

Report on the 2023 Workshops in Music Theory Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia

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Introduction

The sixth meeting of the Workshops in Music Theory Pedagogy convened from Monday, June 26 through Friday, June 30, 2023, at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. This occasion marked the first venue change for the workshops, which had been hosted by Gary Karpinski at the University of Massachusetts Amherst since the inaugural meeting in 2007.

This year, almost fifty participants from North America and beyond joined together at the workshops, the first meeting since 2019. As noted in the opening remarks by Gary Karpinski and Leigh VanHandel, the Co-Directors of the workshops, this year's meeting drew a diverse pool of attendees, continuing the trend set by the previous meetings. The meeting gathered graduate students at both master's and doctoral levels, faculties from a wide variety of university programs, and music instructors outside the higher education system. Not all attendees were music theorists by profession; many were music educators trained primarily in other sub-disciplines such as composition and performance. Nonetheless, they shared an interest in the latest research and techniques in music theory pedagogy and the goal of teaching music theory and aural skills more effectively. This make-up of participants at the workshops highlights the need for music theory pedagogy scholarship to invite input and collaboration from outside the music theory profession.

Over the five days of the workshops, Michael Callahan (Michigan State University), Nancy Rogers (Florida State University), Jena Root (Brown University), and Jennifer Snodgrass (Lipscomb University) joined the co-directors to deliver five sessions per day on a wide range of topics related to music theory pedagogy. In addition to the six speakers, Dylan Robinson (University of British Columbia) participated as a discussant in a Q & A session on the topics of inclusion, diversity, and decolonization. Topics of the twenty-five sessions surround four general themes: (1) reconsidering music-theoretical frameworks, (2) teaching and learning activities for the classroom and beyond, (3) pedagogical principles, and (4) curriculum reform and rebranding.

Reconsidering music-theoretical frameworks

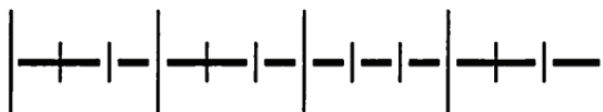
As Root remarked at the beginning of her presentation on the first day, the themes of the workshops show that the field of music theory pedagogy is shifting its emphasis from writing- or notation-based theory to aural skills. With this focus in mind, the speakers offered suggestions on how to reconsider music-theoretical frameworks to facilitate the shift toward listening-based music theory and its pedagogy.

In the first presentation of the workshops, titled “What is Truly Fundamental Aural-Skills Training?”, Karpinski discussed the application of protonotation for both rhythm and pitch training. Designed by Karpinski himself (1990), protonotation is a system of graphic representation that allows users to directly translate their listening experience into written form, while visually preserving the temporal relation between durations (Example 1a). Since protonotation is experience-based rather than notation-based, the graphic representation of music can be flexibly adapted to teach a wide range of rhythm-related topics. For example, as Karpinski suggested, protonotation is useful for teaching the concepts of simple vs. compound meters, as well as more advanced concepts such as hemiola, asymmetrical meters, and hypermeter. The use of protonotation can also extend to pitch elements in aural skills training, as solfège syllables can be added to protonotation to represent the tonal context of the pitches (Example 1b). Most importantly, Karpinski remarked that protonotation should serve as a tool—instead of a goal—for aural skills training. To illustrate this distinction, Karpinski offered an analogy between protonotation and the multiplication table: although students need to spend extra time to familiarize themselves with these tools, this effort is still worthwhile because these tools lay the foundation for further stages of learning. In other words, protonotation is not only useful as an introductory concept, but also as a tool that complements the music theory curriculum through different topics.

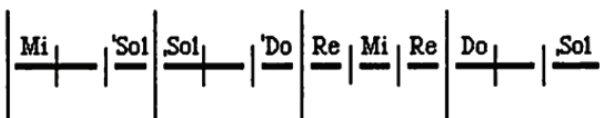
Melody provided for dictation:



(a) Protonotation for rhythm



(b) Protonotation for rhythm plus solfège annotations



Example 1

Examples of protonotation (adapted from Karpinski [1990, Figures 6 & 7])

On the issue of pitch solmization frameworks, Root introduced the concept of pitch-mapping—that is, the mental construction of a tonal network with both absolute and relative solmization systems. Absolute solmization systems are those that remain invariant according to tonal context, such as fixed-do solfège and letter names. On the other hand, relative solmization are key-dependent systems that offer information about the tonal hierarchy, such as movable-do solfège and scale degree numbers.¹ Root argued that such a tonal network would help students situate themselves in a key from any given note, by integrating the absolute and relative solmization systems. As a result, students would be able to understand the abstract relationship of pitches within a tonal context. In addition, they could also acquire a holistic “conceptual knowledge” that would be applicable to a wide range of tasks (VanHandel 2012), ranging from simpler ones such as spelling scales and generating the circle of fifths, to more advanced ones such as sight singing, dictation, and analysis.

In addition to chord notation systems commonly used in today’s music theory classroom, such as Roman Numerals and jazz chord symbols, Snodgrass advocated

¹ Root referred to Karpinski (2021a) for a more detailed discussion of the rationale behind the choice of solmization systems. Root preferred the combination of the use of letter names and movable-do solfège.

for the use of the Nashville Number System (NNS) as a viable alternative for chord notation. The NNS is a notation system developed by commercial musicians in Nashville, TN in which chords are represented by numbers corresponding to each step of the major scale—i.e., the tonic chord is given the number 1, the supertonic is 2, and so on.² As Snodgrass demonstrated, the NNS can be a valuable addition to the music theory classroom as it concisely shows multiple elements of musical structure, including key, form, harmonic rhythm, and meter. It can also be a guide for improvisation activities (to be further discussed below) as it allows room for students to improvise on a given musical blueprint. More importantly, by introducing this notation system originating from Music Row, instructors can tear down the walls between classical and commercial musicians in their classrooms and facilitate a more inclusive environment that allows both types of students to thrive.

Teaching and learning activities for the classroom and beyond

To supplement their recommendations about music-theoretical concepts, speakers at the workshops offered concrete suggestions regarding teaching and learning activities that can be implemented both in and outside the music theory classroom and illustrated the effectiveness of the activities through demonstrating them with the participants. A pedagogical principle that underlies many of the suggested activities is the idea of scaffolding, whereby teaching and learning activities build towards more challenging skills through more easily reachable ones, with careful consideration regarding the scope and difficulty involved. In addition, a recurring reminder from the speakers was that learning goals for all activities should be explicitly identified and made known to the students. Accordingly, the activities should be kept succinct, with all tasks and instructions directed toward their scaffolded goals.

Teaching and learning activities proposed by the speakers cover both rhythm- and pitch-based aural skills training. Callahan described a series of activities for rhythm training, in which the tasks are scaffolded from the concrete to the abstract: In the elementary activities, the pulse and/or its subdivisions are always sounded, either in the musical example or by the student (e.g., by clapping). As students progress, the pulses are no longer sounded, albeit still explicit through embodiment (e.g., with students conducting by hand or finger-tapping silently). The next level of scaffolding would render the pulse totally implicit, and students would internalize and audiate

2 McMakin and Snodgrass (2021) gives the background of the NNS and discusses its importance in both the commercial and the academic world, whereas de Clercq (2019) offers a more comprehensive account of notations used in the NNS.

the pulse and its subdivisions while performing complex rhythms. This scaffolding trajectory from the concrete to the abstract trains students to reduce their reliance on a sounded pulse and contextualize complex rhythms within an abstract and internalized metric grid, thus building up their rhythmic proficiency.

Moving onto the pitch-based realm for aural skills training, Callahan offered ideas for teaching and learning activities both in and outside the classroom. These activities require students' active participation through performance (singing and/or playing). In the classroom, a basic exercise comprises singing a melody over a tonic drone. By drawing students' attention to harmonic intervals between the moving melody and the tonic drone, this exercise can help students establish the sense of tonality and prepare them for more complex sight singing tasks.³ After students are able to sight-sing with a sounding tonal referent, Callahan's scaffolding strategy would require students to sight-sing in conditions where the sense of tonic has to be internalized and audiated. For example, students would sight-sing while playing a bass line on a pitched instrument or tapping a different rhythm. Through these more complicated tasks, students can learn to handle an independent melodic contour and rhythm in sight singing. Additionally, for institutions with a piano lab, Callahan described various activities that allow students to explore various concepts, such as intervals, scales, and chord progressions, at the piano. By incorporating a performance element in teaching music theory, instructors can encourage students to engage with the materials through listening, which constitutes an essential part of understanding the music.

Beyond the classroom, Callahan argued that music theory and aural skills assignments should also involve a performance component, which students fulfill outside the classroom. As suggested by Callahan, one common reason why students struggle in music theory courses is that they do not engage with the music through listening. To rectify this issue, Callahan requires that when his students submit written assignments, they should also submit a recording of them playing their music on an instrument. This strategy not only encourages students to proofread their work aurally but also trains their musicianship with respect to both sound and notation. For multi-part music, Callahan encouraged students—especially those with limited keyboard skills—to use free online software (such as those used for creating virtual choirs: <https://easyvirtualchoir.com/>) to overdub individual voices in the texture

3 Callahan drew a parallel between this “sing with a drone” exercise with other sight singing methods that foreground the importance of a tonal context, such as the Dalcroze approach (Ristow, Thomsen, and Urista 2014) and the Jersild approach (Rogers 1996).

after recording themselves playing each voice separately. The practice of overdubbing offers the additional advantage of cultivating a voice-based—instead of chordal or “vertical”—understanding of polyphonic texture. Nonetheless, as Callahan admitted, technology could pose obstacles to including a recording component in assignments. Consequently, in such assignments, the quality of the recording should not be evaluated; only its completion should be required, and instructors should provide sufficient technical guidelines beforehand.

Both Rogers and Root introduced improvisation and composition exercises as an accessible and effective option for class activities. These exercises are versatile as the amount of prerequisite knowledge required can be minimal. To Rogers, students can start improvising in the early stage of learning for various goals, such as familiarizing themselves with a (pitch or rhythm) solmization system. In simple improvisation exercises, for example, students can work in pairs to construct four-bar phrases by taking turns improvising a one-measure pitch or rhythmic pattern with a solmization system. In addition to practicing their solfège, this task can also generate a large amount of material for meta-analysis. That is, students can learn about stylistic elements observed in their improvisations, such as repetition, imitation, cadence, or even more advanced concepts like sentence and period constructions. Similarly, Root suggested that improvisation exercises can be integrated into classroom activities almost any time. As long as students at least have some grasp of rhythm, they can start improvising and composing, without having to include pitch elements. To prevent the idea of unstructured improvisation from intimidating students, Root suggested that students could base their compositions on a given template while trying out different possibilities. For example, students can take any familiar tune (e.g., the carol “Silent Night” as in her presentation) as a starting point, from which they could alter certain elements (e.g., pitches) while keeping some others (e.g., rhythm) invariant. The product of this guided recomposition exercise could then be used for various analytic demonstrations, such as comparing the intervals and motifs in the original and recomposed versions. Alternatively, the instructor could also set specific prompts regarding intervallic and motivic contents in the recomposition and use this exercise for interval training. In sum, while having minimal prerequisites, improvisation and composition activities can be used to achieve a wide range of learning goals and build students’ competence in multiple areas.

Harmonic and melodic dictation is another teaching and learning activity that was discussed by speakers at the workshops. Acknowledging the difficulty of harmonic dictation for some students, Rogers proposed several “on-ramp” exercises through

which students can gradually build their ability to perform the task. To Rogers, the key to successful harmonic dictation boils down to the ability to aurally extract one voice from a thicker texture. Accordingly, she suggested that instructors could start by giving students a two-voice polyphony and asking them to dictate each part's rhythm (but not the pitches). This introductory two-voice rhythmic dictation exercise could train students' ability to separate multiple voices and compartmentalize the musical information, without the cognitive burden of pitch-finding. Moreover, Rogers offered solutions to the common problem that, in harmonic dictations, students simply guess the chords from the outer voices instead of actually recognizing the harmonies (Stevens 2016). She advocated a play-and-pause approach, with which she would pause on a certain chord in the progression and ask students to answer contextual questions about the chord, depending on the students' level and the inventory of concepts already introduced. For example, at a more introductory level, students should be able to tell the harmonic function of the chord in question. For more advanced students, the identification could relate to chromaticism and tonicization. By breaking down the task of harmonic dictation into mini tasks related to specific concepts in addition to Roman Numerals per se, this approach could help students listen in a more holistic way and maximize the effectiveness of harmonic dictation.

As important as the content and approach to dictation is how instructors should grade students' work and provide feedback. Noting that only one-fifth of schools have a standard grading system for dictations, Karpinski guided participants through his grading process first by identifying different kinds of errors that can happen in dictation: pitch errors, rhythm errors, notational issues (e.g., issues with stems and beams), and what Karpinski called "global errors" that affect the entire dictation, such as wrong key signatures and clefs. By weighting the points allocated to each of the four kinds of errors, instructors can create a clear grading rubric and provide it to the students for their reference. (For instance, there should be a certain number of points assigned to pitch and rhythm respectively, with a certain amount of possible deductions for notational and global errors.) While points can be simply deducted for each pitch error, Karpinski suggested that rhythm errors should be evaluated with respect to the type of conceptual error. For example, if a student consistently mixes up quarter and eighth notes, that should amount to one conceptual error in the rhythmic aspect. The evaluation of notational details can vary according to the class's level (e.g., more important for elementary courses, but less so for more advanced ones). Given the far-reaching effect of global errors on a dictation, instructors should only take points away once for each of those errors and grade the student's work within the

context of the error, such that the rest of the dictation can be evaluated more fairly and meaningfully.

In addition to addressing the assessment and evaluation of students' dictation, Karpinski argued that it is also important for instructors to diagnose the source of students' errors in dictation, such that solutions for improvement can be offered. Expanding on his discussion in *The Routledge Companion to Aural Skills Pedagogy* (2021b), Karpinski reminded participants at the workshops that students' unsatisfactory performance in dictation might not be due to a lack of musical abilities. On the contrary, deficiency in attention could be a reason for unsuccessful dictation. Therefore, before doubting students' musical understanding and proficiency in musical notation, instructors should make sure students can complete the dictation work in an environment that is free of distraction. In addition to focused attention, short-term memory is another non-music-specific skill that is essential for successful dictation. Quoting George Miller's (1956) seminal study on mental information processing, Karpinski suggested that dictation errors are often caused by misremembering, which is unsurprising given the limited capacity of short-term memory. Therefore, instructors should be mindful of the length of musical examples given for dictation or break a longer phrase into sections to allow time for students to process the information without being overloaded. Of course, dictation errors can also come from issues with musical understanding or proficiency with notation. In sum, dictation errors can be a result of issues in different phases of the cognitive process. As tempting as it may be, providing more dictation exercises or repeating the dictation materials does not necessarily help. Instead, to find solutions for improving students' dictation performance, instructors need to review students' dictations, observe how they work, and identify the source of the problems.

Extending Karpinski's suggestions of assessing dictation, Snodgrass offered ways to improve the effectiveness of assessment more generally. Commonly used assessment styles such as essays and multiple-choice exams do not necessarily showcase students' strengths and tend to disadvantage students who struggle with the rigidity of traditional testing. Snodgrass outlined many non-traditional options for assessment that still gather necessary information from students. For quick and informal assessments, instructors could create online quizzes and games with the many new and exciting online platforms available. These interactive and real-time assessments allow for formative assessment while being engaging and educational. In addition, there are also online whiteboard programs that allow students to answer discussion questions anonymously, thus encouraging greater participation than open-

ended discussions. Another valuable suggestion for assessments from Snodgrass is what she has dubbed as a “Thury,” or a “Theory Jury.” A “Thury” is essentially an oral alternative to writing an essay or short answers: students schedule one-on-one meetings with the instructor to discuss a certain topic, and the instructor could give immediate feedback and understand students’ misconceptions more easily. In this form of assessment, students are more likely to be thorough in answering questions. Although time-consuming, this method allows for direct feedback, gives students immediate grades, and accommodates students who may not be able to show their understanding in a traditional test or essay format.

Pedagogical principles

Speakers at the workshops devoted much attention to how music theory instructors can improve their teaching by incorporating principles derived from the latest research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). In one of her sessions, Rogers addressed the intimidation that students feel in music theory courses with a demonstration of how to harness students’ unconscious knowledge, thus showing that music theory is more accessible than some may believe. Rogers’s demonstration started by having “students”—i.e., the workshop’s participants—sing the cadential bassline of a chord progression up to the predominant. Rogers played the progression in two slightly altered versions to show how students would unconsciously add an additional dominant chord when the predominant chord falls on a metrically weak beat (Example 2). Rogers attributed this addition to the general preference that cadences should fall on strong beats of a measure. By repeating this exercise and adding the soprano line and inner voices using common voice-leading patterns, students are guided effortlessly to arrive at the cadential 6/4 chord, which can be a tricky concept to introduce to students. Through this demonstration, Rogers showed that it is important to let students approach music theory through listening, instead of fixating on notation. Consequently, seemingly intimidating concepts could be more lucid than students once believed.

Pre-dominant on strong beat

I V⁶ I I⁶ IV V I

Pre-dominant on weak beat

I V⁴ I⁶ IV V⁴⁻⁸ 3 I

Example 2

Rogers's examples of chord progressions for harnessing students' unconscious knowledge and introducing the cadential 6/4.

Building on her discussion in the abovementioned session, Rogers outlined the importance of teaching musical ideas in context. For example, out-of-context interval drills are not nearly as effective as drills in the context of tonal music. Similarly, rhythmic dictation can be much more effective when presented with pitch, as the presence of a melodic contour facilitates students' intuitive listening. Musical context is also important in helping students make the right creative choices. For example, when students are tasked with harmonizing a melody, they often think about every possible chord rather than what is most likely, even though this approach is ineffective and does not help develop their sense of functional harmony. In this case, since students should already have some knowledge of common progressions and cadences, Rogers suggested that the instructor could present questions to guide students to consider the likely harmonies. These questions can prompt students to think about the type of cadence that occurs in the melody and the typical progressions that lead to that type of cadence. Overall, Rogers consolidated previous ideas on how the instructor could harness students' unconscious knowledge and offer musical context to improve the effectiveness of teaching.

VanHandel presented an overview of music and memory based on a study of cognition and mathematics pedagogy. Through this session, VanHandel concluded that an excessive cognitive load could impede students' memory and obstruct their learning. In order to reduce cognitive load on students, instructors should reduce the

amount of intrinsic and extraneous load—that is, the difficulty of the task and the uncontrollable elements that conflict with the task respectively. To reduce intrinsic load, it is important to highlight important information, which can be achieved through proper formatting and presentation of teaching materials, such that students do not have to weed through bulky writing to get to the necessary concepts. Removing extraneous load could be as easy as removing irrelevant information from task instructions, reducing the noise level in the room, and refraining from talking or playing music while students are working. Overall, for instructors, it is important to understand that *how* information is taught is equally as important as *what* is taught.

Echoing VanHandel’s discussion on reducing cognitive load for students, Rogers highlighted the importance of using clear language and the danger of using confusing yet similar terminologies in the classroom. The nature of music theory requires students to remember terminologies related to different musical elements. Rogers stressed the importance of correctly remembering, differentiating, and applying these terms for music students. However, as experts of the subject, music theory instructors often forget how similar, and therefore confusing, much of the music theory language can be. For example, while the “root” and the “bass” of a chord could be the same in some contexts, their theoretical identities should not be mistaken. Similarly, the word “seven” can refer to different things, even at the same time, such as the seventh scale degree, the chord built on that scale degree, and the added seventh of a chord. As a result, verbal constructions for concepts like the applied chord vii^{o7}/VII (“seven diminished seventh of seven”) can cause students extreme confusion. To avoid this, Rogers suggested instructors remain aware of students’ progress in the music theory sequence and avoid introducing new terms before they are properly explained. Repeating new terms with synonyms can also help students place the vocabulary in their minds. Finally, it is important to correct students’ misuse of vocabulary, especially in early courses in the sequence, to prevent further misconception.

In the last two days of the workshops, Callahan discussed the application of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) on music theory pedagogy. Callahan presented various teaching approaches derived from SoTL that help students succeed, including the method of interleaving (Kornell and Bjork 2008; Taylor and Rohrer 2010; Rohrer, Dedrick, and Burgess 2014). Interleaving refers to the practice of presenting related concepts at the same time while alternating between them. Interleaving information has proven to be more helpful for knowledge retention than blocking—that is, introducing concepts one at a time and expecting students to master each concept before moving on to the next one. By learning in an interleaved manner,

students understand the similarities and differences between topics and therefore differentiate between them with increased success. In the music theory classroom, this could look like rotating through composition, harmonization, analysis, listening, and improvisation in the same course, instead of separating them into different courses and levels. However, this method does come with its downsides. Because multiple topics are being introduced at the same time, mastery of all these topics takes longer to achieve. In order to monitor students' progress while being fair with the grading at the same time, in the early part of the term, instructors should give students low-stakes assessments, i.e., informal assessments that are graded mostly by completion. Consequently, at the end of the term, students will have a heavy workload from summative assessments that account for a large portion of the final grade. Nevertheless, as Callahan summarized at the end of his presentation, the takeaway from his experience with SoTL is that music theory pedagogy can, and should, learn from pedagogical findings from other disciplines.

Curriculum reform and rebranding

Responding to the diverse needs of students in today's music theory classroom, speakers at the workshops proposed ways to reform the undergraduate curriculum and rebrand the field. Based on their experience of reforming the curricula at Appalachian State University (App State) and Michigan State University (MSU) respectively, Snodgrass and Callahan described the background and the outcome of the curricular reforms at their institutions. Snodgrass stated the importance of considering the "why" behind the reforms, instead of the "what" and the "how": Why are you teaching this concept? Why are you using that example?—and more controversially—Why do students need to study music theory? For the latter, the answer will depend on the context of the institution and student body. At her former institution of App State, Snodgrass noted that most students are enrolled in the Music Education program, and a survey of alumni found that they felt unprepared for certain aspects of their jobs after graduation. From this, Snodgrass and her colleagues were able to add more relevant courses such as additional choral and band literature classes and remove those that proved to be irrelevant.

After Snodgrass' session on the "why" behind curricular changes at App State, Callahan discussed the "why" of their curricular reform at MSU. The goals at MSU were to represent classical music with a broader set of composer identities, engage meaningfully with music outside of the Eurocentric tradition, allow greater student

participation in class content design, and prioritize creative musicianship over abstract writing. Successfully achieving these aims, the updated curriculum still begins with a core theory sequence, followed by a substantial list of elective theory topics. By narrowing down the core theory sequence and adding more upper-level music theory courses, students can enroll in courses that will be more applicable to their futures as musicians.

Aligning with her overall theme of rebranding music theory and connecting it to the practice of commercial music, Snodgrass illustrated how music theory is applicable beyond academia and used every day in the Nashville commercial music scene. Snodgrass reported the personal experiences of Nashville musicians with music theory and shared their suggestions of knowledge and skills that students need for a career in the industry. In addition to an understanding of harmony and form using the Nashville Number System, these skills include more general musicianship skills, such as a trained ear with the ability to pick up melodies or harmonies spontaneously and the ability to improvise to a given musical framework. These suggestions from commercial musicians indicate that aural skills training in the university classroom—such as the curricular content and learning activities suggested by speakers at the workshops—is not only applicable in an academic setting, but also helpful in preparing students for a career in commercial music. These insights into how music theory is used by practicing commercial musicians offer a new way with which instructors can rebrand music theory to demonstrate its relevance to students' aspirations.

During an interactive Q & A session at the workshops, Dylan Robinson shared his thoughts about how issues of representation and decolonization can change the way music theory is taught in today's classroom. One of the recurring themes in Robinson's work is positionality, which refers to how a person's unique identity and experiences shape their understanding of the world, including musical knowledge (Tetreault 2012). Most workshop participants acknowledged they were unfamiliar with the concept of positionality despite the growing importance of decolonial pedagogy in the field of music theory.⁴ Robinson argued that the generalized listener does not exist; instead, given the diverse composition of students, multiple listening perspectives exist for any piece of music. As a result, in the music theory classroom, it is important to have conversations about each one's different listening experience. Robinson suggested that this exchange of musical perspectives constitutes a novel type of ear-training, through which both students and teachers acquire new ways of listening to music.

⁴ A recent article in the *JMTP* addresses this issue and suggests strategies to decolonize undergraduate music theory curricula (Reid 2022).

As one participant mentioned during the Q & A session with Robinson, while the process of decolonizing the music theory classroom often involves teaching music beyond the Western classical canon (VanHandel 2020; Reid 2022), there is also the fear of misrepresentation as instructors introduce repertoires which they are unfamiliar with. Robinson responded to this concern by making three suggestions. First, before teaching the materials, instructors should situate their knowledge of the repertoire. By reflecting on the partiality of their knowledge, they could then understand how their teaching could consequently be affected. Second, it is important to privilege those who have a holistic knowledge about the musical culture. This can be done by consulting and crediting research conducted by expert practitioners and scholars and studying the broader history, culture, and aesthetics that surround the music. Last, Robinson emphasized the importance of spending substantial time to build a relationship with the community in question and to understand their musical culture.

Conclusion

Overall, this year's workshop has gone above and beyond the call to action by addressing the source of issues in the realm of music theory pedagogy and providing new and updated suggestions moving forward. After many presentations with invaluable practical pedagogical suggestions and advice, one of the last sessions at the workshops addressed a more personal issue that concerns the participants, including students and faculty. Snodgrass shared her reflection on her career path, which might be shared by most music theory instructors: completing graduate studies, succeeding in the academic job market, and eventually landing a tenure-track professorship. But for those who are not sure about the academic career path, what should they do? Snodgrass led the room through a series of self-directed questions for participants to uncover their purposes and missions: Why did I start to do music theory and a teaching-and-research career? What do I want to be known for? What does living well mean for me as a graduate student/faculty member/etc.? While Snodgrass helped participants develop a purpose and mission statement with these questions, our readers could possibly also benefit from reflecting on them. In addition to reconsidering music-theoretical frameworks, designing effective teaching and learning activities, understanding pedagogical principles, and developing a successful curriculum, what matters as much to today's music theory instructors is perhaps finding their purposes and missions, which is probably one of the most important motivations and empowerment for them to become better teachers.

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