

On the Incorporation of Vernacular Music
Into a Gestural Aural Skills Pedagogy

by

Kirk O’Riordan

A Document Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Music Arts

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2003

©Copyright 2003, 2008 by Kirk O’Riordan. All rights reserved.

On the Incorporation of Vernacular Music Into a Gestural Aural Skills Pedagogy

Popular music, as we know it in the West, shares common roots with concert music. Until the middle of the past century there was no real split between concert music and popular music: the music listened to (in performance) was what we now call concert music. It served the same function then as our popular music does today, because it was the only music available outside the Church. “Lighter” styles of this music (such as the operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan) were written specifically for public consumption and were published in piano reductions (the period-equivalent of the compact disk) for mass consumption. Anthony Storr summarizes the development of what we now know as “Light Classical” music nicely:

The demand for accessible musical entertainment grew during the latter half of the nineteenth century in response to the increased wealth of the middle class. It was met by Offenbach, both Johan Strausses, Chabrier, Sullivan, and other gifted composers of light music which still enchants us today. The tradition was carried on into the twentieth century by composers of the stature of Gerswhin, Jerome Kern, and Irving Berlin. It is only since the 1950’s that the gap between classical and popular music has widened into a canyon which is nearly unbridgeable.¹

Justification for the inclusion of vernacular music into the core theory curriculum, with special attention to aural skills training, is the primary thrust of this paper. The study of this music fits particularly well into a gestural pedagogy of aural skills which features the building of aural cognition abilities through the use of common gestures, or musical mnemonic devices, and the elaboration and/or substitution of elements of those gestures.²

¹ Storr, Anthony. *Music and the Mind*. New York: The Free Press, 1992. p. xi.

² Detailed explanation of this pedagogical method, in so far as I have employed it, is found below.

The Argument

Perhaps the most important characteristic of music in the previous century is its abundant diversity of style, technique, and approach. From Debussy's initial departure from Germanic Romanticism, a complex web of styles developed. These various styles were used simultaneously by concurrent composers (and even within the output of individual composers--Schoenberg, Stravinsky, etc.) This web continued to fan out, reaching toward the development of jazz and its various styles, and in turn gave birth to rock and roll. By the middle of the century, music was being composed in styles ranging from total serialism (Boulez, Babbitt, Wuorinen, et al) to the three-chord pop songs of the (early) Beatles—at the same time. By the end of the twentieth century more different languages of music existed and were used simultaneously than at any time before, and the number of different styles (especially within the realm of popular music) continues to grow. That these various languages had distinct influences (either positive or negative) on the composers responsible for these styles, is a matter of record: minimalism and the avante garde as a reaction to total serialism; rock and roll as a reaction to everything; musical theater styles as a reaction to opera; and the music of Bernstein, Copland, Gerswhin, Daugherty, Bolcom, Albright, Glass, the Beatles, etc. are all cited as evidence of the influences these styles have had upon each other.

With the vast increases in technology of this past century came increases in communication with other cultures, specifically in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and India. These “new, exotic” sounds influenced many composers, even if only superficially. The ability to record and later transcribe the music of these cultures allowed for in-depth research on this music. These ethnic musics, which have origins in the informal, non-concert traditions of their respective cultures, can be referred to as vernacular music.

Vernacular music is music which has as its primary function expression from the general population. This of course includes (at least as far as Western music is concerned) the highly trained professional musicians, but, more importantly, features the less highly trained amateur musicians, for whom music might be nothing more profound than a family and friends singing songs after Thanksgiving dinner. Vernacular music in non-Western cultures includes ceremonial music of all kinds, as well as music for informal gatherings and expression. That this definition is so broad should not be surprising given that so little of the world's music falls outside these boundaries.

Music referred to as Western art music, or concert music, is music that is often (though not universally) performed and composed by highly trained--often in an academic setting-- musicians who have specialized in the performance and composition of this music. Much of the music in this category (with the notable exceptions of early music and some experimental music of the 1950's) is composed by someone who intends that his/her performance instructions (in other words, the score) be followed as closely as possible, allowing for personal expression only within the scope of the given notes, rhythms, dynamics, etc. Many musicians who have trained in the concert style can and do move back and forth between idioms, performing vernacular styles regularly (this is primarily true for Jazz, which, for the record, will be considered--for the most part--a concert style as it can be seen to straddle the line between concert and vernacular music). It is less likely that musicians who specialize in vernacular styles can cross over into the concert idiom, but it is possible.³

The Incorporation of Vernacular Music into Theory Curricula

As the quantity, either Western or non-western, of vernacular music grows; it would seem that the study of it within the concert music training systems has not kept up with the growth. How can it? Musicologists have studied popular music, but theories and conclusions about its impact on the society that created it are still being formulated. Universities are struggling to find a place for these musics within the canon of literature normally associated with the training of concert musicians. Mary Wennerstrom speaks of the struggle in an essay describing the theory core curriculum at Indiana University as of 1989:

We also have continuous discussions about which music, and how many compositions, to include. I.U. has traditionally emphasized Western art music and the theory faculty has decided not to broaden the core curriculum to include a detailed study of non-Western music. Within the history of Western music, however, we have different ideas about what to cover. A unit on Jazz is now included in the second semester, and sometimes in I301, but of course, such study can only be an introduction to the subject. Some theory faculty feel we should include more music by women and minority composers and/or more 20th-century vernacular music, concentrating less on the traditional European canon. As we enter the 21st-century, we will have to give priorities to various kinds of music, emphasizing the development of appropriate study methods rather than complete literature coverage.⁴

Northwestern University, as one example, has adopted a significant world music component to its curriculum. The first term of study at Northwestern is devoted entirely to non-Western musics, with the idea that the students will become more receptive to all manner of musical expression.⁵

³ Billy Joel recently released an album of concert pieces composed in a late 19th century salon-style. These pieces were performed by a traditional concert pianist, and show a high degree of competence in the style.

⁴ Wennerstrom, Mary H. "The Undergraduate Core Music Curriculum at Indiana University." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, vol. 3:2. Fall 1989. pp.165-166.

⁵ Buccheri, John. "Musicianship at Northwestern." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, vol. 4:2. Fall, 1990. pp.125-145.

Students and Teachers in Context

Before a discussion of the merits of and techniques for the inclusion of vernacular music can be engaged, several assumptions about the students should be noted. It is understood that not every student will match the following observations, and therefore the instructor will need to be both flexible and confident in his or her choices and applications of these ideas. The first assumption about the students is that many will have a high degree of personal interest and/or knowledge about this music before entering the classroom. It is likely, though not universal, that these students will have a large collection of vernacular music (popular, country, etc) which they listen to as recreation. The second assumption is that each of these students will have developed a personal taste, with which the instructor, in choosing music for the class, will either intersect with or will not. These tastes may be strongly rooted, and are potentially cause for conflict between professor and student. In addition, these tastes change rapidly, and even the “hippest” instructor may have difficulty keeping up. Justin London writes:

The only problem is that popular music is, by nature, ephemeral. Today’s hot hit is next year’s golden oldie. So a lesson that is *au courante* one year (and perhaps even one semester) may seem out of date the next.⁶

The careful instructor, then, will understand his/her student’s interests and sensibilities (when evident), and endeavor to shape them into an inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Advantages of Using Vernacular Music

The study of vernacular music has several important advantages in music theory and (in particular) aural skills classes. First, its use allows for virtually constant practice by the students. If the students take the time to follow harmonic progressions, trace melodic gestures, comprehend rhythmic patterns, and understand formal constructions of any piece of music, they are then using the skills they will need in their future. For example, we will first make the assumption that a student commutes to classes five days per week. Each segment of the commute (to school, and later from school to home) is, perhaps, approximately twenty minutes long. The student listens to a popular radio station while driving, and in each twenty minute drive hears, on average, approximately five songs, each with an average duration of three minutes. If the student listens (as carefully as traffic permits) to the songs during each leg of the commute, the potential exists for forty minutes of practice time five days per week. During this time the student can attempt to be aware of harmonic motion, form, rhythm, melody and layers of melody (e.g. background vocals). The actual writing down of these observations is not as important: it is simply the act of cognating these elements that will help them develop. The student who lives on campus can have similar experiences with personal compact-disk or MP3 players, walking from residence hall to the music building.

This type of practice has the psychological advantage of *not* being in a practice room or in front of a computer in a lab. It seems less like work, but is far more available to them (they are not subject to the hours of computer labs or practice room availability-- which they will most likely use for their applied instrument/voice). Students can practice

⁶ London, Justin M. "One Step Up: A lesson from Pop Music." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, vol. 4:1, Spring, 1990. pp. 112

this way while doing just about anything, so long as enough concentration is given to the analysis of the music.

The second advantage to incorporating vernacular music into the music theory curriculum is lies in its ability to demonstrate many basic principles of harmonic and melodic progression that art music builds upon. For example, I-IV-V progressions abound in popular music. By using the same approach commonly used to teach melodic intervals, using a tune to identify each interval, the basic tonic-subdominant-dominant progression can be "labeled" and therefore stored as one unit in the student's memory⁷. Popular music would seem to serve this purpose even more efficiently, as the tunes and titles might be more familiar. In addition, the "Eureka Factor"--the sudden realization of how a particular chord progression works--is possible with students if they already have a basic familiarity with a particular piece.

The third advantage is that because many music schools are increasing the size of jazz and commercial music programs, there is a growing population of students whose background is considerably different from that of the traditional music major. These new students may not have the interest in art music that traditional music majors have, and are sometimes alienated by an all-art music curriculum. The inclusion of popular and jazz music into the theory curriculum validates their study, and encourages their participation in the class.

Finally, the fact that vernacular music (popular music specifically) is not as "serious" as is concert music can work to the teacher's advantage. Art music is what each of us does for a living, either as a student who is taking intense classes in it, as a teacher who is directing those classes, or as a performer who is playing many hours each day. For

⁷ Bernstein's. "Somewhere". , from *West Side Story* is a common example.

us, art music is as much work as it is escape, perhaps more so, and even then it might be difficult for many professionals to separate work agendas from personal enjoyment when listening to art music. Vernacular music may not seem as much like work as art music does, and therefore the student perceives this music with potentially less stress. The practice environments described above are far less stressful than are the practice room and computer lab (even if the student has their own ear training software at home, it is still work). The lowered stress levels may illicit better concentration, and ultimately better results. In addition, presenting vernacular music in class provides variety, which can help to keep the subject matter fresh. Justin London summarizes these arguments:

Every so often the theory teacher is blessed with a good pedagogical example from popular music. These examples are useful in many ways. They are usually simple and straight forward, and thus give a good demonstration of a particular analytic point. These examples also tend to be familiar to the student (especially if we are dealing with a theory class not just for music majors), and as such they provide a means of connecting what is taught in class with the students' "real world" musical experiences.⁸

Difficulties with Implementation of Vernacular Music

Despite compelling arguments for its inclusion, vernacular music has not gained widespread acceptance into the curricula of many music schools. There are several reasons for this. Vernacular (with primary emphasis here on popular) music is typically not nearly as complex as is art music in terms of harmonic, melodic, formal, or rhythmic structures. There are instances where popular songs make use of fairly advanced harmonic progressions, or interesting melodic patterns, but even these are not thought to compare to those by the great masters of the art music tradition. As Kingsbury writes:

“The idea that rock music required little or no talent seems to have been associated with the idea that it needed no teaching.”⁹

Another possibility for why vernacular music is not often used in theory curricula may have to do with its repetitive nature: it provides less to analyze, and with less to analyze may come a reduced interest on the part of music theorists. This, coupled with a less complex design offers less of a challenge to a theorist capable of understanding (and perhaps more interested in) the details of say, the Wagner Ring Cycle.

Another argument against the inclusion of vernacular music into the core theory curriculum is the large amount of art music repertory already required for study. It is often difficult to include all styles from all time periods: frequently the twentieth-century (from which, of course, jazz and popular music originate) gets less time in music history and theory classes. Limited class time is spent covering music of the twentieth-century: serial and set music, neoclassicism, minimalism, extended tertian and modal sonorities, impressionism, and (possibly) electronic music. This does not leave time for music that a) does not match up in terms of complexity; b) does not hold the instructors (professional) interest; and c) takes time away from the "more important" works of the twentieth century. One might further claim that students do not know enough concert literature when they arrive on campus, and to spend time on vernacular music is to prevent the student from “making up” lost ground with regard to understanding the concert repertoire.

⁸ London, p. 111.

⁹ Kingsbury, Henry. *Music, Talent and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980. p. 60

Wennerstrom states it thus:

Information about all musics, from ancient Greek through the variety of styles of 1990, has increased greatly, and students cannot be expected to be acquainted with everything. We struggle continually with the problems of musical breadth and depth and hope, through discussions with the musicology faculty, to establish guidelines for any future package of theory/literature/history courses.¹⁰

It does seem that the following statement by Storr has some truth to it:

“Appreciating music other than that which one has been familiar from childhood is more difficult and more demanding than many professional musicians admit.”¹¹

Finally, popular music has the potential to offend a student. One must be very careful when choosing popular music for the classroom. Music by Ozzy Osbourne may be a perfect example of a particular musical event (“Crazy Train” happens to demonstrate the minor-6th interval quite well, as well as demonstrate motion between relative minor and major as it relates to form), but it might offend a student’s moral/religious sensibilities. The instructor must be sensitive to the potential for certain music to offend his/her students, and choose music accordingly. Failure to do so could conceivably have the opposite of the intended effect.

Each instructor (or theory department) must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of including vernacular music into the theory curriculum. Making the assumption that an instructor will incorporate this music into his/her curriculum, the instructor will need to come to terms with several challenges presented by this music.

¹⁰ Wennerstrom, p.166.

¹¹ Storr, p. 50.

On Using Vernacular Music

Instructors who wish to include this music in their curricula will need to stay current with new repertory and constantly changing styles.¹² Students who are 18 or 19 years old do not relate to groups like the Beatles or Yes as easily now as students of the same demographic did 25 years ago. While that music is interesting from a theoretical point of view, current students typically lack familiarity with the cultural context from which this music was created (this is especially true with regard to the Beatles in their later period). As a result, music of the 1950's, through the 1980's can suffer from the same "museum-complex" that often plagues art music.¹³ In addition, keeping current with popular or jazz trends will allow the instructor to monitor the genre for changes in harmonic/melodic/rhythmic vocabulary. The vigilant instructor will then hear a new variant of an older gesture, and this variant may help explain the gesture or, better still, open the students' minds to the possibilities of any simple gesture. Staying current is especially important with regard to popular music, as this style has traditionally been more quixotic than jazz or Broadway styles, which seem to evolve less quickly and far less cyclically.

Staying current in an analytical manner in multiple vernacular styles may prove difficult or impossible for instructors. Assuming that art music is the instructor's primary academic interest (jazz or ethnic musics may be substituted), studying a second style in enough detail to teach it effectively would be roughly equivalent to learning a second

¹² See the quote from London, above.

¹³ The "museum complex" stems from the idea that art music, being generated primarily by composers who have been dead for many years, is experienced in much the same way as a great painting: in the "museum" of the concert hall, where the audience/patron listens/observes the piece/painting in quiet reverence, while the work is framed (literally and figuratively) by other masterpieces by other dead artists. (continued from p.11) The interaction between art and audience is necessarily limited in this case--the piece is "protected" by security of the conservatory, or orchestra hall.

language. Clearly the time involved in the preparation of all of these styles would be substantial. There are two reasonable solutions to this dilemma. The first approach would be to choose one vernacular style and learn it well, acquiring a sizeable knowledge of the repertory of that style, and use it as the primary addition to the art music already in the curriculum. The advantages of this approach are that broad summaries of style are possible, and generalities of technique can be accurately demonstrated to the students. Basic gestures can be distilled and demonstrated. With more knowledge of repertory, the best example(s) can be chosen for the class, which increases the effects of incorporating this music.

Perhaps a more pragmatic approach would be to choose a smaller vocabulary of specific examples which could be drawn from a large pool of vernacular styles. This approach allows for more diversity, which therefore attracts the interests of more students. In taking this approach, the instructor would carefully research the examples he/she needs to use to illustrate specific points, and thereby acquire a less all-encompassing knowledge of any one particular style while accumulating a general knowledge of all styles.

The highly motivated instructor will likely use both approaches, by having a broad knowledge of many different vernacular styles, but choosing one as a specialty, and amassing a large quantity of knowledge in that one style. Ideally the instructor would be fluent in all languages of music, and many are. For those who are beginning to incorporate these styles, it would be prudent to limit the amount of vernacular music used in the curriculum until sufficient experience and comfort with the material has been achieved. After all, one would not (ideally) attempt to teach harmony without a command over part-writing skills, chord spellings, chord function, etc.

Once an instructor has included this music into his/her courses, the inclusion of the music may draw criticism from faculty colleagues (particularly those from previous generations) and/or students. It will be important, then, to be able to justify the presence of this music in the course. The final justification is improvement in the students. If the students improve, then the tools used to inspire that improvement are justified. In addition to higher exam scores, higher interest level (which is a corollary to grade success), and better student attitudes toward practicing (transcribing a popular or jazz tune may be an entertaining challenge for the students) are effective arguments in defense of the inclusion of this repertory. A good teacher, then, can draw examples from many different styles, in hopes that one of those styles will resonate with one group of students, while another style resonates with other groups. With examples from three or four styles, an instructor might more easily relate to all students.

Choosing Appropriate Examples

The instructor should choose music that best suits the needs of the class. Some students may not enjoy the music chosen for the examples which follow: some students will not like the Beatles, or Metallica, or Depeche Mode. Similarly, they will not all like the music of the seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-centuries. The music of those composers is chosen because of its importance in the repertory and because it demonstrates certain techniques deemed necessary by professional musicians. The same can be true with vernacular music: there are materials found in vernacular musics which can be used to support similar techniques found in concert music. In short, one should teach what is, in one's carefully researched and practiced opinion, in the best interest of the students.

Popular Music Defined

My personal studies in vernacular music center on American and British popular music from circa 1980 to the present. This is the music I listened to (as well as performed and composed) during my formative years, and it maintains a high level of interest among students today.¹⁴ Given that my background and interest has been in this music, the scope of this paper, in so far as the specific examples that are included, will be limited to popular music.

Popular music, as I will define it, encompasses the genres of Rock and Roll, Country and Western, and some elements of Broadway and Jazz.¹⁵ While this may seem limiting at first, it should be noted that Rock and Roll alone has myriad sub-genres (including, but not limited to Techno, Grunge, Heavy Metal--and its categories of -80's rock, speed metal, etc.--New Wave, Punk, Retro, "Classic" or Art Rock, the list goes on) as well as many examples of several of these genres blended within the scope of one song (Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" comes to mind). The common feature of all of the styles I refer to as "Popular" is that they were composed primarily for mass public consumption. Folk musics, such as Bluegrass, Cajun, and the like which do have popular appeal but limited commercial exposure (and therefore commercial viability) seem, at least as far as I am concerned, better placed in the Folk category.

Aside from the distinct (and well documented) economic differences between popular and concert styles, other differences also have an impact on incorporating

¹⁴ Though I state above that one must remain current, study of this era of popular music is of interest to me primarily because I lived through it. I have, though, continued to add to my repertoire of teaching songs from recent years as well, and that study will be reflected in the catalog below. In using older music, I have often encountered students who do not know the song. In this case, the style is familiar, and the exercise still has the benefits listed above.

popular music into a theory curriculum. Popular music is typically experienced by the listener aurally and in an informal setting (as opposed to concert music which is experienced, among students and teachers at least, via both the score and the performance). There are three media which accomplish this: recordings, live performances, and music videos.¹⁶ Sales of compact discs released by a popular musician are in no small way a measure of that musician's worth and ability, especially within the music industry. Concert tours and, to a lesser extent, music videos (both on MTV and on DVD) are designed to add to disk sales. With this much importance placed on sales of the recording (which results, hopefully for the musicians, in millions of copies being sold) there can be little doubt that the primary method of distribution of popular music is aural transmission.

In addition, popular music is intended primarily for performance by the creators of the music, and not by anyone else.¹⁷ As a result, written documentation (scores) of this music is not widely available. Additionally, the notational practices involved in writing these scores are not standardized. In many cases, the few scores (leadsheets) which are commercially available are not compiled by the musicians who create the music in the first place, and are therefore often incomplete, or incorrect. Like orchestral scores that are reduced for piano or operas reduced for piano and voice, these scores are of only modest help to a potential analyst. A lead sheet may provide a harmonic outline, but any other information will need to be transcribed from a recording.

¹⁵ Jazz standards from the early part of the century straddle the line between concert music (which to me includes much of the Jazz idiom). Songs such as "String of Pearls" or "Take the 'A' Train" were certainly conceived as popular music. As for Broadway, the same phenomenon exists.

¹⁶ Some might include these under the heading "Recording." I choose not to because of the visual element: the visual element has as much to do with the transmission of ideas as the lyrics or the music.

¹⁷ Songwriters are an exception to this rule in that they compose music specifically for other people to perform.

Another fundamental difference between concert and popular music is the presence of elements of spontaneity. This is most easily recognized in the improvised guitar solos in many popular songs, but it is also evident in the “comping”¹⁸ during these solos as well as during vocal sections. Spontaneity has essentially defined the “spirit” of popular music, and is completely and inexorably integrated with popular music.

Finally, the lyrics play an extremely important role in the expression of popular music. For many (most?) popular musicians, the lyrics are a primary concern, and all musical events are designed to support the text. These texts generate much of the attention that popular music gets¹⁹ (when was the last time a parental group complained that the song modulated or used a ninth chord?), both good and bad. Consider someone like Bob Dylan: his texts are considered to be poetry in their own right by many, but no one could place his command of harmony and counterpoint alongside that of the average undergraduate performance major. He is rightly respected for his poetry, and his command of harmony is all but irrelevant. Composers like Paul Simon and Art Garfunkle, can combine poetic texts with more complex musical structures (“Bridge over Troubled Waters,” like Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” uses linear diminished-seventh chords!). Regardless of the level of harmonic simplicity or complexity, it is the text that remains with the listener. When compared to a concert music analog, the Romantic *lied*, one makes the observation that the text is so prominent in popular music, that the devices that a concert music composer like Schubert used to serve the text (most notably text-painting) and therefore make equal partners of text and sound, are rarely present in

¹⁸ Comping is the rhythmically improvised harmonic accompaniment used especially by jazz keyboard players. This happened most visibly in jazz during the solos. In popular music, it is usually done by the second guitarist, keyboard player, or both.

¹⁹ Songs like the Kingsmen’s “Louie, Louie” generated a furor simply because the text was so poorly enunciated that it *had* to be offensive.

popular music: even simple text painting gestures require the elements that are typically not present in popular music: a score, the reduction of spontaneity, and the drawing of attention to the sounds rather than the words. And while melody is an important part of a popular song's success, the lack of melodic development found in popular music sublimates the melody to the text.

Thus the paradox: concert music and vernacular music can be seen as polar opposites, not reconcilable within one curriculum. While this is, to some extent, true, the two styles can also be compared by the elements that are common between the two styles: the strong emotional reactions they both can generate, the fact that they use essentially the same harmonic language, and the fact that popular music uses small versions of larger gestures used in concert music. Teachers who wish to incorporate popular music into their curricula must account for the differences in the two styles. The lack of the score in popular music may seem to be the biggest hurdle (at least with regard to class preparation). Often, Roman Numerals alone, or the ability to perform the music without notation at the keyboard will demonstrate the point efficiently. As detailed below, transcription exercises are very helpful. A brief discussion of the text can prove useful as well, as it will help the students remember to look to the text first when analyzing any vocal music, regardless of style.

Teaching Vernacular Music

I. Gestural Pedagogy

My approach to including vernacular repertory in my aural skills curriculum has been primarily to illustrate harmonic progressions. I have been developing a gestural pedagogy for aural training, which is based on students learning small units of material (melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic) and concurrently developing a vocabulary of these small units. The students learn how to hear and notate the units, as well as to understand where these gestures are most likely to occur. Dictation examples are composed to feature the units, and the students are encouraged to use their knowledge of the units to guide their notation of the example. Further, the gestures are often named, so that the students can associate a name with a gesture, a kind of aural mnemonic device. The names include items like the “voice-exchange progression” (I-V⁶⁻⁴-I⁶, etc.), or the “happy trails” (see the example below) interval (Scale degrees 1-5-[maj.] 6-5). These names seem to help the students hear music in larger gestures, rather than from one pitch or chord or beat to another.

Once the basic units are mastered, substitutions and elaborations are introduced. In doing so, the logic which governs these alterations is explained. Dictation examples grow into multiple versions of one gesture. This can be accomplished in various ways, including simply having students identify which pattern out of two or three given patterns is played. Indeed, the instructor has a considerable amount of personal freedom for creativity in designing exercises which accomplish these goals.

Teachers have long used mnemonic devices for teaching all subjects, including music (Every Good Boy Does Fine, etc.). These techniques can be applied to aural skills

classes as well. This is the premise behind teaching gestures: the unit [ii⁷-V⁷-I], if understood as one unit (or gesture) rather than three individual chords, is more quickly recognized, and then notated as much from memory as by ear. The student can adjust the part-writing to match the voicings played, but still comprehend an entire passage based on a series of words, rather than individual letters. An analogy I use is the word “Cat”: the individual chords of the progression are analogous to the letters that combine to spell the word. Once we understand what the word “cat” means, and how to spell it, we can use it in a sentence. If every time we chose to use the word, we have to spell it one letter at a time (“C---A---T”) it slows our cognition of the idea to the point where the idea is no longer useful. After the word has meaning and its spelling is mastered, it can then be joined with other words to form more complex ideas.²⁰ Irregular usages of the word can be introduced, or prefixes/suffixes can be added to alter the meaning of the word; but the student can still understand the origin of the more complex word.

From this perspective, it can be seen how complex melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic structures can be simplified, and simple gestures can be compounded to form larger, more complex phrases. In this process, the students learn to make basic analytical decisions about a piece by using only their ears. When they combine score study (mastered in the written component of their theory training) with these principles, the student becomes equipped with the beginnings of powerful analytical tools.

²⁰ This particular analogy can be used to illustrate harmonic, rhythmic, or melodic gestures. The principle

a) "Happy Trails"

b) "Alanis Morissette" (from "Uninvited")

c) Derived from "Blister in the Sun" (Violent Femmes)

d) "There's a place for us..." (Bernstein)

The first patterns to be introduced are purely diatonic, and as the students progress, chromaticism can be added. Melodies from the literature are examined for these patterns, and larger structural patterns which govern melodic contour can be observed. The goal for the students, then, is to become able to process local and global melodic events simultaneously: processing the letters (C--A--T) and the word, and ultimately the word into a sentence.

Rhythmic Gestures

Rhythmic gestures are introduced as possible beat divisions beginning with simple meter and later including compound meter, as seen below.

Simple Meters: Compound Meters:

The notation shows a sequence of rhythmic patterns. The first two measures are labeled 'Simple Meters' and consist of eighth-note patterns. The next two measures are labeled 'Compound Meters' and consist of eighth-note patterns with a triplet of eighth notes indicated by a '3' below them.

Gestures can then be renotated in different meter signatures, and augmented into larger (two- or three-beat) units. In addition, asymmetrical divisions (seven sixteenth-

notes in the space of eight, etc.) can be introduced. Irregular meters (Pink Floyd's "Money" is in 7) are also accessible, because the students become comfortable hearing groups of three divisions as well as groups of two. Rhythmic patterns used in vernacular songs can be used as models for dictation and other identification exercises.

Harmonic Gestures

Harmonic gestures are small patterns (usually three- or four-chords) which recur often in tonal literature. These would include the basic patterns of I-ii-V, I⁶⁻⁴-V⁷-I, etc. Most patterns can be demonstrated very efficiently using popular music. The ii-V-I progressions abound in Jazz; I-IV-V-I is the basis of many early rock and roll tunes, as is I-vi-IV-V-I (in 12/8 meter, this pattern is common in 1950's era ballads). As with all of the gestures, once the basic progressions are mastered, many substitutions and elaborations become available, including such issues as mode mixture (IV-iv-I; V⁷-bVI, which I refer to as the Disney²¹ cadence), modulation (of all kinds, but particularly pivot-chord modulations to closely-related keys and direct modulations), linear functions (Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," Simon and Garfunkle's, "Bridge over Troubled Water"). Chords such as the Neapolitan and the augmented-sixth chords, not frequently used in popular music, do occur in musical theater styles. "Sequences of harmonic

²¹ I have named this cadential figure the Disney Cadence because of its common usage in recent Disney animated films. Use of this cadence allows the singer to hold the high tonic pitch over the last few chords. This effect is parodied in the song "La Resistance" from the movie "Southpark: Bigger, longer, and Uncut."

patterns are just as memorable and recognizable as are tunes,”²² and can therefore be taught in this manner with success.

By using a song that a student is likely to be familiar with to illustrate a particular harmonic gesture, the student can name the pattern, and remember the gesture with greater ease. The student learns to notate it in written theory, and consequently remembers the phenomenon. This aural reinforcement is beneficial to the student because the pedagogical point is put into a very familiar context.

These now familiar gestures are then transformed from the vernacular repertory to the concert repertory. As Swigher writes:

The next long step forward was made in education when it was appreciated that learning proceeds not by an imposition of a body of knowledge upon the unwilling individual and making him memorize facts by main force but by relating the new to the old, assimilating the unfamiliar to the familiar.²³

The instructor should call upon clear examples from the concert repertory, and use them along side the vernacular examples, thereby linking the two usages of the same technique in the minds of the students. As the teaching of the aural perception of harmony (as well as melody, rhythm, etc.) is dependent upon the student’s ability to remember a sensory input pattern, finding concrete ways to establish the memories is paramount. “Since harmony is a sensation, the only way to acquire a facility is aurally. The problem is that there is no more point in playing a chord to a child and saying ‘That is major,’ than to point to a wheel and say ‘That is round.’”²⁴ Some other association

²² Beament, James. *How We Hear Music: The Relationship Between Music and the Hearing Mechanism*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001. p. 80

²³ Swigher, Walter Samuel. *Psychology for the Music Teacher*. Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1927. p. 25.

²⁴ Beament, p. 81.

must then be made, and popular music can serve as a model by which small harmonic gestures can be remembered.²⁵

II. Popular Music and Harmonic Gestures: Possible Exercises

Exercises which employ this pedagogical approach take two basic forms: exercises which emphasize identification, and those which emphasize notation. Identification exercises entail only the recognition of aural events, and can take the form of simple “either/or,” error detection, or aural analysis (where the students discuss what they hear). In addition, the students may be asked to simply identify gestures (melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic), either from a previously distributed list or from memory. Popular music can work very well in these exercises, especially when using very clear examples. The instructor may use recordings or perform these on the keyboard or guitar.

Exercises which feature the notation of gestures range from dictation to transcription. Dictation exercises run the gamut between Roman Numeral Only, to full four-part harmonic dictations, Outer Voice Only, or one voice at a time. Transcription exercises are most useful, especially for jazz players, who often undertake this process to study improvisations of great jazz artists. When a popular tune is assigned (and either duplicated en masse or placed on reserve in a library), the students take down the form, chord progressions (in either Roman Numerals or lead-sheet notation), lyrics, melody/harmony (back-up vocals), keyboard or guitar riffs, or even the drum rhythms. Notating full scores for these tunes will require specialized training (understanding how many guitar parts are being used, and hearing which sounds they employ in order to

²⁵ Beament’s discussion in his book is intended to deal primarily with teaching children. However, many music majors are learning to perceive harmonic function aurally for the first time in their ear-training

separate them) that is perhaps better suited to a class designed solely for the study and transcription of popular music. An exercise used in an aural skills class with concert music can substitute poplar, jazz, or non-Western music.

Vernacular music also provides source material for singing exercises. Popular melodies are often diatonic, with a minimum of chromaticism, making them ideal solfège practice examples.²⁶ These melodies are well-suited to either solfège or scale-degree vocalizations. Singing familiar melodies help acquaint young students with either of these sight singing languages, as well as help the students to important scale degrees (1 and 5): this is an important tenant of my melodic gestural pedagogy.

In addition to singing the melodies, students may be asked to improvise within the framework of a harmonic progression from a popular song. This exercise is particularly useful when using a 12-bar blues form.²⁷ In this exercise, the instructor vamps on the progression (or, if using jazz progressions, a recording--the Aebersold recordings are excellent for this) and the students sing. The patterns the students sing are given by the instructor (call and response, improvised and/or composed, or pre-existing). The students are then given a number of measures to improvise on their own, or perform the melody on their own. This will take a certain amount of confidence on the part of some students who may not feel comfortable matching pitches let alone trying to sing in front of the entire class. But it is also a way for them to practice at home, and build confidence. Students working in pairs or even quartets may attempt to improvise harmonies to a

classes. Therefore an analogy can be made between the child learning to recognize sounds and the freshman music major learning to hear function.

²⁶ I say practice examples because for graded examples it may be preferable to use melodies which are not familiar, thereby forcing the student to practice the assigned melodies. If sight reading itself is the goal of the exercise, it is crucial that the melody not be familiar.

²⁷ A very effective demonstration of this technique was given by Peter Madsen of the University of Nebraska, Omaha at the College Music Society Rocky Mountain Chapter Regional Conference at Colorado

given melody, or alternate improvisations while reacting to each other (“trading fours” in Jazz terminology). If the harmonic structure is presented, the students will have memorized that progression by the end of the exercise.

As it is with other aspects of teaching, the creativity of the individual teacher plays a vital role in the teacher’s ability to transfer information to the students. Creative teachers have the ability to change tack as the needs of the students dictate, and can create exercises on the spot which help to solve problems encountered by the students. Often vernacular music can be used in just this way: an immediate, almost improvisatory creation of exercises or examples. When it comes to planned activities, the teacher has the opportunity to be just as creative, inventing activities which are customized to the needs and interests of the students.

Informal Survey

During the preparation for this article, I submitted the following query to the Society of Composers, Inc., listserv (printed in part):

I wanted to solicit from all of you who have in the past or are currently teaching aural skills classes at any collegiate level--graduate or undergraduate--any insight or experiences you might have with regard to the incorporation of vernacular music (popular, jazz, folk, ethnic of any variety--essentially any style that is traditionally thought of as being outside the Western Art Music tradition) into these classes.

I received 24 responses to this, from instructors ranging from first-year masters students in their initial year as a teaching assistant to tenured professors at major universities.

Several responses are included below.

Steven Paxton
Director of the Contemporary Music Program

Christian University in March, 2003 in his presentation “An Interdisciplinary Approach to Sight Singing Pedagogy Incorporating Jazz Improvisation”

College of Santa Fe.

Aural skills begin with what we know, gradually expanding into what we do not know. As we grow, the unknown becomes the known. At the point when most of our undergraduate students begin the collegiate study of music, the known is predominantly vernacular music, so that is precisely where we should begin.

Now so far, we have not made any sweeping changes in the way we do things departmentally, but each of our teachers (most of them anyway) addresses the obvious need to integrate familiar materials into the study of aural skills in a manner of their own choosing. I personally do the following each time I teach an aural skills class:

I distribute a 20-30 page handout that contains lyrics of traditional folk songs and cowboy songs--the types of songs I learned in elementary music classes about 45 years ago. During each class session we spend a few minutes learning to sing one or two of them. Sometimes we use guitars or the students' own instruments to improvise accompaniments. Sometimes we analyze pertinent melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, or formal aspects (especially formal, and especially recognition of the dominant-tonic relationships). Sometimes we just sing for the fun of it (imagine that). At the end of the semester, I invite other faculty who play traditional folk instruments and we have sort of a hootenanny sing-along. It's great fun.

Next year I am taking a new position as Director of the Contemporary Music Program at the College of Santa Fe. They offer only a liberal arts degree program in Contemporary Music that emphasizes world music, electroacoustic music, music technology, and popular music. I am considering developing some sort of "official" stance that departmentally makes THE SONG the central focus of musical study in the degree program offered at that school--haven't worked out the details yet, but it seems to me that everything studied in a program such as that could grow out of careful, serious study of the song tradition rooted in vernacular music.

Dr. Stuart Hinds
Texas Tech University School of Music

I routinely use popular music styles in my aural skills classes. Progressions like the doo-wop turnaround and the 12-bar blues are easy ways to get the students into improvisation. Jazz progressions are good for recognizing chord qualities. Pop musics also provide many more all-diatonic examples for melodic and harmonic analysis at the freshman level than classical music.

Jennifer Fitzgerald
Ph.D. candidate, Composition
Duke University

I've had my students transcribe the rhythms of Theolonious Monk tunes. Some students went all out and showed the relationship between the harmonic and melodic rhythms but most of them struggled. When I asked them to do rhythmic transcriptions of say, a Beethoven symphony they had a much easier time of it. We also listened to lots of different types of pop music and 20th century classical and would (on the spot) determine meter, rhythmic structure, etc. Overall, I've found that students love popular music rhythms but have a rather difficult time imitating them. I often use world music and jazz vocals to demonstrate the limitations of the Western pitch notation system...the rhythmic transcriptions of jazz did the same for the Western rhythmic notation system. The students (as would be expected) found pre-notated music and the heads of jazz tunes to be far easier to transcribe than solos or say, Billie Holiday's singing.

Christopher Frye
Coordinator of the Music Theory program
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Regarding the Beatles tunes, I have used "Eleanor Rigby" for dorian/Aeolian mode, "Norwegian Wood" for mixolydian mode, "Here, There and Everywhere" for distant (third rel.) modulation and many others for chromaticism and borrowed harmonies, etc.

Amy Dunker
Professor, Theory/Aural Skills/Composition/Brass
Clarke College

Dictation: Modal Melodies - I incorporate rock (esp. heavy metal) melodies in with more traditional modal melodies. I add Blues and Rhythm and Blues melodies to melodic dictations involving chromaticism.

Rhythm (Clapping): I use drum set books. The students then clap out two of the instruments using both hands. (It sets them up for more complex polyrhythms). I also use rhythms from "world music" (especially in Ear Training IV)

Rhythm (Dictation): I chose a rap Cd (this being a Catholic institution, I have to be careful with lyric content) and have them do a dictation of the rapper's rhythm. We then discuss the use of patterns and rhyme scheme.

I also use "pop" music for the early stages of "listening to form" because it is easy to find ones with a simple and obvious form.

We also do "error detection" as far as rhythm, tuning, etc (Ear Training I). Is the singer singing in time? Are they in tune? Is the drummer keeping good time?

Ralph Hayes
Formerly of Kent State University

Most of the vernacular music that I used in college teaching were the suggestions of my students. When we covered a topic (i.e., secondary dominant sevenths), I would assign them to bring in examples from a source of their own choosing. Here are some that I remember, most from musicals and film soundtracks:

secondary dominance: "Do, Re, Mi" (Rodgers)
pedal tones: "You Do Something to Me," (Porter) "The Sound of Music."
(Rodgers)
major/minor: "Gone With the Wind" before and after the war (Steiner)

intervals are a category in themselves:

m2: "Jaws" (Williams), "The Entertainer" (Joplin)
M2: "Somewhere" (Bernstein), "Do, Re, Mi" (Rogers), "The Way We Were"
(Hamlisch)
m3: "The Impossible Dream" (Leigh) "So Long, Farewell" (Rogers)
M3: "The Jetsons" (Hanna)
P4: "Obi-Wan Kenobi's Theme" (Williams)
A4/d5/tt: "Maria" (Bernstein), "The Simpsons" (Elfman)
P5: "Star Wars," "E.T.," "Superman," "Yoda's Theme" (Williams) "The
Flintstones" (Hanna)
m6: "Love Story" (Lai)
M6: "Princess Leia's Theme" (Williams)
m7: "Somewhere" (Bernstein), "Star Trek" (Courage)

M7: "Superman," "Yoda's Theme" (Williams)
P8: "Over the Rainbow" (Arlen) "Gone With the Wind" (Steiner)

Robert Fleisher

I guess the "predictable" patterns of tonal music have mostly to do with the tendencies of individual harmonies (IV or ii to V, V to I, etc.)--in the case of the (12-bar) blues, the framework is very narrow, since the range of variation is slight: I I I I | IV IV I I | V V I I. We use a couple of classic examples for starters, to establish the normative pattern, then play other songs that depart from that, usually in m. 2 (w/ a IV), 10 (ditto), or 12 (with a V "turnaround"). I have them sing the bass line on solfege (either just roots, or arpeggiating entire chord: do mi sol mi | fa la do la | do mi sol mi | do mi sol mi | etc. Blues in minor help too (even incl. The DOORS, with their further departures, such as in Riders on the Storm, mm. 9-12: VII VI i i).

We do use other music (folk, jazz, rock, Broadway & Hollywood, etc.), but I can't say I've found a use for rap as yet!

Mark Phillips

Pop music is highly useful for teaching simple harmonic chord progression recognition as on aural/ear training skill. (I mean really ... how useful is it to be learn to recognize harmonic chord changes if the only context in which you can recognize them -- or even engage that portion of your analytical skills -- is in a plodding 4-part block chord piano rendition?) A lot of pop music embellishes *very* simple harmonic progressions with an astonishing variety of musical and sonic "distractions." So students immediately learn the value of listening on different levels to broaden their understanding. Once beginning students have developed some skills and understanding ... there is suddenly a whole lot of opportunity to practice ... anytime they turn on a radio or CD player. They don't have to drag a friend into a practice room to play through progressions (yeah... right!) or go to computer lab and listen to (typically) boring and bad sounding synthesized block chord progressions.

These responses show the individual creativity and sheer variety of exercises that popular music can allow for with in an aural skills class. The premises of their activities support my arguments as well.

Analyses

The following analyses are given to demonstrate several interesting harmonic techniques that occur in these popular songs. Each of these can be interpreted as variants of techniques found in concert music, and can be used to demonstrate these techniques aurally. Commentary on the pieces will follow each example. These are songs that I consider to be appropriate for classroom use, should be widely available, and allow for easy aural recognition of the salient features. The instructor has the option of introducing the harmonic progressions before the song; and because they are given in roman numerals, they may be reinforced by using identical progressions in the concert four-part style.

These songs are from my popular music interests. An instructor may use similar examples from any other style. These analyses are intended to serve as a suggestion for format. The songs are arranged alphabetically by title.

Breathless

The Corrs (R.J. Lange/The Corrs) (2001)

Interesting harmonic feature: The modulation from the Bridge to the Chorus, and the return to the original key

Intro: B: I | I | I | I || I | V | ii | vi V ||

Verse: I | V | ii | vi V | (2x)

Bridge: IV V | vi | IV V | I (IV) | IV V | vi | IV | V ||

Chorus: E: I | IV | V | I | IV | V | I | IV | V | I | IV | V || (three-bar phrases!!)

Intro (2nd four bars)

Verse (2x)

Chorus:

Intro: (full, second phrase repeated twice for guitar solo)

Bridge:

Chorus (abbreviated by one bar)

Chorus: (full, 2x)

The modulation:

B: V = E: IV This occurs from the bridge to the chorus. Because the plagal progression is common in popular music, the listener expects that the second chord of the chorus will be I or V in the key of B major. However, the A chord (IV in E:) arrives, and because of its relationship to the original key (A is the subtonic of B), the chord is almost shocking: the modulation is confirmed at this point. To return to B Major, the V of E is left suspended by a lack of rhythmic activity at the end of the phrase. As this chord is a B major triad (the I chord of the original key), the transition back is very smooth.

Hungry Like the Wolf

Duran Duran (Duran Duran) (1982)

Interesting harmonic features: Modulation to the Chorus, and the Return to the original key; use of Mode Mixture

Intro: E: i* || I | I | I | I || *anacrusis

Verse: I | I | I | I | bVII | bVII | I | I || (2x)

Chorus: C: I | V | IV | IV⁶ | I | V | IV | II || (2x)

Transition: iii | iii|

Verse:

Chorus:

Break: E: i (16 bars) (can also be analyzed a G: vi, or C: iii)

Chorus: (4x-vamp)

The modulation:

E to C--motion by chromatic mediant. If one follows the bass line, one will hear the bass line stepping downward from E to C. The return is accomplished via the 2-measure transition that occurs at the end of the first chorus. This e minor chord shares the root pitch with the tonic E major, but sounds like a deceptive cadence in G major when

following the D major chord at the end of the chorus. The same effect happens at the break, where the two measures are lengthened to 16. Several keys are possible as a result of this e minor chord: one can understand this chord as iii of C Major, and, more logically, vi of G Major because of the deceptive motion from the D chord as before. This tonal ambiguity takes on programmatic significance in that the section appears to be “hunting” for a key: the hunt in this song is a metaphor for sexual conquest, and is referred to many times in the text.

Mode mixture in the piece is heard first in the opening measure--the anacrusis to the E major opening riff. The same effect is used, as discussed above, to return to E Major tonic from C Major. In addition, the D major chord at the end of the Chorus provides the analyst with a dilemma: is the Chorus in C, or in G? To hear the Chorus in G, one must understand the C chord after the repetition as IV, an understanding that is certainly plausible at that moment. The e minor chords that follow the Choruses do nothing to alleviate the ambiguity.

Kiss Me

Sixpence None the Richer (Matt Slocum, Leigh Nash) (1998)

Interesting harmonic features: Linear descent of sevenths, deceptive resolution of secondary dominant

Intro: C: I | I^{M7} | I⁷ | I^{M7} || (2x)

Verse: I | I^{M7} | I⁷ | I^{M7} | I | I^{M7} | V⁷/IV | IV ||

Chorus: ii V | I vi | ii V | I V⁷/IV | ii V | I V⁶ | vi I⁶⁻⁴ | IV | V⁴⁻³ |

Intro:

Verse:

Chorus:

Intro: (reduced instrumentation) (2x)

Chorus: (first four bars--guitar solo)

Chorus:

Intro: (4x) | I

The Verse and Intro progressions provide a simple introduction into the idea of linear progressions. The melody of the Intro features a chromatic descent from scale degree 1 (8), to the lowered scale degree 7, and then returns. At this point in the song, the lowered seventh scale degree does not result in the implication of the V^7/IV chord: rather, it foreshadows the arrival of that chord in the fourth measure of the chorus. The motion between the four chords in the Intro is purely melodic, and is echoed in the bass line.

When the V^7/IV is finally used, it does not resolve in the normal fashion. The next chord should be IV: however, what comes next is a return to ii (d minor). This can be understood in the key of F major as vi--deceptive motion. Thus in the key of C Major the progression is a deceptive resolution of a secondary dominant.

The Cure

Pictures of You (Smith, Gallup, Thompson, Williams, O'Donnell, Tolhurst) (1989)

Interesting harmonic features: substitution for the basic chord progression (I-IV); form

Intro 1: A: V | vi | V | vi | V | vi | V | vi || (4x) (I^{6-4} is implied by the bass line, as is ii^{6-4})

Intro 2: I | IV | I | IV | I | IV | I | IV | I | IV |

Verse: I | IV | I | IV | I | IV | I | IV | I | IV |

Intro 2:

Verse: (2x)

Intro 2:

Verse: (2x)

Bridge: V | IV | V | IV | V | IV | V | IV |

Intro 2:

Verse:

Intro 2:

Intro 3: I | ii | I⁶ | IV | I⁶ | IV | I⁶⁻⁴ | IV⁶ |

Verse 2: I | ii | I⁶ | IV | I⁶ | IV | I⁶⁻⁴ | IV⁶ |

Intro 2: (2x)

Coda: I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I ||

Harmonic growth over the course of the song creates form in this song. The song can be divided into three basic sections: a germinal section (Intro 1) where the key is ambiguous and the beginnings of melodic motivic material are introduced; the core, where the majority of the text and the key is confirmed by the basic chord progression of the piece (Intro 2-Verse-Bridge); and the final section where the basic chord progression is elaborated upon with substitutions and inversions (Intro 3 and Verse 2). The following reduction demonstrates this:

<u>Section 1</u>	<u>Section 2</u>	<u>Section 3</u>
A: V (I ⁶⁻⁴) vi (ii ⁶⁻⁴)	I IV (V)	I ii I ⁶ IV I ⁶ IV I ⁶⁻⁴ IV ⁶ I
Intro 1	Intro 2 Verse Bridge	Intro 3 Verse 3 Coda

In Section 1, the bass line creates ambiguity of sonority by including an A in its melodic pattern. In addition, because there is nothing of this kind before this, the E's and F-sharps sound like tonic and supertonic. Adding the A to the bass line obscures the sense of tonic. Section 2 climaxes at the bridge. Here, the V chord is introduced unambiguously for the first time, and the section gives the impression of a giant half cadence. Section three substitutes for the IV chord with ii and IV⁶, while I is used in inversions. The scalar bass pattern that results (A-B-C#-D-C#-D-E-F#) confirms the

sense of growth that builds throughout the song. The arrival of the final I chord in the Coda resolves the half cadence from Section 2, but more powerfully than that, it gives the sense of completion of growth, and programmatically, acceptance of the loss of the persons love interest.

The text is a good example of strophic form, with Intro 2 functioning as a refrain. There are also two versions of this song: this analysis is of the longer version found on the album "Show" (a live recording) and on the studio album *Disintegration* (1989). The shorter version is commonly played on radio stations because of its length: three minutes, whereas the studio/live version runs seven and a half minutes. The length of the album version seems to support the song programmatically: a long arduous journey to the acceptance of the lost love (symbolized, as discussed above, by the arrival on the I chord at the Coda).

Depeche Mode

See You (M.L. Gore) (1982)

Interesting harmonic feature: secondary dominants, tonic ambiguity, circle of fifths

Intro: a: i | i | i | i | i | i | i | i | i | (2x--16 bars)

Verse: C: vi | vi | IV V | I I⁶ (V/vi??) | (2x) --OR-- a: i | i | VI V/III | III III⁶ (V) |

Bridge: IV | iii | IV | ii | V |

Chorus 1: I V⁷/vi | vi IV | ii V | I V | vi (a: i??)

Verse: (2x)

Bridge:

Chorus 2: I V⁷/vi | vi IV | ii V | I V |

Chorus 3: I V⁷/vi | vi IV | ii V | I |

Break: IV | I | V/vi | vi | IV | I | V/ii | ii | V |

Verse: (solo) (2x)

Bridge: (solo)

Chorus 1: (solo)

Verse: (2x)

Bridge:

Chorus 2:

Chorus 1:

Intro: (vamp)

“See You” presents a good example for an exercise called “find the tonic.” The song begins by establishing a minor with a 16-bar introduction, during which the primary instrumental motives are introduced. However, the move to the C major chord in the verse is so strong (IV-V-I in C Major) that the tonic is obscured. The following chord leads back to a minor, but it isn’t really V/vi or purely III⁶. There is an E in the bass, but neither of these two chords fits. Thus the move back to a minor is weakened, and the confusion between a minor and C Major as the tonic key is heightened. Reversing the progression (beginning on C and moving by secondary dominant to a minor) further heightens the ambiguity. A solid case can be made for either key being tonic, and this can spark a discussion in class about what makes a chord sound like tonic.

The progression in the second half of the break (IV | I | V/ii | ii | V |) is used frequently in second semester classes when introducing secondary dominants. Depeche Mode’s version can be quickly altered to include I chords on both ends, making it suitable for use in class.

Avril Lavigne

Sk8er Boi (Avril Lavigne) (2003)

Interesting harmonic features: chromatic mediant modulations

Intro: D: I | V | vi | bVI V | (2x)

Verse: I | V | vi | bVI | I | V | vi | bVII (V/bIII)| (2x)

Chorus: F: I | V | IV | V/vi | I | V | IV | V/vi || IV | IV (D: bVI) |

Verse: (D:) (one extra bar at the end, no chord)

Chorus: F: I | V | IV | V/vi | I | V | IV | V/vi || (2x) IV | IV |

Break: (F:) I | V | IV | bVI | I | V | IV | bVI V/vi |

Bridge: vi | vi | I | I | V | V | IV | V/vi (2nd time: D: V) |

Verse: (D:)

Chorus: F: I | V | IV | V/vi | I | V | IV | V/vi || (2x) IV | IV (D: bVI)

Modulations in this song are accomplished in three ways. The first type occurs at the transition from Verse to Chorus: the new key arrives via a pivot chord borrowed from the parallel minor. The C major chord at the end of the verse, understood in D Major as bVII, becomes the dominant of the new key, F Major. The second modulation occurs at the next verse. Here, the Bb chord (IV from the previous key) becomes bVI, implying a deceptive cadence to the lowered submediant (the previous chord is V/D). This motion foreshadows the same progression at the end of the song, which sounds very much like a deceptive cadence even though in the key (F Major) the cadence is plagal. The third modulation occurs between the Bridge and the final chorus. Here, vi is tonicized by the final chord in the progression (V/vi) which on the first repeat leads back to vi. The second time through, however, this leads to D Major: the mode change from d minor (vi/F) to D Major returns the song to the opening key.

For students, this modulation should be readily audible, particularly at the first modulation. In addition, the sequential nature of the vocal melody (as well as several of the accompanying instrumental melodic lines) allows for these gestures to be notated as well.

Catalog of Progressions

The following catalog presents examples of several standard harmonic progressions found in popular music, specifically in rock and roll. They are organized by harmonic gesture. This catalog is by no means complete: there is simply too much music to compile, and too many variations on the basic chord progressions to be listed.

Therefore, I have limited the catalog to only the most basic progressions using primary chords. I intend for this catalog to be a starting point for instructors who wish to include this music in their curricula, and encourage these instructors to add to the catalog as they see fit.

Basic Harmonic Units:

1. I-V-I

1. Billy Ray Cyrus “Achy-Breaky Heart”
2. Ricky Martin, “She Bangs” (Chorus)
3. Squirrel Nut Zippers “Hell”
4. Bryan Adams, “Summer of ‘69” (Verses and Chorus)
5. Lisa Loeb, “I Do” (V-I, Chorus)

2. I-IV

1. The Cure, “In-between Days”
2. Modern English, “I Melt With You”
3. Howard Jones, “Life in One Day”
4. R.E.M., “It’s the End of the World as We Know it (and I feel Fine)”
5. Simon and Garfunkle, “Homeward Bound”
6. Smash Mouth, “All-Star”
7. Bruce Springsteen, “Born in the U.S.A.”
8. Depeche Mode, “Just Can’t Get Enough”
9. Poison, “Every Rose has its Thorn” (includes ninth chords)

3. I-IV-V

This is perhaps the most basic rock chord progression: it is the progression which spawned the criticism that rock and roll has only three chords.

1. The Beatles, et al “Twist and Shout”
2. “La Bamba”
3. Billy Idol, “Mony Mony”
4. The Kingsmen “Louie, Louie” (I-IV-v)

5. Blondie, “The Tide is High”
6. Kiss, “Rock and Roll all Nite”
7. Night Ranger, “Sister Christian”
8. Pat Benatar, “We Belong”

4a. I-V-IV

This is a common variant of the above progression.

1. The Who, “Teenage Wasteland”
2. Duran Duran, “Hungry Like the Wolf” (see analysis above)
3. Pearl Jam, “Better Man” (Chorus)
4. Gin Blossoms, “Allison Road”
5. Ozzy Osbourne, “Crazy Train” (Verse--over a pedal)

4a. I-V-I6-IV

1. Journey, “Don’t Stop Believing”
2. Rush, “Spirit of Radio” (I-V-iii-IV-[iv-V])

5a. I-bVII-IV²⁸

This is the inversion of Progression 3.

1. Guns ‘N’ Roses, “Sweet Child o’ Mine”
2. B-52’s, “Roam” (I-IV-bVII-IV-V)
3. Men Without Hats, “The Safety Dance”
4. Duran Duran, “The Reflex” (Chorus)
5. Kiss, “Rock and Roll All Nite” (Break)
6. Simple Minds, “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”
7. Robert Palmer, “Addicted to Love” (Verse)

5b. I-IV-bVII

1. Guns ‘N’ Roses, “Sweet Child O’ Mine”
2. Huey Lewis and the News, “I Want a New Drug”
3. DEVO, “Whip It”
4. Ray Parker, Jr., “Ghostbusters”
5. Thompson Twins, “King for a Day” (I-IV-bVII-V)
6. U2, “Desire” (bVII-IV-I)
7. The Romantics, “What I Like About You”
8. from Sesame Street, “How to get to Sesame Street”

²⁸ This progression, as well as others using the subtonic chord in major, do not have a direct link to progressions typically studied in aural skills classes. They are included here because they can be understood as a substitute for I-IV-V, and because they are so common in popular music.

6a. ii-V-I

There is an almost never-ending supply of songs which use this progression, particularly in the Jazz idiom.

6b. Circle of fifths:

Longer progressions based on quintal root movement.

1. A-ha, "Take on Me" (Intro, Verse--ii-V-I-IV)
2. Gloria Gaynor, "I Will Survive"
3. Toad the Wet Sprocket, "All I Want" (I-vi-ii-V)

7. I-vi

1. Simon and Garfunkle, "Mrs. Robinson"
2. from Rocky Horror Picture Show, "Janet Weiss"
3. Tears For Fears, "Head Over Heels" (Chorus)
4. Love and Rockets, "So Alive" (Chorus)

8a. I-vi-IV-V-I

1. from the musical *Grease* "We Go Together"
2. Simon and Garfunkle, "Mrs. Robinson"
3. A Flock of Seagulls, "Space Age Love Song" (no V chord)
4. REO Speedwagon, "I Can't Fight This Feeling" (This progression serves as pedal points for I-V-IV-V in the right hand of the piano part)
5. Pat Benatar, "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" (I-IV-iv-V--a common variant)
6. Men at Work, "Down Under" (Chorus--the verse substitutes I with vi)
7. The Police, "Every Breath You Take" (includes deceptive cadences)

8b. I-V-vi-IV

1. Skid Row, "I Remember You"
2. Billy Joel, "We didn't Start the Fire"

9. Blues forms

- A. Simple Blues I-IV-I-V⁷-I
- B. Advanced Blues I-IV-I-V⁷/ii--ii⁷-V⁷-I

These progressions, as with number 6 above, are extremely common in the jazz idiom. There are many popular songs that use this (and variants) as the basic progression.

1. Led Zeppelin, "Rock and Roll"
2. Georgia Satelites, "Keep Your Hands to Yourself"

10. vi-V-IV

1. The Kinks, “Come Dancing” (Break)
2. Gin Blossoms, “Hey Jealousy” (IV-V-vi-V)
3. The Greg Kihn Band, “The Breakup Song”
4. Go-Go’s, “Vacation” (Bridge)

11. Pedal Point

1. Van Halen, “Jump”
2. Styx, “Blue Collar Man”
3. Ozzy Osbourne, “Crazy Train (Verse)”

Minor Progressions

Popular songs in minor keys tend to feature the subtonic or the lowered submediant chords.

1. Survivor, “Eye of the Tiger” (i-bVII-i || i-V-bVI)
2. Black Sabbath, “Paranoid” (i-bVII-III-bVII-i)
3. Soft Cell, “Tainted Love” (i-III-VI-iv)
4. A Flock of Seagulls, “I Ran” (i-bVII)
5. Stray Cats, “Stray Cat Strut” (i-bVII-bVI-V)
6. Billy Idol, “Rebel Yell” (vi-III⁶⁻⁴-IV)
7. Peter Schilling, “Major Tom” (i-IV-bVII) (Verse)
8. Bon Jovi, “Livin’ on a Prayer” (i-bVI-bVII-i) (Verse)
9. Bon Jovi, “Runaway” (i-bVII-bVI-V-bVII) (Chorus)

Sequential Progressions

These types of progressions are frequently two-leg harmonic sequences. Often the motion governing them is quintal.

1. Nirvana, “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (i-iv-III-bVI)
2. 38 Special, “Hold on Loosely” (I-V⁶-bVII-IV⁶)
3. Go-Go’s “Head Over Heels” (I-V-II-VI)--the VI chord is on the raised submediant!

Modulation

Some popular songs feature modulations using several of the modulatory techniques used by composers of concert music.

1. Direct Modulation

This is by far the most common type of modulation used in popular music. Typically the key will move upward, by either half-step or whole-step.

1. Adam Ant, “Goody Two Shoes”
2. Orchestral Maneuvres in the Dark, “If You Leave”
3. Madness, “Our House”
4. Billy Joel, “Scenes from an Italian Restaurant”
5. Def Leppard, “Photograph” (Chromatic Mediant)
6. Night Ranger, “When You Close Your Eyes” (Chromatic Mediant)
7. Duran Duran, “Hungry Like the Wolf” (See analysis above)

2. Common-chord (Pivot) Chord Modulations

1. Queen, “Bohemian Rhapsody”
2. Billy Joel, “Scenes from an Italian Restaurant”
3. Billy Joel, “Angry Young Man”
4. Avril Lavigne, “Sk8er Boi” (See analysis above)
5. The Corrs, “Breathless” (See analysis above)

On Using the Catalog

Instructors can incorporate these and similar tunes into their curricula in several ways. First, these songs can be used as in-class dictation examples. In order to facilitate this type of exercise, the instructor might provide the students with some basic information about the song, including (but not limited to, accept by design of the exercise) lyrics, form, key, etc. The instructor could also provide a series of questions that the student could answer in a few hearings, such as: “How many measures in each phrase?” or “Where do you hear the tonic chord?” Secondly, similar questions can be used as points of discussion, and, if one chooses the song wisely, debate can ensue (this

is true of a song like Depeche Mode's "See You" where one can argue for two chords being tonic--see the analysis above). Thirdly, these songs can be given for homework, as either transcription or analysis assignments. More detailed questions can be asked in this context; the student can use the keyboard (or guitar) to aid in the analysis.

As mentioned above, the chord progressions chosen for the catalog were selected because they are examples of progressions found in concert music. After the progression is recognizable in the popular music context, it should then be transferred to the concert music context using the standard methods (harmonic dictation et al). Exceptions to the rules studied in the concert music context should be carefully pointed out, or, if possible, eliminated.²⁹ These exceptions, however, can be good practice for the students, especially with regard to developing active processing skills. If the goal of an aural skills class is to teach a student to understand what they hear, then giving them some examples that fall just outside their concert music boundaries can help prepare them to do this. In addition, because progressions in popular music are rarely more than four or five chords, their usage fits nicely into the pedagogical approach outlined above. With care, popular music, and for that matter all non-concert musics, can be used to help teach even advanced concepts within this gestural framework.

²⁹ Elimination of these conflicts can be accomplished simply by choosing the pop song carefully, or by using only a part of the song.

Bibliography

- Ashley, Richard Douglass. *Toward a Theory of Instruction in Aural Skills*. D.M.A. Dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1982.
- Beament, James. *How We Hear Music: The Relationship Between Music and the Hearing Mechanism*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001.
- Brink, Emily Ruth. *A Cognitive Approach to the Teaching of Aural Skills Viewed as Applied Music Theory*. Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1980.
- Bruger, Madeline. *The Art of Practicing*. New York, Bell Tower, 1997.
- Buccheri, John. "Musicianship at Northwestern." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*. Vol. 4:2: Fall 1990. pp. 125-145.
- Chosky, Lois et al. *Teaching Music in the Twenty-first Century*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001.
- Cooper, B. Lee. *Images of American Society in Popular Music: A guide to Reflective Teaching*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982.
- Courington, Kate R. "An Alternative Approach to Aural Training." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*. Vol. 6, 1992. pp. 5-18.
- DeBellis, Mark. *Music and Conceptualization*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

- Duckworth, William. *A Creative Approach to Music Fundamentals*, 4th ed. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992.
- Durant, Alan. *Conditions of Music*. London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1984.
- Earhart, Will. *The Meaning and Teaching of Music*. New York: Witmark Educational Publications, 1935.
- Foulkes-Levy, Laurdella. *A Synthesis of Recent Theories of Tonal Melody, Contour, and the Diatonic Scale: Implications for Aural Perception and Cognition*. Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York, Buffalo, 1996.
- Foulkes-Levy, Laurdella. "Tonal Markers, Melodic Patterns, and Musicianship Training. I: Rhythm Reduction." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol. 11: 1997.
- Gelineau, R. Phyllis. *Experiences in Music*. New York, McGraw-Hill, Book Company, 1970.
- Gouldin, Robert and Wennerstrom, Mary. "Pedagogy." *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol.11:1: Spring 1989. pp.66-73.
- Hackett, Patricia and Lindeman, Carolyn. *The Musical Classroom: Backgrounds, Models, and Skills for Elementary Teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001.
- Kaiser, Ulrich. "One Can Only Hear What One Already Understands: Thoughts on the Theme of Music Theory and Aural Training." *MusikTheorie*, Vol. 14:4: 1999. pp. 325-340.
- Karpinsky, Gary S. "Lessons from the Past: Music Theory Pedagogy and the Future." *Music Theory Online*, vol. 6:3: Aug. 2000. URL: www.societymusictheory.org/mto/issues/mto.00.6.3.karpinsky_frames.html
- Kingsbury, Henry. *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.
- Kjinarskaja, Dina, and Winner, Ellen. "Musical Ability in a New Key: Exploring the Expressive Ear for Music." *Psychomusicology*, Vol. 16:1: Spring-Fall 1997. pp.2-16
- The Julliard School. *The Julliard Report on Teaching Literature and Materials of Music*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1953.
- Leach, Robert and Palmer, Roy eds. *Folk Music in School*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

- London, Justin M. "One Step Up: A Lesson from Pop Music." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol. 4:1: Spring 1990. pp. 111-114.
- Lorgan, Steve. "'Integrated Music Learning' and Improvisation: Teaching Musicianship and Theory Through 'Menus, Maps, and Models'." *College Music Symposium*, Vol. 35: 1995. pp.76-90.
- Marcozzi, Rudy. "The Use of Binary Logic and Processing to Enhance Learning and Instruction in the Undergraduate Theory Classroom." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol. 12: 1998.
- North, Adrian C. and Hargreaves, David J. "Subjective Complexity, Familiarity, and Liking for Popular Music." *Psychomusicology*, Vol. 14:1: Spring-Fall 1995.
- North, Adrian C. and Hargreaves, David J. eds. *The Social Psychology of Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Pembroke, Randall G. and Riggins, Herbert Lee. "Send Help!: Aural Skills Instruction in U.S. Colleges and Universities." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, vol. 4:2: Fall 1990. pp. 231-242.
- Potter, Gary. "Putting Skills to Work: An Aural Analysis Project." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol. 2:1: Spring 1988. pp. 69-84.
- Rogers, Michael R. *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Rossi, Nick. *Hearing Music: An Introduction*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1981.
- Rubinstein, Michael. *Music to My Ear: Reflections on Music and Digressions on Metaphysics*. London: Quartet Books, 1985.
- Seashore, Carl. E. *Psychology of Music*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1938.
- Storr, Anthony. *Music and the Mind*. New York: The Free Press, 1992.
- Swigher, Walter Samuel. *Psychology for the Music Teacher*. Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1927.
- Uno, Yayoi. "Modality-based Aural Skills Pedagogy: Ear Training Strategies for Post-Tonal and Non-Western Musics." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol.11: 1997. pp. 27-58.
- Ward-Steinman, David. "Comprehensive Musicianship at San Diego State University." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol. 1:2: Fall 1987. pp.127-148.

Wennerstrom, Mary H. "The Undergraduate Core Music Curriculum at Indiana University." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, Vol. 3:2: Fall, 1989. pp. 153-176.