

Timothy S. Cutler

Assistant Professor of Music

Austin College

ACS Teaching with Technology Fellowship Application

Internet Music Theory Database

I am applying for a second Teaching with Technology Fellowship in order to continue work on the following project. Thus, my application will contain similar content to my previous application, as well as updates from this past year.

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Mifflin, 1978) contain numerous excerpts of tonal music, but their organization schemes and harmonic approach are now outdated.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 continue work on an internet database of music theory examples in order to remedy this situation (see below).

II. Description

In July of 2003, 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 consists of score excerpts in Finale notation accompanied by sound files and organized into specific harmonic and contrapuntal subjects. There will be approximately 25-30 chapters, each devoted to a specific harmonic or contrapuntal technique. The title, movement, and measure numbers of each excerpt are clearly marked, and some examples include a brief comment about an unusual or interesting feature. Each chapter includes both typical and atypical examples of the topic.

I am in the process of finding and posting the first round of 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 will 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 have completed thirteen chapters thus far (over 400 examples are currently online), eight of which were completed during my fellowship in the spring of 2004. We have a rough draft version of our database online, and it can be viewed at:
<http://www.colleges.org/~music/theory/index.html>

III. Timeline

Eventually, the database will consist of approximately 25-30 chapters, each devoted to one harmonic or contrapuntal subject. The project consists of two phases: First, I will collect and post my own examples. Then, the second part of the project will be to request examples from other members of the music theory and education community. As long as these musicians continue to supply me with examples, I will continue to expand the database.

Having completed thirteen chapters of my own examples thus far, we are roughly half way through the first part of the project. I would like to continue work as a Teaching with Technology Fellow during the summer of 2005, during which I plan to complete 6-8 new 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

Currently, Patricia Gray is working on the web design of the database. We have also requested comments from members of the music theory and music education communities as well as advice from experts in the field of copyright law.

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 also 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—whether it adapts to a wide array of theoretical approaches to the study of tonal music. In order to collect this data, we have included a link on our web site that asks for feedback.

During the past year, we have received much encouragement and positive feedback concerning the database. Music professors, including some in the ACS, who are already using the database include Prof. Lynn Raley at Millsaps College, Prof. Leigh VanHandel at the University of Oregon, Prof. Jason Hoogerhyde at Southwestern University, and Prof. Michelle Vigneau at the University of Memphis. (I, too, am using it in both my music theory and ear training classes.) In fact, Patricia and I heard from one professor who was considering using the database instead of a textbook. Furthermore, the Society for Music Theory has expressed interest in making our database an official database of the Society.

IX. Dissemination

The database is available on the internet and we are slowly beginning to publicize it to larger audiences. Patricia Gray has given demonstrations of it at Southwestern University and Middlebury College. I will be discussing the database at a joint national conference of the Association for Technology in Music Instruction (ATMI) and the College Music Society (CMS) in San Francisco in November of 2004. The further this project progresses, the more we will publicize it through the internet and at conferences.