Teaching Ear Training Online

Dr. Jenine Brown
Dr. Gary S. Karpinski
Outline of Today’s Webinar:

• Dr. Jenine Brown:
  • Teaching and assessing sight singing online (prepared singing, “at sight” singing, and other activities)

• Dr. Gary S. Karpinski:
  • Teaching and assessing listening skills online (dictation, transcription, and other activities)

• Q&A
In-person ear-training classes at Peabody:

- 25 minutes, M–F
- Classes consisted of teaching content, group singing, and dictation exercises
- To me, assessment of individual singing is not an effective use of class time.
Ways of assessing sight singing outside of class:

• “Prepared” singing assignments:
  • Videos submitted in Blackboard: 1x/wk

• “At sight” assignments:
Ways of assessing sight singing outside of class:

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- **Ensemble singing assignments: 1x/wk**
Multi-part singing assignment ideas:

- “Sing this duet with me”
- Record a video of yourself singing the treble clef part while listening to a recording of yourself singing the bass clef part.
- Record yourself singing all four parts of a Bach chorale in open score.
- Pairing students together and having them record different parts, etc.
Important considerations:

- Good online course development takes a long time.
- How can we translate our deeply personal class to an online setting? (Perhaps there are even some elements that work even better online!)
- Let go of trying to translate a face-to-face class 1:1 to the online setting and challenge yourself to embrace what online teaching offers. Be creative and adaptive!
Helpful tools:

▶ Sight-singing tools:
  – SmartMusic (home.smartmusic.com using the Chrome browser)
  – SoundCheck (www.noteflight.com/soundcheck)
  – Ear Master (www.earmaster.com)
  – Sight Reading Factory (www.sightreadingfactory.com)

▶ Applications that may improve synchronous performance in Zoom: cleanfeed.net, SoundJack, JamKazam, and Jamulus (I haven’t tried these myself.)

▶ Tuning apps (Tonal Energy, insTuner, etc.)

▶ *Singscope* (iOS app): Helps with intonation
A screenshot of *Singscope* from my iPhone after singing a C major scale.
Questions?

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Dictation, Transcription, and Other Listening Activities in the Age of Coronavirus

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Developing the ear is of the utmost importance
— Robert Schumann, *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln*

Listening is the most dangerous thing of all, listening means knowing
— Javier Marías, *A Heart So White*
Hard at work
NASM’s Only Listening Requirement

2. **Musicianship Skills and Analysis.** Students must acquire:

a. An understanding of the common elements and organizational patterns of music and their interaction, the ability to employ this understanding in aural, verbal, and visual analyses, and the ability to take aural dictation.

—NASM Handbook 2019-20, pp. 102-103
Pulse-Graph (Bartók, Bulgarian Dance No. 6)
Protonotation
Dictation
(5) Listen to the recording titled “Listening5” and write out a transcription of the soprano voice and the bass line on the staves below. Beneath the bass line, analyze the chords using Roman numerals and figured bass as best you can (some are hard to hear, I know!). Clearly indicate the key areas in your analysis. The first note you hear is a B. Use a 4 on the bottom of the meter sign.
Dictation

Transcription
Differences Between Dictation & Transcription
Differences Between Dictation & Transcription

Dictation
Differences Between Dictation & Transcription

Dictation

- specific number of playings
Differences Between Dictation & Transcription

Dictation

- specific number of playings
- time limit after each playing
Differences Between Dictation & Transcription

Dictation

- specific number of playings
- time limit after each playing
- each listening *in toto*
## Differences Between Dictation & Transcription

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A Model for Music Perception During Melodic Dictation

Focused attention
A Model for Music Perception during Melodic Dictation

Focused attention

Short-term melodic memory
A Model for Music Perception during Melodic Dictation

Focused attention

Short-term melodic memory

Understanding
A Model for Music Perception during Melodic Dictation

Focused attention

Short-term melodic memory

Understanding

Notation
The Effects of Substituting Transcription for Dictation

Focused attention

Short-term melodic memory

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Notation
Transcription Can Become a Pitch-Matching Exercise

Allegro comodo.

cantando

Moritz Moszkowski, Guitarre, Op. 45, No. 2, mm. 5-16
Transcription Can Become a Pitch-Matching Exercise

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Allegro comodo.
Problems with Audio Fidelity

- Frequency response
- bass register
- overtones

Distortion
Problems with Videoconferencing Software

- Latency (or “lag”)
- Dropouts
- Artifacts
- Freezing
Problems with Time to Submit Responses

- Scanning or photographing
- Uploading images
- Server functions
- Transmission
Default Zoom Audio Processing

[Image of a frequency analysis graph showing a reduction below 200 Hz and nothing above 8 kHz.]

Source: unimelb.edu.au
Adjust Zoom Settings for Better Audio

- Check the option to "Enable Original Sound" from microphone.

Audio Processing:
- Suppress Persistent Background Noise: Auto
- Suppress Intermittent Background Noise: Auto
- Echo Cancellation: Auto
Zoom “Original Sound” Audio

Source: unimelb.edu.au
Frequency Response — Apple EarPods

Source: rtings.com
Frequency Response — Sony MDRZX110 Headphones (ca. $15)

Source: rtings.com
Gary S. Karpinski

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https://www.rtings.com/headphones/tests/sound-quality/raw-frequency-response


______ (2011). The view from the aural skills classroom. Paper delivered to the 87th annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music.