

“Long-braided Lolitas,” or Teaching Undergraduate Music History in a Study Abroad Context

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Then, when the curtain opened on the group of knock-kneed and long-braided Lolitas jumping up and down, the storm broke. Cries of “Ta gueule” came from behind me. I heard Florence Schmitt shout “Taisez-vous garces du seizième”; the garces of the sixteenth arrondissement were, of course, the most elegant ladies in Paris. The uproar continued, however, and a few minutes later I left the hall in a rage...¹

This account by Igor Stravinsky describes, of course, the infamous premiere of *Le sacre du printemps* on May 29, 1913 in Paris. As most students of music history will learn, *The Rite* not only produced a riot but also signaled a fundamental shift in the musical landscape. In a single evening, so the story goes, Stravinsky and his collaborators dropped the curtain on the Long Nineteenth Century and raised it on a new, modern era. *The Rite*, as both a work and an event, thus fits beautifully into a linear timeline of music history. It also demonstrates one of the central problems in teaching and learning about that history.

Like all music, *The Rite of Spring* manifests a complex intersection of social, cultural, musical, and political influences. Yet the standard undergraduate survey course—as music historians often lament—rarely allows time to examine all of these factors in full detail or in proper context. With limited time and resources, instructors must choose what is most important and useful for students to know. This aspect of the survey course has tended (in combination with other factors) to privilege a prescriptive, linear focus on “great works” and “great composers.” Recent discussions in music history pedagogy grapple with these practical and philosophical dilemmas, often concluding with calls for innovative approaches in the curriculum.² Yet a primary challenge for such innovation

1. Igor Stravinsky, in Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 143.

2. See the Roundtable discussion, “The End of the Undergraduate Music History Sequence?” in this *Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 49–76; and “Essays in Honor of Douglass Seaton” in

lies in identifying what can be changed. How diverse ought the curriculum to be? Should teaching “great works” be relinquished in favor of broader coverage? What sort of contextual information—particularly extra-musical information—ought to be provided? If undergraduates do not know “great composers,” will they be disadvantaged in the future?

These questions reflect not only disciplinary developments but also broader trends in pedagogical scholarship. Efforts to de-linearize set narratives have been accompanied by attempts to decentralize the pedagogical process away from the lecturing professor. Such approaches seek both to diversify the subjects taught and to increase student involvement in the learning process. Terms like the “centrifugal classroom” and titles such as *Teaching Naked* or *Flip Your Classroom* vividly express this urge to change teaching models and contexts in an effort to foster active learning and student engagement.³ As issues in music history pedagogy intersect with these greater didactic concerns, a central challenge for music history teachers lies in shaping the environmental and experiential encounters that their students have with the discipline. Music history teachers must thus confront two separate but related issues: what can (or should) the teaching of music history accomplish, and how can those goals, once identified, be met in the ever-expanding field of music history?

This article describes one attempt to engage these issues through a course entitled “Rites of Spring: Paris, the Ballets Russes, and the Arts of Modernism.”⁴ Using an interdisciplinary study abroad model, “Rites of Spring” sought to address both musicological and pedagogical challenges. The course itself centered on Sergei Diaghilev’s original ballet company (1909-1929) and the ways in which the troupe mirrored the aesthetic and socio-political currents of the early twentieth century. Taking students to Paris and London, “Rites of Spring” used the Ballets Russes as a paradigm for exploring those currents in their historical and physical context. In describing this course, we hope to illustrate how diverse approaches to pedagogy can foster new encounters with music history for undergraduate students and lead to direct, experiential, and individualized modes of teaching and learning.

this *Journal* 4, no. 2 (2014): 191–318.

3. Linda Woodbridge, “The Centrifugal Classroom,” in *Gender and Academe*, eds. Sarah Munson Deats and Lagretta Tallent Lenker (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 133–51; quoted in Pamela Starr, “Teaching in the Centrifugal Classroom,” in *Teaching Music History*, ed. Mary Natvig (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 169. José Antonio Bowen, *Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012); Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day* (International Society for Technology in Education, 2012), <http://site.ebrary.com.libproxy.furman.edu/lib/furman/detail.action?docID=10759765>.

4. Hereafter, *The Rite of Spring* or *The Rite* (indicated by italics) refers to Stravinsky’s work, while “Rites of Spring” (in quotation marks) refers to our study abroad course.

“Rites of Spring” in Context

“Rites of Spring” linked three separate yet related modes of praxis connected to music history, study abroad, and primary sources. Douglass Seaton has written that “music history ought to investigate music experience” and music history students must “engage actively in the discipline.”⁵ Others have put forward ideas for original assignments and activities that develop students’ pre-professional skills and intersect with their interests and majors (most of which are not in music history); examples include games to improve listening skills, blogging to practice writing skills, classroom activities to enhance professional skills (such as public speaking), and alternatives to the traditional music history research paper.⁶ Whatever the method, the goal, in Pamela Starr’s words, is for “the instructor [to set] in motion the structures and processes that enable students to develop . . . their own understanding of the evolution of musical style and to use this understanding to enrich their careers as performing musicians and teachers.”⁷ An emphasis on innovative pedagogy thus leads to an emphasis on individualized and experiential learning outcomes.

Study abroad programs are acknowledged to be one of the best models for innovative learning, fostering “intense student-faculty interaction” and providing participants with dynamic, experiential environments.⁸ Yet these programs are challenging to assess, since each institution must develop its own set of local best practices.⁹ Some universities, for instance, contract with non-profit organizations (e.g. IES Abroad), while others maintain their own international campuses (e.g. New York University-Paris or Oklahoma University in Arezzo).¹⁰ In

5. Douglass Seaton, “Teaching Music History,” in *Vitalizing Music History*, ed. James Briscoe (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2010), 60.

6. Nathan C. Bakkum, “A Concentric Model for Jazz History,” in this *Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 5–22; Kimberly Francis and Travis Stimeling, “E-Publishing in the Undergraduate Music History Classroom,” in this *Journal* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1–22; Sara Haefeli, “Using Blogs for Better Student Writing Outcomes,” in this *Journal* 4, no. 1 (2013): 39–70; Erinn E. Knyt, “Rethinking the Music History Research Paper Assignment,” in this *Journal* 4, no. 1 (2013): 23–37; and Scott Stone and Jessica Sternfeld, “Music Librarian and Faculty Collaboration: How an Historiography Assignment Improved a Music History Class,” in *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (2014): 21–32.

7. Starr, “Centrifugal Classroom,” 169–70.

8. Bowen, *Teaching Naked*, 206.

9. The National Association of International Educators (NAFSA) offers a wide range of professional resources to guide institutions and individuals as they develop international programs. See https://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/. See also *The Handbook for Research and Practice in Study Abroad: Higher Education and the Quest for Global Citizenship*, ed. Ross Lewin (New York: Routledge, 2009), which offers a number of case studies for planning and implementing programs.

10. See <https://www.iesabroad.org/>, <https://www.nyu.edu/paris.html> and http://www.ou.edu/cis/education_abroad/programs/ou-in-arezzo.html.

his extensive review of the study abroad literature, Richard Edelstein notes that assessments tend to focus on pedagogical or experiential outcomes specific to each program.¹¹ Few of these studies share any set of broader norms (theoretical, methodological, or conceptual), making them difficult to quantify. This reflects the evolution of international education; as Edelstein observes, study abroad has transitioned from its original focus on foreign language acquisition towards a wider, less-determinate set of goals. Many programs now emphasize “global citizenship” or “intercultural competence” alongside a specific disciplinary focus.¹² Students on study abroad are not just investigating a subject but are meant to be cultural diplomats, advancing mutual understanding and cultivating international good will. Yet such objectives are as difficult to define as they are to measure and the study away literature has yet to reach consensus either on outcomes or assessments.

What all study abroad programs do share, however, is the idea that learning off-campus is different from learning within the standard classroom. This is not difficult for music students to grasp, since most easily understand that (for example) listening to an excerpt from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* in class and attending a staged production at the Metropolitan Opera House are two distinct experiences. But what makes them different? One answer is that in the second situation students encounter primary sources in non-pedagogical and unmediated contexts—that is, contexts that exist for purposes other than teaching (like artistic performance) and that are not facilitated or interpreted for students in a pedagogical setting (like a classroom).

Music history pedagogy has typically addressed this difference either by bringing primary sources into the classroom or by taking students to the sources themselves. Text-based primary sources (from Oliver Strunk’s classic volume to more recent, specialized materials) have become a standard element in the curriculum.¹³ Many teaching faculty incorporate visits to a library or fieldtrips to a live performance as part of their instruction. In recent decades, gains within the digital humanities have made direct access to sources easier than ever.¹⁴ However, such sources usually remain supplemental, rarely (if ever) forming the substance and basis of an undergraduate music history class.

11. Richard Edelstein, “Globalization and Student Learning: A Literature Review and Call for Greater Conceptual Rigor and Cross-Institutional Studies,” Research & Occasional Paper Series: CSHE.6.14, *Center for Studies in Higher Education* (2014): 1–15.

12. Edelstein, “Globalization and Student Learning,” 7.

13. Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, *Source Readings in Music History*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1998); as an example of more recent, specialized source readings, see Michael L. Mark, *Music Education: Source Readings from Ancient Greece to Today*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

14. Examples of this kind of direct access to sources are described by Drew Edward Davies in his essay, “The Digital Humanities and Teaching Iberian and Latin American Music History,” published in this issue on pp. 99–105 as part of the Roundtable on “Ibero-American Music

Full-fledged interaction with primary sources in music is instead traditionally reserved for graduate students and scholars. Yet, as Catherine Johnson and Wendy Duff write, students need fuller engagement with primary sources “at the undergraduate level so that they become comfortable . . . long before they start graduate-level research.”¹⁵ While Johnson and Duff have in mind a specific environment (the archives), their observations reflect the invisible hierarchy that surrounds primary sources in many settings. Students sense that gatekeepers (librarians, archivists, curators, and others) have “the power to deny [them] access,” although they might not understand why.¹⁶ Thus, as Todd Samuelson and Cait Coker observe, “it is not simply students’ lack of interest in or knowledge of primary research materials . . . that prevents them from engaging with special collections materials. Instead, we suggest that students are blocked by an arrangement of cultural forces and preconceptions that they may not recognize.”¹⁷

In teaching “Rites of Spring,” we sought to recognize that the “arrangement of cultural forces and preconceptions” was not only a factor for primary sources but also, as the literature demonstrates, for music history and for study abroad. This “arrangement” and the ways in which we might address it had a direct impact on our course and on the decisions we made about its design, content, activities, and assessments.

“Rites of Spring”: Design and Content

“Rites of Spring” was designed for a music department within a liberal arts university. Our department offers degrees of Bachelor of Music in performance, composition, music education, and music theory, and of Bachelor of Arts in music. Approximately 200 students (out of a student body of 2,800) major in music, and all must take an introductory class in music history, followed by a three-semester survey of Western music and a one-semester survey of World Music. Music students complete their required music history courses by the end of their junior year. Students majoring in other disciplines within the university must take one appreciation or applied course in the visual and performing arts (usually in the music, art, or theater departments).

and the Music History Curriculum: Reform, Revolution and the Pragmatics of Change. For an index of “substantive open access” projects in musicology, see the list maintained at <http://drm.ccarh.org/>.

15. Catherine A. Johnson and Wendy M. Duff, “Chatting Up the Archivist: Social Capital and the Archival Researcher,” *American Archivist* 68:1 (2005): 128.

16. Johnson and Duff, “Chatting Up the Archivist,” 121.

17. Todd Samuelson and Cait Coker, “Mind the Gap: Integrating Special Collections Teaching,” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14:1 (2014), 55–6.

The music department has typically offered one upper-level music history elective in each year; this course is taught seminar-style and requires students to have completed at least two classes in the music history survey sequence. Like most undergraduate seminars, these electives provide a complementary depth to the survey sequence but are effectively limited to upper-level music majors. Although “Rites of Spring” was listed as an upper-level music elective, it had several distinct differences from other courses in the music history curriculum.

“Rites of Spring” took place during our university’s “May semester,” a three-week term in which students enroll in one intensive course. It began with three days on campus, followed by two weeks in Paris and four days in London. During our on-campus sessions, we gave nine hours of lectures, assigned scholarly readings in musicology and dance history (e.g., Garafola, et al), and set short writing exercises requiring critical engagement with course materials.¹⁸ The concentrated approach allowed us to outline musical and theatrical developments in Paris and St. Petersburg at the turn of the twentieth century and to posit Diaghilev’s ballets as revolutionary not just for their novel choreography and breakthrough music but for their integration of the components of ballet (music, dance, choreography, costume, set design) into a unified artistic vision. Once we left campus, a typical day comprised group excursions to a library, museum, or archive, student presentations, and evening performances or discussions.

Our primary goal was to show our students how to think critically, contextually, and historically about music and dance. We hoped that in doing so they would come to see historical narratives not as “fixed” but as active and evolving in light of ongoing scholarly dialogue with source materials. Our syllabus therefore identified three course objectives:

1. To understand the history and influence of Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes on the avant-garde in the early twentieth century (*topic*).
2. To grasp complex relationships between artistic innovation and political, social, and geographical factors in Paris and London in this time period (*context*).
3. To develop a critical framework for interacting with non-print (visual, musical, and performative) primary and secondary sources (*practice*).

With these goals in mind, we aimed to link our students’ growing musical-historical knowledge to the development of their artistic literacy—in other

18. Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Jennifer Homans, *Apollo’s Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2010); Sjeng Scheijen, *Diaghilev: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)—to name a few of the sources we used.

words, to join their knowledge about the Ballets Russes to their ability to use that knowledge across a range of disciplines and interests.

“Rites of Spring” had no prerequisite requirements but was open to students of any level and in any discipline. This was deliberate; we wanted to attract students with diverse interests and different levels of experience.¹⁹ In certain ways, our course resembled the traditional seminar, with a small class size and topical focus. In other ways, it resembled a survey course, since it provided an entry-level, “overarching framework” of information about Diaghilev’s company.²⁰ Most of our time was spent with primary sources (including ballet costumes, paintings, drawings, cartoons, programs, non-print ephemera, and live performances). The course invited many different encounters with these materials and asked students to investigate sources through a variety of settings: for instance, the curated experience of museum exhibits, the interaction with fragmentary records in archives, or the reinvention of a work in performance.

“Rites of Spring”: Activities and Assessments

A typical day abroad comprised group excursions, student presentations, and evening performances or discussions. We describe them in some detail below in order to illuminate more fully the tenor of the course and the direct, experiential methods of learning that it involved.

Short Lecture and Excursion: Each day began with a short lecture, in which we outlined the questions for students to consider in light of specific venues or materials. Our goal was to guide our students’ analysis by giving them a framework within which to examine materials in different artistic disciplines. For very large cultural heritage institutions (such as the Louvre), we provided specific and detailed guidelines about what our students would see and how they would approach the material. Our intention was not to be tourists seeing the sights but scholars engaging sources with a clear set of questions. As a result, we

19. About half of our group were music majors who had taken at least two music history classes; the other half were non-music majors who understood basic terminology in music and dance, either from a formal classroom experience or from participation in those fields. Given the teaching of information literacy at our university, all students had received general and targeted research instruction on using print sources, major databases, and citation styles, and they knew how to find sources in different disciplines. Our students displayed a strong aptitude for engaging in music history and problem-solving in the research process. But their greatest challenge lay in knowing how to enter into an evolving dialogue of scholarly ideas in the field, and they had not grasped how to treat non-print sources in a research process or how to interact with such sources in a way that intersected with their experience and practice of music or dance.

20. For more on the idea of a historical framework, see J. Peter Burkholder, “The Value of the Music History Survey,” in this *Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 57–63.

did not try to “do everything” in any location; instead, we selected individual rooms, even individual artworks, of primary relevance to our course.

Student Presentations: In conjunction with the excursion, each day two students made presentations each day on individual ballets danced by the Ballets Russes. Their goal was, first, to deliver the material they had prepared ahead of time and, second, to respond to the non-print sources of the location in which they presented. We organized these presentations so that the students’ topics intersected with the materials encountered that day. When we visited the Picasso Museum, for example, the presentations were on *Pulcinella* (for which Picasso designed the costumes and sets) and *Le train bleu* (for which he painted the stage curtain). Although Picasso’s materials for these ballets were not in his Museum, the students gained insights into his stylistic periods, interest in different media, and artistic collaborations; and they were able to draw relationships between the materials they saw in person and those they had studied in class.²¹ One presenter linked Picasso’s *Women Bathing* (1918) and early paintings of his wife Olga Khokhlova to his collaborations with the Ballets Russes and commented insightfully on the flattening of perspective and treatment of the female body that shaped Picasso’s works in these years. By the student’s own account, the direct encounter led her to observe and wrestle with the paintings—and her own responses to them—with an immediacy not present when she had viewed reproductions of the works.

Evening Activity: At the end of the day, we either attended a ballet performance or hosted a discussion session. The former allowed our students to see artistic interpretations that took up the kinds of questions we were asking them to consider, while the latter allowed us to reflect as a group on the themes of the course. Out of many outstanding performances, the most seminal was the Royal Ballet’s production of *Afternoon of a Faun*, choreographed by Jerome Robbins after Vaslav Nijinsky. After the ballet, our students were able to consider Robbin’s choreographic decisions as both homage to and departure from Nijinsky’s scandalous movements. They raised questions about the intersection of past and present in the artistic interpretations (Nijinsky’s vision, Robbins’ choreography, and the execution by principal dancers Sarah Lamb and Carlos Acosta); and they evaluated the ballet from multiple perspectives touching on costume, gesture, use of space, set design, staging, choreography, and music. In doing so, they grasped the sense of an ongoing creative dialogue about this work and entered into that dialogue with knowledge and imagination.

A majority of these course activities did not follow a historical sequence or chronology. This arose from practical and pedagogical considerations: first, we had to go to museums and attend performances when those were available, not

21. We later saw some of Picasso’s costumes for *Parade* at the Victoria & Albert Museum Archives.

when they fit into our sequence; and second, the situation mirrored the reality of music history in practice, in which our narratives about “what happened” reflect how we interpret a complex array of evidence, sources, and our own encounters with them.

The last day of our course offered a striking example of this juxtaposition. Our subject was Balanchine’s final choreographies for the Ballets Russes, with *Le fils prodigue* (1929) as our primary example. But the student presentation that day was on *Le Festin* (1909), one of the troupe’s earliest ballets and a collaboration primarily between Fokine (choreography) and Bakst and Benois (costumes and sets), with music drawn from a potpourri of nineteenth-century Russian composers. With these works bookending our morning discussion, we then visited the Victoria & Albert Museum Archives at Blythe House and saw Ballets Russes costumes and ephemera from the earliest through the latest ballets. The convergence of these experiences accomplished at least three pedagogical goals: (a) it summarized information we had studied throughout “Rites of Spring”; (b) it allowed our students to see how scholars piece together narratives from surviving, yet fragmentary, archival records; and (c) it juxtaposed disparate elements—individual works against a repository of artifacts from many different works—in a way that highlighted the complexity of our topic and placed students within an active milieu of scholarship.

Since the course methodology and materials were new for our students, we wanted to ground their experiences within familiar components. We gave three very traditional assignments—a guided journal, a short presentation (already mentioned), and a long presentation—to hone critical abilities and promote academic rigor. In the journal assignment, we asked the students to reflect on three course activities per week (approximately 500 words per entry) and to link those to the concepts and questions under discussion. The short presentation, as described, required students to master information on a single ballet and to present their findings within the context of materials encountered at an assigned venue. For the long presentation, we asked students to investigate a larger theme—for example, “The Ballets Russes and Russian Folklore” or “*Mir iskusstva* and the Petersburg Avant-garde”—and to develop a scholarly perspective on it using both primary and secondary sources.²² Students were expected to relate print and non-print materials and to think critically about the intersection of traditional research methods with primary source material.

22. Access to secondary sources is always a logistical problem on study abroad. To offset some difficulties, we coordinated library resources with technology supplied through Furman University’s Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Students had access to a combination of e-books (for which our library purchased rights), materials on the course website (within copyright restrictions), and electronic databases. Thanks to a grant from CTL, we also provided students with iPad-minis so that they had equal access to technology for their research, presentations, and logistical planning.

Such oral and written work was clearly traditional in form; but what it required in terms of materials, setting, and modes of investigating sources was fresh to our students and, in our observation, prompted tangible curiosity in every member of the group.

Given our experiential focus, a primary challenge lay in linking outcomes to assessments. Bergmann and Sams comment on this difficulty in relation to the “flipped classroom.”²³ As they point out, an experiential learning environment poses unique difficulties for building “an appropriate system [of assessment] that objectively measures student understanding in a way that is meaningful for the students and the teacher. How do we know if our students have mastered the course objectives?”²⁴ In “Rites of Spring,” we adopted Bergmann and Sams’s two modes of assessment—formative and summative. Formative assessments involve regular, unscripted interaction with students to see that they are learning correct information and mastering key points. Students carry “the burden of proof” and must demonstrate this learning, while the instructor monitors student progress. Our formative assessments took place throughout each day, while we were sharing meals, discussing ideas, asking questions, or reflecting together on an experience (such as a ballet performance). Students’ oral and written work (as demonstrated in journals and short presentations) revealed varying degrees and depths of knowledge; and we were able to use these formative assessments in order to judge quickly when they grasped material and when they struggled with it. When they did not understand, we guided them through conversations, closer observations of works under discussion, or reviews of course texts. Formative assessment requires constant engagement with students, and this is precisely what the intensive study away model fostered in our course.

Summative assessments, in Bergmann and Sams’s terms, are “high-stakes assessments” that require students to demonstrate mastery and proficiency in specific areas of the course.²⁵ The most familiar summative assessment is an exam, but we did not give exams in “Rites of Spring.” Instead, the students’ final presentations constituted their primary way of demonstrating mastery of a subject and synthesizing related materials. These presentations were graded on an A-F scale, whereas journal assignments and short presentations were assessed as satisfactory/not satisfactory. The different grading schemes helped to emphasize which assignments reflected developing learning and which required mastery.

23. Bergmann and Sams, *Flip Your Classroom*, 85–89.

24. Bergmann and Sams, *Flip Your Classroom*, 85.

25. Bergmann and Sams, *Flip Your Classroom*, 88.

“Rites of Spring”: Student Outcomes

“Rites of Spring” offered a unique musical-historical experience at the undergraduate level. With a foundational approach to a discrete musical topic, it fostered direct encounters with primary sources in an interdisciplinary, study-abroad context. In doing so, it not only allowed students to study the history of a musical event and set of works, but it also led them to engage with a creative vision and discover the ideas to be both historically significant and presently relevant.

Student evaluations of the course were extremely positive. Many noted how much and how differently they had learned. Of those who had taken previous music history courses, this ranked as their favorite in both pedagogy and perceived relevance. Suggestions for improving the course were mainly logistical: more evening group discussions and more consistent access to wireless internet (common feedback on study abroad). A number of students also suggested “more lectures” and more time replicating a classroom experience. The logistical aspect of this comment was not unexpected—short-term study away courses, especially those traveling to multiple cities, face difficulties in designating a space for group meetings—but the pedagogical element came as a surprise. Our students were essentially asking for more traditional pedagogy in a non-traditional environment. In future iterations of the course, we plan to address this request by adding a few more lectures and by facilitating small-group meetings for students to raise questions and pursue guided work on their projects.

Since our students came from a variety of backgrounds, they were interested in different aspects of the course. The music students gravitated to ballets with music by Stravinsky and Prokofiev but were critical of ballets whose music seemed less complex. The students with a strong background in dance, however, focused on the virtuosity of the dance, barely noticing the music. While studying a shared topic, the students thus experienced different aspects and emphases through each other’s eyes. The idea that movement, design, or fashion could compete in novelty with the music of a “great composer,” for example, was particularly eye-opening for our music students. In part because of these kinds of interactions, students began to act as agents (rather than just receivers) of knowledge, cultivating new ways of expressing ideas and communicating about the value, significance, and meanings of art.

One final presentation, entitled “The Ballets Russes and American Ballet,” exemplified this kind of broad learning and engagement. The presentation examined the influence of the Ballets Russes on the development and reception of ballet in America before and after World War II. In discussing the founding of the New York City Ballet and the American Ballet Theater, the student traced

the legacy of the Ballets Russes in the work of Lincoln Kirstein, Isadora Duncan, and George Balanchine. In doing so, she sought to establish the “motivation, execution, and means” whereby American ballet became a “high art” form deemed capable (in Balanchine’s words) of “[doing] something for [the] souls and minds” of “future citizens.”²⁶ This presentation ranked among the finest in the course for its depth of material and integration of sources. It demonstrated not only that the student had met the course objectives (surrounding the history and artistic relationships of the Ballets Russes and a critical framework for examining those), but that she had also gone beyond those outcomes to produce meaningful insights into the legacy of an ephemeral art form.

“Rites of Spring”: Faculty Outcomes

Teaching “Rites of Spring” has informed our work in the music history classroom, with three applications emerging from this course. First, we have found value in what we might call “case studies,” where we ask students to present briefly on short, individual topics related to the course but not part of our main lecture material. In “Rites of Spring,” this practice allowed us to survey all Diaghilev’s ballets despite our limited time. Such an assignment can provide one solution for the limitations of the standard music history course. Second, we have begun to use primary sources in whatever form they are accessible (special collections, digital surrogates, local performances) as the basis of assignments. This has worked particularly well in large lecture classes. For instance, we have designed assignments in early music that ask students to trace a given chant through different medieval manuscripts (e.g., using resources like the CANTUS database or the Salzannes digital project) or to observe the rich networks of information in a Renaissance chansonnier (accessible in facsimile or in digital format).²⁷ In these assignments, students consider how the contextual information of a primary source might be captured and communicated in modern form, and to examine whether there are creative ways to preserve, perform, and transmit a musical work that exists in a non-reproducible format (such as a heavily-illuminated Renaissance manuscript or, in “Rites of Spring” terms, a ballet for which only some materials survive). We have also taken smaller classes on “field trips” to special collections or research libraries in other cities in order to help them engage music history and its contemporaneous materials. Here, we especially ask students to consider how these materials constitute the historical record and what potential (and perhaps conflicting) interpretations might be made.

26. George Balanchine, quoted by Homans, *Apollo’s Angels*, 466.

27. See <http://cantusdatabase.org/> and <http://salzannes.simssa.ca/>. Digital projects like these, which allow students to search and manipulate materials, are especially valuable for undergraduate students.

Finally, this experience has prompted us to consider more interdisciplinary approaches in music history, especially in topics courses or seminars. Courses like “Looking at Beethoven” (employing concert programs, letters, paintings, excerpts from the “conversation” books, and other non-musical materials to enrich a study of the music) or “Listening to Degas” (through which students might study a likely repertoire for Degas’s dancers while engaging his paintings of their milieu) could be accessible to both music and non-music students. It is true that such courses would require teaching faculty to present music without reference to specialized terminology and to give equal time to non-musical concepts and events. But this cross-disciplinary investigation is precisely what enlivened “Rites of Spring” and, in many ways, made its music more meaningful than in a solely musicological paradigm.

While teaching this course, we were well aware that many of our students would probably not go on to pursue careers in musicology, art history, or dance pedagogy (although some have). But we did want to change both our own pedagogical mindset and also our students’ experience in the course: instead of bringing music history, so to speak, to our students we wanted to enable our students to place art in a broader context. We wanted them to understand the Ballets Russes as part of a continuing conversation about the value and meaning of art—and to know that they have something both to learn and to contribute to this conversation. As Balanchine observed:

. . . the power of admiring things, which exists, is lost because everyone is doing it on his own and for nothing. Every once in a while people agree. We meet and we say, “Do you see that little flower? How beautiful it is.” “Yes, I see.” Well, let us be people who look at flowers together. Let us have a million people saying that a rose is a beautiful shade of pink. . . . And when fifty million people say loudly, “I love this beautiful thing” the power will be there.²⁸

28. Balanchine, quoted by Homans, *Apollo’s Angels*, 466.