

## Seven Dictation Templates of Increasing Difficulty

Attached are seven dictation templates of increasing difficulty, to be used at appropriate points in the theory curriculum, for in-class exercises, homework, or extra credit. The chart on p. 2 below lists titles of the pieces, the descriptions of the task, the instrumentation, and the theory topic for which they might be relevant.

The templates were designed to be completed from real, commercial recordings, to the extent possible. Certainly, the piano will have to be used—to give the tonic key, to emphasize a starting pitch or tricky set of pitches, where a moment is inaudible or goes by too quickly, and perhaps ultimately, to solidify the dictation for students “in a laboratory environment.” But taking dictation primarily from a real recording requires students to grapple with several important issues that are bypassed when dictation is done through didactic performances at the piano. First, students must be able to hear timbral differences, sometimes in dense instrumental textures. Second, they must learn to factor for expressive timing, dynamics, and articulation. Third, taking dictation from real recordings introduces students to different sung languages. (One of the excerpts below is from a German Lied; others that I use in my classes are from French *mélodies* and Italian opera.)

There are several further benefits of taking dictation from real recording: it introduces students to repertoire in a way that dictation from the piano does not. It raises opportunities for discussion of performances, performers, and the interpretive decisions made by particular ensembles. (Sometimes, I use two recordings, asking the students which is more helpful for hearing a particular event.) Using real recordings also facilitates presenting works for dictation as art objects to a degree that is improbable when excerpts are played on the piano from a sight-singing manual. I devote class time to presenting these excerpts as aesthetic objects, sharing relevant tidbits about their histories, texts, expressive issues, and more. Where relevant, other templates that I use provide specifics about background, history, characters and plots, and so on.

The visual layout of the templates provided here familiarizes students with notation in a way that more typical dictation exercises—for which students “set up” their manuscript paper with key and meter signatures—do not. Here, they are exposed to tempo markings in different languages. They gain experience seeing accent marks, slurs, dynamics, and other articulations, and they get to judge the ways that professional performers respect these (or not!). They are exposed, too, to the idiosyncrasies of notating certain instruments (e.g., flags for vocal music). And on more complex templates that I use in my classes (e.g., excerpts from string quartets and Mahler symphonies), they become familiar with score order.

The templates are valuable for honing analytical listening abilities, because they point students to particular structural features of the music *while the student is listening to the passage in question*. Often, passages that exemplify relevant theoretical topics (a melodic sequence, a particular harmony, a phrase structure) are bracketed and identified on the score; other times, analytical tasks to be completed by the student are listed in the instructions. Since many of the templates provide instrumental parts in addition to the melodic one to be notated by the student, they also provide extra practice for harmonic analysis.

For this resource, I have not specified the number of hearings for each of the dictations, for these will change based on the makeup of students, the instructor, and the nature of the task at hand. For out-of-class assignments, for instance—homework or extra credit—the instructor may wish to give students as many hearings as needed, making this more a transcription than a dictation exercise. For in-class, quiz-style exercises, by contrast, the instructor may wish to be stricter about the number of hearings she or he will permit.

|    | Excerpt                                                                                        | Description of Task                                                                | Instrumentation                                                | Topics Drilled / Skills Developed                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Mozart, Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331, i                                                     | Melodic Dictation—one voice. Treble clef (rhythm given)                            | Piano solo                                                     | The major mode: diatonic steps and skips, sequential melodic patterns, finding a starting pitch (do, mi, or sol?), getting anchored in a key, hearing a period; the Sicilian rhythm; dots in a compound meter |
| 2. | Dvořák, Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, iv                                                          | Melodic Dictation—one voice. Treble clef                                           | Horn + trumpet in a large orchestral texture                   | The minor mode: submediant (te) or leading tone (ti)? Arpeggiation of the tonic triad; hearing a triplet; dots in a simple meter                                                                              |
| 3. | Schubert, “Des Baches Wiegenlied,” from <i>Die schöne Müllerin</i>                             | Melodic Dictation—one voice. Treble clef                                           | Tenor voice in a Tenor + Piano (Lied) texture                  | The major mode: finding a starting pitch (do, mi, or sol?); the melodic tritone; a bass pedal; dictating a human voice; German                                                                                |
| 4. | Schubert, Impromptu in A <sup>b</sup> Major, D. 935, ii                                        | Two-voice dictation—outer voices. Treble and bass clefs.                           | Piano solo                                                     | Two voices; hearing bass pitches of inversions of V <sup>7</sup> ; adding Roman numerals to the template after solving                                                                                        |
| 5. | Shostakovich, “Waltz No. 2,” from the <i>Suite No. 2 for Jazz Orchestra</i>                    | Melodic dictation—one voice. (Two-voice optional) Treble clef (bass clef optional) | Alto saxophone in a jazz orchestra                             | A longer excerpt; hearing the leading tone in the minor mode; a sequential melody; an arpeggiation of V <sup>7</sup>                                                                                          |
| 6. | Mussorgsky, “Il vecchio castello,” from <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (Ravel orchestration) | Two-voice dictation. Treble and bass clefs.                                        | Bassoon, alto saxophone, and English horn in a large orchestra | A longer excerpt; hearing two voices in a dense orchestral texture; double and single reeds; notating dots and subdivisions in a compound meter                                                               |
| 7. | Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, ii                                                                | Melodic Dictation—one voice. Accompanimental parts given.                          | French horn in a large orchestra                               | A long, challenging excerpt; chromaticism (#4 does not tonicize V!); analysis of secondary functions; a descending fifths progression; melodic descending sevenths                                            |

# Melodic Dictation Worksheet

Mozart, Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331 (1783?); first movement.

Complete the following melodic dictation, being sure to respond to the questions underneath the brackets. The rhythm has been given to you.

Andante grazioso.

(At a walking pace; gracefully)

Sicilian rhythm given;  
you focus on pitch

This is a tonic triad pitch:  
is it *do*, *mi*, or *sol*?

Does this measure relate to  
the preceding measure? How?

Do these two measures relate  
to mm. 1 and 2? How?

Antonín Dvořák, Symphony No. 9 “From the New World” (1893), Fourth Movement

Write down the trumpet and horn melody from the opening of this fiery symphonic finale. Pay special attention to whether the leading tone is raised. Note: a triplet rhythm has been pointed out to you. Also be on the lookout for dotted rhythms.

Then:

- Find and bracket an arpeggiation of the tonic triad in the horn/trumpet melody.
- Add Roman numerals to the entire excerpt.

Allegro con fuoco.

Horn, Tpt

9

*ff*

strings and winds

14

*have you heard this music before?*

3

*ff*

Guez: Seven Dictation Templates of Increasing Difficulty

Schubert, “Des Baches Wiegenlied,” the final song from *Die schöne Müllerin* (1824)

Complete at least the vocal melody for mm. 4–8. Identify and bracket a melodic tritone. What scale degrees does it span? Also identify and bracket a melodic repetition. Does the text reinforce the repetition? Add piano pitches where you can; some may be repetitions of introductory material.

*Mäßig*  
(Moderately)

start here ↓

Gu-te

5

Ruh', gu - te Ruh', thu' die Au - gen zu, gu - te Ruh', gu - te Ruh', thu die Au - gen zu!

Text (by Wilhelm Müller):

**Rest well, rest well!**  
**Close your eyes.**  
(Wanderer, you weary one, you are at home.)

Fidelity is here,  
You'll lie with me  
Until the sea drains the brook dry.)

Two-Voice Dictation Worksheet; Inversions of V<sup>7</sup>  
 Schubert Impromptu in A<sup>b</sup> Major, D. 935, No. 2 (1827)

- Add outer voices, where not already provided (see stems). All inner voices are provided.
- Add Roman numerals. All chords are tonics or inversions of V<sup>7</sup>.
- Complete the chart beneath the excerpt.

Allegretto  
*sempre legato*

|                             | Scale Degree | Bass Note in A <sup>b</sup> Major |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| V <sup>7</sup>              |              |                                   |
| V <sub>5</sub> <sup>6</sup> |              |                                   |
| V <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup> |              |                                   |
| V <sub>2</sub> <sup>4</sup> |              |                                   |

Dictation Template: Arpeggiations of  $V^7$ 

Shostakovich, Waltz No. 2 from the Suite for Variety Orchestra

Label the key and write down the alto saxophone melody for this excerpt, being sure to raise leading tones where relevant. (One chromatic pitch has been given to you.) A melodic arpeggiation of  $V^7$  has been bracketed for you. When you have written down the entire melody, try to work out the “ooms” of the bass’s oom-pah-pah accompaniment. Finally, add roman numerals.

Note: the melody comes back in the strings after some contrasting material that includes a descending fifth sequence. We will listen through this material.

*Allegretto poco moderato.*      start here ↓

Alto Sax.

Jazz Orch.

(can you hear these bass pitches?)

(etc.)

11

arpeggiation of  $V^7$

Mussorgsky, "Il Vecchio Castello," from *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874; Ravel orchestration from 1922)

Dictation Exercise: Notate the parts as called for on the template. Pay special attention to your notations of rhythm in this compound meter.

**Andante molto cantabile e con dolore**  
(Mussorgsky's marking; Ravel writes "Andante")

Alto sax.

*pp*

Continue "tenor" bassoon

2 bassoons  
(cellos)

7

Continue sax.

*cantabile espress.*

13

Start "tenor" bassoon again

Eng. Horn

*pp*

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Il Vecchio Castello" from Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," as orchestrated by Maurice Ravel. The score is written for three parts: Alto saxophone, 2 bassoons (with cellos), and English Horn. The tempo is marked "Andante molto cantabile e con dolore" (Mussorgsky's marking) and "Andante" (Ravel's marking). The key signature is D major (two sharps). The time signature is 6/8. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-6) shows the Alto saxophone part with a rest, and the 2 bassoons (cellos) part with a melody starting on a half note. The second system (measures 7-12) shows the Alto saxophone part with a melody starting on a half note, and the 2 bassoons (cellos) part with a melody starting on a half note. The third system (measures 13-18) shows the Alto saxophone part with a rest, and the 2 bassoons (cellos) part with a melody starting on a half note. The English Horn part is shown with a rest in the first system and a melody starting on a half note in the third system. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *cantabile espress.* (cantabile, expressive). Performance instructions include "Continue 'tenor' bassoon" and "Start 'tenor' bassoon again".

Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, ii

Horn Solo Dictation Exercise: Notate the horn part, which begins in m. 8 and is in D major throughout. Add bass pitch and inner voices where you can. Supply Roman numerals for the last six measures of the exercise, where chords are given to you.

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza. *dolce con molta espressione*

Horn

*p sempre legato*

*p* *pp*

D: V6 I

13

*pp animato*

clar.

can this clar. echo help you find the horn pitches?

*p* *pp*

*animando*

Roman numerals?: \_\_\_\_\_