Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy

Volume 3 Article 5

3-1-1989

Ear Training and Integrated Aural Skills: Three Recent Texts

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EAR TRAINING AND INTEGRATED AURAL SKILLS: THREE RECENT TEXTS[1]

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This is the second in a series of three articles. In the first article,[2] I reviewed five recent sightsinging texts. In this one, I review three recent ear-training and integrated aural-skills texts. The line of division between these first two articles is slightly blurred; two of the three texts reviewed here—although they are both touted as integrated texts—consist largely of sight-inging materials, so that many issues raised in my last article will surface again in this one. Finally, I will have raised a number of issues in both articles that can only be fully addressed in a third article on aural-skills acquisition in general, which will appear in an upcoming issue of this journal.

The three books under examination here,[3] in fact, represent three different breeds of text. Bruce Benward's *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening* is purely an ear-training manual, in the sense that its activities include only those traditionally and directly associated with music listening skills. Earl Henry and James Mobberley's *Musicianship: Ear Training, Rhythmic Reading, and Sight Singing* is truly an integrated text: it includes a nearly equal split between listening and performance skills. Robert D. Levin and Louis Martin's *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* contains mostly performance-oriented materials with barely more than suggestions for ear training in the text, but the *Teacher's Manual* does contain a large number of excerpts for ear training.

Ear Training and *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* are each organized in an integrated fashion. Every chapter or unit of these books presents new materials in various areas of pitch, rhythm, harmony, etc. In contrast, *Musicianship* separates these activities into three large sections—Ear Training, Rhythmic Reading, and Sight Singing—and even subdivides the Ear Training section into Rhythm, Melody, and Harmony. There are at least two consequences of these different forms of organization: 1) users of the first two books *need* not page back and forth (for the most part) among various sections of the books; and 2) users of the first two books *can not* page back and forth (for the most part) among various sections of the books. *Musicianship*, therefore, seems at first awkward to use since at any

given time in the curriculum, elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, ear training, rhythmic reading, and sightsinging will be spread about various sections of the book; yet this very feature allows for some reordering of those elements. On the other hand, *Ear Training* and *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* both require that their various materials be presented in order. In Benward's words, "For best results... assignments in Melody Unit 1, Harmony Unit 1, and Rhythm Unit 1 should be made during the first week of the semester or the quarter and continued in like fashion throughout the year."[4]

All three of the books introduce the complexities of rhythm and pitch in roughly the same order. The rhythmic materials progress from simple meters with only a few durations, through compound meters and various beat divisions, to complex and changing meters; the pitch materials progress from stepwise motion and skips within the tonic triad, through diatonic chordal configurations, to chromaticism and some atonality. Each book is accompanied by an instructor's manual that describes its contents and sequence, provides excerpts for ear training, and offers guidelines for classroom presentation and pacing.

The authors of these texts rely to varying degrees on music literature to accomplish their goals. The greater part of the music in *Musicianship* has been newly composed by the authors. Approximately half of the music in Benward's *Ear Training* is excerpted from music literature. Levin and Martin, although they do include self-composed exercises, lean even more heavily on literature. They write, "This text is based upon a belief that the best way to stimulate the ear is with real music and the actual difficulties encountered in performance and listening. Literature spanning eight centuries has been chosen with painstaking care to inspire and to promote continuous progress."[5]

EAR TRAINING: A TECHNIQUE FOR LISTENING

Bruce Benward's *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening* is divided into 16 units (i.e., chapters), each of which contains one or more sections devoted to each of the topics melody, harmony, or rhythm. To coordinate these sections, Benward suggests that, "For best results, material from all three [topics] should be presented concurrently." (*Instructor's Manual*, p. xi) This locks the user into Benward's sequence of study.

The book is intended to be used in two semesters—and in that it differs from the other two books, which are meant for a two-year sequence—but Benward advises that some instructors may wish to spread the book over three or four semesters. Still, in discussing the coordination between aural

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skills and theory books, Benward recommends that *Ear Training* "is designed to accompany most first-year theory texts" (*Instructor's Manual*, p. xi). Instructors who wish to continue beyond *Ear Training* might choose Benward's *Advanced Ear Training*.[6]

Benward justifies the study of aural skills by the following statement: "the vast array of tonal configurations found in music comprises the basic material of the art, and the ingredients are digested to produce aesthetic pleasure. Thus, listening for recognition of musical devices and structures should not hinder aesthetic enjoyment, but should, on the other hand, enhance it considerably" (p. xi). He continues, "Intelligent listening is the most important thing a musician does. No matter what high level of dexterity and accuracy is achieved with an instrument or voice, success is inevitably limited and regulated by the ability of the ear to discriminate and guide the musical performance " (p. xiii).

Benward also discusses his text's point of departure: "The book must begin at the beginning. The most basic elements of music are intervals, simple melodies, simple triads, scales, and simple rhythms" (p. xi). But are these truly the "most basic elements" of music? For that matter, should they necessarily be taught first in the curriculum? He asserts that "Until the basics are mastered, the complex idioms of composition cannot be undertaken" (p. xi). To what manner of "complex idioms" is Benward referring? I have taught business majors to hear the difference between open and closed cadences while music majors struggle to distinguish between tritones and minor sixths. He states his case most fully in the *Instructor's Manual*: "The author cautions that thorough training in the fundamentals is a prerequisite for the study of larger relationships, the structural forces in music. Students who cannot identify a perfect fifth are incapable of perceiving a modulation to the dominant in a two-part or three-part composition" (*Instructor's Manual*, pp. xi-xii). I think that this is not necessarily true. There are "naive" listeners who hear and understand such musical structures without learning their labels and without connecting them to "fundamentals" such as perfect fifths. We must have a better idea of what the fundamentals are to teach meaningful aural skills in a more successful sequence. Although the matter is far from being resolved, the notion of interval and chord training as a prerequisite to contextual study has been seriously and, I believe, correctly challenged.[7]

Benward lays out the goals to be achieved by the student who successfully completes the text. These include mastery of the following: 1) Interval identification; 2) Melodic dictation; 3) Chord progression identification; 4) Identification of rhythmic patterns; and 5) Recognition of "larger patterns" such as "sequences, rhythmic repetitions, harmonic rhythm, phrase extensions, cadence types, and so on" (pp.xi-xii).

The final levels of difficulty reached in the text incorporate the recognition of short two- and three-part forms, harmonic identification of non-dominant seventh chords, modulations, secondary dominants, augmented-sixth chords, and the rhythmic detection of "subtriplets," syncopations, and changing meters (*Instructor's Manual*, p. xi).

Ear Training incorporates the following types of activities: mode identification from melodies or scales; error detection (melodic, contrapuntal, and harmonic); melodic dictation; multi-voice dictation; interval identification (melodic and harmonic); chord-function identification; chord-quality identification; chord-position identification (i.e., chord member in the soprano voice); chord-inversion identification; rhythmic dictation; scale-degree identification; mode identification (from scales and melodies); identification of harmonic vs. non-harmonic tones; melodic-figure identification (e.g., sequence, rhythmic repetition); harmonic dictation; cadence-type identification; identification of phrase relationships; identification of small forms. That is a rather long list of activities, but one of the advantages of using a text for ear training is that it forces an instructor to present a variety of drill and testing environments and forces a student to use his ear in a variety of ways.

An issue which I must address concerns how some of the above activities are carried out. Benward directs the student taking melodic dictation to memorize the entire melody, sing it, then write it down (p. 2). I have a few guarded reservations concerning this procedure. First, students should be made aware that, at times, remembering an entire musical passage will not be possible or practical. Thus, students should develop the skills required to focus on and remember portions of a heard event—a process similar to that presented in Unit 7B (more on that in a moment). Second, there seems to be no indication of how students should bridge the gap between memory and notation. Certainly, most students must be taught how to understand what they remember of a dictation. Benward suggests attention to this all-important stage only in Unit 7B, which covers two-phrase melodies. There he recommends that students "try to memorize each phrase" and to "Think of the scale degree each pitch represents by including solfeggio syllables or numbers" (p. 78). This, to me, is a more practical description of the kind of intelligent music listening these books aim at developing.

Benward makes other recommendations in the *Instructor's Manual*, where he indicates that it "might be wise" to help the students "have the scale well in mind," through singing it, before playing a melodic dictation (p.4). It seems to me that an important and basic skill (more basic than identifying intervals or triad quality) is the ability to infer the tonic (and scale structure or mode) from the context of a heard musical passage. After

a listener remembers a particular passage, that listener ought to be able to determine which pitch is the tonic and thereby determine the functions of the other pitches in the passage. Along those same lines, Benward's practice of providing the student with a starting pitch written on the staff moves the aural-skills classroom one more step away from actual experience. Benward is not alone in this practice—it appears in many aural-skills textbooks and classes—but he even doubles it in two-phrase dictations. In them, Benward provides pitches for the beginning of each phrase (see, for example, p. 78), thereby revealing two "basic" pieces of information: the rhythmic placement and pitch level for the beginning of each phrase. It is precisely such information that students should learn to infer from listening. Once again, a basic skill in aural perception is the identification of all pitches in a passage, even (perhaps especially) the starting pitch.

Benward also directs the student to "count the meter" as the preparatory measures are heard (p. 9). What preparatory measures? He seems to assume that all instructors would naturally count aloud a measure or two before beginning to play a dictation—a fair assumption based on many of the aural-skills classes I have observed, but this is another routine that separates the classroom from real life. Even more drastically, Benward urges, "In extreme cases . . . tapping the meter during dictation, or drastically emphasizing the accented meter beats often helps" (*Instructor's Manual*, p. 13). Once again, meter should be inferred from the musical experience, not laid upon it by the theory teacher. Does this make things harder for the student? Perhaps at first, but this is one of the "basic" skills that must be developed if we are to begin truly at the beginning.

Many of the preceding criticisms might be leveled at almost any ear-training text. *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening* bears the brunt of those criticisms in this article for two simple reasons: 1) it is the only one of the three books reviewed here devoted entirely to ear training; and 2) it happens to be the first book in this article. *Ear Training* is a fine text; it has continued to improve in its second and third editions, and is remarkably free of errors.[8] Most instructors will find that *Ear Training* can meet their needs in a number of ways. Even after careful consideration of my caveats, you may wish only to white out all of those starting pitches . . . .

MUSICIANSHIP: EAR TRAINING, RHYTHMIC READING, AND SIGHT SINGING

Earl Henry and James Mobberley claim that *Musicianship: Ear Training, Rhythmic Reading, and Sight Singing* is "three books in one: a complete course in EAR TRAINING, RHYTHMIC READING, and SIGHT SINGING" (vol.

I, p. ix). *Musicianship* is published in two volumes, and each volume is divided into three sections: Ear Training, Rhythmic Reading, and Sight Singing, but the Ear Training sections occupy more than half of each of the volumes.[9] Most exercises in the book appear in two sets. Set I is intended for classroom use; Set II (also available on tape) is intended for individual use outside of the classroom.

Coordination among the three sections of the book (Ear Training, Rhythmic Reading, Sight Singing) is problematic. The authors provide some tables (*Instructor's Manual*, pp. 2-9) that suggest pacing and coordination of the book's materials, but these suggestions raise some pedagogical questions. As an example, consider the authors' recommendations for study during week eight of the freshman year. They recommend working on Ear Training exercises R-4, M-8, and M-9 while covering Chapter 6 in Rhythmic Reading and Chapter 14 in Sight Singing. While assuring the reader that I have chosen this particular correlation at random, I would like to point out certain inconsistencies and difficulties in coordinating such activities. First of all, merely finding each of these places in the text is rather awkward. Page footers are often nonexistent, occasionally incorrect (for example, in vol. I, p. 168—the second page in the Rhythmic Reading section—is labelled "Ear Training"), and never indicate the number of a chapter; one must constantly refer to the table of contents when moving from one section of the book to another. Secondly, the materials found in each of these sections do not always correlate with one another. In the above example, R-4 contains rhythmic dictations in only compound meters, M-8 and M-9 involve scale degree recognition, Chapter 6 "introduces" the dotted quarter note (although it has already appeared in R-2), and Chapter 14 drills the singing of seconds through an intervallic approach entirely in simple meters. While it might be argued that this approach provides a certain amount of variety, it seems to me that there is little or no coordination to it. For example, the two sections entitled Ear Training and Rhythmic Reading are not well coordinated. The very first set of rhythmic dictation exercises (R–1) contains duple divisions of the beat; such division is not introduced in Rhythmic Reading until after extensive exercises consisting of rhythms one beat and longer. Similarly, the dotted beat in simple meters is introduced immediately after compound meters in the Rhythmic Reading section whereas there is a delay of several chapters between the two in the Sight Singing section.

Musicianship is intended for use over a two-year course of study, and (as mentioned above) the *Instructor's Manual* includes various tables containing recommended pacing for those two years. The book was designed to accompany Earl Henry's *Music Theory*,[10] but the authors claim that it is "compatible with most any theory text" (*Instructor's Manual*, p. 1).

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Similar to Benward, Henry and Mobberley justify each of the activities contained in their text. Unlike *Ear Training* however, the Preface of *Musicianship* contains little of this information. For example, *Musicianship's* Preface explains the purpose of rhythmic study by saying, "One of the greatest obstacles to the appreciation of twentieth-century music is an inability to perform the often complex rhythms" (vol. I, p. ix). The Preface says little more to assert the necessity of studying rhythms. On the basis of this Preface, a student might wonder what warrants devoting a separate quarter of the book to unpitched rhythmic reading. Only later in the book do the authors give more encouragement: "Whether practicing exercises, performing rehearsed works, analyzing, or composing, musicians benefit from increased proficiency in the recognition of musical [rhythmic] patterns" (vol. I, p. 167). Also later in the book, Henry and Mobberley tell the student that "Sight singing is one of the most important skills any professional musician can possess. No matter what instrument they play, performers can improve their reading ability by studying sight singing. For composers, performers, teachers, and researchers, sight-singing proficiency is crucial; the ability to read a musical pattern and mentally 'hear' it as it would sound if played is an indispensable tool" (vol. I, p. 245). Curiously, the authors never discuss the purposes of ear-training study. At best, they tell the student of the difficulties he may encounter and then describe the manner in which *Musicianship* will present the subject (vol. I, p. 1). All of these platitudes, along with Benward's, amount to little more than cheering the student on. Perhaps an aural-skills text is not the place for it, but I would like to see more justifications on the basis of logical principles related to learning theory.

Musicianship begins at about the same level of difficulty at which Benward's *Ear Training* does. However, since it is intended to span two years, it deals with more complex material at the book's end. In addition to the material covered in Benward's *Ear Training*, Henry and Mobberley's *Musicianship* explores metric modulation, graphic notation, and various pitch constructions including extended chords, quartal harmony, tone clusters, whole-tone harmony, polytonality, and atonality. Although the sightsinging of these more advanced materials is quite difficult, the advanced pitch constructions are handled in a rather elementary fashion when it comes to ear training. With the exception of a few pages of atonal melodic dictation, the student is merely asked to identify which of the above constructions he has heard. In fact, none of the books reviewed here goes beyond this level.[11] Volume II of *Musicianship* also provides appendices for "Jazz and Popular Styles" (vol. II, pp. 349-63) and "Music Before 1600" (vol. II, pp. 364-78).

Henry and Mobberley adopt an attitude toward the sequence of ear

training that is similar to Benward's. They write, "Ear training generally refers to the development of aural perception through the study of intervals, triads, and scales, and their combination into motives, chord progressions, and complete melodies" (vol. I, p. 1). Like Benward, they have made an assumption about what is "basic" in aural skills. I think that this assumption is, in part, false. It is often more difficult for a student to identify intervals out of context than to understand and notate a melody. And playing a scale instead of a melody removes from mode identification the most fundamental of procedures involved in that activity: aural detection of the tonic.

Musicianship presents intervallic and contextual drills in what the authors call "two complementary routes: traditionally, from the standpoint of implied scale and harmonic structure, and at the same time, through the study of individual intervals as abstract materials. This dual emphasis permits students to begin with the music they know best (from the common-practice period), master these materials, and *at the same time* begin building a competency in twentieth-century idioms" (vol. I, p. x). All three texts attempt to include intervallic as well as tonally functional approaches to sightsinging and ear training. *Musicianship*—while still primarily tonally functional like the other texts—includes intervallic study both in and out of tonal context. The titles of Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen are representative: "Sixths and Sevenths in Tonal Contexts" and "Sixths and Sevenths in Intervallic Patterns." In *Musicianship*, this intervallic approach is restricted for the most part to the sightsinging chapters, and does not affect the progression of ear-training materials.

As I did with Benward's *Ear Training*, I will list the types of activities prescribed by Henry and Mobberley in *Musicianship*. The Ear Training activities include: rhythmic dictation; error detection (rhythmic and melodic only); interval identification; major/minor and modal recognition in scalar and melodic context; scale-degree recognition; pitch-pattern dictation; melodic dictation; chord-quality recognition; chord-inversion recognition; cadence-type identification; harmonic dictation (using only Roman numerals or in actual music notation); identification of non-harmonic tones; chord position (soprano) recognition; two-part dictation; four-part dictation.

The Rhythmic Reading and Sight Singing activities are each divided into patterns (syntactic fragments), exercises (small didactic passages), studies (longer passages, complete with performance indications), excerpts from the literature, and ensembles. The authors feel that the study of rhythm is as important as the study of pitch, and have thus allocated an equally large section of the book to it.

When it comes to rhythm and meter, the authors' pedagogical focus is on notation rather than perception. This is displayed particularly in certain

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chapter headings from the Rhythmic Reading section such as "The Quarter-Note" and "The Eighth-Note." In the latter chapter, both duple division of the beat in quarter-note meters and the entire notion of eighth-note meters are introduced. In a similar fashion, the chapter entitled "The Dotted Quarter-Note; The Dotted Half-Note" presents both compound meters and the dotted beat in simple meters. This method of organization is problematic. The introduction of new materials ought to be predicated on their position in a well-defined learning sequence and grouped with other materials which are performed and/or perceived in a similar fashion. In this way, various types of compound meters (based on eighth, quarter, and sixteenth notes) might follow a thorough grounding in triple meters (also based on various note values). My point here is that a particular symbol changes its meaning in various contexts, and it is these contexts—and not the symbols—that should determine their own order of presentation. Along these same lines, the book uses very few beat units other than the quarter note in simple meters and the eighth note in compound meters. Even the twentieth-century excerpts (which should offer a rich choice of meters) seem to suffer from this metric prejudice.

The Ear Training sections of the book use a programmed format, in which the correct answers appear directly to the right of the student's response blanks. In practice, the student must cover these correct answers with paper or some other object to avoid seeing them. The authors admit that "this procedure will be more convenient to the left-handed than the right-handed" (vol. I, p. 1).

As Benward does, Henry and Mobberley make very specific recommendations as to how ear training should be drilled. Their instructions to the student concerning melodic dictation include the following:

> *Listen* to the phrase and memorize it by singing it back (silently) one or two times; only then should you actually begin notating. The first pitch is always given, and metronome taps set the tempo. Students generally develop their own individual styles and approaches to melodic dictation. For beginners, however, the following may be helpful.
>
> *Listen* before writing.
>
> Keep the tonic pitch in mind.

> Compare the first and last pitches (often they will be the same). If you know the last pitch, you can usually work backward when problems arise.
>
> *Expect* patterns to be either scales or triad outlines.
>
> *Expect* an anacrusis to be dominant in function.
>
> Draw on your knowledge of theory to anticipate harmonic and melodic idioms (a leap to the fourth scale degree, for example, will often be followed by stepwise movement to the third scale degree) (vol. I, p. 69).

The instruction to begin notating only after singing back is a sound one, but once again the student is left without a clue as to how to translate that musical memory into notation. At this point, students should be receiving rigorous training in understanding pulse, beat, meter, proportions of rhythms (as opposed to absolute values—e.g., quarter notes), the tonic, modes, and scale degrees (as opposed to absolute pitches) as heard events. In other words, they should be able to understand what they hear without regard to a particular key or meter. One might suspect that Henry and Mobberley are driving at something like this when they tell the instructor that "Students might be advised to develop a personal system of shorthand rhythmic notation"; perhaps using only note stems, or other abbreviated rhythmic symbols (*Instructor's Manual*, p. 19). The problem with this approach is that it only substitutes one form of absolute rhythmic notation for another: a quarter note without a note head is still a quarter note (it's only faster to write). My worry here is that we might turn our students into musical shorthand-takers, thinking little about what they are writing, only trying to get it down on paper as fast as possible. On the contrary, the best ear-training students listen, think, and then write; the worst students try to write frantically while the music is sounding and then wait nervously for the next playing. In the aural-skills class, getting the right notes is not necessarily all that matters. In fact, if all a student learns is to write down what he hears, there are few applications for this skill in the musical world. We shouldn't train a world of dictation-takers; we should educate a world of musicians who can think with their ears.

I also have some concerns about Henry and Mobberley's recommendations to the instructor about the manner in which dictations should be given. They write, "To establish the key on the taped performances, a scale precedes many of the melodic dictation exercises. Likewise, a progression

is heard before many of the harmonic dictation drills." The Manual goes on to recommend that a similar procedure should be adopted if the exercises are to be performed live by the instructor (*Instructor's Manual*, p. 17). This procedure seems valid to me only in the case of exercises consisting of small melodic or harmonic fragments that could be ambiguous as to their key. Any music that clearly defines a key should not have to be preceded by anything. As discussed above, an important aural skill is the inference of a tonic from musical context; a student who can not identify the tonic of a musical passage had better work on developing *that* skill first before moving on to the exercises in these volumes. *Musicianship* also provides starting pitches for melodic and harmonic dictations. My concerns expressed with regard to this practice in *Ear Training* apply here as well.

Similarly, Henry and Mobberley define the parameters for rhythmic dictation: "Small notes preceding each frame tell the student how many metronome taps will be heard on the tape. These cues are included in the instructors manual and should be used for class dictation as well" (*Instructor's Manual*, p. 16). It should be obvious to the reader by this point that musical pulse and meter should be inferred by the student and not provided by the instructor. Finally, when presenting rhythmic dictations in "mixed" or changing meters, the authors even give answer spaces containing blank measures with all of the meter changes written in (vol. II, pp. 43-45; 47-48). This precludes teaching a fundamental skill involved in hearing changing meters: the ability to determine just when and how the meter does change.

Frequent errors and omissions appear in the first printing of *Musicianship*.[12] Errata are listed in the appendix to the *Instructor's Manual*, pp. 225-227, and are followed by four pages of corrected musical examples. These errors and omissions are often significant, frequently introducing errors in musical notation or misdirecting the reader with regard to section or item numbers.

However, there are many more errors beyond those corrected in the errata. These include missing notes (e.g., vol. II, p. 103, Exercise 2), missing rests (e.g., vol. I, p. 293, Exercise 6), and missing barlines (e.g., vol. I, p. 284, Exercise 1), as well as shading of highlighted notes to the point of illegibility (e.g., vol. II, p. 62, Exercise 6). A discussion of how a half note tied to a quarter may be replaced with a dotted half note (vol. II, p. 217) is turned into a confusing mess through the omission of the dot. Debussy's fifth Prelude is incorrectly identified as "Les collines d'Anacori" (vol. I, p. 222). There are many other such typographical errors in *Musicianship*, far too many to list here.

On many pages of my review copy, the printing is flawed to the point of garbling the music. Staff lines are occasionally broken or faded (e.g., vol. II, p. 63, Exercises 1-3), note stems have disappeared (e.g., vol. I, p. 170, first

example), and extraneous blotches appear in some musical examples (e.g., vol. I, p. 174, Exercise 3). In sum, regardless of how well this book might meet your teaching needs, its numerous flaws would severely cripple its effectiveness.

I hope that, after extensive editing, Prentice-Hall releases a second printing of *Musicianship*. The book offers an enormous amount of ear-training material and combines it with a variety of rhythmic and sight singing exercises. It would be a shame for all of that to remain in its current condition.

SIGHT SINGING AND EAR TRAINING THROUGH LITERATURE

Robert D. Levin and Louis Martin have divided *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* into forty lessons. The table of contents (pp. vi-xv) appears as a detailed ten-page chart outlining the rhythms, meters, keys, melodic intervals, pitch groups, harmonic progressions, ear-training materials, clefs, and transpositions that are introduced in each of the forty lessons. The chart also suggests how these materials might be spread over four semesters. The text itself is organized around a semester schedule, being arranged into "four groups of ten lessons each, with a review after every fifth lesson" (*Teacher's Manual*, p. 1).

Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature takes a slightly unusual approach by separating the introduction of new concepts from the introduction of new contexts in which those concepts might occur. Thus, for instance, although the major mode is introduced in Lesson One, the various major keys are introduced over thirty-four lessons. In a similar fashion, basic rhythms of one beat or longer are presented in lesson one, yet meters with the quarter note as a beat unit are used exclusively for the first three lessons, followed by the introduction of half-note and eighth-note meters. The authors' philosophy in this matter is to introduce each new context in a slow and gradual manner, since "students need time to assimilate visual symbols into their reflexes" (*Teacher's Manual*, p. 1). They make no claims or suggestions regarding coordination of this approach with a written theory text.

Levin and Martin's argument for the study of sightsinging is as follows: "your ability to play, sing, and enjoy music will be improved immeasurably as you learn to hear music internally, *before* it is played. Just as you can read a newspaper without having to pronounce the words, you will learn to read a musical score and hear the sounds come alive inside your head" (p. xvii). The authors never discuss how the purposes of ear training

might differ from those of sightsinging.

Sight Singing begins at a level of difficulty comparable to those in the other two texts, but (as noted above) it introduces the various keys and meters in a gradual fashion. The final levels of difficulty the book achieves fall between the other two texts, but (as I will discuss below) it addresses more aspects of music reading than they do. Chromaticism is dealt with through secondary dominants and the Neapolitan and augmented-sixth chords, and although *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* does not present such complexities as graphic notation and tone clusters, it does include polyrhythms, changing meters, and whole–tone, octatonic, and 12–tone materials. Clef and transposition studies are included throughout.

The types of materials to be covered are explicitly listed in the table of contents and in chapter and section headings; however, this information refers almost exclusively to the sightsinging materials. The ear-training materials are included mostly in the *Teacher's Manual*, and one must look in the final chapters to determine where these materials lead. The text itself contains almost exclusively performance activities. These include rhythmic patterns and exercises, scalar and sequential studies, intervallic and triadic patterns, improvisatory drills, clef and transposition studies, and solo and part music from the literature. The few ear-training activities presented in the text are mostly various "self ear-training" exercises, which usually involve singing and often look suspiciously like more sightsinging practice. The *Teacher's Manual* contains a wealth of traditional dictation-type materials: intervals; chords; rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic dictation.

Having chosen not to include actual materials for dictation in the text, the authors have inserted in each lesson a few paragraphs with headings such as "Taking written melodic dictation" or "Taking harmonic dictation." While these paragraphs often provide helpful suggestions about the process of dictation, they just as often place unnecessary restrictions on instructors and students alike. Some of my concerns about these restrictions are similar to those I expressed in relation to *Ear Training* and *Musicianship*. For example, Levin and Martin tell the student that, when taking melodic dictation, "Key, meter, and starting pitch will be announced" (p. 17; see also *Teacher's Manual* pp. 16-17). I am, however, more deeply disturbed by other more specific guidelines given in the text.

The textbook itself implies a certain procedure for taking (and therefore giving) melodic dictation. It tells the student, "Listen to the melody as it is performed once in its entirety. Then notate the melody as it is presented in two-measure fragments" (p. 17). The *Teacher's Manual* is quite specific regarding this procedure:

"The text assumes the following procedure for melodic dictation:

A. *Preliminaries:*

1. Announce the key, meter, and starting pitch.

2. Play the dictation in its entirety to establish musical identity, tonal shape, character, and length.

B. *Notation of the Dictation:*

3. Perform the dictation in two-measure fragments. All fragments except the last end with a "link" - the first note of the following fragment.

4. Play each fragment three times: the student concentrates on the pitches the first time and the rhythm on the second. (This may seem an artificial distinction, but students work far better when each hearing has a specific goal.) The third playing connects onward to the following fragment. This allows the student to check over the old fragment and prepare for the new one.

5. Having students conduct and sing back each fragment after the second hearing provides an opportunity for the voice to check the ear before making a final decision on notation.

C. *Polishing up*

6. Play the entire dictation without interruption to allow a final check and to reaffirm the continuity of the music.

D. *Correction*

7. Collect the papers or call on students to give notes, rhythm, or both for each fragment. Alternately, correct the dictation fragment by fragment after the two playings, dispensing with the final playthrough. In either case a student (or a series of students if the fragment-by-fragment correction technique is used) may be put at the blackboard.

E. *Performance*

8. Have the class sing the melody"

(*Teacher's Manual*, pp. 16-17).

Of all three books, *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* does the most to overlook the importance of musical memory as an important listening skill. If every heard musical event is broken into small

fragments by an instructor, students will never learn to focus their attention and develop their memory beyond those small fragments. My comments with regard to the previous texts regarding memory in the context of dictation apply here in the extreme, and Levin and Martin are so specific and restrictive that one must practically abandon their guidelines altogether to remain pedagogically sound. I know that some readers might be comfortable with a method of presenting dictations that is similar to Levin and Martin's, but I ask you to examine your goals—how can two years of patching two-measure fragments together develop a musician who can listen intelligently in the concert hall, to a colleague or student, or even to recordings (without stopping them every few seconds)?

In addition, they recommend: "On the first hearing, sketch the pitches rapidly using dots to represent note-heads. Develop the habit of writing while each fragment is played" (p. 17). This is inadvisable for at least two reasons: 1) most beginning students can not do this and can not develop this skill by simply working harder at it; 2) even for the best students, the habit of writing while listening downplays the extremely important process of musical memory. My worries about turning students into musical shorthand-takers have been compounded by Levin and Martin's advice.

Similarly, their injunction in the *Teacher's Manual* to concentrate on "the pitches the first time and the rhythm on the second" is questionable. This injunction is presented to the student thus: "Do not attempt to write in the actual note values (like quarter notes) at this stage [when sketching in dots for note heads]" (p. 17). It seems to me that taking pitch dictation without first sketching down rhythms is like trying to hang up flesh without a skeleton—the result is amorphous and can not stand on its own. In taking melodic dictation, one ought to be certain of what one has remembered, then establish a rhythmic framework, and finally place the pitches in that framework. By establishing a rhythmic framework first, a student can place pitches in that framework in the order in which he understands them, working from beginning to end, or from the end backwards, or only with the fragments he can master at any given time. Without first establishing a rhythmic framework, the student is restricted to working sequentially from the first note or he will end up with chicken-scratched pitches in no particular metric location.

Yet part of the problem lies in our system of musical notation: rhythmic values can not be placed on a staff without specifying their pitches. However, if the sketching process is redefined as an intermediary stage that develops musical understanding, it is possible to write down some form of shorthand that represents the rhythmic and pitch functions of what has been heard without resorting to the complexities of standard notation. For instance, the student might write down rhythmic and solmization syllables,

or he might sketch out horizontal lines that represent the relative durations of the rhythms and then write in numbers for the scale degrees.[13]

In Lesson One, Levin and Martin introduce a section entitled "Pitch memory," which I reproduce in its entirety:

> Use a tuning fork (A=440) in order to be able to sing without reference to a musical instrument. When practicing these exercises always sing A440 first. Check against the tuning fork. Then sing A B C and check. This will enable you to find the tonic of C major directly from A440.
>
> Over a period of time you will discover that your accuracy will improve until you have virtually 'memorized' the sound of A440. This is the foundation upon which a good sense of relative pitch is built (p. 10).

How practical is this? I have heard of it being tried in several places, but I have also heard of little success derived from it. I have seen students riding the New York City subways striking their tuning forks on the way to a class. Some students hold informal "A" competitions in which the one who sings closest to A440 wins. Most students can often get close (within a major second), but very few achieve any kind of consistent accuracy. I know of no study that proves that this form of long-term musical memory is teachable. What, then, is the point? It seems to me that "a good sense of relative pitch" measures distances between *heard* tones, especially between various tones and the tonic. Why should I want to hear each pitch in, say, Db major as it relates to A440 (which would be dreadfully awful to dredge up in that context anyway)? Musicians with true absolute pitch have the ability to recognize every pitch without reference to another. Musicians without absolute pitch ought to concentrate on developing their true relative pitch—the ability to hear the relationships between the actual pitches they hear—and not try to compare those pitches to some absolute point of reference that they may or may not remember. Fortunately, only a small portion of each lesson in *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* is devoted to this approach, asking students to establish each of the various keys from a starting pitch of A440.

About a third of the lessons in the book incorporate a few paragraphs usually entitled "Interval studies," which attempt to integrate an intervallic approach to sightsinging into the text. The book's primary pedagogical focus is on tonal function, but these studies—like those in *Ear Training* and *Musicianship*—provide a different point of view.

Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature generally demonstrates the highest levels of musicianship and scholarship. This is especially

apparent in the frequent discussions of notational conventions. For example, Levin and Martin present several extensive and rather complete explanations of repetition signs: the double bar repeat (pp. 13-14); *Da Capo al Fine* (p. 23); *Dal Segno* and Coda signs (p. 39); and shorthand repetition signs [e.g.,"/"] (p. 50). I know of no sightsinging text that approaches the completeness with which Levin and Martin treat this important aspect of music notation. Another such discussion addresses changing meters and metric modulation. Their treatment of this topic (pp. 437–440) is detailed, scholarly, and musical.

They also discuss certain idiosyncratic details of notation that are neglected by many other texts. For instance, with respect to vocal notation they tell the student:

> Note how flags and beams reflect the setting of the text. In a *syllabic* setting—one syllable per note—an eighth note (or shorter note value) is isolated by means of a flag. In a *neumatic* setting—one syllable prolonged over several notes—a beam is used to group eighths and shorter durations. The grouping is also shown by a slur, regardless of note values.
>
> Some 20th century composers use beams for syllabic and neumatic settings alike (p. 64).

The authors also present the traditional system of indicating multi-measure rests of from one to nine measures by printing combinations of symbols standing for rests of one, two, and four measures respectively and printing an Arabic number above the staff; they go on to show how longer rests are indicated by a single large rest symbol combined with an Arabic number. They also note how modern practice often uses the latter system for all multi-measure rests (p. 67). This kind of attention to detail is one of the features that sets this book apart from every other aural-skills text I have examined.

Levin and Martin even offer a few brief discussions of performance practice such as double dotting in the French overture, and they quote from Quantz's *On Playing the Flute,* and C. P. E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* in reference to this (pp. 346-7). Where appropriate, they also include information about word origins. This is a venerable procedure—it reinforces learning of a term, links that term with its past, demonstrates our own culture's ties to the past and to other cultures, and shows the importance of understanding terminology and language in general. Examples of this practice in *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* include the following: "*Syncopation* (from the Greek 'cutting up')"

(p. 13); "The word *clef* comes from the French word for 'key': a clef gives the key to the identities of notes on the staff" (p. 17); "The word *chromatic* comes from the Greek *chroma* (color), and refers to any pitches not found within the scale of a given key" (p. 106, footnote).

Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature trains its readers in two related disciplines that many other texts either slight or neglect: clef reading and transposition. In an approach similar to the way they present keys and meters, Levin and Martin introduce new clefs gradually over the course of the two-year sequence. Treble and bass clefs are used from the outset; alto, tenor, and soprano clefs are introduced in the second, third, and fourth semesters respectively. When each C-clef is first introduced, it is related to its position within the grand staff by writing the grand staff first and continuing only those lines used by that particular C-clef, with a dotted line representing middle C. This technique is used only to introduce each new C-clef (pp. 115, 197, and 328 respectively); it is never used as a pedagogical tool for actual clef reading.[14] Transposition studies are tied to each of these clefs. Thus, transposition by third is presented in Lesson Five (pp. 42-43), wherein music written in the bass clef is transposed down a third by substitution of a treble clef, and music written in the treble clef is transposed up a third by substitution of a bass clef. As each of the succeeding clefs is introduced, the various transpositions it may accomplish are also presented. Charts are included in the text and in an appendix showing which clef substitutions result in which transpositions. In addition, the sticky problem of transposition involving accidentals is dealt with thoroughly (beginning on pp. 235-239). Levin and Martin handle the complications of which accidentals to alter in the new key by reference to the circle of fifths, in a discussion that is written clearly and methodically. The technique of transposition by clef has been used for centuries, but it is refreshing to see it presented in such a straightforward manner in this text.

Levin and Martin treat one subject in a manner that might cause a bit of confusion among students. When introducing the symbol C to represent 4/4 meter, they refer to the "late medieval system of metrical notation, which has its basis in the following symbols: O triple meter C quadruple meter ¢ duple meter" (p. 3 footnote). This is correct in the context of mensural notation, but can lead to misunderstanding when the third symbol (*alla breve*) is encountered in modern notation because, in certain instances, that symbol can also represent 4/2 meter. Levin and Martin include at least one such example themselves: the *Benedictus* from Palestrina's *Missa Brevis* (pp. 434-436). The *alla breve* symbol appears here in a transcription with four half-note beats in every measure, seemingly contradicting their earlier definition of the symbol. Indeed, many transcriptions of mensural notation retain the *alla breve* symbol while transcribing the beat

unit as a half note and barring every fourth beat, resulting in 4/2 meter. The symbol has also been used in modern notation to represent both 2/2 and 4/2 meters. In two passages in *A German Requiem* (1866), Brahms used the symbol ¢ to indicate a quadruple meter with the half note as beat unit (i.e., 4/2): 1) "Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand" at the end of the third movement; 2) "Herr, du bist würdig" from the end of the sixth movement. Schubert used two *alla breve* symbols ¢¢ to represent 4/2 meter, an example of which is included in *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* without explanation (p. 293). Some Baroque compositions also use the *alla breve* symbol for 4/2; see, for example, the motet *Credo quod Redemptor meus vivit* (1733) by Jan Dismas Zelenka. Some transcriptions beg the question of meter and use the *alla breve* symbol merely as an indicator that the half note is the beat unit while using *mensurstriche* or placing barlines at various spots in the music.[15] In truth, we can only teach our students that ¢ means that the half note is the beat unit and the metric organization should be inferred from the music. To be fair to Levin and Martin, neither Benward nor Henry and Mobberley treat this subject with any more scholarly precision. Benward makes no statements concerning the *alla breve* symbol, but his book uses the symbol to represent only 2/2. Henry and Mobberley define the symbol as representing only 2/2, but not 4/2.[16]

Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature is an uncommon aural-skills text. The sheer amount of sightsinging materials it contains from the Western tradition (the book is 474 pages long, most of which is devoted to sightsinging) set it apart from other sightsinging texts. Much of the ear-training material in the *Teacher's Manual* is drawn from the literature as well. Its attention to detail is, I think, unique among such texts. This is an aural-skills book that teachers of theory and music history will praise. Aural-skills teachers should also welcome it, even if they find it necessary to pass over the "Pitch memory" sections and ignore the authors' instructions for presenting dictation. Despite these concerns, and the absence of supporting materials such as tapes or software (discussed below), *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* deserves careful consideration.

OTHER ISSUES

A number of issues that bear on all three texts must be discussed at this point. The first of these involves the availability of taped examples for ear training. The *Instructor's Manual* for *Ear Training* contains all of the correct answers to be played for the student. Wm. C. Brown also sells tape recordings of about half of these exercises. Thus, the materials in *Ear Training* may be used individually, in the classroom, or as a combination of

both.[17] All of the exercises in *Musicianship* labeled "Set II" have been recorded (on a variety of instruments) and are sold by Prentice-Hall. These (like Benward's) allow for home, laboratory, and classroom use.[18] No collected recordings of the aural materials in *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* are available at this time.

Wm. C. Brown also offers optional software for the Apple II computer to accompany *Ear Training*.[19] Apple II software for *Musicianship* is available from the Wenger Corporation.[20] No software that is specific to *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* is currently available.

Each of the three texts includes an index. Benward's is an "Index of Sections by Type,"[21] which groups together the sections devoted to melodic dictation, chord function, etc. Henry and Mobberley include indexes in both volumes;[22] these are helpful references to definitions or initial discussions in the text. Levin and Martin provide two types of indexes: 1) an "Index of Literature,"[23] which alphabetically lists composers' works and where they appear in the book; 2) an index of "Terms and Where They are Defined."[24] Benward also includes a glossary of eighty-one terms.[25] Some of the definitions in this glossary are slightly peculiar (e.g., "Arpeggiated bass: A type of 6/4 chord that is part of an arpeggiated bass figure."[26]), and one wonders what criteria were used for inclusion (e.g., the bass clef is defined—only by its symbol and not its position on the staff to set it apart from the baritone clef—but the treble clef is not). Henry and Mobberley's glossary contains 130 "Foreign Terms of Rhythm and Tempo."[27]

Praise is due to Wm. C. Brown for printing *Ear Training* on relatively good paper stock. Both *Musicianship* and *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* are printed on paper that approaches the low quality of newspaper stock. This paper tears easily (especially from the metal ring bindings used on all three books), and deteriorates and discolors rather quickly. I suspect that students reaching even the middle of the books' suggested two-year sequences will find that their copies are falling apart through normal undergraduate use.

The pages of *Ear Training* are perforated for what turns out to be less-than-easy removal from the book's ring binding, with the idea that students may tear completed pages from the binding (thereby mutilating their texts) and turn those pages in to their instructor who will then spend hours removing tiny scraps of paper from the furniture. An instructor might just as easily request that students hand in pages from Henry and Mobberley's *Musicianship*, which is also ring bound but lacks any real perforation (although perforations are referred to on p. 16 of the *Instructor's Manual*); the results will be the same. However, a more elegant solution is suggested by Prentice-Hall: "if *Musicianship* is adopted as a required text, Prentice-Hall will grant permission to photocopy pages from the Ear Training Section.

Either single pages or packets of several pages may be reproduced and given to students."[28] In addition, Prentice-Hall has reduced the mutilation factor by printing *Musicianship* so that "text and exercises are never run back to back."[29] Levin and Martin's *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* contains no answer blanks at all thus requiring students or their instructors to supply their own music manuscript paper for dictation purposes.

CONCLUSION

Both Benward's *Ear Training* and Levin and Martin's *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* are worthy of consideration. Instructors who want separate texts for sight singing and ear training might couple Benward's *Ear Training* with his *Sightsinging Complete*.[30] For those who seek an integrated text, *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* is appropriate. Henry and Mobberley's *Musicianship* will also be a strong contender in this category if and when Prentice-Hall releases a carefully edited second printing; until then it is not a candidate.

NOTES

[1]I am indebted to Stephen J. Paul for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

[2]Gary S. Karpinski, "Five Recent Sight Singing Texts," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 2 (1988): 275-96.

[3]Bruce Benward, *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening*, 3rd edition (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1987); Earl Henry and James Mobberley, *Musicianship: Ear Training, Rhythmic Reading, and Sight Singing*, 2 volumes (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986); Robert D. Levin and Louis Martin, *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988).

[4]Benward, *Instructor's Edition Dictation Manual* for *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening*, p. xi. Hereafter referred to as Benward, *Instructor's Manual*.

[5]Levin and Martin, *Sight Singing*, p. xvii.

[6](Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1985.)

[7]For more information along these same lines, see the comments by William Thomson, Ann K. Blombach, and the Editor's note in "Reader's Response: What is an Interval?" *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 2 (1988): 321-25.

[8]Only one small mistake was apparent to me: in the *Instructor's Manual* on p. xiii, Paul Daley is incorrectly identified as "Paul Delay."

[9]The numbers of pages occupied by the various sections are as follows: Volume I: Ear Training=166; Rhythmic Reading=77; Sight Singing=76; Volume II: Ear Training=198; Rhythmic Reading=76; Sight Singing=74.

[10](Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985.)

[11]For more comprehensive treatments of twentieth-century techniques, see Lars Edlund, *Modus Novus* (Stockholm: AB Nordiska Musikforlaget/Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 1963); chapters 11-13 of Gary E. Wittlich and Lee Humphries, *Ear Training: An Approach Through Music Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), pp. 189-285; or the later chapters of Thomas Benjamin, Michael Horvit, and Robert Nelson, *Music for Sight Singing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).

[12]Prentice-Hall promises a corrected second printing.

[13]More on this in the third article in this series.

[14]A similar device is used by Anne Marie de Zeeuw and Roger E. Foltz in *Sight-Singing and Related Skills* (Austin, TX: University Stores, 1973), pp. 89-91; 94-95; 97-99, in which they present each clef in a manner similar to Levin and Martin, but proceed with clef reading exercises which omit the C-line throughout the entire staff.

[15]As an example of this type that might fall in front of an undergraduate singer, consider Heinrich Schutz's settings of the *Psalms of David* (1628) as edited by Robert E. Wunderlich in the *Easy Choral Classics Series*. In many transcriptions in this edition barlines appear only at the ends of phrases, creating "measures" of 6/2, 5/2, and such.

[16]Henry and Mobberley, *Musicianship*, vol. I, p. 229.

[17]Benward, *Instructor's Manual*, p. xii.

[18]Henry and Mobberley, *Instructor's Manual*, pp. 10-12.

[19]Benward, *Instructor's Manual*, p. xiii.

[20]Henry and Mobberley, *Instructor's Manual*, pp. 13-15.

[21]Benward, *Ear Training*, pp. 201-2; Benward, *Instructor's Manual*, pp. 251–52.

[22]Vol. I, pp. 323-24; vol. II, pp. 382-83.

[23]Levin and Martin, *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature*, pp. 461-70, but more comprehensive in Levin and Martin, *Teacher's Manual*, pp. 150-64.

[24]Levin and Martin, *Sight Singing and Ear Training Through Literature*, pp. 471-74.

[25]Benward, *Ear Training*, pp. 203-7.

[26]Benward, *Ear Training*, p. 203.

[27]Henry and Mobberley, *Musicianship*, vol. II, pp. 379-81.

[28]Henry and Mobberley, *Instructor's Manual*, p.10.

[29]Ibid., p. 16.

[30]Fourth edition (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1986). Reviewed in Karpinski, "Five Recent Sight Singing Texts."