Singing in the Music Theory Lesson: A model for how singing can be used as an effective teaching tool for a practical approach to the subject of music theory

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ABSTRACT

In a typical music theory programme, the act of singing is often confined to the single skill of sight-reading prima vista. My background as a school teacher has taught me that singing can be used in a variety of ways to help children to learn skills such as reading and aural skills and so my wish is to investigate ways in which singing can be used in a music theory lesson at a conservatoire level.

In the last few years at the Koninklijk Conservatorium (Royal Conservatoire of The Hague), the music theory department has been investigating ways in which skills can be transferred across disciplines. One change that has been made is that many music theory related subjects are now taught as a single subject. Teachers are now free to make connections where ever they are found. My own interest is on the use of singing as a tool to achieve these ends.

My own investigation, as show in this research paper, will show models of lessons that can be created where singing is used as a core part of the lesson. A range of skills can be developed and theoretical concepts understood when singing activities are sequenced well and taught carefully. The result will be a model for other teachers to use and adapt for their own teaching.

In addition, the result of the research has also produced a collection of vocal material for teachers to use in lesson in order to encourage singing with advise on how to use it within a lesson.

BIOGRAPHY

Ewan L. Gibson comes originally from Wales in the United Kingdom. His previous studies include Bachelor of Music (University of Exeter), Postgraduate Certificate of Education (Oxford Brookes University), and Master of Music (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). He has worked in the field of music education as a teacher in schools and conservatoires. As a qualified school teacher, Ewan has taught in a variety of schools in the U.K. and in international schools in The Netherlands. These have included everything from pre-school to 18 years old. In addition, he has worked for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The National Youth Choir of Scotland and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra as a musicianship teacher, choral conductor and singing teacher. He has also given many workshop shops to music teachers on the use of singing in schools and teaching music literacy skills to children.

FORWARD

My own music education involved a large amount of singing. From a young age I was involved in choirs and had singing lessons. Music lessons in school involved a great deal of singing too. I was taught to read music by singing it and music theory was a subject that involved a great deal of listening to and performing of pieces that were being analysed.

I was surprised to find that when I studied for my bachelor degree in music, there was a dramatic drop in the amount of listening and performing in the music theory class. As I learnt about more and more abstract concepts I found that I was becoming unable to imagine the sounds, my ability to sight-sing stopped improving at the same rate, and, even though I had a great knowledge of many concepts, I was unable to use that knowledge in anyway that could enhance my performance skills. In short, I felt that there was a large divide between what I considered to be music (a skill in performing, the ability to recognise musical features by listening, the ability to create in a practical way) and the knowledge that I had 'about' music (labelling features on a score, writing exercised according to a given 'rule', talking about the life and times of a composer).

My career took me into the world of school music education and I have now taught music to children from pre-school to 18 years old. As I grew as a teacher, I returned to the use of singing as a core part of every lesson. I have been lucky enough to have worked with and been inspired by many superb teachers and musicians who have shown that singing is highly effective as a tool for inspiring young musicians, helping them to discover music through performance. Not only that, the experience of singing helped students to hear any concepts connected with the music as it gave a direct link to an actual sound that the student made.

I would like to make reference here to the so-called 'Kodály philosophy'. Throughout my teaching career, this has been a guide for how and why singing can be used as a central part of music education. Zoltán Kodály (Hungarian composer, philosopher, ethnomusicologist, pedagogue, 1882-1967) is often quoted as saying that 'if one were to attempt to express the essence of this education in one word, it could only be – singing' (Kodály, 1974, p.206). Singing has indeed helped many children to read and write music, to be able to perform great works of music, to develop skills and understanding of music. The active participation of the student in making music with their own sound and subsequently the direct connection to the sound has, with guidance from a teacher, helped students to reach high levels of understanding and control of the music. My exploration of the Kodály philosophy has taken me back and forth over the years to Hungary and other places around the world to see examples of the types of lessons where singing is successfully used. I have then tried to reproduce or adapt these examples into my own teaching. In successful examples I have seen: how lessons have been full of singing (that is that the majority of the lesson time may be spent actively singing); students who are able to understand and use concepts of music theory (I have seen classes of 7 and 8 year olds improvising in the dorian mode and then transform it into another mode); children perform complex music in many parts from all periods of music history and have risen to the challenge to do so; students have been able to write down with ease their own musical thoughts, be that in dictation or composition; and, most importantly to me, there is joy in the class, created in the lesson through play, discovery, development of skills, and the shear delight of making music. In talking about the alternative, that is, music being taught by

the learning of so-called rudiments, Kodály is quoted as saying: 'teach music and singing at school in such a way that it is not a torture but a joy for the pupil' (Kodály, 1974, p.120). Singing, in the Kodály philosophy, is supported by the use of teaching tools such as movable *do* solfège[1], hand-signs to show these solfège names, rhythmic solfège names.

This then is the background for the inspiration in my teaching and the starting point for this research. Singing is one way, which, in my experience, is a very effective tool for teaching music and, in particular, music theory. I have enjoyed creating lessons and collecting appropriate repertoire so that I can teach in this way and this is something that continues to be a stimulating challenge as my career takes new directions.

[1] Names are assigned to a pitch's function within a given tone-set. The names *do re mi fa so la ti* are used most often in relation to the major scale and altered names are used for chromatic inflections. This is opposed to the 'fixed *do*' system whereby *do* is related to a fixed pitch (C in letter names) and is always so irrespective of the tone's function within a piece.

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THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS PAPER

The title of this paper is:

> Singing in the Music Theory Lesson: A model for how singing can be used as an effective teaching tool for a practical approach to the subject of music theory.

In light of the changes in the curriculum at the Royal Conservatoire, there are now opportunities for teachers to explore new ways of combining teaching approaches with the demands for knowledge and skill development of the student. My own personal interest and background in singing has lead me to question how singing can be used in these music theory lessons. This in turn has led me to formulate the following question:

> *What model can be created to show how singing can be used as a primary tool for the teaching of music theory?*

This is therefore an attempt to create a model for a singing-based approach to the teaching of music theory based on several years of experimenting in the classroom. Based upon previous experience, I hypothesise that by singing regularly in lessons and by using carefully selected repertoire and related practical activities, it is indeed possible for students to learn a large range of theoretical concepts (for example, knowledge of harmonica functions) and to develop a range of musical skills (for example, dictation and improvisation). This approach to teaching and learning should, in my opinion, help students to form connections between skills, knowledge and the different subject domains of music theory and should, in turn, enhance a student's performance abilities.

The result of this investigation is a pair of model lessons which show a range of skills and knowledge being taught in a music theory lesson. It is my hope that these models will be an example for other teachers and students in this institution and beyond so that they may have tools that they can adapt to their own situation should they so desire. In addition, a set of material will be produced that will facilitate singing in the lesson: this will be made available in the appendix to the model lessons.

In the process of creating these models the investigation will need to focus on the practical – or 'praxial' – approach to teaching. My goal is to provide a practical solution for teaching situation and so the investigation is equally practical. My activities have focused on teaching a range of classes over a period of several years. These include, undergraduate 'aural skills and analysis' classes (weekly classes, once or twice per week); teaching musicianship skills to students in the teacher training department and the Young Talent department; individual workshops with prospective students to the conservatoire; workshops with the National Youth Choir of The Netherlands; observations of other teaches who show examples of practice in this area; attending seminars and workshops related to this practice; presenting initial findings at international symposia; and discussion with many students on their experiences.

CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1780s, the English born musician Thomas Attwood took lessons in composition with Mozart. These lessons are known to us today because the manuscripts with Mozart's exercises and Attwood's attempts still exist[2]. These exercises comprise of counterpoint and harmony exercises to which Attwood writes an answer. Mozart annotates the score with helpful advice – 'tis always better if possible to have all of the parts full', 'tis always better to finish with the octave uppermost' – this advice is sometimes more direct in pointing out the errors and is a little less helpful from a pedagogical point of view – 'there are many faults in this example'. There is however one comment that intrigues me more than any other. Without any further explanation Mozart writes: 'this does not sing well'. Here Mozart uses the word 'sing' to convey something that he assumes Attwood will understand; there is a sense that singing is a natural part of a musician's understanding of music and integral to a musician's training. Even when writing exercises on paper the essence of the music is somehow expressed through singing.

Many composers have referred to singing as something that is integral to the experience of music. Schumann, in his *Advice to Young Musicians* (reprint 2010, p.14), suggests that students should 'sing regularly in a choir, especially the inner parts. This will help to make you a real musician', and to 'make efforts, even if your voice is not a good one, to sing at sight without the help of the instrument; in this way the sharpness of your hearing will continually improve'. The Hungarian composer and pedagogue, Zoltán Kodály (1974, p.145) wrote that 'singing, untrammelled by an instrument, is the real and profound schooling of musical abilities', and that 'singing is the core of music-making even when playing on an instrument.' Yet another composer and pedagogue, Carl Orff (2004, p.96), advises that when teaching 'melody should, when possible, also be sung' and he believed that when making music 'movement, singing and playing become a unity'.

The role of singing in the development of the musician is well known in the thinking of musicians and music teachers. Sloboda (2005, p.45-65) makes the point that vocal music has formed the core of the earliest notational practice and that the training of the musician's knowledge of notation and music theory has been based in this very practice. But what role does it have within current practice?

As a music theory teacher at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, I have experienced a change in approach to music theory teaching. Only a few years ago there was a tendency, as in many higher music education institutions, to have separate, specialised subjects. Lessons were taught with the following titles as examples: ear training, solfège, analysis, harmony, counterpoint, history, keyboard harmony, and others depending on the curriculum requirements for any particular year. These separate subjects offered some kind of specialist focus on an aspect of music theory but the underlying problem was that students (and sometimes teachers) would find difficulty in making links between these subjects. In isolation

[2] Available for download at http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nma_toc.php?vsep=223&l=2

the relevance of each subject may not be clear and students had difficulty in transferring skills from one to the other. In some cases, a weakness in one area might hinder progress in another: for example, lack of ability in ear training might mean that a student will have difficulty in actually hearing music that is studied from the score in an analysis class. Edwin Gordon (2004, p.34) describes this problem when he writes that 'unfortunately, music theory is taught to students who do not audiate.'[3] Students themselves would often comment too – 'the lessons do not seem to relate to each other', 'sometimes there is conflicting information from different teachers', 'I do not see how the lessons can be used in my performance practice', 'I would like time to practice certain skills in one subject [this student refers specifically to ear training] before starting other subjects so that I can use that skill more effectively[4].

Rogers (2004, p.xiii) points out that 'ear-training and sight-singing has been claimed (or assigned) as a sub-discipline of music theory, and thus of music pedagogy for at least the last thirty years'. His reference to 'pedagogy' is interesting in that it suggests that the actual teaching skills needed in this one particular skill can often be treated separately, meaning that the teaching approach to separated subjects can become different in themselves. Crouch (2010, p.80) builds upon this statement in her research on training literate musicians by writing that 'In American academic music training, music theorists typically oversee the sight-singing, ear-training, and musicianship courses. The connection between the three is not self-evident, however. The question of what music theorists do reveals a potentially uncomfortable fit between music theory and literacy.' This is confirmed by my own experience of students entering a class room and asking if it is an aural skills class or a solfège class. On asking what the difference is the response is that aural skills is listening and writing (dictation) and that solfège is reading and singing (sight reading). Students were given a simple exercise whereby a two-part piece was given on separate pieces of paper so that half the group could only see one voice while the other half could only see the other voice. They had to sing their part at the same time as listening to the other and then write it down. This activity involved singing, listening, reading and writing and the students immediately recognised the increased level of skill development and how the two separate subjects could easily be one.

Singing as a skill in its own right is often confined to this single subject of sight-reading. An overview of the literature that is available for the use in lessons shows something of the role that singing seems to have in the training of musicians. Some examples of the type of material on offer are:

> Books that are made up of a large number of composed short exercises. These books might sequence material in terms of perceived difficulty in reading intervals or sequences. Berkowitz, et al., *A New Approach to Sight-Singing*(1997), Edlund, *Modus Vetus* (1994)

[3] Audiation is a concept which was developed by Edwin Gordon. It is described briefly as an understanding of music as opposed to imitation; the ability to assimilate and generalize the structures of music upon hearing. See *Untying Gordian Knots* (2011) for more explination.

[4] Taken from satisfaction questionaires relating to feedback from students on the theory curriculum.

Books that are again large collections of short exercises but are extracts from melodies written by known composers. Ottman, *Music for Sight-Singing* (2007), Lieberman, *Ear training and Sight Singing* (1959)

These books do nothing more than collect material into a large body of exercises. The material is often out of context of the larger whole of the music (harmonic support might be missing or the larger form disrupted) whether composed for the book or taken from traditional works. As Kathy Thompson (2004, p.82) points out that most aural skills textbooks compile exercises but leave the conceptual framework up to the individual teacher. However, some books do. Jordan, *Ear Training Immersion for Choirs* (2004) is an example of a book that encourages its users to think about the pedagogical approach. It makes reference to Edwin Gordon's theories of music learning and explains exactly how students should move from one exercise to the next. A concept is at the centre of each chapter and a variety of composed exercises and art music is offered to illustrate the point. He also recommends the use of solfège syllables[5]. In contrast to these types of books are the books by László Dobszay (*The World of Tones*, 2011) in which repertoire, analysis and understanding musical style are at the core of the books, however, singing is encouraged throughout. Exercises are created in such a way that students are able to sing melodies or harmonies or to improvise around a concept.

The contrast to this is that in other subjects (analysis, harmony, counterpoint, etc.) there can be an assumption that either the student is already applying the skills learnt from aural training/solfège and so does not need to be covered. Worse still would be the assumption that these skills are not needed for studying a score on paper.

What could the alternative be? As mentioned above, there has been a change to the curriculum at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. In light of the issues previously discussed, a decision was made to integrate some of the separate subjects into one subject, now called "aural skills and analysis'. With this opportunity presented, teachers in the theory department began to explore ways in which the subject of music theory could somehow be made more 'relevant'. In Crouch's dissertation (2010, p.15), she makes the statement that 'regardless of the instrument, there should be no schism in students' minds between learning to perform music well on their primary instrument and learning to be good musicians.' This may be a lofty goal but she goes on to write that 'both performing music and theorizing about music are enabled by the gradual and deep internalization of all the nuances of musical language.' I understand this to mean that performing and theorizing are linked by the 'internalization of all the nuances.'

In his article on teaching aural recognition, Dr. Brad Hansen (2005, p.2) gives some insight into the nature of teaching music as an integrated subject. He takes the point of view that a constructivist theory of learning (as developed by Dewey, Piaget and Vigotsky, according to Hansen (p.3) that 'there is no knowledge independent of the meaning attributed to experience, constructed by the learner.' Learning is therefore not only coming from experience but it is the students themselves who make connections between experiences that is the learning. 'Learning is contextual', writes Hansen (p.4), 'we do not learn isolated

[5] For example *do re mi...* but other systems, such as the use of numbers, are suggested too.

facts and theories in some abstract mind space separate from our lives: we learn in relation to what we know and believe.'

David Elliott (1995, p.57) develops the theory of praxial learning in relation to music. He writes that 'to look at or to listen to music and to focus exclusively on its structural or aesthetic qualities, in abstraction from its context of social use and production, is contrary to what music making is about. In the praxial philosophy, music making is central.' Hansen returns to this idea, writing that 'if we accept the constructivist position we must follow a pedagogy that provides learners with the opportunity to interact with sounds and construct their own relationships.'

What then should a music theory lesson look like? Hansen continues with 'physical[6] actions may be necessary for learning, but are not sufficient; we need to provide activities which engage the mind as well as the body.' Could singing be part of this physical, or praxial, experience of the student so the mind and the body are both engaged? In terms of the skills that are being developed, George Pratt (1998, p.107-108) makes a distinction between the skill of reading by using an instrument and by singing: 'one is to see [music's] symbols and react mentally and physically to them straight on an instrument. The other is to convert the symbols into *imagined* sound inside your head.' Gordon (2004, p.13) claims that

> 'it is through singing that we develop a sense of tonality (context) and relate tonal patterns (content) to a variety of tonalities in terms of audiation. The more we audiate, the better we learn to sing, and the more we sing, the better we learn to audiate. Emphasis on the oral (singing) without the aural (audiation) is commonplace in the music education of students who are expected to perform in school programs. Worse, however, is emphasis on the aural without the oral, and that usually takes place in classes where students do an inordinate amount of listening to records and are taught about music rather than music itself.'

He makes it clear in this statement that singing is central to a musician's ability to form an understanding of what is heard or performed. He even claims that the listening without the singing is worse than singing without listening.

In connection with the music education philosophy of Zoltán Kodály, the term 'sound to symbol' is often used. This refers to the principle that a sound should be experienced first before a symbol is associated with it. Crouch (2010) writes about the connection between language learning and music and she laments that many language books teach reading and writing before one is even taught how to correctly pronounce the words. However, the Kodály scholars Houlahan and Tacka, in their book called '*From Sound to Symbol*' (2009, p.xv) formulate an approach in their teaching that would 'build their [the students'] knowledge of music theory as a result of using their kinaesthetic, aural, and visual awareness abilities to develop their perception of sound.' This approach links nicely with Elliott's praxial and also with Howard Gardner, who, in his book *Multiple Intelligences* (2006), makes the case that a multiple approach of learning styles should be taken into account in a teaching situation.

[6] In this context physical is meant in a broad sense, or simply as 'doing'.

Houlahan and Tacka (2008, p.79) also claim that 'singing in combination with movement helps reinforce the concept of beat and, if song material is well known, can help vocal intonation.' This supports Gordon's statement that singing goes hand in hand with learning concepts whereby one will improve the other in a continuous cycle thus developing the skill of the musician at the same time as deepening knowledge of concepts.

Michael Rogers (2004) discusses the two approaches of integration and separation of the various domains within the subject of music theory. For him, an integrated approach mixes ear training and analysis within a single unified course[7]. He argues that rather than an either/or approach to the argument for integration or separation of domains, one can 'redefine "integrated theory" as a teaching method or technique rather than as a way of organizing or scheduling classes. Real integrated theory involves involves using […] analysis to develop a set of principles that can explain […] how a competent listener makes sense out of a piece of music' (p.17). In line with Gordon's views on the role that knowledge and skills support each other, Rogers writes that in this 'kind of cyclical process both the thinking and listening aspects of ear training and analysis can nourish one another: the more that music is studied, the more there is to hear; the more that is heard, the more there is to learn.'

Rogers (2004), challenges to look at our own teaching method if one is to achieve an integrated approach to music theory. This paper will present a model for my own ideas and solution to this challenge.

[7] He also includes composition here. At the Royal Conservatoire this is treated as a separate discipline under a diferent department. However, a simple act of inprovising a melody can be included as part of the music theory lesson.

MODEL LESSONS

The objective of this paper is to show the connection of musical skills and musical knowledge through the practical activity of singing. In the following pages, I present two models to show this in action.

The nature of a model needs to be questioned at this point. What is its purpose and what can it show? I have chosen to present two models for the following reasons:

Firstly, practical solutions will need to be given which will inspire students and teachers to feel that they can attempt something and achieve success. This will need to involve a range of activities which encourage singing[8], involve all students at all levels, and give a variety of approaches to musical learning tasks. In other words, how can one tackle the problem now and how can one make small changes in any lesson. The first model is intended to do just this. With a central piece (Mozart *symphony in A* K.134), a variety of activities are offered to give a range of starting point for students and a range of activities to develop musical skills (ear training, improvising, sight reading, harmonic hearing, dictation) along with knowledge of the piece (aspects of Classical form, rules of harmonic patterns, writing techniques). The result is a body of material that can be used over a series of lessons.

Secondly, it is my experience that a model can be very effective when the 'best' is shown, as opposed to immediate solutions. I have chosen to present a single lesson with the National Youth Choir of The Netherlands for the purpose of showing what can be possible with a group that sings well from the start. This single lesson shows what can be done in one well planned lesson and shows how singing is used as an effective tool. It is hoped that this will inspire other to preserver with encouraging the use of singing when it is clear what can be achieved. The piece is the *Agnus Dei* from 'missa el ojo' by Peñalosa.

[8] See appendix 1 for more on this.

Model 1: Mozart, Symphony in A, K.134

A problem that I encountered in the process of my research is one regarding the type of repertoire that is appropriate for a curriculum based on singing. Not everything is easily singable and the majority of repertoire that could be encountered in a music theory lesson tends to be instrumental[9]. It is therefore my intention in this model to explore the vocal possibilities of working with a large orchestral work.

My choice for this model is the first movement of Mozart's symphony in A, K.134. Because this is a symphonic work from the Classical period, it does not lend itself to singing very easily. My goal for this paper is, therefore, to design an approach that could help the student to listen to the piece actively. By actively, I mean that when the student listens to the piece the student is able to recognise features and is able to comment upon those features in a constructive way. The student should be able to analyse the piece aurally and from the score. What follows is a selection of activities and carefully chosen repertoire that should help the student to do so.

A work like this could offer a range of possibilities for discovery and each teacher will choose as appropriate for each class based upon the skill, interest and background of the student and even upon the interest of the teacher. This model, therefore, is not intended as a single lesson, nor even as a sequential series of lessons. Instead I wish to show possible entry points for the discovery of a range of features as found in this movement. For example, a class might only be working on tonic, subdominant and dominant harmony, or they might be working on period form phrases. These activities will tackle a range of these concepts as found in the work.

To assist the reader, I offer this brief analysis of the first movement of K.134. A score[10] with annotations is made available in appendix 2. This analysis of the movement shows that it is possible to divide the movement into section which utilise certain features, which, when known, can help the student to focus attention. In particular, the second theme presents some interesting features. The harmonic outline gives a strong sense of the shape of the melody and its return in the 'expected' position of a primary theme in the recapitulation give the movement an unusual shape. The Romanesca sequence is a pattern that can be learnt in order to understand how sections of this movement are connected together and, again, helps with an understanding of the form. When the same melodic motive from the Romanesca sequence returns in a new harmonic sequence (falling fifths) attention can be brought to this to understand how the development uses material from before but can change it.

[9] Even vocal repertoire will usually have an accompaniment. I find, when working with singers, that I need to draw attention to the harmonic support of the accompaniment.
[10] IMSLP.org

	Bar number	
Exposition	1-8	**Primary theme** in A major. Satz form. Repeated in bars 9-16.
	17-26	**Transition**. Romanesca harmonic sequence.
	27-50	**Secondary theme** in E major. There are two parts to this theme: bars 27-34 and bars 35-42 (this second part is repeated in bars 43-50). The first part of the theme is accompanied by tonic and dominant harmony (labelled T & D respectively in the score), while the second part uses a subdominant harmony (labelled SD) in addition.
	51-68	**Codetta** using fragments from the primary theme.
Development	69-95	Motives are taken from the primary theme. The falling fifth sequence comes in bars 82 to 88 and is build using the motivic material from the Romanesca sequence.
Recapitulation	96-111	Unusually, this begins with the **second theme**. A major. There is now repetition of the second part of this theme.
	112-121	**Transition**. Romanesca harmonic sequence.
	122-137	The **second theme** returns here however its form has changed. The first part of the theme is missing altogether. Instead the second part of the theme is heard in a minor form (bars 122-129) followed by a repetition in the original major form (bars 130-137)
	138-155	**Codetta** using fragments from the primary theme.
	156-end	Coda

When teaching a piece of music, one will need to make decisions about what is to be taught. This may be up to the decisions of individual teachers. Based upon the analysis given above, I hereby present my own choice of musical features that are to be taught. The following is an outline of these features:

1) Recognising (aurally and by reading) tonic, subdominant and dominant harmonic patterns. (second theme)

2) Romanesca harmonic sequences (transition between first and second theme)

3) Falling fifth harmonic sequences (development)

4) Classical phrase structure (period form in the second theme)

5) Modal transformations (major to minor - recapitulation)

In turn, each concept will be prepared and practiced in a variety of ways. Firstly, a selection of repertoire will be presented. This repertoire will include the concept that is to be studied. Students should gain an aural experience of the concept firstly by singing repertoire without analysing. In my practice I have varied this approach by teaching some pieces aurally and some have been used as sight reading exercises.

Alongside each piece is a comment for how the piece can be used to enhance additional skills. Even though the theoretical concept is the starting point for the organisation of this sequence of material, it is important to acknowledge that there are a range of musical skills which are being developed in tandem with the knowledge. Every piece offers itself as an opportunity to develop sight-reading skills and/or memory skills (students could be required to memorise passages or to learn the piece aurally). If a piece is learnt aurally this also gives opportunities for the students to create their own internal picture of the sound and then to write the piece down (i.e. dictation). Students will practice composition, improvisation, modal transformations, dictation, two-part hearing, singing and playing a two-part piece at a piano, transposition, melodic decoration. All of this is in addition to the skills of reading and the knowledge of analysing a piece of music from the score.

Some of these sections then include a worksheet for the students to use in a lesson. The activities and repertoire choice are based on several years of teaching experience.

The outline of the following model is as follows:

Introductory comments on the choice of repertoire

Theoretical concepts studied in preparation for an aural understanding of Mozart K.134

Listening to a larger work: Mozart – Symphony in A (#23) K134 1st movement

Final comments on the model

- Introductory comments on the choice of repertoire

Canons

I have found in my practice that canons are a great way for students to practise many skills. Rather than singing dry exercises for sight-reading practice, it is much more interesting to sing 'real' music. By singing in canon the students can focus more on in-tune singing and ensemble singing. The simplicity of a canon can help students to focus easily on the harmonic content. This is achieved because that student will sing every voice in turn rather than just one.
There are many canons by most of the well know classical composers that give a good introduction to their style – phrasing, harmony, melodic shape.
Students can conduct canons and make decisions on when the cadence comes.[11]

Choral music

Singing is at the core of our theory curriculum in The Hague. Choral music serves as a good bridge between the simplicity of canons and larger instrumental pieces. Choral pieces are, of course, designed to be sung and so let the student develop their singing skills. Again, this introduces students to a composer's style and to the large body of repertoire that exists.

Instrumental works

Despite having a curriculum based on singing, it is important that students also study larger, more complex works. However, by singing at the initial stages and through careful sequencing of your material it is possible to prepare the student to listen to something that they might not be able to sing in its entirety.

- Theoretical concepts studied in preparation for an aural understanding of Mozart K.134

1) I IV V Harmonic Patterns

Canons:

The canons here are all by the composer Ravenscroft. They are chosen for their clear examples of tonic, subdominant and dominant harmony. Three examples are used so that students can experience these harmonies in a variety of combinations.

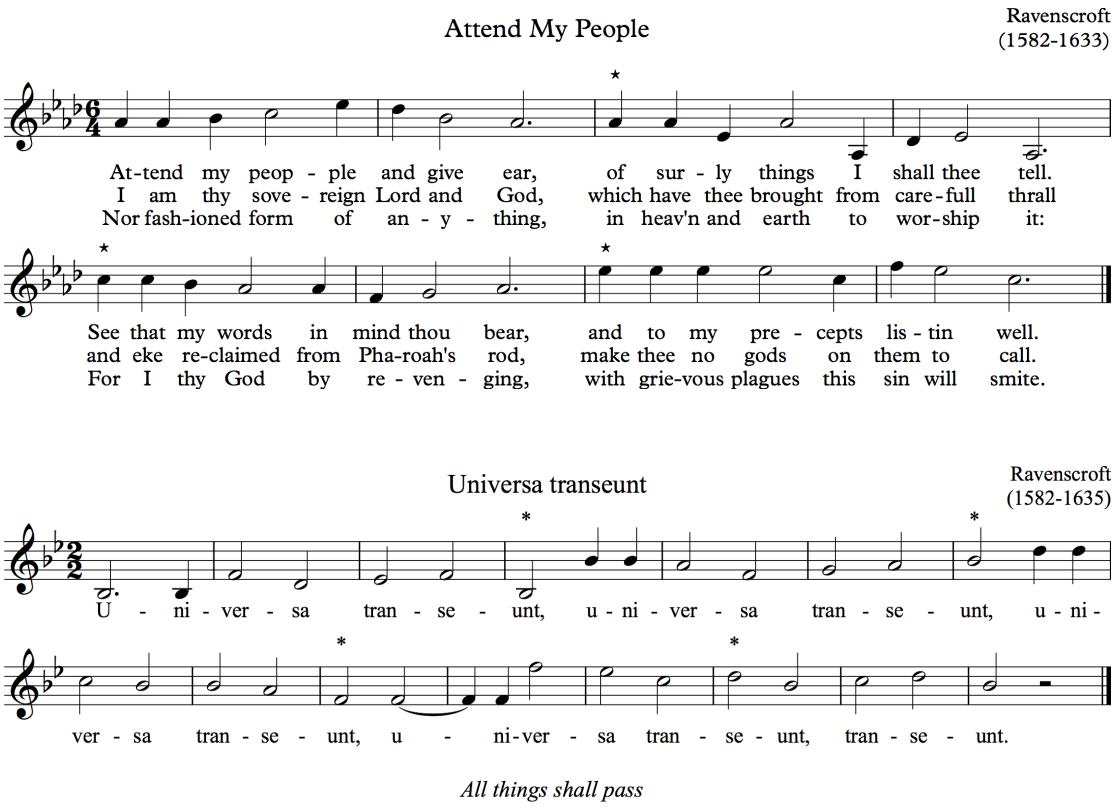
Attend My People: I V I IV V I
Universa transeunt: I V I^6 IV V I

[11] Further discussion on the use of canons can be found in appendix 1

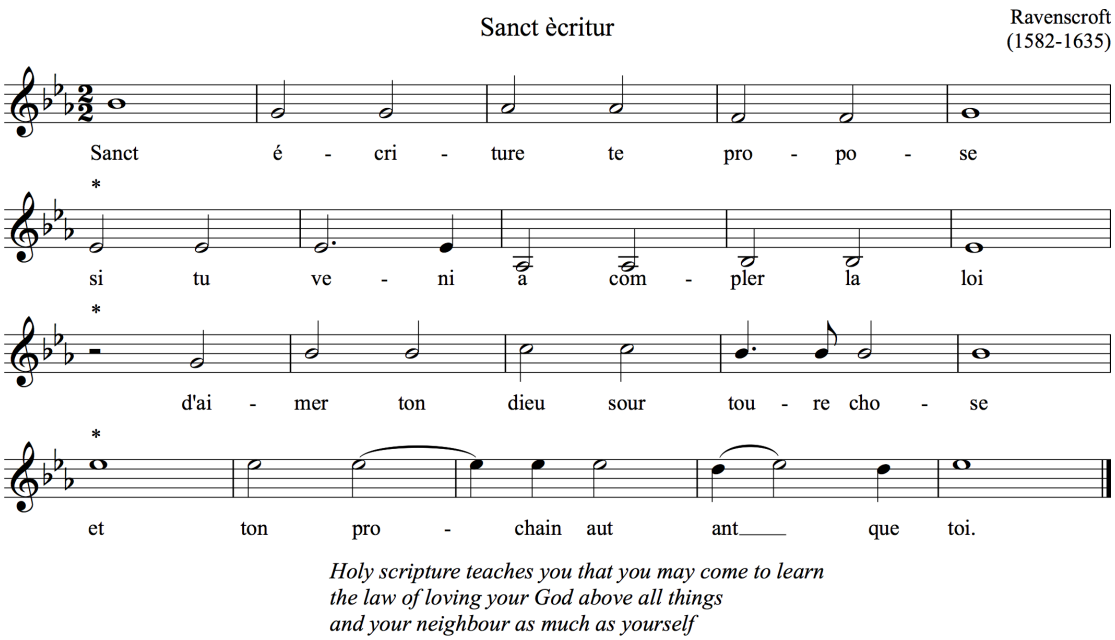
Sanct ècritur: I IV V^{3-4-3} I

In teaching these canons, I mainly use them for sight-reading practice. However, it is also possible, and encouraged, to vary the approach.

The melodies can be used for dictation exercises.
A harmonic progression can by played as a dictation or to be sung in preparation for singing the canon. This type of 'framed' dictation can help the students to focus on one or more aspects of the piece at a time rather than everything at once (another example of a framed dictation could be that the rhythm is given first)
Regular practice of memorisation of small pieces can aid the memorisation of larger pieces.
Practical work can be done such as a sing-and-play. Students will sing while they play in canon with themselves on a piano. This will reinforce the two-part harmonic hearing along with tackling any rhythmic difficulties.
Canons can also be taught by rote simply for the joy of learning a song aurally. For an extra level of difficulty, the students could sing one phrase behind the leader at the same time as listening to and memorising the next phrase ('follow the leader') thus working again on two-part thinking.



All things shall pass



Holy scripture teaches you that you may come to learn
the law of loving your God above all things
and your neighbour as much as yourself

Choral pieces:

Scheidt – *Bergamasca*

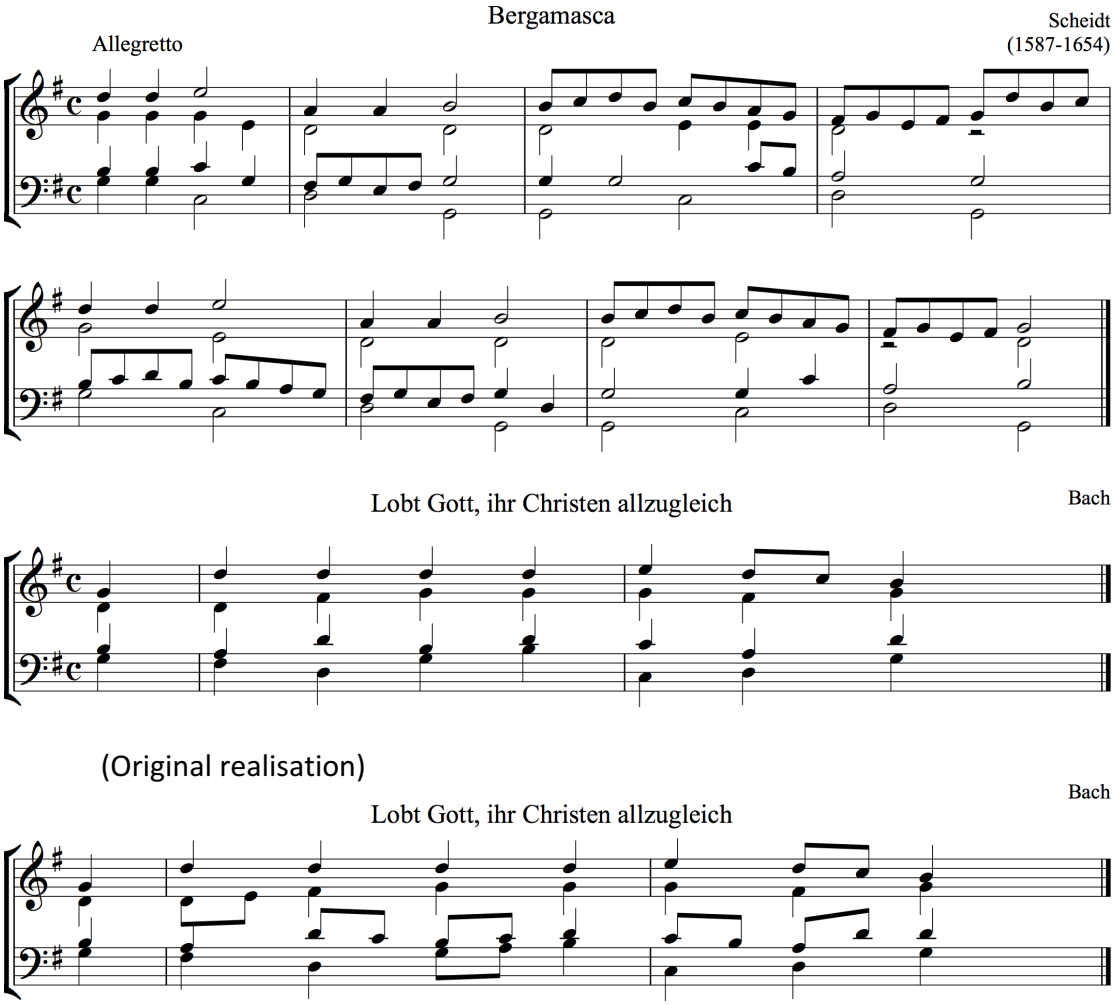
This renaissance dance form is a good piece for hearing I IV and V, being repeated over and over in the same familiar sequence. After many repetitions, individual students will be able to improvise their own melody lines over the accompaniment of the rest of the group singing the piece as written.

Bach – *Lobt Gott, Ihr Christen allzugleich*

Seeing a concept in a new piece will reinforce the understanding and students should be given as many opportunities as possible to see new repertoire by outstanding composers.
In this example students can analyse the harmony for themselves. As an improvisation activity I ask students to decorate the melody by making links between notes (passing notes etc.). Analysis of the *Bergamasca* is necessary before this can be done. Students can go back and 'improve' their own canons after this activity.

Josquin – *Ave vera virginitas*

Another example of I IV V in the first half of this piece. Before students see the music, I give the melody as a dictation. I sing the melody and the students follow one bar behind me in canon a fifth lower (the tenor). Once students have memorised both melodies, they should sing one part and play the other on the piano and should sing while hand-signing a bass line that they have created, do I give them the score. This way the students are very focused on all parts of the piece while they sing it as a chorale.

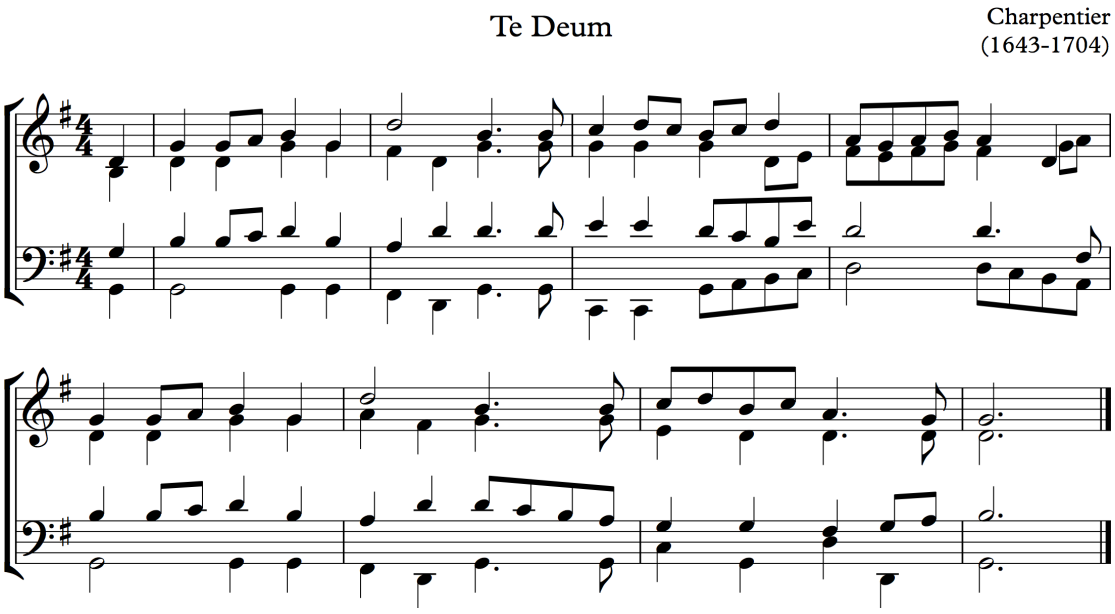


(Original realisation)

Instrumental pieces:

Charpentier – *Te deum*

A well-known piece is useful as a 'way in' for students. The greater pitch range makes it more difficult to sing this piece, however, I would ask students to sing the melody while playing the bass line on the piano. They could also sing an alternative bass line in which there are no inversions. A discussion could follow about how it might change the piece. This melody also employs the period form, which will return in later exercises and the Mozart symphony. In preparation for working with period form I would ask students to improvise a new consequent phrase. The rest of the class could support an individual by singing the bass line or another reduced harmonic progression.



Supplementary exercise: compose your own canon.

When analysing the canons students can ‘collect’ the notes that come together.

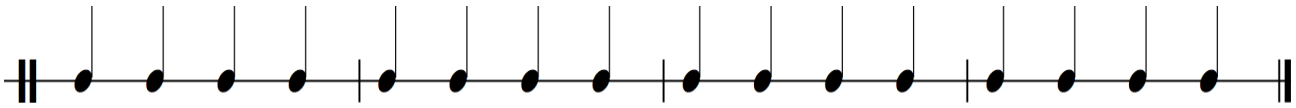
They will end up with something like the chord table given. The spacing of the notes in this table is important to help the student to see and hear the relationships between the sounds.

Students may now try to sing their own melodies by finding paths through the chord chart. The spacing of the sound in the chart will encourage them to think melodically and to recognise the importance of voice leading. Harmonies are after all the result of combined melodies. The teacher could point to each chord in turn to create harmonic patterns, which represent common patterns from the pieces studied. Students could lead the activity to discover new patterns (What does V IV I really sound like? How does it compare with what we have studied so far?)

After hearing and analysing the sound of tonic, sub dominant and dominant harmonies (in this case I IV V) student may try to compose something, which will use these sounds. Using the given rhythm pick on note from the given harmony to make your melody. Try to use a different note or pattern for each repetition of the harmonic sequence. The result is a canon! Of course, this does not guarantee a successful piece of music. At every opportunity, students should sing their examples solo and in canon with others. Students should make artistic decisions on what to change.

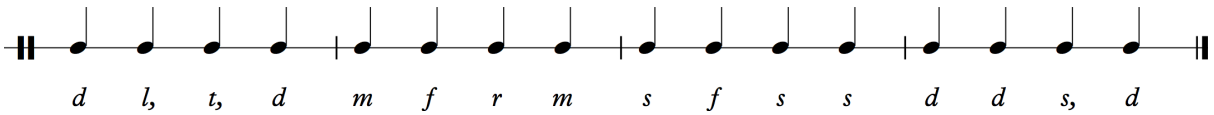
Worksheet for ‘Compose your own canon’

	l	
s		***s***
	f	*(f)*
m		
		r
d	*d*	
		t,
	l,	
s,		***s,***
	f,	
I	**IV**	**V(7)**



I IV V I I IV V I I IV V I I IV V I

Example solution:



d l, t, d m f r m s f s s d d s, d

2) Romanesca Harmonic Pattern

This particular pattern appears in the transition of the Mozart symphony K.134 as well as being a common pattern in much music of the early Viennese Classical style (with origins at least as far back as the Renaissance), which is the period in which this symphony sits. By learning harmonic patterns rather than naming individual chords without connections, students will develop a 'vocabulary' of sounds that they will be able to internalise. This pattern can be combined with knowledge of I IV V I to begin to fit patterns together into longer sequences (for example, a Romanesca followed by a IV V I cadence as in the canon *Ding Dong Bell*)

Canons:

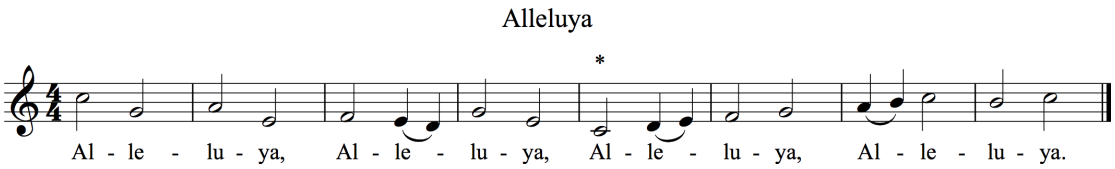
This selection of canons gives opportunities to challenge both beginners and more advanced readers. Or as students develop they can return to the same concepts at a later stage. Repetition is one of the keys to success.

After singing many examples of canons, choral pieces, and listening to other pieces, students should now study how this sequence works and how the harmonies are made up. Once again, voice leading is important and so a reduction is given of a sequence as it appears in the Mozart symphony. Students can sing this sequence easily and will recognise it when it appears later.

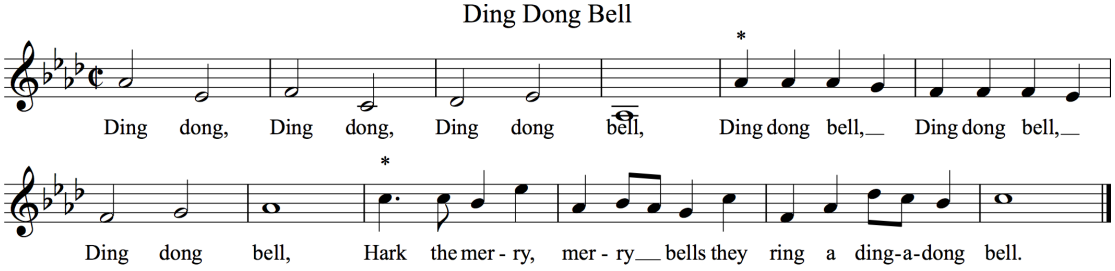
When canons are found that have the same harmonic progression with the same harmonic rhythm, it is possible to sing them as a quodlibet (or partner-song – that is both two or more different songs at the same time). *I cannot sing this round* and *Fie, Nay, Prithee, John* can be sung in this way (assuming transposition to the same key, of course.) This gives an opportunity for differentiation in a group whereby students of different reading or singing ability can be allocated different songs with different difficulty. This would then give every student the same opportunity to take part in the music making. This also increases the possible options for the number of parts and it may be possible that every student in the group with have his or her own part.

As there is no actual bass line to follow, students can improvise an appropriate line. This could just be the fundamental bass or could use inversions. I would ask a student to sing and play this on the piano while the others sing and use hand-signs to show the shape of the bass.

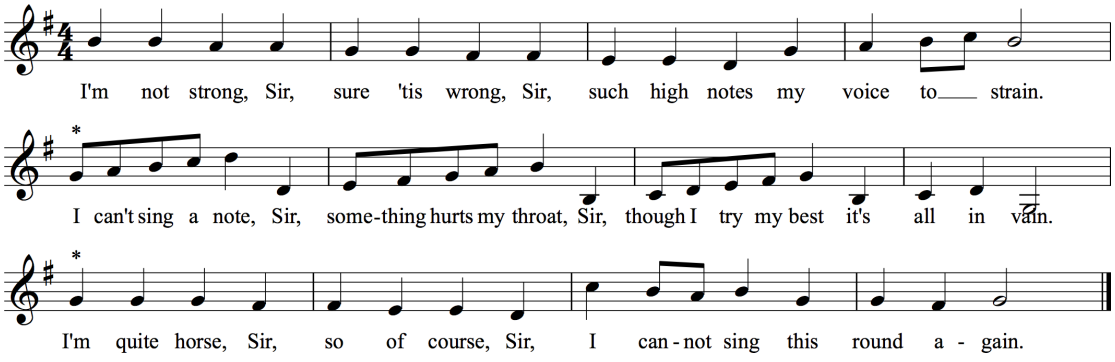
Canons:



Ding Dong Bell

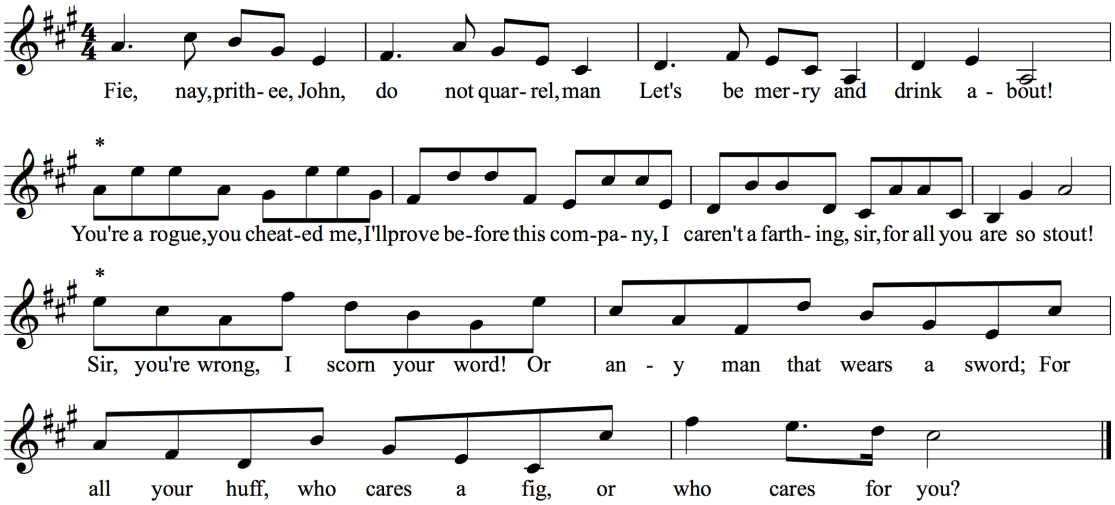


I Cannot Sing This Round



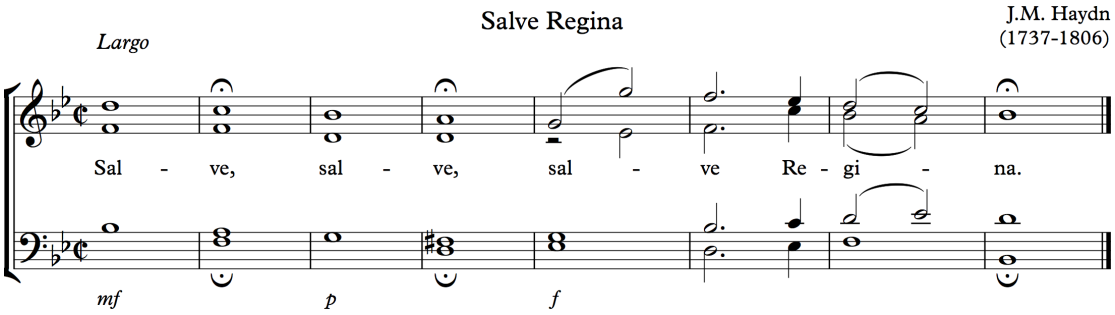
Fie, Nay, Prithee, John

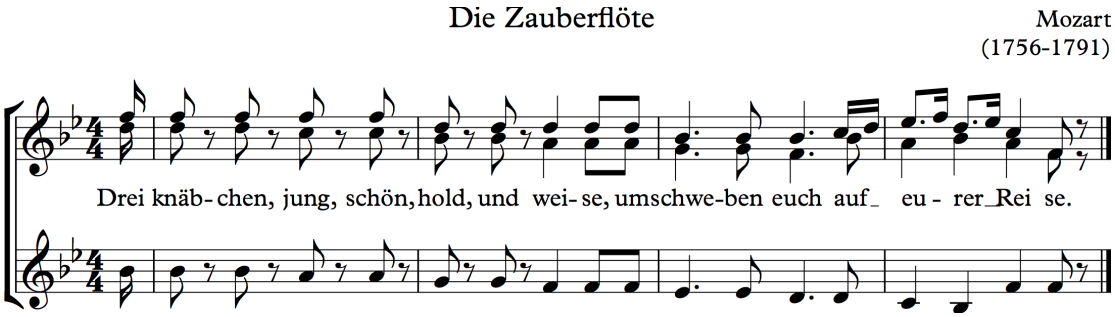
Purcell
(1659-1695)



Choral Works:

A ‘new’ harmony is experienced here in the fourth harmony (secondary dominant to the relative minor). Students can easily sing this version and without the F♯ to experience the difference in colour.





Supplementary Exercise 1: Singing Harmonic Patterns and Analysing the Harmonies

This gives an opportunity for students to work with harmonic reductions. I ask the students to sing in three parts (or four if the fundamental bass is added) and to analysis the harmony (already written out in this given example). Being written out in solfa notation gives the students the possibility to easily transpose to other keys should they play this on the piano. The modulation at the end of this sequence gives a variation to the expected ending as experiences in the previous canons (for example, *Ding Dong Bell*, which follows the Romanesca pattern with a IV V I cadence)

s	*s*	*m*	*m*	*d*	*d*	*d*	*t,*
m	*r*	*d*	*t,*	*l,*	*s,*	*fi,*	*s,*
d'	*t*	*l*	*s*	*f*	*m*	*r*	*s*

Fundamental bass

d'	*s*	*l*	*m*	*f*	*d*	*r*	*s*

Harmony

I	V	VI	III	IV	I	$II_{\#}^{7}$	V

Supplementary Exercise 2: Dictation

In this dictation, the students sing the given voice while the teacher sings the other parts. The students are required to read and sing, and to listen and write all at the same time. If well prepared, the students should recognise that there is a romanesca pattern in the other voice. By recognising these patterns, the student is able to focus more on the other voice and is more able to memorise it. Relating to knowledge that they already have increases the chances of success and will reinforce their knowledge. It should be noted that this reinforcement is the purpose of this dictation.

Outlined is an example of the number of steps that can be taken to complete this dictation, which I have found useful in my teaching practice.

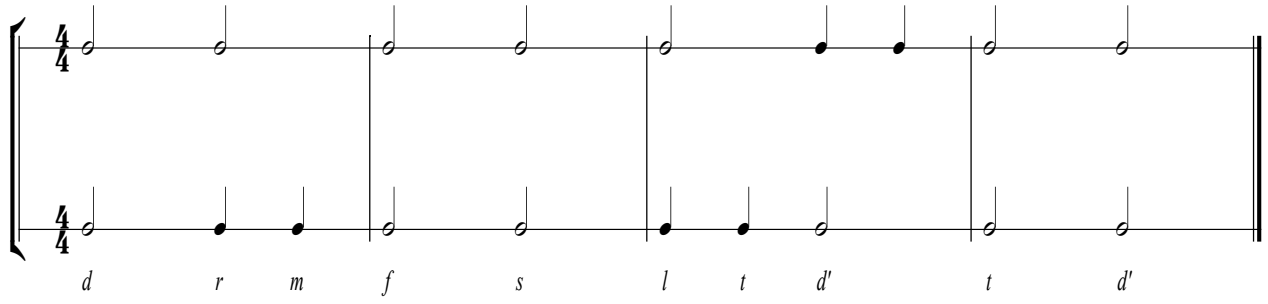
- Give time for the students to read the given melody in their heads and to prepare (Tap the rhythm, sing the ton-set)
- Sing as a group at least once in solfa
- Encourage the students to memorise this line as quickly as possible. As further preparation the student could sing the given part and gently tap the rhythm of the other line – memorise both parts
- Sing to a neutral syllable
  The teacher sings the other part to a neutral syllable
- Students listen to the other line while singing their own part. Encourage the students to memorise the whole line of the other part
- As students become confident that they have memorised the other part, they can take over the leading by singing it instead of the teacher.
- Once a student has learnt both parts they can write down the solfa. Please note that this is the first time that students are allowed to write anything.

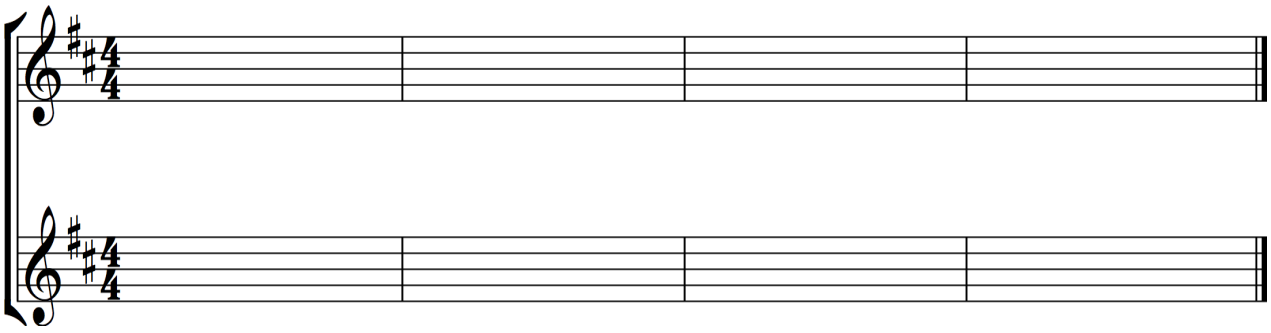
- Once written, they should now think about singing it on letter names. I would not normally give the key before this part. This will keep the students flexible in their thinking up to this point. Once they have thought it out in a given/chosen key they should go to the piano and sing and play the piece. Only after that may they write the whole piece down on the stave.

It must be noted that I also encourage students to 'sing what they have written'. I have found that students will often find that they have made mistakes in their writing: what a student writes does not always accurately reflect their true understanding. In addition, students often write down the solfa correctly but can sometimes make mistakes when writing on the stave. This is why I find it important for the student to write down the solfa first. That way, as a teacher, I can more accurately see where there are faults in the students' knowledge.

The canon used for this dictation is *Alleluya*. In this case I would then not use this canon as sight-reading practice beforehand.

Dictation worksheet:

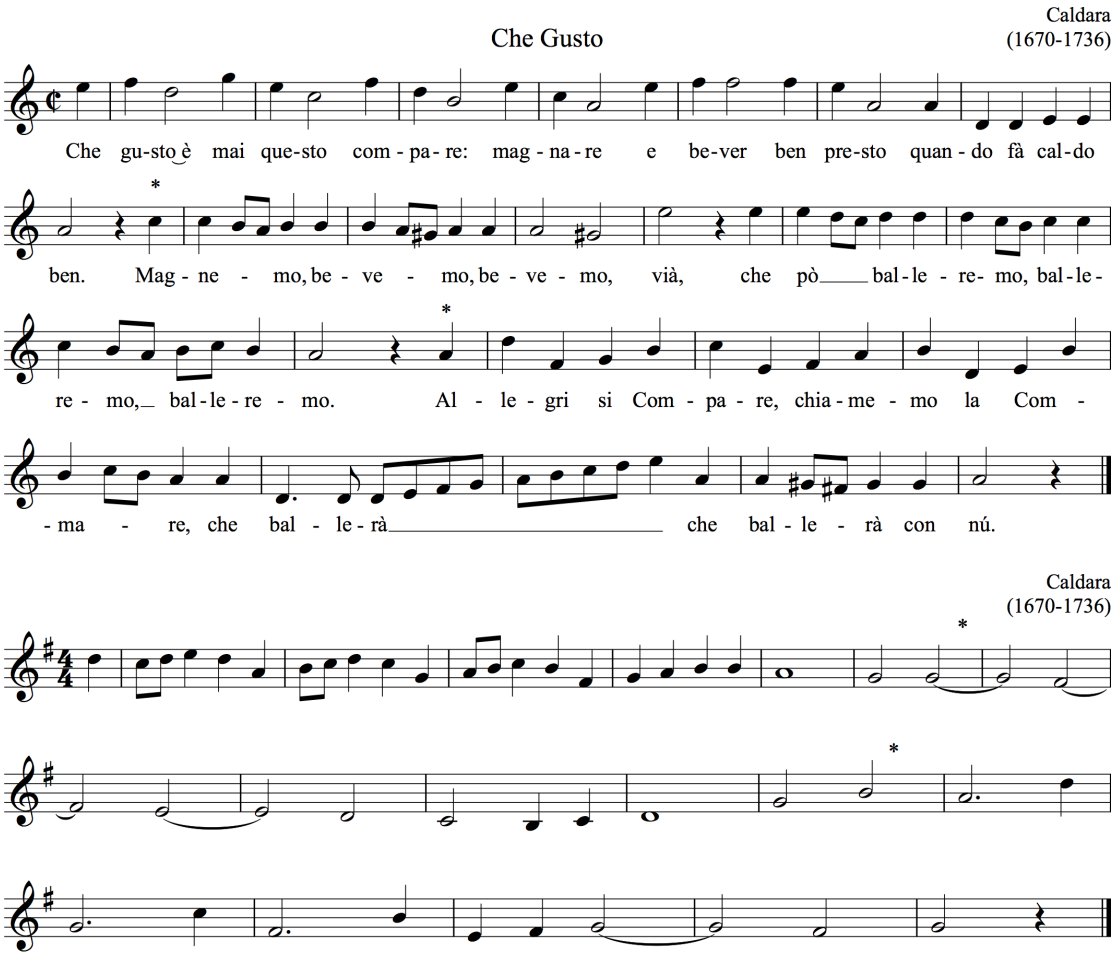




3) Falling fifth sequences

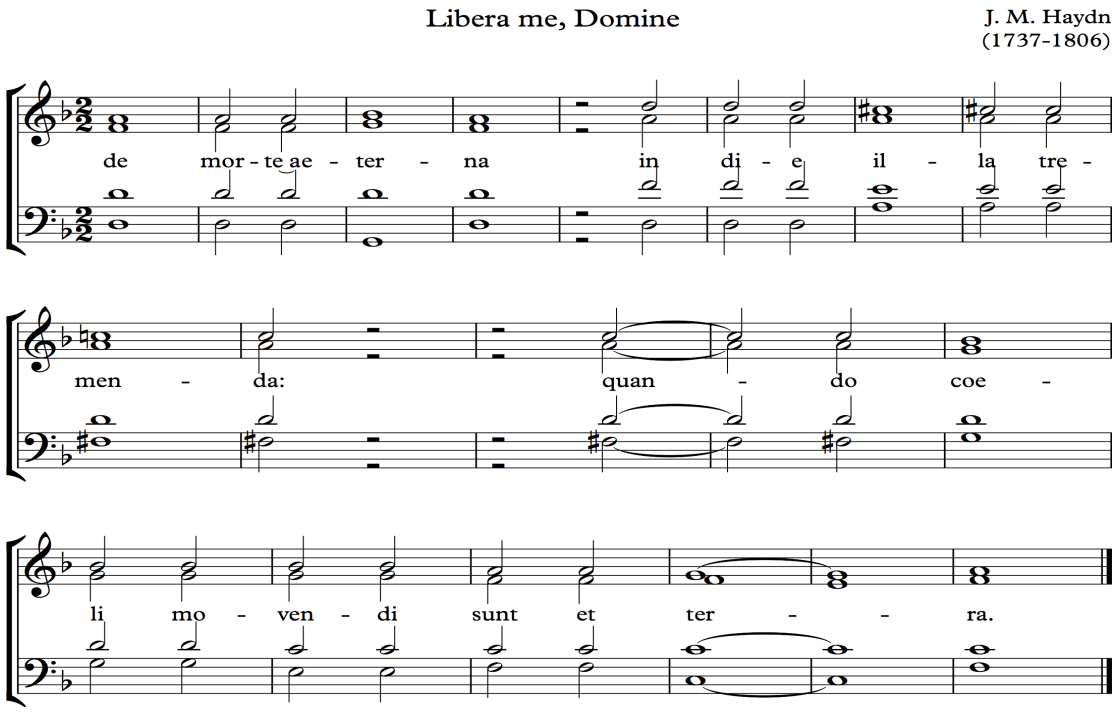
Canons:

A full sequence of falling fifth is very rare in the repertoire of canons. In this case I have used examples which show part of the sequence.



Choral Works:

In the same way that the I IV V I canons showed a variety of solutions for combining the harmonies to give variations, these pieces also show a range of contexts for the falling fifth sequence. In the J. M. Haydn, the falling fifth sequence employs secondary dominants seventh chord, starting from bar 9. In preparation for this piece I have asked students to sing the piece with and without the accidentals in order to experience the differences and to see if it is possible to still feel the change from D minor to F major which comes at the end. I then asked the students to improvise a continuation of the sequence to see if it is possible to end in a different key.

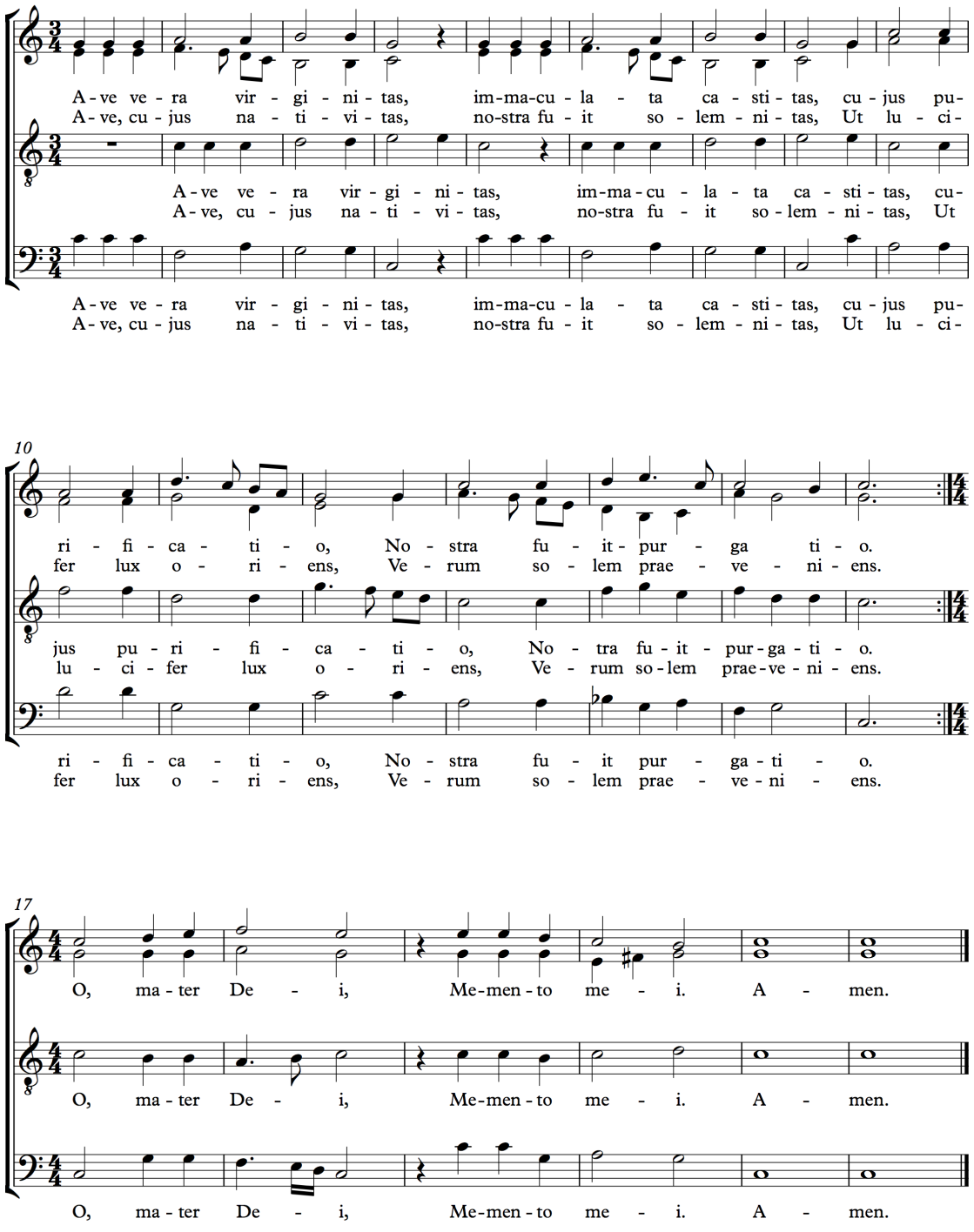


Josquin – Ave vera virginitas

As a preparation for this piece, I have chosen to do a 'follow the leader' style dictation (the leader begins to sing and the students follow behind in canon while listening to the next part at the same time). The extra challenge here is that the students need to follow a fifth lower. The leader sings the soprano line and the students follow by singing the tenor. By now the students will be able to imagine the I IV V I bass. The following section from bar 9 includes part of a falling fifth sequence (bars 9-12) followed by a characteristic flattened seventh chord from the Renaissance, thus giving a new context.

Ave vera virginitas

Josquin des Prez
(1450-1521)



4) & 5) Themes by Mozart

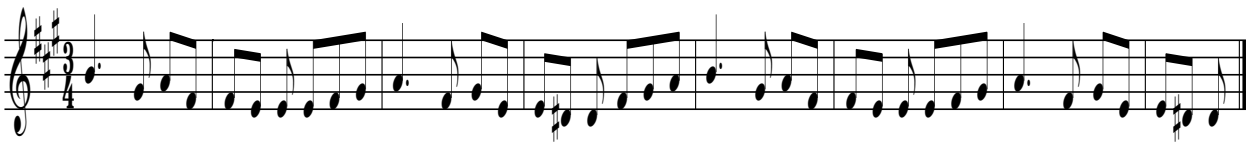
Simple themes can be used as sight-reading exercises in preparation for listening to instrumental works. It is more relevant for the student if the theme is then heard within the context of the piece. These themes are taken from the first movement of symphony in A major by Mozart K.134. A score of this, with annotations, can be found in appendix 2.

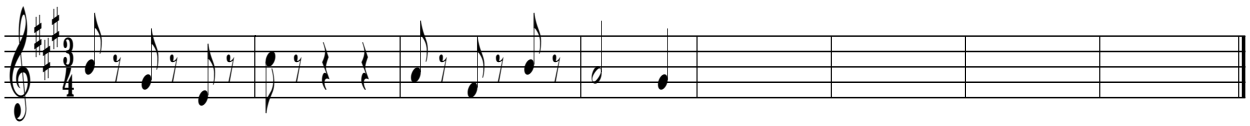
In the first theme, students are asked to imagine a tonic and dominant baseline and to label the score. Recognition of this theme will be important for determining the form of the symphony as a whole. If the preparation has been done well through the previous activities then students will be able to imagine and appropriate bass line here.[12]

In the second exercise, students are asked to improvise a second half to the theme, which gives and answer (period form). This will have been discussed/prepared in relation to the *Te deum* by Charpentier. Again, a bass line can be worked out or dictated by the teacher. Here there is an opportunity to discover the deceptive cadence. In addition, modal transformations can be practised. Sing the melody in minor. Students will recognise this when listening to the symphony (recapitulation) and will aid their understanding of the form.

Appendix 2 includes a full annotated score of the first movement of this symphony. The first them given here is labelled 'secondary theme' at bar 27 and the second example given here begins at bar 35. In the recapitulation, this second example is transformed to the tonic minor at bar 122 in the recapitulation. Please refer to the table on the following page for a more detailed description of the movement.

Worksheet for Mozart Themes:





[12] See appendix 2 for the results of the students' work and the commentary at the end of this model for a discussion of this work

- Listening to a larger work: Mozart – Symphony in A (#23) K134 1st movement[13]

Students should now be able to use all of the knowledge and skills that they already have in order to 'discover' this piece of music. I would encourage students to listen to the music without a score firstly. A sketch can be made of what happens and when. When they have the score they can label it as they listen again. My experience is that students sometimes want to sing along with the themes and fundamental bass lines.
Based on the preparation that they have now had they will hear: Romanesca sequences, falling fifth sequences, period forms, modal transformations of the melody, I IV V sequences, and repetitions. They will also recognise themes from the piece.
With this knowledge a discussion can be had about what happens and when. This leads to an understanding of the form of the whole work.

Form of K.134, first movement. (Please see appendix 2 for the full score).

I return to the table given above so that the reader may better understand the overall shape of the movement and how all of the preceding examples relate to this. The Students might be expected to create such a table in order to understand how the form of the piece works.

	Bar number	
Exposition	1-8	**Primary theme** in A major. Satz form. Repeated in bars 9-16.
	17-26	**Transition**. Romanesca harmonic sequence.
	27-50	**Secondary theme** in E major. There are two parts to this theme: bars 27-34 and bars 35-42 (this second part is repeated in bars 43-50). The first part of the theme is accompanied by tonic and dominant harmony (labelled T & D respectively in the score), while the second part uses a subdominant harmony (labelled SD) in addition.
	51-68	**Codetta** using fragments from the primary theme.
Development	69-95	Motives are taken from the primary theme. The falling fifth sequence comes in bars 82 to 88 and is build using the motivic material from the Romanesca sequence.
Recapitulation	96-111	Unusually, this begins with the **second theme**. A major. There is now repetition of the second part of this theme.
	112-121	**Transition**. Romanesca harmonic sequence.

[13] See appendix 2 for the results of the students' work

	122-137	The **second theme** returns here however its form has changed. The first part of the theme is missing altogether. Instead the second part of the theme is heard in a minor form (bars 122-129) followed by a repetition in the original major form (bars 130-137)
	138-155	**Codetta** using fragments from the primary theme.
	156-end	Coda

- Final Comments on the Model

As can be seen in this model, there are a range of activities and repertoire that focus on a particular skill or concept.

Concepts:

Analysis of the movement from the symphony shows the following concepts that could be discovered by a student. These are the focus of this model.

Harmonic patterns: I IV V, Romanesca, Falling fifths
Phrase types: Period forms
Form: Sonata

Skills:

Through experiencing the preparatory repertoire and by doing the accompanying activities the following skills are practiced:

Improvising and composing, dictation, sight-reading, part-singing.

What then is the final out come of this model?

By singing material that is simpler than the larger work, students will gain experience of the concepts that are to be found in the score. The final activity is then to listen to the work and the students will be able to discover the concepts for themselves.

My final step in the discussion of this model is to discuss the results of carrying it out on a group of students. Although I carried out all or part of this model on a range of classes in development of the material, I would like to discuss the final result from one class. This class

is a second year undergraduate class of students in the school music department with eleven students. These are students who are training to be teachers in schools rather than following a purely instrumental training programme. I chose the class in particular because of the range of ability and backgrounds of the students in that not all students in this class have a strong background in music theory nor in classical music. I have been teaching them myself over one and a half years and I have had to teach many of them from the very beginning in the development of their aural skills. In that way, I knew that this one class had limited knowledge of the concepts that were to be discovered in this work yet they could already sing well enough to tackle these particular activities. Over a series of weeks, we used each of the preparation repertoire for sight-reading exercises or we followed one of the activities. Each lesson (or two lessons) focused on a particular concept (e.g. I IV V harmony). At the point that I felt that they had assimilated the material (either memorised, able to sing accurately using solfa names, could recognise concepts from the sound, had labelled scores or successfully carried out dictations or improvisations) they listened to the Mozart. The first few times they listened without the score. My goal was to see if they could recognise concepts that they had just studied. After that, I gave them the score. They were then asked to annotate the score while listening to the music again.

(Appendix #2 shows examples of the work of the students.)

Results of the lesson and comments on the student's work

- 'Romanesca Dictation'

Of the eleven students all but one were able to complete the Romanesca dictation exercise. However, the one who did not was able to write the basic pattern of the Romanesca. Most transferred it to the stave after writing in solfa first. As an extension exercise, some students were able to play one voice on the piano while singing the other voice.

- 'Compose your own Canon'

All students could complete, the 'compose your own canon' exercise. Few made minor errors the choice of pitch for the accompanying harmony and some added a *re* for a chord IV (so implying chord II). Some were able to add passing notes to the melody.

In itself, it is to be noted that this could be a simple mathematical exercise – simply put the right note in the right place according to the formula. However, I made the following observation. During the lesson, students were encouraged to perform their canons in groups. Mistakes that were made in the writing process were picked up by the students by ear and then changed. Those that chose chord II instead of IV were still happy with the result and did not want to change. This proved to be an invaluble experience because it started an exploration in the next few lessons in the difference and similarity between chords II and IV.

The important thing here is that the students had and aural experience of a concept before the discussion.

- 'Themes by Mozart'

While I sang the melody, students improvised a bass line. The choice was *do fa so* and this activity followed the activity on composing a canon. They then wrote down their preferred answer. All students except for two (one was absent in this lesson) were able to imagine an appropriate harmony under the given theme.

The second part of this exercise was to improvise an answering, second half to a given phrase. The challenge was to create a consequent to a given antecedent. I accompanied on the piano with I IV V harmony and the students had to fit their answers with my harmony. All but one were able to write down appropriate answers.

- Listening to the Mozart.

The final lesson involved listening to the music as a group. In the discussion that followed, students were able to name harmonic sequences that they had heard and were able to link it to repertoire. Even when they were not able to give the name, some were able to say that at a given point it 'sounded like' one of the pieces that we had sung previously. Students could then go to that piece and discover how they had labelled it there.

Students were then given the score and I asked them to annotate their own scores. No more help was given at this point and the students worked individually. The students had no difficulty in following the score and, when hearing, a familiar pattern, would label the score.

In addition, it was interesting to note that some students were also able to notice the Satz form of the opening phrase even though that was not included in particular model but had been taught in previous lessons before this research began.

Students were able to hear that in the second phrase of the second theme (the theme upon which they improvised a second half) the harmony was not as I had played it before. It was in fact a deceptive cadence at the end of the first half and not an authentic cadence. Their experience of singing on authentic cadences drew their attention to the character of the deceptive.

Students noticed that the second theme is transformed to the minor in the recapitulation. This then lead to a 'dictation exercise'. By that I mean that I asked the students to sing the theme in minor with the appropriate solfa names.

Finally, after labelling the score, students were able to discuss the form of the whole movement. Their ability to dissect the score into meaning sections by listening gave then a means of comparison of sections (there were no problems of having to workout transpositions of themes because they had identified the themes aurally) and so a frame for further discussion. In subsequent lessons in the year, we have used this piece, and this

experience, as a starting point to compare with other pieces, which were learnt in a similar fashion, to lead to an understanding of sonata form.

In conclusion, even though no singing was used directly with the symphony (except for the preparation of singing one of the themes and improvising upon another), singing was used in all of the preparation. It was the singing that gave the students the aural experience that led to an understanding of the piece. In the process, the students were able to develop a range of skills, such as dictation, improvising, harmonic understanding, in a way that was unified by a common purpose. That was, to analyse a work from a symphonic movement. The singing was supported, in this case, by canons, which had been prepared as sight-reading exercises and giving an aural experience, and with short choral pieces that highlighted a particular concept for the students to study.

(See Appendix #2 for examples of the students' work.)

Model 2: Peñalosa, *Agnus Dei*, Missa 'el ojo'

In this second model, I would like to present an example for a single lesson and to show how singing and practical activities, which include skill development (part singing, aural skills, improvisation, reading), can lead to an understanding of a particular piece.

Context

In February of 2016, I was invited to work with the chamber choir of the National Youth Choir of The Netherlands in a workshop situation. This is a choir of 24 singers aged 16-20, mixed voices. The choir works together once per month for rehearsals, vocal training and musicianship training. Along side this they receive weekly musicianship classes in smaller groups. This choir works with guest conductors and while working with one guest conductor they tried to learn the 'Missa el Ojo' by Peñalosa (1470-1528). This is a group that sings well however, this particular piece had presented difficulties in rhythm. The choir was finding it difficult to learn the piece because of these difficulties.

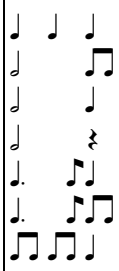
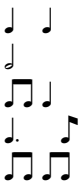
My task was to teach the piece in such a way so that I can teach the rhythm of the piece to the choir so that they could understand it and thus to enhance their performance. The lesson was to be a musicianship lesson rather that a rehearsal for a performance and so I would have to teach the piece in such a way that the students could understand the key concepts for themselves and to utilise those concepts. I, therefore, saw this as like any other music theory lesson and a perfect opportunity to see how singing and performance can lead to understanding through the development of skill while using vocal repertoire.

In order to teach this piece, I firstly had to analyse the piece for myself. I had been told that during previous rehearsals there had been a lot of trying to count the complex rhythm patterns while someone would keep a steady beat for them. This piece is a typical Renaissance choral work that is highly polyphonic, melodically and rhythmically, yet is written out with modern bar lines. My objective became to help the choir to understand the music with out bar lines by understanding how each voice is independent of the others and has its own beat structure, in addition to its own rhythm structure. I felt that the solution would be to understand and feel how the beats of each independent voice were based on groups of two and three (that is group of quarter notes, thus forming beats of half notes and dotted half notes)

In my analysis of this piece, I chose to write out the parts of the choir (not the tenor as it was just a steady cantus firmus) as individual parts with no bar lines (this means that any notes tied over the bar would now be written as one note.)[14] On these new scores I marked in the

[14] See appendix 3 for the original score as used by the choir (CPDL.org) and for my rewritten parts.

rhythmic structure of the piece by placing slurs over a group of three notes micro-beats[15] which make up a macro-beat and leaving the others unmarked. After this preparation I was able to find that there are some basic rhythmic patterns in the music which reoccur. These are as follows:

Groups of 3 micorbeats	Groups of 2 microbeats
	

Understanding that this piece is fundamentally constructed out of these basic rhythm patterns meant that I was able to focus my lesson and to lead the students towards the discovery of the music.

Following is the lesson plan and commentary.

(See appendix #3 for scores and a fuller description of the activities used in this model)

[15] A macro-beat is the main strong beat that is felt throughout while a micro-beat is the basic subdivision. Micro-beats are either groups of two or groups of three. Gordon (2004)

- Warm up[16]

Chevaliers: Moving to different time signatures of 2 and 3 beats.
Ball game: 2 beat pattern – bounce, catch
3 beat pattern – bounce, catch, throw

Cum decore: Accompany the song with actions in groups of 3, 3, 2 or 3, 2, 3
3 pattern – tap shoulder R shoulder with RH, click fingers RH, Click LH
2 Pattern – clap hands, tap back of hand

With partner make the 2 pattern clap own hands, clap partner's hands

Perform in groups of four. Both patterns together.

These two songs and games involve moving to groups of two and three. The first song, the time signature changes and the game encouraged a feeling of the change. The second song was in a regular four group throughout but the actions were contrary and so created a polyphony of ever changing groups.

- *Hey Ho* (Byrd)

Learn song aurally. Discover how to fit the patterns of 2 and 3 to the song
(using movement patterns from *Cum Decore*)

I taught this song aurally. The movement patterns from *Cum decore* (groups of two and three) became the base for all activities so that the choristers had an experience on which to fall back and to link to each new activity. The choristers had to discover how the underlying groups two and three changed in the song (hemiola). They then sang this song in canon.

- Bach Canon BWV1072

Using patterns of 2 and 3
Introduce more rhythms patterns and names
Improvisation transforming beat patterns

In this exercise, I firstly asked the choristers to read the canon by Bach, which is a simple piece based on scale patterns. They then had to improvise patterns of their own. The next step was to improvise by changing the basic beat structure (for example, changing the song into a piece in $\frac{5}{8}$). In my analysis of the Peñalosa, I was able to reduce the piece to a set of rhythm patterns.

[16] Activities taken from Geoghegan & Nemes (2014)

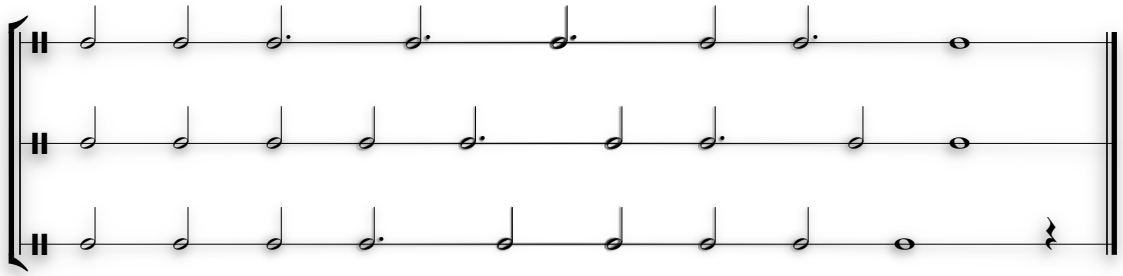
They were then encouraged to use some of the rhythm patterns from the piece in their improvisations.

- Dictation

Taken from motives in the *Agnus Dei* (soprano, alto and tenor lines taken from bar 10 to 15 in the score)

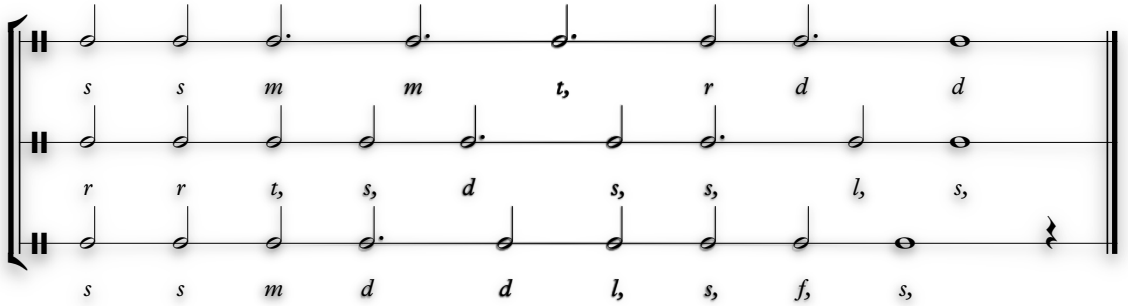
I chose one part of the *Agnus Dei* as a dictation exercise. Three exercises were given (a soprano, alto and bass line. The tenor only had a *cantus firmus* in long note values, however everyone had to do all of the dictations). This dictation was done in carefully worked out steps (framed dictation – meaning that the students only needed to focus on one of two elements of the music at any time. This means that they could instead focus on other skills such as two-part thinking)

Clap the basic beat pattern of the phrase showing groups of 2 and 3.
Each line was done separately. After which, the choristers showed their answers through performance by using the actions of two and three as taken from the game accompanying *Cum decore*. This pattern is simply the macro-beat, that is, the rhythmic patterns have been stripped away to leave only the basic beat structure.



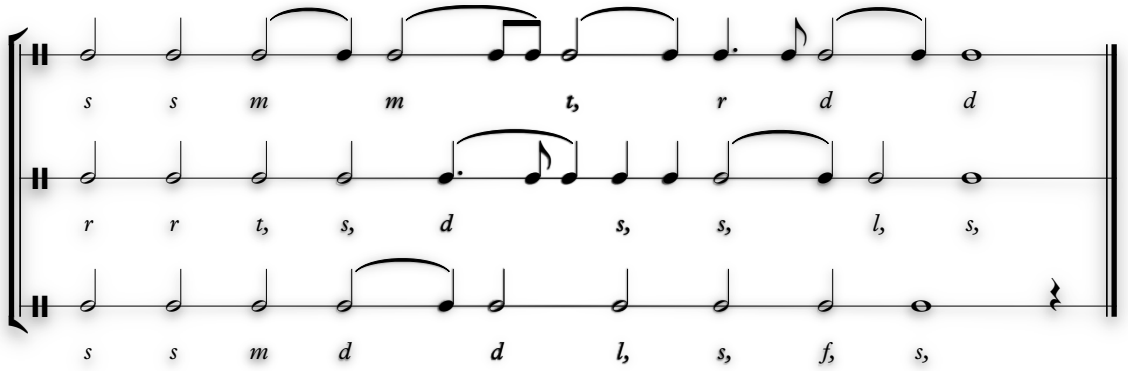
Add pitch of first note of each group.

While the choristers clapped the beat pattern, I sang a single pitch for each note. After singing back what they could hear they could write it down.

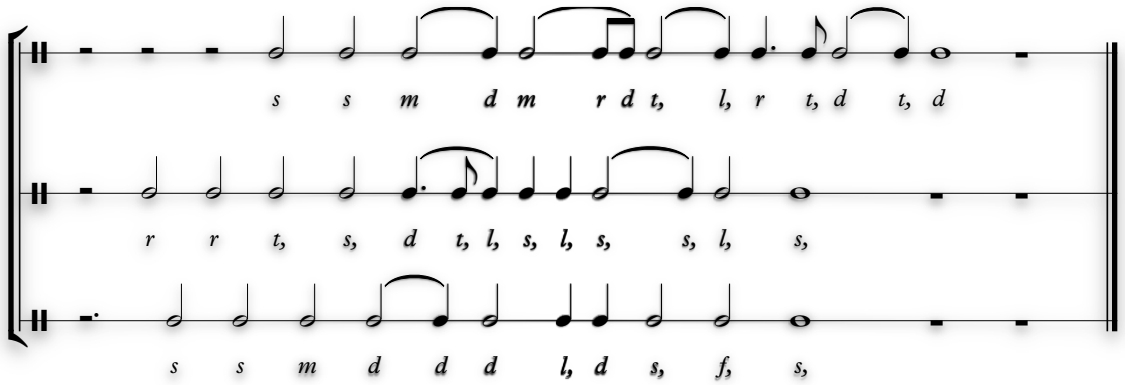


Add the original rhythm patterns of the motive while singing given notes.

As the choristers clapped and sang their answers, I then clapped and more complicated rhythm pattern using rhythms that they had used in the Bach improvisation. The students, again, wrote it down after they could clap back what I had performed.



The final step was to show the complete answer with new pitches for every rhythm value. The choristers performed it by reading



- *Agnus Dei*

The final step was to go to the score of the *Agnus Dei*. For this lesson, I had prepared a score with no bar lines. The choristers then discovered the music from the dictation in the score and they performed once again. They were then given time to study the rest of the score. I had told them that I had marked in when there was a rhythm group of three, everything else was to be assumed to be a group of two.

After a short moment of study, the choir was able to perform the entire movement with only occasional mistakes. I was able to observe that individuals were instinctively moving to the beat groups in their individual lines of music.

- Extension

A final exercise was to sing the canon *Golpe* for fun. This Latin American piece makes use of changing time signatures between $\frac{3}{4}$ (a macro-beat with two micro-beats) and $\frac{6}{8}$ (a macro-beat with three micro-beats) and so was a moment to practise what had been learnt in a new situation.

Conclusion

I feel that the choir sang with understanding of the structure of the music. Feed back from the choir and the conductor was positive. As the choir had struggled to learn this piece well over a period of several weeks it was encouraging for the choir and for me to be able to achieve the standard that they did within a 90-minute lesson.
Despite movement being central to this lesson it was nevertheless singing that held it together throughout. This group sing very well and it was through this practical activity that the choir was able to internalise the theoretical concept and then to translate in into performance.
The lesson involved: learning by ear, singing and moving, dictation, discovering in music (*Hey ho* and *Agnus Dei*), improvising, reading.

(See Appendix #3 for the scores of the songs used in this lesson, the analysis of the rhythm patterns in the Pennalosa, and the score that I created for the choir.)

CONCLUSIONS

My initial motivation for doing this research was to develop my own teaching practice. In particular, I was interested to see how singing can be used more in the music theory classroom. The background for my interest in singing was based upon my own experience with singing as a young student and with the use of singing in the school classroom as inspired by the Kodály philosophy of music education.

In order to answer the question –

> *What model can be created to show how singing can be used as a primary tool for the teaching of music theory?*

I set myself the task of trying to develop material and activities that would be appropriate for a music theory classroom. The result has been as follows:

Repertoire

There is, of course, a large body of vocal repertoire available, however, books that have been published for use in the classroom tend to focus on developing sight-reading as an isolated skill. The material tends to be, in my opinion, unrelated to other repertoire (even unmusical in my taste) and designed to develop one particular, isolated skill. This concurs with Rogers (2004, p.19), who states that 'although dozens of analysis and ear-training textbooks are available, few of them include the kind of integration discussed.' (He refers back to his discussion on the pedagogical approach to the integration of music theory subjects)

If singing is to become central to my lessons, then the first task is to collect good quality music that encourages singing and gives students a good introduction to the gamut of musical material. This repertoire should be analysed, catalogued well and cross referenced to larger works so that single lessons and series of lesson plans can be created that help to lead students to knowledge of repertoire and to develop skills.

The Book of Canons has gone a long way to achieving this. The success of the book has been that students have asked me for copies so that they can use it at home and other teachers have asked to use it in their lessons too. There has been a general rise in interest in singing in the lessons. Also a wide range of skill development exercises have resulted from the creative use of the canons.

Elsewhere in this research I have presented examples of small choral works, which extent the experience of vocal repertoire into larger pieces with a richer harmony and range of styles. These pieces have been invaluable for approaching larger works of art music.

I realise now that the repertoire presented in this paper is only enough for the model lesson that I have written about. In order to teach effectively for all situations, the research and collecting of vocal music cannot stop here. It is my intention to continue this work by editing and publishing further volumes of material for use in the classroom. An online resource would be an ideal solution for an ever growing body of material that everyone can access.

The models

These models have shown me that a lot can indeed be done in a music theory lesson whereby singing is the central activity. The practical activities have helped students to conceptualise a sound by hearing it an experiencing it. What I have found from this is that in order to achieve the goal of the music theory lesson – to understand a concept or to develop a skill – a large amount of planning is involved. It is not enough to merely present pieces to students for them sing and then to expect them to 'magically' make a connection to something else. The activities that I have developed in these model lessons have been carefully sequenced and are supported by exercises and games that help to 'join the dots'. This, perhaps reopens the discussion on the constructivist approach as discussed in part 1 of this paper. Quoting Hansen again, he writes that 'if we accept the constructivist position we must follow a *pedagogy* that provides learners with the opportunity to interact with sounds and construct their own relationships.[17]' (p.7). I see now that in this quote the focus should be just as much on pedagogy as it could be on on giving opportunities to students. What I propose is that any teacher who wishes to use singing in the lesson in the way that I have will need to not only analyse repertoire for its musical content but be able to analyse in a pedagogical way. That is to mean that material should be sequenced carefully and exercises are created in such a way that the difficulty of a piece can be overcome if the previous material was sung well and the experience is such that skills can support one another.

In addition, I have found that singing is not always enough. I have found that movement has become part of many activities. Singing is a physical activity and movement will support that by helping to improve the quality of the singing and will help to draw attention to concepts (particularly rhythmic concepts, although even the concept of high and low pitch can be reinforced by movement as can be seen with the use of hand-signs for solfège names). For me, this relates back to Elliott's (1995) 'praxial' and Hansen's (2005) comments on the 'physical' in education.

I feel that the models presented here are only some examples of many possibilities. I have shown how certain concepts that have presented themselves as challenges within a piece of music can be tackled with singing activities, however, every piece of music has its own challenges and each teacher will have their own interpretation of a piece. The focus must therefore be on developing a range of models and a range of activities that can be adapted for many possible situations. The sharing of ideas has been of upmost importance to the development of my work. I have been able to observe many inspiring teachers and I have been able to take away an activity and adapt it for my own use. This should continue through out my work. It is often the case that seeing it in action is the best way to understand how to

[17] My own italics.

use something. It may be useful in the future to develop more model lessons with videos of it in action or to have more demonstration classes where teachers can show their best practice.

Final thoughts on singing

When singing becomes the norm in a lesson, I have experienced that students sing with confidence and joy. Even students who find singing difficult or embarrassing will overcome their inhibitions when singing becomes a routine where everyone is expected to be involved at all times. If the whole class is singing and enough opportunities are given in a safe and friendly environment, then even the most shy will eventually 'give it a go'. As with any practical subject, regular practice is required and so, for anyone who wishes to involve more singing in their lessons, enough material must be provided to allow this to happen. In addition, if the point of the singing becomes clear – that is that they will see improvements in their understanding and skills across other areas – then the motivation to sing becomes higher. However, this statement can work the other way too. The joy of singing is something in itself and the joy of making music in a lesson can motivate students to become more interested in a subject like music theory and they will become more motivated to improve their knowledge and skills if the result is a beautiful performance. This reflects both Gordon (2004, p.13) ('The more we audiate, the better we learn to sing, and the more we sing, the better we learn to audiate') and Hansen (2004, p.5) ('[in this] kind of cyclical process both the thinking and listening aspects of ear training and analysis can nourish one another: the more that music is studied, the more there is to hear; the more that is heard, the more there is to learn.') Patience may be needed from the teacher at the start but the end goal will be achieved in good time if time is taken to develop the quality of singing at the start. The work shown in the models, presented in this paper, and through my teaching experience over the last few years has shown that a deep understanding on musical concepts can be achieved in a practical way where singing is the teaching tool.

As a final conclusion, I return to my original title and hypothesis. Firstly, I have been able to create two types of models which have both been highly effective in teaching practice. These models offer different possibilities for approaching a theoretical problem. By analysing the work that the students have done I have been able to see that, indeed, students were able to process information aurally and were able to apply it to analysis (study of a score by annotation after listening) and to performance (The choir's performance of Peñalosa).

Singing has always been a joy for me and I am pleased to find that more and more students and teachers are finding way to use singing in many different situations. In my opinion, and I feel that this is backed up by this paper, music must be made and heard, and singing is one effective way to make that happen.

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Many Thanks!
Ewan

APPENDICES

1 A BOOK OF CANONS

INTRODUCTION

The process of investigation in this research has required that I find and use a large amount of vocal repertoire. In this appendix I choose to create an anthology for other teachers to use.

What is required of such a collection?

Based upon my initial investigation into the currently available material and, through practice, discovering the ways in which simple vocal material can be used in a lesson, the following criteria have been formulated.

> A large amount of repertoire with many examples that address a particular problem. That problem could be for developing a skill, such as sight-reading, or that will provide a good example that will connect with repertoire.
>
> Repertoire that is musical. That is to say that it is worth performing (with text, fun to do). There is a certain quality that encourages students to want to sing.
>
> Repertoire that covers a range of styles, historical periods and composers. This suggests that the repertoire should be original pieces rather than exercises that are written for a particular purpose.
>
> Repertoire that is singable. Vocal repertoire will have to be the starting point in any lesson based upon singing. Instrumental music can be reached through this.
>
> The repertoire must lend itself to developing musical skills through the performance, such as part singing, as well as other skills such as sight reading and dictation.
>
> The difficulty of the repertoire should range from the most simple to very advanced with enough material in between. In fact, the majority of the material should be simple.[18]

In the end, I chose to create a collection of canons for this anthology. I find that canons satisfy the above criteria very well. In Hansen's article (2005), he writes that he has found that 'singing canons in class is a great way to help students grow individually and also to join a larger external context of harmony and rhythm as they sing.' Over several months of searching and collecting, I have found that there is a very large body of canons from across the musical spectrum that is easily accessible to all. I chose to bring together and edit three

[18] Many learning theories advise that in the begining stage there shoudl be the most material. Kodály's own series of exercises from the *Choral Method* starts with 77 simple exercises, then 66 more difficult through to only 22 of the most advanced exercises. See also Solity, *The Learning Revolution* (2008)

hundred and twenty of these pieces into one volume for the use of students. This book has turned out to be very popular, both among students and other teachers.

Why have these been successful?

Students will often know some canons themselves, which can serve as a starting point for any work in the lesson. Prior knowledge can encourage students who are uncomfortable with singing.

There is an immediate satisfaction with being able to singing in harmony.

Part singing leads the student to reach to the group rhythmically and in intonation. The singing of canons leads the student to experience all parts of the harmony. And to experience how the parts interact with each other.

Stylistically they are easy ways into a particular composer's work or historical period as they are 'real' examples rather that composed in order to mimic a style.

As opposed to Molnár book of canons[19], which is commonly used in sight-reading lessons, these include texts and so lend themselves to more interesting performances. In addition, I returned many canons to origin forms (traditional clefs and keys) so that students can gain better understanding of the tools used in different historical performances.

The availability of an easily printed edition gives students plenty of material to practise both in the lesson and at home. Homeworks are easy to give – sight-reading practice, memory work, singing and playing in canon, analysis.

What can be done with these canons?

Sight reading practice

Short passages for dictation

Short repetitive sequences to hear and to memorise a particular sound such as a harmonic sequence.

Dictations may be more interactive. For example, the teacher can start a phrase and the students have to follow behind while listening to the next phrase at the same time.

Pieces can be used for small performances

[19] Molnár, A., *Classical Canons* (1955)

Sing and play. Students can practice playing canons with themselves, for example, sing and play in canon on an instrument or sing and clap in canon. Thus improving two-part thinking.

Improvisation. As a student becomes familiar with a concept or style, they can begin to improvise. For example, if the group continues to sing the canon, giving harmonic support from a short, repeated sequence, an individual can improvise a new melody over the top or a student could find a fundamental bass to the sequence. Alternatively, there can be opportunities to change or extend a pattern (for example, in *Dis-Moi* by Lassus, students can continue each melodic pattern several more steps thus continuing the cycle of falling fifths)

In terms of practicing sight-reading these canons offer possibilities that are not always found in other sight-reading books. In examples such as Palestrina's *pleni sunt coeli*, we see that the lack of clef allows the singer to chose a clef or key. For example, he first note could be *do* or *re*. This would then mean that the student can practice reading different modes and imagining what the clef and or key signature would be. In fact, this was Palestrina's intention. The solution to this canon is to start singing after two bars but one note higher. The result is that the two voices are reading from the same score but with different solutions. A third voice enters yet one tone higher.

There are so many melodies that can be used and played with in some way. For example, if learning about modes, there are enough canons in a particular mode for practicing the sound and it could then be possible to transform other known or new melodies into that mode.

The range of styles and patterns gives opportunities to study and hear, tonal and real answers in a fugue; 20th century techniques; harmonic sequences such as falling fifths and Romanescas. There are even possibilities to try to imagine an inversion of a melody (Mozart – *Laß immer in der Jugend Glanz*). And many more…

Below, I give a brief summary of some analyses of these canons. Of course there are many more possibilities and I encourage any teacher or student to analyse the canons in the way that is appropriate for his or her lesson. There are also many more examples of each categories to be found in this book. Later in this research, I will include some of these canons in some model lessons.

Historical periods

Medieval	Summer is a-coming in
Renaissance	Palestrina – Pleni sunt coeli
Baroque	Bach – Thematis Regii
Classical	Mozart – Ach! Zu kurt ist unsres Lebens Lauf
Romantic	Brahms – Mir lächelt kein Frühling
20th Century	Ligeti – Ha folyóvíz volnék

Types of canon

Intervals	Brahms – Ans Auge
	Cherubini – Guarda bene
	Franck – Da pacem, Domine
	Des Près – Benedictus
	Mozart – Auf das Wohl
	Palestrina – Pleni sunt coeli
Crab	Bach – Thematis Regii
Inversion	Bach – BWV 1075-1077
	Brahms – Zu Rauch
	Mozart – Laß immer in der Jugend Glanz
	Scheidt – Vater unser
Double	Brahms – Zu Rauch
	Mozart – Ach! Zu kurz
	Sweelinck – Miserere mei

Modalities

Aeolian	Bárdos – Ősz-Kánon
	Britten – Old Abram Brown
	Krumm – Misty Morning
	Poor Tom
Dorian	Bárdos – Ave Maris Stella
	Gumpelzhaimer – Cantate Domino
	Holst – Water Clear
Phrygian	Benji met a bear
	Gesius – Benedicamus Domini
Lydian	Bartók – Ne menj el!
	Come Away
Mixolydian	Byrd – Non nobis, Domine

Different Clefs Bach – BWV 1073-1076
Palestrina – Pleni sunt coeli

Harmony

I (Tonic chord)	Beethoven – Ars longa, vita brevis

	Cherubini – Ha! Ha! Ha!
	De Bezem
I V	Mozart – Dona nobis pacem
	Ah, poor bird *(minor)*
	Frère Jacques
	A Ram Sam Sam
	Click, Stamp
	Kyrie
	The little bells of Westminster
	Yabadaba
I IV V	Beethoven – Im Arm der Liebe
	Down the River
	Prisoners (minor)
	I Love the Mountains
I V/IV VI II V	Nice but naughty
I II V	Bravo
	All things shall perish
	Jazz Canon
	Jolly Red Nose
Neapolitan 6^{th}	Caldara – Al povero d'amore
	Caldara – Caro bel idol mio
Augmented 6^{th}	Caldara – Ancor non son content
	Caldara – Filen, mio bene
Mediant modulations	Salieri canon p.61

Partimento patterns

Passamezzo	Gedenck-Clanck – Neemt mij in der hand
	Hey ho, nobody home
Romanesca	Purcell – Fie, nay, prithee, John
	Alleluya
	Ding Dong Bell
	I cannot sing this round
Monte	Kuhlau – Musik von Cherubini
Cycle of 5ths	Caldara – Che gusto
	Josquin – Verbum supernum
	Lassus – Dis-moi

Other Modalities

Pentatonic	Bartök – Kánon
	Hotaru Koi

	Land of the Silver Birch
Acoustic Scale	Ligeti – Ha folyóvíz volnék
Whole Tone Scale	Bartók – Kánon
Octatonic Scale	Bartók – Kánon
Pandiatonic	Little Child

Unusual time signatures

7/4	Britten – Old Joe
5/4	Holst – Water Clear
8/4	Kubizek – Können und wollen
3/4+6/8	Golpe
3/8+3/4	Bells are ringing
8/8	New Year
Mensuration	des Près – Agnus dei

Conclusion:

The result of this book has been that, over the last few years, students have engaged with singing as an integral part of a lesson. This has led to an increase in confidence in singing – something that will often hinder a student's progression. Each and every lesson starts with something form this book which then sets up the rest of the lesson. And, activities such as sight-reading and dictation have become much more joyful.

THE BOOK

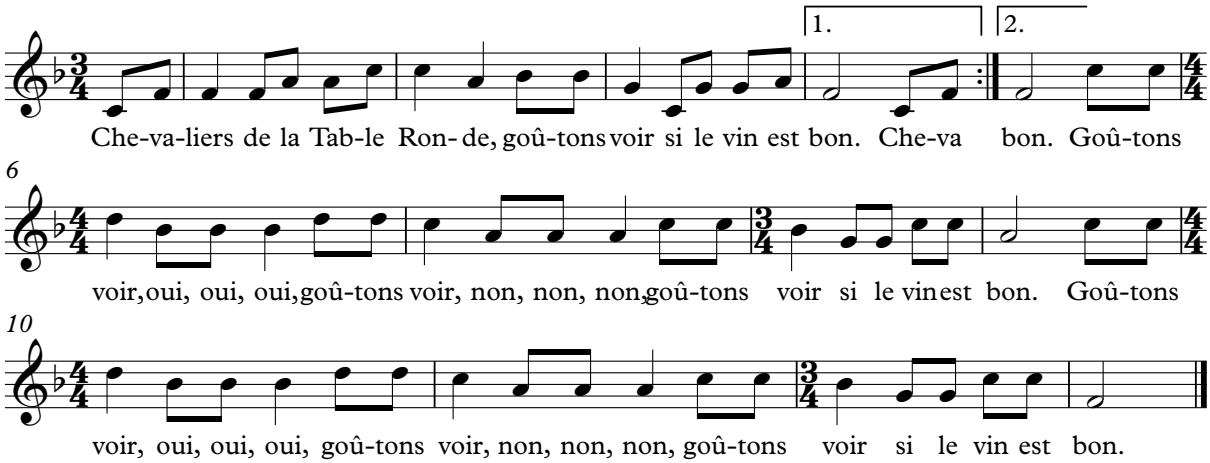
Please see separate attachment

2 WORKSHEETS AND SCORES OF STUDENTS' WORK: MOZART K.134

Please see separate attachment

3 SONGS AND ACTIVITIES: PEÑALOSA 'MISSA EL OJO'

Chevaliers de la Table Ronde



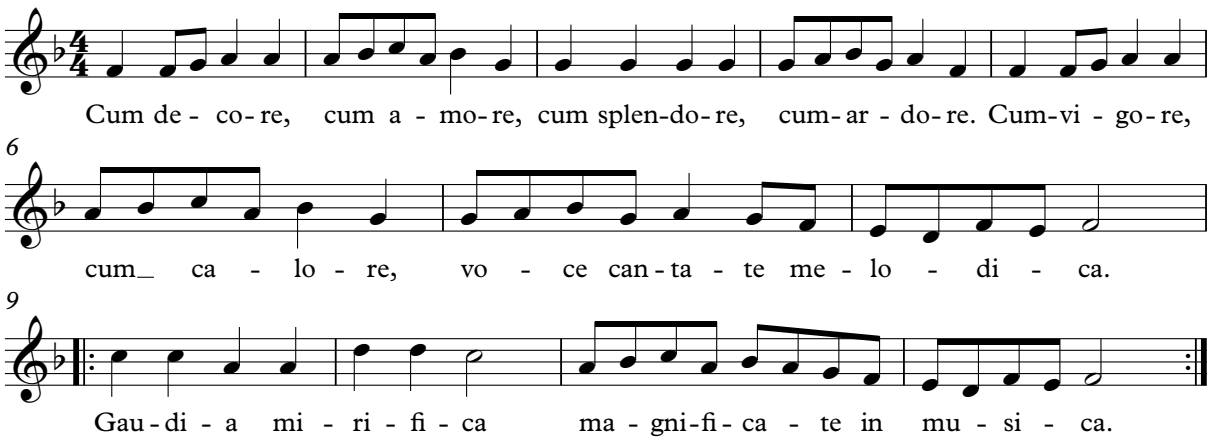
Activity[20]: Using a large ball, bounce to the following pattern.

In $\frac{3}{4}$: 1st beat – bounce the ball to another person
2nd beat – the other person catches the ball
3rd beat – the person who now has the ball throws it to someone else

In $\frac{4}{4}$: 1st beat – The person with the ball bounces it to someone else
2nd beat – the other person catches the ball
3rd & 4th beats – repeat the steps for beat 1 & 2

Cum Decore

Tilman Susato
(1500-1561)



Sing with beauty, with love, with splendour,
with ardour, with warmth, sing with a melodious voice.
Extol the wonderful joys of music.

[20] Songs and activities for *Chevaliers* and *Cum decore* are taken from Geoghegan & Nemes (2014)

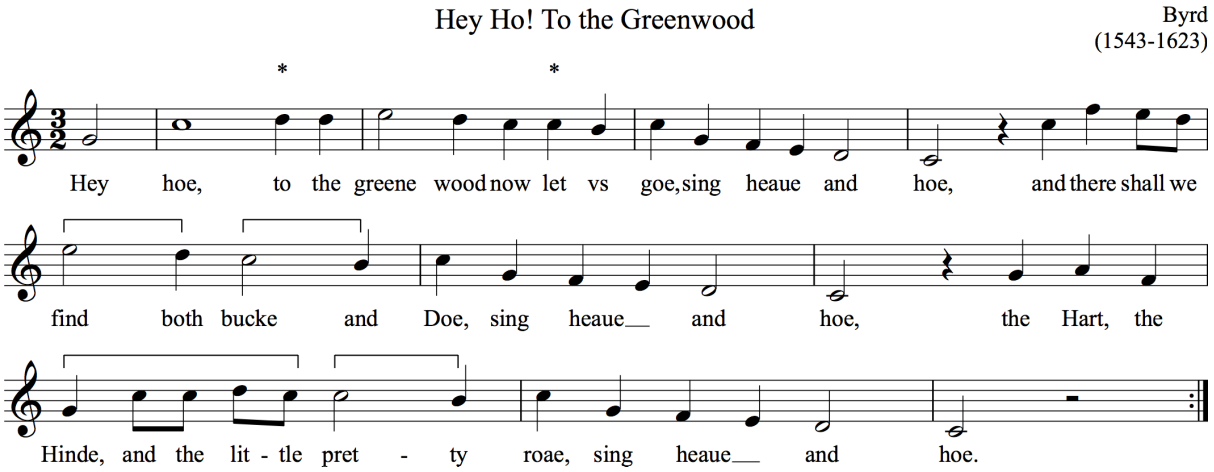
Activity: Clapping pattern, moving on eighth notes.

1st beat – tap right shoulder with right hand, click fingers of right hand
2nd beat – click fingers of left hand, tap left shoulder
3rd beat – click fingers of left hand, click fingers of right hand
4th beat – clap hands, tap back of left hand with right hand

The above patterns form two groups of three (tap shoulder, click fingers of one hand, click fingers of an other) and a group of two (clap hands, tap back of left hand with right hand. The grouping for this game is then 3 + 3 + 2.

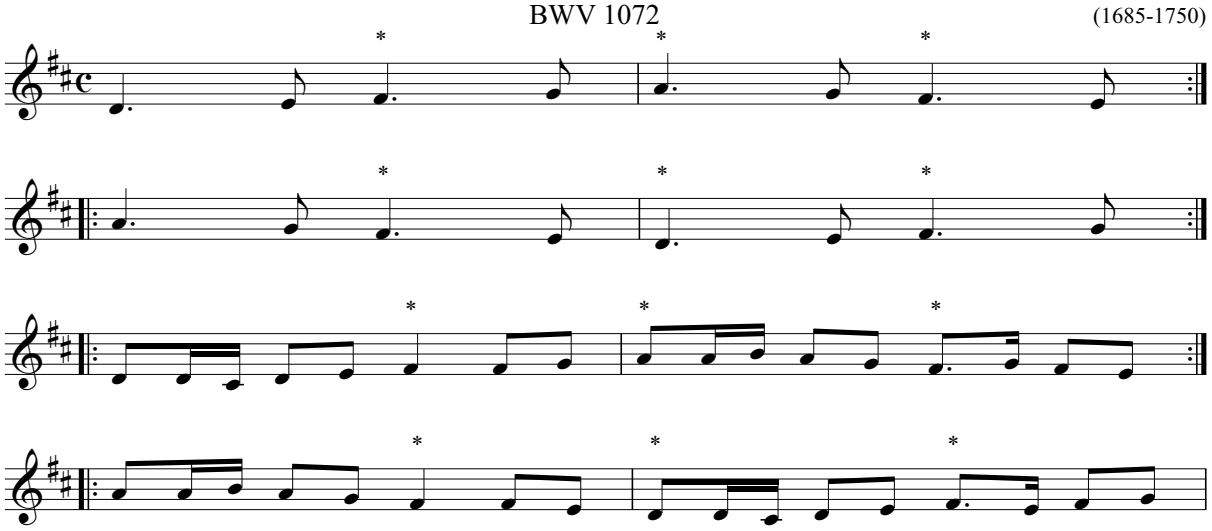
Change the pattern to 3 + 2 + 3 or 2 + 3 + 3.

Instead of tapping the back of left hand with right hand, this could be ‘clap both hands with someone else. If four people come together the the game can be played with two pair doing different combinations of threes and twos at the same time. The four people should stand on the four corners of a square with each pair facing each other diagonally across the square. The game can be played in groups of six too.



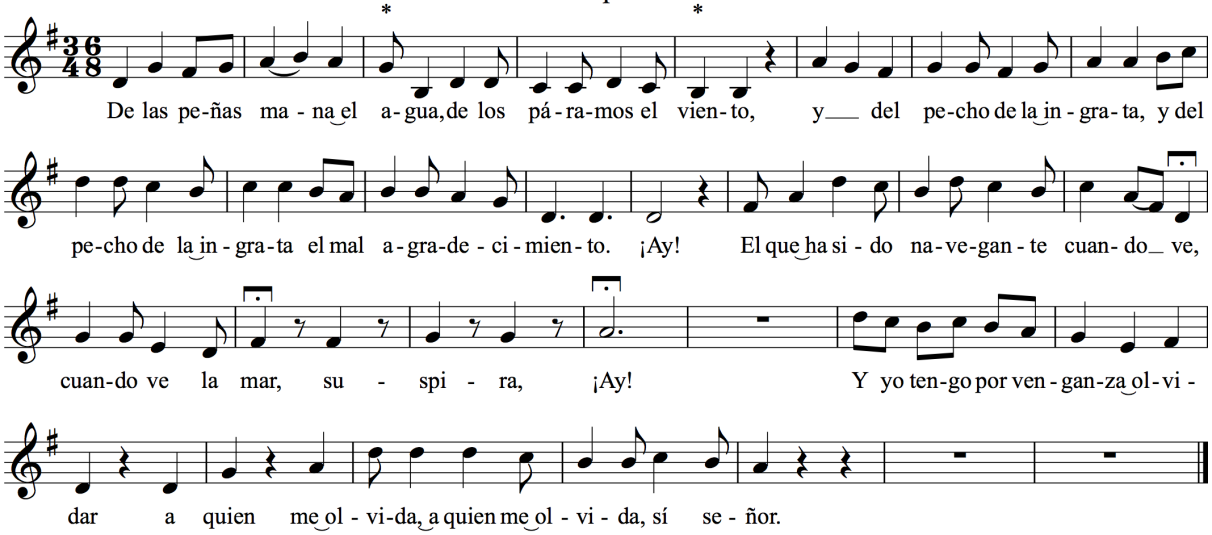
Bach JS
(1685-1750)

BWV 1072



Juan B Plaza
Venezuela 1898

Golpe



Blow

From the rock springs the water, from the high plains the wind,
And from the heart of the ungrateful: ingratitude.
Ay! He who has been a sailor when he sees the sea, sighs, Ay!
And I have as revenge to forget him who forgets me, yes, sir.

21

[21] Canons are taken from: Bach - CPDL.org; Byrd – Kings Singers (2002); Golpe – Weber (1994)