

A REPORT ON THE 1992 CMS THEORY PEDAGOGY INSTITUTE

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The Institute for Music Theory Pedagogy Studies III, sponsored by the College Music Society, was held at the University of Montana in Missoula from June 14-19, 1992. 65 participants attended the meetings including theory specialists; non-specialists who teach theory; college music teachers of other subjects; high school teachers; and graduate students. The Institute was planned and team taught by John Buccheri (Northwestern University), Gary Karpinski (University of Oregon), and Michael Rogers (University of Oklahoma). The special topic of focus was the teaching of aural skills.

Sessions on many different aspects of ear training and listening were presented including the goals of aural skills; melodic and harmonic dictation; sight-singing approaches; use of technology; and cognition and perception research. In addition, these traditional subjects were extended by devoting special attention to: a) the perception and understanding of rhythm and meter; b) those more elusive elements of aesthetic response (e.g., subtleties of musical expression and nuance in performance interpretation); and c) the discussion of both analytical and non-analytical listening.

The variety of formats included lecture presentations, small and large group discussion, and various audio and visual demonstrations. Discussion of philosophical frameworks was balanced by suggestions for practical application. Many questions were asked with animated discussion often spilling over into the breaks and meal times. The conference was permeated with an active interchange and sharing of concerns and teaching experiences by the participants as well as the faculty. A display table of various pedagogical materials and resources was provided as well as a notebook of handouts, bibliographies, and special practice materials and analyses.

One evening was set aside for members to make "show-and-tell" presentations of their own ideas and for group improvisatory activities. These sessions included a discussion led by Lathon Jernigan (University of Northern Iowa) on the special problems associated with teaching twentieth-century aural skills; a report on interval research conducted by John Hanson (SUNY/Binghamton); computer programs involving Hypercard

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routines developed by Tim Smith (Ball State University); and performances of improvised compositions directed by Sheldon Atovsky (Depaul University).

Gary Karpinski offered sessions on an unusually wide range of topics including a summary of the various kinds and categories of computer software available for ear-training practice (game formats, tutorials, drill and repetition, etc.) and the problems, limitations, and values of each. He especially favored directing students to computer-assisted practice as a supplement rather than as a substitute for the richer and more nuanced diagnosis available through human interaction in the classroom and in one-to-one remedial instruction. He argued that the best use is made of computer software when practice is provided on an individualized basis for a very specific problem (e.g., scale-degree function) rather than simply running everyone in a class routinely through the same series of exercises or course of study.

Karpinski also presented a summary of research in music cognition (see the concluding paragraph of this article for additional information about a related CMS institute in the summer of 1993) that would be relevant to teaching aural skills. A detailed bibliography was provided with a synopsis-style commentary highlighting especially practical studies in such areas of perception and thinking as short-term memory and chunking; extractive listening, interference, and forgetting; functional vs. intervallic listening; shadowing; inference of tonic; and the inadequacy of paper and pencil tests of cognition.

Karpinski's major presentations focussed on a detailed "nuts-and-bolts" methodology for teaching dictation. The core of his program applies a four-fold model for distinguishing at which stage a student may go "off the track" in translating a performed example into encoded music. A wrong answer could be the result of 1) problems in hearing (lack of concentration, for example, or actual neuro- or psycho-physiological impairment); 2) problems in remembering (materials were heard but cannot be recalled); 3) problems in conceptual understanding (the example was heard and memorized but cannot be positioned accurately, for instance, into the context of a tonality); or finally, 4) a pattern that is fully understood sometimes cannot be symbolized in actual musical notation (perhaps because of gaps in theoretical knowledge). The main work of the teacher, then, is to locate the true source(s) of student error through interactive diagnosis (best accomplished through individual tutorials or a testing environment that is carefully enough conceived to pinpoint mistakes in the pedagogical chain passing from *hearing* to *memory* to *understanding* to *notation*). Appropriate

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remediation activities can vary considerably depending on where in the chain a student experiences difficulty.

Actual diagnostic sessions from Karpinski's research were presented on audio tape for the Institute. These "question-and-answer" dialogues between teacher (i.e., Karpinski) and student were extremely impressive and convincing in their ability to reveal the particularity of individual impediments on a case-by-case basis and were persuasive testimony to the efficacy of Karpinski's model—and to the power of the "Aha" principle as a pedagogical tool. Time and again the proverbial "flash of insight" in the student's mind was demonstrated as the student was lead to discover the reason for a given mistake and, more importantly, by inference the implications for future practice so as to eventually eliminate the problem(s) from one's response repertoire of faulty habits. Such a finely tuned "cause-and-effect" approach to teaching could profitably be applied to other areas of theory pedagogy besides dictation or could even be proffered as a paradigm for teaching any subject. [For additional information see the article by Karpinski in this journal, "A Model for Music Perception and Its Implication in Melodic Dictation," 4/2 (Fall 1990): 191-229.]

Additional notions raised by Karpinski included the idea that the most foundational starting point for teaching tonal hearing should be the ability to infer tonic from a set of patterned pitches and durations rather than the more conventional view that posits aural knowledge of the discrete interval as the appropriate point of pedagogical departure. [The relative value of isolated interval study vs. interval approaches involving scale-degree function emerged several times during the conference as a controversial topic. No definitive answer to this issue seems possible until a more clear description of what practicing (and hearing) intervals in isolation really means. Does this involve some kind of abstract listening to raw distance or quality outside of any tonal context or does it mean that single intervals (melodic or harmonic) could be practised by themselves through supplying imagined contexts—differing tonal grids or frameworks or scaffoldings—and noting the differing psychological and musical effects (e.g., tension provocation vs. stability) that result from placing the same acoustical event (as measured in frequency ratios) into a variety of environments?] Regarding harmonic dictation, Karpinski also spoke about studies indicating that expertise at recognizing the quality of individual chords does not necessarily lead to success in hearing chords within a tonal progression; the two, evidently, are different skills.

John Buccheri shared with the Institute his considerable involvement with teaching students how to experience rhythm and meter more musically. These sessions were especially appreciated since they served as an

effective antidote to the preoccupation with pitch that so many of us operate under when teaching aural skills. His wonderful collection of quotes was shared as well, including everyone's favorite by Messiaen, "There was no time. Then God hit the gong and there was a *before* and *after*. Then he hit the gong again and there was duration."

In a presentation, "Meter Builds Character," a case in favor of the powerful role that meter contributes to musical expression was advanced. Factors such as tempo, motives, harmony, and accent and pattern (i.e., regularly recurring changes in any dimension of music—instrumentation, dynamics, density, registration, speech sounds, etc.) were all discussed as contributors that affect metric structure. Detailed analytical routines including lists of appropriate questions to ask of pieces about rhythm and meter were provided as well as specific applications to actual listening experiences with real compositions.

A fascinating analysis of the 4th movement of Mozart's Symphony #39 was given involving a detailed discussion of the connection between phrase structure and hypermeter. The possibility of multiple interpretations of given passages was of special interest—not just the possibility of different understandings in an intellectual way (although this was present, too), but the possibility of how different listenings can arise from the analytic process itself. Perhaps, in fact, what made the analysis memorable was a demonstration of how one's processing filters can be adjusted or calibrated to color the listening experience—i.e., it is the *interaction* and *relationship* of "thinking about" and "hearing in a particular way" that is significant in teaching this topic. These adjustments can be allowed to emerge on their own or can be experimented with at will to consciously select how one chooses to hear—and often including options of aural paradox or illusion. Some contrived pedagogical counterpoint exercises were performed also to demonstrate (on a scale less sophisticated than in Mozart) how tiny details of adding or subtracting a measure (to create or eliminate elisions, for example) can drastically influence one's perception of phrase structure and continuity.

The slow movement from Mozart's Prague Symphony was used to demonstrate how body movement exercises might be used in a class to sensitize one's awareness to the multifarious counterbalances and paired oppositions found in this composition (e.g., melodic imitations; directional changes; strings vs. woodwinds; antecedent vs. consequent; sectional lengths; registral pairings; dynamic contrasts; etc.). Not only the occurrences of such events were identified, but their timing and pacing as well. Throughout Buccheri's presentations, the focus was relentlessly on soaking in the musical richness and purposeful ambiguities of his examples with the result that, in this approach, students could not help but be led to a deepened

appreciation for the intricate interplay of both local and global durational factors in any conceivable kind of music. Whether or not starting with technical discussion, the emphasis always ended up being about musical expression and possibilities for listener response.

With regard to temporal matters, the importance of carefully considered terminology and clear definitions was demonstrated over and over again. The murky problem of trying to distinguish meaningfully between simple and compound meter was used as an example of the pitfalls associated with even the most basic vocabulary for rhythm.

Buccheri also dealt with other pedagogical topics such as how to ask provoking questions, “learning by discovery” through techniques for stimulating classroom discussion, and leading students to explore their own thought processes. And finally, the idea of analytical listening as learning was addressed. An especially innovative term coined by Buccheri was introduced to represent the ear-training equivalent of “imaging” for visual analysis. Buccheri argued that if the conventional term “imaging” (for the eye-training aspects of analysis) involves producing mental pictures of theoretical constructs, then his special term “audaging” can be defined as the internal hearing of theoretical constructs. None of the more standard terms (like “audiation” or just “internal hearing”) seems to quite capture the combination of imaging, singing, and mental rehearsal that his own term implies.

Michael Rogers discussed approaches to sight-singing. Among a list of tips for how to practice (e.g., brief but frequent sessions; working with a “buddy”; use of cassette recorder; silent singing; etc.), Rogers recommended the desirability of some kind of “organized routine” for examining and performing a melody at testing time (presumably the student would be rehearsing with this same routine as part of her practice sessions as well)—a routine that eventually becomes ingrained and automatic through repetition and habit. Many versions are possible but the particular system presented was a six-step adaptation by Rogers of a plan favored and originally designed by Gary Potter (Indiana University): 1) analyzing the given tune—key/scale, meter/tempo, phrases/cadences, recurring motives, key defining vs. decorative pitches, high/low points, tonality frame (relative positioning of tonic/dominant), harmonic implications, contour (skips vs. steps), sequences, archetypical patterns, long-range step progressions, etc.; 2) orienting to the key (tonal grounding for the mind’s ear and for the physical production of sound) through vocal warm-ups using arpeggios of the tonic triad, a scale, or some simple outline of a cadence pattern; 3) “silentsinging” (in the real key) of the melody, noting trouble spots; 4) finally, only after all the preceding steps, singing the tune aloud (the “first

reading"); 5) mentally evaluating (further "figuring out of the solution"; comparing the sung version with the imagined correct version: the "second analysis"); and 6) singing a corrected version (the "second reading").

Also discussed were summaries and comparisons of five different pedagogical methods for designing a sightsinging program. In actual practice, of course, many teachers incorporate aspects of several approaches. The five methods identified were: 1) intervallic (e.g., as found in Samuel Adler, *Sight Singing*, Norton, 1979); 2) harmonic (e.g., Robert Ottman, *Music for Sight Singing*, Prentice-Hall, 1986); 3) structural reductions (e.g., Leland Bland, *Sight Singing Through Melodic Analysis*, Nelson-Hall, 1984); 4) Solfege systems (e.g., Micheal Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Sound Thinking*, Boosey & Hawkes, 1990); and 5) scale-degree function (e.g., George Wedge, *Ear Training and Sight Singing*, Schirmer, 1921).

Regarding solfege systems, the various "pros and cons" of fixed vs. moveable approaches were discussed as well as the more controversial "pros and cons" of do-based minor vs. la-based minor within the moveable systems [for an extremely interesting, detailed—even exhaustive—and heated exchange of viewpoints on this topic see the "Reader's Response/ Author's Reply" section of this issue of this journal]. Regarding scale-degree function methodology, Rogers discussed in some detail the "Jersild Method," a Scandinavian approach, not well-known in this country, developed at the Royal Conservatory in Copenhagen by the Danish composer, Jorgen Jersild [see his *Ear Training*, Wilhelm Hansen, 1966]. This method uses an intricate, yet highly efficient, series of exercises to enculturate the performer into the tugs and pulls of various tendency-tone patterns.

In a series of lectures, "Beyond the Right Notes," Rogers discussed various ways to practice aural skills that pick up where hearing the correct pitch and rhythm leave off [see George Pratt, *Aural Awareness*, Open University Press, 1990 for a text on this topic]. These were presented as supplements to more conventional dictation practice, not as substitutes, and included such things as pitch bendings; timing adjustments; balance; articulation; dynamics; timbre; and the subtle shadings of phrasing as represented in side-by-side comparisons of different interpretations. All of these topics were illustrated with a wide variety of recorded examples.

Rogers also presented his concept of "Just Listening," a purposeful play on words with the double meaning of "only or merely" listening and/ or "authentic or genuine or real" listening—listening that is free from the sort of label-pasting (naming of events) so commonly found in the music theory classroom. His focus was on the value of the non-analytical listening found more often in the concert hall done purely for the pleasure of contact with music's expressive core—its mystical or spiritual component, if you will. The problem for theory teaching is how to establish the proper

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relationship between these two modes of perception. An important question is "Does the analytical approach 'inform' or 'contaminate' our hearing of music or do the two approaches simply serve different pedagogical purposes at different points in one's training?" Recorded examples included some particularly haunting interpretations of Bach fugues from the "Art of the Fugue" as performed on the piano by Glenn Gould at a live recital in Moscow on May 12, 1957 (compact disc: Le Chant du Monde, LDC 278 799)—pieces that are often not listened to as "just music" in the theory classroom but rather as repositories of compositional devices and contrapuntal procedures.

The smooth support of the College Music Society, the hospitality of the University of Montana School of Music, and the beautiful Northwest setting were appreciated by all (after a few initial days of drizzle and grayness). A spectacular bus tour of the surrounding mountain and lake areas was made available to participants at the end of the week as an option. More importantly, the overall pedagogical value and stimulation provided by such an institute is not possible to measure by any tangible yardstick, yet for most of those in attendance something real, I think, took place. Something synergistic happens when a bunch of music theory teachers gather to argue, share, compare, and synthesize their belief systems. After all the events are described, after all the statistical tabulations are listed, Gary Karpinski's final statement best summarizes the feelings of the group: "And it was a lot of fun."

Next summer (June 20-25, 1993) a related institute in Music Cognition will be offered—again in Montana. All of those interested can receive details by writing to or calling the College Music Society at 202 West Spruce St; Missoula, MT 59802 (406-721-9616).