

Preparation for Collegiate Music Theory and Aural Skills Through Repertoire

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
Liberty University  
Fall 2016

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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## Abstract

Music majors often struggle in first-year music theory and aural skills coursework. These struggles have led to increased dropout rates among music students. Even those students who succeed in music theory course work often are not able to apply theory concepts to music literature. Some universities have identified this problem and sought to rectify it through offering remedial course work, however the universities should not bear this burden. Success in theory and aural skills is linked to mastery of music fundamentals and basic aural skills. Pre-college studies should focus on these subjects and not place too much emphasis on advanced music theory or performance skills alone. Performance studies represent a relevant and readily available platform in which to gain fundamental theory and aural skills. Performance teachers must take the responsibility to purposely integrate music theory and aural skills into their lessons and rehearsals. The ability to put theory into practice contributes to the making of a whole musician. Students studying theory and aural skills through repertoire will gain a more holistic understanding of music and these skills will have practical meaning for the student.

### Preparation for Collegiate Music Theory and Aural Skills Through Repertoire

“Performance is important and wonderful; no one doubts this. But performance alone is not enough”(Grashel, 1993, p. 38). For many students the first year of college presents an academic culture shock. Music majors, in particular, often find the demands of freshman music theory and aural skills courses to be crippling. Students face exacting performance auditions to earn admission into music schools and yet many fail first-year required courses. This dichotomy is cause for reevaluation of high-school music education and its relevance to collegiate requirements. The current educational structure is inadequate and there is a need to identify the cause(s) of failure and present an effective solution.

Music theory and aural skills courses are standard in freshman music major curricula. Music theory courses focus on the abstract and mathematical elements of music; ear training involves sight-singing and transcribing pieces by ear. For students with little background in this material, these classes can become a significant challenge and discourage students from continuing in their majors. Performance ability alone will not prepare a student to earn a music degree, yet many students only study performance in high-school. This causes problems in college for bright young students.

Students struggle because most of this material is foreign and abstract. Without a way to meaningfully connect abstract theoretical principles to actual music, music theory can become a painful and trivial chore. Aural skills such as harmonic transcription can appear impossible if students don't have the background knowledge with which to approach them.

Musicianship and theory studies, like performance and language studies, should proceed gradually and, of course, begin at an early age. The mental processes utilized in these studies are different from those required to memorize. (Kohs, 1980, p. 136)

Aural skills and music theory are skills developed over time like playing an instrument or speaking a language. Introducing these skills in college is too late and students will be forced to play catch up.

A simple solution to this problem involves incorporating music theory and aural training into existing high-school performance studies. An integrated study of music theory through repertoire would prepare students for college by both familiarizing them with the theoretical principles of music and making the study of theory practical and relevant. Repertoire as the starting point for aural training provides a large body of material with which to practice aural skills.

### **Content and Purpose of College Music Theory**

Dr. Robert C. Ehle (1973) defines music theory as that which “encompasses and includes all attempts to describe . . . works of music by means of structures, models, analysis, and other similar approaches . . . it tends to include aesthetic, psychological, mathematical, and acoustical procedures”(p. 22). The art of music could be viewed as solely intuitive, creative and expressive. However music is also a subject to be considered rationally and analytically. Ehle explains that while an artistic approach is fundamental to musicianship, an understanding of the theoretical framework of music supports and informs creative musicality.

The musical understanding birthed from theory study should not be undervalued. E. D. Thompson (1963) states the purpose of music theory as “to train a person in the techniques, skills and knowledge that will enable him to have clear insight into and understanding of music – in other words, to make him truly a ‘musician’” (72). Music theory then well deserves its place as standard curriculum for the music major. Such study equips students with the terminology and analytical understanding that assists performance, pedagogy, and composition. No matter the specialization, theory fundamentals aid the music student significantly.

Undergraduate theory studies include analysis of melody, rhythm and harmony. Charles W. Walton lists several elements collegiate level music theory: listening, analysis, music reading, creativity, keyboard harmony (as cited in Livingston & Ackman, 2003). Below is a list of basic music theory concepts taken from the theory text *Music Theory Secrets: 94 Strategies for the Starting Musician* (Coppenbarger, 2014, p. vii-x).

- Reading treble, alto and bass clefs
- Understanding rhythms and time signatures
- Simple and compound meters
- Key signatures, the circle of fifths
- Major and minor scales
- Alternate scales and modes
- Scale degrees, intervals
- Triads, chords, inversions
- Roman numeral analysis
- Figured bass and non-chord tones

- Solfège
- Transposition
- Four part writing
- Sequence and form

This list represents the basic content of freshman music theory courses designed to promote musical literacy. Often these courses assume prior knowledge of treble and bass clefs, and move quickly through meter and scales, progressing promptly to studies of harmony such as intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions.

### **Theory in Practice**

The true purpose of studying music theory is to gain knowledge and tools to put into practice whether in performing, teaching or composing. An efficient theory curriculum will require students to apply the concepts to performance thereby holding student's interests and promoting understanding of the material. Leland Bland (1997) explains the importance of putting theory into practice from the start.

The theory instructor cannot realistically expect to maintain interest for very long if students are forced to deal almost exclusively with details without some applications in broader contexts. Even in the beginning stages of theoretical study when the means are limited, courses should be designed to present material in usable forms which allow students a degree of success and satisfaction . . .

Opportunities should be provided for continual practice in the synthesis of materials from seemingly diverse sources so that students will eventually be able to transfer knowledge and skills to a variety of musical situations. (167)

### **Content and Purpose of College Aural Skills**

Alongside music theory, music majors enroll in aural skills classes. This coursework is designed to develop the ear through sight signing and transcription (melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic). The purpose of aural skills is to put music theory into practice through each musician's primary instrument: his own body. The invaluable step between the written analysis of music theory and the musical performance on an instrument is internalizing the auditory realities of theoretical principles.

Aural skills are not quickly developed. Even students who understand music theory concepts well may struggle with performing them or identifying them aurally. It is entirely possible for a student to properly analyze a Bach chorale through Roman numeral analysis and yet be utterly lost when asked to transcribe the same chorale. This is because aural skills take time to mature. Repeated practice is required to internalize the sonic realities of theoretical principles. Edward Klonski (2000) discusses how aural skills take longer to master.

Most aural skills courses are designed to roughly parallel the sequence of topics presented in traditional tonal theory textbooks. This raises the question of whether the conceptually based order of topics found in theory texts also represents the optimal perceptual ordering. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, at least sometimes, the answer is no. Most students can learn conceptually rudimentary topics, such as how to spell or analyze intervals, in a relatively short time. Yet, for many students the aural identification of intervals requires months and even years of practice to achieve competency. (p. 168-169)



Though often challenging, aural skills give practical meaning to music theory. Ability to audiate or, “hear in the mind” musical modes, rhythms, and motifs precedes ability to effectively perform the same on an instrument (The Gordon Institute for Music Learning, 2016). Studies have shown that being able to sing a melody gives freedom to the performer and allows him to experiment with interpretation (Grant, 2007). The act of playing an instrument is a technical feat itself, but without a clear mental goal for the music, performance can be nearly impossible. This is where aural skills come into play. Much of what is required to be a true musician relies on a well-developed ear and this is why aural skills courses are required for all undergraduate music degrees.

### **Failure in Theory and Aural Skills**

With the content and purpose of music theory and aural skills established, an examination of current undergraduate courses is called for. Are students able to achieve the theoretical and aural competencies necessary for excellent musicianship? An investigation into past research proves disappointing. Many scholars have evaluated student success in the theory classroom with unpleasant results.

Florida State University professors observed how few theory and aural skills freshmen music majors possess.

Freshman college students enter a music major program with minimal non-performance skills. Most of their training consists of playing or singing with high-school ensembles and taking private lessons. Occasionally some experience with the musical elements is gained in a high-school theory or “music appreciation” course. But for the most part the novice student is a performer only. He knows

little of the theoretical and stylistic structures of music (Taylor & Urquhart, 1974, p. 76).

Brent Coppenbarger (2004) acknowledged the general deficiency of music theory knowledge in the prelude of his book.

I have seen a number of students enter the university as music majors and struggle with music theory or even drop their music major because of the challenges of music theory. Some of these students were very talented in their area of specialization, be it instrumental or vocal . . . Most, with some extra time to learn the material, could have made a career in music[.] (p. xviii)

Because music theory is mastered over time, there is a need for preparatory music theory study before entering college.

Some universities have taken steps to simplify their theory programs to better match student preparedness, but this takes course time away from analysis and true theory studies. The University of Florida music students struggled so much in theory courses that the faculty reworked the curriculum, constructing a simpler introductory course covering less material (Livingston, 1982). However, because they entered the university unprepared for music studies, students in these remedial courses fall behind in their studies. Robert Ehle (1973) compares this student unfamiliarity to lacking basic English grammar skills:

The average music student is first exposed to music theory in his freshman year . . . most of his freshman year theory course will be consumed by learning the rudiments of music, taught under the name of theory. This is unfortunate, perhaps, but largely unavoidable because the typical entering freshman has little

knowledge of the basic grammar of his language (rather similar to a freshman English major having no knowledge of spelling, punctuation, sentence construction, etc.). (p. 22-23)

Studying music theory in high-school may carry the connotation of being only for the smart or serious students. But as stated by Ehle (1973), the foundations of music theory encompass the grammar of music. Students seeking to competently communicate through music will be severely hampered if they are not fluent in its fundamentals. Mastering music fundamentals before entering music school is as elementary as basic literacy for an English student. Unfortunately, in a climate of high stakes testing, music teachers often do not have the time necessary to provide their students with meaningful interactions with theory and musicianship material.

In 1981, Carolyn Livingston (1982) surveyed 58 University of Florida music majors on their theory preparedness. Each survey participant indicated in which of 14 areas of theory study they felt well prepared to enter college. The 14 categories and the percent of students who felt prepared in that area are as follows (27).

Rhythm and counting	77.5%
Ability to hear major and minor triads	70.6%
Knowledge of scales	68.9%
Knowledge of key signatures	65.6%
Keyboard skills	55.1%
Ability to write triads	51.7%
Ability to hear intervals	44.8%
Ability to write intervals	39.6%

Notation	37.9%
Sight-singing	32.7%
Ability to compose melodies	25.8%
Melodic Dictation	24.1%
Part-writing	15.5%
Harmonic dictation	10.3%

As indicated by the rankings, students felt least prepared in matters of aural skills. This is not surprising given the time-intensive nature of aural skills mastery. Under-preparedness is not unique to the University of Florida. A similar study conducted by Carole S. Harrison on 178 freshmen music majors at California State University at Fullerton revealed “that many music majors are not able to perform adequately in the major components of freshman theory: written work, sight reading, ear training and keyboard harmony” (as cited in Livingston & Ackman, 2003, p. 27).

Research by James P. Colman indicated that in schools with no theory placement tests (most universities fit into this category) freshman dropout rate approaches 30% (as cited in Livingston & Ackman, 2003, p. 28). Even in schools that administer placement tests or provide remedial coursework, under preparedness can lead to “theory phobia” and affect graduation rates (as cited in Bowman, 1987). A 1972-1976 study at Eastman School of Music showed that 63% of students in remedial theory did not graduate (Bowman, 1987). College is not the time to be learning the rudiments of musicianship. Students should have basic competence not only on their primary instruments, but also in the fundamentals of music.

Professors at Florida State University observed how even successful theory students were often unable to appropriately apply or recognize theoretical principles in music literature (Taylor & Urquhart, 1974). These professors constructed an additional theory course designed to integrate music theory and literature. The course was for undergraduate upperclassmen who had passed their theory coursework and were still unable to put it to practice.

The advanced student – the junior and senior music major – should be well prepared in non-performance skills, since he has just completed two separate tracks: theory and literature/history . . . Unfortunately, most students still demonstrated inadequacies in their comprehension of the fundamentals. They could work with isolated musical structures, but few were able to describe the contextual music . . . The School of Music theory and history faculties became increasingly concerned as more of these problems accumulated. It became apparent that students were completing the basic musicianship courses with little awareness of the relationships between theory, history, and the actual music literature. (77)

It is particularly troubling when college seniors are still engaged in remedial theory work. Music theory should be inextricably linked to real music literature, yet many students learn theory outside this context and even upperclassmen music majors often are unable to make the connection. If these students had instead learned basic musicianship through their own repertoire, important connections would be made early, reducing this problem.

In summation, research indicates that students are not sufficiently prepared for both music theory and aural skills when entering college. This applies even to students who have taken formal advanced theory in high-school. Universities have made concessions, offering placement examinations and remedial theory courses, but these changes have not adequately addressed the issue; and remedial studies are linked to high dropout rates. The educational framework for music students has a major failing and the universities should not bear the burden of instilling this basic knowledge. They cannot do so effectively and should not have that responsibility.

### **High-School Music Theory and Aural Skills Curriculum**

Considering the research demanding student enter college prepared for theory and aural skills courses, an evaluation of high-school theory studies is deserved. Comparing appropriate high-school theory studies with actual coursework may reveal the cause of many college freshmen's shortcomings.

Carole S. Harrison (1990) evaluated several studies and examined how many factors correlated to success in freshman music theory. While various factors (such as academic achievement) were correlated to theory success, the study showed that "of the studies that focused on the identification of the best predictors of achievement in the areas comprised by music theory courses, most deal with the prediction of success in sight-reading." (176)

### **High-School Theory Courses**

High-school theory courses represent a possible solution to this pervasive problem. However, research indicates this is not always helpful. Livingston's (1982) research at the University of Florida indicated that only half of the surveyed students who

had taken a high-school theory class identified it as the best preparation they received for college theory. Earl Henry (1981) identified in his article *Please Stop Teaching College Theory in High-School* some failings of high-school theory courses. Henry noted that when students study college-level theory in high-school they may feel as if freshman theory is repetitive and wish to become exempt. However, it is unlikely that students will have studied all of the material, studied it in sufficient depth, or have retained a sufficient amount.

Henry warned against introducing students to advanced theory prematurely and implored high-school teachers to focus on fundamentals and ear training. He explained high-school students should have complete mastery of written fundamentals, postponing most written harmonic studies until college. A significant portion of high-school study should be performance-based. Sight-singing intervals, melodies, and rhythmic patterns provide some of the best college theory preparation possible. Simple rhythmic and melodic dictation should be taught as well. High-school teachers do not have the responsibility to teach college-level theory but instead to prepare their students for college level theory. College professors will be grateful.

Additionally, many students who learn advanced written theory early, have yet to master basic aural skills. Aural training requires years of development yet is often overlooked completely and can cause students to drop out of college (Henry, 1981). Therefore even in cases where students have taken an advanced high-school theory course, success in college is not assured. High-school music education would be better suited to focus on aural training and total master of theory rudiments.

### **The Role of the Performance Teacher in Teaching Theory and Aural Skills**

The same freshmen that struggle in music theory do not often struggle similarly in performance – otherwise they would not have gained admission to music school. High-school performance instruction is an almost universal prerequisite to studying music in college. The majority of high-school programs offer ensembles and most prospective music majors also take private lessons on their instrument or voice. These private lessons give students an opportunity to study one on one with professional musicians. These lessons are integral to preparation for collegiate music studies. As performance instruction is present in the music education of the students in question, it is a potential source for college theory preparation.

### **Current Research**

In Livingston's (1982) survey of University of Florida music majors and theory preparedness, each survey participant ranked his/his high-school experiences according to which provided the best college-theory preparation. The study indicated private lessons as the most helpful, above actual music theory coursework. The list below names high-school experiences and the percent of students who listed each as the most helpful preparation for college music theory.

Private teacher of student's major instrument	34.4%
High-school theory class	13.7%
High-school band program	10.3%
High-school choral program	10.3%
Private teacher of student's secondary instrument	6.8%



Private teacher of theory 3.4%

(Livingston & Ackman, 2003, p. 14)

In 2001 the study was recreated, with a few changes in the distribution shown above. High-school band and theory classes were most influential for 40% and 32% of the students respectively. Private instruction on primary and secondary instruments prepared 36% and 16% of students respectively (Livingston & Ackman, 2003).

Performance instruction consistently ranked as a significant influence on theory preparedness. It is reasonable to assume this influence is related to the prevalence of performance instruction when compared to theory instruction. But recall, only half of the 1981 students who had taken a high-school theory class listed it as most helpful and instead attributed their preparation to performance instruction (Livingston, 1982).

Performance studies provide practical applications to theory principles that often make them the most relevant and influential.

### **Integrated Study**

Teachers have a responsibility to impart musicality to their students. This involves more than just technical performance skills and will require a holistic approach. While some teachers may argue that lesson time is precious and should be dedicated to studying the specific instrument, good theory instruction in lessons not only prepares students for the classroom, but also improves performance as students are better informed. Since performance instructors are so influential, they must assume responsibility and teach theory to their students. Teachers should especially take note and cater to their students' aural skills deficiencies.

Music theory is best when taken beyond the abstract notes on a page and put to practice in music literature.

Robert C. Ehle states that many books purporting to be music theory texts are de facto harmony books, and there is significantly more to a music theory curriculum than the study of harmony. He says collegiate music theory should be linked to the practice of music and used for furthering basic musical concepts and skills. A college freshman theory course also should include sight singing, keyboard harmony, written harmony and dictation (Livingston & Ackman, 2003, p. 14). Currently, private teachers tend to focus on technical skills, and theory is only taught as needed. However, private teachers can easily teach the most basic aural skills that students miss. The Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) provides guides for private teacher and how they can include this in their lessons (Bowman, 1982).

### **Pedagogy**

Music-education professionals are not unaware of the importance of theory and aural skills. Pedagogues Dalcroze, Orff, Suzuki, and Gordon each emphasize ear training in their methodologies (Churchley, 1967). The philosophy of Comprehensive Musicianship seeks to integrate “performance, analysis, and composition” (Grashel, 1993, p. 38) to enable a more complete understanding of music. Jeffery Patchen advocated, “Integrate more thoroughly music history, literature, theory and listening skills into all areas of music education” (as cited in Grashel, 1993, p. 38).

Hungarian composer and pedagogue, Zoltán Kodály advocated for the development of the complete musician through singing folk music and using movable do Solfège. His educational philosophy supports learning through singing before beginning

instrumental training (“The Kodály Concept”). The emphasis on ear training found in the Kodály method is invaluable to the development of any musician. While the method is often focused on young children, older student can also benefit from the development of aural skills through singing.

Integrated music study benefits the student by allowing for a more complete understanding of music, which leads to a higher class of performers, educators, and composers. Performance instructors often are unable to effectively integrate theory or history into lessons and rehearsals. This is because “extra-performance activities” (Grashel, 1993, p. 39) can detract from repertoire study. Holistic teaching requires careful planning to be effective and not a distraction. Such preparation can be time consuming and is most likely the reason many teachers do not maximize the potential of this teaching style.

### **Teaching Music Theory and Aural Skills Through Repertoire**

Basic theory principles can be taught through repertoire in performance instruction without detracting from main purpose of the lesson. Music theory and aural skills support a musician and make him stronger and therefore add value to a lesson or rehearsal. Note that while performance studies include private lessons, chamber groups, and large ensembles, for the purposes of this examination much of the research and commentary will be directed to private lessons alone. Several basic theory principles are outlined below alongside tools for teaching them through repertoire. The musical examples below have been drawn from intermediate solo violin repertoire. The concepts are applicable to other instruments as well.

## Intervals

Figure 1 shows a double-stop passage from F. Seitz's *Violin Concerto No. 5*, where intervals of every quantity spanning an octave are found. A mixture of perfect, major, minor, and diminished intervals are included. If students studying this passage take the time to identify the various intervals, their practice time will be better educated. This passage gives an excellent example of intervals in inversion as seen in the second measure's major sixth (M6) between A and F# and minor third (m3) between F# and A.



**Figure 1.** F. Seitz, *Student Concerto No 5. Op. 22, Mvt. 3 mm. 121-125*

Further, a student who understands the difference between the major sixth between A and F# and the minor sixth (m6) between the C# and A will be better equipped to play those intervals with good intonation. Recognizing the significant aural distinction between the diminished fifth (d5) and the perfect fourths (P4) and fifths (P5) will inform the students' pursuit of intonation. The time dedicated to studying theory through this passage can immediately impact a student's performance for the better.

## Chords and Harmony

In college theory, students will be required to provide Roman Numeral analysis on many musical excerpts. Without foundational understanding of harmony, these exercises may be a challenge. Students who play melodic instruments (such as the violin) may be even more distanced from harmony than students of chordal instruments (such as the piano). However, chord structures may be found even in the repertoire of melodic instruments. Figure 2 is an excerpt from Beethoven's *Violin Sonata No 5*. This work

provides the opportunity for students to evaluate chord qualities, inversions, chromatic chords, and harmonic progressions. A teacher can focus on one or more of these concepts as the student's understanding allows.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in a single system. The first staff contains five measures of music with harmonic analysis labels below:  $I^6$ ,  $vi_4^6$ , and  $ii^6$ . The second staff contains seven measures of music with harmonic analysis labels below:  $vii^o$ ,  $vii^{o6}$ ,  $V_4^6$ ,  $I^6$ ,  $vi_4^6$ ,  $vii^o(V)$ , and  $V$ .

**Figure 2. L. van Beethoven, *Violin Sonata No. 5 “Spring” Op 24, Mvt. 1 mm. 11-20***

Bach's *Violin Partita No. 1 Sarabande* (Figure 3), does include full harmonic chords, providing an excellent example of a simple chord progression. This opening motive quickly establishes the minor tonality of the movement. Teachers can use harmonic analysis to help their students differentiate between relative major and minor keys as well as inform the students' knowledge of harmonic progression and phrasing.

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in a single system. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first five measures are marked with harmonic analysis labels below:  $i$ ,  $iv^7$ ,  $v^6$ ,  $\frac{6}{5}$ , and  $VI$ .

**Figure 3. J. S. Bach, *Violin Partita No. 1, Sarabande mm. 1-2***

### Phrase Diagrams and Cadences

Purposeful phrasing is one of the most essential factors in creating a meaningful performance. Music theory can assist in this endeavor. Recognizing different cadences and phrase groupings will allow a student to communicate more effectively through a

performance. The excerpt from Corelli's *La Folia* (Figure 4) shows a simple parallel period with half (HC) and perfect authentic (PAC) cadences after each respective phrase.

**Figure 4.** A. Corelli, arr. S. Suzuki, *La Folia*, mm. 1-16

Identification of the C# in the eighth measure as part of the dominant chord and therefore comprising a half cadence leads to the understanding that the music is continuing and should be expressed to match that phrase structure. The concluding cadence eight measures later should be performed with more finality, as the perfect authentic cadence (shown by ti –do in the melody) dictates.

### **Relative Major/Minor Keys**

As alluded to in the Bach *Sarabande* example, theory knowledge can aid in understanding the differences between relative major and minor keys and lead to recognition of modulations between these keys without the help of a change in key signature (as relative keys have the same key signatures). Figures 5 and 6 are two excerpts from Vivaldi's *Violin Concerto in A minor*. The opening in Figure 5 definitively establishes the tonality as minor even without any double or triple stops. The five-to-one movement in the melody and the outlining of both A minor (tonic) and E (dominant) chords indicates that A minor, not C Major, is the key.



measure 21) is in the relative F major. Students should be able to recognize this change in tonality, could even attempt to identify the moment and means of modulation.



**Figure 8.** F. M. Veracini, *Violin Sonata in D minor*, Gigue mm. 19-21

### Transposition/Form

Even more complex music theory concept can easily be introduced in private instruction. Sonata-Allegro is found in most Classical Era works. An example of the exposition's theme 2 in the dominant key transposed to tonic in the recapitulation is shown in Figures 9 and 10. The two examples show the same theme, the first in D major, and the second in G major.

Exposition

**Figure 9.** W. A. Mozart, *Violin Concerto no 3 in G*, Mvt 1 mm. 64-74

Students can continue to reinforce dominant relationships (one of the most fundamental concepts in music theory) as well as begin to understand more complex forms such as Sonata-Allegro through examining the transposition of this melody from the dominant key initially back to the tonic to conclude the movement.



Recapitulation

G:

*Figure 10. W. A. Mozart, Violin Concerto no 3 in G, Mvt 1 mm. 182-192*

### Sight Singing and Solfège

Building sight-singing skills is a sequential process. The first step is becoming familiar with scale degrees and/or Solfège. Before beginning work on a piece, the teacher can ask the student to sing the scale associated with the work. The student can then play the scale on his instrument and begin working on the piece. After becoming comfortable with singing scales, the student can begin singing sections of the piece's melody in Solfège. As the student becomes more fluent in the use of Solfège, the teacher can begin using it as a sight-singing tool. Students can sing through sections of new repertoire before even attempting it on their instruments.

This process is doubly beneficial. Students who can sing their repertoire are better able to internalize the music and develop a deeper understanding with which to interpret the piece (Grant, 2007). While students are internalizing their repertoire through singing, they are also developing aural skills. Solfège is an invaluable tool that takes repeated practice to develop.

Incorporating Solfège into repertoire provides a large amount of relevant and practical experience. The teacher will be instilling essential aural skills organically while developing the musicianship of the student and improving their performance abilities.

Then when students sight sing excerpts in a college ear-training course, they will not only understand the application of such exercises, they will also be familiar with the tools required to approach the unfamiliar melodies.

### **Conclusion**

Performance instruction is a readily available means through which to teach fundamental music theory and aural skills concepts. Students possessing this knowledge will become more educated and expressive performers, and will have the base knowledge required for college-level music theory courses. When foundational music knowledge is firmly linked to actual music literature, music theory studies can then serve their true purpose, which is to grow the musicality of the whole musician.

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