments, hypothetical discussions, and discussions led by panels of students. The latter two ideas are particularly intriguing. Bribitzer-Stull suggests using hypothetical discussions such as the oxymoronic existence of the diminished unison or how to discover the major key whose signature has 100 flats in order to spark the interest of students who might not otherwise find music theory engaging. These topics can facilitate stimulating conversations that relieve the tiring routine of "busy-work" assignments.[7] Bribitzer-Stull also suggests holding in-class panel discussions in order to encourage academic dialogue without intimidating individual students. He explains,

> Unlike the typical "teacher-at-the-front-of-the-class" group analysis sessions, this format requires a small number of students to take the lead. Imitating the format of political and academic conferences, a panel of experts (students who have, ideally, carefully studied the assigned piece) [is] set up in front of their peers to

[5] Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, "Contention in the Classroom: Encouraging Debate and Alternate Readings in the Undergraduate Theory Class," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 17 (2003): 21-45.

[6] Bribitzer-Stull, "Contention in the Classroom," 22.

[7] Bribitzer-Stull, 23. Although one could argue that finding the major key whose signature has 100 flats constitutes a busy-work assignment, this exercise differs somewhat from traditional assignments and may stimulate students' creative thinking.

> answer questions and debate the merits and shortcomings of various solutions amongst themselves.[8]

This exercise appears to be an effective method for increasing student participation and requiring students to take responsibility for their individual analysis and preparation. However, there are some potential drawbacks to this approach. In order to maintain a consistent level of involvement among students, instructors would need to require each student to serve on a panel at some point in the semester. Because multiple class periods would be needed in order to include all of the students, this exercise would demand a large investment of class time. The amount of material covered in the course might also need to be reduced since student-led panel discussions could not present course material as efficiently as instructors could in lectures. In addition, the effectiveness of panel discussions could be significantly reduced by insufficient student preparation. While the concept of a student panel discussion is intriguing, instructors should weigh the potential challenges before implementing this exercise.

Although I did not participate in student panel discussions during my undergraduate years, I took part in one during a graduate seminar in music history. My group researched the life and works of a particular composer from the historical era on which this seminar focused. After determining among ourselves which portions of the material each person would investigate, we completed our research separately and shared our findings as a panel at the next meeting of our class. Our panel successfully presented the results of our research and fielded questions from our classmates. Although I initially had misgivings about preparing a group presentation with little advance notice, I realized that the amount of material to be covered was much less overwhelming when each

[8] Bribitzer-Stull, 41-42.

member was responsible for a limited portion of the research. Since each member of the panel participated in the oral presentation, this exercise held each student accountable for his or her contributions. I enjoyed working with several of my classmates without having my grade significantly affected by the quality of their work. I believe that panel discussions can enable students to benefit from a variety of perspectives while still ensuring individual accountability.

In the article "Competing Analyses as Pedagogical Strategy and Hugo Wolf's *Das verlassene Mägdlein*," Gordon Sly reveals a pedagogical method which he first encountered as a graduate student and subsequently implemented in his own teaching.[9] He attributes this method to a former professor of his, the late Christopher Lewis. According to Sly, this pedagogical method entails "teaching a piece from very different—even opposing—perspectives in [three] successive class meetings."[10] The first class meeting presents a convincing analysis of a piece that might be analyzed in more than one way. The analytical interpretation set forth in this class may be original to the instructor, or it may be drawn from the scholarly literature. By the end of the first class, students are convinced that this interpretation is accurate. However, the next class period holds a significant surprise for students: the instructor, or a guest lecturer, arrives to repudiate the previous analysis, claiming that a different interpretation is required in order to understand the piece correctly. Thus, the second class is devoted to the presentation of this contrasting analysis. Finally, the third class period provides a balanced discussion of both analyses, acknowledging elements of each analysis that are

[9] Gordon Sly, "Competing Analyses as Pedagogical Strategy and Hugo Wolf's *Das verlassene Mägdlein*," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 14 (2000): 31-46.

[10] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 31.

worthy of consideration.[11] Sly notes that this final class period does not always maintain the second class's criticism of the initial analysis. The instructor and students frequently decide "that both analyses [contribute] valuable insights" to their understanding of the piece.[12]

Sly identifies several important lessons for students who participate in this process:

> It [becomes] clear that two convincing and yet contradictory analytical accounts of a piece [are] possible. The experience also [teaches] them to approach analytical explanations with a measure of skepticism, and to consider carefully the assumptions upon which an analysis rests. For their own work, they [learn] that any analytical approach carries specific implications and constraints—that analytical claims have consequences.[13]

He believes that the final lesson listed above is of paramount importance since students often experience difficulty in effectively supporting their analytical decisions.

Sly utilizes the pedagogical method described above with college sophomores, juniors, and graduate students.[14] According to Sly, two compositions that readily lend themselves to this approach are Chopin's Prelude in E minor, op. 28, no. 4, and Wolf's setting of *Das verlassene Mägdlein* from his *Gedichte von Eduard Mörike*.[15] Sly observes that his students are consistently preoccupied with discussing which of the competing analyses is superior. Although he does not consider this the primary question of the pedagogical approach, he allows students to engage in this discussion while

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[11] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 31-32.

[12] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 31-32.

[13] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 33.

[14] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 35.

[15] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 32, 35. The Chopin piece was a favorite of Professor Lewis, while the Wolf setting is Sly's preferred composition for demonstrating this pedagogical approach.

emphasizing the importance of evaluating underlying assumptions for each analytical interpretation. Ultimately, Sly believes that the idea "that analysis of a piece…influences our experience of music" is the most crucial lesson that students can glean from this method of teaching.[16]

I find the pedagogical strategy of competing analyses fascinating; it offers a clear, effective manner of teaching students that musical compositions can be interpreted in multiple ways. Despite my attraction to Sly's strategy, I have several concerns about using it. First, this strategy has the potential to erode the credibility of the instructor. Students are used to viewing analyses as either correct or incorrect, especially when receiving feedback on their own work. However, they are not accustomed to having their instructor present a seemingly correct analysis only to declare it incorrect at the next class meeting. After students experience their instructor's renunciation, albeit temporarily, of his or her previous analysis, they may not be as swift to believe information that the instructor presents in the future, even if this information is neither ambiguous nor open to multiple interpretations. This potential problem may be less likely to occur if the first analysis presented is drawn from the scholarly literature rather than originating with the instructor, or if the second analysis is presented by a guest lecturer.

Second, this pedagogical approach may be confusing to students who are accustomed to observing analyses that are not subject to multiple interpretations, and some students may resent being "taken in" by convincing analyses that are subsequently overturned by other interpretations. One way to mitigate this potentially negative reaction from students is to avoid presenting the second analysis as a correction of the first. Instead, the second analysis can simply be presented as a viable alternative to the

[16] Sly, "Competing Analyses," 46.

first one. This emphasis on multiple analyses as complementary rather than corrective may also provide a solution to the previous concern regarding the instructor's credibility. Instead of focusing on which analysis is correct, students can consider factors that may contribute to the preference of one analysis over another and can develop their ability to make subtle and advanced analytical decisions.

Third, this approach requires a large amount of class time since three class periods are spent on the analysis of a single piece of music. Such a time-intensive exercise may not be practical when a large amount of material must be taught in the course. Even though these concerns are not insurmountable, it is vital for instructors to consider such potential disadvantages before deciding to incorporate competing musical analyses in their music theory courses.

In the article "Developing the Analytical Point of View: The Musical 'Agent,'" Sly proposes a solution to the challenge of equipping undergraduate music theory students to carry out sophisticated musical analyses.[17] According to Sly, the difficulty of preparing students for in-depth analysis stems primarily from "a misunderstanding of the process" of analysis.[18] Sly recommends that instructors of music theory courses teach students to identify specific viewpoints from which to launch their musical analyses. One approach which Sly finds particularly effective is to guide students toward the recognition of "musical 'agency,'" which Sly defines as "the capacity of some musical element or idea to influence the course of events."[19]

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[17] Gordon Sly, "Developing the Analytical Point of View: The Musical 'Agent,'" *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 19 (2005): 51-63.

[18] Sly, "Developing," 51.

[19] Sly, "Developing," 52.

As demonstrated in Sly's article, a number of musical phenomena can serve as agents. Examples of musical agents include a single pitch that links disparate tonal areas through enharmonic reinterpretation, or a dyad that appears in various harmonic contexts throughout a composition.[20] Musical agents for specific pieces can be chosen in several ways. In order to assist students in choosing effective musical agents without over-emphasizing his own point of view, Sly offers input while students consider potential musical agents rather than requiring students to submit their choices for his approval.[21] Sly suggests that instructors facilitate students' selection of musical agents by having students participate in class discussions or small groups in order to generate potential musical agents.[22]

Once students have chosen specific musical agents, they can apply their findings through written assignments. These assignments include three parts: "a one-paragraph description of the piece," a succinct "'point of view' statement," and a written analysis that directly supports the student's selection of a specific musical agent.[23] Sly believes that these assignments, ranging from two to five pages in length, can encourage students to conduct meaningful analysis while resulting in finished assignments that are of manageable lengths for evaluation by instructors of large class populations.[24]

The idea of developing a written analysis that focuses on the influence of a single musical agent is appealing; however, this approach requires careful planning. Because

[20] Sly, "Developing," 54, 61.

[21] Sly, "Developing," 52.

[22] Sly, "Developing," 52-53.

[23] Sly, "Developing," 53.

[24] Sly, "Developing," 63.

most students would not be accustomed to viewing a musical composition as the product of a particular musical agent, it would be helpful to provide introductory examples of this type of analysis. Since more than one musical agent may be available within a given piece, students can discover their own analytical interpretations while learning about factors that may encourage the choice of a particular musical agent over that of other potential agents. This type of exercise seems more appropriate for second-year students and those enrolled in upper-level theory courses than for first-year students, since a broad range of musical knowledge would be necessary in order to complete the exercise effectively. Given appropriate planning and preparation, I believe that the process of identifying musical agents and describing their effects on compositions can be a valuable means of leading students to think analytically and to explore multiple interpretations in musical analysis.

The above sources focus directly on including multiple interpretations in musical analysis. In contrast, the following sources propose pedagogical methods that may help to create a classroom environment in which students are encouraged to consider multiple analytical interpretations. These sources also emphasize the importance of increasing students' critical thinking skills in order to equip the students to evaluate musical analyses effectively.

One interesting approach to classroom instruction is found in Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent's article "Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction."[25] According to Felder and Brent, "student-centered instruction is a broad teaching approach that includes substituting active learning for lectures, holding students responsible for

[25] Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent, "Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction," *College Teaching* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 43-47.

their learning, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning."[26] Although this approach can increase students' understanding and retention of course material, the paradigm shift from a lecture-based approach to student-centered instruction can initially provoke strong, negative reactions from students. Felder and Brent describe students' resistance as "a natural part of their journey from dependence to intellectual autonomy."[27] Despite the potentially negative reactions from students, Felder and Brent assure instructors that the ensuing benefits of increased confidence and enhanced teamwork skills among students are well worth grappling with the challenges inherent in implementing programs of student-centered instruction.[28]

Although Felder and Brent's article does not specifically address the use of student-centered instruction in music theory courses, this application is possible. In the article "Cooperative Learning in the Music Theory Classroom," Lawrence Zbikowski and Charles Long discuss the application of cooperative learning, a type of student-centered instruction, to music theory courses.[29] Zbikowski and Long realize that instructors must carefully integrate cooperation among students into the flow of music theory courses. In order to facilitate this integration, Zbikowski and Long present four lessons that model the use of cooperative activities in music theory courses.[30] These lessons include using first-inversion harmonies, drill on fundamentals, harmonic dictation, and an extended

[26] Felder and Brent, "Navigating the Bumpy Road," 43.

[27] Felder and Brent, 43-44.

[28] Felder and Brent, 45-46.

[29] Lawrence M. Zbikowski and Charles K. Long, "Cooperative Learning in the Music Theory Classroom," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 8 (1994): 135-57.

[30] Zbikowski and Long, "Cooperative Learning," 141.

group project.[31] In order to ensure the participation of each student in these cooperative exercises, Zbikowski and Long recommend designating roles within each group of students. For example, a group of four students could complete a harmonic dictation exercise. In this case, one student could focus on the soprano line while another student focuses on the bass line. The third student could consider the harmonic progression, and the fourth student could synthesize and record the information gathered by the other students in order to produce a complete, written answer.[32] These roles can be rotated among the students so that each member of the group grows in competence in executing a variety of analytical tasks.[33]

Zbikowski and Long recognize that the process of implementing cooperative exercises in music theory classes can be challenging; however, they believe that the majority of students can quickly become accustomed to participating in group exercises. According to Zbikowski and Long,

> A more significant problem [than the adaptation of students to cooperative learning] may be the teacher's own training: the barriers created by years of passive absorption, highly competitive learning and work situations, and proscriptions against sharing information…are not easily overcome. The teacher interested in changing the dynamic of his or her classroom through cooperative lessons must recognize these barriers and have confidence that the rewards associated with becoming actively involved in the learning process will motivate students to overcome whatever reluctance they may have about working in groups.[34]

This description provides a realistic assessment of potential obstacles which music theory instructors may face in order to integrate cooperative learning methods into their courses.

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[31] Zbikowski and Long, 142, 146, 148, 150.

[32] Zbikowski and Long, 148.

[33] Zbikowski and Long, 139, 150.

[34] Zbikowski and Long, 155.

By recognizing these challenges before implementing cooperative learning exercises, instructors may be able to reduce the difficulty of adjusting to cooperative learning and other forms of student-centered instruction.

While I find the concept of cooperative learning intriguing, I have some reservations about incorporating this approach on a regular basis. I can identify strongly with the possible objections of high-achieving students to working on assignments in groups. Although my experience with group assignments in music theory has been limited, I can recall the frustration of waiting for my fellow team members to deliberate over analytical decisions that I could have made more quickly working independently. Since some of the grades that I received on group projects were lower than the grades that I regularly received on independent homework assignments, I found myself resenting and dreading the prospect of group assignments. In retrospect, I realize that these exercises may have enhanced my ability to work in teams; however, I am not convinced that the degree to which my teamwork skills were enhanced outweighed the challenges and frustrations of participating in group assignments. Perhaps more tangible benefits may have resulted if I had been a part of team-based exercises on a regular, ongoing basis or if grades had been assigned for individual participation rather than for jointly completed written assignments. In order to be confident that this approach would benefit the music theory courses that I will teach in the future, I would need to consider carefully the potential advantages and disadvantages associated with this pedagogical approach.

James Caldwell believes that music theory students should be taught to ask questions that can be answered through analysis.[35] Caldwell notes that students

[35] James Caldwell, "Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Develop an Approach to Analysis," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 223-24.

frequently do not learn to generate questions simply through observation; rather, they must be intentionally taught to develop insightful questions.[36] Caldwell recommends not immediately requiring students to answer the questions which they generate; he wisely observes that "not attempting to answer the questions frees the students from only asking questions they think they can answer."[37] Caldwell encourages students to develop questions that utilize verbs such as "define," "explain," "demonstrate," "distinguish," "formulate," and "evaluate."[38] Beyond the use of this specific vocabulary, it is not readily apparent what questions Caldwell would consider insightful. However, some examples of pertinent (and insightful) questions may be found in Rogers' book as discussed near the beginning of this chapter.[39] By helping students learn to ask insightful questions, instructors can enhance the analytical and writing skills of their students, and can assist students in developing the "questioning spirit" which Caldwell considers the essential aim of any analytical approach.[40]

In a related vein, Paul Paccione discusses the importance of critical thinking skills for students.[41] Although his article focuses primarily on the development of critical thinking skills for young composers, Paccione's observations are also applicable to undergraduate music students of other specializations. Paccione claims that students must become accustomed to ambiguity and conflicting ideas in order to learn to think

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[36] Caldwell, "Using Bloom's Taxonomy," 223-32.

[37] Caldwell, 228.

[38] Caldwell, 225-26.

[39] Rogers, 86-92.

[40] Caldwell, 232.

[41] Paul Paccione, "Critical Thinking for Composers," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 73-84.

critically.[42] Paccione defines critical thinking as "the process of rationally deciding what to do or believe through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation."[43] The process of learning to think critically can be challenging, but it is ultimately worthwhile. According to Paccione, "A student who does not think critically never has to deal with ambiguity and accepts dogma without question. Critical thinking leads to experiment and questioning—and it is not comfortable."[44] While the development of critical thinking skills can be arduous, it is important for students to learn to examine and evaluate academic arguments. In order to succeed academically and professionally, students must grow in discernment. By honing their critical thinking skills, students can prepare themselves to participate actively and successfully in their chosen professions.

Since Paccione's goal in this article is to enhance the critical thinking skills of students studying composition, the only sample assignments that he presents are compositional exercises. Interestingly, one of these exercises instructs students to analyze the pieces they have just composed.[45] Because Paccione believes that analysis is a valuable tool for composition students, he encourages students to be aware of the structures that underlie their works.[46] The process of analyzing one's own work also offers a unique opportunity to consider multiple interpretations while retaining, or perhaps gaining, a thorough understanding of one's thoughts and intentions as a composer.

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[42] Paccione, "Critical Thinking," 73.

[43] Paccione, 74.

[44] Paccione, 73.

[45] Paccione, 80.

[46] Paccione, 73, 77, 80.

I believe that a number of students would appreciate learning in an environment that actively fosters discussion and that accepts multiple interpretations of musical examples. However, I realize that some students may be uncomfortable with this style of learning. Certain students may feel threatened by musical ambiguity and may prefer to address questions that yield only one correct answer. While regular exposure to multiple interpretations and musical ambiguity may assuage the concerns of some students, others may never fully embrace this aspect of music analysis. Unfortunately, it is not possible to maintain continuously the interest and approval of every student in a classroom setting. However, by utilizing a variety of pedagogical methods, instructors can ensure that each student has the opportunity to interact meaningfully with the course material throughout the semester.

In addition to dealing with students' concerns about multiple interpretations, instructors must also come to terms with their own potential discomfort in teaching students how to analyze ambiguous musical examples. Such examples can be difficult to explain. Even after thorough in-class discussion of potential analytical interpretations, it may not be feasible to declare one interpretation superior to the other possible interpretations. Instructors may be hampered by students' dissatisfaction with ambiguous musical examples; some students might view ambiguity as the result of shortcomings in the theoretical systems being used, or even as a lack of knowledge or pedagogical skill on the part of the instructor. Although even highly skilled instructors may be unable or unwilling to render a verdict on intrinsically ambiguous examples, students may blame them for not explaining these examples clearly enough. This unwarranted judgment may

surface in some students' course evaluations, leading to lower ratings of the instructors' teaching effectiveness.

Felder and Brent address this concern relative to the implementation of student-centered instruction in college-level classes. While they acknowledge the validity of instructors' concerns about negative course evaluations, Felder and Brent urge instructors to persevere through the "steep learning curves" inherent in the transition from lecture-based to student-centered instruction. This transition would probably be more difficult for instructors than for students. Since new students might not realize that a significant change had occurred, they would likely view it as normal and quickly adapt to this style of instruction. However, instructors would face the challenge of teaching familiar material in a distinctly unfamiliar context. Such an adjustment might initially produce feelings of discomfort, perhaps resulting in a temporary reduction in teaching effectiveness, as instructors learn to work within the paradigm of student-centered instruction. According to Felder and Brent, "The key is to understand how the process works, take some precautionary steps to smooth out the bumps, and wait out the inevitable setbacks until the pay-offs start emerging."[47] When applied to the analysis of musically ambiguous examples, Felder and Brent's advice encourages instructors not to be intimidated by initially disappointing reactions from their students.

Instructors may also find themselves uncomfortable with leading group exercises or facilitating discussion of ambiguous musical examples. Since many instructors may be primarily accustomed to lecturing, they may initially feel awkward or ill-equipped to lead meaningful and effective discussions. However, resources are available to assist instructors in confidently facilitating discussions among their students. Some universities

[47] Felder and Brent, 43.

offer professional-development resources that address this issue, and a number of helpful articles are available in the scholarly literature. For example, Gary Goldstein and Victor Benassi present experimental research on "Students' and Instructors' Beliefs about Excellent Lecturers and Discussion Leaders," while John Henning offers practical advice for instructors in the article "Leading Discussions: Opening up the Conversation."[48] Another helpful discussion appears in Quinn Vega and Marilyn Tayler's article "Incorporating Course Content while Fostering a More Learner-Centered Environment."[49] These articles, as well as other resources, are available for instructors who desire to improve their skills in facilitating effective in-class discussions.

Although the majority of the sources discussed in this chapter do not incorporate formal experimental studies, they provide valuable input through well-reasoned position statements and experiential evidence.[50] Several broad categories or strands of thought emerge. These include acceptance of multiple interpretations in musical analysis, use of unconventional exercises or pedagogical strategies, student-centered instruction, and the development of critical thinking skills. While Felder and Brent call for increased student responsibility in the college classroom and emphasize the benefits of students building teamwork skills through student-centered instruction, Zbikowski and Long present specific exercises that can introduce methods of cooperative learning into music theory courses. Bribitzer-Stull provides an additional way for students to work in small groups:

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[48] Gary S. Goldstein and Victor A. Benassi, "Students' and Instructors' Beliefs about Excellent Lecturers and Discussion Leaders," *Research in Higher Education* 47, no. 6 (September 2006): 685-707; John E. Henning, "Leading Discussions: Opening up the Conversation," *College Teaching* 53, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 90-94.

[49] Quinn C. Vega and Marilyn R. Tayler, "Incorporating Course Content while Fostering a More Learner-Centered Environment," *College Teaching* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 83-86.

[50] In this chapter, the only source that features formal experimental research is Goldstein and Benassi's article "Students' and Instructors' Beliefs about Excellent Lecturers and Discussion Leaders."

student-led panel discussions. All three of these approaches emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts among students. By interacting with their classmates and discussing one another's analyses, students may encounter analytical interpretations that differ from their own. This experience encourages students to discuss a variety of perspectives and to weigh their options carefully before arriving at a consensus. Sly offers two intriguing pedagogical strategies in his discussions of competing analyses and musical agents; both of these strategies facilitate the acceptance of multiple analytical interpretations and can introduce students to the dynamic realm of diverse analytical perspectives. Caldwell and Paccione advocate the engagement of students in active questioning and critical thinking through learning to formulate insightful questions and to evaluate ambiguous or conflicting ideas in order to make informed musical choices. Rogers offers a wealth of questions that can be explored through analysis.

While analysis of musical examples and ideas that allow more than one interpretation can sharpen students' curiosity and enhance their skills in critical thinking, this type of analysis should not usurp the place of a firm pedagogical foundation in rudimentary music theory. Only after this foundation is in place can students interact with the rich ambiguities of music without becoming overly confused or perpetually frustrated. Since the field of music theory is fraught with examples of ambiguity as well as with concrete, black-and-white principles, instructors of undergraduate music theory courses should strive, at appropriate times, to introduce their students to musical concepts and examples from both ends of this spectrum. Despite the challenges inherent in pursuing multiple interpretations in music analysis, both instructors and students will

ultimately benefit from an increased understanding of the rich complexities that permeate the field of music theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

Variations on a Theme of Music Theory: Implementing a Variety of Assignment Types and Musical Examples in the Music Theory Classroom

Music theory courses are often characterized by routine. Students are taught foundational concepts of music theory from the common-practice period and the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, they learn to apply these concepts primarily to art music from the same periods, and they do so in assignments that take predictable forms. Conducting Roman numeral analysis, realizing figured bass, part-writing in four-voice chorale textures, and constructing species counterpoint are all common activities in undergraduate music theory courses. While the effectiveness of these methods can be amply demonstrated through many years of instruction, and while the pedagogical stability of these courses is commendable, something may still be lacking. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, a spark that may ignite the imagination of undergraduate music students and motivate them to engage more fully with the subject of music theory might be found in variety.

The previous chapter of this thesis discussed variety to a certain extent by exploring several different pedagogical approaches. In fact, that chapter's emphasis on embracing multiple interpretations encouraged variety in analysis. This chapter will address the further incorporation of variety by exploring different types of assignments and the use of examples from traditions outside the classical canon. I will survey a number of sources drawn from the scholarly literature and will share my thoughts on these means of increasing variety in the music theory classroom.

Variety in Assignment Types

Assignments that may enhance the learning experience of students by adding variety to music theory courses include the use of prose writing exercises, composition projects, and pedagogical games. While many other types of assignments are possible, my discussion will focus solely on the ones listed above. Deron McGee argues that written prose assignments can increase students' understanding of course materials while helping to enhance their critical thinking skills.[1] According to McGee, five styles of written assignments, encompassing both formal and informal exercises, may prove useful. These styles include "free-writing, note-taking, short answers, summaries, and analytical essays."[2] One example of a brief, analytical-essay assignment requires students to compare and contrast material from two compositions:

> Prepare a complete harmonic analysis of the opening eight measures of Mozart's Sonata in A Major and Schumann's Soldiers March (the music has been provided). Once the analysis is complete, write a brief paper comparing these two excerpts. You may discuss similarities or differences in harmony, form, melody, rhythm, texture, timbre, etc. When discussing the music, use examples from your analysis to support your assertions. The paper should be well written using clear and concise prose with a maximum length of two typed pages, excluding examples. The theory faculty is your intended audience. A draft is due one week from today with the final version due two weeks from today.[3]

Regardless of the type of assignment instructors may select, McGee maintains that the primary emphasis should be on "the *process* of writing, including revising and editing, rather than on the final *product*."[4]

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[1] Deron L. McGee, "The Power of Prose: Writing in the Undergraduate Music Theory Curriculum," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 7 (1993): 85-104.

[2] McGee, "Power of Prose," 91.

[3] McGee, 96.

[4] McGee, 93.

In order to keep prose assignments manageable, both for the students and for the instructors who grade them, McGee recommends limiting the length of most assignments to a maximum of two pages. For longer assignments, he suggests breaking them down into smaller segments that students can complete incrementally throughout the semester. This approach can also ease instructors' workloads at the end of the semester since the time required to grade lengthy papers can be reduced by prior acquaintance with the projects.[5] McGee advises instructors to construct a sequence of assignments that gradually leads students to complete increasingly difficult exercises. Additionally, the initial assignments of this sequence might feature carefully defined questions while later assignments broach questions without unequivocal answers. These assignments provide the opportunity for McGee to explore a number of questions with his students, such as: "How is theory related to performance? What fields outside of music influence music theoretical thought? Can music theory influence fields outside of music? Is music analysis interpretation?"[6] By exploring these and other questions, students can expand both their knowledge of music-theoretical concepts and their understanding of the field of music as a whole. McGee concludes,

> If writing assignments can be implemented across the music curriculum, we will greatly enhance the breadth and depth of our students' understanding of course content, the relationships among the various sub-disciplines of music, and the relationships of music to other disciplines. In addition, we can help our students grow intellectually by improving critical thinking and writing skills, while enhancing their assimilation of course content.[7]

[5] McGee, 96, 103.

[6] McGee, 99, 93.

[7] McGee, 104.

By encouraging students to connect what they learn in the music theory classroom with their other musical and scholastic activities, the writing assignments that McGee suggests may help students to better understand and interact with the varied facets of the musical world in which they live.

Bruce Kelley provides another perspective on the use of prose writing as he addresses the application of "writing-to-learn" exercises to music theory courses.[8] This type of writing consists of brief assignments that are "addressed primarily to the writers themselves" and are not usually graded. According to Kelley, proponents of this approach embrace it because it can stimulate creative thinking among students. This article details the results of a study that he conducted in order to compare the effectiveness of short writing-to-learn exercises with that of part-writing and visual error-detection exercises. Kelley observes that "for teaching harmonic constructs, part-writing was clearly the most effective of the three treatments."[9] While he suggests that music students can still benefit from the concept of writing-to-learn, he argues that the written medium that may prove the most beneficial for these students is music notation rather than prose. However, prose-writing assignments may still prove useful in situations that involve musical ambiguity or that lack clarity in context, thus requiring students to make informed decisions based upon critical thinking.[10]

Another means of increasing variety in the music theory classroom is to include composition projects that differ from the types of assignments already in use. Thomas

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[8] Bruce C. Kelley, "Part Writing, Prose Writing: An Investigation of Writing-to-Learn in the Music Theory Classroom," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 13 (1999): 65-87.

[9] Kelley, "Part Writing, Prose Writing," 74, 81.

[10] Kelley, 82, 85. A more extensive discussion of musical ambiguity and critical thinking can be found in the previous chapter of this thesis (see chapter three, 40-43).

Benjamin recommends "moving from the very restrictive, in which most of the details are specified, to the more open-ended, providing progressively more opportunities for compositional decision-making."[11] He includes a number of sample composition exercises that may be used in the music theory classroom. One clearly delineated assignment instructs students to "complete the realization of the following figured bass in the given texture [block chords]. Then compose an *espressivo* solo line for an instrument available in class."[12] This assignment combines the normative exercise of figured-bass realization with the creative task of composing a new melodic line compatible within the given harmonic framework.

An assignment that is somewhat less structured provides students with a phrase diagram of the form of a small, Baroque-style dance such as a Courante or Gavotte. This diagram specifies the length of phrases and labels them with lower-case letters such as *a, b,* or *b'*. The types and placements of cadences are specified, repeat signs are included where applicable, and the tonal scheme of the piece is indicated through directions regarding key areas and modulations.[13] Essentially, students are provided with the formal analysis of a piece of music that has not yet been written. Within the parameters given by the diagram, students are free to exercise their creativity by composing the melodies and harmonies. Since students are accustomed to analyzing extant musical compositions, this assignment gives them an unusual opportunity to view and interact

[11] Thomas Benjamin, "Teaching Theory as Composition," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 191.

[12] Benjamin, "Teaching Theory," 191-92.

[13] Benjamin, 195.

with music from "behind the scenes" by creating a musical work typical of the Baroque period while operating within the safeguards of a pre-determined formal structure.

Once students have completed these assignments successfully, they are better equipped to handle less restrictive composition projects. Benjamin suggests that instructors design these projects to be completed via several intermediate stages that permit them to offer feedback and to address any problems that arise during the writing process. Here are Benjamin's instructions for one such assignment:

> Choose any short, rhyming, metrical text and set it for voice and piano (or any instrumental combination available in class). Check choice of text with the instructor before composing the song. Let instructor (class) see at least one preliminary draft and one complete draft before the final version. Then copy out the work cleanly and clearly, with complete performance instructions (editing). Rehearse before performing in class.[14]

Through a series of assignments like the ones discussed here, students can enhance their compositional skills and increase their comprehension of how music functions.

Benjamin notes that the most challenging issue presented by the inclusion of open-ended composition assignments involves class size. Although Benjamin prefers to assign two of these projects per semester, he realizes that this may not be practical when twenty-five or more students are enrolled in a course. Larger-scale composition projects may not be feasible at all in classes of thirty or more students. Benjamin believes that "administrators responsible for class sizes need to be made aware that theory teaching involving any degree of composition cannot be done properly in a large class setting."[15] Despite the potentially challenging factor of class size, Benjamin urges instructors to assign composition exercises whenever possible.

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[14] Benjamin, 196-97.

[15] Benjamin, 196, 198.

Although these exercises can foster an increased understanding of music among students, broad, open-ended assignments can be very time-consuming. In order to balance the importance of stimulating students' creativity with the demands of course content, instructors must use discernment in choosing which types of assignments to adopt. Decisions should be based on the needs of the students enrolled in a specific course and may fluctuate from one semester to the next. By maintaining a realistic and flexible approach to teaching, instructors can make informed decisions about incorporating a variety of composition assignments into their courses.

Another method of increasing variety uses pedagogical games to enliven the normal routine of music theory classes and to reinforce their content. Although these games can vary widely in structure and complexity, they share the purpose of helping students to apply music-theoretical concepts creatively. Jeff Gillespie includes an assortment of games in an intensive, ten-day remedial music theory program that is offered to incoming freshmen at the university where he teaches.[16] These games provide means of reviewing concepts already studied and of enhancing students' enjoyment of the learning process. In his article, Gillespie mentions two games: the "relay race" and "theory bingo." For the relay race, the students form two teams and answer questions by drawing on their knowledge of music theory. One sample question instructs students, "In bass clef, notate the submediant pitch of the natural minor scale that has a tonic of G#." Another directs students to "write the compound duple meter signature that has a beat division of a sixteenth note."[17] Gillespie explains,

[16] Jeff Gillespie, "Welcome to Theory Camp! More than Simple Remediation," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 14 (2000): 47-62.

[17] Gillespie, "Theory Camp," 54-55.

> In the race, each student must arrive at an individual answer before getting additional help from the team. Besides being a lot of fun, this game helps tie together many different concepts learned during the camp, it requires students to rely on accuracy and speed, and it gives students an opportunity to encourage one another through team work.[18]

This activity effectively combines individual responsibility for course material with a supportive, team-based environment. Gillespie provided additional details on playing this game through informal correspondence.[19] Teams of students are formed in such a way that both teams possess similar levels of ability. Each student competes, in turn, with a member of the opposing team in order to answer questions like the ones previously mentioned. The first student to raise his or her hand after writing the correct answer on the board earns a point that is credited to that student's team. If the student's answer is incorrect, his or her teammates are allowed to offer assistance. When the game is finished, the team that earned the most points is declared the winner.[20]

The second game that Gillespie suggests in his article is "theory bingo," using "popcorn (already popped) for playing pieces and an 'I love theory' free space in the middle of the playing cards."[21] According to Gillespie, the answers to a variety of fundamental music-theory questions are printed on the playing cards.[22] As the instructor reads the questions, students mark the appropriate answers on their playing cards until

[18] Gillespie, "Theory Camp," 54-55.

[19] Jeff Gillespie, e-mail message to author, May 30, 2011.

[20] Gillespie, e-mail message.

[21] Gillespie, "Theory Camp," 55.

[22] Gillespie, e-mail message.

someone says “Bingo.” The class reviews the questions and the winning answers, and the winner receives a prize.[23]

The greatest strength of these two games is their simplicity. Both the relay race and theory bingo can be played without a lengthy learning process or, after the initial framing of the questions, an extensive amount of preparation. I recently had an opportunity to use an activity similar to Gillespie’s relay race in my own teaching. I divided my class into three groups of students that raced to complete brief part-writing exercises that asked students to prepare and resolve the Neapolitan chord in a variety of keys. For each exercise, students were given the name of the key, all desired Roman numerals, and the notated Neapolitan chord. The most entertaining aspect of this activity was the name of each group; in a lighthearted reference to Neapolitan ice cream, I designated the three groups as “chocolate,” “vanilla,” and “strawberry,” respectively. The majority of the students appeared delighted with this pun. The students in the “strawberry” group were especially enthusiastic; in addition to completing the exercises, they promptly decorated the marker board with strawberry-themed artwork that included a Christmas tree decorated with strawberries and labeled “Strawberry-mas.” Although it might have proved more effective to divide the class into smaller groups in order to keep all students engaged, the exercise still provided an opportunity for students to practice their part-writing skills in a fun environment. This limited involvement with a pedagogical game taught me the value of finding ways to help students engage actively with the material covered in class. Any number of similar games might be invented for a wide variety of pedagogical topics.

[23] Gillespie, e-mail message.

Lora Gingerich introduces a more sophisticated example of a pedagogical game in her article "Pitch-Class Poker."[24] She adapts the well-known game to include standard concepts and tools of analysis from atonal pitch-class set theory. In order to participate, players must know how to identify interval vectors for pitch-class collections. Gingerich replaces the standard deck of cards with an original deck containing forty-eight cards, each of which depicts a certain pitch in a particular register and clef. The customary four suits of cards are represented by the treble, alto, tenor and bass clefs. Each hand is ranked according to "the total interval content or interval vector of the pitch-class set represented by [its] cards."[25] Gingerich offers two versions of Pitch-Class Poker: "Tritone Trump" and "Semitone Sweep." In the former, "the hand with the most tritones (interval class 6 or ic6) in the interval vector ranks highest." If no hands contain the tritone, or if two or more hands tie in this respect, the ranking is determined by the next-largest interval. The other version of this game, "Semitone Sweep," functions similarly; in this case, the semitone represents the highest-ranking interval class.[26]

In order to facilitate the process of evaluating one's hand, Gingerich includes an extensive list of possible Pitch-Class Poker hands and their rankings. Her list is particularly useful since she notes that the information found in a normative listing of interval vectors is insufficient for players of Pitch-Class Poker. According to Gingerich, the process of becoming a skilled player "requires subtle strategic thinking, with an

[24] Lora L. Gingerich, "Pitch-Class Poker," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 161-78.

[25] Gingerich, 161. According to Gingerich, a regular deck of fifty-two playing cards may also be used if the four Queens are removed. Each card still represents a specific pitch class.

[26] Gingerich, 162, 177.

understanding of the abstract subset and superset relations among pitch-class sets."[27] This understanding can help players determine which cards should be replaced in order to gain a stronger hand. However, participants can still play the game satisfactorily by relying on their "intuitive understanding of which cards to retain and which to discard." Pitch-Class Poker can benefit students by helping them to identify interval classes and to modify a given assortment of pitches in order to increase the occurrence of a particular interval class. Regardless of who wins, Gingerich believes that each player will benefit from understanding the concepts of interval vectors, supersets, and subsets more thoroughly.[28]

Although I find this game intriguing, I have some concerns about implementing it in the music theory classroom. My foremost concern is the complexity of the game. Even for those students who already know how to play poker, the adjustments inherent in adapting to the methodology of Pitch-Class Poker could be challenging and time-consuming. Another concern involves the moral implications of the game. Gingerich makes it clear that the methods of dealing, betting, and playing in Pitch-Class Poker are the same as in traditional poker.[29] Since some students may not be comfortable playing poker because of its association with gambling, instructors would need to provide them with an alternative activity that reinforces the same music-theoretical concepts. Additionally, instructors should ensure that their incorporation of this game does not imply an endorsement of illegal gambling among college students.

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[27] Gingerich, 163, 169.

[28] Gingerich, 176-77.

[29] Gingerich, 161.

Although these concerns are significant, they may be ameliorated by careful guidance from instructors who explain the purpose of Pitch-Class Poker and design alternative activities for any students who have conscientious objections to playing the game. Instructors can facilitate the learning process by giving students clear, step-by-step directions and by minimizing the competitive orientation of the game. In order to address students' possible conscientious objections, one option is simply to change the name of the game. However, this action may be insufficient since wagers are still involved. Another possible solution is to use a neutral object instead of money during the betting process. Ultimately, the purpose of this game is not to train students to be masterful Pitch-Class Poker players; rather, its purpose is to help students interact with course content and to improve their understanding of selected twentieth-century topics. Despite the potential complications of introducing Pitch-Class Poker, I believe that the game has the potential to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of atonal music theory, a subject that often meets with strong resistance from students. Because of this benefit, the game may become a valuable addition to the music theory classroom.

Variety in Musical Examples

In addition to incorporating a variety of in-class exercises and homework assignments, instructors seeking to increase variety in their music theory courses can broaden their selection of musical examples to encompass the analysis of both popular music and of music drawn from streams other than the Western musical tradition. As I will show through a survey of the scholarly literature, popular music appears more suitable than music of non-Western traditions for music-theoretical analysis at this time.

In the article "We Won't Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Musical Analysis," John Covach explores possible avenues of mutually beneficial interaction between the disciplines of music theory and popular-music studies.[30] Covach cautions music theorists to be aware of their motivations for selecting repertoire for analysis; he notes that "a common image (or caricature) of music theorists…is that the only music that theorists value is music that they can get to fit into their established analytical models." While Covach recognizes that this characterization of theorists is somewhat overstated, he admits that "it is not entirely without foundation…[since] theorists may at times determine *what* music they study by *how* they plan to study it."[31]

Notwithstanding his caution to avoid selecting musical examples exclusively on the basis of one's preferred analytical system, Covach refutes the idea that "the application of analytical paradigms developed in the study of art music to popular music (and rock) is likely to produce distorted interpretations." He believes that analysis of rock music can draw upon established analytical paradigms such as modified Schenkerian approaches and style theory.[32] Additionally, analysis of this repertoire can encourage the exploration of particular analytical issues that arise in the study of rock that may not arise as obviously in other, more traditionally studied repertoires. For example, Covach notes that timbre plays a key aesthetic role in rock music. While Covach does not advocate attempts "to force popular music into models created for the analysis of European art music," he cautions his readers to avoid automatically dismissing such

[30] John Covach, "We Won't Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Musical Analysis," *In Theory Only* 13, nos. 1-4 (September 1997): 119-41.

[31] Covach, "We Won't Get Fooled," 125.

[32] Covach, 130-32.

models as inapplicable to popular-music analysis.[33] Ultimately, the most effective approach to analyzing popular music can be found in a balanced consideration of the musical facets found in this repertoire, both those that can be explained in terms of traditional, music-theoretical analysis and those that are better understood in terms of the unique characteristics of the specific genre of popular music.

It is important to recognize that Covach's article, while offering insight into the arena of popular-music analysis, does not directly address issues of music theory pedagogy. Although Covach argues that music theorists should refrain from choosing only the musical examples that fit their preferred analytical methods, he does not rule out the possibility of tailoring the selection of popular-music examples to suit the needs of students in undergraduate music-theory courses. Instructors should exercise discernment when deciding which examples will best illustrate specific music-theoretical topics. This discernment applies to the selection of musical examples from any genre; even examples from the classical canon must be carefully chosen in order to illustrate specific aspects of music theory effectively. There is, however, one significant difference between selecting examples for traditional theory courses from popular genres and choosing examples from the classical canon. Examples from the classical canon are often chosen because the concepts they illustrate are normative aspects of that body of music. Although the same concepts may occur in popular-music examples, these examples may not represent standard features of the genres from which they come. Therefore, instructors must be careful not to imply greater similarities between popular and classical genres than are actually present. Nonetheless, Covach's article demonstrates the importance of

[33] Covach, 133, 135.

incorporating popular genres into the body of music analyzed by theorists, and, by extension, the repertoire that is taught in undergraduate music-theory courses.

The past several decades have brought a dramatic increase in popular music analysis by music theorists. Peter Kaminsky argues that the growing interest of theorists in analyzing popular music reflects, at least in part, "the attempt by a younger generation of theorists to deal with a kind of collective schizophrenia, born from deep involvement with both classical and popular musics."[34] He believes that traditional methods of analysis can be applied to popular music, although some nuances of these applications may differ from the application of these methods to classical music. According to Kaminsky, an effective methodology for analyzing popular music should encompass "scholarly and critical acumen" in addition to "the sense of fun, unbridled enthusiasm, ontological complexity, and questioning of authority that…come with the territory of popular music."[35] Kaminsky's identification of these components provides food for thought for both analysts of popular music and for music-theory instructors who include popular examples in their classes.

In the article "'One Step Up': A Lesson from Pop Music," Justin London argues that music theory instructors can benefit by incorporating examples of popular music into their lectures.[36] London attributes the pedagogical effectiveness of these examples to their typically "simple and straightforward" structures and their familiarity to students.

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[34] Peter M. Kaminsky, "Revenge of the Boomers: Notes on the Analysis of Rock Music," *Music Theory Online* 6, no. 3 (August 2000): par. 2, http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.00.6.3/mto.00.6.3.kaminsky.html (accessed May 11, 2010).

[35] Kaminsky, "Revenge of the Boomers," par. 4, par. 15.

[36] Justin London, "'One Step Up': A Lesson from Pop Music," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 111-14.

Through this familiarity, popular music examples can connect classroom topics with the "'real-world' musical experiences" of students.[37] He states,

> One of the most difficult tasks theory teachers face is getting students to use some of the analytical tools they have acquired through their studies. Even those students who are quite competent at harmonic analysis and species counterpoint often fail to apply what we teach to their own listening and performance. The failure of our students to connect theory to their other musical experiences is perhaps our fault, for often (mea culpa) our lessons consist of abstract rules for harmonic progressions, of analysis of Bach Chorales that lie outside most students' musical life…We must take the initiative to show our students how theory plays an important role in critical listening, and how a knowledge of music theory can enhance their musical understanding and experience.[38]

Thus, one of the greatest strengths of popular-music analysis lies in its application of principles and skills learned in music theory courses to a body of music that is relevant to a large number of students.

According to London, the primary disadvantage of using popular music examples is that this music is short-lived; therefore, lessons that incorporate current examples of popular music may quickly become outdated. While these examples may, in fact, need frequent replacement, he believes that insightful lessons can still be drawn from older pieces. London suggests using analysis of popular music as a means for discussing "the relationship between theory, analysis, and criticism" as well as for exploring "the notion of convention(s) in popular music." He contends that the foremost lesson that popular music analysis can yield is the realization "that the settings of popular song lyrics often contain examples of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic structures which play upon the conventions of musical syntax."[39]

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[37] London, "'One Step Up,'" 111.

[38] London, 113-14.

[39] London, 111, 113.

Like London, Stuart Folse views popular music as a valuable resource for instructors of undergraduate music theory courses.[40] He states, "Popular music can provide teachers…with an endless supply of pedagogically relevant examples that make lasting impressions on our students."[41] Folse believes that the use of examples drawn from popular music can clarify potentially challenging harmonic concepts, and he recognizes several potentially beneficial aspects of popular music. According to Folse, lead-sheet notation can facilitate students' association of chord symbols with harmonic functions, while the "clear and transparent texture" found in a number of popular works can provide links between aural and written assignments by promoting "unencumbered aural cognition of harmonic rhythm and harmonic function."[42] Folse argues that popular music can offer students "an accessible frame of reference for standard harmonic progressions and melodic patterns" and can enliven class meetings by allowing students to study music that is familiar to them. Folse explains,

> Since students are exploring a familiar genre, they are able to perceive and discuss musical concepts unencumbered by details of musical styles that are often distant (historically and sometimes, aesthetically) from their personal experience. If the ultimate objective of the classroom is to improve students' abilities to analyze and understand music, highlighting requisite materials in popular contexts can provide a fresh and enduring perspective toward this end.[43]

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[40] Stuart Folse, "Popular Music as a Pedagogical Resource for Musicianship: Contextual Listening, Prolongations, Mediant Relationships, and Musical Form," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 18 (2004): 65-79. Folse uses the term "musicianship" to refer to the integration of "written, aural and keyboard skills" in the curriculum at the university where he teaches (see Folse, 66-67).

[41] Folse, "Popular Music," 65.

[42] Folse, 65-66.

[43] Folse, 66.

Because the popularity of popular music examples tends to be ephemeral, it is the perspective gained through analysis of this music, rather than the examples themselves, that is enduring.

Randall Pembrook observes that the prospect of discussing popular music in the classroom setting has provoked a variety of responses from music educators.[44] While some instructors may welcome this repertoire because of its widespread appeal to students, others may prefer not to use popular music because they perceive this repertoire as inferior in quality to more traditional musical genres. Pembrook provides a concise discussion of some potential advantages and disadvantages of popular music. He states,

> The 'good' elements of popular music would seemingly include unusual cadences, modal melodic features, extreme melodic ranges, and varying tempos. 'Less-than-creative' elements would include instrumentation, dynamics, lack of modulation, melodic interval selection, overemphasis of I-IV-V harmony, and a lack of variety in meter, length, and form.[45]

Pembrook suggests that instructors can turn even the seeming drawbacks of popular music into pedagogical advantages. For instance, musical examples that instructors might initially deem too simple can prove valuable when first introducing concepts, such as musical form, to students. Pembrook concludes that the "simple structures" and "tremendous appeal" of popular music can facilitate students' understanding of musical concepts through the medium of music with which they are already familiar.[46]

A different approach to introducing non-traditional musical examples for analysis can be found in the recent educational emphases on multiculturalism and world music. In

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[44] Randall G. Pembrook, "Exploring the Musical Side of Pop," in "Pop Music and Music Education," ed. Michael Blakeslee, special issue, *Music Educators Journal* 77, no. 8 (April 1991): 30-34.

[45] Pembrook, "Musical Side of Pop," 30, 33.

[46] Pembrook, 33-34.

the article "Music That Represents Culture: Selecting Music with Integrity," Carlos Abril offers criteria for choosing examples of music from non-Western traditions that portray the cultures that they represent respectfully.[47] Abril recommends that instructors consider three primary areas when selecting music: "cultural validity, bias, and practicality."[48] In order to locate materials that are culturally valid, Abril suggests that instructors search for materials "that are disseminated by a trustworthy source, include contextual information about the music and culture, and provide sufficient information about the performance style and practice."[49] When considering the potential bias of a piece, instructors should be aware of stereotypical or potentially prejudicial elements, particularly when considering lyrics. According to Abril, appropriate world-music repertoire should possess a high level of cultural validity while containing only a limited amount of bias. He also acknowledges the importance of considering practical matters when selecting new materials. The materials selected should suit students' technical skills and take into account the available instrumentation or voicing, community receptivity, and the overall flow of the curriculum.[50] Although the process of selecting appropriate repertoire can be arduous, Abril believes that the results are worthwhile. According to Abril, "the exploration of a new musical culture can lead to a heightened

[47] Carlos R. Abril, "Music That Represents Culture: Selecting Music with Integrity," *Music Educators Journal* 93, no. 1 (September 2006): 38-45.

[48] Abril, "Music That Represents Culture," 38.

[49] Abril, 42.

[50] Abril, 42-44.

awareness of music" and can give students and instructors "a greater understanding of [themselves] and [their] own musical cultures."[51]

In the article "Defending Music Theory in a Multicultural Curriculum," YouYoung Kang addressed the possibility of teaching university-level music theory courses from a multicultural perspective.[52] According to Kang, these attempts can range from "a perfunctory inclusion of non-Western music to a complete re-design of the theory curriculum." While Kang admitted that "a repertory-nonspecific approach to theory sounds like a good compromise solution and may even sound utopian," she believed that this approach is quite problematic.[53] Kang claimed,

> Music theory practiced in general, universal terms is often vague and unsatisfying, because it is the in-depth investigation of a musical culture that produces understanding and interested engagement...ultimately a specific vocabulary and culturally and/or historically contingent analytic techniques are necessary to study any particular music in depth.[54]

Although Kang acknowledged that piecemeal inclusions of music from non-Western sources or non-traditional repertoires "can be well-intended," she argued that "this 'inclusive' approach gives Western music theory a 'universal' omnipotent status and subsumes all musics under the theoretical umbrella of Western art music."[55]

Even though Kang believed that "an in-depth theory curriculum with another [non-Western] repertory as the focus…could accomplish many of the same goals as the

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[51] Abril, 44-45.

[52] YouYoung Kang, "Defending Music Theory in a Multicultural Curriculum," *College Music Symposium* 46 (2006): 45-63.

[53] Kang, "Defending Music Theory," 49.

[54] Kang, "Defending Music Theory," 51.

[55] Kang, "Defending Music Theory," 53.

standard theory sequence," she did not necessarily view this possibility as realistic.[56] She recommended that music theory instructors use Western classical music as the primary source of examples for their courses, not because this repertoire is somehow superior to others but because it provides an "established theoretical apparatus as the basis for a detailed analytical study of music." Additionally, much of the repertoire that students will perform and teach is drawn from Western art music. Kang concluded,

> Music theory in a multicultural curriculum occupies an uneasy space between the competing interests of offering a multi-faceted study of music and allowing students to explore many different musical cultures versus exposing students to the process of learning music in its particular detail and defamiliarizing a musical world that students had taken for granted. At the present moment in liberal arts institutions, the detailed and painstaking engagement with music that theory pedagogy offers is still essential, and the theory developed for Western art music is still the most useful for most students.[57]

While some may take issue with Kang's conclusion, she made a persuasive case for continuing to focus on analyzing music from the Western tradition. Nevertheless, it may not be possible to dismiss easily the call to include analysis of music from non-Western cultures in music theory courses.

In response to Kang's article, Mark Hijleh argued that the music theory curriculum must be reformed in order to increase its effectiveness "in training musicians for the actual twenty-first-century musical world in which they will live and work."[58] He described this environment as "a globalized world in which connections and syntheses are far more important than differences, exclusions and definitions." According to Hijleh, the current approach to music theory pedagogy neglects to represent accurately

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[56] Kang, "Defending Music Theory," 54.

[57] Kang, "Defending Music Theory," 61-62.

[58] Mark Hijleh, "Reforming Music Theory as the Centerpiece of a Twenty-First-Century Curriculum: A Response to YouYoung Kang," *College Music Symposium* 48 (2008): 98.

the "culture of synthesis" that has always been inherent in the music of the West.[59] Hijleh took issue with Kang's assertion that an "'in-depth investigation of a musical culture'" is necessary in order to facilitate "'understanding and interested engagement.'"[60] He asked, "What if the 'musical culture' in question is a globally synthetic, eclectic one? How might such a musical culture be approached for 'in-depth investigation?'" Hijleh declared that the term "'in-depth' must be redefined for an age in which synthesis, not narrowly focused expertise, is the higher value."[61] According to Hijleh, "a new hybrid world music theory" could benefit from a variety of musical systems and genres. Ultimately, Hijleh believed that instructors should focus on preparing students to "become music makers first and music studiers second" by exposing them to a wide variety of musical cultures and teaching them how to synthesize the contributions of these cultures.[62]

In a subsequent response to Hijleh, Kang disagreed with his portrayal of a global synthesis of music.[63] She argued that Hijleh "does away too facilely with *difference* in his rush to synthesize all musical cultures into one global culture." According to Kang, the extant global culture contains a variety of "intersecting musical worlds with real differences in values, aesthetics, performance practices, [and] belief systems."[64] She differentiated between the shaping of an individual's response to a specific type of music

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[59] Hijleh, "Reforming Music Theory," 98-99.

[60] Quoted in Hijleh, 100.

[61] Hijleh, 100.

[62] Hijleh, 101, 103.

[63] YouYoung Kang, "Music and Liberal Arts Education: A Reply to Mark Hijleh, 'Reforming Music Theory,'" *College Music Symposium* 48 (2008): 105-7.

[64] Kang, "A Reply," 105.

by his or her prior experiences with diverse musics and the homogenous blending of all types of music into a single "global musical culture." Kang believed that students already interact meaningfully with the musical world; rather than attempting to teach students, as Hijleh advocated, to "'become music makers first and music studiers second,'" she contended that the curriculum of the liberal arts college should teach students to understand the formation of their world and "to recognize all the assumptions that undergird that world."[65]

I agree with Kang on this issue. Although instructors should model a respectful attitude toward the differences among cultures and their musics, they should not try to eliminate these differences by creating the appearance of a single global culture. Such a conglomeration of vastly different cultures may ultimately denigrate the very cultures that its creators desire to honor. Realistically, an attempt to synthesize differing cultures through the erasure of the very traits that make each one unique is both ineffective and ill-advised.

With this conclusion in mind, how should instructors choose musical examples for their students to analyze? Hypothetically, these examples could be drawn from any genre, providing that the examples contain the material being studied. Thus, certain examples of non-Western music could illustrate topics from the music theory curriculum. However, without making significant changes in both content and structure, I do not believe that this curriculum is equipped to represent effectively the characteristics of non-Western musics and the cultural milieus in which these musics originate. Instructors who choose to incorporate examples of non-Western music into their lectures should exercise caution in order to avoid over-emphasizing potential similarities between these examples

[65] Kang, "A Reply," 106.

and those found in the classical canon. Although some similarities may be identified, the differences that contribute to the unique characteristics of these musics should not be discounted.

While the idea of studying non-Western music can be alluring, the primary goal of my thesis is to increase the perceived relevance of music theory courses to undergraduate music students. Because students are almost certainly more familiar with popular music than with musics of other cultures, I believe that popular music analysis is more likely to create an increased perception of music theory's relevance to students. Rather than including token examples of music from other cultures in an effort to multiculturalize the music theory curriculum, instructors should maintain an emphasis on Western art music and add variety by incorporating popular music examples. They must choose these examples wisely; although popular music shares a number of features with Western art music, it also differs from this music in several respects. For instance, the harmonic retrogression V-IV is common in popular music but rarely appears in music grounded in functional tonality. Because of such differences, instructors should be careful not to imply that popular music is universally compatible with the principles of the common practice period. Nonetheless, well-chosen popular examples can form valuable connections between students and the concepts they learn in music theory.

This chapter has explored a number of ways in which instructors can incorporate variety by using different types of assignments and by analyzing non-traditional musical genres. While it is vital to avoid falling into a potentially dull routine, it is equally important not to lose sight of the wisdom of time-tested pedagogical methods and enduring musical examples. The ideas mentioned in this chapter are simply meant to

encourage instructors to enliven their lectures through fresh musical examples and less common types of assignments without neglecting more traditional methods of instruction. By strategically increasing the amount of variety in their courses, instructors can encourage and enhance the interest of undergraduates in studying music theory.

CHAPTER FIVE

Teaching Theory in Practice: Discussion of Sample Exercises

Introduction

In order to apply the research discussed in the previous chapters, I designed a three-fold classroom assignment that addressed the issues of analysis and performance, multiple interpretations, and variety. This assignment consisted of three one-page exercises that asked students to apply their knowledge of musical form to examples drawn from diverse genres such as classical, popular, and ragtime music. In addition to providing variety through a diverse selection of musical examples, the assignment included several questions that were not typical of analysis assignments. During the second exercise, for instance, participants listened to audio recordings that presented different interpretations of the same example, then considered the influence that contrasting performances may have had on their analyses. Because the example was subject to more than one interpretation, the exercise may have facilitated students' critical thinking by permitting multiple analytical approaches. Thus, all three categories addressed in my thesis—analysis and performance, multiple interpretations, and variety—were represented in this assignment.

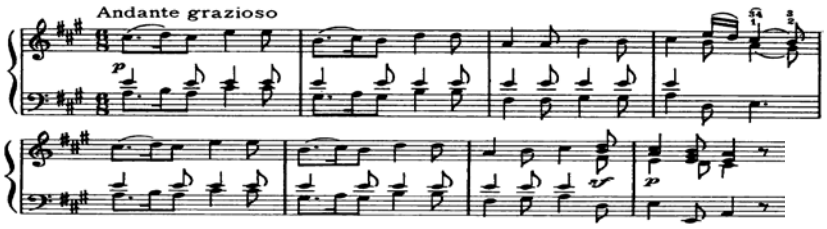
The first exercise utilized examples from Mozart's *Piano Sonata in A Major,* K. 331, and Schubert's "Sehnsucht," op. 39, D. 636. Each eight-measure example demonstrated period form; the first example illustrated a parallel period while the second example presented a contrasting period. After an audio recording of each example was

played twice, students were instructed to identify and label any cadences by type and to name the form of each example.[1] This exercise was designed to provide students with a brief assignment similar to those used in their course (see figure 1).[2]

Exercise One

You will hear a recording of this example. As you listen, identify and label any cadences by type. Name the form of this example. It is not necessary to complete a Roman numeral analysis.

Mozart: Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331, I, mm. 1-8



You will hear a recording of this example. As you listen, identify and label any cadences by type. Name the form of this example. It is not necessary to complete a Roman numeral analysis.

Schubert: "Sehnsucht," op. 39, D. 636, mm. 96-103

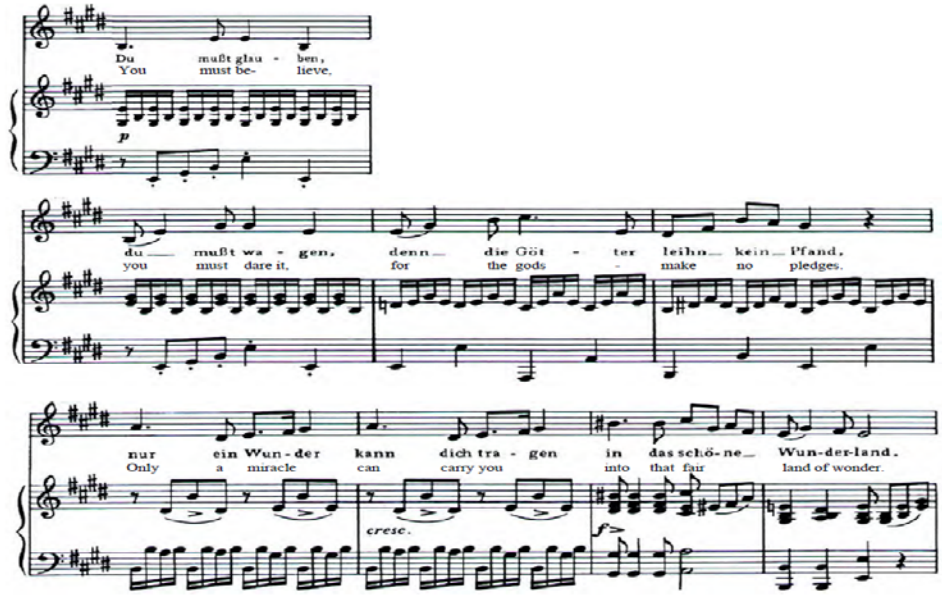


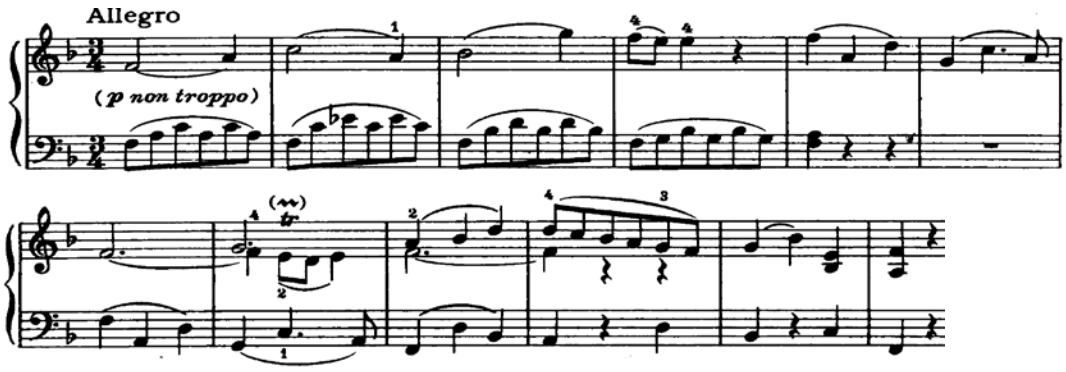
Figure 1. First exercise, designed to present a normative analysis assignment.

[1] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Mozart Piano Sonatas*, Alicia de Larrocha, CD RCA 221 v. 1, 1990; Franz Peter Schubert, *Schiller-Lieder, Vol. 2*, Regina Jakobi and Ulrich Eisenlohr, CD Naxos 1098 v. 2, 2002.

[2] The translation of the text for the Schubert example was found in Emily Ezust, "The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Page," Emily Ezust, http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=14515 (accessed February 9, 2011).

The second exercise presented a somewhat more challenging assignment. Given the first twelve measures from the first movement of Mozart's *Piano Sonata in F Major,* K. 332, students were asked to determine whether or not a cadence occurs in mm. 4-5, an ambiguous section of the piece (see figure 2), and, if so, where and of what type.

Figure 2. Mozart: *Piano Sonata in F Major,* K. 332, I, mm. 1-12.



Although the first five measures comprise a tonic prolongation, one could potentially argue for the presence of a cadence at the end of the first four measures. The clear punctuation of the melodic contour with a rest at the end of m. 4 implies a half cadence; however, the harmonic motion and accompanimental pattern do not reach a stopping point until the tonic chord on the downbeat of m. 5. Because the upper part simultaneously begins a new melodic idea at this point, the cadence analyzed here would be an elided imperfect authentic cadence.

This passage has inspired discussion by several theorists. James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy view the first five measures as a circular pattern (do-te-la-ti-do) that prolongs the opening tonic harmony.[3] According to their analysis, no cadence occurs in the fourth and fifth measures. Charles Rosen identifies a cadence in the inner voice in

[3] James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 91-92.

mm. 8-9, with a conclusive ending of the first theme in m. 12.[4] The careful attention to detail that leads Rosen to acknowledge an inner-voice cadence indicates that he would not ignore the presence of a previous cadence; thus, Rosen would most likely not analyze an imperfect authentic cadence in mm. 4-5. However, since his discussion concentrates on *tonic* cadences, it is possible that he might analyze a half cadence in m. 4.

Focusing on the melody, Robert Tyndall identifies three distinctive four-measure phrases that coalesce into a larger unit of twelve measures.[5] His analysis, emphasizing the autonomy of each four-measure phrase, supports the identification of a half cadence in m. 4. Finally, Matthew Santa views the first twelve measures of this piece as a three-phrase period in which the first four-measure phrase is followed by a five-measure unit that elides with the final four-measure phrase.[6] His emphasis on the separation between the first and second phrases also supports the analysis of a half cadence in m. 4. As demonstrated by these varying perspectives, students could reasonably analyze this passage in more than one way. In order to view the exercise in its entirety, see figure 3.

The third exercise instructed students to name the form of two musical examples after listening to the corresponding audio recordings.[7] This exercise encouraged students to apply their knowledge of musical form to examples drawn from genres more recent and popular than the ones they typically analyzed.

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[4] Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 245-46.

[5] Robert E. Tyndall, *Musical Form* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1964), 8.

[6] Matthew Santa, *Hearing Form: Musical Analysis With and Without the Score* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 24.

[7] YouTube, "Michael Bolton: Go the Distance," YouTube video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8DSKNuS1Wg (accessed January 28, 2011); Scott Joplin, *Piano Rags*, Alexander Peskanov, CD Naxos 1600 v. 1, 2004.

Exercise Two

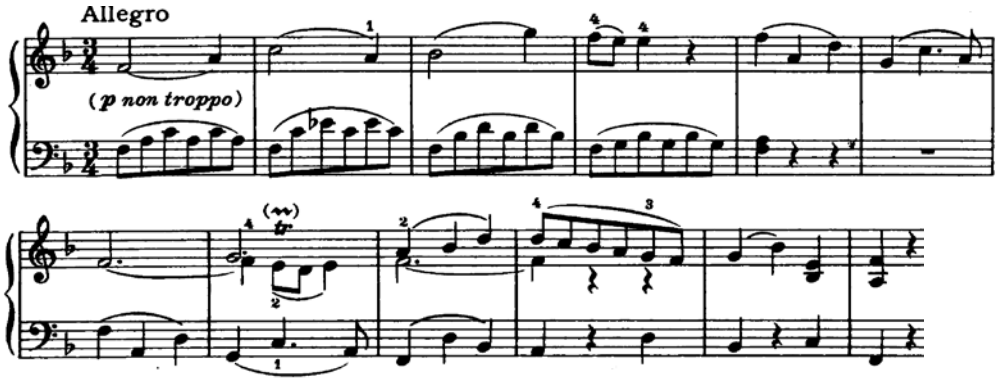
Examine the following example and answer the first two questions. You will then hear two recordings of this excerpt, each of which will be played twice. Listen carefully to these recordings before answering the remaining questions for this example.

In the fourth and fifth measures, do you find (circle one answer):

a. No cadence
b. A half-cadence (HC) in m. 4
c. An imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) in m. 5

What specific factors influenced your decision? Briefly support your answer with observations drawn from your knowledge of music theory.

Mozart: Piano Sonata in F Major, K. 332, I, mm. 1-12



Answer the following questions **after** listening to the recorded performances.

Which performance most closely matched your initial analysis (circle one)?

a. The first one
b. The second one

Regardless of your answer to the previous question, which performance did you find the most effective (circle one)?

a. The first one
b. The second one

If, after having listened to these performances, you would like to change your answer to the initial question about a potential cadence in mm. 4-5, which answer would you choose now (circle one)?

a. No cadence
b. A half-cadence (HC) in m. 4
c. An imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) in m. 5
d. Not applicable; I do not want to change my answer.

Do you think that this example could be interpreted correctly in more than one way (circle one)?

a. Yes
b. No

Figure 3. Second exercise, designed to address multiple interpretations and the relationship between analysis and performance.

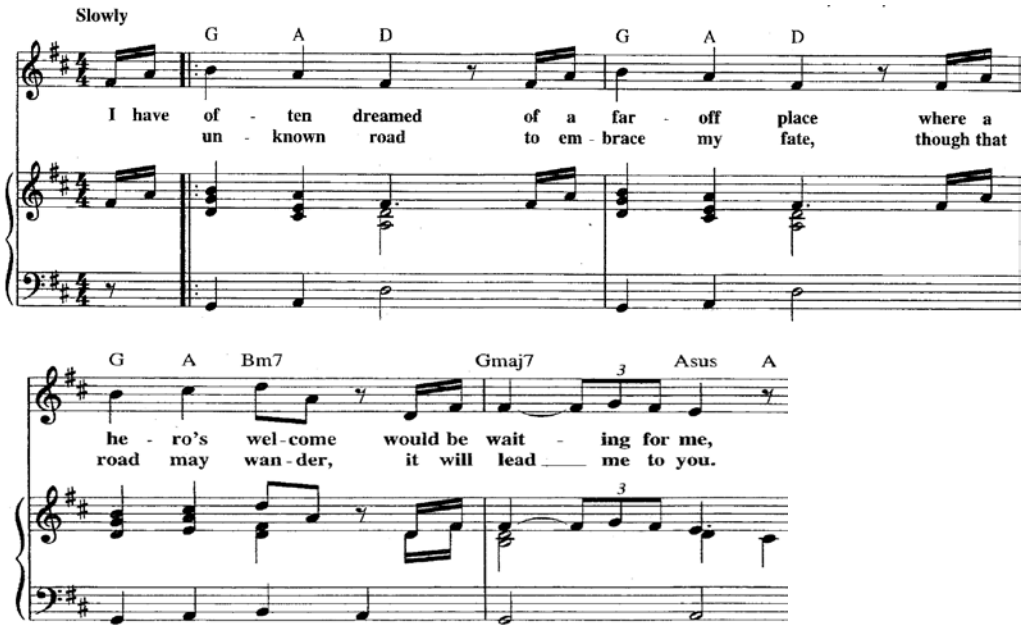
Both excerpts, one from Menken and Zippel's film song "Go the Distance" and the other from Joplin's "The Entertainer," exemplify sentence form. The former excerpt,

only four measures in length, is a more compact version of a sentence than the normative eight-measure length seen in the latter excerpt (see figure 4).

Exercise Three

You will hear a recording of this example. After listening, name the form of this example. It is not necessary to complete a Roman numeral analysis.

Alan Menken and David Zippel: "Go the Distance" from Walt Disney Pictures' *Hercules*, mm. 1-4



You will hear a recording of this example. After listening, name the form of this example.
It is not necessary to complete a Roman numeral analysis.

Scott Joplin, "The Entertainer," mm. 61-68

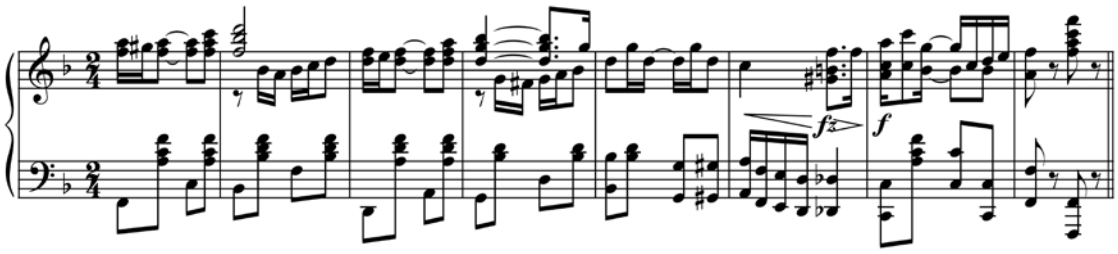


Figure 4. Third exercise, designed to allow students to analyze musical examples from outside the classical canon.

Methodology

I implemented the assignment with two classes of students enrolled in the second semester of undergraduate music theory at Baylor (Theory II).[8] The exercises were administered to intact music theory classes with the approval of the instructor who had previously reviewed the exercises and approved the difficulty level of their content. Forty-four students participated in these exercises. Audio recordings of the musical examples were played via the classroom sound system; each recording was played twice. The three exercises were distributed and completed separately. A summary sheet that invited students to respond to each exercise was handed out after all three exercises had been completed and collected. In order to protect students' privacy, responses to these exercises were anonymous and no personal information was collected. The assignment took place during a single class period and occupied approximately 40 minutes.

Each participant completed a written consent form prior to engaging in these exercises, and only subjects who were 18 years of age or older were permitted to participate. Although no one chose to opt out of the exercises, students were informed that an alternative analysis assignment was available if they decided not to participate. The content of the alternate assignment was of appropriate difficulty for the students' level of study and would have required a comparable amount of time for them to complete.

Results

Based on written comments from students, the first exercise accomplished its goal of providing a normative and relatively simple analysis assignment. Many students

[8] This assignment was conducted at Baylor University on Wednesday, March 2, 2011.

easily identified the cadences and forms of the excerpts. A number of students commented on the ease of analysis, clarity of examples, and straightforward directions. One student summarized this perspective by stating, "It seemed the most like the work I'm comfortable with."

Before hearing the example in the second exercise, students were asked to choose among three options to explain what takes place in mm. 4-5: no cadence, a half-cadence (HC) in m. 4, or an imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) in m. 5.[9] Each option was well represented among the answers of students. In addition to selecting one of these options, students were asked to briefly support their decision with evidence drawn from their knowledge of music theory. Students' responses to this question revealed their thought processes and illustrated the factors that influenced their analysis of this example. Of those who answered that no cadence is present in mm. 4-5, several students commented on the absence of a traditional dominant chord in m. 4 (a $vii^{\circ 6}$ is present instead), believing that this precluded the possibility of a cadence at this point. A more convincing reason for this choice appears in one student's comment that "there doesn't seem to be a sense of arrival because the soprano comes back in right as the bass voices finish and rest."

Several students who concluded that a half cadence takes place m. 4 noticed the presence of $vii^{\circ 6}$ instead of V; however, they did not believe that this eliminated the possibility of a half cadence. Some considered the leading-tone chord an acceptable substitute for the dominant in a half cadence. Others focused on the melody, noticing that a new melodic idea begins in m. 5 and commenting on the melody's tendency to

[9] The term "elided" was omitted from the third answer choice because students had not yet learned what it meant.

confirm the placement of cadences. It is possible that these students, not yet having learned about elision, did not realize that a new phrase can begin simultaneously with the conclusion of a previous phrase and were therefore dissuaded from analyzing an imperfect authentic cadence in m. 5. Nonetheless, a number of students did analyze an imperfect authentic cadence in m. 5. Most of these students supported their answers by mentioning the harmonic progression in mm. 4-5; several students specifically called the cadence a leading-tone IAC. Recognizing the melodic component of the example, one student pointed out the resolution of the leading tone in m. 4 to the tonic in m. 5.

Once students had formed their preliminary analytical conclusions, they listened to two contrasting recordings of the example. In the first recording, the performer presented a clear, albeit slight, break in the melody between m. 4 and m. 5, thus emphasizing the notion of a half cadence occurring in m. 4.[10] The second recording, featuring a different performer, continued to build dramatic intensity all the way through the downbeat of m. 5.[11] Since this performance did not convey a sense of repose in m. 4, it could support the analysis of an imperfect authentic cadence in m. 5. Each recording was played twice; the second recording was played only after the first was played for the second time.

After students finished listening to both performances, they answered the remaining multiple-choice questions. Given the opportunity to change their answer to the opening question about the presence and type of a cadence in mm. 4-5, 32 percent of students decided to select a different answer. Although listening to contrasting

[10] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Sonata in A, K. 331; Sonata in F, K. 332; Fantasie in D minor, K. 397*, Mitsuko Uchida, Philips CD PHI 147, 1983.

[11] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Mozart Piano Sonatas*, Alfred Brendel, Philips CD PHI 448, 2001.

recordings led these students to rethink their initial analyses, 68 percent of students remained convinced of their first answer. When asked if this example could be interpreted correctly in more than one way, an overwhelming majority of students agreed that multiple correct interpretations were possible: 89 percent answered "yes," while only 11 percent answered "no." Students may have been more receptive to multiple interpretations because their regular instructor intentionally emphasized the possibility of finding more than one correct analytical interpretation.[12]

Comments on this exercise were primarily positive. While some students found it challenging to analyze a potential cadence before hearing the example, they realized that this aspect of the exercise forced them to think carefully about their answers. One student said that this exercise "made you tune into the music more each performance," declaring that this exercise was "the best of the three" exercises that were presented. Several students appreciated the process of revisiting their analyses after listening to the recordings. As one student explained, "I liked how I had a chance to try to analyze the piece without hearing it first, but then had the opportunity to hear it played and compare my new thoughts to my original analysis and could change my answer." For some students, the exercise revealed a link between analysis and performance that they had not previously considered. One student remarked, "It was interesting to discover that there could be more than one way to interpret the form of a piece of music, depending on how it is performed." Another student expressed a similar response, stating, "I didn't know an interpretation could bring into question the placing of a cadence." Students' interest in exercises that allow multiple interpretations is evident in one student's comment that it

[12] The instructor mentioned this pedagogical emphasis on multiple analytical interpretations during one of our conversations.

was satisfying to be able to select a "musical interpretation of choice." While this exercise did encourage students to choose their own interpretations, it also required them to think carefully and to support their answers with specific musical evidence.

The majority of students' comments on the third exercise were also encouraging. Many students remarked favorably on the selection of musical examples for this exercise, describing them as fun, familiar, and more modern than typically used examples. One student declared that the final example was enjoyable because "it wasn't *just* classical music." Another student explained, "Using entertaining songs helps me concentrate," while a third student said that "listening to popular songs help[s] make the theory feel more real." According to a fourth student, "It makes theory more applicable to every day life when a broad range of musical styles and genres are included in the study." These comments reveal that students appreciated the inclusion of familiar, popular music examples and that their perception of music theory's relevance may have been enhanced through this exercise.

One student's comment aptly described the desired effect of such examples, stating that "this exercise was more interesting and entertaining than the others." This student continued to comment that the exercise "showed that music has similar forms *no matter what genre it is* [emphasis added]." While students' perception of cross-genre similarities can be beneficial, this comment illustrates a danger addressed in the previous chapter: the use of popular-music examples to demonstrate conventional tonal practices can imply greater similarities among repertoires than actually exist.[13] Instructors who desire to include popular examples should caution students that, although certain examples of popular music *can* illustrate traditional formal, harmonic, and melodic

[13] See chapter four, 60, 69-70.

practices, many examples do not. When accompanied by this explanation, popular-music examples can provide fresh, entertaining material for analysis without leading students to infer an unrealistic degree of compatibility between classical and popular genres.

In addition to acquainting their students with the similarities and differences between these genres, instructors must find appropriate examples that can increase curricular variety throughout the semester. As I discovered while designing my exercises, locating effective musical examples can be challenging, and the challenge is augmented when the repertoire being considered is unfamiliar to the instructor who selects the examples. While databases and anthologies of musical examples can be convenient, an exclusive reliance upon these sources can ultimately defeat the purpose of increasing variety in the music theory classroom by narrowing the canon of music that is analyzed. In order to make the task of music selection more manageable, perhaps instructors could begin by drawing examples from databases or anthologies while regularly setting aside time to become more familiar with diverse repertoires. By consistently taking time to find new examples, instructors can increase their knowledge of a number of musical genres and can gradually accumulate a wealth of examples appropriate for analysis.

Although the incorporation of popular music examples met with approval from most students, this approach was not without its critics. One student in particular reacted negatively to the choice of repertoire for this exercise, calling the use of the *Hercules* example "cute, but upsetting." This student believes that "taking a nice Disney song and trying to analyze it" is tantamount to desecrating "the wonder of music" and subjecting it to "roboticization." Other students enjoyed analyzing these examples but thought that the

familiarity of the pieces made them more difficult to analyze. Since both examples demonstrated sentence form—which students had studied less extensively than period form—any increase in difficulty most likely resulted from the use of this form rather than from the students' prior knowledge of the music.

When asked to describe any ways in which they found this series of exercises interesting or helpful, the students offered a variety of responses. Most students concluded that the exercises provided a good review of cadences and forms. According to one student, "They showed a great range of music while still pulling from form types we, as Theory II students, were familiar with." A few students mentioned the ear-training aspect of the exercises; they believed that the process of finding cadences while listening to recordings could enhance the students' listening skills. Nine percent of students plainly stated that they did not enjoy doing the exercises, or that they did not consider the exercises interesting or helpful. Most students, however, had positive comments when looking back on the series of exercises. Several mentioned the variety of repertoire and types of form that were analyzed. An especially encouraging comment was that "these exercises were interesting [because] they approached music theory as a system open to debate about how it should be taught and [how] music [should be] interpreted." Since the second exercise was specifically designed to facilitate multiple interpretations, it is gratifying that some students realized that "sometimes everything is not set in stone."

Conclusion

Although I was satisfied with the majority of the sample exercises' results, I would probably make some changes before re-administering them. In order to test the

students' premise that popular excerpts are more difficult to analyze because of their familiarity, I might include examples of period form that are drawn from popular music. Alternatively, one or more examples of sentence form could be included in the excerpts from the classical canon. By disassociating examples of popular music from the potentially challenging sentence form, the exercise may reflect more accurately any impact that the familiarity of these examples might have on students' ability to analyze them. Other changes that I might implement would focus on the process of administering the exercises. Some students commented that they could have used more time to complete their analyses, so I could allow more time between the first playing of each audio recording and its repetition. Since several students took time to diagram the form of examples, I would inform them that diagrams are not required. While some students may still wish to draw formal diagrams in order to clarify their thought processes, others could gain valuable time by omitting this step.

Even though these changes might enhance the balance and pacing of the exercises, I believe that these exercises already offer a useful application of the research explored in my thesis. By participating in these exercises, students may increase their understanding of the relationship of analysis and performance, the possibility of multiple interpretations, and the variety of musical examples that can be analyzed. Through the synthesis of these elements, such assignments may help to increase students' perception of the relevance of music theory courses and may further equip them to become knowledgeable, well-rounded musicians.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In my thesis, I have discussed the question of how to increase the perceived relevance of music theory courses to undergraduate music students. I have explored three ways in which music theory pedagogy might be improved: by relating analysis to performance, by employing teaching strategies and choosing musical examples that encourage multiple analytical interpretations, and by increasing the role of variety in the theory classroom by including different types of assignments and musical genres. I have provided a broad, though by no means comprehensive, survey of the academic literature on these three primary areas. In addition to discussing the perspectives contained in these sources, I have proposed a three-fold sample assignment that incorporates elements of all three areas addressed in my thesis. By considering several avenues in which music theory pedagogy might be enhanced, my thesis has provided a synthesis of multiple perspectives and has offered practical suggestions for increasing the perceived relevance of music theory courses to undergraduate music students.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I explored the relationship between musical analysis and musical performance. As demonstrated in this chapter, interactions between analysts and performers can prove challenging; however, these interactions can be rewarding if they take place in supportive environments that encourage performers and analysts to share their perspectives through their preferred means of communication. In order to avoid perpetuating a tradition of separation between the musicians who analyze music and those who perform it, it is crucial to teach undergraduate music students that

mutually beneficial collaborations can occur between analysts and performers, that the roles of analyst and performer can be shared by each individual musician, and that the concepts students learn in music theory classes can influence their performance in tangible ways.

In the third chapter, I discussed the idea of using musical examples that are open to more than one interpretation, and I examined several pedagogical strategies that might stimulate students' thinking and encourage them to consider multiple interpretations in their musical analysis. This chapter also explored the topic of student-centered instruction and discussed the importance of enhancing students' critical thinking skills by training them to formulate insightful questions and to confront examples of musical ambiguity.

In the fourth chapter, I discussed the incorporation of variety into the music theory curriculum by using different types of assignments and by including examples from a variety of musical genres. The first part of this chapter examined several types of assignments—prose-writing exercises, composition projects, and pedagogical games—that might improve the learning experience of students by increasing the level of variety in music theory courses. The second part of the chapter addressed the use of examples from a variety of musical genres, including popular music and music from non-Western cultures. After surveying a number of sources from the scholarly literature, this chapter concluded that, at present, popular music seems more appropriate for analysis than music from non-Western cultures.

The fifth chapter offered a practical application of my research by describing a three-fold sample assignment designed in order to address the areas of analysis and

performance, multiple interpretations, and variety. This assignment included three one-page exercises that asked students to apply their knowledge of musical form to examples drawn from diverse genres such as classical, popular, and ragtime music. The chapter also detailed the responses of a number of undergraduate students who participated in the exercises. While some aspects of these exercises might still be improved, the comments of participating students were primarily positive. By encountering these or similar exercises, students may come to an increased understanding of the interaction of analysis and performance, the validity of multiple analytical interpretations, and the broad array of musical genres available for analysis.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Approval for Conducting Sample Exercises

BAYLOR
UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

One Bear Place #97310 Waco, TX 76798-7310 • (254) 710-3763 • FAX (254) 710-7309 • WEBSITE: www.baylor.edu/research/irb

DATE:	February 25, 2011
TO:	Angela Ripley, B.M.
FROM:	Baylor University Institutional Review Board
STUDY TITLE:	[220088-2] Investigation into Instructional Material Preferences of Music Theory Students
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Amendment/Modification
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	February 25, 2011
EXPIRATION DATE:	February 25, 2012
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited review category # *2*

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. Baylor University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Sherr at (254) 710-4483 or michael_sherr@baylor.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Sherr, Ph.D.
Chair, Baylor IRB

APPENDIX B

Copyright Permission Letter

HAL•LEONARD CORPORATION

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Tel: 414-774-3630
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July 5, 2011

Angela Ripley
5422 Maple Vista
San Antonio, TX 78247

RE: **Go The Distance**
from Walt Disney Pictures' HERCULES
Music by Alan Menken
Lyrics by David Zippel

Dear Ms. Ripley:

We hereby grant you permission to include the above-cited composition in your dissertation. Credit will be given directly under the music to be included as listed above. This permission is limited to use of the above-cited composition for purposes of your printed dissertation, and does not include any right to use the composition, or any part thereof, in any other publications, in any other formats, or for any commercial purposes.

Our fee for this usage is $15.00.

The terms of this agreement shall not be deemed effective unless and until we receive a countersigned copy of this letter, along with the fee cited above.

Sincerely,

Daniel Peters
Permissions Administrator
Business Affairs

Agreed to:

By Angela Ripley
Angela Ripley

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