

A Comparative Review of
***The Complete Musician* by Steven G. Laitz,**
***Harmony in Context* by Miguel Roig-Francolí,**
and *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis*
by Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin

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The last twenty years have seen a rapid metamorphosis in undergraduate music theory textbooks. One trend, undoubtedly inspired by the seminal work of Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, has been to incorporate Schenkerian philosophy and analytical techniques.¹ As Schenkerian methods have become more pervasive, some pedagogues have devoted their attention to barriers that have historically separated the various facets of music theory pedagogy. The textbooks under review represent the most recent efforts to level these barriers by the integration of written work, listening, and ear training. (The continuing influence of the Contemporary Music Project of the 1960's and its emphasis upon "comprehensive musicianship" is remarkable.) Texts comprising the focus of this review are *The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening* by Steven G. Laitz, *Harmony in Context* by Miguel Roig-Francolí, and *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* by Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin.² This review follows (roughly) the layout of each publication, with

Editor's note: Ordinarily the journal would not review the work of its Editorial Review Board. The former editor contracted this review before Don Traut, Steven Laitz, and Miguel Roig-Francolí were invited to serve. With publication there is an implicit assurance by the current editor that neither professor Laitz nor Roig-Francolí read the review before publication. Neither was professor Clendinning (outgoing Reviews Editor) nor professor Marvin (former ERB member) privy to the review. JMTP is fortunate to have on its ERB sufficient pedagogical depth as to make such contexts difficult to avoid, and, in rare instances, understandable.

¹ Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1989).

² Steven G. Laitz, *The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Miguel A. Roig-Francolí, *Harmony in Context* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003); Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin, *A Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005).

assessment of their various approaches to fundamentals, diatonic harmony, form, chromaticism, and extended harmonic techniques.

PART 1: FUNDAMENTALS

Each of these packages provides for thorough coverage of rudimentary pitch and rhythm materials, including ample assignments on each topic.³ Every text presents sufficient material for an eight to ten week fundamentals unit, but programs requiring longer exposure to the rudiments may find it necessary to employ supplementary materials.

Of the three, the introductory portion of *Harmony in Context* provides for the fullest range of simple to most challenging pitch and rhythmic drills. *Harmony in Context* is also notable for its singular approach to the teaching of intervals, by semitones, before the introduction of scales. The presumed outcome of this order is that students (arguably) become as fluent with augmented and diminished qualities as they do with the major, minor, and perfect. Both *The Complete Musician* and *The Musician's Guide* contextualize intervals in scales, emphasizing diatonic to the potential detriment of non-diatonic qualities. Much the same can be said with respect to Roig-Francolí's approach to meter, which contains more asymmetric examples.

Especially welcome is the strategy taken by every author to introduce species counterpoint, in two voices, early in the curriculum. In each case this material follows an explanation of the relative consonance and dissonance associated with each interval. While every author pays homage to Fux, each tolerates varying degrees of license with respect to strict species. Steven Laitz's *Complete Musician* covers first and second species, requiring students to analyze and label the generic intervals formed between the two parts: a nice set-up for figured bass exercises. Roig-Francolí's *Harmony in Context* adds the fourth species in two voices, employing Fux's *cantus firmi* as points of departure. Having introduced the church modes, Roig-Francolí is also poised to exploit the modal *cantus firmus*, allowing for the explanation of Phrygian cadences and modal key signatures in Bach chorales. While Clendinning and Marvin's *Musician's Guide* incorporates more species (first through fourth), their approach is less strict than that of Fux. They write:

³ I have used the term "package" because each publication includes materials supplementary to the textbook. See Part 5: Workbook and other Supplemental Materials.

⁴ Piper Clendinning and West Marvin, *Musician's Guide*, 136

For example, while Fux restricts first species to consonant intervals only, we will learn how to connect consonances with chordal dissonances. We will also use tonal endings in our contrapuntal writing, rather than the modal endings of traditional first species.⁴

(a) O P C P P P O C C O C C O S

(b) O C C P C S - C C C P C O C

Example 1: Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin, *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis*, p. 145

By relaxing these rules, the authors allow for outer-voice formations and rhythmic patterns more typical of tonal writing. This is seen in their two settings of “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” shown in Example 1. In addition to the mix of quarter and eighth-note values, each of these settings ends with an implied V6/4-5/3–I progression. While these types of formations may frustrate purists, they do stress the importance of outer-voice counterpoint, an important preliminary step to the pedagogy of four-voice writing.

PART 2: DIATONIC HARMONY

While each text emphasizes contrapuntal elaboration of large-scale harmonic functions, they approach this and other Schenkerian concepts somewhat differently. In Part 2 of *The Complete Musician*, “Tonic and Dominant Expanded,” Steven Laitz presents one of his overriding tenets: “simple processes underlie all tonal music, and are simply fleshed out in wondrously diverse contexts.”⁵ Laitz

E.

① V_3^4 neighboring tones → neighboring chord soprano (N) → passing chord and neighboring bass (P) → passing tones → passing chord NB. bass and soprano in 10th → double neighbors → double neighbor chords

② $V_3^4 + 6$

③ V_3^4 I^6

④ V_3^4 I^6

F.

① V_2^4 as bass passing tone ② neighboring tones → neighboring chord ③ incomplete neighbor with passing tone → incomplete neighbor chord with passing tone

voice exchange

V_2^4 I^6 I^6 I^6 V_2^4 I^6 I^6 V_2^4 I^6 I^6 V_2^4 I^6

Example 2: Steven G. Laitz, *The Complete Musician*, p. 166

substantiates this maxim in numerous drills of short patterns, or expansion figures, as shown in Example 2. The purpose of these drills is to demonstrate how non-harmonic tones become embellishing chords. Whereas Roman numerals identify the chords in each case, “second-level analysis” interprets each chord contextually as a tonic expansion. These tools enable the author to distinguish contrapuntal expansions (typically inverted sonorities that prolong harmonic areas) from functional harmonic progressions (usually root-position or strong, deep-level harmonies). While such

⁵ Laitz, *Complete Musician*, xvii.

attention to detail could be cumbersome in larger analytic excerpts, the system does get students interpreting (and hearing!) chords in groups.

The Complete Musician continues to develop the ideas of expansion and harmonic progression in Part 3 where Laitz shows how the “phrase model” (i.e., T-Pd-D-T) accounts for the remaining diatonic harmonies and the formation of musical phrases. Part 4 progresses to still larger periodic and sequential structures. Laitz’s take on sequences is noteworthy. As a slight revision to the descending fifths sequence, he notes that the two-chord model formed by the descending fifth is actually copied a descending second from the original (i.e., C-F, B-E, etc). Thus the sequence is called “Descending Seconds” (D2), with the descending fifth root motion recognized as part of its internal structure.⁶ He also displays an eye for detail when asking for labels representing whether or not the sequence has interlocking or alternating seventh chords and/or applied chords. (One possible label would be “D2(D5xA4) w/ applied 7ths interlocking”.)

Roig-Francolí’s *Harmony in Context* features the most exhaustive use of Schenkerian principles, employing harmonic reduction (i.e., voice-leading reduction), which the author defines as “a nonmetrical representation of harmonic motion and harmonic hierarchy in a musical passage.”⁷ His reductions have three clearly stated goals:

A prolongational reductive graph should clearly show (1) the pitches that have a structural function and those that have a prolongational role, (2) the extent of the prolongation, and (3) the specific prolongational technique used in a particular passage.⁸

⁶Laitz’s full label for a sequence moving C-F, B-E would be D2(D5xA4). As mentioned above, the D2 signifies the model/copy relationship. The D5xA4 refers to the internal root motion: descending fifth followed by ascending fourth. This label has the potential to confuse the important distinction between root-motion intervals (D5) and pitch intervals (A4). For an excellent discussion of issues surrounding sequences and pedagogy, see Adam Ricci, “A Classification Scheme for Harmonic Sequences,” *Theory and Practice* 27 (2002): 1-27.

⁷ Roig-Francolí, *Harmony in Context*, 162.

⁸ Ibid.

The image shows two systems of musical notation, labeled 'a.' and 'b.', within a single staff. System 'a.' consists of two measures of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: Measure 1: Treble clef has A4, G4, F#4; Bass clef has F#3, E3, D3. Measure 2: Treble clef has G4, F#4, E4; Bass clef has E3, D3, C3. Below system 'a.' is the figured bass notation: AM: I V₆ I I₆ IV V I IV I. System 'b.' also consists of two measures. Measure 1: Treble clef has A4, G4, F#4; Bass clef has F#3, E3, D3. Measure 2: Treble clef has G4, F#4, E4; Bass clef has E3, D3, C3. Below system 'b.' is the figured bass notation: I—6 6 IV V I. Above system 'b.' is the label 'PT' with lines connecting the notes in the two measures, indicating a parallel motion or transformation.

Example 3: Miguel Roig-Francolí, *Harmony in Context*, p. 205

Example 3 shows how this notation is incorporated into the text, highlighting the linear function of inverted chords. In the next chapter, chords are grouped into one of three functions. Structural chords are those that can have a beginning or ending function within musical units (only I and V). Predominant chords have the function of preparing the dominant. Prolongational chords have the function of extending the structural frame in time or of extending other nonstructural chords (179). Students are instructed to use these categories and graphic notation to create reductions of their figured bass exercises. While this is an ambitious undertaking, Roig-Francolí is clear and consistent in his use of reductive symbols. Later in the book he introduces bass-line sketches, a more practical approach when it comes to longer pieces.

Miguel Roig-Francolí is also to be commended for his consistent effort to contextualize chords and their harmonic functions by interjecting related concepts that stimulate interest. Chapters 1-4 introduce the harmonic fundamentals: general principles of harmonic progression, tonic and dominant in root position, the subdominant and triads in first inversion. From there his attention turns to formal units. A chapter on cadences precedes two chapters on melodic organization, which cover periods, bass reductions, and the technique of interruption. Placing these topics near the beginning opens the door for a greater range of literature study and the potential for composition assignments. The remainder of Part 1 covers all the necessary bases. Chapters devoted to nonchord tones and six-four chords are methodical and complete. A chapter titled, "Harmonic Rhythm; Hypermeter," gives much needed attention to these elusive topics. Some may find the late arrival of dominant seventh chords and their inversions (chapter 12) to be problematic, but this does not undermine the overall effectiveness of this portion of the text.

Schenkerian influence is the least overt in Clendinning and Marvin's *Musician's Guide*. There are no reductions or graphic notations. Instead, the authors use the over-arching concept of "the phrase model"—comprised of tonic, dominant, and tonic closure—to illustrate how various chords can expand harmonic areas. This allows for a more fluid presentation of specific chords, as seen in Chapter 16, which begins with various ways to expand tonic, including motion to the submediant, 5-6 motion, motion to the subdominant, and inversions of the V7. While the authors use terms like "expansion" and "prolongation," they have opted not to employ the graphic notation techniques exploited by Roig-Francolí and Laitz.

In addition to its presentational style, various pedagogical approaches of *The Musician's Guide* distinguish it from the other texts comprising the focus of this review. Where appropriate, Clendinning and Marvin champion composition as the preferred methodology for internalizing concepts, with one section devoted to folk song harmonization and another to how a four-part setting can be adapted to a piano texture. The creative emphasis is especially evident in Chapter 21 where students are instructed to use applied chords, compositionally, to provide temporary harmonic diversion, or create forward motion, or evade an expected resolution. The compositional accent engages students in a decidedly active and creative approach to learning.

PART 3. FORM, CHROMATICISM, AND BEYOND

All three texts contain excellent presentations of the major forms of tonal music. Predictably, each begins with binary and ternary song forms and progresses to sonata and rondo. Whereas Laitz and Clendinning/Marvin employ the traditional terminology of sectional vs. continuous and simple/rounded/balanced, Miguel Roig-Francolí uses "tonal types" to identify binaries by harmonic traits of the first reprise: I-type, V-type, or III-type. While these labels adequately describe the repertoire, some students may find them restrictive, too specific to reinforce general notions of harmonically open or closed units.

Part 7 of *The Complete Musician* devotes chapters to ternary, rondo, and sonata forms. In lieu of an anthology, Steven Laitz has reproduced complete scores and analytic comments in the text itself.

These include the third movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 2, No. 1 (ternary), the *Urlicht* from Mahler's Second Symphony (ternary), an air by Francois Couperin (rondo), the Handel aria *Vaghe pupille* from *Orlando* (rondo), and the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata, K. 333 (sonata).

Part V of Clendinning and Marvin's *Musician's Guide* is titled "Musical Form and Interpretation." A unit on song forms covers early twentieth-century American popular song and the nineteenth-century German lied. Clendinning and Marvin's disposition toward stylistic variety is revealed by their inclusion of quaternary and verse-refrain forms, added sixth and ninth chords, pentatonic and blues scales, twelve-bar blues, "sus" chords, and pop chord symbols. The pages devoted to variation are especially thorough, including techniques for sectional, figural, chromatic, character/stylistic, textural/timbral, and continuous variation. The chapter continues with exploration of performance idioms, and concludes with a very short section on rondo.

Each package supplies varying amounts of material for study beyond the fourth semester. Laitz's *Complete Musician* offers units on modal mixture, equal divisions of the octave, chromatic sequences, and the move toward symmetry in the late-eighteenth century. Appropriately titled "At Tonality's Edge," his final chapter ventures into "intervallic cells" as unifying principles, with examples from Brahms and Scriabin.

Roig-Francolí's *Harmony in Context* projects the discussion further into the twentieth century with a chapter on "Nonfunctional Pitch Centricity," to my knowledge the first instance of neo-Riemannian *Tonnetz* and the PLR model in a book of undergraduate scope. Whether or not instructors use this section, Roig-Francolí deserves accolades for a thorough presentation of the concept. *Harmony in Context* concludes with sections on nonfunctional diatonic collections (pentatonic and quartal harmonies), and symmetrical scales (primarily whole tone and octatonic).

The Musician's Guide provides by far the most material for the study of twentieth-century music. The whole of part VI, "Into the Twentieth Century," introduces set-class theory and serialism, usually covered in an introductory course on this material. Clendinning and Marvin develop the analytical techniques of integer notation, interval class vectors, normal order and prime forms, matrices, hexachordal combinatoriality, the set-class table (appendix), and more. Contemporary rhythmic and other features

receive attention as well, including variable and polymeter, additive rhythm, metric modulation, and graphic notation. A section on developments in form focuses on minimalism and phasing, moment form, and indeterminacy. Their combination of topics, pieces, and exercises easily comprises sufficient material for a fifth semester.

PART 4: WORKBOOK AND OTHER SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Each package includes a workbook, recordings, and teacher's manual. Whereas the anthology for *Harmony in Context* is included in its workbook, *The Musician's Guide* offers the workbook and anthology separately bound. *The Complete Musician* anthologizes complete works in both its text and workbook (particularly in its chapters on form). Every workbook contains exercises for each chapter of the text, including a nice mix of shorter drills (spelling chords, etc.), longer exercises (figured bass and harmonic analysis), and analysis of musical examples. In every chapter of its substantial workbook, *The Musician's Guide* organizes student activities around what the authors call "Basic Elements, Writing Exercises," and "Analysis." The recordings are of good quality.

Every author has adopted a similar approach to the presentation of concepts (in the text), problems where instructors can check for comprehension (also in the text), and additional materials for homework (in the workbook). The middle step—checking for comprehension—is facilitated by exercises in the body, and at the end, of each chapter. Textbook problems are of the same type and difficulty as students might expect to encounter in the workbook. *Harmony in Context* features "Worksheets" in the textbook. "Try it!" exercises in *The Musician's Guide* provide short drills with answers at the book's end. A timely resource, Clendinning and Marvin's WebFacts are designed to: "explain how certain ideas came to be, fill in background for composers and pieces..., or simply [provide] more advanced information."⁹

The anthologies contain repertoire enough that most users will not need to supplement. The anthology to *Harmony in Context* includes 60 entries, a mix of excerpts and complete pieces. In addition to the war-horses, *Harmony in Context* also includes works by Clara Schumann and Maria Theresia von Paradis. The anthology

⁹ Clendinning and Marvin, *Musician's Guide*, xxviii.

for *The Musician's Guide* features some 60 pieces, a third of which are intended for the unit on twentieth-century analysis. This latter anthology also includes works by Gershwin, Sousa, Meredith Willson, and John Barnes Chance.

CONCLUSION

While each author's approach is in some ways unique, they share some common trends. Most noticeable is the inclusion of sufficient materials for four semesters of study. Each author has obviously sought to minimize the need for supplements. Whereas the danger of the 'everything under one roof' approach is that it has the potential to compromise quality, I cannot detect any such compromise. For the most part each book realizes ambitious goals in a clear and comprehensive fashion.

Were I to criticize anything, it would be that each text tends toward overly-exhaustive explanation. As we all know, music is full of exceptions to the rules, and it is this richness that provides grist for some of our most important and interesting discussions. With each book under review, however, the response to anomalies seems to be to add more material and labels, thereby increasing the level of complexity to the potential undermining of opportunities to perceive deviations for what they truly are. Rather than focusing on general underlying principles, the texts sometimes attempt exhaustive presentation of specific realizations of these principles. This is seen, for example, in the countless prolongational figures, numerous binary types, and sequential subtypes of *The Complete Musician*. For seasoned instructors (and more savvy students), such exhaustive labeling can become over-bearing. That said, there are instructors who delight in details and are able to use them to great effect; it is better to have too much material than not enough. So, it is the uniqueness of each author and approach that gives reason to celebrate; each text represents an important and welcome addition to music theory pedagogy. With the right match of program, students, goals, and instructor, any one could be effective.