Cultivating Career Skills Through Public Music Theory and Community Engaged Learning

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Pedagogical research suggests that providing students authentic, real-world tasks boosts intrinsic motivation by helping them make connections between your course, your discipline, and the world around them. This is particularly true if class activities invite students to extend their work into the public sphere through community-engaged learning (CEL). Several authors have suggested possible large-scale CEL projects aimed at the undergraduate core. However, most projects tend to suffer from two issues. First, none reflect how students will most likely use music theory in their professional lives, diminishing the benefits of using real-world tasks. Second, I have found students are often overwhelmed by the newness of these types of assignments compared to more traditional projects commonly assigned in other courses—or even compared to assignments from earlier in my music theory class.

This article outlines small- and large-scale ways to integrate public music theory activities into the undergraduate core that invite students to apply their knowledge of music theory to real-world tasks. Infusing classes with these smaller assignments not only leaves students better prepared to accomplish more complex cumulative assignments, but it also results in a curriculum permeated with consistent and meaningful opportunities for students to connect what they learn in the classroom to their intended careers.

Pedagogical research suggests that providing students authentic, real-world tasks boosts intrinsic motivation by helping them make connections between your course, your discipline, and the world around them.[1] This is particularly true if class activities invite students to extend their work into the public sphere through community-engaged learning (hereafter CEL).[2] Several authors have suggested possible large-scale CEL projects aimed at the undergraduate music theory core.[3] However, most projects tend to suffer from two issues. First, none reflect how students will most likely use music theory in their professional lives, diminishing the benefits of using real-world tasks.[4] Second, students are often overwhelmed by the newness of these

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1 Lang (2016, 426–432) and Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman (2010, 80–83). Bain (2011, 64–65) also suggests something similar.

2 Lang (2016, 429–430), Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray (2001), and Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, and Ilustre (2002).

3 Bourne (2017), Peebles (2017), and Williams (2017).

4 Peebles (2017) comes closest in that most students will need to write program notes in their

types of assignments compared to more traditional projects commonly assigned in other courses—or even compared to earlier assignments in music theory classes.

To overcome both issues, I have found it helpful to incorporate, throughout the semester, targeted, small-scale public music theory (PMT) exercises—all based on broadly applicable real-world tasks—that help students gradually develop the skills needed for larger projects. Only later in the course do I ask students to use these newly developed skills to accomplish a larger, cumulative CEL project. Infusing my classes with these smaller assignments not only leaves students better prepared to accomplish the more complex cumulative assignment, but it also results in a curriculum permeated with consistent and meaningful opportunities for students to connect what they learn in the classroom to their intended career paths.[5] In my experience, this infusion of PMT results in drastic improvements both in student work and the intrinsic motivation felt by students.[6]

This article describes my implementation of both types of assignments. Part 1 details various types of smaller preliminary exercises that instructors can incorporate throughout the theory and aural skills core; these cultivate specific skills needed for a larger PMT project as well as skills for students' intended career paths. The exercises in Part 1 give students crucial experience translating theoretical jargon for the non-expert in a low-stakes setting. Part 2 outlines a flexible, culminating project that can be used in any theory or fundamentals classroom: students create a podcast, YouTube video, or newspaper article for a non-expert audience that either analyzes a piece of music or teaches a theoretical topic learned in class. Such a project builds crucial career skills given that almost all musicians will at some point have to teach a theory concept to a student, walk someone with no theory knowledge through a piece, or publicize a piece they are performing or conducting. Moreover, many performers, teachers, and producers will create podcasts and YouTube videos to promote their concerts, develop pedagogical content, or even serve as their primary performance venue. However, while these projects do build career skills, they do not necessarily have students actively disseminating their work to the broader public. Part 3, therefore, describes

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professional careers. However, the audience for that assignment stops it from truly reflecting a real-life situation.

5   In integrating brief PMT throughout the curriculum, this article builds on previous work in Belcher and Grant (2019) and Jenkins (2020).

6   My anecdotal observations are supported by pedagogical research by Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman (2010, 117), which shows that applying class material in diverse contexts reinforces concepts and facilitates transfer of class materials outside the classroom better than repeatedly practicing those concepts in the same way.

several ways to expand the core summative project into a variety of CEL activities that allow students to purposefully take their work into the public sphere.

PART 1: SMALL-SCALE PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

Small-scale PMT exercises can take many forms. The following discussion will center on five types of assignments that I assign—miniature pre-concert lectures, short teaching demos, concert reviews, concert announcements, and graphic analyses— all of which imitate real-world tasks and build skills necessary for the large-scale cumulative project later in the semester.

MINIATURE PRE-CONCERT LECTURES

At some point, all musicians will need to speak to audiences about music they perform, conduct, or produce; yet most students never receive training within the undergraduate curriculum to accomplish this task. As such, I often see many undergraduate (and even graduate) students fill pre-concert lectures with trivial facts about the composer or how hard they or the ensemble worked on the piece—neither of which enhances the audience's listening experience. The theory core, though, offers a prime place to train students at this task, given that the goal of most curriculums centers on helping students understand and speak about music more effectively.[7]

Thus, in my own theory and aural skills classes, I have begun asking students to either record or write miniature pre-concert lectures as part of their analysis or listening assignments. These talks are typically 2–3 minutes long (300–400 words), must include at least one reference to the given class's topic, and should be aimed at helping non-musicians hear the piece better. For instance, as shown in Example 1, I recently asked students to analyze Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's "Du bist die Ruh" during my unit on the analysis of vocal music. After briefly analyzing the song's poetry, I asked them leading questions about the piece such as the song's form; the harmonic, linear, and expressive purposes of the persistent G-naturals; and any other forms of text painting they could find. These leading questions—particularly regarding the expressive purpose of the modal mixture—set students up well for the final part of the assignment where they were required to translate their analysis for the general public through a short pre-concert talk.[8]

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7   Jenkins (2020, 384) also endorses this view and gives suggestions on possible implementations.
8   These leading questions also provide crucial guidance that helps students transform their analytical observations into understandable qualitative, descriptive statements while avoiding a common misunderstanding that analysis is simply labeling Roman numerals and forms.

ANALYSIS OF VOCAL MUSIC HOMEWORK

1.) LISTEN to the following excerpt from Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's "Du bist die Ruh" (1839–46), and answer the following questions (a recording can be found here: https://youtu.be/v-sxSzWjH9I):

Hensel: "Du bist die Ruh"

Example 1.
Analysis of Vocal Music Homework. Hensel, "Du bist die Ruh."

Example 1 (cont'd).
Analysis of Vocal Music Homework. Hensel, "Du bist die Ruh."

Du bist die Ruh	**You are repose**
Friedrich Rückert	English Translation by Richard Wigmore
Du bist die Ruh,	You are repose
Der Friede mild,	and gentle peace.
Die Sehnsucht du,	You are longing
Und was sie stillt.	and what stills it.
Ich weihe dir	Full of joy and grief
Voll Lust und Schmerz	I consecrate to you
Zur Wohnung hier	my eyes and my heart
Mein Aug' und Herz.	as a dwelling place.
Kehr' ein bei mir,	Come in to me
Und schliesse du	and softly close
Still hinter dir	the gate
Die Pforten zu.	behind you.
Treib andern Schmerz	Drive all other grief
Aus dieser Brust,	from my breast.
Voll sei dies Herz	Let my heart
Von deiner Lust.	be full of your joy.
Dies Augenzelt	The temple of my eyes
Von deinem Glanz	is lit
Allein erhellt,	by your radiance alone:
O füll' es ganz.	O, fill it wholly!

Example 1 (cont'd).
Analysis of Vocal Music Homework. Hensel, "Du bist die Ruh."

2.) READ the poem provided above. Analyze the rhyme scheme with lowercases letters to the right of each line of German text.

    a) Is the rhyme scheme consistent?

    b) Briefly summarize the poem. Who is speaking? To whom are they speaking? And about what?

    c) Are there any evocative images that stand out to you that might be good candidates for text painting?

3.) COMPARE the form of the poem to the form of the song.

    a) How does the punctuation in the poem influence the form of the song?

    b) What is the overall form of the song? Does that align with the text? Why or why not?

    c) Hensel repeats the second verse twice. Why do you think she did that?

4.) CONSIDER the use of G-natural ($\flat\hat{6}$) throughout the song (Hensel uses it 10 times).

    a) What category of chromatic chord do we expect to see given the appearance of $\flat\hat{6}$?

    b) Focus specifically on the chords featuring G-natural in mm. 26. What Roman numeral would you give these chords? Does a Roman numeral truly capture the chord's function? Why or why not?

    c) Choose two instances of the chord that you feel exemplify text painting and explain how Hensel uses them for an expressive effect.

Example 1 (cont'd).
Analysis of Vocal Music Homework. Hensel, "Du bist die Ruh."

5.) CHOOSE one other moment where you feel Hensel's musical choices reflect the text. Briefly describe how she accomplishes this.

6.) IMAGINE you are performing this song as part of a recital. Write a short 2–3 minute pre-concert talk (~300–400 words) that uses at least one analytical observation you noted above to help the audience hear the song better. Because many of the audience members may not be musicians, you may not use analytical jargon. You may include some brief historical background on the song, but it may not take up more than 20% of the talk.

Please upload the written talk and a video recording of you performing it to Canvas.

Example 1 (cont'd).
Analysis of Vocal Music Homework. Hensel, "Du bist die Ruh."

As shown by this example, including such PMT tasks takes very little adjustment given that the pre-concert talk portion of the assignment can simply take the place of a short-answer question one typically asks after the analysis of a score. Yet this initial foray into PMT provides students with crucial practice in translating theoretical topics into language understandable by the general public through a low-stakes, controlled activity that also prepares them for the larger cumulative project down the road. Moreover, this task also trains students to *perform* their translations in an engaging way—a crucial aspect of any advanced PMT assignment.

SHORT LESSON PLANS AND TEACHING DEMOS

Students in many of my classes also perform short teaching demos or prepare lesson plans that walk a class through the analysis of a piece or excerpt.[9] Almost all musicians will teach at one point in their lives, but these exercises particularly appeal to music education students as relevant to their career goals. Teaching also forces students to comprehensively understand a concept before they can distill it into accessible language,[10] yet many of our students have had no teaching experience prior to entering our classrooms. At my institution, for instance, even music education

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9   For more information on using teaching demos as PMT assignments in the undergraduate classroom, see Belcher and Grant (2019).
10   These two reasons are why I include a teaching component in my large-scale, cumulative project at the end of the semester.

students in my final theory core classes have yet to take a formal music education class. As such, asking students to craft lesson plans and perform small teaching demos throughout the course gives them experience in a low-stakes way before embarking on a larger pedagogical project. Students receive a gentle introduction, are given feedback on their teaching, and then have many more opportunities to improve these crucial career skills throughout the semester.

In my experience, review days prior to an exam offer a particularly good place to include short teaching demos. For homework leading up to these days, I break students into groups and ask them to prepare a short 5–10-minute lesson for the following class reviewing a concept on the upcoming exam. Although students do not always have to reframe these demos for the public, I have noticed that the reformulation process helps both the "teachers" and "students" remember the content more thoroughly. Moreover, students seem to truly relish the challenge of translating concepts for the non-expert.

Students can also prepare analyses as lesson plans. For instance, they might construct 10–15-minute lesson plans that present analyses suitable for a non-expert audience. For these assignments, students do not necessarily have to teach the actual class to reap benefits, as instructors can still offer suggestions for improving both pedagogy and communication with non-experts. It is important, though, that students have a particular audience in mind before writing.[11] Are they gearing their lessons towards a sixth-grade general music class? A high-school AP theory course? A private lesson student? Each audience requires different teaching styles, and it is important for students to know to whom they are teaching before they begin planning.

CONCERT REVIEWS

Concert reviews are ideal vehicles for short PMT assignments and offer an easy way to connect your classroom to the outside world. Moreover, they acquaint students with writing and reading a genre that many of them will either interact with or be asked to write for throughout their careers. For example, students can analyze a piece programmed on an upcoming school performance or local concert venue either during class or for homework. Then, after attending the concert, they can write a short 250–500-word review of that concert that includes at least one theoretical or analytical point emphasized in class. Many students, though, have never read a concert review. Therefore, I typically give them several examples by myself and others as models for how to marry performative critique with analytical insights.[12]

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11   For information on the importance of audience in student writing, see Bean (2011, 40–46).

12   For example, see my review in *DiaKCritical*, Grant (2020), or Alyssa Barna's piece in *The*

Because students have to provide both of the above types of insights when writing these short pieces, reviews help students to work on translating analytical observations into prose—a skill needed for the larger PMT project—and to develop higher-order listening and communication skills. Indeed, to write a review, students must think about what makes a performance effective or not, how performance and analysis relate, and how to communicate about performances thoughtfully and intelligently. Each of those skills directly relates to any career path a student may take, whether that be performing, teaching, or producing.[13]

Unlike the previous two assignments, concert reviews take more advanced planning to implement. When assigning these in my own classes, I contacted ensemble directors and explored music that was often unfamiliar to me in order to find appropriate places to include this type of assignment in my curriculum. One way around this, particularly for upper-level students learning advanced topics, would be to assign students to watch recorded live performances on YouTube and review those. I have noticed, though, that students truly appreciate being able to analyze music they themselves are performing.

SHORT CONCERT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Concise concert announcements suitable for publication in the local newspaper offer students another PMT activity that builds skills needed for any job as a music director or performer.[14] For example, students can analyze a piece being played at an upcoming school performance and prepare a 250–500-word newspaper blurb explaining what audiences might expect to hear in that piece. Within this blurb, students must include at least one theoretical concept about the upcoming performance.[15] For instance, as shown in Example 2, my school recently put on *The Great American Trailer Park Musical*, and I had students analyze a number and write a short announcement, aimed at a public audience, that included elements from that analysis. Students later reported that the assignment excited them about the show, and that they brought their analytical hearings to the performance.

Washington Post on Taylor Swift's album *Evermore, Barna* (2020).

13   The communication skills built into this and the other shorter projects also transfer well if students choose to pursue careers outside of music.

14   For more information on using concert announcements in the classroom, see Belcher and Grant (2019).

15   This assignment also conveys to the students Lewin's (1969, 63) well-known point about analysis: its goal should be to hear a piece better.

L I S T E N I N G   A S S I G N M E N T   # 1

This listening assignment is designed to help you familiarize yourself with new and fantastic repertoires, work on your writing skills, and develop your active listening skills. In short, this project should give you an opportunity to apply what you learn in class.

To accomplish this assignment successfully, here are some tips:

> 1.) **Follow the prompt**: Each portion of the assignment has specific questions that must be answered. Please read every part of the question!

> 2.) **Engage with the score**: The response to every prompt must include at least two to three specific musical examples from various parts of the score—do not simply analyze the first few measures of the piece! Don't forget to specify measure numbers!

> 3.) **Ask for help if you need it**: I am here to help. Use me as a resource!

> 4.) **Don't wait until the last minute**: This assignment will take some time. Spread out your work. Also, you can always turn it in early for extra feedback!

> 5.) **Be creative**: The prompt is only a starting point. Feel free to tell me more about your experience listening and thinking about the piece!

THE GREAT AMERICAN TRAILER PARK MUSICAL

The Great American Trailer Park Musical is being performed at Missouri Western State University this semester. Listen to the musical along with the score (on Canvas) and answer the following questions:

> 1.) Listen to the song "The Great American TV Show," and write a paragraph discussing the use of different keys in this song. Why does the song change keys so many times? Do any of the keys come back? Do all the key signatures match the actual key the person is singing? For this question, it can be helpful to watch a video of the production. One can be found at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrGgnxka8rE.

> 2.) Choose one song and write a few paragraphs on how the composer illustrates the text. Focus on elements of: harmony, melody, register, rhythm, declamation, etc… Be creative!

> 3.) Now that you are an expert on this musical, use the above analyses to write a short concert announcement (~300 words) suitable for submission to the Griffon Weekly that can publicize the musical. Your concert announcement should include at least one analytical fact about the piece drawn from either of the above analyses that will help the potential audience member hear the musical better. Because this is for the Griffon Weekly, your <u>announcement should not use any theoretical jargon</u>. Assume your audience knows nothing about music. This will be a challenge, but feel free to run rough drafts by me at any time!

Example 2.

Listening Assignment 1: *The Great American Trailer Park Musical.*

Instructors could build on this assignment by having groups of students generate these blurbs, then vote on one to submit to the school paper, thus allowing students to see their PMT assignments in print. This applied learning opportunity gives students a clear taste of what it feels like to actually market and drum up excitement for an upcoming performance, something that almost all of them will need to do at some point in their careers.

This type of project also works well for fictitious performances. For instance, I have augmented model compositions done in my theory class by having students write concert announcements about their pieces that analyze the composition for the general public. This exercise has several benefits. First, it provides a short, low-stakes way to train students to distill analysis into understandable language. Analyzing their own piece also forces them to step back and reflect on how they want their model compositions to be heard on the large scale, creating a productive feedback loop between analysis, performance, and composition. Finally, the activity makes the composition feel more like a real performance rather than simply a theoretical exercise.

GRAPHIC ANALYSES

Not all PMT has to be written prose. For example, the Toronto Symphony recently started publishing Visual Listening Guides under the project name "Symphony Graphique."[16] These guides provide listeners with a nearly textless timeline of the piece, a timeline augmented with stylized graphics that display information such as instrumentation, form, contour, and key. These graphics supplant the traditional text-heavy program note with an accessible way for listeners to track where they are in the piece and to what they can be listening. Similarly, the Philadelphia Orchestra produces a smartphone app called LiveNote that provides listeners with an in-time guide to the composition.[17] One can imagine the impact of either listening guide on the experiences of non-musicians, many of whom do not listen to classical music on a daily basis. Focusing specifically on how to make accessible explanatory graphics allows students to cultivate a skill useful in more contexts than just the final project.

With this inspiration in mind, I have begun asking my students to create artistic diagrams of pieces as part of their analytical homework. This works particularly well for units on musical form. For instance, as shown in Example 3, I recently tasked my students with creating a graphic analysis of Clara Schumann's *Variations on a Theme*

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16   See Bishko (2017) for examples of these guides.
17   Thank you to Jenkins (2020) for alerting me to this app.

by Robert Schumann, op. 20. For this assignment, I first asked students to analyze different aspects of the movement such as its large-scale form, the character of each section, and variation techniques displayed throughout the piece. Students then used this information to create an artistic representation of how some of these features (or others not listed) play out in the piece for a non-musician audience member. I have similarly experimented with this type of assignment when investigating small binary forms; after analyzing pieces in class, students create formal diagrams that are directed toward the general public. In those cases, student diagrams often depict the binary form's thematic characteristics and the overall trajectory from stability to instability and back.

While I have had great success implementing these artistic diagrams on their own alongside my already created analytical homework, they are far from the only way to include graphic analyses into the classroom. Jenkins (2020, 384), for instance, suggests having students write informational slides for a listening guide to accompany a composition they are working on in their private lessons. One could also combine this assignment with one listed above such as the pre-concert talk. After creating their graphic analyses, students could work individually or in groups to create a five-minute pre-concert talk that walks an audience member through their graphics. While this option takes more class time, it also more clearly resembles a real-world activity that most music majors might perform at some point in their lives and therefore be even more motivating.

L I S T E N I N G   A S S I G N M E N T   # 2

For this listening assignment, we're going to begin thinking about how composers can create an entire piece from one simple theme.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1.) Listen to Clara Schumann's "Variationen über ein Thema von Robert Schumann," Op. 20 several times with and without score. A recording and score is on Canvas.

2.) Take a close look at the Variation 1:

a.) If we consider the theme to be divided into four voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), which stay the same and which differ between the theme and first variation?

b.) If we look closely between this variation and the theme, we notice that the harmony remains largely unchanged. What specific musical element is altered, in the first variation, then?

2.) Now consider Variation 2. This variation looks radically different than the theme, but there are some features that remain consistent.

a.) First, what is the most obvious musical difference between this variation and the theme?

b) Now, try tracing the melody through the first eight bars. Can you find every note of the original theme? What makes it so difficult to find?

c.) Finally, name two other musical features of Variation 2 that remain consistent between it and the original theme.

3) Variation 3's most obvious alteration to the theme is changing the mode from minor to major. However, That's not all Schumann changed. She also reharmonized the piece. Do a

Example 3.
Listening Assignment 2: Clara Schumann's *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann*, op. 20.

PART 2: A LARGE-SCALE PROJECT

The previous section detailed several options for infusing small-scale PMT activities into the undergraduate theory core. While these provide approachable introductions to various PMT skills, a larger, cumulative, project gives students a chance to tie those skills together into something substantial that also builds career skills.[18]

I advocate for replacing a final analytical paper with a project in which students create YouTube videos, podcasts, or newspaper articles, tailored for the non-expert, that either analyze a piece of music or teach a concept learned in class.[19] While analytical papers have many benefits, they are not the only way for students to apply their knowledge. Instead, this media-directed project requires students to synthesize their knowledge as they would for an academic paper and better reflects how students will most likely use theory in their professional lives.[20] Every musician will need to distill an analysis of a piece for a non-expert at some point in their career, and giving students the opportunity to think through a concept from a teaching perspective directly relates music theory to any student with aspirations to teach in some capacity.

Despite these benefits, students often find translating theoretical concepts and terms into language comprehensible to the public challenging. For instance, in early attempts at this type of project, struggling students tended to fall into one of three camps: 1) they left out analytic detail in favor of blow-by-blow descriptions, 2) they filled space with historical or biographical description, and 3) they used specialized jargon. A project like this must, therefore, be strategically scaffolded so that students receive feedback from both their instructor and their peers. This scaffolding not only helps students confidently craft prose suitable for the non-expert, but it also allows instructors to provide feedback on auxiliary issues, such as how to construct and implement an effective lesson plan—a skill many music students will find immediately relevant. Thus, after giving an overview of the project, I will discuss, in detail, its scaffolding and its assessment.

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18 For many music education students, this project can potentially also be part of a teaching portfolio.
19 Jenkins (2020, 385–386) also endorses using podcasts and YouTube videos in the classroom and discusses possible implementations for each that complement the project described here. Importantly, Jenkins also discusses the benefits and drawbacks of both mediums.
20 Lang (2016, 429–430).

OVERVIEW

When I assign this project, I intentionally give students options so that they can take ownership and forge their own paths. They can choose: 1) to work individually or in groups; 2) to make a YouTube video, podcast, or newspaper article; and 3) to teach a concept or analyze a piece of music for the general public. I only restrict the pieces to be analyzed or the subject of the lessons, because both must align with topics covered in the course. For instance, Example 4 displays a recent assignment sheet, appropriate for a fourth-semester tonal theory course at a regional state institution, that covers topics including chromatic harmony and modulation, form and harmony in popular music, and the analysis of texted music. Given the heavy emphasis on vocal music, text painting, and expressive chromaticism in the course, students are encouraged to analyze nineteenth-century vocal works. Similarly, many of the suggested teaching topics revolve around vocal music from both the common-practice and popular traditions. These are only suggestions, though; students can choose other topics in consultation with me as long as the topics reflect the course content.

These broad guidelines make this project flexible such that it can work with any core undergraduate course. Teachers merely need to tweak the suggested analytical pieces or teaching topics depending on the course, curriculum, and institutional circumstances. For instance, as shown in Example 5, I recently assigned a variation of this same project to my music fundamentals class, with only minor modifications. In that case, I required students to create teaching videos or podcasts. In doing so, my hope was to have students create a class resource that would help everyone review for the final exam—students teaching students—a goal that worked out quite well.

The project's flexibility allows students to take ownership of their work and results in tremendously diverse final products. For instance, when I assigned the project detailed in Example 4, one student created a podcast analyzing Schubert's "Der Erlkönig."[21] Another created a YouTube video in which a poor, unsuspecting person asked a Ouija board how to write popular songs, only to have a "mad musicologist" emerge from the board to explain verse-chorus forms and "Rick Roll" his victim. Still other students taught twelve-bar blues through a sketch in the style of *Saturday Night Live* featuring caricatures of the professors in the music department. The formats chosen also vary significantly, with students tending to favor making podcasts and YouTube videos over writing newspaper articles.[22]

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[21]   To listen to this podcast, please visit the following link: https://bit.ly/2WjVK1S. Thank you to Andrew Day for providing me permission to share this project.

[22]   This heavy reliance on technology may give some teachers pause. However, there is a wealth of

OPTION 1: ANALYZE A PIECE FOR A PUBLIC AUDIENCE

This project can be done in groups of up to three people.

For this option, analyze a piece of music for a public audiences using a format of your choice. Pieces, however, must include some elements of chromatic harmony and/or must be in a form discussed in class (i.e. strophic, through composed, etc…). If you cannot decide, the following vocal pieces, most of which can be found in your course anthology, would all be good choices:

1.) Johannes Brahms: "Die Mainacht"

2.) Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel: "Nachtwanderer"

3.) Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel: "Neue Liebe, neues Leben"

4.) Franz Schubert: "Der Doppelgänger" from *Schwanengesang* (this score can be found on IMSLP.org)

5.) Franz Schubert: "Erlkönig"

6.) Clara Schumann: "Liebst du um Schönheit"

7.) Robert Schumann: "Widmung," from *Myrthen*

Some options for formats include creating:

1.) a 5–10 minute YouTube video (e.g, SMT-V: https://societymusictheory.org/smt-v),

2.) a 5–10 minute Podcast (e.g., Song Exploder or Surprisingly Awesome Episode #10),

3.) a blog post or newspaper article (e.g., Alyssa Barna's work for the Washington Post: https://wapo.st/2Jv2yW9).

If you decide to create a YouTube video or podcast, you will be paired with one of Missouri Western's music technology students to help you produce the recording.

TIP: This option is challenging in that you have to explain topics that you learn in class to an audience that does not know any theory jargon. You can use terminology that you learned in theory, but you have to teach that to the audience before you use that term. Therefore, I suggest you *show* them what you want them to hear using lots of musical examples. In other words, think about this project as if you are teaching someone to hear a piece better.

Example 4.
Final Project General Overview.

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free and paid apps and websites that make the process of creating YouTube videos and podcasts easier than ever. For podcasts, Anchor and SoundTrap are both good options to suggest to students. Anchor is completely free, and SoundTrap has a free tier that is enough for most projects. The latter even has options that allow you edit audio by editing a written transcript. For YouTube videos, I suggest Apple's iMovie. This program is both intuitive and available for free on any Mac or iPhone.

FUNDAMENTALS: FINAL PROJECT

Welcome to the final month and a half of your fundamentals experience! This final project is designed to allow you a chance to synthesize all of the theory knowledge that you've gained throughout the class and distill it into something designed for the general public.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

This project can be done in groups of up to four people.

For this project, you will create a 5–10 minute YouTube video or podcast that teaches a concept we learned in class to someone with little to no musical training. Possible topics include anything listed as a subheading in the table of contents of your textbook (pp. ix–x).

TIP: This will be challenging given your audience, but it is similar to what you will face if you are ever tasked with teaching in real life. Think about structuring your lesson around a particular piece or song, and coming back to that piece throughout your project.

Also, know that I am always willing to help at any point of the project. Don't be afraid to start thinking about this early, and always email me if you need some extra help with anything from teaching tips to tech help!

PRESENTING THE PROJECTS:

These projects will be presented to the Missouri Western community as part of the annual Theory Extravaganza (December 4) in Potter Theater. Be ready to introduce your project, play it for the audience, and answer questions for several minutes after it plays.

DEADLINES:

Each of these deadlines except the final form of the project will be graded as a homework assignment.

November 8:	One paragraph proposal of the project outlining your chosen group, chosen medium, and three possible topics.
November 13:	Detailed lesson plan/script for your project due. The more detail you can give me, the more feedback I can give!
November 20:	Rough cut of your project due for critique (this can be a several-minute rough clip of the video just to see how things are looking!).
December 2–4:	In-class presentations of your final projects. (Sign-ups will be posted online in Week 13).
December 4:	Final project due by 11:59 PM the day of the Theory Extravaganza.

Example 5.
Fundamentals: Final Project.

PROJECT SCAFFOLDING

The timing and scaffolding of the project are also critical for its implementation. As shown in Example 6, I assign this project in week 10 of the course to ensure that students have a significant amount of time for refinement. Furthermore, I break the assignment down into five parts or stages, roughly equivalent to what Inman (2017, 51–54) suggests for scaffolding a final term paper.

PROJECT ASSIGNED: *Week 10/Day 1*	Assignment sheet passed out.
STAGE 1: *Week 11/Day 1*	One paragraph proposal of the project due outlining the chosen project option, the overall thesis and chosen piece, chosen format, and chosen group (if applicable).
STAGE 2: *Week 12/Day 1*	Detailed outline of the project due. For the analysis project, they must provide a form chart and marked-up score along with the outline. For the teaching option, they must hand in a detailed outline of your lesson plan and a list of pieces they plan to use in their class.
STAGE 3: *Week 14/Day 1*	Rough draft of the project due.
STAGE 4: *Week 15/Day 1*	Students must either present their project in class or upload their projects to an LMS for peer feedback.
STAGE 5: *Day of Final Exam*	Final project due.

Example 6.
Timeline of Final Project.

Stage 1: The Proposal

The first stage of the assignment consists of a one-paragraph proposal outlining the student's project format, the piece they are analyzing or concept they are teaching, the general analytical thesis or takeaway point for the lesson, and the group members. This stage ensures three things. First, students begin the project early and confidently. Second, the instructor can provide helpful resources on the project's topic to students at a formative stage in the project. In particular, I like to give students examples of effective PMT in their chosen format at this stage, so they have a point of reference

when creating their project.[23] Finally, though most students hand in appropriate proposals, this stage also ensures no one begins with a bloated topic. For instance, students hoping to teach every type of vocal form in both popular and common-practice styles may have trouble trying to fit that in a 5–10-minute video.

Stage 2: The Detailed Outline or Lesson Plan

A week after the proposal is submitted, students hand in detailed outlines of their projects. For the analytical option, students must turn in an overview of their analysis along with a form chart and marked-up score with measure numbers.[24] For the teaching option, students submit an outline of their lesson plan along with a list of pieces and excerpts they will use in the class. Instructor feedback at this stage may address areas for improvement or expansion, note any misreadings or broad conceptual errors, ensure students are properly defending their proposed theses from Stage 1, and stop students from trying to use information gleaned from poorly chosen sources.[25] At this stage instructors can also correct pedagogical missteps taken by students who chose the teaching option; these could include regurgitating a summary of the textbook without concern for pedagogical practices such as proper sequencing of topics, not providing interactive moments, and poor ordering of explanations.

Stage 3: The Rough Draft

In Stage 3, students hand in rough cuts of recorded projects or drafts of newspaper articles. Students should not be editing much at this stage. Rather, they should focus on showcasing their vision of the final project to their instructor so that they can receive feedback before intense editing occurs. Students tend to have two main issues at this point: 1) their language is often still too jargon-heavy and 2) the teaching projects often sacrifice pedagogical clarity for comedic routines. Rather than providing written feedback, I find it easier to schedule individual meetings so that I can give feedback while playing specific portions of their assignments back to the students.

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23   There are plenty of fantastic examples to choose from in each format, but I tend to steer students towards SMT-V for YouTube-style videos, Song Exploder for podcasts, and Alyssa Barna's writings for *The Washington Post* (https://wapo.st/2Jv2yW9) for newspaper articles. For many more suggestions, please see Jenkins (2017) and (2020).

24   The markings I ask of the students depend on the project. I do not expect, for instance, a full Roman-numeral analysis of every score. Rather, I want their annotations to pertain to their thesis.

25   Such conversations allow you to both explain to students the differences between good and bad scholarly sources and also to reveal the resources at their disposal at an institution of higher education. In some circumstances, it may be prudent to plan a brief library trip to show students these resources in person.

Stage 4: Peer Feedback

In the penultimate stage of the project, students receive peer feedback—a necessary step after having already received my extensive comments. By this stage, most of the projects should be in good shape, but the peer feedback does help students make a few final productive tweaks before the final submission. This stage can be done in two different ways depending on instructor preference. If one has the time or fewer students, in-class presentations can be a good option. Doing so allows for students to present their work to their peers and receive and respond to feedback in person. This option also enables instructors to help guide the discussion and actively keep feedback constructive. Another possibility is to have each person or group upload their projects to a learning management system (LMS) so that their peers can log on and comment within a forum. In that case, I require that students post commentary on at least two projects, noting both strengths and weaknesses of each and prioritizing projects that have not already gotten comments. This option not only saves class time, but it also helps ensure that every voice in the class is heard.

Stage 5: Final Project

For the last stage, students upload their final projects to an LMS or cloud service a week after the final presentations. In my experience, because of all of the preceding steps, the final deadline proves a low-stress situation for most students. Most are tremendously excited to turn in their final products, reflecting the unparalleled buy-in I see from students throughout the process.[26]

ASSESSMENT

The feedback from the extensive scaffolding results in projects of generally very high quality, but assessment can be tricky. Two questions, in particular, need to be addressed: 1) how does one evaluate each of the stages in the assessment, and 2) what features should be prioritized when grading? Example 7 presents a rubric I have used for assessing projects that addresses these two concerns.

As shown in the example, I incorporate the grading of each preliminary stage into the final assignment rather than counting them as four separate homework assignments.[27] Each preliminary stage is worth 5% of the final grade and graded as

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26   This project is frequently mentioned on student evaluations as students' favorite part of the course. They note that they love the "creative leap" PMT assignments invite them to take and that they appreciated how these projects "helped prepare [them] for future projects in their career." Students also regularly provide me thank-you notes for assigning such a distinct final project.

27   I have, in the past, made each stage a homework assignment, but found that this artificially

Grading Criteria	Percent of Grade
Stages 1–4	5% each or 20% total; each stage pass/fail
Production quality	10%
Length	5%
Creativity	10%
Success in conveying ideas to non-experts	20%
Pedagogical structure/content or analytic content	35%

Example 7.
Rubric for Final Project.

pass/fail. Doing so allows students to feel like these assignments are relatively low stakes and encourages them to take risks and try out ideas within the early stages without fear of their grade faltering.[28]

The rubric's grading spread also clarifies my answer to the latter question. Above all other features, I feel that the project must display both correct content—either analytical or pedagogical—and successfully translate analytical jargon into material understandable to the general public. Those two facets of the project are worth a combined 55% of the grade. After that, production quality, length of the project, and creativity are worth a small amount each. This grading scheme incentivizes students to think about more than simply providing an error-free analysis or lesson plan. My hope is to encourage them to create quality, engaging projects that a non-expert would not only learn from but also *seek out*.[29]

PART 3: EXPANDING THE PROJECT

This project allows students to begin making connections between the theory classroom and the outside world. With only a small amount of additional time, this PMT project can be expanded to become a full-fledged CEL activity in which students

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inflated homework averages at the end of the semester and caused undue stress on the students with each stage of the process. As such, I would caution against it.

28   Giving students room to test ideas and fail without significant repercussions early on in the project is particularly important, as this will be a new type of assignment and assessment format for many students.

29   Indeed, I tell my students to think about the project as an episode in a YouTube or podcast series, or as one of many newspaper articles in a recurring column. This mindset has led some of my students to attempt to make this a recurring series that continued after the class ended.

perform real-world tasks and interact with the public. As a result, students do not stop at simply making connections between the classroom and the outside world; instead, they actively bring the classroom into the broader community.

CEL is popular because it has been shown to engender personal growth in students,[30] and students who participate in CEL claim that they learn more about the field in a CEL course than do similar students in a non-CEL course.[31] This next section of the paper, therefore, outlines some of the ways in which this project can be modified and expanded to become a CEL activity that would fit into various types of communities. While some of the previous small- and large-scale projects such as the pre-concert talk and concert announcements already engaged the college/university community, this section details how to move students' work into the local and global community in several different ways. [32] While this is not an exhaustive list, I do hope that my suggestions offer a variety of paths that will work for various situations.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

The TED Talk

The above projects work well on their own, but they lack a clear audience. For that reason, I recently began organizing end-of-semester public TED-style talks where students teach either their fellow university colleagues or the local community about a piece or music-theoretic concept through videos and podcasts. Indeed, I have had students from both my fundamentals and Theory 4 classes perform such talks, and they only require a few small modifications to the project.

First, rather than making topics and pieces an open-ended choice, I ensure that all potential theoretical topics and analyses revolve around a theme. For example, one semester my Theory 4 class presented topics and analyses centered on "Form and Expression in Vocal Music." As such, audience members learned about verse-chorus forms before being treated to an analysis of Nicki Minaj's "Starships." Next was a lesson on text painting followed by a podcast analyzing Schubert's "Der Erlkönig." In both cases, students were available for questions from the audience after presenting their projects.

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30   Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray (2001).
31   Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, and Ilustre (2002).
32   Note that, with almost no modifications, this final project could become a larger version of the brief assignments in Part 1, such as a pre-concert talk or marketing for a recital. Simply require students to take the analytical route and walk the viewer through the analysis of a piece that is programmed on the recital.

Second, while this CEL activity obviously appeals to music education students because it gives them a mock class to teach, I make minor modifications to make it even more applicable to students in other degree programs. Some opt to simply teach a theoretical concept or present an analysis of a piece in order to practice both crucial skills for private-lesson instructors. However, I allow some to craft their projects as pre-concert talks for a piece they have previously learned or are currently learning. In these cases, students present their analytical videos or podcasts before performing the piece. In doing so, they practice a skill that they could bring to their next solo recital.[33]

This TED-style talk invites students to distill analytical and theoretical information for interested non-experts in real time. When it occurs on campus, the event also establishes an often-missing link between the school of music and the rest of the institution. While most colleges and universities have a thriving music scene on campus, that scene is not always connected to the music school or department. As such, the host of students singing in glee clubs, playing in rock bands, and performing in their church choir might never even enter the music building. With a little advertising to non-majors around campus, however, this project can help bridge that divide by showing how music-theoretical training can lead to new insights into pieces they love and new ways of listening to music. This may even encourage more students to major or minor in music.[34]

Teaching Local K–12 Music Classes

Many schools and departments of music maintain close connections to local K–12 schools. In my own institution, faculty members frequently guest conduct ensembles or guest lecture in music classes. Those appearances often inspire pre-college students to think more broadly about music, and some decide to attend our university as music majors. But what if the paradigm were reversed? For many institutions, music education students constitute the bulk of their majors. Why can't *they* also teach at the local schools and provide a testament to what a college music education can provide?

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33   I could also imagine performance students crafting their projects into a type of masterclass-style presentation, where they would alternate presenting portions of their video or podcast to explain part of a piece with playing that excerpt. In such cases, students could be encouraged to show the audience the ways in which analysis and performance interact.

34   Intermixing your TED-style talk with other classes doing similar projects around campus can help this even more. I will be piloting such a university-wide initiative with faculty in the history department next year.

This project presents a structured way for college students to complete the project while also giving them experience teaching pre-college students. Instead of presenting students two options with the project—a teaching and analytical one—instructors can instead task them with creating videos that teach topics relevant for classes being offered at local K–12 schools. Students can either send those videos to the local schools for instructors to use as supplemental videos[35] or they can visit the K–12 schools, play their projects for the younger students and then answer questions in person after their video; this gives students a chance to gain further practice speaking to a population many of them will teach in their careers. In the latter option, students could also use the videos in class as practice and then perform their lessons live.

This scenario can work in several different ways. While it may work best for students to visit high school AP theory classes, local ensembles or general music classes also represent viable options. For example, students from my fundamentals class will teach theory concepts to a high school choir class on various Fridays late in the semester. Instructors merely need to coordinate with local music teachers to determine relevant topics and the scope of the project. The true challenge for both scenarios, though, is logistics.[36] One solution is to ask local music teachers what theory topics they will be covering, then have your students make supplemental explanatory videos for each of those topics. This option not only gives students practice making videos as they would for a real music class in their theory course, but it actively helps to teach local K–12 students. This both builds career skills for our students (as well as a great teaching portfolio piece) and strengthens a crucial relationship between the university and public schools.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The Reddit "Ask Me Anything" (AMA)

Because of the internet and social media, the communities available to use for CEL do not need to be local. Indeed, social media offers one of the most logistically easy ways to turn this project into a CEL activity. One particularly good option involves assigning all students to do teaching projects, then concluding Stage 5 by uploading

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35   My university actually did this as a campus-wide initiative to help aid public schools in the time of COVID.

36   It is highly unlikely that every student in the theory class can go to the same K–12 class. That should not pose a problem as the instructor can merely arrange multiple trips, but scheduling is a definite limitation of the project. That being said, I firmly believe the benefits outweigh the additional hassle.

the videos to either Reddit or Tumblr in order to start an AMA about music theory.[37] Instructors can then require group members to field questions from members of the community. Like the TED talk, having the class make a series of videos revolving around one theme and creating one large post could be more effective than a series of random videos. That way, each student can be tasked with answering a few questions from the community. For example, a class on fundamentals could make a series of teaching videos for each of the class's units, essentially making a video textbook on music fundamentals. Another option might involve the class analyzing songs by a specific composer, with the AMA focusing on questions about their music.

The AMA format has several benefits. It gets students engaging with the broader community, as it reinforces the learning objective of being able to talk about music to a non-expert in a sophisticated way. This activity gives students with teaching aspirations the chance to apply their knowledge in the same way they will as educators. Finally, by interacting with the global community, students function as ambassadors for both music theory and their college or university, imbuing them with a sense of ownership that they cannot get from many other class activities.

The Class Podcast

One final way to engage the global community would be to create a class podcast that the class actually publishes. Such a project has several benefits. First, it gives students experience in making and publishing a medium that is becoming more and more popular among musicians. As such, students gain crucial entrepreneurial skills. Second, the project can be tailored towards an instructor's individual class makeup and their particular career goals. A class of mostly performance majors might focus on creating episodes for an analytical podcast that focuses on performance and analysis. A class of mostly music education students, by contrast, might create an educational podcast that teaches audience members about listening to various musical forms.

Accomplishing this requires only a few minor changes to the original project. First, prior to Step 1, instructors need to have a class brainstorming session about the theme of the podcast, some names for the podcast, and a publishing plan. Moreover, instructors need to provide examples of good podcasts such as Switched On Pop or the New Music Listening Club.[38] Step 1 can then consist of students proposing episodes for

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37   The Reddit music theory community is particularly active and engaging. I would suggest either having students post their projects to the music theory subreddit (https://www.reddit.com/r/musictheory) or to the popular subreddit "Today I Learned" (https://www.reddit.com/r/todayilearned).

38   Find these podcasts at switchedonpop.com and newmusiclisteningclub.com.

the chosen theme. After the projects are turned in, the class can review the process for uploading podcasts to a hosting site such as Anchor and create a schedule for releasing each episode.[39]

CONCLUSION

The past few years have seen a surging of interest in bringing PMT into the undergraduate and graduate classrooms. This paper seeks to add to that scholarship by suggesting activities that make our music theory classrooms more outward-facing in a way that builds tangible career skills and reflects how students will most likely use music theory in their professional lives. Research suggests that such activities have the potential to engender greater intrinsic motivation in our students, and I have personally noted this to be the case in my own students. They seem to have internalized concepts much more meaningfully than if I had simply assigned them to write a final paper, and they approach these projects—small and large—with unrivaled enthusiasm and excitement. As such, I believe that infusing our curriculums with consistent and meaningful opportunities for PMT will benefit our students. Indeed, this success has led me to actively look for even more ways to incorporate PMT and CEL activities into my undergraduate core, and I am excited to see where that journey leads.

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39   There are many free podcast-hosting sites, but I recommend Anchor.com because everything needed to create and distribute the podcast is in one place.

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