

PROPOSAL

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ACS Teaching with Technology Fellowship Application
Internet Music Theory Database

I. Background: Rationale for Overall Project

Like other young teachers, I spend a great deal of time finding appropriate examples of harmonic and contrapuntal techniques for my courses in tonal music theory. Presently, there are few sources that offer help. Music theory textbooks offer a limited number of printed excerpts. Books such as *Music for Study: A Source Book of Excerpts* by Howard Murphy, Robert Melcher, and Willard Warch (Prentice-Hall, 1973) and *Music for Analysis* by Thomas Benjamin, Michael Horvit, and Robert Nelson (Houghton Mifflin, 1978) contain numerous excerpts of tonal music, but their organization schemes and harmonic approach are now outdated. One also can turn to Charles Burkhart's excellent *Anthology for Musical Analysis*, although this textbook contains only complete pieces, making it cumbersome to examine isolated harmonic and contrapuntal ideas.

The purpose of the proposed project is to create an internet database of music theory examples to remedy this situation (see below).

II. Description

In July, I posted a message on the Society for Music Theory email list, asking if any comprehensive tonal database already exists and if people would find it useful. Within a few days I received over forty responses: No such database existed, and the response to my idea was overwhelmingly positive. Such a database could save teachers hours of preparation time, and it also would be useful to music students wanting to further their theoretical studies independently.

The database will consist of score excerpts in Finale notation accompanied by sound files and organized into specific harmonic and contrapuntal subjects. There will be approximately thirty chapters, each devoted to a specific harmonic or contrapuntal technique. The title, movement, and measure numbers of each excerpt will be clearly marked, and some examples will include a brief comment about an unusual or interesting feature. Each chapter will include both typical and atypical examples of the topic.

I propose to create the first excerpts, but eventually I would like others in the music theory and music education community to contribute their favorite examples. Thus, the Internet Music Theory Database would be an ever-growing resource for music teachers and students. The work involved includes finding appropriate musical examples (some of which I have already collected—approximately 1,000 thus far); copying the scores of these excerpts into the Finale notation program; making recordings of the excerpts; and designing a web page to put the score and sound files on the internet.

Patricia Gray, the coordinator of the music division of the Associated Colleges of the South, and I are currently working on a sample chapter on Neapolitan chords. It can be viewed at <http://www.colleges.org/~music/theory/neapolitan.html>.

III. Timeline

The database will consist of approximately thirty chapters, each devoted to one harmonic or contrapuntal subject. During the spring, when I will have a reduced teaching load that will enable me to devote more time to this project, I anticipate completing between ten and fifteen of these chapters.

IV. Technology

The technological requirements of this project include access to and knowledge of Finale, a music notation program; recording equipment from which sound files can be created; and knowledge of creating web pages and other internet techniques.

V. Other Support

I intend to enlist the help of other teachers from the Associated Colleges of the South in this project. Currently, Patricia Gray is working on the web design of the database. Once that aspect of the project is finalized, I would like other ACS members to help make Finale and sound files as well as suggest other repertoire to include in the database.

VI-VII. Learning Outcomes and Curriculum

The database will be most useful for teachers, researchers, and advanced students. Not only will it save teachers many hours of preparation time, but having so many musical examples in one location will stimulate discussion about these theoretical topics. Students might use the database to supplement their classroom education. And since it is my intention not to supply harmonic analysis with the examples, some teachers may want to make assignments directly from the database.

VIII. Assessment

The success of the database can be judged by 1) its usefulness, 2) its ability to stimulate discussion about musical issues, and 3) its inclusiveness--can it encompass a wide array of theoretical approaches to the study of tonal music? In order to collect this data, we can include a link on our web site that asks for feedback.

IX. Dissemination

The database will be available on the internet and will be free to users. I also would expect to make presentations about the database at various music conferences, such as the Society for Music Theory and the College Music Society.