Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy E-Journal 2013-2017

Volume 1 Article 3

1-1-2013

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Think back to the first time you stood in front of an ear training class. Were you prepared? Did you feel you had all the tools necessary to make on-the-spot decisions regarding pitch, rhythm, and harmony? Or were you reciting scale degrees in your head while students entered the room? After all, you were taught on numbers and your new school demanded that you use solfege! Many of us had the opportunity to develop our teaching strategies through trial and error, by serving as a teaching assistant during our graduate studies. Any teaching experience that accompanied us to that first theory class was minimal, if at all. Over the years, countless graduate students have corresponded with me about how unprepared they feel to actually TA a course. I routinely receive phone calls from recent graduates asking questions on how to teach a fundamental concept to the student who just doesn't seem to "get it." After all, the students who we send to graduate programs are the students who always seem to understand the concepts quickly. Unfortunately, many undergraduates do not have the opportunity to gain teaching experience in theory or aural skills until they are put directly in front of the classroom, whether in the K-12 classroom or on the university level. The establishment of an undergraduate music peer-tutoring center seeks to give tutors such an experience, providing undergraduates with the opportunity to formulate their own teaching philosophies, while gaining valuable experience in peer teaching and theoretical problem solving.

Beyond the benefits for those students looking to refine their teaching style, peer tutoring in music theory provides a valuable experience to those students who are working to gain mastery on the more difficult concepts of analysis and aural skills. Music theory is a skill that is constantly building upon itself, and the fundamentals must be mastered before understanding the true interpretation of a particular composition. Through peer tutoring, students have the

opportunity to ask questions that they may not be comfortable asking in class. There are many instances in which the deficiencies of the quiet student in the back of the room are not realized until the first exam, often weeks into the semester! By working with their peers, students can meet more regularly outside of class, in an environment where they feel more at ease. Even more importantly, the fundamentals can be drilled and mistakes can be addressed quickly, thus leading to a greater understanding of what is being taught in the classroom. The development of a peer tutoring lab enables the students to drop in for additional help at any time to receive assistance from students they consider peers and friends.

Many institutions across the country have embraced student-led tutoring, believing it to be a rewarding and successful operation, enabling students the chance to teach their peers. It is standard practice for campuses to employ writing centers where a student can drop in and receive assistance from peers in traditional academic subjects such as math, science, and foreign-language studies. Music departments across the country routinely hire upperclassmen and graduate students to tutor students enrolled in the lower levels of music theory. For example, the Student Success Center at the University of South Carolina offers set hours for music theory tutoring and the Learning Resource Center at Youngstown State University also employs one music theory tutor. Other universities, such as Dallas Baptist University and Palm Beach Atlantic University, have music theory tutors that work with students one-on-one by request.[1] Over the past few years, several universities have created music tutoring centers, where music students have the opportunity to drop in and receive help from upperclassmen who excel in different areas of music theory, history, and aural skills. These schools include, but are not limited to Michigan State University, East Carolina University, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Appalachian State University.

The Music Tutoring Lab at Appalachian State University

Johanna Albrecht, "Students as Teachers: The Effects of a Student Run Music Tutoring Center" (paper presented at the annual National Conference for Undergraduate Research, Missoula, Montana, April 15-17, 2010).

In the spring of 2008, I began to plan and implement a music-tutoring center at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. It was my vision that the tutoring center would create an environment where both tutors and tutees would work together in order to create significant learning experiences. With support from Academic Affairs the tutoring center was officially opened in the fall of 2008, housed in a classroom within the Broyhill Music Center, and staffed by one graduate director and five undergraduate tutors. Due to the success of the center and high demand for tutoring, the lab now employs eight undergraduate tutors and two graduate directors. The lab is open five nights per week from 7:00-10:00 pm, and students are encouraged to use the lab for any issues related to music theory, music history and aural skills. Each undergraduate tutor is paid $250 a semester while the graduate directors receive graduate assistantships for their work in the lab. The classroom is equipped with twenty tablet PCs, two electronic keyboards with headphones and stands, a LaserJet printer, instrumental method books and textbooks in music theory, aural skills, and music history.

In the past four years, the music tutoring lab has been staffed by twenty-six undergraduates and three graduate students, many of whom have gone on to successful teaching experiences on both the K-12 and university level. Several alumni of the program are now enrolled in graduate programs in music theory and many plan to continue to research pedagogical techniques that they first observed in the center.

Quantitative Data-The Student Viewpoint

Beginning in the spring of 2009, data have been collected regarding the usage of the lab and its effectiveness. As Table I indicates, the lab has logged over 3000 hours in the past seven semesters, averaging 432 hours per semester and serving 377 individual students. The top six courses in which enrolled students logged in the most are presented in Table 2.

Semester	Number of Hours

Spring 2009	312
Fall 2009	558
Spring 2010	310
Fall 2010	506
Spring 2011	376
Fall 2011	463
Spring 2012	500
Total	3025

Table 1[2]
Number of tutoring hours logged in per semester

Course and Topics Covered	**Total Number of Hours**
Theory 2 (Chromatic Harmony)	**302**
Music History (All Levels Combined)	**216**
Contemporary Musicianship II (Theory for Music Industry Majors, Chromatic Harmony)	**197**
Theory 4 (Large Scale Formal Analysis)	**166**
Contemporary Musicianship I (Diatonic Harmony)	**159**
Aural 2 (Diatonic melodies, Harmonic Dictation)	**121**

[2] It is interesting to note that the hours seem to dramatically decrease during the spring semester. While there was no qualitative data given to determine the reason for this decrease, the winter weather during the spring semester of 2009, 2010, and 2011 could have played a significant role in students wanting to come to campus for additional help. The lab was closed many evenings due to poor driving conditions.

Table 2
Number of tutoring hours logged in by course

In order to further evaluate the data collected, the forty-five students who utilized the lab most often were chosen for individual study. The students selected spent at least fourteen hours in the lab during the course of the seven-semester period. Table 3 includes information collected on these forty-five students.

Major	Music Education-24 students Music Industry-9 students Performance-7 students Music Therapy-5 students
Average GPA	3.14
Average amount of time spent in lab	27.8 hours (over the 7 semester period)
Average visit length	82 minutes
Average number of individual visits	21 (over the 7 semester period)

Table 3
Information collected on selected students

Several T-tests were run in order to evaluate any significance in the relationship between time spent in the lab and final grades in theory, music history, and aural skills courses. Based on the results of the T-test analysis, it was determined that there was a significant relationship between time spent in the lab and higher final grades. Although the tests indicated significant improvement in final grades and in overall GPAs, it was determined that too many factors (including teacher and course level) could possibly skew any statistical data in terms of grades. A control group was also not made available during this study.

Qualitative Analysis-The Student Viewpoint

Over the past four years, students who visited were encouraged to complete a survey regarding their involvement with the tutoring center. Out of the 377 students who visited the lab, only 24 took the time to complete the entire survey. Each student was asked to answer or comment on the following questions:

1. Give three adjectives to describe the environment of the tutoring lab.
2. Why do you continue to use the tutoring lab? Please elaborate as necessary.
3. Have the tutors been able to focus on your individual needs? Have they been able to give you ample time in individual attention?
4. Have there been any instances in which the tutor's direction conflicted with that of your instructor? Be as specific as possible.
5. Did you find the materials in the lab helpful? If no, what materials would you like to see added to the tutoring center?
6. Are the tutoring center's hours convenient and sufficient? Would you like to see more open hours? If so, when?
7. How do you feel that your attendance in the tutoring center has impacted your performance in your academic classes?

The results of this survey indicate that students find the lab to be helpful, inviting, and productive. Over 77% of the students who responded to the survey listed helpful as the first adjective in their description of the environment of the lab. Students repeatedly commented on the teaching abilities of the tutors and the ability to focus on individual needs of the student. One student comment stated, "Yes, every time I've needed help, they've been there, ready to help and persisted until I no longer needed assistance." While the majority of the results show there was no conflict between a tutor's direction and that of an instructor, one survey included the following statement in response to question 4, "A few times, just with melodic and harmonic dictation and how they presented to me." The student did not expound on this to say if the presentation was more or less helpful; however, it was clear from this statement that a variety of explanations were presented by the tutors in the lab. This variance in explanation is not only helpful for the tutee, but also for the tutor, enabling him or her to look at an interpretation or approach in several different ways. This is an essential skill for the student planning to teach music theory on the college or high school level.

Overall, the students in the lab feel that their attendance has greatly impacted their performance in academic classes. Many students, especially in aural skills, responded that they would "never have passed without the tutors." I often hear comments in my class that start with the phrase, "In the lab last night, we…" Perhaps it is the reality I observe when I walk into the lab the next morning and see part writing and aural dictation on every single white space available that allows me to support the student perception of the lab. It is a safe, helpful environment. It allows students the opportunity to ask questions and, in the words of another student's response, "achieve my goals and leave more informed then I entered."

The Tutor's Viewpoint

In the Spring of 2011, an additional survey was given to all of the undergraduate tutors for the 2010-2011 academic year in order to collect responses based on their experiences in the lab. Tutors were asked to evaluate their responses on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being strongly disagree, 5 being neutral, and 10 being strongly agree. Table 4 lists the questions and the average response. All ten tutors responded to the survey.

Question	**Average Rating**
I was pleased with my performance in the tutoring lab	7.9
My role as a tutor helped me to develop various teaching techniques.	8.9
My experiences as a tutor enabled me to understand various learning styles.	8.5

My experience as a tutor helped me to gain more knowledge in several subject areas in music.	8.2
The mentoring chain established in the tutoring lab was efficient.	8.0
I have gained confidence in my teaching ability	8.4
Overall, I would rate my experience as a music tutor as excellent.	8.8

Table 4
Responses from Music Center Tutors

While the responses listed above are extremely positive, it is the reaction to the free response questions that provides compelling feedback to the success of the tutoring lab. Each question presented below is followed by student tutor responses.

What are the rewards and challenges of working in the lab?

- It's wonderful to help people to understand something that you love and show them how passionate you are about it. Getting through to a struggling student is both challenging and extremely satisfying.

- Rewards include seeing students go from a place of confusion to one of enlightenment, learning new things myself and making cross-curricular connections myself, and enjoying the company of fellow tutors and tutees. Challenges include the nominal compensation of my time commitment (although I would do it for free) and "down" times when very few or no students come to the lab.

- The challenges of working in the lab include being able to reach all the students. Sometimes it is difficult to transfer information to a student that has a different learning style than you may have. It's been rewarding to team teach with the other tutors, and to see tutees able to tutor other students that are struggling with a student.

- Sometimes you aren't fully able to help a student out if you aren't familiar with a particular style or idea. But sometimes you can, and you can be a big help to those who need it.

- I am always challenged in the tutoring lab, but in a healthy way. Not only have I learned ways to approach different learning styles, but I have also been forced out of my comfort zone. It has made me brush up on my theory skills, and I have learned to think outside the box regarding my teaching styles.

- Helping other students learn in a non-stressful environment is so rewarding as a fellow student and future teacher. It is such a pleasure to help my peers understand something that I consider very important and interesting. It can also be challenging to help a fellow student, which strengthens my abilities as a teacher. To communicate with students in a safe, clear way can be difficult. Students might want to use the tutoring lab as an opportunity to gripe about their

teachers, and as a tutor, I have had to help students work through their challenges without having a hateful conversation about a professor. It can be difficult.

- I have loved getting to work with a variety of students on different levels. It has tremendously helped my ability to teach many different subject areas!

- One of the biggest challenges is working with large groups who want to learn the same thing but have different learning styles and speeds or when members of a group come in later than others. It can be hard to balance what information to spend extra time on and what is holding some members of the group back. This experience has helped me a lot in classroom situations where there are many students. One of the greatest rewards is seeing your own students gain confidence in their classes and start getting better grades. They'll come up to me in the hall to show me their tests or to tell me about their last sight singing exam and it's so great to see them smile about it and feel confident.

Has working as an undergraduate tutor changed your opinion concerning teaching?

- I discovered a few years ago that I love teaching music and being a tutor has only reinforced that.

- Working as an undergraduate tutor has not really changed my opinion concerning teaching, but it has affirmed to me that it is something I enjoy.

- It's changed my opinion about my teaching future. I thought I wanted to teach at the k-12 level, but working in the tutoring lab has made me realize that I want to eventually teach at the university level.

- Although I do not want to teach grade-school age students, working as an undergraduate tutor has helped me re-evaluate my stance on teaching at the college level. I have really enjoyed working with students who want to do well in music theory and aural skills. Their desire to learn and get things right has encouraged me to be the best teacher possible.

- Working as a tutor has made me so much more excited to be a teacher. I have been looking forward to teaching for a long time, but actually having the opportunity to work with students makes such a huge difference. In the lab, I am encouraged by the students' success and understanding. And it can be really fun in there working with people.

- It has furthered my desire to teach!

- Absolutely. When I came into the tutoring lab to start teaching I didn't really feel that I had any kind of "teaching style" or any particular strengths but I've come to know myself as a teacher very well. I am aware of what my strengths are and I've had to develop and work towards fixing my weaknesses. Before becoming a tutor I had no plans to be a teacher at all and now I am hoping to teach music theory at the college level.

Have you learned techniques while working as an undergraduate tutor that you can apply in classroom teaching? If yes, please elaborate.

- Being able to relate musical concepts directly to the students focus in music helps them to understand the concepts at a deeper level so that they can retain the information. Finding that connection takes knowledge of the students instrument area and their major subject area.
- I have learned how to question and how to break complex concepts down into more comprehensible parts, and I already apply these techniques in classroom teaching.

- Yes, I have learned how to think on the fly, grown more patient, and learned how to teach using my personality for my benefit.

- I've definitely developed a few new ways to teach certain things. I try to come up with as many ways to solve/practice a problem so the student can hopefully understand at least one of them.

- Working in the lab has helped me understand learning styles. In the lab, I usually work one on one with students, and this helps me tailor my teaching style to their needs as a student. In the classroom setting, I am now more aware when a student is struggling, and I usually have a better understanding of what I can do to help them.

- Seeing how different students work has been the main thing that I will apply to teaching. For example, I had one student this semester approach identifying secondary dominant chords in a unique and specific way that made sense to him. He helped me to understand his way of thinking, and now I will take that with me. Knowing how different students struggle and succeed is always a helpful resource in being a teacher.

- I have definitely learned how to break down material in order to ensure that the student is understanding it. Nothing feels better than taking a student from "I have no idea" to "I get it!"

- Absolutely. I had to learn how to make theory collaborative and accessible. As a student, I always felt like a professor just told us the material and we had to work on our own to learn it. After working in the lab I have learned that my teaching techniques greatly affect a student's ability to comprehend and retain information. I have learned to get students singing and to use questions to guide students to answers. I never just hand out answers to my students, instead I give them the tools to find the answers themselves. I have learned to create a safe environment in the lab where students can make mistakes that lead to understanding and correct answers instead of making mistakes that lead to frustration or embarrassment.

Conclusion

The positive effects of peer tutoring have been well-documented in several research studies, most recently in the 2011 study at the National Formosa University in Taiwan. The conclusion to the 2011 study indicates that “peer tutoring has been successful in regard to tutors and tutees’

achievements, motivation and attitudes."[3] While improvement in grades for those students who attended the ASU music tutoring lab was tracked and indicates significant improvement, it is perhaps the "achievements, motivation, and attitudes" of the tutors themselves that is the most telling in terms of success for the lab. The student tutors have found this experience to be insightful, allowing each to reevaluate their own perception of how music should and can be taught. Each tutor was challenged to use a variety of methods while also working personally with learning styles and challenges. In *The Tutoring Revolution: Applying Research for Best Practices, Policy Implications, and Student Achievement*, the authors identify ten key factors for making a tutoring program more effective. Several of the factors discussed in this text are used continually in the ASU music tutoring lab, including tutor preparation through an undergraduate music theory pedagogy course, tracking of tutoring sessions, continuous feedback, and collaboration with faculty and other tutors.[4]

The success of the music tutoring center at Appalachian State University provides a standard by which other universities can implement teaching experiences for the undergraduate student while also supporting students who are struggling in lower division music classes. The lab's success is based entirely on the dedication of the student tutors who are willing to think outside of their comfort zone, who strive to empower lower division students to achieve mastery of musical concepts.

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