

Search-Solve-Sing: A Group Presentation Model to Strengthen Practice and Performance Techniques in Upper-Level Aural Skills Classes

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Whether in a high school or college, from conservatories to liberal arts colleges, singing prepared melodies in upper-level aural skills classes presents unique challenges that differ from those of lower levels. While lower-level aural skills melodies tend to incorporate strings of predictable tonal gestures, upper-level aural skills melodies are often complex and require audiation and pre-analysis even for the most accomplished students. This article presents an aural skills lesson model titled Search-Solve-Sing: a three-part plan for preparing and presenting aural skills melodies that puts small groups of students in charge of analyzing, performing, and teaching in the aural skills classroom.

In Search-Solve-Sing students work in groups to identify simple sections and troubleshoot challenging ones in a melody (the search and solve portions of the process) as they prepare a lesson plan to present to the class. This is followed by a group performance, and subsequent whole-class performance, of the melody (sing!). Through small group work, students engage more deeply with course materials, develop stronger sight-singing abilities, and reap the benefits of learning from one another. Search-Solve-Sing is a student presentation model that flips the aural skills classroom and allows students to teach and learn from one another.



Introduction

Singing prepared melodies in upper-level aural skills classes presents unique challenges that differ from those of lower levels. While lower-level aural skills melodies tend to incorporate a string of predictable and common tonal gestures, melodies presented to upper-level aural skills students are often long and complex and require audiation and pre-analysis even for the most accomplished students. Stacey Davis explains that audiation is still necessary in sight singing—students should not jump in without first hearing at least parts of a melody in their heads. “Audiation could be considered a form of ‘sight-hearing,’ which is a natural counterpart to the other typical aural skills activity of sight-singing.”¹ Regardless of skill level, while preparing a melody for class, students may either think of it as something to simply sing through (or memorize!) without any sort of critical engagement or dismiss the task as too

1 Davis (2010, 40).

difficult and give up. Building upon Anna Stephan-Robinson's "mini-lessons," this article presents an aural skills lesson model that puts small groups of students in charge of analyzing, performing, and teaching melodies in the aural skills classroom.² Titled *Search-Solve-Sing*, it is a student presentation model that flips the aural skills classroom and allows students to teach and learn from one another.

Search-Solve-Sing is a three-part plan for preparing and presenting aural skills melodies. The model involves breaking students into groups to work on a melody, about which they then prepare a mini-lesson. Students work through a melody by identifying simple sections and troubleshooting difficult passages as they prepare a melody lesson plan, which they then present to the class (the *search* and *solve* portions of the process). This is followed by a group performance, and subsequent whole-class performance, of the melody (*sing!*). Through small group work, students engage more deeply with course materials (including more obvious overlap with written theory concepts), develop stronger sight-singing abilities (because they have brainstormed, modeled, and observed other students model how to approach tricky passages), and reap the benefits of learning from one another. In addition, students practice analyzing melodies for phrase, hierarchical, and implied harmonic structure. Gary S. Karpinski explains the value of preparing melodies;

We are generally unable to perform at sight that which we have not yet learned. To become better sight readers we must indeed do lots of sight reading; but to be able to read, interpret, and perform new musical figures we must first encounter such figures in a variety of settings and work them out in practice sessions during which they can be isolated from one or more other musical parameters so as to focus on the very thing to be learned.³

The *Search-Solve-Sing* method presented in this article empowers students by asking them to work together and lead the class in groups, which gives students a sense of agency and control over course materials.

Why is the Search-Solve-Sing Model Effective?

A common obstacle in aural skills classes stems from students' varying background experiences. This is an even bigger issue in earlier levels because students lack the shared foundation they gain as a group in the first few aural skills and music theory courses, but early ability often carries through into the higher levels as well, especially

2 Stephan-Robinson (2018, 111).

3 Karpinski (2000, 189).

with regard to student confidence. This skill disparity challenges instructors to keep higher-skilled students engaged without overwhelming the lower-skilled students. As Cora S. Palfy writes, “pedagogues tend to find that selecting one group to focus on within the varying ranges (such as ‘teaching down’ to students who need extra help, ‘teaching up’ for experts, or aiming for the middle experience level) will inevitably isolate one or more groups within the classroom—experts feeling bored, novices feeling lost, etc.”⁴ Moreover, students are often aware of where they fall on the skill spectrum as Yayoi Uno Everett writes, “most students are aware of their weaknesses but have few clues for overcoming them.”⁵ Group work is one pedagogical method to help encourage student involvement across skill levels while minimizing individual anxiety.⁶

Group work helps ease student anxiety about learning and performing melodies while also giving the students the benefit of one another’s expertise. More skilled students are challenged to find a way to explain and break down skills for struggling students (aural error detection is, of course, a valuable skill on its own); struggling students learn from their peers in a way that is less pressure-inducing than learning in a whole-class setting or directly from the instructor. As Karpinski notes, “Error detection and correction are indeed indispensable skills that all musicians should possess to a useful degree... . The more adept musicians are at detecting and correcting discrepancies between sound and notation, the more often such errors can be corrected and even avoided in their own performances.”⁷ Moreover, group work uses direct, rather than passive, engagement.⁸ Similar to learning in secondary language courses, I have witnessed aural skills groups in which students of varying levels work together and learn from one another.⁹ In constructing groups of varying student skill levels the method prevents “less able pupils... [from] being stigmatized and exposed to a

4 Palfy (2019, 376).

5 Everett (1997, 27).

6 Flannery (2018).

7 Karpinski (2000, 130).

8 For more information on this distinction, see Benware and Deci (1984); Wingfield and Black (2005); and Wolff, Wagner, Poznanski, Schiller, and Santen (2015).

9 Studies on learning a secondary language (L2) show that “mixed proficiency pairs may form collaborative and expert/novice relationships that are conducive to L2 learning.” Storch and Aldosari (2012, 47).

‘dumbed-down’ curriculum.”¹⁰ Group work encourages students to engage with and learn from one another, puts students in control of their aural skills development and alleviates some of the pressure of performing for the class.

Performance anxiety is common for musicians on their primary instrument, but for non-vocalists, aural skills classes often create an added level of stress because faculty ask students to perform on an “instrument” with which they are less comfortable. Just as with dictations, performing even well prepared melodies in an aural skills classroom can induce great amounts of student anxiety.¹¹ Even the most supportive of student peers can be intimidating in a larger class setting, and, as a pedagogue, I am often left to wonder about the value of such performances on students’ long-term growth as musicians. To combat this issue, the *Search-Solve-Sing* model puts the onus on the students to learn the melodies together while also asking them to catch and troubleshoot any areas within that melody other students might find challenging. The students must present solutions that are not simply to drill an interval or tricky passage, but to engage with *why*, musically and structurally, a particular passage presents a challenge, and what creative solutions model more informed practice techniques.

The Process

Before we sing the melody, we go through the *Search-Solve-Sing* model together as a class using a warm-up melody that incorporates the concept or strategy we plan to focus on that day.¹² I project the melody to show how I mark the score, and students have a paper copy of the melody in front of them as well. I prompt the class with directed questions, which students have printed, and we work together to answer the questions for the warm-up melody. This important pre-discussion gives the students a full approach for the melody without taking up much class time (roughly five to ten minutes). Students take notes on the chart or in their score as needed- I do not require or collect the tables. If we stumble when we sing the melody after carrying out this

¹⁰ Glass (2002, 5.20).

¹¹ Rifkin and Urista (2006, 57) explain that dictations “can create a debilitating anxiety that impedes learning, especially for the weaker students... [and] can polarize the class. The students with [perfect] pitch become bored, while the other students become anxious, even resentful.”

¹² At my school, a liberal arts institution centered on engaged learning, aural skills classes meet twice a week. My typical structure for upper-level courses is to have one day focused solely on singing and the other on dictations (with singing incorporated as well). This model works well for the singing-focused day, and I use it almost every week in upper-level aural skills classes.

analysis, we debrief together, evaluating what was successful and challenging in the performance. We add to the *solve* section if need be and then try again.

As the semester progresses, students know what to look for and become faster at the process. This fluency then carries through into their sight-singing exams where they quickly scan melodies and anticipate and think through potential pitfalls before singing. It leads to a more melodically-informed tonic finder (a tonally idiomatic warm-up phrase that establishes a key—see Example 1) as well, which then makes it more likely that students will both correctly sing chromatically-altered pitches and anticipate those pitches' resolution points.¹³



Example 1
Basic Tonic Finder.

Once we are warmed up, I break the class into groups of 3–4 students. I try to make sure each group has one more experienced student, and at least one student who is less confident or experienced. Note that student strength or weakness is not necessarily related to student confidence or comfort with singing or the group—often some very experienced students are shy about performing, while some less experienced students are confident enough to perform. I assign each group a different melody and give them fifteen minutes to work. Groups may stay in the classroom, or they may go elsewhere—typically one group stays in the classroom while others go into a practice room, an empty classroom, or outdoors. Students structure these group meetings themselves, but I model the ideal approach over the first few classes so they have a point of reference.

The students have three primary objectives to cover in their meeting: first, to quickly identify and dismiss recognizable and thus easily-executable passages; second, to identify and diagnose any problematic areas; and third, to carry out a structural or hierarchical analysis of the melody to give their peers a better overview of how to conceptualize that melody.

¹³ Karpinski (2000, 151ff) provides further information on how to teach and use tonic finders.

Search

Groups work together to, first, analyze their melody for recognizable patterns (sequences, arpeggiations, scalar passages, etc.).¹⁴ Much of earlier aural skills education is simply teaching students to recognize and execute certain common melodic gestures, such as *mi-fa-mi*, *mi-re-do*, or *do-sol-do* (we use moveable *do*). Ideally, students will be able to quickly diagnose and dismiss these kinds of patterns in the first step of this process, aiding in their ability to “chunk” the melody and form a plan to efficiently work through it. Karpinski defines “chunking” as the ability to “hear and immediately understand such features as scalar passages, triads, repetitions, sequences, modulations, and rhythmic patterns... [which] afford[s] listeners the opportunity to encode music in meaningful chunks, thereby dramatically reducing the number of memorable ‘bits’ in a passage.”¹⁵ This is an important skill—students who are able to quickly dismiss a section as familiar is able to then devote more time to new musical information. As Davis explains,

[G]ood sight-readers have better chunking ability, which reflects their understanding of musical structure, expectation, and grouping. For instance, it is advantageous to recognize a triad or seventh chord as a single entity rather than as multiple, individual pitches. Noticing such patterns reduces the amount to be remembered and facilitates the performance of unfamiliar music.¹⁶

These are the uncomplicated sections that they can easily categorize based on familiar prototypical patterns.¹⁷ This portion of the meeting should be quick and should take up very little time in the ultimate presentation. Chunking the melody then also helps establish “anchor” pitches to help students orient themselves if the performance gets off track.¹⁸ While this portion of the meeting is brief, it is extremely important—

14 Karpinski (2000, 163). This step is essentially a long version of Karpinski’s “mumbling”—a useful tool in sight singing, but one that, for many students, must be taught in small steps. “Mumbling” is “a kind of rapid reading that stands somewhere between freely scanning out of sequence on the one hand and reading actively in real time on the other. Its main goal is to point up salient aspects of pitch that will provide anchor points along the way and help to keep the actual sight singing moving as smoothly as possible.”

15 Karpinski (2000, 73-5).

16 Davis (2010, 45-6).

17 Roberts (1986).

18 Karpinski (2000, 69) defines “melodic anchoring” as a “cognitive means of processing melodic pitches into hierarchical relationships. . . [which] helps organize pitches into what may be more easily memorized structures.”

it works on students' ability to scan a melody efficiently in a novel sight-reading scenario, and thus strengthens the resulting performance.

Solve

Second, students identify any potentially problematic areas in the melody. When students find a problematic passage, they first work to answer *why* a particular passage presents a challenge. This allows them to more easily identify potential solutions to that problem. Rifkin and Urista explain, “in traditional dictation practice, skills are usually assessed solely in terms of the final stage—notation. Errors in a student’s finished exercise will indicate the existence of a problem but won’t necessarily reveal the source of the problem or its solution.”¹⁹ Students regularly make mistakes when singing but diagnosing the *why* behind a mistake is an important skill that requires development. Mistakes are also often dependent on the individual—some students are particularly weak around *fa*, for example, or regularly struggle with leaps of a fourth. In response to this obstacle, a thoughtful approach to group structure is important. If I group all of the more experienced students together, they may have trouble identifying passages that cause less experienced students to stumble. If all less experienced students are grouped together, they may struggle with part one, or to come up with effective practice techniques for tricky passages.

Moreover, understanding why certain mistakes are logical while others are not is an important skill. As Stacey Davis writes,

[I]ncorrectly played pitches that violate tonal context are perceptually different than those that remain suitable in the prevailing key,” and “errors that do not disrupt tonal, metric, or harmonic context are considered ‘reasonable’ and are easily overlooked. Knowing that these errors are less noticeable might help to explain many student strengths and weaknesses.²⁰

Bruno H. Repp notes that “even errors that have been detected still vary in degree of severity, and a listener probably could rate them accordingly. Errors then are a matter of degree.”²¹ Students should focus on melodic expectations or how a particular melody may challenge them. Then, in their presentation, students can say something like: “We expected the melody to go to *mi* because of the preceding *fa*, but instead it goes to *fi* and so we practiced it by...”. Indeed, there is a sort of hierarchy to mistakes

19 Rifkin and Urista (2006, 57-8).

20 Davis (2010, 52 and 61).

21 Repp (1996, 179).

in sight singing—when the implied harmony is dominant, expecting *fa* as the chordal seventh to resolve to *mi* is a musically logical assumption. Expecting *fa* to leap to *do*, or somewhere like *le*, is not musically logical in this context.

I ask students to incorporate a hierarchical and structural analysis into their meeting and presentation. Recognizing the overarching system helps students recognize similar scenarios in other melodies, thus deepening the prototypical melodic pool from which they draw. David Castro writes, “Therefore within cognition literature the preferred term for this phenomenon is now tonality, which means the mental construct by which we orient ourselves toward a single pitch and hear other pitches as being related to it in a hierarchical relationship.”²² Orienting themselves within the system, and establishing and maintaining fluency enough to rely on the anchor pitches set up by the chunking process of step one, helps students develop a kind of hierarchical or structural fluency within melodies. Examining the melody as a whole and creating relationships across sections of that melody keeps students from focusing too hard on the note-by-note, thus missing the proverbial forest for the trees. Occasionally focusing on intervals may be necessary, but “the occasional use of intervals in order to understand or identify melodic events does not negate the importance of tonality, which remains a more fundamental system.”²³ Moreover, analyzing a melody at this hierarchical level asks students to think critically about that melody. It is not simply “this note not that note,” but rather “why this note instead of that note,” which leads to a more theoretically-grounded understanding of the musical impetus within a given melody.

Sing!

Finally, students return to class and each group has roughly five minutes to present and perform their melody. As they present, they point out simple areas from part one, highlight problematic areas from part two (including providing at least one practice method for each problem), and go over any hierarchical or structural features of their melody that students might use as anchors. Groups may lead the class through practice demonstrations, and often students from other groups will ask questions or speak out in favor of (or against) certain practice method suggestions. Occasionally, other groups provide additional practice techniques or ideas to supplement those

²² Castro (2013, 145).

²³ Castro (2013, 146).

presented by the group.²⁴ The group then performs the melody for the class, conducting as they go. Depending on the strength of that performance, they may pause to debrief (including commentary from other students or feedback from me).²⁵ Each presentation ends with the group leading the class in a performance of the melody. The success of the class performance is dependent upon (and often directly reflects) the strength of the group's presentation.

In my experience, the start-to-finish time of the presentations including the class performance is somewhere between seven and twenty minutes. I do not strictly enforce a time limit, but I do push them to move quickly and replicate the fast thinking required in a sight-singing situation. If a presentation goes as long as twenty minutes, it is likely that other students are asking questions and contributing ideas, or it is a particularly complex melody. Although melodies grow longer and more complex over the semester, presentations often get shorter as students become more fluent in the *Search-Solve-Sing* model. At my institution, aural skills classes are seventy minutes long, and so if I have four groups presenting it will usually fill the entire class period. I usually devote one class period per week to this activity in upper-level classes, excluding quiz/exam weeks. For my academic calendar, this works out to roughly ten *search-solve-sing* sessions per semester.

Modeling the Process

In this section, I provide a potential melody I might use in a class focused on *fi*, modifying the previously introduced warm-up in keeping with the new material. For each example, I move through the *Search-Solve-Sing* model, highlighting what I expect students to point out. Example 2 shows a typical melody I might use for a day focused on singing *fi*. Example 4 shows this melody as it would be marked up after we finish the discussion but before we sing. Table 1 provides a list of the questions I provide for all melodies, and then the answers for this specific melody.

24 When other students chime in, the length of the leading group's presentation increases accordingly.

25 This again increases the time spent on that melody.

Scott Joplin, *The Easy Winners*

Not fast

Example 2

Warm up melody. Scott Joplin's *The Easy Winners*.

Search

We begin with the search portion of the exercise. This particular example is by Scott Joplin, and so I open the lesson by asking about Joplin, including a brief overview of who he was, and why he is an important figure in music history. In their group work, I expect them to look this information up for their melody. After historically-orienting the example, I ask students what musical features they might expect to encounter in an example by Joplin. We discuss chromaticism, ragtime, and syncopation. Next, I ask them to look for the simple parts of the melody, for things such as scalar passages, arpeggiations, and anchor pitches. In this melody, students identify the neighbor figures in mm. 2 and 3 (which then repeat several times throughout the rest of the melody), the skip from *mi* to *sol* at the beginning, and that the opening gesture appears at the beginning of several more phrases. I use stars to indicate the helpful repetitions in mm. 1, 5, and 9. We mark similar melodic sections as x and y. They notice the similarities between x and y, and quickly scan the differences between x and x', y and y', etc. We mark anchor pitches (typically *do*, *mi*, or *sol*) with an anchor symbol in mm. 4, 12, and 16. We discuss logical breath placement, marked with ', and decide the overall dynamic should be *mezzoforte*. The meter is 2/4 and we plan to conduct in 2 at a moderate tempo (obeying the tempo indication of “not fast” on the score).

Solve

With the less-challenging work out of the way, we switch our discussion toward issues around chromaticism, leaps, rhythms, and making larger connections. First, I ask them to identify and assign solfège to any chromatic pitches and alter the tonic

finder to prepare for those pitches within the melody.²⁶ They quickly identify the solfège for D $\sharp$ (*fi*) and D $\flat$ (*fa*). We discuss *fa* as a courtesy accidental, and I remind them to think up when they sing *fi* and down for *fa*. Together, we alter our basic tonic finder structure (Example 1, above) into one individualized for this melody (Example 3). In addition, we review the resolution of *fa* down and *fi* up, and how each of these pitches function harmonically (in this case either as the seventh of an implied V 7 or the third of an implied V/V).



Example 3

Tonic Finder Warm Up Individualized for the Target Melody.

Next we focus on tricky leaps and rhythms, something that often causes a lot of student anxiety. We notice two potentially challenging leaps in this melody, the first from *sol* to *re* in mm. 2–3 and the section from *mi* to *ti* in m. 12. We troubleshoot the first one. I ask them: “What is the most important pitch in bar 2? And in bar 3?” Students identify *sol* in m. 2 and *do* in m. 3, but if alternate answers come up, we discuss them as a class. We discuss conceptualizing *la* as the upper neighbor to *sol* and *re* as the incomplete upper neighbor to *do*. We pause and sing our tonic finder, and then hone in on this particular leap very briefly. For the leap from *mi* to *ti* in m. 12, we talk about two approaches. Often students’ first instinct is to simply drill the leap until they have it memorized. With this model I challenge them to think structurally instead: *mi* completes the previous phrase, while *ti* acts as an incomplete lower neighbor to *do*.²⁷ Conceptualizing *do* as the goal makes it easier for students to find *ti*, while also creating a more musical result that does not unnecessarily link the beginning of this phrase with the ending of the previous one. After leaps, we scan for particularly tricky rhythms. This melody is highly syncopated, but with quite a bit of rhythmic repetition. I ask them to choose the one or two gestures that seem the most challenging, and then we tap, clap, or use solmization syllables to work those rhythms out together.

²⁶ In my experience, economically incorporating melodic figures from a given example into the tonic finder is one way to safeguard from error when we sing the melody.

²⁷ Karpinski (2000, 156ff) encourages this auralization as well in his section entitled “Aural Imagery prior to Sound Production.”

Finally, I ask students to examine phrase openings, build connections across phrases, and compare marked repetitions for potential differences. We mark repetition with stars (if it is not already marked), review the *mi-sol* opening gesture of this melody, and discuss *fa* as a passing tone between *sol* and *mi* in mm. 8–9. We compare *x*, *x'*, and *x''* for differences, noting the repeated *E*'s of *x'* and simple descending scale to *do* in *x''*.

Example 4

Warm up melody after in-class analysis. Scott Joplin's *The Easy Winners*.

Sing!

After reviewing the warm-up and singing our revised tonic finder, I lead the class through a performance of the melody. After one run-through we discuss things that could have been better—potentially missed leaps, incorrect rhythms or pitches, or absent musicality. We do one final run through before I break them into groups to study a melody on their own.

A Model Presentation

In this section, I give one melody I would assign to a student group and give an overview of a typical student presentation. As students work on their presentation, they move through the topics we covered in the warm-up, along with topics covered on previous days. The content of each presentation is dependent upon the assigned melody, but each assigned melody highlights the overarching topic of the day, in this case, singing and hearing *fi*. Example 5a is one melody I might assign a group to present in class. I assign it to a group and review their objectives: to *search*—identify

	Questions	This melody. . .
S E A R C H	<i>What is the melody? Who wrote it? (Google!)</i>	Scott Joplin, 1868-1917, The Easy Winners. Black composer known for ragtime
	<i>What expectations do you have based on #1?</i>	Expect syncopation and potentially more chromaticism because it's from the 20th-C.
	<i>Find easy things such as scalar passages, arpeggiations, and anchors</i>	Neighbor figures in x and y; Arpeggiation from mi-sol opening
	<i>Find and mark any repetition you can use to your advantage. Flag repeat signs.</i>	Marked x and y (with x', x'', and y'). Repetition marked with stars. Anchor pitches marked with anchor.
	<i>Mark breaths, phrasing, or dynamics as needed</i>	Breaths marked with '. Overall mf dynamic with shaped phrases based on breath marks.
S O L V E	<i>What is the meter and what conducting pattern will you use?</i>	2/4, will conduct in 2 to avoid going too fast (note indication at beginning of "not fast")
	<i>Is there any chromaticism? What's the solfege? What will your tonic finder be?</i>	Fi and Fa! Marked on score. Discuss Fa as a courtesy accidental, and discuss singing up for fi and down for fa. Establish new tonic finder.
	<i>Are there tricky leaps? Use hierarchy.</i>	Two leaps: Sol-re in mm.2-3. Hierarchy: what is the important pitch in bar 2? Sol! In bar 3? Do! La as UN to sol. Re as IUN to do. Leap mi-ti in m. 12. Could conceptualize as leap or instead, think of mi as completing previous phrase. Breath. Ti introduces the next phrase as an ILN to do. Use do as anchor to find ti.
	<i>Any tricky rhythms?</i>	Lots of syncopation. Tap/clap rhythm at opening. Note repetition of syncopated pattern.
	<i>Link phrase openings, build connections across phrases</i>	Repetition marked with stars- review mi-sol opening and discuss fa as PT between sol and mi in mm. 8-9.
SING!	<i>Compare marked repetitions for potential differences</i>	Compare x, x', and x''. Compare y and y'
	<i>Anything else?</i>	N/a
SING! (Unexpected stumbling? Return to solve, revise and try again!)		

Table 1
Summary of Warm up melody analysis/ Search-Solve-Sing model.

and dismiss easy passages; to *solve*—identify and troubleshoot challenging passages; and, finally, to *sing*—first as a group and then leading the class. Table 2 provides a list of the questions I provide for all melodies, and then the answers for this specific melody.



Example 5a
Franz Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*.

Search

After fifteen minutes, students return to class ready to lead. They break their presentation into the three parts listed above, beginning with *search*. For this melody, I expect students to begin with historical context and information about the piece: Franz Schubert (1797–1828, late Classical or early Romantic style, melody composed for voice, and the title translates to “You are Rest.”) Next, they shift focus to the prototypical features: the *do-ti-do* neighbor figure in mm. 3–4, and the three ascending scales in mm. 7, 11, and 13. Students should point out the repeat sign (circled in Example 5b), and mark their scores for any melodic repetition (marked with stars in mm. 5 and 9). Students indicate breath marks, and that the overall dynamic (*pianissimo*) echoes the gentle implication from the piece’s title. One potential stumbling point for students is this melody’s meter—some students will want to conduct it in three, while others will want to feel it in one. Depending on the group, students might try it each way in their meeting. No matter which they choose for their presentation, I will suggest we try it both ways as a class.

Solve

Next, students should help their classmates identify chromaticism in the score, in this case marking the *fis* and *fas*. Students should discuss them as lower neighbors (sometimes also marking this in the score) and will likely discuss singing *fa* as a potential challenge. They discuss expectations around *fa* as the chordal seventh of V⁷,

which they want to resolve down, but in this case, it is simply a lower neighbor. *Fi*, on the other hand, is the new material for that day and acts as the applied leading tone to V or the third of a V/V. Ideally, students will work *sol-fi-sol* and *sol-fa-sol* into their tonic finder; if they skip this step, I encourage them toward it.

Next, students address any tricky leaps or skips in this melody. This example has two tricky parts: first finding *la* in m. 5, and second from *do-mi* in m. 12. It is critical students think through several options in order to analyze *why* a particular leap is tricky; this extra thought allows them to effectively teach their peers. For the first leap, there are three methods students should present. If any one of the three is missing from their presentation, I step in and help them along to the missing possibility. The first method is to connect *do* at the end of m. 4 to *la* in m. 5 using *ti* as a bridge. After practicing that way a few times, students remove *ti* and can usually find *la*. A second method is to link the *la* in m. 2 to *la* in m. 5—this requires longer-range hearing, and it will certainly not work for all students. A third method is to link the opening *sol* from m. 1 to the opening *la* in m. 5 as a sequence up a step. Again, this is more of a long-range hearing option. In my experience, presenting students with multiple options means at least one resonates and gives them a model for future troubleshooting on their own. Moreover, it reveals to them how people can analyze and hear a passage differently, enriching the analytical skills they carry into the theory classroom.

For the second leap from *do-mi* in m. 12, students' first instinct may be to simply drill. If that is the method they choose to present, I challenge them to think back to *fa* as a chordal seventh and their expectations around *fa* in m. 11. Students quickly make the connection that they wanted *fa* to go to *mi*, and it eventually does, in m. 13. They can then link this *fa-mi-re-do* descent in the melody from mm. 12, 13, 14, and ending on the very last note in m. 15. This reductive approach pushes them beyond simply singing each note on the page as if they are all structurally equal. Depending on how much time we have in class, I may step in and discuss the opening phrase as an ascending stepwise line from *sol-do*, and connect this to the second half of the melody as one large descent from *la-do*, where *la* is an accented upper neighbor to *sol*, the structurally-important pitch.

Students address any tricky rhythms, which in this melody are minimal; perhaps only the dotted figures, and link phrase openings (if they did not already do so in comparing the opening on *sol* to the second phrase's opening on *la*). Stars mark these repetitions in Example 5b. Students should give brief attention to comparing the sixteenth-note patterns for differences, and end by pointing out that mm. 12 and 14 combine to arpeggiate tonic. I would push them to identify the final cadence and ask if

the melody implies a V or a V^7 in the penultimate bar. If students suggest it is a V^7 , we would review chord quality and discuss what *fi* implies, as compared to *fa*.

Sing!

Finally, the group performs the melody for the class and then leads the class in a performance. Ideally, they will have the class perform it once conducting in one, and once conducting in three, and then lead a brief discussion about how this choice might lead to a different musical result.

The image shows a musical score for Franz Schubert's song "Du bist die Ruh" in 3/8 time. The score is written on two staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking "Langsam" circled above the first measure. A *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking is in the first measure. The melody is marked with an anchor symbol above the second measure and a double bar line with a star above the third measure. The second staff begins with a measure rest marked with an anchor symbol below. The melody continues with notes marked "Fa!" above the fourth measure, and "Fi!" above the sixth, seventh, and eighth measures. The score ends with a double bar line and an anchor symbol below the final measure. The title "Schubert, *Du bist die Ruh*" is written above the first staff.

Example 5b

Melody after student analysis and class discussion. Franz Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*.

	Questions	This melody . . .
S E A R C H	<i>What is the melody? Who wrote it? (Google!)</i>	Franz Schubert (1797-1828), <i>Du bist die Ruh</i> (“You are repose”)
	<i>What expectations do you have?</i>	Late Classical/ Early Romantic style. Meant to be sung.
	<i>Find easy things such as scalar passages, arpeggiations, and anchors</i>	<i>Do-ti-do</i> neighbor figure before repeat. Ascending scales at the in phrases after the repeat.
	<i>Find and mark any repetition you can use to your advantage. Flag repeat signs.</i>	Repeat sign in m. 4. Repetition at beginning of phrases in mm. 5 and 9 (marked with stars).
	<i>Mark breaths, phrasing, or dynamics as needed</i>	Breaths marked with ‘. <i>Pianissimo</i> - peace, gentle!
	<i>What is the meter and what conducting pattern will you use?</i>	3/8. Try conducting in 3 and in 1. Discuss after performance – which led to a more musical result?
S O L V E	<i>Is there any chromaticism? What’s the solfege? What will your tonic finder be?</i>	<i>Fi</i> and <i>fa</i> ! Marked on score. Both are LNs to <i>sol</i> - could be trickier to find <i>fa</i> because it isn’t continuing down. Discuss resolution of <i>fa</i> as chordal seventh in V7 (review) vs. <i>fi</i> as leading tone in V/V (new). Tonic finder: <i>do-ti-do-re-mi-fa-fi-sol-fi-sol-la-sol-fa-sol-la-sol-fa-mi-re-do-mi-sol-mi-do</i> .
	<i>Are there tricky leaps? Use hierarchy</i>	a. <i>La</i> in m. 5, three methods: sing <i>ti</i> to fill the gap between <i>do</i> and <i>la</i> a few times, then cut it; hold on to <i>la</i> in m. 2 in your ear and link m. 2 to m. 5; link m. 1 <i>sol</i> to m. 5 <i>la</i> as just a step away. b. <i>Mi</i> in m. 12. This one’s cool- it’s resolving that <i>fa</i> chordal seventh from m. 11! Link <i>fa</i> to that <i>mi</i> , and then down to <i>re</i> in the penultimate bar.
	<i>Any tricky rhythms?</i>	Not too tricky- point out dotted rhythms and maybe tap/clap m. 7.
	<i>Link phrase openings, build connections across phrases</i>	Already linked m. 1 to m. 5. M. 5 also links to m. 9, marked by stars.
	<i>Compare marked repetitions for potential differences</i>	Again hit <i>fi/fa</i> and compare sixteenth-note patterns beginning on <i>fi</i> , then <i>fa</i> , then <i>re</i> .
	<i>Anything else?</i>	Point out that m. 12 and m. 14 arpeggiate tonic. Talk about harmonic implications of final cadence V-I. Is it a V7?
SING! (<i>Unexpected stumbling? Return to solve, revise and try again!</i>)		

Table 2
Summary of presentation melody analysis/ *Search-Solve-Sing* model.

Conclusion

This article presents a method of learning how to learn—a practical approach to practicing prepared melodies in an aural skills classroom. The method trains students in an analytical system that gives them a sense of control over sight singing. Instead of looking at a melody from beginning to end without critical thought, students learn to look ahead, to scan for potential pitfalls, and to strategize those passages before they begin. Moreover, the method puts the onus on the student to brainstorm and troubleshoot in a system that will help when they are on their own in the practice room or, later, in as real-world musicians.²⁸ They practice the melodies and start to think ahead about what they might point out if assigned a particular melody in a group. They think of this as “cheating” or “working ahead;” I think of it as practicing, learning, and growing as musicians.

Through group work and presentations, this method flips the aural skills classroom from a teacher-student model, to one where students assume the role of teacher. As groups prepare their presentations, they engage with the melodies on a deeper level, incorporating phrase structures, implied harmonies, and other materials from the written theory class. Students learn from one another and gain a sense of control over their progress in the course.

The group work makes class a place for engaging and collaborative learning, rather than an anxiety-inducing environment dependent on individual progress. While statistical results are beyond the scope of this project, anecdotal evidence from students suggest student anxiety is low, and their musical growth high with this model; students reported feeling more confident as sight singers and that they built useful habits and strategies in a way not previously presented to them in drill-based aural skills classes. An interactive classroom is an essential goal, and as students work with, challenge, and learn from one another, their understanding and engagement with course material goes far deeper than if the instructor always takes control from the front of the room. Moreover, music is a collaborative activity and this exercise helps students learn how to work with musicians at varying levels and with different strengths from their own. The *Search-Solve-Sing* model is more than a method for learning aural skills melodies; it is a method that teaches students how to learn and teach, leading to long-term musical and interpersonal growth.

²⁸ Palfy (2019, 380) suggests that with scaffolded assignments, “students feel empowered from their in-class activities to critically examine the effectiveness of their at-home practice and take on the onus of challenging themselves to increase mastery.”

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