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# A Handbook for Graduate Students Teaching Aural Skills

David William Marvel

*University of Tennessee*, [dmarvel@vols.utk.edu](mailto:dmarvel@vols.utk.edu)

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by David William Marvel entitled "A Handbook for Graduate Students Teaching Aural Skills." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, with a major in Music.

Barbara A. Murphy, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Keith R. Brown, Brendan P. McConville

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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# **A Handbook for Graduate Students Teaching Aural Skills**

A Thesis Presented for the  
Master of Music  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

David William Marvel  
August 2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis was to prepare new graduate students to teach ear training courses. Relevant pedagogical materials were reviewed to gauge what resources are currently available to help new graduate students teach ear training and what additional resources are needed for this task. A survey was created through Qualtrics to investigate the selection, responsibilities, and training of the Graduate Teaching Assistants who would teach ear training. The results of the survey indicated that there is no consistency in how Graduate Teaching Assistants are prepared to teach at different institutions and that, alarmingly, many receive absolutely no training whatsoever. The review and survey informed the construction of a training handbook for new Graduate Teaching Assistants teaching ear training. The handbook provides a philosophical and pedagogical background on teaching and provides tools and activities that Graduate Teaching Assistants can use in their ear training classes.

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Increasing enrollment in colleges has created the need for more instructors to teach core classes. From 1976 to 2015, student enrollment in American universities and colleges climbed by 62% (Brower). As student populations have swelled, institutions of higher education have struggled to teach so many students. A common solution has been to hire more graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to teach undergraduate classes required of large numbers of students (June). While GTAs get valuable professional experience and financial assistance, the primary disadvantage of hiring GTAs is that they often have no teaching background or experience. With 136,820 graduate teaching assistants employed in the United States as of May 2017 (“Graduate Teaching Assistants”), there are likely thousands of graduate students every year who find themselves standing in front of a class for the first time. Graduate students in Schools of Music are no exception to this trend.

The highest volume classes in Schools of Music tend to be those that are required of all music students, regardless of major: theory, ear training, piano, and music history. In a small survey conducted in 2011, Elizabeth West Marvin found that some schools with GTAs are moving towards a lecture-lab design where faculty teach large lectures and graduates students are responsible for running lab sessions (256). While all schools are different, it is not uncommon to find graduate students assisting with or teaching these core classes at colleges all across the United States.

Since many graduate students have no teaching background, the goal of this thesis is to provide a handbook for new GTAs that will be teaching for the first time. The

handbook is aimed at GTAs who will be teaching ear training classes in particular. In Chapter 2, research into relevant literature on pedagogy will be provided to assess what is already available to assist new ear training teachers. In Chapter 3, results of a survey conducted by the author on the current status of the selection, preparation, and responsibilities of GTAs in music theory departments will be presented. Chapter 4 contains the example handbook for new graduate teaching assistants. The literature review and survey inform the content of this handbook. The conclusion to this thesis, Chapter 5, includes some suggestions about how to use the information in this thesis and handbook in the preparation of new GTAs who will teach ear training classes.

## CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

The goal of this thesis is to provide a handbook for new GTAs that will be teaching ear training for the first time. There is already a large body of writing aimed at helping college teachers, including books, journals, and technology-based resources. This chapter will provide a brief summary of these materials and will highlight what new teachers can gain from these materials. This chapter divides the literature review into discussions of books, journals and web resources. The discussion of books and journals covers a range of teaching perspectives, progressing from general views on teaching to those specifically about teaching ear training. The web resources section includes descriptions of online journals for teachers and interactive websites for students.

### *Books*

Peter Filene's *The Joy of Teaching* is an excellent handbook for first year teachers; it focuses on general elements of teaching and is relatable to all disciplines. At only 159 pages, this book can be read quickly and referenced easily throughout one's first year of teaching. New GTAs can glean information about the philosophy behind teaching and general methods for teaching a college class from this book.

Filene divides his book into three parts: "Premises," "Practices," and "Extracurriculars." "Premises" covers a broad set of philosophical questions about the kind of teacher the reader wants to be, how the teacher can build a pedagogical relationship with students, and what the teacher wants their students to be able to

achieve in and after their courses. “Practices” provides a solid cognitive and pedagogical foundation for designing classes, helping students learn, and evaluating assessments and student success in classroom objectives. The final part, “Extracurriculars,” deals with two issues that aspiring professors will have to confront to survive a career in academia: how far they want to extend their professional relationship with students beyond their office and how to balance teaching with research and service.

While Filene’s book is a useful resource, it does not go into as much depth as many other books on college teaching and includes a significant amount of information not relevant to music theory GTAs. For instance, Filene’s discussion of syllabus construction focuses on the pacing and ordering of topics and assignments in a course. While this is useful information, most GTAs will not have the kind of autonomy with their ear training courses for Filene’s approach to be applicable. There is no discussion, however, about much boilerplate information that goes into a syllabus, including attendance policies, office hours, statements on academic integrity, and other important details that new GTAs need to understand.

Ken Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do* is a more comprehensive book about teaching and, as such, can be a valuable resource for new GTAs. Bain defines the “best” teaching as instruction that has a lasting, positive impact on students that goes far beyond the classroom. He introduces several of the “best” teachers who he will refer to throughout the book, using their stories to demonstrate what incredible teaching can be like and the influence it can have on students. Through these examples, Bain

describes how the teacher knows learning is taking place, how teachers prepare for their classes, what they expect of themselves and their students, how they conduct their classes, how they treat their students, and how they evaluate their students and themselves.

This book provides practical advice, words of wisdom, and philosophical perspectives on teaching. Bain's teaching examples come from a variety of disciplines and the reader is encouraged to think about how the underlying principles of the examples relate to their subjects so they can improve their own teaching for the sake of their students. For instance, Bain uses a study investigating how much students learned about motion in a physics class from the 1980s to demonstrate how learning takes place in all disciplines (22). The same methods can be used in theory and ear training classes. Although this text is inspiring and informative, it does not address many of the basic behaviors involved in classroom teaching, such as getting a textbook into the university bookstore, or how to approach the first day of class.

Wilbert McKeachie and Marilla Svinicki's book, *Teaching Tips*, provides the day-to-day details missing from both the Filene and the Bain books that are useful for GTAs. *Teaching Tips* is divided into seven sections covering topics such as planning a course, developing teaching methods, understanding students, teaching large classes and labs, teaching aimed at higher-level goals, and sustaining a lifelong career as a college professor. Like Filene and Bain, McKeachie and Svinicki discuss motivating and engaging students. In addition, *Teaching Tips* also includes detailed information about teaching a college class, such as assigning grades; meeting a class for the first time;

ordering a textbook through the bookstore; using readings, lectures, and discussions to teach; and how to deal with trouble students.

While the Filene and Bain books are more focused on the philosophy and intent behind good teaching, *Teaching Tips* provides more in-depth information that can be helpful to new GTAs. For instance, Bain's chapter on evaluating students includes very little information on the actual process of assigning grades; instead, Bain highlights how great teachers use evaluation and assessment as learning rather than performance opportunities (152). McKeachie and Svinicki, on the other hand, have four detailed chapters on planning and administering assessments, providing feedback, and the specifics behind assigning grades, including involving students in planning the grading process to reduce their anxiety about grades (132). Although the breadth and depth of topics covered in *Teaching Tips* is astounding, most of the topics are addressed in generic scenarios and not specific to the teaching of music. There are a few books that can help with some of the challenges unique to teaching music.

Conway and Hodgman's *Teaching Music in Higher Education* not only provides teaching suggestions specifically for music instructors, it also considers National Association of Schools of Music requirements and music education certification requirements in each state. New GTAs can learn a lot about how music schools operate and find tips for teaching musical content in this book since the authors approach the material within the book through the lens of "learner-centered pedagogy" (xi). Quotes from undergraduate students, graduate assistants, young teachers, and seasoned professors reinforce the content throughout. *Teaching Music in Higher Education* also

touches on most of the clerical responsibilities typically required of college music teaching. Bridging the gap between general pedagogy texts and topic-specific manuals for teaching, Conway and Hodgman address the unique needs of music curricula and instructors. However, the broad approach to teaching music used in this book does not provide detailed examples of how to apply its methodologies to ear training classes (with a few exceptions, e.g., syllabi).

Shinichi Suzuki has had a profound impact on music education; his method of teaching is used all over the world and can be useful for new music theory GTAs. In *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki presents his “sound before sight” approach to learning music and his philosophy of “nurturing” students to become the best versions of themselves. Often, the freshman ear training student is still a child in terms of the development of their musical ear; a good number of new music students have never learned a piece of music without looking at notated music. Such students will be new to the process of learning to hear and think in music, and some will require a lot more nurturing to develop this skill than others. Suzuki’s teachings aim to not just teach students to play an instrument, but to foster talent. He argues that developing talent is the best way to become a better person (85). Suzuki’s teachings are directly applicable to the ear training classroom: the process by which young children learn to play an instrument is the same way we train to understand what we hear. While many of Suzuki’s ideas are transferable to the ear training classroom, he makes no specific mention of the topic in his writings. There are, however, a number of books that more directly address teaching ear training.

Michael Rogers' *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies* is an important text in the field of music theory pedagogy that provides new GTAs with pertinent information for teaching ear training. Rogers divides his book into three distinct sections which he compares to that of a sonata form in his Preface. Part One, the "Exposition," expounds the fundamentals of teaching music theory, and establishes the purpose and need for music theory instruction. This section also introduces four major dichotomies in philosophical approaches to music theory teaching:

1. Whether written and aural skills should be taught as isolated courses or coordinated/taught together.
2. Whether music theory should be taught as an independent course or coordinated/taught with other music classes.
3. Whether music theory should be taught using a historical-stylistic organization or through general principles that can be applied to a variety of musics.
4. Whether the focus of music theory teaching should be developing practical musical skills or developing musical thinking skills.

Through Rogers' text, new music theory GTAs can learn about the advantages of using different musical tools to teach musical skills (e.g., fixed or movable Do, La or Do based minor). Part Two, the "Development," provides a broad overview of the various approaches used to teach the concepts, ideas, and terminology related to hearing and thinking about music intelligently. Contrasting teaching methods are provided for teaching fundamentals, analysis, sight singing, transcription and many other topics,



allowing the reader to gain familiarity with different approaches to teaching and learning music theory and challenging the ways they learned themselves. Part Three, the “Recapitulation,” deals with methods for effectively communicating the content of parts one and two through teaching strategies, student evaluation, and curriculum design.

While Rogers addresses most of the important topics in ear training, he does not provide many useful activities for teaching these topics. For instance, Rogers provides eight practical tips about teaching intervals (e.g., ascending melodic intervals are easiest to learn, avoid overusing tunes to learn intervals, harmonic intervals can be mentally broken up into a melodic interval), but Rogers offers no activities, beyond drilling, that can be used to introduce or practice intervals (105). New GTAs need tools and activities they can immediately take to the classroom to teach all of the valuable information Rogers presents.

John White’s book, *Guidelines for College Teaching of Music Theory*, provides more practical tools that can be used by GTAs to teach ear training than Rogers’ book. White outlines four core music theory topics (analysis, composition, ear training, and keyboard skills) and demonstrates how each topic should be taught over the course of several semesters. White balances practical teaching advice with big-picture thinking about the progression of learning in music theory courses. Although White has a lot of useful information about ear training, his teaching strategies are suggestive; he doesn’t provide many fully developed activities for GTAs to use. For example, White claims that games can help students in the ear training classroom, but he doesn’t provide example games beyond keeping track of who had the most correct answers in a drill exercise

(32). GTAs need more instructional examples that they can draw on to effectively engage students in an ear training classroom.

*The Norton Guide to Teaching Music Theory*, edited by Rachel Lumsden and Jeffrey Swinkin, is the newest, most wide-ranging text on the pedagogy of music theory and offers practical information for new GTAs teaching ear training. The book includes several chapters that focus specifically on ear training, such as incorporating movement into aural skills, teaching post-tonal aural skills, and using the piano to engage students. There are many chapters that are not specifically about aural skills that can still help new GTAs. Chapters on expanding the repertoire and including popular, jazz, racial, ethnic, and world music in the classroom could be very helpful to ear training instructors. There are also chapters about using more contemporary approaches to teaching music theory, including the use of videos and universal design for learning.

In all three of these texts about music theory pedagogy (i.e., the Norton, Rogers, and White books), ear training has been considered a portion of one's theory training, not treated as an individual task. There are advantages to this comprehensive approach, but new teachers and GTAs will need more specific information on how to teach ear training than presented in these books.

Gary Karpinski's *Aural Skills Acquisition* provides a detailed survey of the musical skills involved in teaching and learning how to listen to, read, and perform music; new GTAs will find a wealth of useful information about most topics encountered in ear training in this book. Karpinski draws on experimental and qualitative research on isolated musical behaviors to inform aural skills teaching. For most topics, Karpinski

describes the cognitive processes that make aural skills possible. For instance, in describing melodic dictation, Karpinski begins by warning of the limitations of dictation exercises and then describes his own model for music perception and cognition during dictation. He breaks the process of melodic dictation into four stages: hearing, short-term melodic memory, musical understanding, and notation (64). He describes the goals of each stage and what kinds of activities may be necessary for each. In describing short-term melodic memory, Karpinski describes two separate memory encoding mechanisms for contour and specific pitches. Karpinski asserts that these two mechanisms must work together to be able to accurately dictate melodies, and he offers two strategies for extending the capacity of short-term musical memory: extractive listening and chunking (71).

While all of the information in *Aural Skills Acquisition* is important for ear training GTAs to know, Karpinski does not offer many suggestions for ways to teach the concepts to an actual class. In his discussion of presenting melodic dictation to a class, Karpinski talks about important information (how many listenings should be given, how much information should be given before listening, etc.), however he does not talk about how to introduce his model for dictation nor does he suggest any methods for teaching students about extractive listening or chunking. GTAs need specific tools and activities they can use to share all of this useful information with their classes.

### *Journals and Web Resources*

While all of the books mentioned above offer valuable information for teachers of all levels, none are exhaustive in their discussion of what to do in the classroom.

Additionally, some of these books are somewhat out of date, and, in a field where technology is widely used, this time lag can cause some problems of relevancy.

Journals and other online resources can provide current, relevant literature on theory and ear training pedagogy. There are three open-access, peer reviewed journals that may be particularly useful for new GTAs: the *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy (JMTP)*, *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy*, and *Music Theory Online (MTO)*.

The *JMTP* publishes articles about all topics related to music theory pedagogy including teaching strategies, reviews of textbooks, and teaching materials including sample handouts and worksheets with answer keys, explanations, and sample syllabi. *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy* publishes short articles on student-centered learning in college music classes. There are essays about teaching, assessing, practicing, using technology, and an entire issue devoted specifically to using jazz to engage students. *Music Theory Online*, the Journal of the Society for Music Theory, primarily publishes analyses and, occasionally, articles on pedagogical topics in the theory/ear training classroom. The sample analyses of contemporary and popular music can be used as reading material for classes or as examples for use as transcription and sight reading practice.

Many websites also contain exercises and tutorials that can be used by new GTAs teaching in class or as supplementary homework. Three exceptionally useful free websites are Musictheory.net, Teoria.com, and musictheoryexamples.com.

Musictheory.net contains explanations of music fundamentals and has a wide variety of customizable exercises to practice hearing, writing, and identifying notes, key signatures, intervals, scales, and chords. The site also includes several useful tools, such as an online keyboard, metronome, and staff paper generator. Teoria.com is similar to Musictheory.net in that it has tutorials and exercises for most fundamental musical skills. However, Teoria also includes melodic and rhythmic dictation exercises, sections on jazz topics, and information on more chromatic techniques and musical forms. The *Internet Music Theory Database* (Musictheoryexamples.com), authored by Timothy Cutler, is a website that is dedicated more to music theory teachers than students. This site provides a database of musical excerpts sorted by content (e.g. major scales, augmented 6th chords, modulations), making it easy to find examples from the western canon for use as examples in class or for tests. The excerpts are provided as PDFs and sound files, without commentary or analysis.

The books, journals, and websites available to help teachers are impressive; however, no sources address teaching from the perspective of the new music theory GTA. What do GTAs need to know how to do? How are GTAs taught how to teach theory and ear training in particular? What resources are they given and what training is provided? The next chapter presents the results of a survey conducted to help answer these questions.

### **CHAPTER 3: Survey Results and Discussion**

This thesis is intended to help prepare GTAs to teach ear training. To determine what kind of help is already provided to GTAs, a survey was sent out to gather information about the responsibilities, selection, and preparation of GTAs in the music theory discipline. These results are suggestive about the current state of GTA positions at institutions of higher learning and indicate that the procedures for GTAs vary not only from institution to institution, but even for individual assistantships within departments.

#### *Survey*

The survey was created in Qualtrics and, after IRB approval was obtained, was sent out in the Spring of 2018 through the College Music Society email list to music theorists. The email invitation that was sent out may be viewed in appendix A. The instructions asked for only one response to come from each school; however, as no identifying information was gathered about respondents, there can be no way to know for sure that there are no duplications in these results. The complete survey and results appear in appendix B.

#### *Results*

The minimal demographic information gathered through this survey about theory/composition GTAs highlights the importance of this thesis. Of the 164 people who opened the survey, 160 agreed to complete the survey. However, not all 160 participants answered each question. In fact, the number of responses to each question

varied from 64 to 78. Results are skewed toward schools with large theory departments as shown by the number of GTAs. 51.28% of respondents indicated their institutions had seven or more graduate students majoring in theory/composition (Table 1) and 42.11% of institutions have seven or more theory/composition GTA positions (Table 2). These numbers reveal there are a minimum of 348 theory/composition GTAs amongst the institutions represented in these results; considering the actual number of theory/composition GTAs is likely higher, this is a significant population of people who are tasked with teaching undergraduate music students skills vital for their musical development. This large number of theory/composition GTAs reaffirms the need for materials to help train these future teachers.

**Table 1: Number of Graduate Students in Theory/Composition**

Answer (Select one)	Count (N=78)	Percentage
1-2	14	17.95%
3-4	13	16.67%
5-6	11	14.10%
7+	40	51.28%

**Table 2: Number of Graduate Teaching Assistants in Theory/Composition**

Answer (Select one)	Count (N=76)	Percentage
1-2	15	19.74%
3-4	18	23.68%
5-6	11	14.47%
7+	32	42.11%

The results showed that not all schools used only theory/composition majors as GTAs, further increasing the need to make sure there are materials to help these GTAs who may not even be studying the material they are teaching. The numbers showed a split between schools using exclusively theory/composition majors (48.7%) and those hiring students in other majors as GTAs (51.3%). Schools with only one or two theory/composition GTAs are far more likely to draw on students with other majors to fill their theory/composition GTA positions; of the thirteen schools in this category, 84.6% indicated they hired GTAs from all majors (Table 3).

**Table 3: Number of Schools who only use Theory/Composition majors as Theory/Composition GTAs**

Answer (Select One)	Schools with 1-2 Theory/Composition Majors (N=13)		Schools with 3-4 Theory/Composition Majors (N=12)		Schools with 5-6 Theory/Composition Majors (N=11)		Schools with 7+ Theory/Composition Majors (N=40)	
Yes	2	15.38%	7	58.33%	5	45.45%	23	57.50%
No	11	84.62%	5	41.67%	6	54.55%	17	42.50%

Theory/Composition GTA workloads and financial assistance vary significantly; the amount of time GTAs have to prepare for their classes and the compensation they receive will have an impact on their experiences in the classroom. 28.57% of schools use contracts for quarter-time (10 hours) employment, 14.29% use third-time (~13 hours) employment contracts, and 24.68% use half-time (20 hours) employment contracts. The largest number of respondents (32.47%) categorized their positions as “Other,” indicating that they employ GTAs for different workloads ranging from eight



hours per week up to twenty hours per week. For their work, GTAs were most commonly provided tuition waivers and stipends, but not fee waivers (Table 4). Six respondents (7.79%) selected other types of financial assistance including some kind of health insurance waiver or additional stipend.

**Table 4: Financial Assistance Offered to Theory/Composition GTAs**

Answer (Select all that apply)	Count (N=77)	Percentage
Tuition Waiver	60	77.92%
Fee Waiver	16	20.78%
Stipend	67	87.01%
Other	18	23.38%

To hire their GTAs, over half of all departments use some combination of resumes (58.4%), letters of recommendation (50.65%), and interviews (71.3%) to select their GTAs (Table 5). However, only 9.09% use teaching demonstrations, either in person or via video, in their selection process. Since so few GTAs have to demonstrate an ability to teach to earn a teaching position, it is important to make sure there are resources available to help them teach.

The teaching loads and responsibilities of GTAs varies considerably from school to school. The largest number of schools (43.84%) have their GTAs work with only one course at a time while another 28.7% respondents indicate their GTAs taught two classes per term (Table 6). It is interesting to note that 17.81% of respondents indicated that their GTAs don't actually teach any classes. Only 22.97% of institutions give their GTAs complete teaching responsibility for their classes (Table 7); it is more common

**Table 5: Information Used in Selection of Theory/Composition GTAs**

Answer (Select all that apply)	Count (N=77)	Percentage
Resume	45	58.44%
Letters of Recommendation	39	50.65%
Interview	55	71.43%
Teaching Demo (Video)	2	2.60%
Teaching Demo (In Person)	5	6.49%
Other	23	29.87%

**Table 6: Number of Classes Taught by Theory/Composition GTAs**

Answer (Select one)	Count (N=73)	Percentage
0	13	17.81%
1	32	43.84%
2	21	28.77%
3	5	6.85%
4+	2	2.74%

**Table 7: Theory/Composition GTA Teaching Responsibilities**

Answer (Select one)	Count (N=74)	Percentage
100% Teaching/Instructor of Record	17	22.97%
Grading Only	7	9.46%
Leading Discussion/Recitation Section	21	28.38%
Other	29	39.19%

(28.38%) for schools to use their GTAs to lead separate discussions sections, much like the findings of Elizabeth West Marvin (256). Most respondents (39.19%), however, indicate some “other” combination of teaching, grading, substituting for professors, and providing extra help to students outside of class. Of the seventy-six responses to a question about GTA responsibilities, 69.74% responded that their theory/composition GTAs have more responsibilities than just teaching. The other responsibilities required of GTAs frequently include grading, tutoring, supervising a tutoring center, and helping out with running electronic or new music festivals/concerts.

The largest number of institutions (70.42%) use their GTAs to teach ear training, reaffirming the need to provide these GTAs with materials to help them teach (Table 8). Other teaching assignments were often determined by the student’s prior experience and knowledge of “other” areas for 23.94% of respondents. Interestingly, some classes were taught by GTAs only at schools that had seven or more GTAs; respondents from these schools responded that their GTAs could teach music technology classes and composition classes/lessons.

**Table 8: Courses Taught by Theory/Composition GTAs**

Answer (Select all that apply)	Count (N=71)	Percentage
Ear Training	50	70.42%
Music Theory Fundamentals	47	66.20%
Music Theory Core Curriculum	45	63.38%
Music Technology	16	22.54%
Composition Class/Lessons	16	22.54%
Other	17	23.94%

Most theory/composition GTAs don't have to worry about writing their own syllabi or tests/quizzes for their courses. Out of sixty-five responses, 66.15% of schools indicated that GTAs receive a syllabus prepared by the department, 27.69% provide a syllabus template that may be altered by the instructing GTA, and just 6.15% of institutions allow GTAs to create their own syllabi from scratch. Again, out of sixty-five responses, 55.38% of GTAs receive departmentally prepared quizzes and tests, 26.15% of schools provide templates that may be altered, and only 18.46% of institutions allow GTAs to create their own quizzes and tests.

Theory/Composition GTAs are also guided by faculty through observations of their classes. The survey showed that 57.81% of schools observe their theory/composition GTAs once or twice a semester; however, 10.94% of theory/composition GTAs are never observed (Table 9).

**Table 9: Frequency of Theory/Composition GTA Teaching Observations**

Answer (Select one)	Count (N=64)	Percentage
Never	7	10.94%
Once or Twice a Year	12	18.75%
Once or Twice a Semester	37	57.81%
Several Times a Semester	4	6.25%
Weekly	4	6.25%

Most institutions require their theory/composition GTAs to go through some kind of training before school begins. The largest group of respondents (26.47%) respondents indicated some "other" training procedures for GTAs (Table 10). This

training included attending school-wide GTA sessions, working one on one with their supervisor, and theory/composition department meetings to work with GTAs. Future GTAs in theory/composition should be warned that 23.53% of institutions offer no training prior to school and no schools are using the web to train their GTAs. Some respondents indicated that GTAs do not teach until later semesters, allowing GTAs to take pedagogy courses early in their coursework and/or work with faculty before they actually have to teach.

**Table 10: Training Offered Prior to Start of School**

Answer (Select one)	Count (N=68)	Percentage
No Training	16	23.53%
Training Less Than Two Hours	14	20.59%
One Day Training	15	22.06%
Multiple Day Training	5	7.35%
Online Training	0	0.00%
Other	18	26.47%

Many theory/composition GTAs will receive additional training/mentoring during their studies. Out of seventy-two respondents, only half (50%) indicated their institution requires theory/composition GTAs to take at least one pedagogy class; it is startling that half of institutions do not require their GTAs to take any pedagogy courses at all. Of the thirty-six who require pedagogy classes, 70.59% are required to take general music theory pedagogy course (Table 11). “Other” required pedagogy classes include a non-music specific pedagogy course, and multiple pedagogy classes for written and

aural skills. It is interesting to point out that even though more theory/composition GTAs will teach ear training than theory, more are required to take written theory pedagogy instead of aural skills pedagogy; there is room for more ear training specific training for new GTAs.

**Table 11: Pedagogy Courses Required of Theory/Composition GTAs**

Answer (Select all that apply)	Count (N=34)	Percentage
Aural Skills Pedagogy	5	14.71%
Written Theory Pedagogy	7	20.59%
General Music Theory Pedagogy	24	70.59%
General Music Pedagogy	4	11.76%
Other	6	17.65%

### *Further Questions*

While this survey and the data it represents are useful, it is not exhaustive. The results bring up more questions, that should be asked in future surveys. More demographic information about the respondents would help to identify trends in how GTAs are selected, prepared, and what responsibilities they are given. Questions could include:

- Whether the school is public or private
- The number of music students in the various degree programs offered (i.e., undergraduate, masters, or doctoral students, etc.)

- The type of school (e.g., research institutions, teaching colleges, technical schools, or conservatories)
- The number of theory and composition faculty

Since the survey was sent to faculty, it would also be interesting to send a survey to the GTAs themselves to get their perspective. Answers to these questions could provide insight into the preparation need to prepare new GTAs. Such a survey might ask questions such as:

- How many GTAs are coming straight from undergraduate school to graduate school?
- What kind of teaching preparation did they receive before entering graduate school?
- Do they have teaching experience at any level (e.g., student teaching, K-5, 6-8, 9-12, college level teaching, college level tutoring)?
- How many are pursuing a master's degree or doctoral degree?
- How do they perceive their training, mentoring, and guidance during their assistantship?

### *Conclusions*

GTAs in theory/composition play a very important role in teaching undergraduate music majors; however, very little attention is given to how students teach when they are selected, and training procedures vary drastically from school to school, with an alarming 23.53% offering no training whatsoever. Given that no schools represented in

this survey are using the internet to help with preparing their GTAs, there is an opportunity for the development of new resources to help with this task that could significantly increase GTA preparation without the need for additional meetings. The next chapter contains a handbook that can be used by institutions to help prepare their GTAs to teach ear training.



## CHAPTER 4: Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook

The following is an example handbook that could be used to help train newly-appointed GTAs. It contains philosophical and pedagogical information on teaching as well as specific tools and activities that can be used in class. A brief discussion of how institutions could incorporate this handbook into their training procedures appears in chapter 5.

### *Preface*

Congratulations! You have earned a bachelor's degree and you are now embarking on a new journey as a teaching assistant in graduate school. Although you worked hard to get yourself here, chances are you've had at least one teacher in your college career who has helped you a great deal on your path towards success. Think of the ways this teacher pushed you, challenged your thinking, and encouraged you. Spend a lot of time considering their impact, and that of other great teachers in your life; they will serve as your best examples as you develop your skills in the classroom.

The purpose of this handbook is to prepare you to teach undergraduate ear training. This guide is divided into three parts: *Why*, *How*, and *What*. Part 1, *Why*, answers the question of why teaching and ear training are important. Part 2, *How*, describes how learning takes place, how to create an environment that fosters learning, how to organize class materials, and how to balance teaching with your graduate studies. Part 3, *What*, provides tools for teaching ear training such as background

information on hand signs, solfege and rhythm syllables, and activities on various topics to use in class and for homework.

Teaching requires commitment, preparation, practice, and the willingness to change and improve. Like any skill, your teaching will develop and change over time, and the habits you develop at the beginning of your career will be the foundation for your future teaching. You will find that the rewards of teaching make it well worth your effort and commitment. Ask any veteran teacher you know why they teach, and they will most likely tell you about the difference their students have made in their life. One of the most rewarding elements of teaching is observing your students' progress and growth. It is a thrilling experience to hear a student sight-sing a melody accurately and explain how chromatic pitches are functioning musically who was not able to match a pitch three months earlier. You will find excitement in your students' successes and you will feel proud watching them do great things on their own. You will have good and bad teaching days, but as long as you prepare and do what you believe is best for your students, you will continue to improve.

### *Part 1: Why*

Learning is the most important undertaking of our lives. The human capacity for learning is what has propelled our species and society ahead of all other life forms on this planet. Learning begins the moment we are born; our first teachers are our parents. We learn how to talk and walk and act by observing and imitating our parents. Like animals, our first educational experiences include the basic skills necessary to find food

and shelter; those that learn the most effectively are the ones that survive. Humans, however, have sought to learn much more than the basics; for example, we learned how to create fire, then how to use it to protect ourselves, to cook our food, and how to power our machines. We learned from those who came before us and added to their discoveries. Teachers, whether family members or professionals, pass along what has already been discovered and train us so to become lifelong learners

As a society, we have increasingly set aside more and more time for our children to focus on learning before they become independent adults. We entrust professional teachers to impart the knowledge and skills necessary for our children (and society as a whole) to continue to evolve. Teaching used to be the passing along of facts, skills, traditions, philosophies, concepts, etc.. Digital technology has helped with these tasks and transformed the role of teachers; we now rely on professionals to teach deeper critical thinking skills, self-education techniques, and how to critically sort through the wealth of information available to us thanks to the internet. As teachers, we need to find ways to more efficiently, yet effectively, communicate what we know with younger generations so they can carry on the process of discovery.

Research has shown that when a student believes something is important and finds it interesting, they will be much more likely to commit the time needed to actually figure it out (Bain 40). Students who do not see the relevancy of the material will be the ones that ask “Why do I need to learn this?;” an inevitable question for nearly every teacher. It is a question that all teachers dread, but one of the most important questions that teachers need to answer for themselves and their students; if students see the

value and applicability in what they are learning, the teaching process will become much easier.

To answer the question of *why*, for yourself and for your students, think about the benefits of studying music theory and ear training in your own musical development. You may have valued the practicality of being able to play by ear. You might have fallen in love with the process of analyzing a piece of music and using that analysis to enhance your performances. You might have realized the more informed you are about a piece, the better you are able to conduct and rehearse it. Every student will have a unique need for the concepts they will learn in ear training. As the teacher, it is your responsibility to help your students understand their unique needs for aural skills and how they interact with performing, conducting, teaching, or whatever else they may end up doing. To this end, offer practical examples of how your students might use aural skills in their future vocations. Future band directors will need a different set of skills than those who want to work in a recording studio, but they will both benefit from seeing how ear training will help them achieve their goals. When a student asks *why*, be prepared to help them understand. If you keep the question of *why* in your mind while you are planning your class, your students are more likely to see for themselves and take their learning into their own hands.

## *Part 2: How*

One of my professors from undergraduate study always used to say to me, “I can’t teach you anything; you have to figure it out for yourself.” At first, this statement made me frustrated. I thought he was holding out, keeping intellectual secrets from me. Little did I know how true those words are about how we learn. We can’t teach babies how to walk; we explain to them how to walk, they observe others walking, and they develop their own desire to be able to walk. The iterative process includes their observations of what works and, more importantly, what doesn't work. Once they've learned the basics of walking, they can experiment with other things such as running, jumping, swimming, and biking. All learning, from walking to analyzing music and sight reading scores, takes place in this same manner. Good teaching allows students to experience this natural process of discovery for themselves.

### *The Natural Learning Process*

The natural learning process has already been adopted by some music educators in the following format: observe, form a mental image, imitate, trial-and-error practice, and motivation (Criss 43). *Observation* is where the whole process starts; we learn by taking in sensory information: a car looks like this, a dog smells like that, this key on the piano sounds like this, this note looks like this on paper, etc. *Forming a mental image* involves connecting observations to other related ones to begin finding new ways to apply the information or skills we have observed, this is most easily accomplished through story mechanisms such as analogies, metaphors, or similes. A

very basic example of this is when young musicians learn to connect major triads with happy and minor triads with sad; as we take in more and more sensory information, we can make more complex and accurate connections. *Imitation* is where we attempt to reproduce our mental images. *Trial-and-error practice* is the continuation of the imitation stage where repeated attempts are made to refine the imitative attempt. Without this practice, we cannot experience an imitation of our mental images, which will prevent us from gaining more accurate mental images to rely on in the future. *Motivation* is what keeps us working through this process and causes us to seek out new models to observe. As teachers, we should organize our classes in a manner that supports this natural learning process. There are a lot of different ways to achieve this, and no one method will work for all students, but any effective method will involve creating and nurturing, a positive learning environment.

### *The Positive Learning Environment*

A positive learning environment is one which is both *effective* and *enjoyable*. The learning environment is primarily established by the teacher, and how they interact with their students.

### *Fostering an Effective Learning Environment*

An effective learning environment directs students towards a pre-imagined end goal and allows them to experience the natural learning process on their own. Many musicians and teachers believe it is the goal of ear training to develop a “seeing ear”

and a “hearing eye” (Karpinski 3). If this is the end goal, then work backwards to determine how to achieve the goal: what does it mean to have a “seeing ear” and a “hearing eye?” How can you demonstrate that you have accomplished these goals? What skills do you need to develop to accomplish these goals? How do you as the teacher help the students develop these skills?

An *effective* aural skills class directs students towards the goal of having a “seeing ear” and a “hearing eye.” At the highest level, a “seeing ear” and a “hearing eye” are tools that allow musicians to think *about* and *in* sound, and, when combined, allow musicians to communicate *through* sound. “Seeing ears” allow musicians to identify and transcribe what they are hearing, and “hearing eyes” allow them to hear sound in their mind as they read notation. The ways these tools will be used by different musicians will vary considerably; however, musicians are asked to do certain tasks using these tools quite frequently, such as sight reading, transposing, composing, arranging, etc. The most *effective* ear training activities will help students develop multiple skills simultaneously. An activity that incorporates sight-singing, improvisation, transcription, and analysis is much more beneficial than isolated interval practice.

The most *effective* way to direct students’ attention and thinking towards a pre-conceived end goal is through asking them questions, much like the Socratic method. A talented teacher can ask the right questions to lead students to discover answers on their own. Such teaching requires getting into the mind of the student to figure out *why* they aren’t understanding the concept being discussed. Some mistakes are simple to fix; for instance, musicians will sometimes read music in the clef of their

primary instrument instead of what is notated, and it is easy to lead them to the solution by asking “what clef is this in?” Some mistakes are more complicated and require a series of questions to lead students to correct answers. Understanding the problem a student is having and developing an *effective* line of questioning to fix the mistake in their thinking takes practice and requires meeting students at their current level of understanding. Try not to give answers; if a student asks a question, ask them questions in response.

Finally, in order to be *effective*, material must be presented in a logical cognitive sequence that moves from simple to complex (Filene 42). Complex ideas are often built off of simple ones; without a solid understanding of the simple ideas, the complex ones will not be able to develop in a student’s mind. Michael Rogers points out that students who have a strong understanding of fundamentals always succeed in music theory, but that the students who struggle in music theory are always weak in fundamentals (36).

### *Fostering an Enjoyable Learning Environment*

An enjoyable learning environment is one in which students believe they can achieve success and they do not fear making mistakes during the natural learning process. There are many ways to foster an enjoyable learning environment in an ear training class. The teacher must communicate with the students in a way that does not belittle or embarrass students. Always speak with kind words to your students; talk to students in a way that will convince them they are capable of learning what they are working on. The teacher’s reaction when students make mistakes will determine



whether or not students will fear mistakes in their class; always welcome mistakes and show how they are opportunities to learn. When we encounter a difficult student, it is hard-wired in us to immediately place all of the blame on them; if students won't stay focused, don't participate in class, won't do their homework, or are confrontational in class, it is often because of our own actions as a teacher. McKeachie and Svinicki recommend introspective reflection to perceive what about our own actions in the class may be inviting problematic behaviors before attempting to compassionately resolve those behaviors with students (171).

### *Organization of Classroom Materials and Activities*

Good teaching requires preparation and planning, which begins long before stepping foot in the classroom. Teachers need to plan activities, gather needed materials, familiarize themselves with classroom technology, prepare exercises, handouts and homeworks to complement classroom activities, and provide feedback to students, among other things.

### *Lesson Planning*

One way to prepare is to create a lesson plan for each class. Try to plan out a list of activities that progress through the natural learning process. Start off class by demonstrating skills and processes you would like your students to figure out for themselves. Provide opportunities for them to imitate, refine, and connect the dots with other concepts. Work in ways to get students excited throughout the entire process.

There are many different ways to write and keep track of lesson plans; a Google Doc, a journal, or notecards can all make it easy to keep track of what is happening each day in class. However you keep track of what you do, it is most important that you have a plan before each class, spend some time after class evaluating how well your plan worked, and then adapt your plan for the future as necessary. I plan each class on a notecard and after every class I take notes on the back of the card about how far we actually got in the class, then I pull out a new note card and plan my next class. Just find a system that works for you.

### *Assigning Homework*

Homework is “an important extension of in-school opportunities to learn” (Good and Brophy 393). Coordinate homework with your in-class activities to make sure your assignments are actually an extension of your class, and not merely busy work. Tell your students how often you will be assigning homework and how they will hear about it. Let your students know how their assignments will be graded and how they will submit them. Daily homework ensures students are engaging with the class material more frequently, but can quickly become a burden to grade; weekly assignments take less time to grade, but might allow some students to forget about a class entirely for several days. Online submissions for homework and assignments make it impossible to lose papers, but can make it more complicated to leave feedback. If you use a system for online submission of assignments, make sure to instruct students on how to use it. Inform students how long it will take you to grade the assignment and how they will

receive grades and feedback. Over time, you will find what works best for you and your students.

### *Providing Student Feedback*

Students want and need feedback on how they are doing as quickly as possible. Maxwell Maltz relates the servo-mechanisms that direct us towards pre-conceived goals (e.g. a “hearing eye” and a “seeing ear”) to the self-guided torpedo; it is the feedback that keeps the torpedo moving in the correct direction (19). One of the most regular methods used by teachers to provide feedback to students is through grades and comments on assignments. Grading takes up a significant portion of a teacher’s time, so do not get behind. Keep track of grades in a way that makes sense to you. There are many online grading systems, your school may require you to use a particular system, such as the one in their Learning Management System (LMS). If there is no prescribed system, then choose one that works for you and is convenient for your students. A grading system in which the students can see their grades and progress is helpful to you and the students; such a system will allow the students to know what their grades are at any time and save you from having to answer many questions about where students stand in the course. Communicating with students about their progress in your class will prevent most problems when it comes time to submit grades, but, likely not all problems. There are always some students who may still put up a fight and contest their grade; if you grade all assignments the same and calculate your final grade according to your syllabus guidelines, you protect yourself from significant problems.

### *Balancing Life as Teacher and Student*

Graduate school is busy, you will be a full time student, possibly working on a dissertation or thesis, in addition to working as a teacher. You will have to figure out how to balance your responsibilities as a student with your responsibilities as a teacher. Keep a calendar of due dates for the classes you take, and the ones you teach. If possible, try to anticipate when your busier weeks will be and spread your workload out. Plan out time for grading and lesson planning in addition to studying and writing for your own classes. Learn to manage your time wisely. Although teaching is incredibly important, you should not let your own studies suffer.

### *Part 3: What*

Developing “hearing eyes” and “seeing ears” involves learning about sounds, symbols, and how they are related. Rhythm and pitch tend to be the most prominent features of music studied in aural skills courses; however, other elements of music (timbre, form, texture, dynamics, etc.) should not be neglected. Fortunately, through language, we already have a model for how to learn sounds, symbols, and how they relate.

### *The Language Learning Process*

Language is an innate faculty of the human mind that is qualitatively identical amongst all people (Pinker 18). The way we learn language was never consciously devised, it is an instinctual process that has evolved to facilitate communication. This

means we don't need to devise new methods for learning language, all we need to do is exploit the instinctual process within us:

1. Learn to make sounds
2. Learn how to communicate with those sounds
3. Learn symbols that represent those sounds
4. Learn how to transform those symbols into sounds
5. Learn how to transform sounds into symbols

This process is directly applicable to learning the 'language' of music; each step has a parallel in the music world. While the sounds we learn for the sake of language are based primarily on syllabic combinations of consonants and vowels, the sounds we learn for music are based primarily on metered combinations of pitches and rhythms. Musical communication with these sounds requires listening and responding extemporaneously; this is what musicians call improvisation. Once we can carry on a basic 'conversation,' we can begin to associate symbols with the sounds we already know. Turning symbols into sound is described by the same action in both language and music: reading. The final step in the language process, turning sounds into symbols, is known to musicians as transcribing.

Tools such as rhythm syllables, solfege, and hand signs can help students discover the relationships between sound and symbol. In the following sections for rhythm and pitch, you can find information about these tools and how you can use the natural learning process to implement them in your class in conjunction with each step of the language learning process.

## *Rhythm*

Rhythm is the most fundamental element of music, no sounds can exist devoid of time; therefore, it is best to focus on rhythm first in teaching ear training. Whether you are working on simple or compound time, to progress from simple to complex, start with rhythms that use whole beats, then slowly incorporate rhythms longer than a beat and the first level of subdivision. Next, use second level subdivisions (e.g., sixteenth notes) before mixing in dots and syncopations. Introduce mixed or asymmetrical meters much later.

## *Tools*

Any effective approach to teaching rhythm will involve using an organized system of syllables to represent common rhythmic patterns (Palkki). There are numerous systems, such as the Gordon method, the Kodaly method, and Takadimi, for teaching and learning rhythm. Use whatever rhythmic syllable system is used at your university. If there is no one system in use, you will have to decide for yourself which system you prefer and why.

The Takadimi system, developed by Richard Hoffman, William Pelto, and John White, is one of the most useful tools for learning and teaching rhythm in colleges. Takadimi was created specifically to address the rhythmic needs of college student; the system is easily learned and applied to many musical styles. Takadimi emphasizes relationships to the beat, common musical patterns, and is very practical for learning how to consistently and accurately perform complex polyrhythms (Hoffman 28).

While the actual system used for teaching rhythm is important, it is less important than *how* that system is used. The system should be used to help students engage in the natural learning process through the stages of the language learning process.

### *Learn to Make Sounds*

One possible activity that can be used to introduce new rhythmic material at any level could start with having students stand in a circle and move in time with a beat. Speak rhythmic patterns using your syllable system and have the class repeat them back to you. As they are repeating you, listen for what rhythms they are struggling with and use them more frequently until they are no longer struggling. Throughout this activity, take pauses from repetition to ask questions about the sounds you are demonstrating (Am I dividing the beat into 2's or 3's? Did I always include the downbeat in my rhythms? What do the rhythms TaKa, TaDi, and TaMi have in common? How are they different? Etc.). This simple activity allows your class to observe you, form a mental image of how rhythmic patterns relate to the beat, imitate you, and refine their skills through trial-and-error.

### *Learn to Communicate with Sounds*

Once your class has developed a basic vocabulary of rhythmic patterns, you can introduce games that require your students to improvise. One game you can play and vary starts from the echoing circle; the goal of the game is to get around the circle without any mistakes or hesitation. Pick a student to start with, a direction to go around

the circle, and how many beats you want them to improvise. If someone makes a mistake or hesitates, stop the game start over again. To get a class to improvise, it is helpful to start with a lot of restrictions; for instance, you could limit the rhythms they can improvise with to four or five rhythmic patterns your students already know. You could develop this game further by having students repeat patterns and then improvise a response. For instance, asking them to repeat the last two beats of the person before them and improvise two additional beats might play out like this:

*Student 1:* TaKaDiMi TaDi TaKaDiMi Ta

*Student 2:* TaKaDiMi Ta TaDiMi TaKaDi

*Student 3:* TaDiMi TaKaDi TaKaMi TaKaDi

*Student 4:* TaKaDiMi.....

*Teacher:* Oooops! What syllables did Student 3 end on?

*Whole Class:* TaKaMi TaKaDi

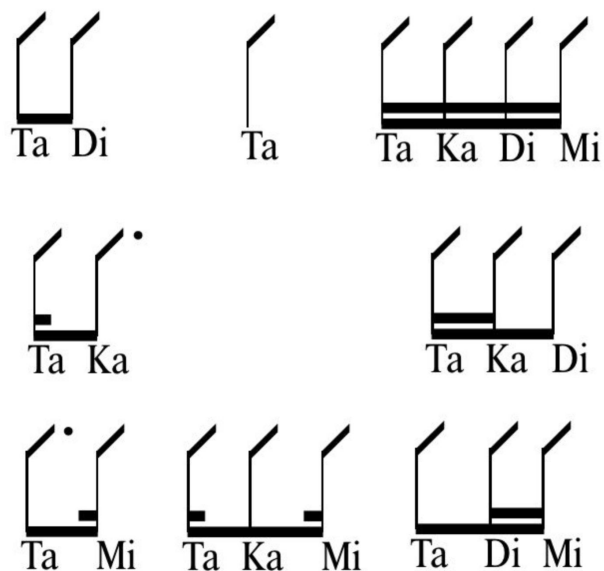
*Teacher:* Right! Let's start with Student 7 this time....

### *Learn Symbols that Represent Sounds*

When your students have picked up on the rhythms you've introduced in the previous stages, they are ready to begin learning the symbols. One way you could introduce the symbols is to ask your class to recall the patterns you have been using and notate the syllables (not musical notation) on the board. The actual musical notation could be incorporated immediately after discussing the syllables, or much later in the process. When you introduce the musical notation, write them on the board above the



syllables they correspond with. If you had been working on simple time, you might end up with something similar to Figure 1. To add variety in this stage, you could ask students to do all of the writing on the board, or ask them to consider the multiple possible symbols for each sound (What does 'TaDi' look like in 4/4? 3/4? 2/8? 100/2? What would this rhythm look like if we used dots instead of slurs? What if we used rests instead of dots? Etc.).



**Figure 1. Common Rhythmic Units in Simple Time**

*Learn to Transform Symbols into Sounds*

As soon as you have introduced the symbols (either the syllables or notation), you can immediately begin to practice translating them into sounds (reading). An easy way to do this could be to start with what you already have on the board from the previous step; ask the class to keep a pulse and perform the rhythmic patterns as you point to them on the board. You could leave both the syllables and notation on the

board during this activity, or erase one set. You could even have students come to the board and lead this activity.

For a different reading activity, ask your students to write two or four beats on a sheet of paper, then line them up into two teams so that each team can perform the other team's complete rhythm in tempo. Just like the reading activity above, this one could use rhythm syllables, actual notation, or both.

By this point, you could begin to bring in examples from real music to practice with. You could use non-pitched examples (certain percussion instruments for instance), or just ignore the pitch for a melodic excerpt. Ask questions about each example before performing to model good methods for sight reading practice (What time signature are we in? What gets the beat? Are there any rhythm patterns you haven't seen before? Do you see any spots that look complicated? How can we figure out how to perform this challenging part? Etc.). You could have students verbally indicate the syllables for the example or you might have them write the syllables above or below the notation before performing it.

### *Learn to Transform Sounds into Symbols*

To be able to transcribe a rhythm, a student must be able to identify what they are hearing and know which symbols are needed to convey it. You might postpone the actual dictation until your students can reasonably identify rhythms. An activity you could use to practice identifying rhythms is very similar to the echo circle; instead of

saying the syllables, clap the rhythm and have your class respond with the proper syllables to prove they know what they are hearing.

Another activity you could use to focus on the identification of rhythms without the actual notation is very similar to the improvisation circle game. Instead of having students improvise with syllables, make them clap their improvisations. The next student in the circle must repeat what the person before them clapped, using syllables, and then clap their own improvisation.

Once your students can successfully identify the rhythms you have been focusing on, they can begin to notate what they are hearing. An activity you could use to introduce the process of notation begins from the identifying games above; after your class has identified a rhythm you have performed, ask them basic analytical questions about the rhythm to prepare them to notate it (Did this rhythm use simple time, compound time, or both? How many beats does it sound like are grouped together? What time signature could this rhythm use? Etc.). You could have them work in groups or as individuals to notate the rhythm on the board, paper, or some notation software. Finally, ask questions to lead your students to a process to check their own answers for mistakes (Do all of your measures have the correct number of beats? Did you include bar lines? How can you check if the rhythm you have is correct? Did you beam all subdivisions correctly? Etc.).

Once they are familiar with the notation process, additional practice can easily be done outside of class as homework. You could record yourself clapping rhythms or use examples from real music for them to transcribe. Another alternative could be to

incorporate software or applications that provide examples for practice and give immediate feedback.

Activities can also be used that build through several successive steps of the process. For an activity that culminates in transcription, you could break the class into groups and ask each group to assign rhythmic syllables for the metric pattern of a poem you have given them. Have groups perform their poems for the class and have the groups transcribe each others' poems.

### *Pitch*

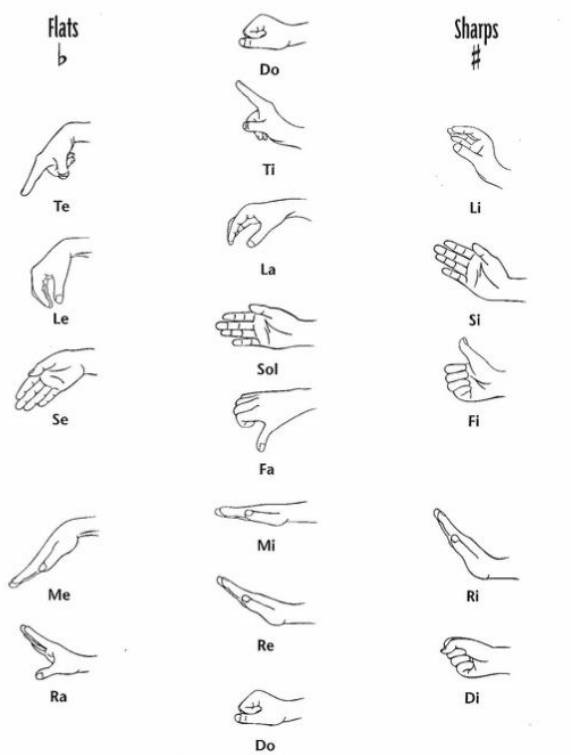
Pitch is one of the most developed and essential elements of western music; therefore, the progression from simple to complex in pitch involves many more topics than any other element of music. To start simple in pitch space, begin with one pitch at a time, use the Major scale, use only stepwise motion, and use only consonances when introducing simultaneous pitches. To build complexity in pitch space, use other modes, use more dissonances, incorporate more frequent and larger leaps, change the melodic direction more frequently, use chromatic pitches, and include more pitches simultaneously.

### *Tools*

What Takadimi syllables do for rhythm, solfege syllables do for pitch. There are many different singing systems (e.g., solfege, numbers, fixed do) and many different versions of these systems (e.g., moveable do, fixed do, la based minor, etc.). You

should use whatever system is used by your school and learn how to use it the same way as your system of rhythm syllables - to present sound before symbol. The exercises below will use the movable do, do-based minor system of solfege, which is the author's preferred system.

Incorporating the Curwen hand signs, as shown in Figure 2, may help students to learn solfege syllables more easily. The hand signs can be learned concurrently with solfege syllables, and when done so, the two reinforce each other. Using hand signs makes it easy to coax sounds out of a class and can be very useful for communicating pitch information quickly without notation or the need for words. In addition to their practicality as a teaching tool, the hand signs draw in more sensory information,



**Figure 2. Curwen Hand Signs (“Curwen”)**

allowing students to better remember pitches with the additional information of “what they feel like.”

One of the most effective tools for learning music, including pitch, is the piano; fortunately, you and your students do not need to be piano majors to benefit from a little bit of keyboard work. For ear training, you will need the skills to “illustrate, highlight, experiment, explain in sound, accompany, interact, and *teach* with the piano - in other words, to do the things recorded performances cannot do” (Lumsden and Swinkin 162). Notice that none of these tasks use the piano as a performative instrument. Students can also benefit greatly from careful piano practice that reinforces what they are currently learning.

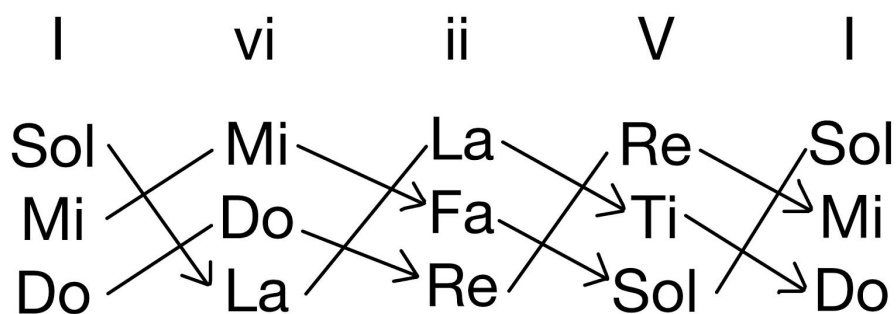
### *Learn to Make Sounds*

An activity you could use to introduce pitch at any level is basic echoing. You could sing pitches using solfege syllables and hand signs and ask your students to repeat them after you. As they are repeating you, listen and look for what they are struggling with and emphasize them until they are no longer struggling. Throughout this activity, take pauses from repetition to ask questions about the sounds you are demonstrating (Which pitch of the major scale sounds the most stable to you? Does “Fa” sound as consonant as “Do” when played against the tonic triad? What is the interval from “Le” to “Re?” Where does it sound like “Fi” wants to resolve? Etc.).

After your students have a basic comprehension of scale degrees and the hand signs, you could silently make hand signs and ask your class to match the hand signs

and sing the pitches. Leading with hand signs can be a great way to introduce harmony; break your class into three groups and have them all start singing “Do.” Lead one group up the major scale to “Sol,” and another group up the scale to “Mi.” From there, you could move from group to group and slowly change harmonies. Take breaks from singing to reinforce these harmonic sounds on the piano, and ask questions to get your students thinking about chord qualities, harmonic function, and inversions (What are the intervals between “Do Mi Sol?” Are there any other triads that share this same pattern of intervals? What are the intervals between “La Do Mi?” How does that sound different from “Do Mi Sol?” We just ended on “Sol Ti Re,” did that sound like a conclusive ending? Etc.)

After your class knows the basics about triads, there are many activities you could use to have your class practice producing harmony. To prepare them for a game that can help them experience harmonic function and principles of good voice leading ask your class to create a short, simple chord progression using Roman Numerals on the board and then have them identify the solfege syllables below each chord. The goal of the game is to sing through the progression using as little motion as possible. Work as a class to trace out the paths of least motion; you could use solid lines to indicate common tones and arrows for steps, or use different colored markers to trace each line. You might end up with something similar to Figure 3. Finally, break the class into groups and have each group start on a different pitch of the first chord and sing through the progression. You could even repeat the progression with groups starting on different pitches until everyone has had a chance to sing every line.



**Figure 3. Horizontal Motion in a Simple Progression**

This particular harmonic activity could be developed in many ways to add more complexity. As your class gets familiar with the process, skip tracing the lines or spelling out each chord to force students to figure it out for themselves. You could change or add certain pitches in the progression to introduce new harmonies; for instance, after your class has sung through the progression shown in Figure 3, you could add a “Fi” (if they have already learned what “Fi” sounds like) in between the ii and V. Ask them to sing it again and ask questions that ultimately lead them to an understanding of secondary dominants (How does “Fi” change the quality of the ii chord? “Fi” functions like what other scale degree? If we made “Sol” the new “Do,” what would “Re Fi La” become? Etc.).

### *Learn to Communicate with Sounds*

As your students start to be able to accurately produce the pitch content you are working on, you can introduce games that use improvisation. To incorporate simple pitch improvisation activities, you could start by having students pair off. Give them a set



of guidelines to keep them from being overwhelmed by all of the choices. For an early freshman activity, you might make the guidelines:

1. You will improvise 3-5 pitches at a time using solfege
2. Your improvisation may only use stepwise motion and notes from the major scale
3. Your improvisation must begin on the same pitch your partner ended on

This activity can easily be modified to include students' instruments, more complex material, or incorporate other musical tasks as well. This game could also be played by the whole class, going around a circle instead of trading back and forth. Working in pairs on this activity allows each student more opportunity to refine through practice and forces them to hold each other responsible for mistakes.

### *Learn Symbols that Represent Sounds*

Once your class has developed some proficiency with the previous two stages, they are ready to start learning the symbols used to represent pitch. You could start as simply as asking your class to recall the solfege syllables and writing them on the board. To bridge the gap between solfege syllables and pitch notation, work with your class to spell out a few major scales, writing the letter names below the syllables. At this point you could ask your class what they already know about pitch symbols. If necessary, ask questions to get them thinking about how the staff, clefs, accidentals, and key signatures help to convey information about pitch. Once you have the staff and a clef on the board, work with your class to notate the scales you have already spelled out.

### *Learn to Transform Symbols into Sounds*

It won't take long for your students to pick up on the symbols used for pitch, and many will already be familiar with them. As soon as you introduce the symbols, begin to practice turning them back into sound; a basic preliminary exercise you could use is pointing to notes in the scales you have already notated while your class sings the pitches, start to erase the solfege syllables beneath the scales until your students are reading notation but not notation.

To build up to sight singing exercises, you could have students write a staff on a sheet of paper and write a few stepwise pitches. You could break your class up into two teams and have them line up to create melodies that the other team can then sing. You could develop this exercise by changing what note "Do" is, having them adjust their accidentals to fit within the new key, and then reading the new melodies. You could follow this activity up with questions that highlight the different information conveyed through actual pitch notation and scale degree syllables (Does "Do" sound the same in all keys? Does "C" sound the same in all keys? If I asked all of you to play "Do Re Mi" at the same time on your instruments, would it be in unison? What if I asked all of you to play "C D E?" Etc.)

By this point, you could begin to bring in examples from real music to practice with. Just like with rhythm, you could isolate pitch in these exercises first, either by treating each pitch as fermata or by making each pitch the same duration. Ask questions about each example before performing to model good methods for sight reading practice (What clef are we in? What is the key signature? What pitch is "Do?")

How do you know? Do you see any spots that look complicated? How can we figure out how to perform this challenging part? Etc.). After identifying the clef and tonic, Gary Karpinski recommends locating the positions of each scale degree on the staff in that key to help students situate themselves in the tonal context of the example (162). You could have students write the solfege syllables below the notation or ask them to verbally indicate the syllables for the example; at this point, they are ready to begin singing through the pitches. After an initial reading, ask questions to have them evaluate their performance and go back over any spots that need improvement. Eventually, your students will need to practice performing pitch with the correct rhythm; to lead to this, you could start by having them speak the solfege in time. When they can speak the solfege in time, and they can sing the solfege out of time, they should be ready to slowly put the two together.

Sight reading involves coordinating multiple skills; it can help to have a process to work through challenging passages. After modeling through some of the activities above, begin to ask questions to lead your class towards a general process they can use. This process is not set in stone, each and every student will have a slightly different process that works for them. Your class might end up with something like this:

1. Make note of the time signature and key signature
2. Figure out what the key and mode is
3. Figure out the solfege and takadimi syllables
4. Isolate any trouble spots and rehearse
5. Put pitch and rhythm back together

Step four tends to be where the most instructor help is needed after the fundamentals (steps 1-3) are addressed. There are a lot of ways to identify and fix trouble spots; this is one of the areas where creativity comes into play. Certain awkward leaps might be solved by first filling in the leap with stepwise or arpeggiated motion. Certain complex syncopations might be simplified by adding downbeats. Leaps to “Fi” might be solved by trying to hear “Sol” first. Very basic reductive analysis can help make certain melodies singable.

### *Learn to Transform Sounds into Symbols*

In order to notate pitch, students must be able to identify what they are hearing and know which symbols are needed to convey that pitch. You could use activities that isolate the identification before incorporating the actual notation. An activity you could use to practice identifying pitch is very similar to echoing games; instead of singing with solfege, use a neutral syllable and have your class respond with the proper solfege to prove they know what they are hearing.

Another activity you could use to focus on the identification of pitch without the actual notation is very similar to the partner improvisation game. For instance, to include practice identifying pitches, you might use the following guidelines:

1. You will improvise 3-5 pitches at a time on “Loo”
2. Your improvisation may only use stepwise motion and notes from the major scale
3. Before improvising, you must sing back what your partner improvised in solfege
4. Your improvisation must begin on the same pitch your partner ended on

This game might play out like this:

*Student 1:* Loo Loo Loo Loo Loo

*Student 2:* Do Re Mi Fa Sol... Loo Loo Loo Loo Loo

*Student 1:* Sol La Sol Fa Mi... Loo Loo Loo Loo

*Student 2:* Mi Re Do Re... Loo Loo Loo...

Once your students can successfully identify pitches, they can begin to notate what they are hearing. An activity you could use to introduce the process of notation begins from the identifying games above; after your class has identified the solfege you have performed, you could ask them to write the pitch names in multiple keys. Once they can competently translate solfege into pitch names, you could ask them to write the pitches on a staff using multiple clefs.

Melodic dictation requires identifying the rhythms, in addition to the pitches, and combining the two in one set of symbols. This is a complicated task, and will only be more difficult if your students are struggling with any of the preceding activities. Do not rush into this final stage until your students are prepared for it, they should already be able to transcribe rhythms, aurally identify solfege, turn those solfege syllables into pitch names, and place pitches on a staff accurately.

With so many preparatory stages involved in melodic dictation, it can be useful for your students to have a strategy that addresses each. Gary Karpinski breaks the melodic dictation process into four stages (64):

1. Hearing
2. Short-term melodic memory

3. Musical understanding
4. Notation

Each of these stages can be divided further; for instance, within short-term melodic memory, Karpinski suggests using techniques such as extractive listening (71) and chunking (73) to extend memory capacity. Ask your class questions to help lead them to a general process they can use for all dictations; this process does not need to be identical to Karpinski's, but it should contain the same basic elements. Through questioning, your class might arrive at a process that looks something like this:

1. Sing excerpt from memory
2. Transcribe what you are confident in
3. Use process of elimination and educated guesses to figure out rest
4. Hum through to check for errors

Whenever you practice transcription with your class, ask your students about their process; over time, they will be able to refine and find a strategy that works for them. In addition to developing a process, ask questions to make sure your students understand why each stage is important. (What does being able to sing the excerpt from memory prove? What does it allow you to do? Etc.) Steps three and four tend to require the most help from the teacher. For example, step three might involve isolating pitches on downbeats only, looking for imitative patterns, or hearing where a chromatic pitch resolves.

When actually doing dictation in class, you could have them work in groups or as individuals to notate the melody on the board, paper, or some notation software. Once

they are familiar with the notation process, additional practice can easily be done outside of class as homework. You could record yourself playing melodies on your instrument, or use pre-existing recordings of real music for them to transcribe. Another alternative could be to incorporate software or applications that provide examples for practice and give immediate feedback.

Harmonic dictation should be approached in the same manner; make sure your class has already worked harmonic material through the earlier stages of the language process before asking them to transcribe them. Although the general process for harmonic dictation is the same as the one used for melodic dictation, some of the details may vary. For instance, it is impossible for one student to sing back an entire harmonic example; instead, they might start with just the bass line. Instead of using extractive listening to isolate down beat pitches, students could use extractive listening to identify chord qualities.

One strategy your students could use in the process of elimination during harmonic dictation relies on using the bass line to determine what harmonies are possible. To introduce this strategy, you could play a harmonic example and ask your students to only take down the bass line. Go through each bass pitch and ask what chord it would be if the bass note was the root, the third, or the fifth. For example, if the bass note was “Re,” the chord could be a ii, vii<sup>o</sup>6, or V6/4. You could go through this process with your class on the board for each pitch of the major scale and you might end up with something that looks like Table 12.

**Table 12: Possible Triads above a Given Bass Pitch**

Fifth	IV <sup>6</sup> /4	V <sup>6</sup> /4	vi <sup>6</sup> /4	vii <sup>o</sup> 6/4	I <sup>6</sup> /4	ii <sup>6</sup> /4	iii <sup>6</sup> /4
Third	vi <sup>6</sup>	vii <sup>o</sup> 6	I <sup>6</sup>	ii <sup>6</sup>	iii <sup>6</sup>	IV <sup>6</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>
Root	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii <sup>o</sup>
Bass	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Ti

*Conclusion*

You will need to use some kind of organized system of pitch and rhythm syllables to be able to effectively teach ear training. Whichever systems you or your school decide upon, make sure you practice using them before class so you can be an accurate model for your students. As in the activities described above, always move from sound to symbol and from simple to complex. Have students imitate you first, without looking at notation and then have them begin to improvise with those same sounds. Have them associate the sounds with the symbols and then practice turning symbol into sound (reading), and, finally, turning sound into symbol (transcribing). Include several successive activities in each class that build from simple to more complex devices and applications. Whatever activities you choose to use, incorporate new content using those games throughout the course of a semester.

This is just the beginning of your teaching journey; as you build up experience in the classroom, you will discover which activities work for you and your students and which do not. You will discover new ways to help direct your students towards their goals and maintain their interest. Keep in mind the natural learning process as you plan your class and always introduce new musical material in the order of the language



learning process. Encourage your students to work through the process as they refine their skills and help them sort out how to use their new skills in other facets of their life as a musician. You will have good and bad days in the classroom; as long as you continue to keep the why, how and what you are teaching in mind throughout your teaching journey, you will find that the good days become better and more frequent.

## CHAPTER 5: Discussion

Ear training is one of the most crucial elements of musical development; the GTAs who teach ear training have an enormous responsibility, and, like all new teachers, need guidance to be able to better teach their students. Investments in the success of the GTAs through preparation and training will lead to great returns for Schools of Music in the form of better ear training classes for undergraduate students which will, in turn, lead to better musicians. The handbook provided in chapter 4 is intended to help prepare GTAs to teach ear training classes; what follows is a few suggestions about how schools could use the handbook to help prepare their new GTAs.

### *How to Use This Thesis*

Preparation for any task, especially teaching, takes considerable time; as soon as new GTAs are selected, schools should begin to invest in them. The handbook could be emailed to new GTAs along with their contract offers in the spring so they have the summer to read through it and start thinking about why, how, and what they will teach. Since most schools provide the syllabi for ear training classes, these could also be sent to new GTAs long before school begins so they have . Theory departments could create a brief document that identifies any specific methods or systems used (We use moveable do with do based minor. We use Takadimi. We use Noteflight for homework. Our school uses Blackboard. Etc.) that could also be sent so that new GTAs have time to adapt if their undergraduate school used different systems.

Reading is most effective when it is followed up with discussion. Theory departments could have a meeting in person, or through video conferencing, with GTAs before school begins to talk about the ideas presented in the handbook. Such a meeting could also include opportunities for mock teaching so GTAs can try out new techniques and activities before they are put in front of a class.

In addition to training prior to the start of school, GTAs should have regular opportunities to receive feedback once they are actually in the classroom. Observations by faculty members followed up with discussion can be a great way for GTAs to improve their teaching. Regular observations by multiple faculty members would be the most ideal scenario, but even one or two observations a semester can be useful. In addition to faculty feedback, GTAs can get feedback from their own students and other GTAs. An anonymous survey could be sent to ear training students a few weeks into the course so GTAs can adjust and refine their teaching. If a school has multiple GTAs teaching ear training, they should be encouraged to observe one another and discuss their challenges and successes with each other.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this thesis is to provide the necessary information and materials for new GTAs teaching ear training to succeed in their teaching endeavors. First, books, journals, and web-based resources were presented that can be used to help prepare new GTAs; while there are many useful resources, none of them address the unique needs of GTAs. In order to find out what GTAs would need to succeed, a survey was

sent out to gather information about the selection, responsibilities, and training of GTAs who will teach ear training. The survey revealed several alarming trends; the two most notable are that very rarely do GTAs have to demonstrate they can teach to get their position, and that many GTAs receive absolutely no training for their teaching positions. The pre-existing resources and survey informed the creation of a handbook that provides philosophical and pedagogical information about teaching, as well as many activities and tools that can be used specifically to teach ear training. My hope is that this thesis can bring awareness to the crucial role GTAs teaching ear training play in Schools of Music and help them succeed as teachers.

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## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A: Survey Recruitment Email

Greetings colleagues:

I wonder if you could spare a few minutes to help participate in a survey about the responsibilities, preparation, and selection of Graduate Teaching Assistants in the music theory discipline.

The purpose of this research study is to gather information about graduate teaching assistantships in the music theory discipline. The results of this survey will help inform the writing of a Master's Thesis project in Music Theory Pedagogy.

By completing the survey, you are giving your permission to use the information in the Master's Thesis Project and in any subsequent publication or presentation on the topic. No names will be used in the publication of the results. (All answers will be anonymous.) Individual responses will be kept confidential and only aggregate data reported.

Please have only one person from each institution complete this survey. If you are not the appropriate person on your campus to respond to questions about the responsibilities, preparation, and selection of Graduate Teaching Assistants in Music Theory, please forward the URL to that person.

This electronic Qualtrics survey will take approximately 5 - 10 minutes to complete. It can also be filled out on smartphones and tablets.

The link to the survey is  
[\*\*Theory/Comp GTA Survey\*\*](#)

Thank you very much for your help.

Best wishes,  
David Marvel  
Graduate Teaching Assistant in Music Theory  
The University of Tennessee School of Music

## APPENDIX B: Survey Results

**Q1 - INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT** The purpose of this research study is to gather information about the responsibilities, preparation, and selection of Graduate Teaching Assistants in the music theory discipline. The results of this survey will help inform the writing of a Master's Thesis project in Music Theory Pedagogy.

**INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY** As a participant, you will complete this survey by answering questions about graduate teaching assistant positions at your institution. By completing the survey, you are giving your permission to use the information in the Masters' Thesis project and any subsequent publication or presentation on this topic. No names will be used in the publication of the results. Individual responses will be kept confidential and only aggregate data reported. Please have only one person from each institution complete this survey. If you are not the appropriate person on your campus to respond to questions about the responsibilities, preparation, and selection of Graduate Teaching Assistants in music theory, please forward the URL to that person. This electronic Qualtrics survey will take approximately 5 - 10 minutes to complete.

**RISKS** There are no foreseeable risks to participants filling out this survey other than those encountered in everyday life.

**BENEFITS** Music theory teachers, graduate students, and those applying to graduate school will benefit from being more informed about what is expected of new graduate teaching assistants. The results will aid in the development of a resource aimed at helping the graduate students finding themselves teaching for the first time.

**CONFIDENTIALITY** The information in the study records will be kept confidential. No names will be used in the publication of the results; only aggregate data will be reported. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the person conducting the research unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link specific participants or their institutions to the study. All responses will be anonymous.

**PARTICIPATION** Your participation in the study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

---

CONSENTI have read the above information. I have received (or had the

opportunity to print) a copy of this form. Clicking on the button to continue and completing the survey constitutes my consent to participate.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	I agree to participate	97.56%	160
2	I do not agree to participate	2.44%	4
	Total	100%	164

**Q2 - How many graduate students does your school have in Theory/Comp?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	1-2	17.95%	14
2	3-4	16.67%	13
3	5-6	14.10%	11
4	7+	51.28%	40
	Total	100%	78

**Q3 - How many GTAs does your school have in Theory/Comp?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	1-2	19.74%	15
2	3-4	23.68%	18
3	5-6	14.47%	11

4	7+	42.11%	32
	Total	100%	76

**Q4 - Are all of your Theory/Comp GTAs majoring in Theory/Comp?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	48.05%	37
2	No	51.95%	40
	Total	100%	77

**Q21 - What % time do your Theory/Comp GTAs work?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	25%	28.57%	22
2	33%	14.29%	11
3	50%	24.68%	19
4	Other	32.47%	25
	Total	100%	77

Q21\_4\_TEXT - Other

Other - Text

---

12 hours per week

---

---

10 hours per week

---

Two 1.5h classes per week plus preparation and grading -- 25% at most

---

10% very light duties, if I understand the question.

---

I don't understand this question. Work as a GA? Work outside of school?  
Percentage of their total time? Percentage of an expected full load?

---

We don't measure in these terms

---

8-12 hours/week

---

25% or 50%

---

It varies according to their individual duties.

---

37.5%

---

13 hours per week

---

None

---

12 hours per week

---

Most are either 25% or 50%, but I think there's a single 33% in the mix, too.

---

Hard to translate into % time. The contract indicates the commitment is for 20 hours per week, with 8 contact hours weekly in most cases.

---

10 hours per week

---

DMAs about 20%, MFAs 5%

---

40%

---

Percent of what?

---

One 50%, others 25%. We are being forced to consolidate two 25% lines into a single 50% for AY 18-19, with more to follow.

---

---

20

---

We have approx. 10 at 25%, approx. 10 at 50%, and one at 33%.

---

10-20 hours per week.

**Q6 - What kind of financial assistance do your Theory/Comp GTAs receive?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Tuition Waiver	77.92%	60
2	Fee Waiver	20.78%	16
3	Stipend	87.01%	67
4	Other	23.38%	18
	Total	100%	77

Q6\_4\_TEXT - Other

Other - Text

---

Partial tuition waiver

---

health insurance

---

Not all are paid equally, though.

---

Work study

---

This is no different from any other fellowship offer. We offer five years' full support (with possible extension), and require teaching in all but two of the years.

---

Health insurance

---

---

healthcare

---

In the past, a stipend was sometimes available, but is not a yearly party of the budget.

---

Tuition Scholarship

---

Health Insurance

---

In-state fees plus stipend

---

DMAs Tuition Waiver and Stipend MFAs salary

---

student health insurance

---

A mix of tuition waiver (all), non-teaching fellowships, research assistantships, teaching assistants

---

Also a health insurance subsidy. Select GTAs also receive "stipend enhancement" funding (fully renewable throughout period of GTA support).

---

Hourly compensation.

---

Tuition plus stipend

---

#### Q7 - How are your Theory/Comp GTAs selected?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Resume	58.44%	45
2	Letters of Recommendation	50.65%	39
3	Interview	71.43%	55
4	Teaching Demo (Video)	2.60%	2
5	Teaching Demo (In Person)	6.49%	5

6	Other	29.87%	23
	Total	100%	77

**Q8 - How many classes are your Theory/Comp GTAs expected to teach per semester?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	0	17.81%	13
2	1	43.84%	32
3	2	28.77%	21
4	3	6.85%	5
5	4+	2.74%	2
	Total	100%	73

**Q9 - How much instructor responsibility is given to your Theory/Comp GTAs?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	100% Teaching/Instructor of Record	22.97%	17
2	Grading only	9.46%	7
3	Leading Discussion/Recitation Section	28.38%	21
4	Other	39.19%	29
	Total	100%	74



Q9\_4\_TEXT - Other

Other - Text

---

Some work in a tutoring center 10 hours/week. Others have 100% responsibility for a class as Instructor of Record. Others work for faculty.

---

Grading part writing and some teaching for experience

---

Both grading and section leading. Associates are the lecturers/instructors of record.

---

depends on level and course, can be any of those

---

In aural skills classes they are instructor of record. In theory classes they lead discussion sections, but these meet twice a week.

---

Most of the obligation is tutoring students from theory and aural skills classes, with some exam proctoring or managing some other kind of in-class activity when the professor is away.

---

Grading / class assistance / tutoring / proctoring make-up exams / leading review sessions and extra tutorials

---

All three of the above are possible, depending on the course.

---

instructor of record, but we provide many materials to help them prepare.

---

The theory/comp GAs grade and lead discussion/recitation sections. Other GAs chosen after completing a graduate Music Theory Pedagogy class will do 100% teaching of a Fundamentals class or Freshman Aural Skills class.

---

Grading, providing extra individual help.

---

Most often, a mixture of the first two choices, though some are 100% teaching and 1-2 are grading only.

---

---

For some reason you are trying to force me into only one choice when there is a mix (and this includes questions where there was no "other" button, so be aware that your data is bound to be misleading). Most of our graduate assistants teach. For technical reasons, the aural skills teachers are described as leading recitation sections, but in fact they are teaching (and these classes are not just labs associated with someone else's large class). There are also graduate assistants who run our electronic music studio, and sometimes they help with our new music festival. Grading is extremely rare.

---

Depends on the class and the situation. Sometimes a teacher is the instructor of record, other times the student is only grading the work of a Professor in the department.

---

One GTA leads an optional, extra-credit ear-training session for students

---

It varies according to the needs of the department, skills and experience of individual TA's, and the TA's interest in taking on full instructor of record responsibilities (if performance focused TA presenting their lecture recital or the like, they may opt to stick only to grading)

---

Our Theory/Comp GTA's do grading as well as substituting for our professors theory and musicianship classes, as well as tutor undergraduate students in theory and musicianship.

---

Depends on the TA and the specific assignment. Aural skills instructors teach lab sections attached to a lecture section taught by a faculty member. They work under an aural skills coordinator, but are responsible for preparation and the aural skills part of the grade. Instructors for the fundamentals course are the instructor of record, as is one advanced TA per year who teaches in the core curriculum. The previous question is unanswerable as asked: 1) aural skills instructors teach PART of a course, not a whole course; 2) different TA assignments teach different numbers of courses, or sections. Rewrite the question to allow more room for individual response.

---

They teach three sections a week and grade assignments. Within clear and specific guidelines, they are responsible for structuring those class meetings.

---

Grading and music engraving

---

DMAs 100% MFAs grading/some teaching

---

This varies. Some teach just the lab sections of written courses. Some are the sole instructor of aural-skills sections. Some serve as instructor of record for non-major music theory courses.

Varies from TA to TA. Some get 100% responsibility; some teach lab sections of a larger course.

Teach one course 100% as instructor of record. In addition, grading, attendance, etc for another course.

Varies

Most are 100% Instructor of Record. 1st-year master's students can't be classified as such but serve in the same capacity. Previous answer: 0.50-time GTAs will teach 2 classes (2 theory or 1 theory/1 aural skills); 0.25-time GTAs will teach 1 theory class \_or\_ 2 aural skills classes.

Grading, assisting in classes (but not teaching), assisting outside of class (during their office hours). Because of the faculty union contract, only faculty can teach classes.

Theory TAs are the instructor of record for Aural Training, which meets two days a week. They run Theory sections two days a week and do all grading. There is a large theory lecture taught by the professor that meets one day a week.

#### Q10 - Which classes do your Theory/Comp GTAs teach?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Ear Training	70.42%	50
2	Music Theory Fundamentals	66.20%	47
3	Music Theory Core Curriculum	63.38%	45
4	Music Technology	22.54%	16
5	Composition Class/Lessons	22.54%	16

6	Other	23.94%	17
	Total	100%	71

Q10\_6\_TEXT - Other

Other - Text

---

GTAs grade part writing, assist in class by playing excerpts at the piano and teach some classes solo and portions of classes for experience

---

An aural skills "lab" session attached to Fundamentals.

---

We have one large freshman theory class. The Theory/Comp GTAs teach a breakout session one day per week and grade.

---

Arranging and Orchestration classes

---

Sometimes an advanced doctoral student teaches counterpoint. There is also a course for non-majors that is mostly fundamentals but also involves song writing.

---

Redesign the survey to allow free response that provides more information, not necessarily "other" than the options listed. Most of our TAs teach aural skills or fundamentals. In years that we have a suitable person available, one advanced TA teaches a lecture section in the core curriculum. We have also had TAs teach music technology, but the course was recently designed and is now taught by a faculty member.

---

No teaching

---

varies greatly

---

Keyboard harmony

---

Teach ear training but also grade for theory fundamentals.

---

Class piano, sometimes jazz intro, sometimes western art music intro

---

Tonal counterpoint. Also a non-majors class entitled "The Art of Songwriting."

---

---

They do not teach classes

---

Usually assist in musicianship classes (integrated theory, aural skills, and keyboard harmony), but can assist in any class.

---

Class piano

---

**Q11 - Do your Theory/Comp GTAs have responsibilities other than teaching?**

#	Answer	%	Count
2	Yes	69.74%	53
3	No	30.26%	23
	Total	100%	76

**Q12 - What responsibilities other than teaching do your Theory/Comp GTAs have?**

What responsibilities other than teaching do your Theory/Comp GTAs have?

---

See earlier response -- some GTAs work in a tutoring center 10 hours/week; others are instructor of record for music fundamentals; some assist faculty. Each GTA has only one assignment.

---

Grading part writing homework

---

They run the student composers' concerts and also assist with the New Music concert series.

---

Moving equipment, putting up posters, some database work, photocopying, and so on.

---

Proctoring exams / tutoring / leading review sessions

---

---

monitoring recital attendance

---

some help with grading

---

seminar work, language requirements, etc.

---

Grading; assisting faculty; assisting music librarian

---

A regular faculty member teaches one large freshman theory class on T/H. The two comp GAs attend class at least once each week, lead a breakout session on F, and grade papers for approximately 35 students.

---

Grading, lecture attendance, and staff meetings.

---

Grading for another theory professor

---

Theory tutorial lab.

---

A few GTAs per semester, in addition to teaching duties, do one of the following: - serve as Theory/Comp area research assistant - help put on an annual New Music Festival - course assisting via grading (many do this, which I would not consider "teaching" per se)

---

Grading, office hours for students, leading study sessions before exams

---

Proctor theory entrance exams for incoming freshmen.

---

Sight-singing evaluations In-coming freshman evaluations (grading their tests)

---

Most of them only teach, but some might help with the electronic music studio or the festival of new music. We have one assistantship for composers only that involves observing orchestral rehearsals (i.e., there isn't any typical work at all).

---

Enrichment labs, some composition GTAs organize concerts and events for the composition department.

---

Grading other courses

---

Working in the music student resource center

---

---

May be syllabi writing, may be administrative, it varies according to the needs of the department

---

We organize the composition recital each semester, as well as help organize our university's new music festival. This also includes various oddjobs as they come up.

---

Maintain their class standing and perform at a level satisfactory to their instructors

---

Grading papers taken in lecture classes; assist teacher-of-record with class setup

---

Work with the new music ensemble. For the next question on this survey, you need to provide a free response box: none of the options fit what we do in all cases, which includes providing previous syllabi, which the TA may revise, but in consultation with a faculty member and only with the faculty member's approval. Same for the next question, about tests/quizzes. Provide a free response box, or better options.

---

grading, tutoring

---

Grading, attending lecture

---

They are responsible for communicating with the students, with each other, and with the instructor of record. This constitutes a significant portion of their responsibilities, and it includes a good deal of reading.

---

Grading and score engraving. Occasional research.

---

Grading for their theory/ear training classes; theory is one part of a GTA assistantship. Most have other responsibilities, such as teaching applied lessons in their specialty, coaching chamber ensembles, collaborative piano, etc. depending on their area in addition to the theory and ear training work.

---

Grading, recording keeping, scoring freshmen theory entrance exams

---

Copying music within different notation software programs

---

Tutoring, individually and in small groups

---

---

Some are also tutors in our Music Theory Learning Center. They observe lectures and staff the MTLC on a drop-in basis. Some are research assistants. They work as assigned by faculty members.

---

We also have a tutor and sometime research assistant. (The latter not technically a TA).

---

Grading

---

Grading and taking attendance.

---

grading; research assistance

---

1 or 2 GTAs are selected to assist with our electronic music studio, electronic ensemble, and electronic composition classes (not as instructors). 1 GTA is selected as assistant to the director of our music living-learning center (who is on the theory faculty). 1 GTA in composition is selected for a one-year opportunity to attend all orchestral rehearsals/performances, to assist the director of orchestras in various ways, and to compose an orchestral work (which receives a performance the next year).

---

Supervise our tutoring lab, grade as needed, provide research support

---

Outside of class office hours and some secretarial-type duties. Please note that given our use of graduate assistants, the following questions are unanswerable (or at least the answers will not be valid in your survey). Perhaps a "N/A" option would have been good to include. Also, we refer to the position as GA (graduate assistants) rather GTA. I am answering the following questions, but, again, they have no meaning in our situation.

---

They are also taking classes and conducting research while teaching.

---

Depends. Some may have some administrative responsibilities, or technology responsibilities, for example.

---

Tutoring, grading, assisting with instructor projects

---

Grading assts

---

Student committee

---



**Q13 - Do your Theory/Comp GTAs write their own syllabi for their courses?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes, from scratch	6.15%	4
2	We provide a template they may alter	27.69%	18
3	We provide a syllabus they may not alter	66.15%	43
	Total	100%	65

**Q14 - Do your Theory/Comp GTAs write their quizzes/tests for their courses?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes, from scratch	18.46%	12
2	We provide quizzes/tests they may alter	26.15%	17
3	We provide quizzes/tests they may not alter	55.38%	36
	Total	100%	65

**Q15 - Are your GTAs observed while teaching?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Never	10.94%	7
2	Once or twice a year	18.75%	12

3	Once or twice a semester	57.81%	37
4	Several times a semester	6.25%	4
5	Weekly	6.25%	4
	Total	100%	64

**Q16 - Are your Theory/Comp GTAs required to take any pedagogy courses?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	50.00%	36
2	No	50.00%	36
	Total	100%	72

**Q17 - Which pedagogy courses are your Theory/Comp GTAs required to take?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Aural Skills Pedagogy	14.71%	5
2	Written Theory Pedagogy	20.59%	7
3	General Music Theory Pedagogy	70.59%	24
4	General Music Pedagogy	11.76%	4
5	Other	17.65%	6
	Total	100%	34

## Q17\_5\_TEXT - Other

## Other - Text

---

It's not really an official pedagogy course; it's more like a mentoring setup with the lead music TA.

---

The Music Theory Pedagogy course includes work on written skills, aural skills, and musical form.

---

hard to describe

---

General teaching pedagogy

---

A theory pedagogy course which includes written and general music theory pedagogy and aural skills pedagogy.

---

2 semesters, covering both written theory ped and aural skills ped.

**Q18 - What kind of preparation does your institution offer to Theory/Comp GTAs before school starts?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	No training	23.53%	16
2	Training less than two hours	20.59%	14
3	One day training	22.06%	15
4	Multiple day training	7.35%	5
5	Online training	0.00%	0
6	Other	26.47%	18
	Total	100%	68

Q18\_6\_TEXT - Other

Other - Text

---

Faculty mentor

---

The graduate school has a teaching center that offers workshops, and there is a program in the department. It;s not necessarily preparatory, and none of it is "training"--we don't do that to humans.

---

There is a university-wide training session that is half-day. The GTAs that run the breakout session meet once a week to discuss the sessions and grading. The GTAs that teach Fundamentals or Aural Skills must take a music theory pedagogy class first. This refers to the previous question--the GTAs that teach Fundamentals are provided with previous syllabi and have access to numerous resource files, but ultimately, they make the final choices for the course. GTAs that teach Aural Skills are provided an area syllabus that they can tweak. Tests, though, are provided for them for consistency. The GTA is given the same materials and instructions as an adjunct instructor.

---

1:1 with myself and the instructor. Also, I will use them in the summer band camp as an assistant.

---

A Grad Student Orientation week in which you meet with your GTA supervisor to discuss duties so essentially just one meeting.

---

There are various sessions. The university has some sessions geared toward all TAs, and the College of Music has some geared toward all music TAs, and for specific courses the TAs have sessions with the specific course supervisor(s). Some sessions last a couple of hours, and I think one colleague has two half-day workshops. I'm not positive about the details.

---

Students only grade during the first year, giving them the opportunity to learn some skills from the other instructors before stepping in front of a class in the second year.

---

---

Generally the training is done throughout the year and varies according to the needs of each TA. If the TA has never taken a pedagogy course, they may receive training on it before leading classes entirely on their own. If they have solid teaching experience prior to their appointment or in other departments, they may not require training beyond what they already have received at other institutions or departments etc...

---

GTAs spend their first year, at full stipend, taking pedagogy courses along with their normal class schedule. They teach in their second and third years, with increased stipends.

---

Meet with teacher-of-record to establish numbers in each section, class locations, set expectations for use of textbooks, grading/attendance policies

---

Not exactly "training": it's guidance and preparation, which can take the form of several meetings for aural skills, and a series of exchanges and consultations with a faculty member for fundamentals and core classes.

---

We do a full three days of orientation. We also ask the TAs to read through course materials, practice singing, and practice the piano. It adds up to a lot of advance preparation and requires a daily commitment of time over the course of many weeks.

---

Initial orientation then Simultaneous training

---

Multiple day training as part of a campus-wide "TA Orientation." There is no music-theory based orientation.

---

One day (or one partial day) of training specific to the class they will be teaching; one or two days of general training for all GTAs.

---

Instructions/training given by the individual faculty member the student is assisting.

---

They take multi-day training provided to all incoming GTAs through our teaching center. We used to do a full day of theory specific training after that, but the schedule no longer allows it. We are now moving toward an online course that may help them transition into their new role.

**Q23 - Do you have any additional relevant thoughts about the responsibilities, preparation, and selection of GTAs in Theory/Comp at your school?**

Do you have any additional relevant thoughts about the responsibilities, preparation, and selection of GTAs in Theory/Comp at your school?

---

1st-year assistantships are entry-level (working in the tutoring center or for a professor). 2nd-year assistantships are awarded to those who've taken pedagogy and have at least 18 credits

---

As part of the interview for selection, GTAs demonstrate piano skills and analyzing music at sight. They also take a music theory examination in part writing, required of all graduate entering students.

---

Several of the questions, such as those about syllabi and quizzes, require more complicated answers than the questionnaire permits. It was possible (almost) to say that we have graders, assistants, and instructors among our students; degrees of autonomy vary accordingly. Not all of our fellowship employment involves teaching. We do not recruit teaching assistants in any sense separate from the graduate admissions process.

---

Our DMA program is one of "Performance, Conducting, Literature, and Pedagogy." All DMA students are required to take a pedagogy class for music in higher education and then choose between History/Appreciation and Music Theory for a second course. Masters students may take a pedagogy class as an elective. The program has proven successful in placing students in teaching positions that require a second emphasis (e.g., conducting and music theory).

---

My university does not think that teaching music theory three days a week counts as a full load (13 hours per week). Between 3 hours in class, 2 office hours, prep time for each class, and grading papers, I find this to be full time by my university's standards.

---

It was difficult to answer some of the questions with the mutually exclusive choices. For example, we interview prospective TAs rather thoroughly, a process that includes a skills assessment (dictation, sight-singing, and keyboard reading) and written theory assessment (analysis, figured bass realization, et al.).

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---

You misspelled "recommendation" early on; it was "reccommendation." We have weekly meetings where faculty distribute the weekly material (lesson plans, quizzes, homework assignments, tests, grading keys, etc.).

---

Pedagogy is not required, but most do elect to take theory pedagogy.

---

I have observed that many theory teaching fellows are dedicated to learning how to teach and work for the students' benefit exclusively. Unfortunately, I have also observed that there are theory teaching fellows who are more enamored with their own egos than they are with being quality teachers. It is very disheartening when students tell you how cruel and condescending some theory teaching fellows are to their students. It is also sad when students of other teaching fellows come to your office hours and ask for help (which I am glad to give!) because their own instructors make fun of them or dismiss them with "you need to work harder." In my opinion, there should be more training, seminars, workshops, etc. to address the importance of how to teach rather than simply expect those who have never taught to be able to do so effectively and without arrogance.

---

We assess a lot of relevant skills before we even admit graduate students in Theory and Composition: sight singing, piano playing from a score, keyboard harmony, ear training, basic analysis, etc.

---

We also employ a number of grad students as graders, and others as Fellows (instructors) in the Preparatory School.

---

I was a Theory GTA at two different times and locations: 2011-2015 at the University of Arizona and 1975-1979 at Indiana University. Both handled GTAs the same way (but we had a GTA office at UA).

---

Regarding the survey and GTAs at our school: Theory and Comp are separate here; I'm in Theory and I've guessed at what comp does. Our GTAs are used differently in different courses. In my course, the GTA is only a grader, does not teach, and is not observed. Also he/she is rarely a theory major. If they expressed an interest in leading class during the term I wouldn't object, but we both seem happier if they only grade. Regarding % FTE, there's a number used by the university that determines their pay. Our expectation is 8 hours a week. I would put the hours actually spent on the position at closer to 6.

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---

Speaking in general—not about my institution per se—the kind of preparation, support, and oversight that TAs receive will depend on the department's course offerings, as well as its structure, level of funding, and faculty engagement. Do TAs teach discussion or lab sections attached to courses taught by faculty, or are they instructors of record? Do all faculty members observe and mentor TAs, or do just one or two people do that? Is that mentoring taken into consideration as part of the faculty member's workload, or is it something faculty essentially volunteer to do because they believe it is important?

---

Very casual, with TAs chosen based on resume and word of mouth. But limited to 25%, so none of them teach their own course.

---

Yes, but not that would fit in a box many times the size of this one. In one way or another, I spend most of my time working with the graduate students. Over the years, it has become my main means of training graduate students, as teachers, researchers, and above all musicians. In terms of educating future researchers and college/university faculty, I think what goes on in and around the undergraduate classroom is more formative and has a deeper, longer-lasting impact than all the courses/seminars these students take.

---

We have multiple sections of each course taught by GAs that need to stay synchronized so that all students are getting an equal theory and ear training experience and can be successful in future classes. To that end, we meet weekly to go through the curriculum, discuss the most useful pedagogical approaches, and make sure that all students are understanding material and that all teachers know the best practices for each topic.

---

As a conservatory, we are different from Universities and Colleges. Also, we have a high-profile DMA program that attracts excellent students who we work with to have them teach what is congruent with their individual strengths.

---

Our approach is currently in a state of flux, with some duties being transferred to an online course. The GAs will continue to provide tutoring.

---

There are 11 GAs in music theory. 7 are Master's students in Music Theory, chosen on the basis of admission to that degree program. 3 are either Master's or Doctoral students in Composition, chosen by the composition faculty with no input by the theory faculty. 1 is a Doctoral student in tuba performance, chosen by the tuba professor; that person's role is split 50/50 into low brass and music theory teaching.

---



---

Supposed to be about a 10 hour commitment, but took me about 20 hours a week. There was no training or support for TAs. As a result, I did not get much out of my seminars and was unable to participate in the academic life of the department.

---

The TAs who teach labs for core Theory courses are well-known to have to work the hardest of any TAs in the Music Department, but they also do very well in competing for jobs after graduation.

---

I was selected to teach ear training at the school where I did my masters degree because they needed another person. My assistantship was really for trumpet and that is what the majority of that assistantship focused on. I got my theory assistantship for the school where I did my DMA because of my previous experience teaching ear training.

---

At my institution Theory and Composition are in different areas. There are eight TAs in music theory; seven are music theory PhD/MA students, and one is a composition student with a 1/4 appointment in music theory and 1/4 appointment in composition. That is the only TA for composition.

---

Our GTAs only work in the tutoring lab so several of these questions did not apply.

---

See written addition to question on the previous screen.

---

Our GTAs are overworked. While they do their best and often teach very well, the situation they are put in is not ideal. I have been trying for seven years to change the balance of responsibilities while still allowing them some creative autonomy in the classroom, but it is very difficult to change these things in a larger institution.

## Q12 - Topics

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	47
Total	100%	47

**Q21\_4\_TEXT - Topics**

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	23
Total	100%	23

**Q6\_4\_TEXT - Topics**

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	17
Total	100%	17

**Q9\_4\_TEXT - Topics**

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	28
Total	100%	28

**Q10\_6\_TEXT - Topics**

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	15

Total	100%	15
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#### Q17\_5\_TEXT - Topics

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	6
Total	100%	6

#### Q18\_6\_TEXT - Topics

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	17
Total	100%	17

#### Q23 - Topics

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	27
Total	100%	27

## VITA

David Marvel was born and raised in Harrington, a small town in southern Delaware. He is the son of Beth and Richard Marvel. David attended school at Woodbridge Elementary, Middle, and High School. After graduating as Valedictorian of his high school class, David studied trumpet performance at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. During his time at Appalachian, David participated in domestic and international tours with Appalachian's Wind Ensemble, Symphony Orchestra, and Jazz Ensemble, and he performed with the Symphony as a Concerto-Aria Competition winner. He graduated from Appalachian summa cum laude with his Bachelors of trumpet performance degree in December 2014. David stayed at Appalachian to study trumpet performance at the Masters level. As a graduate assistant at Appalachian, David supervised the Learning, Research, and Technology Lab, taught trumpet lessons and trumpet choir, worked for the graduate coordinator, served on Appalachian's Graduate Student Council, taught his first ear training class, and received Appalachian's Outstanding Graduate Teaching award. David graduated summa cum laude with a Masters of Music degree in trumpet performance and was inducted into the Cratis D. Williams Graduate Honor Society in May 2016. David then attended the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he was a graduate teaching assistantship in music theory. As a GTA, he served as an instructor for ear training classes as well as the Fundamentals of Music Theory course. During his time at the University of Tennessee, David performed with the Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, and Jazz Ensemble, and did outreach performances at local schools with the Volunteer Brass

Quintet. David graduated summa cum laude with a Masters of Music degree in Music Theory in August 2018.