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Engaging Chopin's Nocturnes: Model Composition and Nineteenth-Century Diminutions

GILAD RABINOVITCH

This tribute to Prof. Peter Schubert reflects my experience teaching a model composition unit on Chopin's nocturnes, as part of a master's-level course for "classical" performance majors that was dedicated entirely to hands-on model composition. I discuss Chopin's rhythmic contours and their significance to this stylistic modeling, which is abstractly inspired by Schubert's (2008) discussion of rhythms in Renaissance counterpoint. I reflect on post-classical echoes, both in terms of Caplin's formal types as well as in terms related to Gjerdingen's harmonic-melodic schemata, as they inform teaching model composition in Chopin's style. I also discuss possible ways of adapting Kalkbrenner's (1849) treatise on keyboard improvisation to this context. The article highlights the tension between "thinking in music" and "thinking *about* music" (Schubert 2011) and some challenges and scaffoldings for teaching model composition.

Introduction

Prof. Peter Schubert has achieved an inspiring synthesis of scholarship, teaching, and practical musicianship. His ability to reconstruct and teach historical improvisation is a vivid demonstration of the sounds of historical European music. We live in exciting times in which Renaissance improvisation practices are brought back to life and the surge in partimenti scholarship and practice gives us a more vivid view of later styles of historical European musicianship.[1] Prof. Schubert's work as a scholar-teacher-practitioner also poses considerable challenges to us as instructors. Can we impart on our students the ability to "think in music," whether it precedes "thinking about music" (as Schubert would have it) or follows it?[2] I was privileged to study in Prof. Schubert's guest seminar on the history of theory at the Eastman School of Music in Fall 2009, and also in a graduate-student workshop on the analysis of Renaissance instrumental music at the Society for Music Theory's annual meeting in Milwaukee (2014). In both learning experiences, inspiring connections emerged between listening to music, reading historical treatises, analyzing, music-making, and teaching. The present article reflects briefly on some of the open threads, especially ones that I have not yet been able to resolve for myself as a teacher.

1 Sanguinetti (2012), Guido (2017).

2 Schubert (2011).

The dilemma of "thinking *in* music" vs. "thinking *about* music" has been on my mind as a scholar and instructor with an interest in galant schemata, partimenti, as well as model composition and improvisation. Do students need explicit step-by-step instructions in order to compose or improvise according to given models? One of the main difficulties in teaching model composition and improvisation is that many of the theoretical tools that we teach focus on generalities of tonal musics (or common-practice music), not on a rich description of an idiom. Schubert thinks that creative activities should precede the introduction of theoretical concepts.[3] While I am appreciative of his ultra-integrated approach, I have found it challenging to incorporate significant amounts of work in model composition and improvisation into the core curriculum, with its required knowledge *about* music as students move between levels and instructors.[4] I have also found it necessary to create various explicit scaffoldings for more complex creative tasks, some of which are described in the present article.

We also live in a time of considerable soul-searching for music theory as a speculative and pedagogical discipline. Melissa Hoag's survey of "Integration, Diversity, and Creativity" highlights, among other things, the increased role of creative assignments in recent curricula.[5] My goal here is not to provide a comprehensive survey of recent literature like hers, but rather to engage briefly the diversity of approaches and underlying assumptions. In an early textbook incorporating model composition, Nicholas Cook writes: "[This] book is not intended to teach composition; as the title indicates, it is intended to teach analysis *through* composition."[6] Cook articulates what I suspect is a common assumption—that model composition serves to acquire or reinforce theoretical concepts. However, one might also view core theory learning as a background for a lifetime of musicianship, creative work, and hands-on repertoire study and engagement. More recent pedagogical reflections present a great variety of methods and underlying assumptions. Derek Remeš proposes an integrated, hands-on approach to part-writing, analysis, and model composition, combining historically-informed knowledge with skills transferrable to other tonal

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3 Ibid.

4 In Rabinovitch and Norgaard (2018), we reported on some of the benefits and challenges of implementing an intensive model composition and improvisation track within the undergraduate curriculum.

5 Hoag (2016).

6 Cook (1996, vii).

idioms.[7] Hoag makes a compelling case for recomposition in the theory classroom as a way to engage compositional choices, illuminating aspects such as melody, harmonic progression, and phrase structure.[8] Shersten Johnson shows how Mozart's *Musical Joke* K. 522 can be used for a low-stakes analysis-through-recomposition project through students' corrections of Mozart's intentional errors.[9] Nancy Rogers uses college fight songs as a basis for model composition, since this repertoire is more familiar to students yet follows some common-practice "grammatical" conventions.[10] Of course, current textbooks such as those by Clendinning and Marvin and Laitz contain model composition activities related to the theoretical concepts under study.[11]

In teaching the Rule of the Octave harmonic model, Sánchez-Kisielewska proposes putting experience before conceptualization: students immerse in an idiomatic harmonic template whose component chords they cannot yet label.[12] My experience teaching basic model composition within the core curriculum at my prior institution, Georgia State University (GSU), resonates, though only partially, with her rather Peter-Schubertian observations: I have found that teaching a Boccherini-based model composition project was feasible even though the students had not formally acquired all of the necessary harmonic vocabulary.[13] A brief modulation to the key of V in the assignment—though such modulations are not introduced in the theory curriculum until almost two semesters later—was not a complicating factor for my students in completing the assignment. Switching "moveable do" syllables conceptually and thinking in V for four measures was easy enough to grasp, while focusing on the principal task of creating a musically satisfactory and idiomatic melody. This was assigned in conjunction with a 12-bar blues composition project, which reverse-engineered aspects of Nicholas Stoia's blues schemata for practical teaching purposes.[14]

7 Remeš (2017).

8 Hoag (2013).

9 Johnson (2014).

10 Rogers (2013).

11 Clendinning and Marvin (2016), Laitz (2015).

12 Sánchez-Kisielewska (2017, esp. 118 and 121).

13 For the Boccherini model see Rabinovitch and Slominski (2015), Example 8. In the context of that article, we used it for historical improvisation. In the present brief account of my experiences with GSU students, I had repurposed it for model composition.

14 Stoia (2013).

Here, too, students were given little explicit knowledge of blues musical organization but were able to experience this style as well through a creative exercise. In more ambitious model composition projects, I have found it necessary to do quite a bit of thinking *about* music before (or during) the creative work, as I will describe in the present article.

Juxtaposing Boccherini and the blues seemed appropriate given the multiple diversities of my undergraduate students at GSU, who were roughly evenly split into three groups of classical performance and composition majors, music education majors, and music industry majors.[15] From the point of view of students born around the year 2000, creatively exploring the works of Ma Rainey or Robert Johnson may seem almost as "antiquarian" as learning about Boccherini or Haydn, for all of the influence that both blues and common-practice music still exert on present-day genres.

My brief engagement of recent approaches to creativity in theory teaching highlights some tensions: between explicit knowledge and implicit stylistic understanding, "paper theory" and musicianship skills, analytical recompositions vs. fully-fledged creative exercises, as well as between traditional and diverse repertoires. I have found it rewarding to challenge myself to include creative work in the theory curriculum, which lies in my personal comfort zone but outside of the students' comfort zone; I have also enjoyed the challenge (for me) of diversifying teaching repertoires in theory and analysis and relating to the varied musical interests of my students.

The present article focuses on a master's course in Model Composition taught in Spring 2019 at GSU. I have also incorporated here some retroactive reflections and additions based on this experience. This course was entirely dedicated to model composition based on four small groups of pieces. Students came to this course with quite a bit of explicit knowledge of theory and analysis—at least through the core curriculum at their undergraduate institutions, if not from Advanced Tonal Analysis and Post-Tonal Analysis at GSU. However, I did not endeavor to assess how fresh the materials were in their memory and I suspect that some remained more fluent in harmonic and formal analysis than others. By focusing on model composition from a creative, theory-informed lens, my hope was to facilitate a meaningful musical experience for the students. My hope was to use an exploration of stylistic immersion and model composition as part of life-long curiosity about repertoires and musicianship.

In the context of my course, model composition was the goal: students were not

15 Cf. Palfy and Gilson (2018) for a discussion of the "hidden curriculum" in music theory and possible ways to address or, at least, acknowledge it.

expected to annotate their creative work with Roman numerals or formal labels. When a successful and idiomatic model composition is the desired output, the dilemma of thinking in and about music takes a slightly different twist: How much explicit theory and analysis is necessary in order to create in historical styles? At best, explicit theoretical knowledge is a necessary yet insufficient condition for this type of creativity. Unlike Cook's "analysis through composition" approach, "composition *through* analysis" is inextricably linked with immersion in a genre. The musical surface becomes something to admire, analyze, and model closely in composition.[16] Analysis in this case might mean something quite different from analysis for its own sake, since the purpose is creative.

The Model Composition course in Spring 2019 contained four units, based on the following models:

1. J. S. Bach figuration preludes;
2. J. S. Bach chorale variations (hymn in the soprano against a florid added bass);[17]
3. Debussy preludes;
4. Chopin nocturnes (A section only).

Each unit presented an opportunity for the students to explore a somewhat limited corpus through online resources (IMSLP, YouTube, Naxos) both in and outside of class. Though music students are known to be particularly busy, the corpora involved needed to be somewhat manageable for immersion within a 3-4-week period: there is really no way of overdoing the amount of intensive exposure. My choice of these four models was not intended to put the canon on a pedestal but rather was aligned with the interests of GSU master's students, who are almost exclusively "classical" performance majors actively involved in playing these repertoires.

A Bach figuration prelude is a good place to start committing ideas to the page, since it is so constrained. A chorale variation project involves working with an existing model that receives substantial modifications on the surface. The Debussy unit was an opportunity to move away from the "grammatical" constraints of common-practice tonality into the difficult-to-articulate stylistic constraints of Debussy, giving us respite from common-practice "grammar" while challenging us in new ways. Finally, the Chopin-nocturne unit brought into play further issues of melodic and harmonic

16 Cf., again, Schubert (2011).

17 In the case of the Bach chorale variation, I curated a small anthology of relevant two-voice models such as two-voice variations from BWV 767 and 768, chorale prelude BWV 711, and "Kein Frucht..." from Cantata BWV 114.

writing and required coming up with quite a few pedagogical scaffoldings. I have decided to focus the article on this unit and share some of these scaffoldings.

Classroom activities included the following:

1. Study and analysis of models: analysis for stylistic modeling, playing, singing, and engaging the models;
2. Focused composition tasks, such as composing a phrase or a melodic fragment;
3. Presentation, discussion, and workshopping of students' pieces in progress (and excerpts composed at home), with feedback.[18]

Activities #1 and #3 are in line with Schubert's reliance on real music in the classroom, whether by well-known composers or by the students.[19] The classroom activities mirrored the types of engagement that I hoped that students would continue outside of class. In other words, I wanted to "show, not tell" that it is extremely important to spend time with the models, rather than just preach to students that they must listen attentively. In addition to group feedback, I also used alternative-format individual meetings towards the end of each unit, in order to provide closer individual feedback to my eight students. The following sections discuss three of the technical threads that emerged from our discussion of Chopin's nocturnes: emulating his rhythmic practice, creating an idiomatic formal mold, and relying on post-classical harmonic-melodic schemata. Following these technical concerns, the final section focuses on the types of knowledge that can be gleaned from nineteenth-century treatises, with Kalkbrenner's treatise on improvising preludes as an example for both reconstructing historical diminutions and transforming them for a given creative task.

Chopin's Rhythmic Usage

I would like to start the technical discussion at a point that intersects in a curious way with the teaching of Renaissance counterpoint. This is appropriate in a tribute to Prof. Schubert's pedagogy in general and counterpoint (or model composition) teaching in particular.[20] It is also an opportunity to ponder the relations between

18 Feedback from me was often in the form of improvised suggestions. Transferring this particular skill to the students would have required starting with much more basic improvisation. This relates to the obvious "trade-off" between the sophistication of the creative output and the benefits of the immediacy of improvisation.

19 Schubert (2011).

20 Schubert (2008).

a theoretical topic (rhythm and meter) and modeling a style. The discussion of the rhythmic shaping with the students can be quite intuitive, but from an instructor's perspective it draws on relations between meter and melodic groupings.[21] Renaissance rhythmic usage disguises the metric frame (to use some anachronistic terms): vocal entries are often "off the beat," and there is a tendency to avoid the start of a new rhythmic value or motive on a "strong position," creating the magic flow. Aspects of the received pedagogical wisdom on shaping rhythmic profiles can even be the basis for computational modeling, articulating intuitions with greater precision.[22] In the present type of model composition, of course, a deep intuitive understanding is necessary. Naturally, some students have more pre-existing intuitions about the style and more experience with it.[23]

Without diverting too much time from immersion in Chopin's nocturnes, it is useful to start with a comparison of rhythmic designs that would sensitize the students to Chopin's practice. The first "Qui Tollis" from the Gloria of Jacob Obrecht's *Missa Maria Zart* (Example 1) typifies Renaissance rhythmic usage: downbeats are disguised, abundant ties are necessary in modern notation, and a string of eighth notes starts "off the beat" in our terms (the top, *discantus* part, mm. 9–14 is particularly illustrative through its many ties across bar lines).

The opening of Vivaldi's Concerto op. 3, no. 8 (RV 522, Example 2) represents an opposite pole: meter, melodic groupings, and harmonic surface are in congruence, marking downbeats and individual beats for our attention with clarity: every downbeat and beat are articulated through rhythmic values and melodic shapes (see esp. mm. 2-3).

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21 Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983).

22 For a pedagogical prescription on shaping rhythmic profiles, see Schubert (2008). For a computational model, see Mavromatis (2012).

23 As one of the anonymous reviewers of this article points out, this creates an unequal starting point for students in the class: a pianist might be able to read through some of the nocturnes, while a trombonist with a lot of experience playing the likes of Maslanka in wind ensemble might be less familiar with the corpus a priori and might have a harder time immersing in it. This is a real challenge for which I do not have a definite answer. As previously mentioned, the students in this group were all "classical" performance majors with an active interest in the repertoires modeled. In addition, even for students who are more experienced in the styles modeled, this task provides an opportunity for close study and emulation that is hopefully transferrable to other tonal styles. The anonymous reviewer also proposed mixing instructor-defined styles and styles suggested by the students—an excellent suggestion that can create a more student-driven, "bottom-up" model. This productive suggestion would be highly appropriate, for instance, for an undergraduate student population with more diverse musical interests, as discussed above in connection with emulating Boccherini and the blues.

Example 1
Jacob Obrecht, excerpt from *Missa Maria Zart*, "Gloria."

In In contrast with these other styles, Chopin's left-hand parts establish regularity and set the right hand's incongruent groupings, improvisatory diminutions, and rubato in relief.[24] The opening of Chopin's Op. 48, No. 1 (Example 3) showcases an elegant combination of obscured downbeats and stressed ones in the right-hand melody. For instance, mm. 1-2 are syncopated: the melody emphasizes weak quarter notes, then weak eighth notes (beginning of m. 2). This is followed by a sixteenth-note flourish that disguises beat 3 of m. 2 through a tie. In contrast, mm. 3–4 have higher congruence between onsets, melodic groupings and motives, and the underlying meter, making them more "square-headed."

24 Underlying regularity in the accompaniment facilitates an improvisatory flow in the right-hand part. The improvisatory quality of Chopin's nocturnes suggests an interesting class digression: is he "trading fours" with himself with highly regular hypermeter? What features of the score make the music seem improvisatory? How does this compare to living improvisatory genres with which we are familiar?

Example 2
Antonio Vivaldi, Concerto op. 3, no. 8, mm. 1–6.

The rhythmic flow at the opening of the Nocturne Op. 37, No. 1 (Example 4) shares some similarities with the preceding example: the downbeats of measures 1 and 2 are particularly disguised. The third measure exhibits high congruence between the melodic groupings and the metric grid, with two symmetric quarter-eighth-eighth patterns. The downbeat of m. 4, with its lengthy tied half note, receives emphasis on the musical surface despite the fact that the measure is hypermetrically weak.

In order to create a Chopinesque rhythmic profile, is it necessary to teach students explicitly about meter and groupings or to assume prior knowledge of these concepts? When the goal is creative rather than analytical, it seems possible to be sensitized to style without gaining explicit knowledge using explanatory theoretical tools. Of course, this type of experiential learning can support and enrich a purely theoretical discussion, whether such a discussion precedes or follows creative learning.

A classroom activity on this topic begins by comparing Obrecht and Vivaldi, leading into a discussion of Chopin's rhythmic practice. Some useful guiding questions include:

1. What is the difference between the rhythmic flow of Obrecht and Vivaldi? What kind of "feel" do they have?
2. How is this "feel" created by the use of rhythmic values within a measure?
3. How does Chopin's rhythmic usage compare to the excerpts by Obrecht and Vivaldi? Is Chopin closer to either of the other composers (and in what ways?)

Example 3

Chopin, Nocturne Op. 48, No. 1, mm. 1–16.

Through in-class discussion, the students can discover a checklist for a Chopinesque rhythmic profile:

1. Disguise downbeats through rests and ties, at least initially;
2. Use strings of identical rhythmic values (e.g., sixteenth notes) asymmetrically, while avoiding the start of a new rhythmic value on the beat, creating syncopation through ties;

Example 4
Chopin, Nocturne Op. 37, No. 1, mm. 1–8.

3. Balance disguised strong beats with a clearer reflection of the meter in the right hand: as we have seen in both Op. 48, No. 1 and Op. 37, No.1, the right-hand part moves from de-emphasized strong metric positions to melodic groupings that are more congruent with the meter.

After immersing in these and additional models, the students can form an intuitive understanding of Chopin's rhythmic usage. It is useful to have an in-class workshop in which the students produce a four-measure draft for the beginning of a melody. This is an opportunity for group feedback: by workshopping the pieces and asking for peer feedback about "what they liked" in a student's melodic line and "points for improvement," students have a chance to think explicitly about an aspect of the stylistic modeling and articulate some features of Chopin's musical usage. A hypothetical student line might look like Example 5. This example shows a gradual transition from "obscured downbeats," most prominently in measure 1, to clearly supported downbeats in measure 4. While the F♯ on beat 3 of m. 2 may still have an "in-between" quality, the second half of m. 3 supports the metric grid through four eighth notes, which pave the way for the metric congruence of m. 4.

Example 5
A four-measure preliminary melodic fragment.[25]

This activity also demonstrates how elements of an idiom can serve as a basis for students' discovery of a stylistic tendency. This is done intuitively and connects a type of musical analysis with creative work: through two examples of Chopin's rhythmic profiles, with contrasting examples by Obrecht and Vivaldi, students develop stronger intuitions about an aspect of Chopin's nocturnes. While the current goal is "analysis for composition," discovering rhythm and meter in different styles can also serve to introduce (or revisit) abstract theoretical models in a style-specific context. I have found that my students were receptive to the discussion of rhythmic usage in this style and others, even though they were generally not conversant in theories of rhythm and meter. This issue ties back to the larger dilemma of thinking *in* and *about* music, which I have certainly not resolved for myself yet.

Post-Classical Echoes (1): Caplin's Formal Types

The model composition project focused on creating an A section (only) of a Chopin nocturne, a complex task in terms of harmonic and melodic writing. Given this difficulty, generic and schematic elements on any level can serve as a productive creative constraint. The present section focuses on the large formal framework for an A section, whereas the following section will examine local harmonic and melodic schemata. Examples 3 and 4 above are excerpts of A sections equivalent to a classical small ternary (or rounded binary) without the repeats (in the latter case, there is in effect a written-out repeat of the second reprise). The opening of the Nocturne Op. 15, No. 2 (Example 6) is a sentential antecedent phrase.[26] These examples also demonstrate Chopin's general tendency to rely on a highly regular hypermeter—

25 Since I did not run a formal, IRB-approved trial in this course, I cannot provide examples of actual student work, as much as I think that it is productive for us to discuss pedagogy with concrete student outputs in mind, both strong and weak. I have done so in the past with collaborators Johnandrew Slominski and Martin Norgaard—see Rabinovitch and Slominski (2015), and Rabinovitch and Norgaard (2018).

26 After Caplin (1998).

something to be mindful of in this type of creative activity.[27]

Example 6

Example 6. Chopin, Nocturne Op. 15, No. 2, mm. 1–8: A sentential antecedent phrase.

The A section of op. 48, no. 1 provides a possible outline for the students' section, in essence a small ternary (or rounded boundary) without notated repeats, as shown in Example 7:

MM. 1–4: Opening phrase (ends on i: PAC)

MM. 5–8: Second phrase (ends on v: PAC)

(MM. 1-8 equivalent to first reprise)

MM. 9–12: bII-to-i Fonte (sequential fragmentation)

MM. 13–16: …→ III: HC

MM. 17–24: Expanded reprise of mm. 1-4, with cadential delays leading to i: PAC.

(MM. 9-24 equivalent to second reprise)

Example 7

Formal Outline of Op. 48, No. 1.[28]

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27 The first section of the Nocturne op. 15, No. 3 is a notable exception to the high degree of hypermetric regularity of Chopin's nocturnes. For background and an interpretation, see Kallberg (1988).

28 Whether or not mm. 1–4 and mm. 5–8 may be considered an antecedent-consequent with a

Students can discover Chopin's formal molds and sentential tendencies through in-class study of exemplars such as the beginnings of Op. 15, No. 2 (Example 6, mm. 1–8, a sentential antecedent phrase), Op. 9, No. 1 (a sentential antecedent with an expanded consequent with cadential delays), Op. 55, No. 1 (opens with a sentence), or Op. 32, No. 1 (opens with a sentence). Discovering or rediscovering Chopin's sentences and additional formal molds gives the students a sense of the framework for his melodic, improvisatory freedom. An informal query to my students in Spring 2019 indicated that fewer than half of them had retained the concept of a sentence from their previous studies. However, when asked to compare several openings, students were able to formulate a working definition of Chopin's usage of the prototype. As mentioned, it was useful to provide the formal scheme of Op. 48, No. 1 as a suggested outline for the students' A section (Example 7): the purpose was not to impose on them a specific outline (some of them chose a different path), but rather to find a productive framework. The students also appreciated the sentence-like qualities of this outline, though it technically fits into a different mold. Example 8 provides a possible roadmap based on the A section of Op. 48, No. 1.[29]

MM. 1–4 Antecedent

MM. 5–8 Consequent

MM. 9–12: Middle section with fragmentation and sequencing

MM. 13–16: Drive towards cadence (non-home key)

MM. 17–24 (or so): Reprise of opening idea with cadential delays (see below) and I: PAC

Example 8

Proposed Roadmap for Students' A section.

Knowing *about* the sentence or the rounded binary is useful, and many of us want our students to emerge from their music degrees with vivid musical experiences of these concepts. When the goal at hand is creative, there is a need to "zoom into" the musical surface in greater detail, as I will do in the following section.

modulating consequent depends on one's fine-grained definitions and terminology.

29 Alegant (2013) outlines the pedagogical utility of road maps.

Post-Classical Echoes (2): Harmonic-Melodic Schemata

The previous section has focused on the well-defined formal models of the high-classical style, on which Chopin’s post-classical usage relies. The present section turns to an under-articulated aspect of early nineteenth-century music: idiomatic harmonic and melodic frameworks. Considerable workshopping, peer feedback and instructor feedback are necessary in order to help students experience different melodic and harmonic possibilities, such as different harmonizations of the same melodic idea. It is difficult to articulate intuitions about Chopin’s surface melodies and harmonies, and some pedagogical scaffoldings are clearly necessary.

The persistence, transformation, or “deformation” of galant schemata in the nineteenth century merits further attention from a purely theoretical standpoint.[30] Galant schemata include not only harmonic paradigms, but also associated soprano skeletons. Therefore, they have the potential to lead to a richer, style-specific description of musical practice than a generalized tool like harmonic or formal analysis.

One formulaic tendency that Chopin’s melodic writing shows is a drive towards higher and higher melodic peaks before reaching a cadence. This is a type of gesture that Yosef Goldenberg described as a “gesture of growing obstinacy.”[31] Chopin’s tendency to ascend to a high $\hat{1}$ before a cadence can also be viewed as an echo of the eighteenth-century Cudworth Cadence (see Example 9).[32] In Op. 15, No. 2 (refer back to Example 6), we can observe that Chopin’s way of descending from the high $\hat{1}$ ($F\sharp_5$) in measure 6 already diverges from the stereotyped eighteenth-century Cudworth Cadence. However, the eighteenth-century listening horizon still seems relevant to me, as a high $\hat{1}$ cues impending closure.[33] How can we sensitize students to such harmonic and melodic tendencies in an area that can still use more basic theoretical mapping? In the following subsections, I will provide a few models.

30 See Gjerdingen (1988), Byros (2009), Ijzerman (2017) for scholarly efforts in this area.

31 Goldenberg (2006). Goldenberg’s Examples 9, 19, and 20 are by Chopin (the latter is from the Nocturne Op. 9, No. 1).

32 After Gjerdingen (2007).

33 Cf. the discussion in Rabinovitch (forthcoming) after Larson (2012) of an analogy between two phrases by Mozart and Chopin.

Example 9
Cudworth Cadence (after Gjerdingen 2007).

A) Cadential delays and pre-cadential melodic peaks

The concluding phrase of the A section of Op. 48, No. 1 represents eighteenth-century listening horizons surrounding cadential delays.[34] It also shows Chopin's tendency to strive towards higher and higher melodic peaks.[35] Example 10 provides a model for attaining higher peaks towards the ending of a section, loosely inspired by Op. 48, No. 1, mm. 17–24.

Example 10
"Deceptive→Complete Cadence" Harmonic-Melodic Skeleton.

One might object that this scaffolding is too specific and verges on spoon-feeding, and perhaps this objection has merit. There is a fine line between encouraging immersion and providing the students models that are already idiomatic. It seems to me that providing a stylistically appropriate outline and requiring students to fill it with diminutions is a realistic compromise: the successive peaks on $\hat{6}$ (m. 1) and $\hat{1}$

34 Schmalfeldt (1992), Gjerdingen (2007).

35 Goldenberg (2006).

(m. 4) provide an opportunity for students to experiment with Chopinesque flourishes, which is quite challenging in itself and requires a close study of the models. Much like the discussion of rhythm above, creating idiomatic melodic activity requires close attention to the musical surface.

B) Major/minor reinterpretation schema

The opening phrases of both Op. 37, No. 1 and Op. 48, No. 1 can guide an in-class discussion of reharmonization and harmonic paths not taken. For instance, for Op. 37, No. 1 (Example 4 above), one might ask:

1. What chord would you anticipate on the downbeat of measure 4?
2. How might you alter measure 4 in order to remain in the home key?
3. How might you alter mm. 5–8 in order to remain throughout in the relative major?

This analysis and re-composition activity relies on abstract thinking about harmony, which seems necessary here. (Indeed, we have collectively spent more class time Roman-numeralizing passages in the Chopin-nocturne unit in comparison with the Bach units of the course). It is also possible to propose a more schema- or paradigm-based approach to modeling, such as the following outlines (Example 11), inspired by Chopin's phrases reproduced in Examples 3 and 4.

Example 11
Relative Key Reinterpretation Patterns.

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C) Sequential Models

Finally, antiquated sequential models with bass lines alternating fourths and seconds and an underlying stepwise melody, as well as eighteenth-century influenced Monte and Fonte sequences, are idiomatic in the present context.[36] These models can fit into the sequential fragmentation of a sentence or into a middle part of a rounded binary. Example 12 offers pedagogical templates that attempt to model Chopin's usage: this can serve as a handout with exemplars for the students.

Example 12
Chopin-Inspired Sequential Outlines.

Pattern A (Example 12) represents a descending-thirds sequence with bass moving down by a fourth and up by a second in each link in the sequential chain—this is chromaticized in a Chopin-inspired way through the raised $\hat{3}$. Pattern B takes an ascending thirds sequences (bass rising by a fourth and descending by a second in each unit), also implying a tonicization of IV at its end. Patterns C and D are based on the eighteenth-century Monte and Fonte sequences, respectively.[37] The soprano part is now slightly embellished in surface diminutions, creating a connection to Chopin's

36 Cf. Gjerdingen (2007), Froebe (2007).

37 Cf. Gjerdingen (2007).

surface writing, while also providing opportunities for further embellishing. Pattern E deviates from the eighteenth-century Fonte, reinterpreting what should have been a final G♭ as an F♯, which becomes a leading tone in the key of V rather than a minor third over a iii chord.

Harmonic-melodic paradigms and ways of embellishing them on the surface represent two types of requisite knowledge for this type of creative project. One could endeavor to create a complete lexicon of Chopin's phrase types: this might prove unwieldy in comparison with the more stereotyped melodic behaviors of eighteenth-century music.[38] Without underplaying the crucial role of stylistic immersion for the students, we can provide scaffoldings to guide their creative work. Patterns C, D, and E in Example 12 also bring us closer to historical practices of keyboard diminution, to be explored in the following section.

Learning from a Romantic Improvisation Treatise: A Sample of Kalkbrenner (1849)

Though I have not incorporated a discussion of this with my students in the first run of the nocturne composition unit, I would be remiss in an essay in honor of Prof. Schubert to omit discussion of at least one nineteenth-century treatise. Frédéric Kalkbrenner is not only the dedicatee of Chopin's E-minor concerto, but also the author of the *Traité d'harmonie du pianiste* ("A Pianist's Treatise on Harmony.")[39] This is a modest yet valuable source for the study of romantic preluding, that is, the extempore performance of preludes or introductions to other pieces. Kalkbrenner's treatise was published at a time of decline in keyboard improvisation, which, ironically and unfortunately, predated the age of recording.[40] Kalkbrenner's pedagogical approach to keyboard improvisation shows the importance of varied diminutions upon conventional bass sequences: internalizing (perhaps memorizing) harmonic models and idiomatic embellishments through the fingers is an activity that is de-emphasized in our modern-day curricula from K-to-12 (and on to DMA). Examples for this practice across three centuries include the 17th-century diminutions of Spiridionis, the eighteenth-century

38 Ibid.

39 Kalkbrenner (1849).

40 Gooley (2018) provides an impressive survey of nineteenth-century improvisation practices.

partimento patterns of Durante, as well as Kalkbrenner's treatise.[41] Kalkbrenner's sequential harmonic motions are varied and embellished in idiomatic piano textures, as we can see in Example 13.

Example 13
Kalkbrenner (1849, 15): An Embellishment of a Sequential Bass.

Sequences play an important role in Chopin's fragmentations and middle sections. However, Kalkbrenner's lines and textures can also serve as an inspiration for breaking the mold and "nocturnizing" this type keyboard musicianship. Example 14 is my attempt to "nocturnize" Kalkbrenner's pattern. The exercise of breaking symmetry and forming a more nocturne-like phrase can serve as an advanced activity: it raises our awareness of idiomatic accompaniment patterns, while also experimenting with harmonic and melodic writing.[42]

Though I have taken some license with one of his patterns, some of Kalkbrenner's own keyboard diminutions are extravagant in their own right. For instance, diminutions on what we might call a 5-6 ascending sequence clearly demonstrate the persistence of contrapuntal thinking and keyboard diminutions in nineteenth-century France. The exemplar learning of the partimento tradition, adopted at the Paris Conservatory, is

41 Bellotti ed. (2003-2005 /2008), Gjerdingen (n. d., ed.), Kalkbrenner (1849).

42 For a discussion of accompaniment patterns in a model composition project, see Silberman (2012).

Example 14
My attempt to "Nocturnize" Kalkbrenner's excerpt.

echoed here, as we can see in Example 15.[43]

Readers may wish to experiment with recomposing the final variation in Example 15 in a "nocturnized" fashion: it is a good idea for us as instructors to try out some of the creative tasks that we ask of our students and continue challenging our own musicianship. Much as historical treatises are central to Prof. Schubert's project of reconstructing historical improvisation, Kalkbrenner's treatise gives us a vivid sense of one improvisatory aspect of nineteenth-century music.

Kalkbrenner's sequence models—both literally and in principle—open some options for future implementation:

1. Use selected sequences as keyboard exercises (or play-and-sing / singing exercises) in support of acquiring nineteenth-century diminution patterns;
2. Adapt melodic patterns to model Chopin more closely (as in my Example 14)—a challenging model-composition activity.

These historical diminutions give us a glimpse of the types of skills that we spend less time on in the curriculum, perhaps with the exception of highly specialized training in historical improvisation. Prof. Schubert insists that his counterpoint students learn several pieces by heart. This insistence on the currently frowned-upon activity of rote

43 See the discussions of the transfer of Neapolitan teachings to Paris in Cafiero (2007), Gjerdingen (2013), Gjerdingen and Bourne (2015).

Example 15
From Kalkbrenner (1849, 32).

memorization may be crucial for an immersive and creative musical experience in any style, historical or contemporary.[44]

Conclusion: Thinking *in* and *about* Music through Model Composition

Chopin's nocturnes serve as an example for an advanced unit in model composition in a course populated by master's-level "classical" performance majors. This is a challenge to those of us—like the present author—who are proponents of "thinking *in* music," since the creative project seems to require quite a bit of "thinking *about* music" before setting to emulate the model, or while struggling through various stages of the process. I had to design appropriate pedagogical scaffoldings for a particularly challenging creative task, in which mere immersion was not enough, at least not within the time frame of a 3-4 week unit.[45] While explicit thinking was necessary, some of it was concerned with fine idiomatic details rather than with generalizations about harmony, melody, or form that might apply equally to Mozart, Chopin, or the Flintstones theme song, among many others. In this essay, I have reflected on the applicability of a variety of theoretical tools to model composition, or, in other words, the possibility to "reverse-engineer" them for creativity. Descriptions of the incongruence between groupings and meter, definitions of phrase types in Caplin's sense as well as Gjerdingen's are meaningful tools for modeling Chopin's style.

A unit in model composition is an opportunity to incorporate live feedback in the classroom. Spending time listening to, engaging, singing, composing, and workshopping students' excerpts is invaluable. As Schubert suggests, reacting to peers' work-in-progress allows students to articulate their evolving musical understanding.[46] At times, this understanding is more intuitive and informal—e.g., "I liked the rhythmic flow at the beginning of your phrase, but the ending was too repetitive,"; in other cases, "paper-theory" observations—"make your middle section / fragmentation more

44 Sánchez-Kisielewska stresses that rote memorization is valued in second-language acquisition studies (2017, 120–21). While most human beings become expert speakers in their native language, enculturation in music manifests itself in becoming an experienced listener, not a composer or an improviser (Patel 2008). If there were more similarity between these competencies, we would surely not need any explicit music theory in order to become fluent creators within musical styles with which we are familiar.

45 In addition, as stated, these students had already acquired many explicit theoretical tools through their prior training.

46 Schubert (2011).

chromatic"—are necessary.

Schubert's example suggests that we should all be open to modifying our teaching, even in radical ways. Contradictions along the way are to be expected, and I have not been able to resolve many of my own dilemmas as a teacher. The recent experience of teaching model composition has allowed me to reflect again on what Schubert refers to as the paper-theory toolbox and the experiential stylistic understanding sandbox.[47] As our discipline and pedagogical practices are opening up to new repertoires, new revelations about historical musicianship, and new technologies that can support audiation and engagement, we can hope to prepare our students for life-long curiosity and explorations of musicianship, creativity, repertoires of their choice, and even music analysis.

The perspective of historical musicianship in composition, improvisation, and anywhere in between also has the potential to blur the lines between "dead-white-male composers" on the one hand and diverse, living musicians who compose, improvise, and perform on the other hand. The reality of the matter is that historical European music from the middle ages to the early nineteenth century had fuzzy lines between these musical activities.[48] Recognizing the improvisatory quality of European "art music" of the past is thus a way to engage the canon both musically and critically. As we continue to enliven and enrich our theory curricula in ways that reflect our students' interests and our own, Prof. Schubert's example and appeal for a more integrated and musical approach remains an inspirational model for emulation.

47 Ibid.

48 Busse Berger (2005), Gjerdingen (2007), Christensen (2017), Gooley (2018).

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