# Beyond Coverage: Teaching for Understanding in the Music History Survey Classroom

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For some time now, music historians have faced the problem of an enlarging amount of material which must be "covered" in the music history survey courses. Calls to incorporate popular music (broadly defined), jazz and relevant world music traditions, or subfields of critical inquiry like performance practice (to name but one) have expanded music history survey courses to the breaking point. Thus, the two most vexing problems with the music history survey in most American universities and conservatories (whether it includes two, three, or four courses) are what should be covered and how should it be taught.

The music student population at my school, the University of Massachusetts, is comprised of those seeking the Bachelor of Music degree with specializations in Sound Recording Technology (40%), Music Business (25%), Music Education (25%), and Performance (10%). Many of those enrolled in these programs lack formal music schooling in Western traditions before coming to school. Moreover, a large percentage of our total student body has no experience performing in a traditional concert band, choir, and/or orchestra. Rather, students' interests are in rock, jazz, or other popular traditions, and their career aspirations will most likely keep them in these types of music. The pedagogical focus in the music history survey courses (Music History I: Antiquity to 1750; and Music History II: 1750 to the Present), however, has been on canonic preservation—an entitlement of the Western classical tradition and a linear imperative which emphasizes getting from point A (e.g., Antiquity) to point B (e.g., the present). Why should students care about this material? How does it relate to other courses and practical careers in music? How will students be allowed to explore their own creativity and connections with the materials?

To address these questions, I identified educational priorities that resonated more closely with the interests and strengths of the particular student body I was educating. The first half of this paper reviews pedagogical methodologies from other disciplines that I have found helpful in addressing these priorities in music history survey courses: "uncoverage;" "backward design" (as described in the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTiegh); Lee Schulmnan's concept of

"Signature Pedagogies;" and new approaches to assessment. The second half of the essay describes how I apply those ideas in teaching with a developmental model for music history and a composition assignment using the concept of isorhythm.

## Coverage and "Uncoverage"

The primary approach to teaching the music history survey sequence has long been the "coverage" model, which emphasizes the transmission of knowledge from instructor to student, typically focusing on surface detail in order to get through the material. Ultimately, this approach casts the professor (and the text of choice) in the role of historical authority, as students memorize, retain, and restate factual and analytical information. It does not recognize the multiplicity of musical backgrounds among students, the level of preparation for advanced study in music, and a diversity of learning abilities. What then should be the primary educational task for the music history survey courses in the twenty-first century when a growing number of university music programs, like my current institution, reconsider their educational goals and the repertoire incorporated in their programs to more appropriately reflect the backgrounds of the students in them? Should the music history survey courses embody the approach summarized above, or something else?

The coverage model of teaching music history is so deeply embedded within the culture of our profession that its ultimate objectives are rarely discussed. It is safe to assert that one of the reasons for the reliance on the coverage model rests upon the hegemonic assumption that music students lack factual, basic knowledge of the Western classical canon, and thus cannot engage in advanced levels of musical thinking, understanding, and practice. This perceived deficiency of fundamental informational data, therefore, has to be addressed before students can move on to courses with higher-level, systematic, and focalized approaches to understanding music. Unfortunately, even when music students take more advanced, upper-level undergraduate music history courses, the coverage model tends to persist only within a more narrowly defined genre of music (e.g., Jazz, American Musical Theater, Film Music), style period (e.g., Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, Contemporary), or perhaps by geographical location (e.g., American Music).

Another consideration when rethinking the focus on the coverage model of music history survey courses is that we have moved into an era of easily available factual abundance powered by online resources. Students first turn to search engines like Google or online resources like Wikipedia when they need to know the facts about a composer or piece of music. But pitfalls are apparent as there often is no scholarly filter in the Wiki-world; search engines

like Google usually rank sites in terms of the number of hits they receive. If we are to accept the fact that the online world has now supplanted the print world for factual information (and I believe we have to at this point), the preferable online resources for finding the "facts" on a music subject are any number of authoritatively edited music reference sources, journals, and books now available to students through their university libraries. Furthermore, open access peer-reviewed web publications, professional society websites, and other online community educational forums are constantly being created and updated with links providing a vast network of informational sources on a topic. The very abundance of information found online turns this situation into a serious pedagogical challenge. What can we as musicologists and teachers of music history offer to learners when the facts and coverage about any musician, style, time period, and genre are instantly available from easily negotiated sources, and when a composer's or performer's work can be heard with a few key strokes?

It has been encouraging to see the musicological profession increasingly engage its membership in the systematic study of student learning, developing a disciplinary infrastructure rooted in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and applying methods and approaches that are appropriate to the study of music history.[1] Other disciplines like history have an extensive and established scholarly literature and discourse that has at its core a critique of the coverage model.[2] Pedagogues have investigated the numerous pedagogical approaches of teaching a survey course and have ultimately challenged the preeminence and legitimacy of that model. In the article "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature

1. Recent, important activity in the field of musicology has begun to address the deficiency of print materials in the area of music history pedagogy. A leader in this movement has been Douglass Seaton, "Teaching Music History: Principles, Problems, and Proposals," in *Vitalizing Music History Teaching*, ed. James Briscoe, College Music Society Monographs & Bibliographies in American Music 20 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 2010), 59–72. Other work in this field includes *Teaching Music History*, ed. Mary Natvig (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002) and *The Music History Classroom*, ed. James A. Davis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

2. On the scholarship of teaching and learning which has clear pedagogical connections to the teaching of music history, see Todd Estes, "Constructing the Syllabus: Devising a Framework for Helping Students Learn to Think Like Historians," *The History Teacher* 40, no. 2 (February 2007): 183–201; Julie Roy Jeffrey, "The Survey, Again," *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 3 (April 2003); Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, "From Learning History to Doing History: Beyond the Coverage Model," in *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*, ed. Nancy Chick, Aeron Haynie, and Regan Gurung (Sterling, VA: Stylus 2009), 19–35; David Pace, "The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (October 2004): 1171–92; and Lendol Calder, William W. Cutler III, and T. Mills Kelly, "History Lessons: Historians and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning," in *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Exploring Common Ground*, ed. Mary Taylor Huber and Sherwyn P. Morreale (Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 2002), 45–67.

Pedagogy for the History Survey," Lendol Calder persuasively argues against the coverage model, basing his work on that of cognitive psychologists.[3] He argues that the facts-first, data-driven approach will only lead to the failure of attaining any deeper understanding of the subject by the end of the course.[4] Furthermore, he claims that the coverage model is a "wrongheaded way" to introduce students to history because it implies either that students will already know how to put the facts they learn to use or that they will develop this ability in later, upper-level courses.[5] "To cover" can mean to travel over or blanket a certain length of time or topic which, of course, can promote superficiality. Moreover, coverage can also mean to conceal or cover up something. Applying Calder's ideas to survey courses in music history should endeavor to "uncover" the larger questions and cognitive contours of history as an epistemological domain. In short, the pedagogical thrust of any survey course in music history should be historical thinking or forms of inquiry, not simply content mastery, in which students learn to think like historians and musicians of the past by actively doing history and transforming data into understanding through practical experience.

**Backward Design and Signature Pedagogies**

Backward design is a curricular approach that begins by identifying clear learning outcomes for a unit, course, and/or entire curriculum.[6] These learning outcomes arise out of important questions and issues about which music historians and musicians debate. Students eventually offer their own positions and interpretations which they must justify on the basis of evidence. The advantage of this type of curricular design is that outcomes can be specific and in line with the educational goals of individual departments and/or institutions, avoiding a "one size fits all" approach. Once the learning outcomes are clearly identified,

3. *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1,358–70. See also Lendol Calder, "Looking for Learning in the History Survey," *Perspectives* 40, no. 3 (March 2002): 43–45, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2002/looking-for-learning-in-the-history-survey. For important summaries of cognition as it relates to learning, see John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, eds., *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2000).

4. For a summary of studies demonstrating that students remember very little from lecture-based, coverage courses, see L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 2–4.

5. Calder, "Uncoverage," 1,359.

6. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2006). Lendol Calder actually borrows the term and concept of "uncoverage" from Wiggins and McTighe. For an intriguing and specific discussion of backward design in music history, see William A. Everett, "Creating a Music History Course: Course Design, Textbooks, and Syllabi," in *The Music History Classroom*, ed. James A. Davis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 1–14.

the instructor or a group of faculty can design a set of learning experiences that will systematically move students toward a mastery of the requisite skills and knowledge.[7]

I am also interested in providing students with highly interactive and experiential modes of learning, such as "signature pedagogies," which require students to demonstrate what they know through doing.[8] Thus, in music, a signature pedagogy challenges students to think and understand what musicians do in performance, audio engineering, or scholarship. This method pursues answers to larger disciplinary questions that are useful to practitioners in multiple programs of study within a music department.

A signature pedagogy must constantly revisit the big questions of why we study something like music history through a regular, recurring pattern of cognitive habits in critical inquiry. Calder acknowledges six crucial paths to understanding and keeping the learning objectives in focus: questioning, connecting, sourcing, making inferences, alternative perspectives, and recognizing limits of one's knowledge. Others have developed an approach known as the "five C's of thinking:" change over time, causality, context, complexity, and contingency.[9] Wiggins and McTighe also suggest six facets in teaching for complete and mature understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge.[10] In the end, it is up to the teacher to best identify a mode of inquiry and appropriate level of understanding of the desired educational result for a particular student body (whether they be students at a traditional conservatory, in a liberal arts college, or in a music teacher training program).

### Assessment

While the move away from the traditional coverage addresses overall course design, it also brings into question how to assess student learning. Evaluating students when a course focuses on content knowledge of a specified time period through lectures and textbook reading assignments is relatively straightforward. Multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank statements, brief definition assignments, and standard essay questions are widely used to gauge student

7. Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 23–24.

8. "Signature Pedagogies in the Professions," *Dædalus* 134, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 52–59; see also Lee S. Shulman, "Pedagogies of Uncertainty," *Liberal Learning* 91 (Spring 2005), 18–25.

9. Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?" *Perspectives* 45, no. 1 (January 2007): 1–5, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically.

10. For a complete and thorough discussion of their facets of learning, see Wiggins and McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 82–104.

learning of historical content. What happens, however, if we want to assess understanding rather than simple content knowledge? Understanding and the assessment thereof, thus, have several meanings. First, the music history student who understands historical inquiry or application realizes that history is an ongoing conversation about the past that relies on a variety of sources and emanates from a variety of perspectives to form multiple narratives and interpretations. The materials of music, therefore, are constantly being recycled and are continually open for reuse and reinterpretation. Just because something is old does not mean it is necessarily fodder for the dustbin. Second, in historical discourse the student must have an awareness of continuity and change over time, of the many ways that the past differs from the present but at the same time acknowledging that the present is rooted in the past.[11] Given just the basic discussion above, one can see that authentic assessment of understanding poses a significant challenge in the music history survey course.

To understand, according to Wiggins and McTighe, "is to be able to widely and effectively use—transfer—what we know, in context: to apply knowledge and skill effectively, in realistic tasks and settings."[12] The assessment must be authentic and not based on decontextualized knowledge. Assessments should be problem-based and require the application of knowledge or demonstration of ability to creatively come up with a solution to a problem or question.

## New Models

Inspired by the concepts of uncoverage, backward design, and signature pedagogies, I created a framework for learning, a model of developmental tendencies in the study of history in which students can explore changes in musical style across time and place. Students apply this model to develop their own understanding of music through discussion, listening, analyzing, writing, and composition. Ultimately, students use this understanding of musical style to enrich their planned careers as audio engineers, teachers, business professionals, and performers.[13]

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11. For informative examples of strategies for teaching students to think historically, see Joel M. Sipress, "Why Students Don't Get Evidence and What We Can Do About It," *The History Teacher* 37, no. 3 (May 2004): 351–63 and Geoffrey Scheurman, "From Behaviorist to Constructivist Teaching," *Social Education* 62, no. 1 (1998): 6–9.
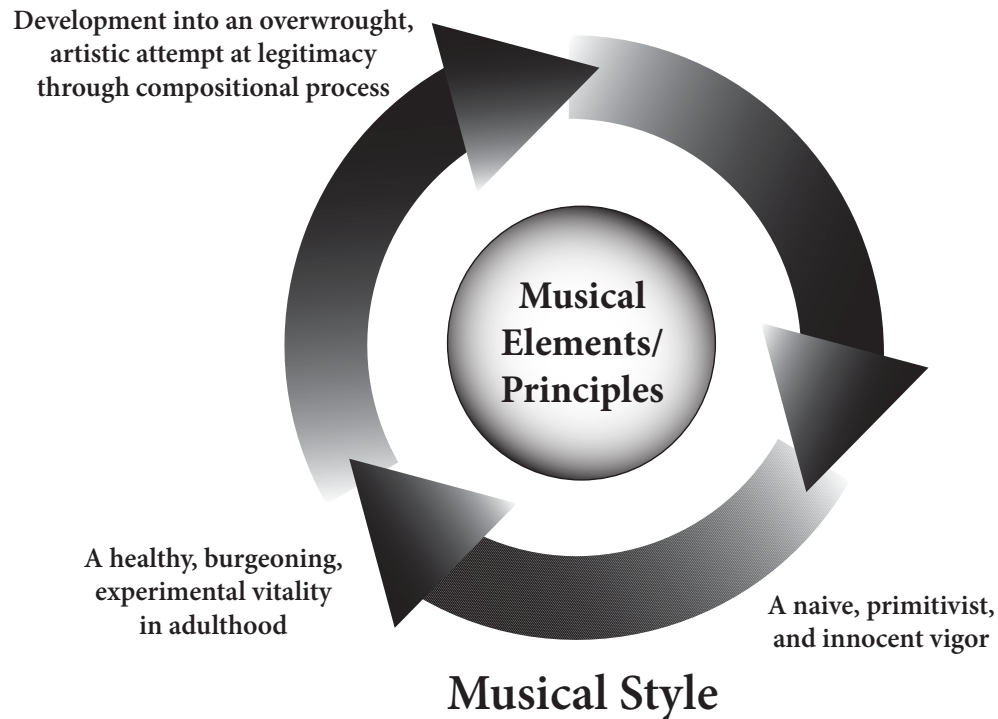
12. Wiggins and McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 37, 7.

13. See, for example, the collection of short essays in "Musicology and Undergraduate Teaching," *College Music Symposium* 28 (1988): 10–23, and particularly the contribution by James A. Hepokoski, "'Music History' as a Set of Problems: 'Musicology' for Undergraduate Music Majors," 12–15. See also Anne Hallmark's, "Teaching Music History in Different Environments," in *Musicology in the 1980s: Methods, Goals, Opportunities*, ed. D. Kern Holoman and Claude V. Palisca, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 131–44.

*Developmental Tendencies*

The students' quest for deeper understanding beings with questions of the very nature of music itself. They wrestle with unanswerable questions to uncover preconceived notions about music and to establish our realm of inquiry: What is music? What is music history? Why study it? What stories and/or patterns reveal themselves when studying the past? Two overriding questions which specifically frame all our subsequent discussions of music are: (1) How might a metaphor of life cycle describe the development of music and inform our understanding of style and the ideas which transform it?; and (2) Is this type of developmental tendency rooted in a common, Western aesthetic which can be experienced in a musical style period, in a specific genre, and so on? I show students a figure illustrating a three-stage inherent developmental tendency in Western musical expression. I argue that this model is legitimate for most Western styles (classical, pop, and jazz) on many different levels (see **Figure 1**).

**Figure 1**: A developmental tendency model in western music.



Development into an overwrought, artistic attempt at legitimacy through compositional process

**Musical Elements/ Principles**

A naive, primitivist, and innocent vigor

A healthy, burgeoning, experimental vitality in adulthood

## Musical Style

If the developmental model is laid flat and conceptualized as spiraling upward in circles to represent the passage of time or a musical style period, while the three inherent developmental stages remain stationary around the outside of the spiral, one can see how the spiraling circles overlap and what might seem to be dissimilar musical styles because of their compartmentalization within a

certain style period actually have common musical traits or aesthetic assumptions which cut across or down through time. In other words, understanding the developmental tendencies of Western musical expression is treated recursively by examining the developmental process of music many times rather than linearly, which dictates superficiality.

Note, too, that at the heart of my diagram is the placement of musical elements (i.e., instrumentation, melody, harmony, texture, form, and so on) which label, identify, and are helpful when describing, explaining, or reporting what one has experienced within a musical interaction. To focus mainly on musical elements, however, sometimes leaves out a discussion of the felt experiences of music—the connection of mind and body. By engaging in a discussion of the sensory side of music, a teacher of music history can reframe the way music is initially approached through a series of foundational principles of musical expressivity rather than the sometimes isolated discussion of musical elements. These principles can revolve around (1) sound/silence, (2) motion/stasis, (3) unity/variety, (4) tension/release, and (5) stability/instability as principles of musical expressivity.[14] Ultimately, a repertoire of musical works (the Western European canon or something else) is simply a resource that supports the cognitive framework of the model or the course. Students place musical works, composers, and genres on the developmental model based on their own arguments and as supported by acceptable musical and contextual evidence.

*Composition Assignment*

The intellectual framework informed by backward design and uncoverage served as a catalyst to facilitate a more active approach to learning which allows students a creative space to experiment with musical materials. An extended "research" paper—a traditional project most undergraduate music majors undertake to demonstrate learning—is not the only option to promote a deeper understanding of music in a survey course.[15]

Historically-informed composition assignments are successful alternatives to research papers.[16] For some students, composing can be a very liberating experience, while for others it can be absolutely terrifying. The power

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14. I am deeply indebted to the work of music education scholars Janice Smith and Michelle Kaschub for their work in this area. See M*inds on Music: Composition for Creative and Critical Thinking* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 15–19.

15. Erinn E. Knyt, "Rethinking the Music History Research Paper Assignment," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 4, no. 1 (2013): 23–37, http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/95/123.

16. For a thorough and penetrating exploration of teaching and learning music composition in tertiary institutions, see Mandy Lupton and Christine S. Bruce, "Craft, Process and Art: Teaching and Learning Music Composition in Higher Education," *British Journal of Music Education* 27, no. 3 (2010): 271–87.

of challenging students to creatively engage with the musical materials lies in the personal nature of the task. Musical composition allows for a gradual development of ideas and engagement with a subject. It reveals the creative process, as well as the final products of an extended encounter with a historical problem or a work of literature, visual art, or another piece of music. And not least important for the music history teacher, composition assignments provide the opportunity for and the satisfaction of responding directly to students in a manner that guarantees their attention through dialogue on a project that typically becomes very personal.

I assign one major composition project per semester for my students in the music history sequence. For this project, I choose a genre that students often find complicated or difficult to understand as described in the textbook. The creative process opens their eyes to understanding in a way that simple analysis does not. The project has two main purposes. First, students must grapple with the creative process and create a musical work of substance. Second, students gain a deeper understanding of their pieces by chronicling all stages of the compositional process and reflecting on what goes into their initial inspiration, their compositional choices, and the development of each idea. They summarize in writing what they have learned over the course of the assignment in relation to the initial learning goals.

Many students struggle to understand isorthym in the Ars Nova. In my course, students compose (in modern notation) a talea of durations in any pattern as long as there is some symbolic meaning or system to the pattern. Next, they compose a melodic pattern (or select a pre-existent melody) with a number of notes different from the number of durations in the talea. Like the talea, the color must have a system or a symbolical meaning. These symbolic meanings can be personal to the student, rooted in the history of the Church, or have any other type of inspiration. The final direction is to create a complete isorhythmic line of music by combining the talea and color.

Students then implement the isorhythmic line in a multi-voice composition. They are encouraged to use different texts in the various lines (like a motet) if the composition is for multiple voices. Or, for the more motivated student, he or she can create multiple isorhythmic lines and try to use each isorhythmic line in a different voice in a polyphonic composition. Other students use the isorhythmic line for the bass line in a song their rock bands are composing. I place no restrictions on what group or type of music is appropriate for the assignment.

As one can tell from the barebones description above, I only try to guide the students' thinking and approach, making suggestions about additional resources or strategies as needed. I rarely address specifics of compositional style, as I want the students to feel unencumbered and as little observed as possible while

they explore their own creative spirit. The students are usually able and willing to run with the project on their own. At the end I am always pleasantly surprised as they emerge with remarkably sophisticated compositions.

Evaluating a composition project and the written summary/journal of that process requires a unique set of criteria. The evaluation must chart growth in various related skills of learning as made evident in the manipulation of musical ideas. Thus, the criteria I use to evaluate compositions are: (1) a clear, growing sophistication and handling of the initial musical ideas as the student works toward the finished composition; (2) a careful and thoughtful description of process, including compositional inspiration and choices; (3) signs of an attempt to organize and prioritize the features of the composition believed to be most important to the understanding of the work; and (4) evidence that the student has reached some deeper insight or understanding about the nature of music, composition, and the context which inspired its creation (both original and contemporary). The advantage of this rubric is its ability to provide clear evidence of student understanding and a process of thinking, not just an explanation of the finished product.[17]

To further the learning experience and to show how all work, even an assignment, has potential for professional use, I select around ten compositions I consider to be the strongest in the class to be performed during a student recital hour. For the recital, the student composers are in charge of all aspects of the performance: they recruit performers and rehearse their works; they distill their extended prose descriptions to an appropriate and succinct length for program notes; as a group they determine an order of performance, one which they feel will hold the audience's attention for fifty minutes; and they compile program notes and distribute them to all music students in attendance (see the Appendix for an example of a program). After the recital, the student body discusses the merits and limitations of each composition and the overall effectiveness of the recital. Students thus are exposed to multiple solutions to and interpretations of the compositional problem of isorhythm in a contemporary context and are made aware that just because something has been used in the past does not mean it still has relevancy to the present.

An active engagement with musical materials through composition is important for two reasons. One, it pushes most students into moments of uncertainty comparable to the ambiguous situations they will face outside class, when historical judgment may be all that separates him or her from advancing

17. All music students take a course called Musical Practices 1 as beginning music majors and as a pre-requisite before entering the survey sequence. In this course, which emphasizes the experiences of music while instilling basic vocabularies to describe music, students undertake more rudimentary compositional exercises that are evaluated using the same rubric as the music survey composition assignment.

in their careers or failing. And two, it drives students into situations of risk-taking and foreboding, excitement and exhilaration. It forces students to engage with the materials and make them their own rather than treating music from class merely as relics of the distant past. The exercise of composing and cataloging the process of creating an isorhythmic work uncovers important aspects of the historical enterprise, such as the misplaced idea that history has one master narrative (or master work) and how different interpretations of a single compositional model can be, even when everyone works from the same evidence. Historical knowledge, as students learn, is full of multiple interpretations which hopefully bring students to the realization that the claims and arguments made by historians are always debatable but are made more convincing through the proper use of evidence to support one's thesis. Whether an instructor uses written prose or musical composition as an assessment tool is really secondary to the idea that students must *demonstrate* understanding (the goal of a signature pedagogy) through active problem solving rather than assuming that history is a stable, authoritative body of facts which must be digested, memorized, and regurgitated on exams.

**Conclusion**

My (re)vision of the music history survey courses at my home institution focused on providing the academic scaffolding necessary for students to succeed in understanding the developmental tendencies of Western musical practices, respecting the diverse musical backgrounds and lives of the students by incorporating more contemporary and familiar types of music into the fabric of the courses, and finally implementing several student-centered learning exercises with multiple "correct" outcomes to reinforce a broader consideration of repertoire and styles. The reward for yielding a significant portion of my authoritative position in the classroom, although it has been disconcerting for me at times, has been far more engaged students who embrace the course and material as their own.

In no way am I suggesting, however, that what I have presented in this article is a signature pedagogy every music history survey teacher should adopt. I merely wish to continue the conversations across the discipline about what works and what does not in particular situations. Perhaps the greatest benefit for me in the pedagogical research I have undertaken and the manifest changes I have made to my classroom teaching is the opportunity to talk with students, not at them, about their work, their ideas, and their discoveries. Thus I am afforded the luxury of becoming one of many voices as my classroom expands to not "cover" more musical material, but rather to include the entire intellectual and musical life of the students.

**Appendix: Isorhythmic Program Sample**

## The University of Massachusetts Lowell
## Department of Music
Durgin Concert Hall
Student Recital Hour, 1-2 p.m.
26 February 2009

Isorhythmic Compositions by UML Student Composers
Dr. Timothy M. Crain, instructor

### Program

Isorhythm No. 1                                                Jeremiah Smith
                    Jeremiah Smith, *engineer*


*Buddying Up*                                                Kathryn Davidson
                    Pam Craven and Ben Lyons, *guitars*


*Carissa's Hat*                                                Everly McCormack
                    Everly McCormack, *piano*


Sonata in AC♯                                                Andy Chau
                    Bonnie Anderson, *piano*


Isorhythm No. 1                                                Jacob Weinreb
                    Bonnie Anderson, *piano*


*Crivelarre*                                                Kevin Webb
                    Amanda Molhan, *soprano*
                    Craig Peura, *tenor*
                    Andy Chau, *clarinet*


"My Autumn" Isorhythm                                                Kathleen King
                    Andy Chau, *violin*
                    Theresa Cleary, *viola*
                    Odaeze Ogunede, *cello*


*Chromatically Chronological Composers*                    Theresa Cleary
            Theresa Cleary, Michael Coelho, Elizabeth Farmosa, *violas*
                    Jon Reagan, *guitar*

*Amazing Mary Was Graced by a Little Greensleeved Lamb*   Mark Ledwich
Theresa Cleary, *viola*
Elisabeth Hodge, *double bass*

*A Portrait of Gracie*   Benjamin Scibelli
Benjamin Scibelli, *electric bass*

## Concert Notes

**Isorhythm No. 1**: I began my composition by trying to construct a subtractive rhythmic palindrome that would extend for an irregular amount of measures (prime numbers other than two or three) so as to maximize the isorhythmic potential when combined with my melodic pattern. Continually, I ended up having a talea of two and one half measures of duple compound meter. So, I decided to double its length by having an additive palindrome immediately follow for a total tale a of five measures. In standard modern notation exact durations are masked by ties over beat divisions and bar lines, but they are as follows: dotted quarter, quarter, dotted eighth, eighth, eighth, dotted eighth, quarter, dotted quarter, eighth, dotted eighth, quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter, quarter, dotted eighth, eighth.

In constructing the melody I applied some chromatic harmony with enharmonic spellings. Its basis is a descent: C, B, B♭, A, A♭, G, G♭, F, E, E♭, D, C. I then took each of these notes and spelled triads using each respective note as either its root, third, or fifth. All the other chord members are diatonic to C major. I then selected the harmonic progression from these choices based on creating an open cadence followed by a closed while preserving the descending motion. Each chord was then made into a seventh chord with all members except the chromatic descending members being diatonic to C major. The resulting progression is as follows (commas represent bar lines): C major 7, B half diminished, B♭ major 7, A minor 7, F minor 7, D half diminished, G major, G major, F♯ half diminished, F major 7, C major 7, F♯ fully diminished, D minor 7, F major seven (F minor 7), C major 7, C major 7. I chose inversions based on voice leading with smallest possible steps and minimizing leaping. I then chose to have two voices. The lower voice outlines a consonant interval from each chord inversion in the progression while the upper outlines the two remaining notes that may or may not be harmonically dissonant. Each melody is sixteen measures in length.

Now for the fun part! The lower voice reads the entire five-measure tale a as stated and applies its melodic formula as suited. The upper voice simultaneously reads the talea in reverse while applying its formula. The rhythm of each

voice conflicts as their harmony coincides. The effect is something of a constant hemiola or hocket. Generally it is clumsy and disorienting and probably very difficult to execute but not a problem to hear thanks to MIDI. I have only notated and recorded sixteen measures (one statement of the superimposed melodies and three and one fifth statements of the talea) as notating both conflicting patterns until they simultaneously concluded and began again would not happen until the end of the eightieth measure.—*Jeremiah Smith*

*Buddying Up*: For the tenor line of *Buddying Up* I used the third and fourth line of the Irish folk song "Oh Danny Boy" as the color. I chose these lines so that the cadence at the end would be stronger. I was going to use just the 12 notes of the last line but decided that I wanted it to be longer so I chose to use the last 24 notes since 24 is a multiple of 12. The rhythm (talea) is formed by saying "USS Alabama." I took the rhythm of those words to create the seven durations of the talea. I switched the "USS" and "Alabama" rhythms so that the piece would end on a quarter note with more finality. Together the color and talea numbers create a 12/7 ratio which is both the date of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the date that my grandfather passed away. He was in the US Navy in WWII on the USS Alabama and two of his favorite pieces were "Oh Danny Boy" and "Amazing Grace." The title I chose for the piece also follows this theme as we never called my grandfather anything like "Grandpa," "Grampie," "Pops," or any other traditional grandfather name, we just called him "Buddy."—*Kathryn Davidson*

*Carissa's Hat*: The composition of my isorhythm started as a joke when I told Carissa Gray I should use Morrissey lyrics translated into Latin as text for my isorhythmic composition. Upon checking a translation website and discovering that Latin was not an option, I decided to just base my entire melody on a line of text from "Nowhere Fast" by The Smiths: "If he day came when I felt a natural emotion, I'd get such a shock I'd probably jump in the ocean." Obviously I was trying to be as ridiculously melodramatic as possible, but I went with this concept to create a melody anyway. I took the number of letters in each word and applied that number to the scale degrees of C major; for example, "If," having two letters, would translate to D since that is the second scale degree of C major. So I did this for each word in the phrase and came up with a melodic line. I omitted the last two notes ("the ocean," which would have been an E and a G) for two reasons. First, I had already decided that my color would consist of 19 pitches. Also, if i ended on the word "in," both the first and last note in the order would be D. Next I composed my talea, which I had previously decided to make a palindromic rhythm, since I have always had a strange fascination with palindromes. I composed it so that the rhythms would fit evenly into a triple time signature because of the symbolism of the number three. I decided to flat

the B in the melody since the melodic line started on D and sounded as though it could be in either d minor or F major.

I decided to pick 19 pitches for the color for a few reasons. First of all, my current age is 19, and 19 is also a prime number, which I think is an interesting concept. As far as the number of durations in the talea, there were also a few reasons. It seemed significant to me that nine is the perfect square of three, and that three was the most symbolic number in the Middle Ages. Also, the idea of a perfect square, a number that is the product of a number times itself, seemed to contrast well with the concept of a prime number, a number that is divisible by nothing except itself and one. In addition, I was born in September, the ninth month in our calendar, and it is also the number of letters in my last name. Also, coincidentally, it is the number of letters in the name "Morrissey," who wrote the lyric on which I based my melody. It takes 39 measures before the pattern begins to repeat itself; there are 13 repetitions of the talea and six repetitions of the color before they both come together again to repeat the beginning pattern.—*Everly McCormack*

**Sonata in AC♯**: This piano sonata is simply a day in the life of the composer. The very major key of B shows the excitement in a day. The piece begins with longer valued notes to show how the day starts slowly and calmly and as the piece goes on the note values are smaller showing the craziness of a day and the ups and downs that can happen. The accidentals also show how one day can not always be perfect. The constant B bass line keeps the "time," similar to the hours of the day. The piece goes through the daily trials and tribulations of life and then finally ends on the tonic of B, showing that "he," the composer, is indeed "home " This sonata will put the listener in "his" shoes.—*Andy Chau*

**Isorhythm No. 1**: My isorhythmic composition is based on chance. I decided that I would use dice to compose my piece! To get the color (the pitch pattern) I rolled the dice. I ended up deciding on a series of numbers that spanned from one to twelve. For each number I then assigned a pitch class within one octave. For example:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| C | C♯ | D | D♯ | E | F | F♯ | G | G♯ | A | A♯ | B |

Once I had the pitches for my color I then used the dice to determine my rhythm (talea). I dropped them and listened to the rhythm that they made when they hit a wooden table. I notated the rhythms that I heard and came up with my talea. My mathematical calculations allowed me to surmise that my isorhythmic

pattern would repeat itself after six repetitions of the talea, with 11 repetitions of the color. I feel that the piece turned out to be pretty interesting.—*Jacob Weinreb*

***Crivelarre***: In my composition, the text in the upper voice is a riddle in Latin. The riddle asks .

> What is greater than God?
> More evil than the devil,
> The poor have it,
> The rich need it,
> And if you eat it, you will die?

The answer simply is nothing. In case one can not figure out the riddle, all one has to do is look at the clarinet part, specifically the notes that the clarinet plays. I mapped out the letters of the alphabet, and assigned each one a note. Using this cipher, the word "NOTHING" has been encoded into a collection of pitches: G♭ A♯ F♯ A♭ B♭ G♭ and G. These seven notes make up my color (pitch pattern). I chose a combination of nine durations for my talea, giving me a "tenor" line of 63 notes. Interestingly, this random collection of pitches sits mainly in G♭ major, with a few flat-II chords thrown in. When I composed the upper voices, I discovered I could use many different traditional Western harmonies, such as V-I, Neapolitan 6th chords, I-VI, and so on. The title of the piece is not complicated "Crivelarre" is the Italian word for riddle.—*Kevin Webb*

**"My Autumn" Isorhythm**: I composed this isorhythm composition with inspiration from my niece. She is five years old and I wanted to capture that as much as I could. I developed my first talea based on her name. I wrote out the alphabet and added a sequence of values: half note, whole note, quarter note, eighth note, dotted eighth note, sixteenth note, eighth note, half note (I wanted to include the dotted eighth, sixteenth note value because I felt it encompassed her 5-year-old energy very well). Every time this sequence was to repeat, I would omit the first value (i.e., half note) and add it at the end of the sequence (I added this because I noticed too much repetition in my talea figures). My first talea was based on her name, which came out with the rhythm: half note, sixteenth, dotted eight, sixteenth, dotted eighth, sixteenth, dotted eighth, half note. The rest of my tale as just used the various sequences developed going in order of the alphabet, in eight-note sequences. I did something similar with my pitch content (color). For each letter of the alphabet I went up in thirds, starting on C (A–C, and so on). I was originally going to use her name for this as well, but as' A' and 'U' show up a lot in her name (her middle name is Angel), I found a lot

of repetition. So instead I chose her birthday, 2 September. I just added one and two to the alphabet and included the notes in the sequence for the number two. This gave me the pitch sequence E D F G D G E D C G B B. I divided this series in two and used them as my two colors. The first color has three taleas in the main melodic line, in the violin, and two tale as for the second color. I used one talea each for the viola and cello throughout the entire piece. In the viola, however, the talea is used once, then reversed, and back and forth until the end of the piece. I added a second section to this piece, and I used the same basic principles. The only difference is that for the second section I used different names for my figures. For my taleas, I used a combination of two of my cousins names, Ashley Jak(e). I made two taleas based on this, changing the order of values in my alphabet. For my color, I used their sister's name, Sarah Christin(e). I think now I should change the name of the piece from "My Autumn" to "Loved Ones" as now the piece is not based solely on my niece! Unfortunately, my computer program did not cooperate when I was composing. To make a contrast, I took out some of the dotted values, making it sound slightly more "grown up," as my cousins are older than my niece. Everything came nicely together at the end, with each section ending on the note A.—*Kathleen King*

***Chromatically Chronological Composers***: My isorhythmic composition, *Chromatically Chronological Composers*, combines my love of art music and music theory. The rhythmic pattern (talea) I chose corresponds with the number of syllables in the last names of ten of my favorite composers, arranged in chronological order by their birth dates:

> Victoria (Vic-to-ri-a): four sixteenth notes
> Bach (Bach): one quarter note
> Handel (Han-del): two eighth notes
> Tchaikovsky (Tchai-kov-sky): eighth note triplet
> Dvořák (D-voř-ák): eighth note triplet
> Puccini (Pu-cci-ni) eighth note triplet
> Rachmaninoff (Rach-man-in-off): four eighth notes
> Stravinsky (Stra-vin-sky): eighth note triplet
> Shostakovich (Shost-a-ko-vich): four eighth notes
> Lauridsen (Lau-rid-sen): eighth note triplet

The pitch pattern (color) repeats itself through a series of root position triads in the key of E♭ major. I chose E♭ major because it occurs very often in the music of W. A. Mozart, and it seems to be one of his favorite keys. The color is as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E♭ | G | B♭ |
| F | A♭ | C |
| G | B♭ | D |
| A♭ | C | E♭ |
| *F♭ | A♭ | C♭ |
| B♭ | D | F |
| C | E♭ | G |
| D | F | A♭ |
| *D♭ | F | A♭ |

This pattern repeats itself until the original E♭ tonic triad occurs in the beginning rhythmic motive. The triads marked with an asterisk are borrowed—a Neapolitan 6th and a subtonic major VII chord. The guitar part contains this isorhythm while the Viola II and III parts are roughly based on the triads underneath the isorhythm. Viola I, however, simply plays an E♭ major scale to emphasize the use of the scale in the pattern.—*Theresa Cleary*

***Amazing Mary Was Graced by a Little Greensleeved Lamb***: My piece is based on three very well-known musical compositions "Amazing Grace," "Mary had a Little Lamb," and "Greensleeves." I started with the entire melody of "Mary had a Little Lamb" as my color. This is a simple melody that is easily recognized. I then took the rhythm of the melody to "Amazing Grace" and called it my talea. This gave me 26 pitches and 18 rhythmic values, meaning that the color is repeated nine times while the talea is repeated 13 times. After composing the double bass line, I decided to try and be more creative by placing "Greensleeves," which is composed in the relative minor of "Mary had a Little Lamb," in the viola line. I knew this procedure would cause an interesting contrast of pitches. Overall, I think that the piece came out very well with the occasional dissonant intervals that are magically resolved.—*Mark Ledwich*

***A Portrait of Gracie***: I aimed to create an entire work for the electric bass playing only harmonics, allowing the performer to display the full spectrum of the instrument, something rarely done for the bass. The piece begins with a melodic progression, working towards the isorhythmic component of the piece. The pitch pattern for the isorhythm was inspired by Jaco Pastorius' "A Portrait of Tracy," which 1 quoted and worked into an original melodic idea. The pitch pattern (color) repeats over a shorter rhythmic pattern (tale a), the basis of all isorhythms, until the cycle repeats itself—*Benjamin Scibelli*