

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.