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Practices, Needs, and 21st-Century Concerns in the Undergraduate Music Theory Curriculum as Identified by the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to address curricular concerns defined during the open discussion forum of the annual Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable (OMTR), held at the University of Tulsa in 2011. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the author of this study formulated a panel of experts and created a survey. Instructors' profiles, practices, curricular needs, and 21st-century concerns were examined using a sample of anonymous postsecondary Oklahoma music theory instructors ($N = 27$; 35.06%) who are affiliated with the OMTR. Data collection and analysis were conducted, and results were delivered at the 2013 annual OMTR conference held at Oral Roberts University.¹

Background on the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable

The Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable (OMTR), established in 1986, is the premiere professional organization for collegiate music theory professors in the state of Oklahoma, and additionally serves all music theory and composition students in the Oklahoma University system. In its annual meetings, the organization addresses issues pertinent to music theory and composition instruction at the collegiate level, including but not limited to curriculum needs, educational resources, innovative teaching methods, and various topics in contemporary music theory. OMTR also serves as a platform for the performance and analysis of repertoire vital to

¹ The results were presented in two parts at the conference. The author of this article analyzed and presented item numbers 1-24 (Cathey 2013). W. T. Skye Garcia analyzed and presented the open-ended response items—numbers 25-30 (Garcia 2013). I thank Skye for his enthusiastic involvement, collaboration, and participation in this study.

the ongoing development of music theorists and their students. The first meeting, organized by Alice Lanning, was held at Oklahoma City Community College and featured Michael Rogers as the guest speaker.

Research Questions

Several research questions guided data collection for this study:

1. What are the profiles of postsecondary Oklahoma music theory instructors who are affiliated with the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable?
2. What are the practices of postsecondary Oklahoma music theory instructors who are affiliated with the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable?
3. What are the curricula needs of postsecondary Oklahoma music theory instructors who are affiliated with the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable?

Previous Research

Use of primary textbooks, solmization preferences, curricular format, and preparedness of incoming music majors are some of the most common topics in the discipline of music theory pedagogy (Casarow 2002; Johnson 2010). Postsecondary music theory/aural skills instructors use a wide variety of textbooks and resources for in-class instruction and out-of-class practice, such as traditional bound paper textbooks, anthologies, eBooks, unpublished or self-published instructor-designed materials, computer-aided instruction (CAI), notation software, online resources, smart phone apps, MIDI or acoustic keyboards, and interactive whiteboards (Cathey 2014). The variety of resources implies diversity in pedagogical approaches. The current study did not investigate ways in which materials are used; however, the author acknowledges that instructors may use textbooks like anthologies, from which instructors pull examples for in-class work. Instructors may also use their own approach while using a collection of examples for

practice and assessment. Although a wide variety of traditional bound paper textbooks are used, Kostka and Payne's *Tonal Harmony* (Cathey 2013; Johnson 2010; Killam et al. 1987; Nelson 2002) and Ottman's *Sight Singing*² (Anderman 2011; Cathey 2013, 2014; Collins 1979; Johnson 2010; Killam et al. 1987; Pembrook and Riggins 1990; Reed 2013) appear to be the most commonly-used textbooks in the United States, based on nationwide and regional surveys.

According to the literature, moveable-*do*³ solfège (Anderman 2011; Cathey 2013; Collins 1979; Nelson 2002; Taggart and Taggart 1994) and scale-degree numbers (McClung 2001; Pembrook and Riggins 1990) are the most-used solmization systems in the United States.⁴ The frequent use of Ottman's text provides additional support, in that Ottman encourages musicians to use a solmization system to facilitate accurate sight singing (e.g., Ottman and Rogers 2011, 13), with preference given to two moveable-oriented systems—moveable-*do* solfège and scale-degree numbers (e.g., Ottman and Rogers, 2011, 66).

Unlike the common choice of a single sight-singing textbook, instructors use a variety of materials for teaching dictation. The most common materials are instructor-designed materials (Killam et al. 1987), instructor-designed materials and/or CAI (Anderman 2011),⁵ Benward or Benward and Kolosick's *Ear Training* (Cathey 2013; Coleman 2005; Collins 1979; Pembrook

² Anderman's (2011) finding that 39% of respondents use Ottman and Rogers (2007) implies that *Sight Singing* continues to thrive even after Ottman's death in 2005. This is consistent with the findings of the current survey, in which 44.44% of respondents indicated that they use Ottman and Rogers (2011) (Cathey 2013). It is also the most common text in high school music theory. In a comparative study of resources used in AP Music Theory classrooms from 2009 to 2012, Reed (2013) found that Ottman and Rogers (2007, 2011) was most-used, followed by Phillips, Clendinning, and Marvin (2005).

³ Spellings found in the literature are: moveable-*do* (moveable do, or moveable *do*) and movable-*do* (movable do, or moveable *do*). This article will use the former spelling.

⁴ Most of the literature supports moveable-*do* solfège as the preferred system in the United States. Moveable-*do* (81%) with *do*-based minor (54%) was most frequent in Cathey (2013). Similarly, moveable-*do* with *do*-based minor (80%) was most common in Anderman (2011). Nelson (2002) found that 53% of respondents used moveable-*do* with either *do*-based minor (32%) or *la*-based minor (21%). Taggart and Taggart (1994) found moveable-*do* with *la*-based minor (unknown *n*) to be the top response. In earlier research, moveable-*do* (unknown *n*; unknown preference in minor) was the top response in Collins (1979). Two other studies found scale-degree numbers to be the preferred system. These were McClung (2001) (58%) and Pembrook and Riggins (1990) (48%).

⁵ The majority (61%; *n* = 49) of California community college instructors preferred to use their own materials or CAI because of the high cost of textbooks (Anderman 2011).

and Riggins 1990; Werner 2005), and Horvit, Koozin, and Nelson's *Music for Ear Training* (Cathey 2013). This implies that instructor approaches to teaching dictation, as opposed to sight singing, may be more varied; and thus, it is less likely that a single dictation textbook is commonly used. Further, instructors who use Benward are most likely subscribing to *objectivism*, which is the most prevalent framework used in teaching dictation (Buehrer 2000; Cathey 2014; Covington and Lord 1994; Lord 1993).⁶

Whether to teach music theory, aural skills, and keyboard harmony as integrated, comprehensive, or as separate courses has been a curricular concern in the United States since the mid-twentieth century. Kintzer (1959, 73) indicates a shift in curricular format, in that the method of teaching music theory through an isolated treatment of keyboard harmony and aural skills was being abandoned for "the new integrated and musical approach." In a survey given to participants ($N = 208$) attending a Comprehensive Musicianship workshop held at Eastman in 1969, Boyle (1971, 333) found that nearly 75% "reported that the basic musicianship curriculum in their present teaching positions is fragmented into separate courses." Based on a survey of 233 (67.34%) music departments holding membership in the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), Collins (1979) found that Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP) and integrated theory classes were the curricular norms. More recently, researchers have found that the majority (60-65%) of instructors teach music theory and aural skills as separate

⁶ Rooted in behaviorist psychology, objectivism in aural training is the belief that students must master basic aural elements before integrating them into larger contexts of music (Buehrer 2000; Cathey 2014; Covington and Lord 1994; Lord 1993). Objectivism in aural training dates back to the earliest known textbook on dictation (Pfeiffer 1810 as cited in Will 1939). Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasizes learner interaction and recognizes that knowledge is constructed through learners' experiences. For alternative approaches to objectivism, see T. E. Buehrer, "Alternative Pedagogical Paradigm for Aural Skills: An Examination of Constructivist Learning Theory and its Potential for Implementation into Aural Skills Curricula" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2000), ProQuest (UMI No. 9966041); K. Covington, "An Alternative Approach to Aural Skills Pedagogy," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 6 (1992): 5-18; K. Covington & C. Lord, "Epistemology and Procedure in Aural Training: In Search of a Unification of Music Cognitive Theory with its Applications," *Music Theory Spectrum* 16/2 (1994): 159-170; C. Lord, "Harnessing Technology to Open the Minds: Beyond Drill and Practice for Aural Skills," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 7 (1993): 105-118.

courses (Anderman 2011; Nelson 2002; Pembrook and Riggins 1990). Undoubtedly, teaching musicianship comprehensively through performance or having an integrated approach of combining music theory, aural skills, and keyboard harmony into a single course have not been abandoned and continue as viable options; however, teaching music theory, aural skills, and keyboard harmony as separate courses seems to be the most common approach.

Music theory preparedness of incoming music majors is another topic that has been explored in the literature (Anderman 2011; Asmus 2004; Bowman 1982; Cathey 2013; Johnson 2010; Jones and Bergee 2008; Juilliard School of Music 1953; Lekberg 1942; Livingston 1982; Livingston and Ackman 2003; Smith 1994; Wennerstrom 1989). Eastman, Indiana University, Juilliard, and the University of Florida are among the schools that have examined music theory preparedness of incoming music majors. The University of Florida is particularly interesting because music theory preparedness was examined twice (1982 and 2003). Music majors ($n = 50$) at the University of Florida identified high school band directors (40%), private music teachers (36%), and high school music theory instructors (32%) as providing incoming students with the best preparation for college-level music theory (Livingston and Ackman 2003). Further, harmonic dictation (Livingston 1982) and sight singing (Livingston and Ackman 2003) were identified as the least prepared areas of music theory by University of Florida students.

Methodology

Design

The author of this study designed a 30-item questionnaire for this non-experimental descriptive study. An expert panel identified questions that were unclear or ambiguous, and gave suggestions for modifications (Fowler 2002; Fowler and Cosenza 2009), which resulted in

improvements to or elimination of those questions.⁷ The survey was further modified based on a pilot-test. After the pilot phase, the author sent a survey link to all instructors ($N = 77$) in the OMTR email database for collection of main study data and forwarded two email reminders in two-week increments. A total of 27 (35.06%) instructors responded to the survey.

Sampling Procedures

When considering whether to send a survey to one representative per institution or to all instructors, one must consider the known population and gender. The OMTR email database consists of instructors from 20 institutions in the state of Oklahoma. In a web search, only six institutions (30%) identified their music theory coordinator; therefore, sending the survey to music theory coordinators was not a viable option. Sending the survey to the chair of music at each institution was also considered; however, s/he may not specialize in music theory, and based on a web search of 20 Oklahoma institutions, this procedure would have produced an unbalanced gender ratio of males (55%), females (30%), and unknown (15%).⁸ To provide equal opportunities for gender, and academic rank/position, the entire email database of OMTR affiliates were invited to take the survey. The survey was sent to all 100 instructors in the email database. Twenty-two emails bounced back as non-working email addresses and one former instructor asked to be removed, leaving a target population of $N = 77$. The respondents ($N = 27$) represented 35.06% of the OMTR database. Because of the low response rate, results should be generalized with caution.

⁷ Robert C. “Bob” Chamberlin (Webster University), Sarah Chan (Northwestern Oklahoma State University), W.T. Skye Garcia (East Central University), Mark Hollingsworth (East Central University), and Matthew Saunders (Oklahoma Panhandle State University) served as panel members. Additionally, Joseph Rivers (University of Tulsa) was consulted for questions related to music technology.

⁸ According to the 2013 College Music Society Directory, males (64.2%) comprise the majority of postsecondary music theory instructors in Oklahoma compared to females (35.8%).

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was limited to simple descriptive analysis. The author exported survey results from SurveyMonkey to JMP Pro 10 Statistical Software, a version of SAS, to analyze the data.

Results

The following results are sequenced according to three distinct sections of the questionnaire: instructors' profiles, practices, and curricula needs.

Instructors' Profiles

Research Question 1 asked, "What are the profiles of postsecondary Oklahoma music theory instructors who are affiliated with the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable?" Profiles were established by the first 10 questions on the survey: primary area of teaching responsibility (Q1), primary instrument (Q2), position or rank (Q3), type of institution where respondent teaches (Q4), gender (Q5), age (Q6), highest degree obtained (Q7), degrees in music theory and/or composition (Q8), years of teaching experience on the college level (Q9), and perceived effectiveness in teaching music theory, aural skills, and music technology (Q10).

Profiles revealed that 59.3% of the respondents identified music theory/aural skills as their primary area of teaching responsibility (Q1).⁹ The remaining 40.7% identified applied music (25.9%), composition (7.4%), music education (3.7%), and choir (3.7%) as their primary areas of teaching. In a follow-up question (Q8), the same percentage (59.3%) of respondents who

⁹ This percentage is 13% higher than postsecondary aural theory instructors in Anderman's (2011) survey of California community college instructors, which may imply that non-theory specialists may be more likely to teach theory classes in community colleges than four-year institutions.

identified music theory/aural skills as their primary area of teaching also stated that they had obtained at least one degree in music theory and/or composition.

Piano (66.7%) was notably identified as the primary instrument of most OMTR respondents (Q2). The remaining respondents acknowledged clarinet (11.1%), saxophone (7.4%), voice (7.4%), oboe (3.7%), and percussion (3.7%) as their primary instruments. When considering all respondents who identified music theory/aural skills as their primary area of teaching responsibility (Q1), an even higher percentage (81.3%) overwhelmingly identified piano as their primary instrument. The advantages of competent piano skills are implied by Question 23, in which piano was selected by 73.1% of the respondents as one of the most useful pedagogical tools in the music theory classroom (refer to Figure 3).

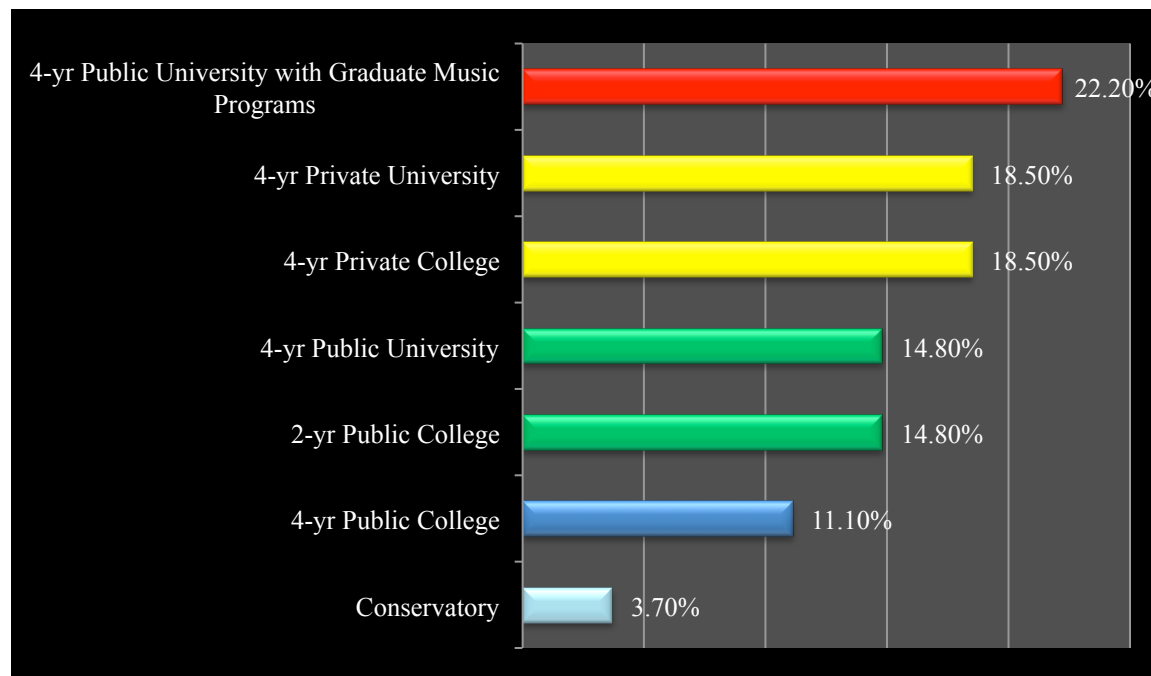
Respondents were asked to identify their rank or position (Q3). A plurality (74.0%) of the respondents consisted of professors (33.3%), assistant professors (22.2%), and associate professors (18.5%). The remaining quarter were comprised of adjunct professors (11.1%), college instructors (7.4%), professor emeriti (3.7%), and other ranks (3.7%).

Because anonymity would have been compromised by asking instructors to reveal their institutions, respondents were asked to describe the type of institution where they most frequently teach (Q4) (Figure 1). Most (22.2%) described their institution as a 4-year public university with graduate music degree programs. Four-year private universities (18.5%) and 4-year private colleges (18.5%) had a tie score for the second most common institution, while 4-year public universities (14.8%) and 2-year public colleges (14.8%) had a tie score for the third most common institution. Four-year public colleges (11.1%) and conservatories (3.7%) were least common. Data collection from public and private institutions closely mirrored Oklahoma

institutions with music degrees, indicative of a representative sample. In this survey, 63% of respondents teach at public institutions, while 37% of respondents teach at private institutions.

Figure 1

Institutions Represented in the OMTR Survey



The ages of respondents ranged from 30 to 66 years old, with a mean of 52.48. Gender was nearly equally matched, in that males represented 51.9% and females represented 48.1%. According to the 2013 College Music Society (CMS) Directory, postsecondary music theory instructors in Oklahoma are comprised of males (64.2%) and females (35.8%). Thus, the findings may imply that females were somewhat more likely to respond to the survey than males.

The OMTR sample represented a plurality (70.4%) of instructors with terminal degrees (Q7).¹⁰ Of these doctoral recipients, the majority (73.7%) had obtained at least one degree in

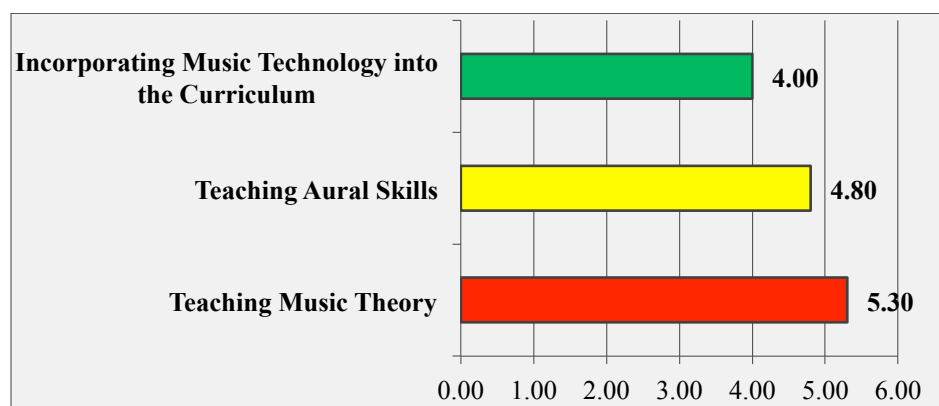
¹⁰ This is consistent with Johnson's (2010) survey of Texas postsecondary music theory instructors, in which 70.9% had obtained a doctoral degree.

music theory and/or composition, while only 26.3% of doctoral recipients had not specialized in theory or composition in any of their degrees.

The final two profile questions asked instructors about their experience and perceived effectiveness in teaching. OMTR respondents have taught postsecondary music theory for an average of nearly 21 years (Q9).¹¹ On a 6-point Likert-type scale, OMTR respondents rated their self-perceived effectiveness as a 5.30 in teaching music theory, 4.80 in teaching aural skills, and 4.00 in incorporating music technology into the curricula (Q10) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Perceived Effectiveness in Teaching Music Technology, Aural Skills, and Music Theory



Because of the lower mean score for effectiveness in incorporating music technology, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)¹² was conducted to determine if differences occurred between technology effectiveness and primary area of teaching. On another 6-point scale, instructors who primarily teach composition had a mean of 5.0, suggesting that they are the most confident group of technology users in this sample. As a group, composers are likely to be comfortable creating their own compositions and teaching materials with notation software, commonly used in the theory classroom (Q23). Instructors who primarily teach music theory had

¹¹ This is consistent with Johnson's (2010) statewide Texas survey, in which the mean age was 21.1 years.

¹² An ANOVA is a statistical procedure that is used to test the degree to which two or more groups vary or differ.

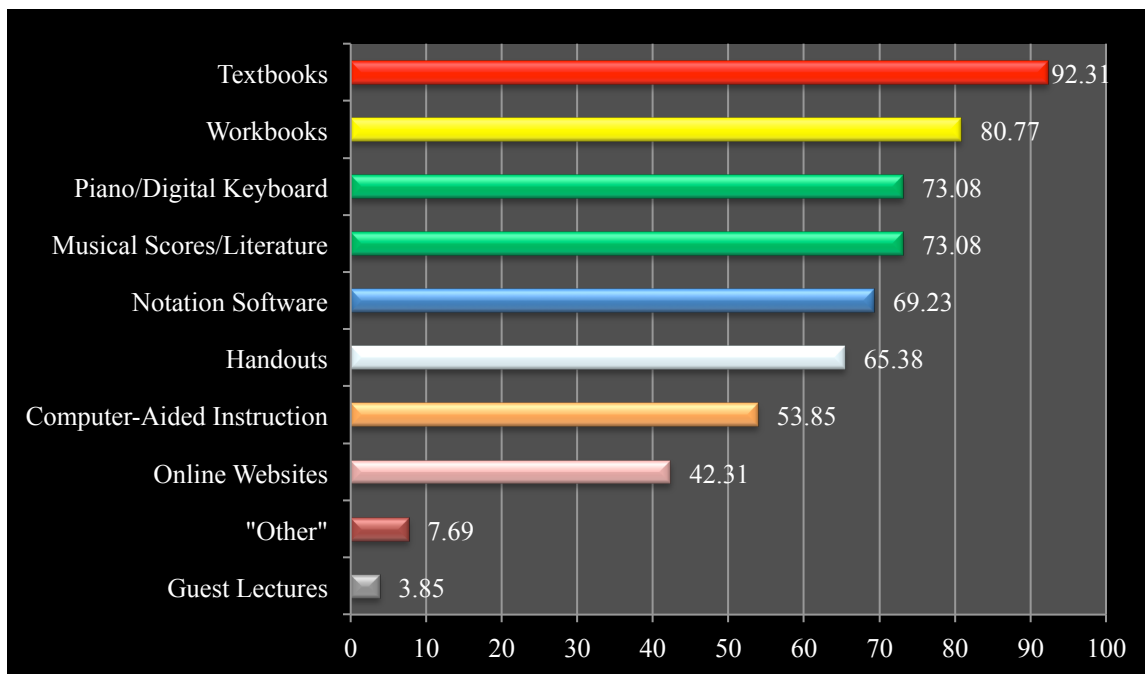
a mean score of 4.12 on technology effectiveness, while instructors who primarily teach music education and choir had the lowest mean scores of 3.0.

Instructors' Practices

Research Question 2 asked, "What are the practices of postsecondary Oklahoma music theory instructors who are affiliated with the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable?" Because music theory and aural skills are most often taught as separate courses, two questions were provided for primary textbooks in Music Theory I, II, III, and IV (Q11) and Aural Skills I, II, III, and IV (Q12). Although instructors use a variety of resources for in-class instruction, commercially-available textbooks (92.31%) and companion workbooks (80.77%) are the most common pedagogical tools that OMTR instructors use for the music theory classroom (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Most Useful Pedagogical Tools in the Music Theory Classroom



According to the results, Kostka and Payne's (2009) *Tonal Harmony* (57.7%) is the most-used music theory textbook among OMTR respondents, followed by a tie between instructor-

designed materials (23.1%) and Clendinning and Marvin's (2004) *Theory and Analysis* (23.1%). In Oklahoma, the latter is currently used at some of the public universities with graduate music degrees, private universities, and private colleges; however, it appears as though it is not in use at community colleges or public universities without graduate music programs in Oklahoma. No respondents indicated that they are using integrated approaches by Laitz (2003) or Mayfield (2003); yet, 35% of the respondents employ an integrated curricular format (Q20).

Consistent with precedent literature, Ottman and Rogers's *Sight Singing* (48%) is the most-used textbook among OMTR respondents. Instructor-designed materials were the second most-used approach, as was found in music theory, followed by a tie between two ear-training books—Benward and Kolosick, and Horvit, Koozin, and Nelson. Unlike the overall agreement in choosing a sight-singing text, there is discrepancy in selecting the most-used dictation text.

Figures 4 and 5 display results for texts used in music theory and aural skills.

Figure 4

Textbooks used in Music Theory I, II, III, IV

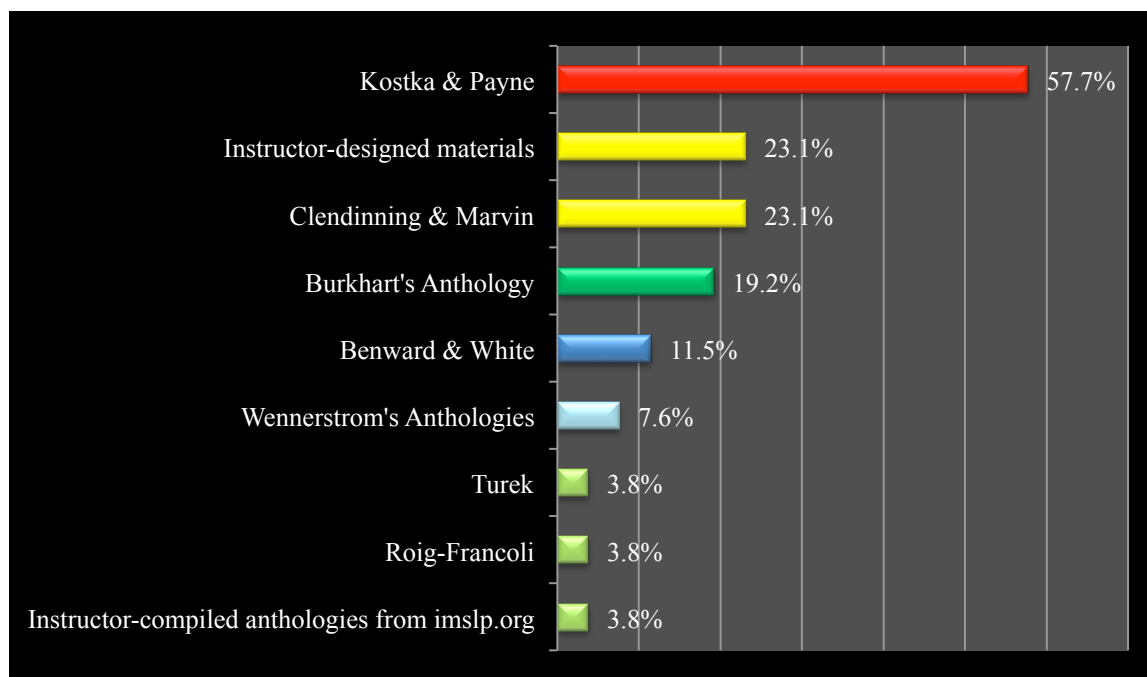
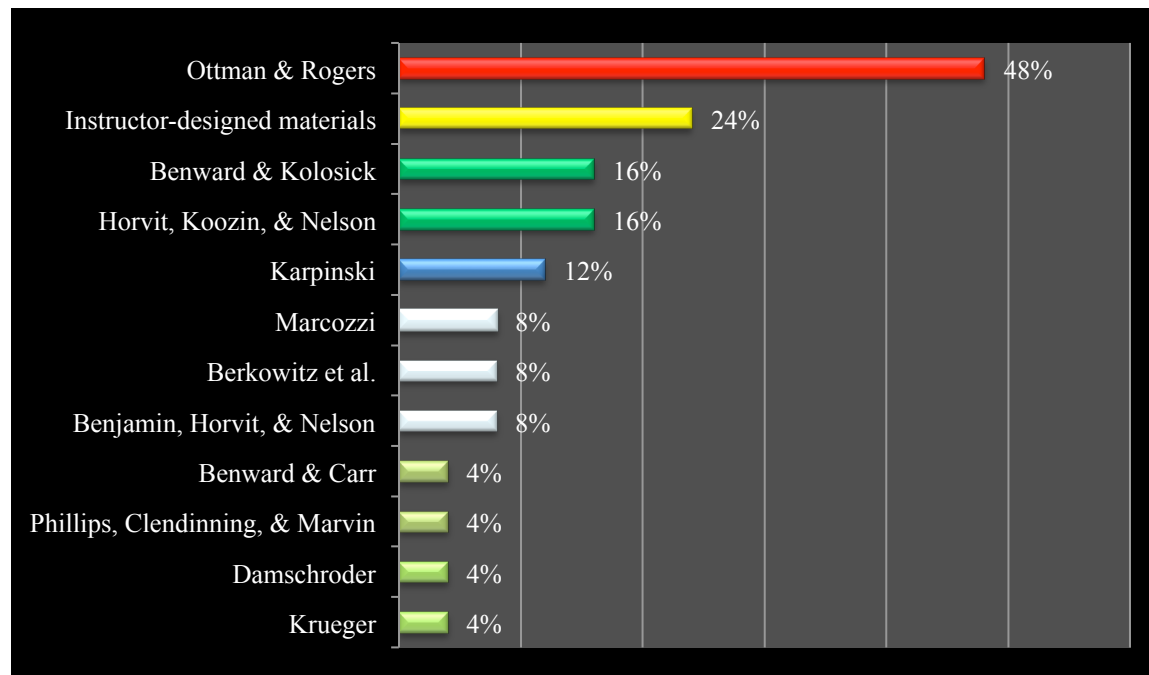


Figure 5

Textbooks used in Aural Skills I, II, III, IV



In addition to textbook usage, OMTR members were asked to identify all titles of music technology that they incorporate into the curriculum (Q24). Finale (64%) and MacGAMUT (52%) were the only titles used by over half of the respondents. Other titles included MusicTheory.net (48%), Sibelius (40%), Teoria.com (24%), GarageBand (16%), Auralia (8%), Logic Pro (8%), SmartMusic (8%), Audition (4%), Band-in-a-Box (4%), ProTools (4%), and Tenuto (4%).

OMTR instructors were asked to identify all pedagogical systems/aids that they use in aural-training courses (Q21). Out of 18 identified systems/aids displayed in Table 1, only three systems are used by over half of the respondents. These are moveable-*do* solfège (80.77%), conducting (73.08%), and *do*-based minor (53.85%). Much diversity is found among OMTR

instructors in rhythm, but the most common systems are *1-e-&a* (50%) for simple meters and *1-la-li* (38.46%) for compound meters.

Table 1

Pedagogical Systems/Aids used to Teach Sight Singing

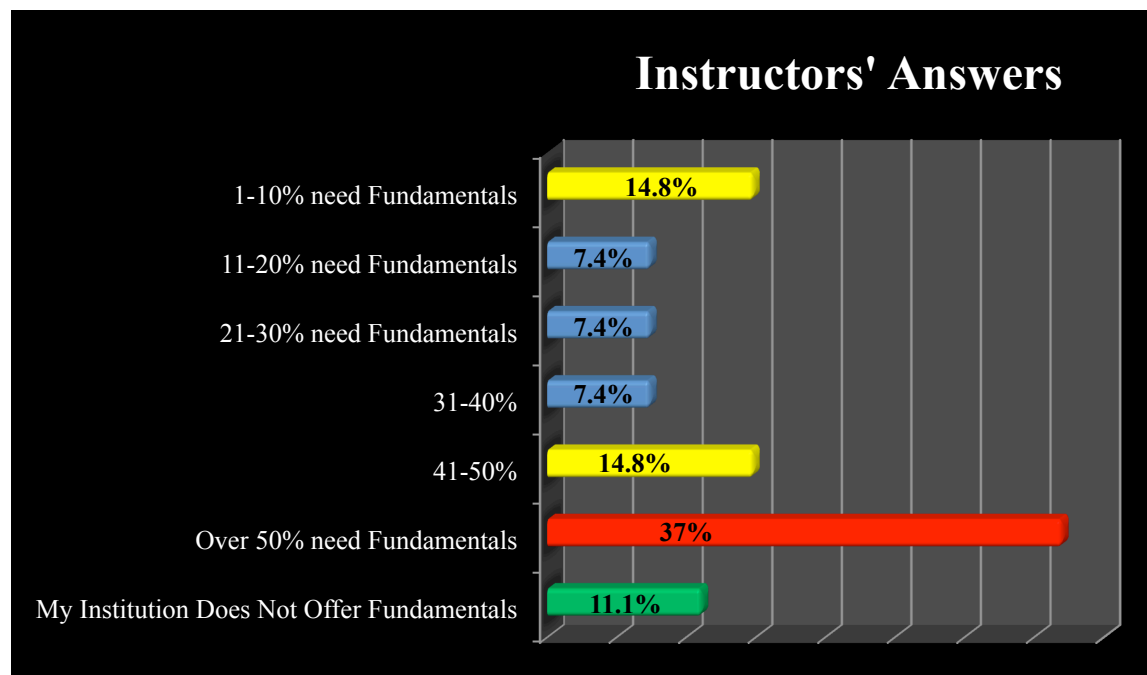
Systems/Aids	% of Respondents
Moveable- <i>do</i> Solfège	80.77%
Conducting	73.08%
<i>Do</i> -based Minor	53.85%
1-e-&a Rhythm Solmization	50%
La-based Minor	38.46%
1-la-li Rhythm Solmization	38.46%
1-ta-te-ta Rhythm Solmization	26.92%
Fixed <i>Do</i>	19.23%
Sing-and-Play Exercises	19.23%
Curwen/Kodály Hand Signs	19.23%
Scale-Degree Numbers with Chromatic Inflections	15.38%
1-trip-let Rhythm Solmization	15.38%
Takadimi Rhythm Solmization	11.54%
Kodály Rhythm Solmization	11.54%
Gordon Rhythm Solmization	7.69%
Neutral Syllables	7.69%
Letter Names with Chromatic Inflections	7.69%
Shape Notes	3.85%

The status of incoming students was also addressed (Q14, Q15). The majority (67.86%) stated that their institution requires incoming music students to take a music theory entrance exam, but only 35.71% stated that their institution requires an aural skills entrance exam (Q14). Instructors were asked to provide an estimate of incoming students at their institution who need a Fundamentals of Music course (Q15). The following response options were provided on the survey: 1-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50%, More than 50%, or My Institution Does Not Offer Fundamentals. Over half (51.80%) of the respondents perceive that 41% or more of their incoming students are underprepared in Fundamentals. The following figure displays instructors' perceived percentages of incoming students who need a Fundamentals of Music course (Figure

6). The left-hand column of this figure displays the survey’s response options, while the right-hand column displays the percentages of instructors who selected these responses.

Figure 6

Perceived Percentage of Incoming Students who Need a Fundamentals of Music Course



Because of the diversity displayed in the above figure, the author of this study ran one-way ANOVAs to determine which types of institutions have the most-prepared and least-prepared incoming students. Among 2-year schools, 75% of respondents stated that 41% or more of their incoming students need Fundamentals. Most likely, these institutions are offering a separate course for Fundamentals. Among 4-year public colleges and universities without graduate music programs, roughly 75% said that over 50% need Fundamentals, while the remaining quarter stated that their school does not offer Fundamentals. Schools that are not offering a separate course are likely spending much time in this area during Theory I, and may not progress as rapidly throughout the rest of the semester or the remaining theory sequence. Instructors at private colleges stated that 31% or more need Fundamentals. Instructors at private

universities, on the other hand, had the most amount of diversity among all institutions. With the exception of the 21-30% category which was vacant, each category represented roughly 20% of the respondents at private universities. No single answer dominated; rather, we may conclude that incoming students who attend private universities may have better preparation than students at the other examined institutions.

At 4-year public universities with graduate music programs, approximately 80% of the respondents indicated that only one to 30% of their incoming students need prerequisite work. Overall, we may conclude that the best-prepared students are at these institutions. These schools may be able to move more quickly through a Fundamentals review and cover more material during the first semester of Theory I, providing them with more time to address advanced material during Theory IV.

The author also examined the most common components taught in music theory and aural skills. A content analysis of several textbooks was used to construct response options, and an “other” field option was included. In Music Theory I, instructors most commonly teach Fundamentals, Inverted Triads, Figured Bass, and Part Writing (Figure 7).¹³ Over half (56%) of the instructors teach Nonchord Tones during the Theory I.

In Music Theory II, 100% of the respondents agreed that Part Writing and Diatonic 7th chords are central to the required competencies for the second semester (Figure 8). The majority (60%) of instructors cover common-chord modulations and possibly other modulatory techniques in Theory II. As displayed in Figure 9, Theory III exhibits the most amount of diversity. Augmented 6th Chords, the Neapolitan, Mode Mixture, Modulations, and Further Uses of Harmony are the most frequently taught components in Theory III. Approximately one third

¹³ Instrument transposition and diatonic 7th chords were inadvertently omitted from the list, but were added to the “other” category. Most likely, both topics would have been much higher if they had been listed as response options.

(35%) of the instructors is introducing students to 20th century music, and a third is incorporating Counterpoint, Sonata Form, and Rondo into the Theory III curriculum. The “other” category consisted of respondents who stated that they teach subjects from the Theory II list during Theory III. Because of these differences, students should be encouraged to complete the 4-semester theory sequence at a single school before transferring to another school.

In Music Theory IV, Chord Structures were the most commonly-covered component among OMTR respondents (Figure 10). As mentioned above, 35% of instructors are including 20th century techniques in Theory III. For these instructors, it is possible that Theory IV is entirely devoted to 20th and 21st century music. In order to attain this level, less time needs to be spent reviewing Fundamentals during Theory I so that more advanced material can be covered.

Figure 7

Components Taught in Music Theory I

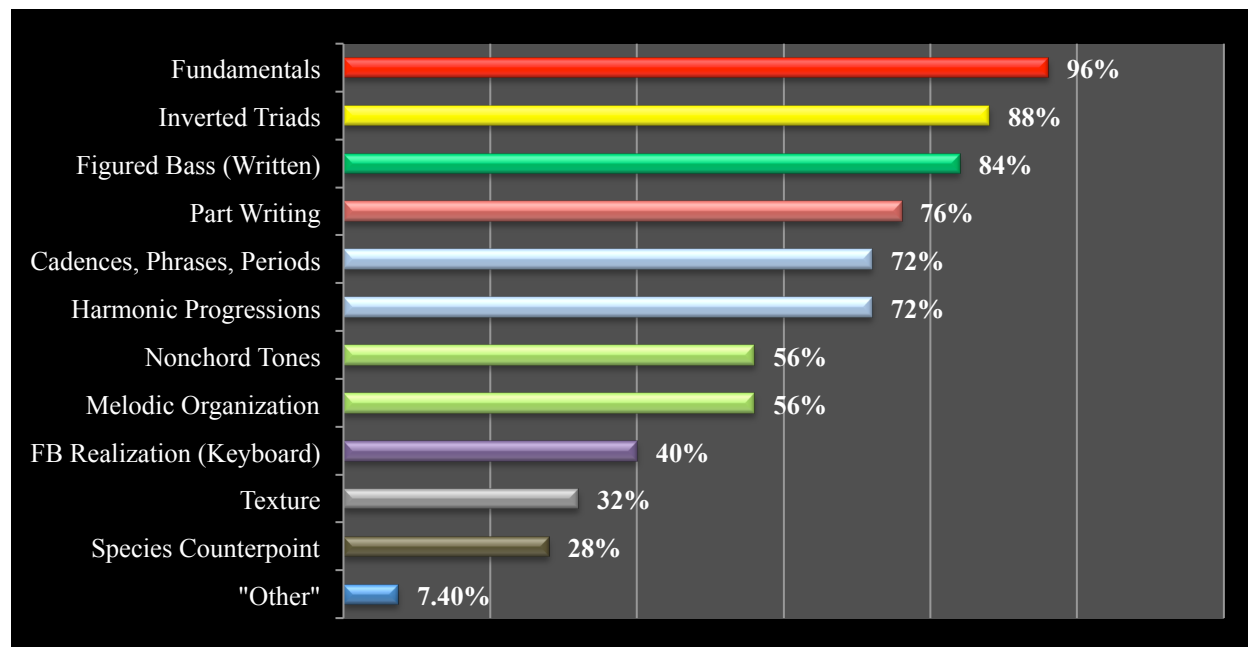


Figure 8

Components Taught in Music Theory II

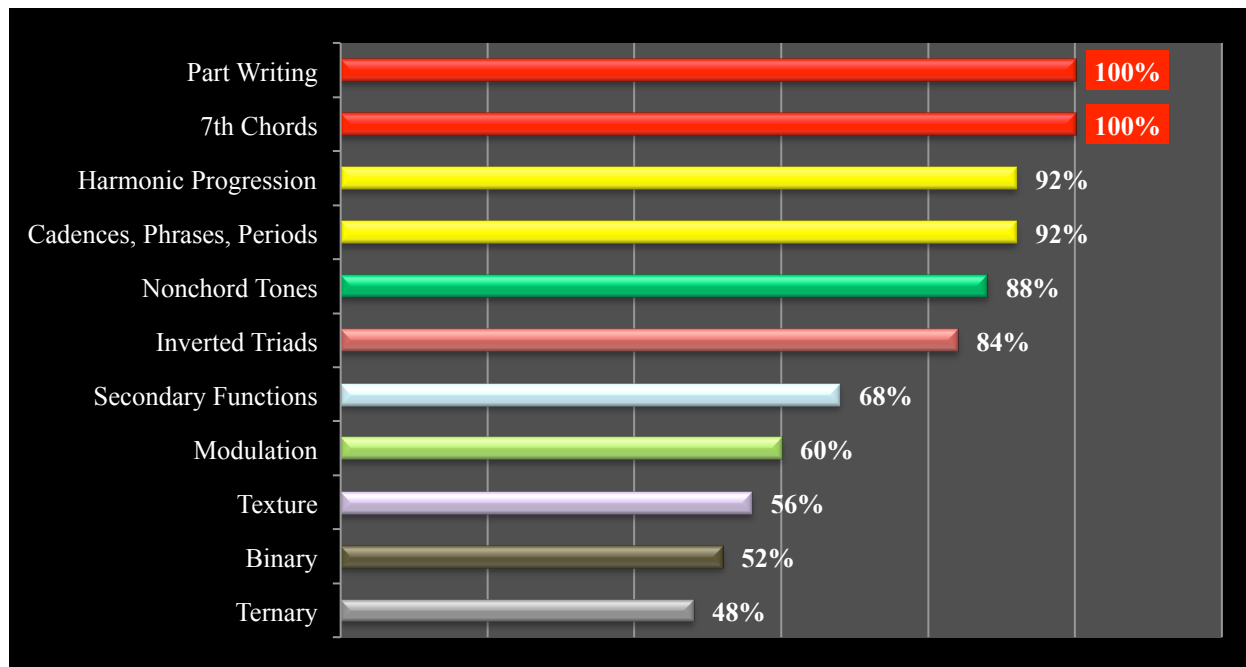


Figure 9

Components Taught in Music Theory III

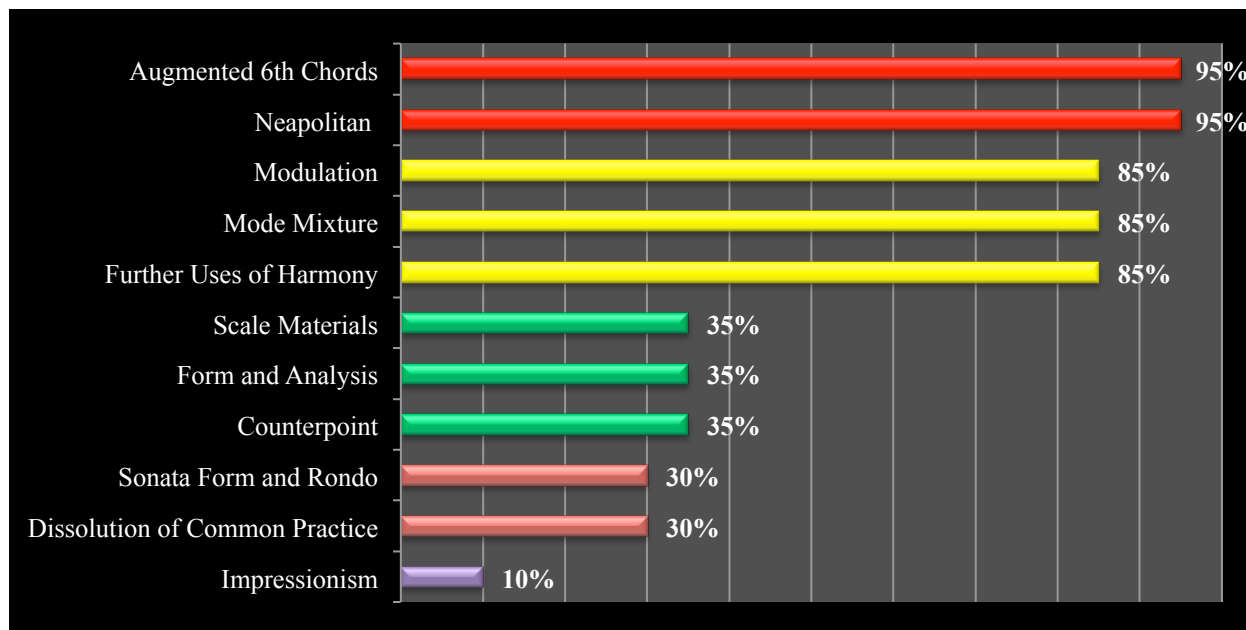
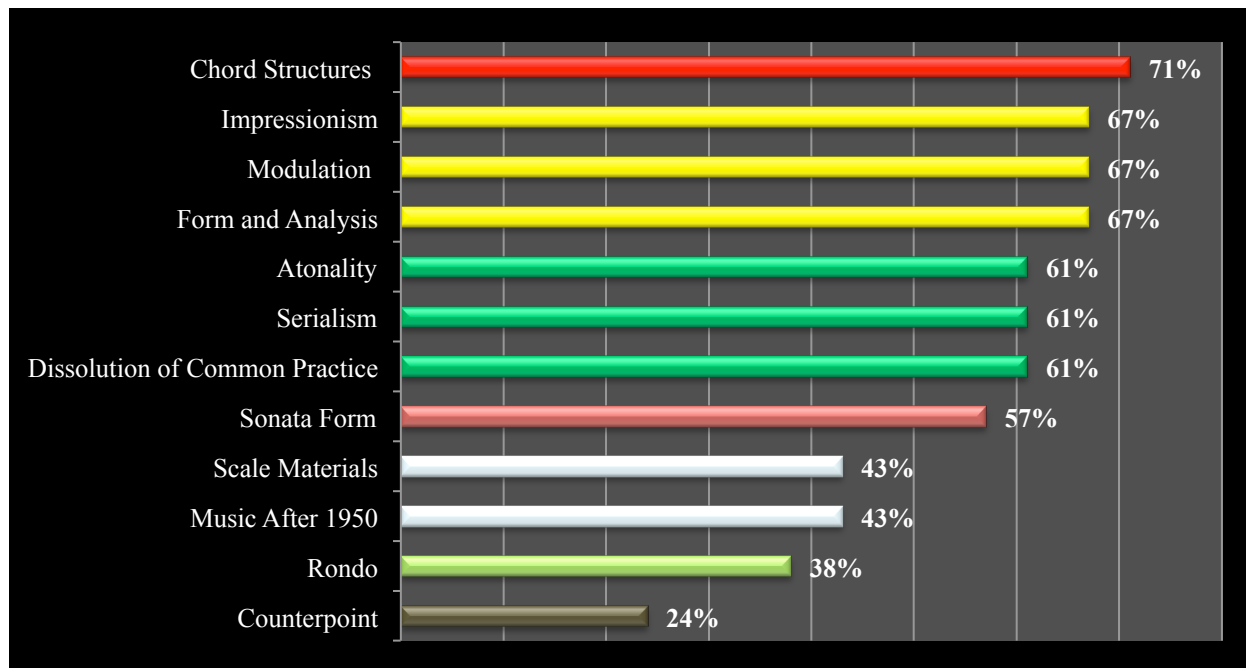


Figure 10

Components Taught in Music Theory IV



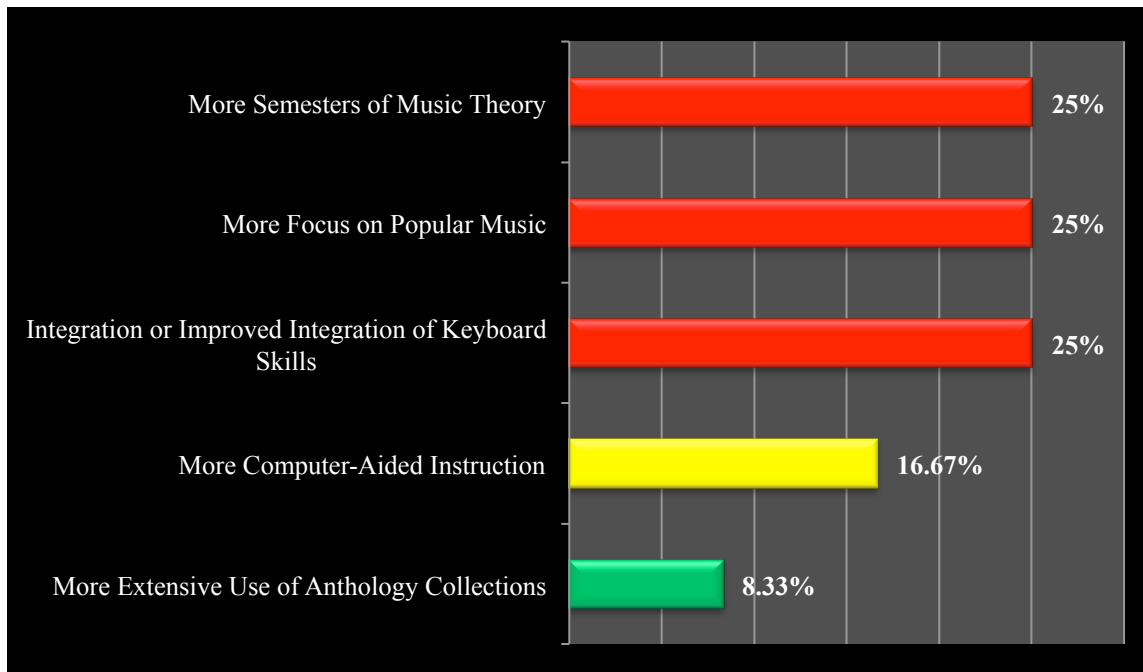
Curriculum Needs

The final six questions (Q25-Q30) of the survey were constructed in an open-ended format in order to provide maximum flexibility to instructors in identifying perceived curriculum needs. Because instructors were required to provide their own open-ended responses, the lowest response rates occurred for these six questions. The qualitative answers were coded for common themes and placed into categories.

Question 25 asked, “In your opinion, what components need to be added to or eliminated from our current Music Theory curriculum?” This question was answered by 12 respondents and skipped by 15. The first part of this question asked participants to identify components that need to be added to the curriculum. Respondents stated that (a) more semesters of music theory for all music majors, (b) more focus on popular music (i.e., pop harmony, lead-sheet notation, and commercial music), and (c) integration or improved integration of keyboard skills are the most important components that need to be added to the undergraduate curriculum. Only three participants provided answers for the second part of the question, which asked instructors to identify components that need to be eliminated from the current curriculum. These respondents stated that part writing ($n = 2$) and figured bass ($n = 1$) need to be eliminated. Figure 11 provides a complete list of coded themes that respondents ($n = 12$) believe need to be added to the curriculum.

Figure 11

Components that need to be Added to the Music Theory Curriculum



Question 26 asked, “How do you incorporate ‘supplementary’ twentieth- and twenty-first century art music, pop music, and multicultural music into the Music Theory curriculum? (If possible, please cite a few examples of composers and works).” Fourteen participants provided answers; 13 instructors skipped this question. Two primary themes emerged from the data. Respondents stated that they either incorporate supplementary music into the music theory classroom to teach or reinforce various theory topics ($n = 7$), or their institution offers separate courses that cover these topics ($n = 5$). Instructors use 20th/21st-century supplementary music for ear training ($n = 3$), structural analysis ($n = 2$), transcription projects ($n = 2$), harmonization and orchestration projects ($n = 1$), part writing ($n = 1$), and sight singing ($n = 1$). The selected comments demonstrate ways that instructors incorporate supplementary music:

For harmonic dictation I emphasize aural identification of basic chord progressions, e.g. 12 bar blues, “Run Around Sue” (I v i IV[ii6] V I; I v i V/V V I; I V/ii, V/V V I; I V/IV, IV, V/V V I), Louie Louie, etc., identifying bass & soprano lines, filling in inner voices. In Ear Training IV, instead of MacGamut, I have put together a series of “Transcription Projects” based on non-Western music (Korean, Japanese, Balinese, Chinese, Arabic, Native American, etc).

I use YouTube videos and my own charts/scores for analysis/transcription. I bring in folk melodies, musical theater, children's songs, and some pop. If rhythms are too difficult to transcribe, we learn the melodies with solfege/numbers and sing them. I try to incorporate multiple styles for analysis in every harmonic/melodic subject covered.

I assign Harmonization/Orchestration projects where students pick a contemporary work of their choice from any "non-classical" source (broadway, pop music, gospel, etc.).

Some respondents provided a list of courses that their institutions offer in contemporary music: (a) 20th Century/21st Century Music, (b) Post-1900, (c) World Music, (d) Composition and Song Writing, (e) Applied Lessons, and (f) Jazz Combo. One respondent stated that Music Theory IV is devoted to 20th/21st-century music, while another respondent stated that his/her institution has a 5th semester of music theory that is entirely devoted to 20th/21st-century music.

The second part of Question 26 asked participants to provide specific examples of supplementary music and materials used. Popular music ($n = 7$) was the most common response, but had a variety of artists, including Dion Dimucci, The Kingsmen, The Doors, Queen, Billy Joel, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, Kelly Clarkson, Katy Perry, and Flo-rida. Additional responses were Broadway tunes ($n = 3$); art music ($n = 2$); sacred/gospel ($n = 2$); children's songs, such as Disney ($n = 2$); and non-Western music ($n = 2$), including Native American, Korean, African, Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese. Other respondents stated that they use YouTube and Dubstep (electronic dance music) to provide examples of supplementary 20th/21st century music. One respondent who incorporates popular and multicultural music into the music theory classroom stated:

I frequently use pop songs to reinforce concepts, such as the structural analysis of [Queen's] Bohemian Rhapsody, 12- and 16-bar blues in works by Stevie Ray Vaughan, the bridge section in the Doors' Light My Fire, and the melodic borrowing of a Beethoven Piano Sonata in Billy Joel's This Night. As an educator, I look for ways to incorporate world musics into the classroom. To cite a few examples in my teaching, I present PowerPoint presentations on African xylophones and traditional Choctaw music, and listening analyses, such as the 4-syllable phrases in Choctaw Jump Dance I.

Question 27 asked, “Do you have suggestions on providing a reasonably comprehensive understanding of 21st-century music, as well as music of the past?” Ten respondents answered this question; 17 skipped this question. Besides two instructors who stated that they do not have time to add 21st-century music into the curriculum, the remaining respondents provided helpful insight, which was categorized into three themes. The most common theme was to incorporate 21st-century music into the current music theory curriculum ($n = 4$). This can be done by connecting written theory to aural examples, using technology to gain immediate access to music, comparing and contrasting current trends in popular music to music of the Common-Practice Period, and adding examples of popular/commercial music into the current curriculum. The second theme was to provide a separate course for 21st-century music ($n = 3$). Respondents did not identify whether this course should be an elective or required course; however, one respondent advised to include this course beyond the two-semester Music History sequence. The third theme was to revise the current curriculum ($n = 2$). One respondent remarked:

First, by discarding the obviously false notion of the “dissolution of common practice,” and “atonal” music replacing diatonic and modal music in modern practice. Atonal and Serial styles represent a passing phenomenon, much like the Avignon school of the 14th century. To require students to spend half a semester constructing tone rows is a waste of valuable time that could be spent on writing and analysis of the music we actually hear in concerts and broadcast media.

Question 28 asked, “How do you plan to integrate 21st-century music into the Music Theory curriculum?” Thirteen respondents answered this question; 14 skipped this question. The top response was to integrate 21st-century music into Music Theory IV ($n = 5$) through the use of YouTube examples, student-initiated examples, and/or with harmonic analysis. The second most common response was a tie score between (a) no current plan to include 21st-century music ($n = 4$), and (b) integrating this music into classes beyond the four-semester Music Theory sequence

to integrate 21st-century music ($n = 4$), such as Composition classes, Post-1900 Music, Form and Analysis, Pop Music class, and World Music.

Question 29 asked, “What philosophies guide your textbook selection, and how closely do you adhere to the selected books?” Out of 17 responses for this question, only one respondent actually provided a theoretical/philosophical framework that s/he uses for music theory pedagogy. This framework, Regelski’s (2004) *action learning*, can be adapted for older students, but it is actually a musicianship approach to teaching “tweenagers” based on the assumption that students already have a musical base derived from their home and community influences, and that educators should capitalize on these influences. In other words, educators should import real life into the curriculum in order to export learning beyond graduation. The most common “philosophy” designated by OMTR respondents, however, was *practicality* ($n = 6$). Examples of practicality included: clarity of writing and style, simplicity in how material is presented, good/accurate explanations, professional formatting and engraving, efficient and concise, thorough and comprehensive, ample reinforcement, logical sequencing, well-designed examples and exercises that do not co-mingle extraneous variables not being evaluated, relevant examples for homework and self-study (including a workbook), and up-to-date. The second most common response was a tie score between textbook selection based on student demographics and needs ($n = 2$) and not using a textbook ($n = 2$). Instructors who do not use a textbook stated:

Textbooks are too “loaded” and impossible to get through in the time available; I create my “own” textbook. This removes the pressure to “get through” so much “extra” in textbooks.

I prefer to use actual musical examples over textbooks and workbooks; I make use of such recourses as Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Principles of Orchestration*, an anthology based on scores from IMSLP, and Alfred’s *Essential Dictionary of Orchestration*; plus personally created handout exercises and worksheets.

The second part of Question 29 asked instructors how closely that they adhere to the text. The top response was using the textbook as a foundation, but supplementing with additional repertoire, or providing alternate possibilities and opinions for analyzing music ($n = 5$). The second most common response was closely following the textbook ($n = 3$), which might be particularly important for schools with multiple sections of the same course. Some respondents stated that most textbooks are fairly comprehensive, while others stated that they are not involved in textbook selection.

The final question on the survey (Question 30) asked, “Do you have additional comments not addressed in the above questions?” Eight respondents answered this item; 19 skipped this item. A concern for underprepared in-coming music majors devoid of solid classical training was the most common response for this item. The following serve as examples of respondents’ comments:

Current students arrive in college tech savvy, but not music savvy. They are fully aware of short snippets of musical examples found in video/computer games and websites, so perhaps initial study of music theory could include these resources.

We are in a place where we must deal with a shift in pre-college musical experiences. We enroll each year more and more students without strong classical training, and I know that we are not alone. Sad to say, but if we don’t adapt somehow, students won’t be able to gain a minimal comprehension of materials we consider so important to Western music understanding.

Since we do not have a “fundamentals” course for students (so Theory I is basically fundamentals) and there are only four semesters of required theory, there is much too much to cover in too short a time.

Discussion of Results and Implications for Pedagogy

The following discussion serves to address themes and concerns which emerged from the data analysis. It addresses piano as a common primary instrument, underprepared fundamentals of music among incoming music majors, 21st-century curriculum needs, and generalizable characteristics.

Piano as a Common Primary Instrument

The high percentage of respondents whose primary instrument is the piano (66.7%) suggests that it is advantageous for theorists to be able to play dictation examples, pieces for in-class analysis, and demonstrations of new theoretical concepts, among other topics. In fact, the percentage of pianists was higher than the percentage of instructors who primarily teach music theory/aural skills (59.3%). Of those who primarily teach music theory/aural skills, 81.25% indicated that piano is their primary instrument. Further, piano tied with musical scores/literature as the third most useful pedagogical tool in the theory classroom, following the importance of textbooks and companion workbooks.

Underprepared Fundamentals of Music among Incoming Music Majors

Consistent with previous literature, incoming music majors in the state of Oklahoma are largely underprepared in Fundamentals of Music. Over half of the instructors believe that 41% or more of their incoming students need a course in Fundamentals of Music. The best prepared students seem to be attending public universities with graduate music programs and private universities. The least prepared students seem to be attending 2-year public colleges, 4-year public colleges, and 4-year public universities without graduate music programs. Because of this lack of preparation in students' pre-college education, Fundamentals of Music is the most-taught component in Theory I, according to this survey. One instructor stated that his/her institution does not offer Fundamentals of Music; therefore, "Theory I is basically Fundamentals." By the time students arrive in Theory IV, we find quite a bit of instructional diversity. Two instructors stated that they primarily teach Theory III concepts in Theory IV, while other instructors stated that "Music Theory IV is devoted to 20th century/21st century music" or their institution offers a "fifth semester entirely devoted to 20th- and 21st-century music."

Twenty-First Century Curriculum Needs

Overall, there is a concern among OMTR members for 21st-century music but many are not exactly sure how to incorporate it. Suggestions included expanding Theory IV to include 21st-century music, including it in a post-1900 class, adding a Pop Music class, and adding a course beyond the two-semester Music History sequence. Other respondents recommended that 21st-century music should be incorporated into the current music theory curriculum through the use of YouTube examples, student-initiated examples, and harmonic analysis.

Instructors were asked to identify components that need to be added to or eliminated from the current music theory curriculum. Overall, respondents believe that the current music theory curriculum needs to include more semesters of music theory for all music majors, spend more time on popular/commercial music, and improve the integration of keyboard skills. The concern for better integration of keyboard skills is consistent with Nelson's (2002, 62-63) findings:

One primary frustration is the relatively low amount of emphasis that is placed upon keyboard harmony (not to be confused with keyboard studies, functional piano, and the like). Understanding that students often bring little or no background in playing keyboard instruments to the collegiate setting, and also recognizing that keyboard harmony can be a difficult and apprehensive discipline to teach, the point also may be made that this is the very area which can crystallize much of what takes place in the two-year music theory core curriculum where so many theory faculty spend a tremendous amount of time and energy. In fact, if pressed, some would point out keyboard harmony as the single most important part of the curriculum. It is here that the student can synthesize such elements as voice leading, harmonic progression, rhythmic stability, and improvisation in a fashion that is at once auditory, tactile, visual, and cognitive. It must be stressed that the issue at hand here is the inclusion of keyboard as a tool for the study of harmony rather than the pursuit of the keyboard as an applied instrument.

In the current study, some instructors suggested eliminating part writing and figured bass, while another instructor recommended "discarding the obviously false notion of the 'dissolution of common practice,' and 'atonal' music replacing diatonic and modal music in modern practice and dissolution of common practice from the music theory curriculum." The perceived

importance of part writing, however, is very clear in Question 17, in which 100% of the respondents stated that they teach part writing in Music Theory II.

Generalizable Characteristics

Based on current findings, further research using similar demographic samples of postsecondary music theory/aural-training instructors may produce comparable results. The current study is consistent with previous literature in several ways. First, according to previous research, moveable-*do* solfège is the most-used solmization system in the United States. In the current study, moveable-*do* solfège (80.77%) is used by the majority; however, only 53.85% use *do*-based minor perhaps because a strong minority (38.46%) use *la*-based minor. Second, according to previous research and the current study, curricular format has primarily moved from an integrated approach to teaching music theory, aural skills, and keyboard harmony as separate courses as the curricular norm. Third, a lack of music theory preparedness of incoming music majors has been a concern since Lekberg (1942). In the current study, the majority of respondents indicated that 41% or more of their incoming students are underprepared in Fundamentals. Fourth, several studies, including this one, have found that Kostka's *Tonal Harmony* and Ottman's *Sight Singing* are some of the most-used textbooks in the discipline.

The following tables (Tables 2 and 3) expound on the idea of primary textbooks used in music theory and aural skills. Table 2 displays the top three music theory textbooks for each of the following studies: "Oklahoma (2013)," Johnson's (2010) study of music theory faculty in Texas, Coleman and Werner's (2005) study of music theory/aural skills faculty in Missouri, Nelson's (2002) nationwide study, and Killam et al.'s (1987) nationwide study.¹⁴ Because of the diversity of materials found among aural-training instructors, Table 3 displays the top seven

¹⁴ The purpose of Table 1 is to display the three most-used textbooks in each study and how other studies agree or disagree. Please refer to the individual studies for a complete list of textbooks and anthologies used by postsecondary instructors.

choices in the current study and shows how other studies agree or disagree with the current findings. The studies shown in Table 3 are “MacGAMUT (2014),” “Oklahoma (2013),” Anderman’s (2011) study of aural-training instructors in California community colleges, Coleman and Werner’s (2005) study of music theory/aural skills faculty in Missouri, Pembroke and Riggins’s (1990) nationwide study, and Collins’s (1979) nationwide study.¹⁵

Table 2

Comparison of Studies Investigating the Most-Used Music Theory Textbook

Theory Textbook	Oklahoma (2013)	Texas (2010)	Missouri (2005)	Nationwide (2002)	Nationwide (1987)
Kostka & Payne	1st	1st	2 nd	1st	1st
Instructor-designed Materials	2 nd (Tie)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Clendinning & Marvin	2 nd (Tie)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Benward & White (or Benward & Saker)	3 rd	4 th	1st	2 nd	2 nd

¹⁵ Because aural-training instructors typically use sight-singing and dictation materials, the purpose of Table 2 is to display the top seven textbooks used for Aural Skills in the current study and how other studies agree or disagree. Please refer to the individual studies for a complete list of textbooks used by postsecondary instructors.

Benjamin et al. (<i>Techniques & Materials</i>)	N/A	2 nd	N/A	8 th	3 rd
Henry & Rogers	N/A	3 rd	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gauldin	N/A	N/A	3 rd	7 th	N/A

Table 3

Comparison of Studies Investigating the Most-Used Sight-Singing and Dictation Textbooks

Textbook	MacGAMUT (2014)	Oklahoma (2013)	California (2011)	Missouri (2005)	Nationwide (1990)	Nationwide (1979)
Ottman (SS)	1 st	1 st	1 st in SS	1 st	1 st	1 st in SS
Instructor-designed Materials	2 nd	2 nd	1 st in ET	N/A	N/A	1 st in ET
Benward & Kolosick (ET)	5 th (Tie)	3 rd (Tie)	2 nd in ET	2 nd	N/A	2 nd in ET
Horvit et al. (ET)	9 th (Tie)	3 rd (Tie)	3 rd in ET	Minimally Used	N/A	N/A
Karpinski (ET & SS)	8 th (Tie)	4 th	6 th in ET	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marcozzi (ET)	9 th (Tie)	5 th	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Berkowitz (SS)	3 rd	6 th	3 rd in SS (Tie)	Minimally Used	2 nd	2 nd in SS
Benward & Carr (SS)	5 th (Tie)	7 th	3 rd in SS (Tie)	3 rd	3 rd	3 rd in SS

Recommendations for Further Research

Most respondents exhibited a lack of a theoretical/philosophical framework that guides their textbook selection process (Q29). Regelski's (2004) *action learning* was the only framework identified, and it was only identified by one respondent. Future researchers could explore several areas, such as philosophical frameworks that can be adapted to music theory pedagogy, common core curricula to determine needs in graduate music theory pedagogy courses, and practices to determine the percentage of institutions that are offering music theory pedagogy courses.

Overall, respondents rated their perceived effectiveness of incorporating music technology into the curriculum as the lowest component. Further, Finale and MacGAMUT were the only music software titles that are incorporated into the curriculum by over half of the respondents. Future researchers could investigate potential deficiencies in music technology among non-specialists who teach music theory, technological needs and expectations of current traditional-aged college students (a.k.a. Digital Natives), and technological frameworks that can be used in the music theory classroom (e.g., Bowen's (2012) *Teaching Naked*; Koehler and Mishra's (2005) *Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge*; Mayer's (2005, 2009) *Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning*).

Summary

In summary, this study supports previous research in the areas of primary textbooks, solfège preferences, curricular format, and preparedness of incoming music majors. In this study, one-way ANOVAs were used to determine which types of institutions (e.g., 2-year, 4-year, public, and private) have the most-prepared and least-prepared incoming students. This study also examined most-used pedagogical tools in the music theory classroom; pedagogical systems/aids used to teach sight singing; components taught in Theory I, II, III, and IV; components that need to be added or eliminated from the current music theory curriculum; and concerns and ways to incorporate 20th/21st-century art, popular, and multicultural music into the music theory curriculum.

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