

Postscript to “Absolute Pitch Perception and the Pedagogy of Relative Pitch” (JMTP vol. 21, 2007)

BY ELIZABETH W. MARVIN

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TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to correct an omission from my article “Absolute Pitch Perception and the Pedagogy of Relative Pitch,” published in the most recent issue of *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* (vol. 21, 2007). Among the strategies I suggested for teaching relative-pitch skills to students with absolute pitch were (1) the use of scale-degree and roman-numeral singing and dictation without staff notation or key specified, and (2) the use of dictation excerpts drawn from music literature (for the variety of timbres and textures). I discussed these strategies with reference to several sight-singing and dictation textbooks: Wittlich and Humphries (1974), Yasui and Trubitt (1989), Karpinski (2000, 2007), and Phillips et al. (2005).

Because the discussion focused on sight singing and dictation texts, I neglected to mention Laitz (2003, 2008), a theory and analysis text that integrates harmony study with musical skill development. These skills include the singing of pitch patterns, transposition and improvisation exercises, error dictation, keyboard exercises, and dictation both from the keyboard and from music literature. Throughout the two-volume workbooks (2008), Laitz asks students to listen to passages from the literature and to supply roman numerals only (no key specified). For examples in the second edition volume 1, see Exercise 8.7 (p. 171), where students identify tonic and dominant harmonies and cadence types in passages from Schubert, Handel, and Chopin; or Exercise 12.17 (p. 283), where students hear figured textures from Schumann, Haydn, Bach, Schubert, and Loeillet and label the underlying harmonic progressions and cadence types. This type of exercise continues through more advanced topics, such as aural identification of sequence types without notation (p. 493). Other dictation exercises are drawn from music literature as well (though now with staff

notation), including recurring bass-line dictations where students see the upper voices in diverse textures and instrumentation, and are asked to supply the bass line and roman numerals by a combination of dictation and analytical skills.

In sum, there are several excellent resources available on the market today for teachers whose classes include a mixture of absolute- and relative-pitch listeners. My discussion was not meant to be exhaustive, but rather was intended to demonstrate types of appropriate pedagogical strategies and a sampling of resources for addressing this learning issue.

Elizabeth W. Marvin
Professor of Music Theory,
Eastman School of Music

REFERENCE LIST

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