

1-1-2009

## The Evolution of a Styles Simulation Course for Graduate Theory Students

Robert Gauldin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/jmtp>

---

### Recommended Citation

Gauldin, Robert (2009) "The Evolution of a Styles Simulation Course for Graduate Theory Students," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*. Vol. 23, Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/jmtp/vol23/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy by an authorized editor of Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections.

## The Evolution of a Styles Simulation Course for Graduate Theory Students

ROBERT GAULDIN

In the teaching of collegiate music theory the accessibility to a wide range of literature afforded by anthology collections has in recent years shifted the pendulum away from such writing skills courses as counterpoint, stylistic simulation, or composition toward an emphasis on purely analytical techniques. Indeed, the only compositional decisions required of most current graduate theory majors are the pushing around of a few white notes in two-voice species studies. Therefore, when the Eastman School of Music decided to inaugurate a master's degree in Music Theory Pedagogy some years ago, it recognized that the teaching of undergraduate theory necessitated the acquisition of correctional pedagogical tools that went beyond the mere detection of parallel fifths in partwriting assignments. For more creative student projects, such as melody harmonization, prospective teachers not only needed the knowledge and ability to state whether this choice or that choice was better and why it was better, but also the compositional skills to demonstrate other options that might produce more musical results. Toward this end the faculty initiated a new one-semester course entitled "Advanced Harmony and Composition," whose content was designed to rectify two deficiencies in the department's then current graduate offerings.<sup>1</sup> This seminar essentially represented the resurrection of a "styles practicum," in which students attempted to simulate characteristics of various historical periods or even specific composers through the assignment of compositional exercises and projects.<sup>2</sup> It also explored the realms of harmony and tonal design

---

<sup>1</sup> Three articles in previous issues of this journal have described the general theory program at some specific institutions (David Ward-Steinman at San Diego State University, 1987, Mary Wennerstrom at Indiana University, 1989, and John Buccheri at Northwestern University, 1990). This essay will confine itself to the development and content of a single course.

<sup>2</sup> I will not attempt to provide an extensive bibliography on the topic of "model or simulation composition," but will mention several relevant articles that have appeared in this journal.

during the late 19th century, an era that until recently has been unduly neglected.

Enrollment was limited to eight students or less, allowing a significant portion of the hourly sessions to be spent around the keyboard with the teacher and class members playing, discussing, and critiquing their pieces. During the time I served as instructor, I gradually evolved a syllabus that seemed relatively successful in fulfilling the original goals. In addition to a number of preliminary exercises that served to introduce and establish various techniques indigenous to the style and genre in question, I assigned four major compositional projects, incorporating characteristics from the late Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods. These completed pieces were performed and recorded in class, providing each student with a permanent memento of their work.

The remainder of this article will document the subsequent history and progress of the course, pointing out what I believe to be both successful and unsuccessful pedagogical procedures. The resultant syllabus not only lays out the content and sequence of study but also includes illustrative snippets from some of the various assigned exercises perfected over the years, as well as a few brief excerpts from actual student compositions.

## PART 1: BAROQUE CHORALE HARMONIZATION

The initial quarter of the semester centered on Baroque chorale harmonization, a skill that appears to have fallen on hard times in recent years. While the partwriting ability of most graduate students is usually adequate, many of them lack proper guidance and instruction in the art of effective melody harmonization. Consequently, after a brief review of chord terminology and function and well as rudiments of Baroque figured/unfigured

---

Whereas the first of Thomas Benjamin's essays deals with the more general teaching of composition (1987), the second consists largely of a collection of composition-oriented assignments suitable for an undergraduate theory class (1989). Matthew Bailey-Shea's more philosophical discussion of license in model composition (2004) contrasts with Sylvia Parker's practical recipes on how to compose a Classical sonata movement, complete with student examples (2006). Finally, two texts that view theory through more creative-colored glasses are Nicholas Cook, *Analysis Through Composition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), and Earl Henry and Michael Rogers, *Tonality and Design in Music Theory* (New Jersey: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2005).

bass and harmonic preferences for the various scale degrees (via the *Regola dell' ottava* or "rule of the octave"), I established some methodical step-by-step strategies for four-voice chorale settings. Since much of this information is contained in two of my previous articles, I will defer the reader to the guidelines outlined there and mention only a pair of pertinent techniques in passing.<sup>3</sup>

The duet between the melody and bass voice forms the contrapuntal basis for almost all Baroque composition. The interaction resulting from their linear and intervallic relationships is no less crucial in chorale settings. Comparisons utilizing multiple harmonizations of the same tune are particularly instructive in this regard; one class handout aligned the outer-voice duets from four different Bach settings of "Christ lag in Todesbanden."<sup>4</sup> Since the harmonic language employed in this genre is somewhat limited (mainly diatonic triads, seventh chords, and closely-related tonicizations using applied dominants),<sup>5</sup> the concept of scale degree reinterpretation is especially useful for achieving tonal variety. A kind of tunnel vision that relates melodic pitches and their key implications to only *one* basic tonic center seems to inhibit some students from reinterpreting diatonic scale degrees in that central key as diatonic scale degrees in *other* keys, either at cadential arrivals or during momentary tonicizations within the phrase. For instance, within a basic F major center the pitches G F E and D D C, usually thought of as scale degrees 2 1 7 (implying V I V) and 6 6 5 (implying IV IV6 I), may be reinterpreted to produce new cadence types in other closely related keys, as shown in Examples 1A and 1B.

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert Gauldin, "An Intersection of Counterpoint and Harmony," *Journal of Music Theory* 15 (2001): 91-102, and "Fux to Bach: Bridging the Gap," *Indiana Theory Review* 14/2 (Fall 1993): 45-72. In addition, I referred the students to the informative chapter on chorale harmonization in Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter's *Counterpoint in Composition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 245-328. Obviously, their approach and analysis is colored by a strong Schenkerian orientation. Allen McHose's statistical summaries on harmonic and non-harmonic materials in Bach's chorale settings are also valuable; see his *The Contrapuntal-Harmonic Technique of the 18th Century* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1947).

<sup>4</sup> Nos. 15, 184, 261, and 371 in the Riemenschneider collection.

<sup>5</sup> There is only one Neapolitan sixth in all of Bach's chorale settings (see "Ach Gott vom Himmel sieh' darein," No. 262). Instances of augmented sixths and mixture chords are quite rare.

Example 1 consists of two musical examples, A and B, each with a treble and bass clef staff. Above each staff are scale degrees with carets (^) indicating the notes used in the chords. Example A shows four measures: 1) F major (scale degrees 6, 6, 5), 2) C major (2, 2, 1), 3) a minor (4, 4, 3), and 4) Bb major (3, 3, 3, 2). Example B shows four measures: 1) F major (scale degrees 8, 8, 7), 2) c minor (4, 4, 3), 3) d minor (3, 3, 3, 2), and 4) a minor (6, 6, 5).

Example 1 - Two instances of scale-degree reinterpretation at cadences

Example 2, which compares four different harmonizations of the opening phrase from “Nun lob’, mein’ Seel’”, illustrates this technique—first with Bach’s simple diatonic setting in C major (Example 2A) and then with three additional versions beneath. While Example 2B remains diatonic, it now operates within the realm of the relative A minor. On the other hand, Example 2C employs both applied harmonies and sequential motion in tonicizing V and iii respectively (we will allude to Example 2D later). The application of this reinterpretive technique is, I feel, the single most important tool for obtaining tonal diversity in chorale harmonizations, since it not only influences the overall key scheme of the music but also the relationship of the bass line to the hymn tune; note the contrasting melodic contours of the lower voice in the four phrases.

Following a discussion of incorporating a “walking bass” or a pattern of second- species eighth notes in the bass voice (a typical Baroque device) and examination of several such settings,<sup>6</sup> the students were given a reduced note-against-note version of “Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir” (No. 164 in the Riemenschneider chorale collection) and asked to elaborate the bass with continuous

<sup>6</sup> Typical examples include “Meinen Jesum lass ich nicht, (No. 299), “Was frag’ ich nach der Welt (No. 255), and “Straf’ mich nicht in deinem Zorn” (No. 38). The last setting also employs a consistent eighth-note motive throughout.

The image displays four systems of musical notation, labeled A, B, C, and D, arranged vertically. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. System A shows a simple harmonic accompaniment with chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. System B features a more active bass line with eighth-note patterns. System C includes figured bass notation (V and iii) under the bass line. System D shows a different harmonic approach with more complex chordal textures in the right hand.

Example 2 - Scale degree reinterpretation applied to the opening phrase of "Nun lob', mein Seel'"

background motion. After their results were compared to Bach's version, I requested that they compose two different second-species settings for the opening phrases of "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern;" a pair of possible solutions appear in Example 3.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with a fermata over the final note. The middle and bottom staves are bass clefs, both with the same key signature and time signature. They contain two different bass line settings for the same melody. The bottom staff includes figured bass notation (numbers 6, 6#, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6) and a final measure with a fermata and a sharp sign (#).

Example 3 - Two “walking bass” settings of the opening phrases of “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern”

Next we considered some overall strategies for harmonizing an entire chorale tune, using a version of “Ein’ feste Burg” (No. 273) for our model melody. The initial plotting of phrase punctuations (via our reinterpretive method) not only guaranteed a variety of both cadential types and closely-related tonicizations but also provided points of tonal stability (or metaphoric “telephone poles”) through the use of root-position triads. By contrast, the phrase interiors were by nature more linear (= “stringing the wires between the poles”), favoring intervals of thirds and sixths between the voices of the soprano-bass duet and the use of inverted chords. At the same time, a prevalent sense of harmonic function (pre-dominant to dominant to tonic) continued to underlie most progressions. The last step of supplying the alto and tenor voices to complete the four-part texture was largely mechanical. After applying this approach to the “Ein’ feste Burg” tune, we then checked our results with Bach’s setting.

Since most students seemed somewhat tentative when faced with the task of harmonizing *modal* chorale tunes (typically Dorian, Mixolydian, or Phrygian), I outlined some general features of this literature: (1) the occasional alteration of pitches in the original melody to accommodate *tonal* settings, (2) harmonizing the various phrases in closely-related major or minor keys, and (3) the tendency for such melodies to begin and conclude on the modal tonic (or *finalis*) chord. Other characteristics included common transpositions, frequent cadential areas (such as D minor, A minor, and F major in untransposed Dorian),<sup>7</sup> the choice of an authentic (G and D) versus a

<sup>7</sup> Using such Dorian settings as “Christ lag in Todesbanden” or “Jesu, meine Freude.”

plagal emphasis (G and C) for Mixolydian harmonizations,<sup>8</sup> and the tendency of untransposed Phrygian tunes to be set within either an A minor or C major context.<sup>9</sup> The students were required to compose a setting for the Phrygian chorale “Gott hat das Evangelium,” Since each phrase is followed by its exact repetition, the second of each pair demanded a different harmonization.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, we addressed the topic of text painting, an extremely common attribute of chorale settings. Although this subject is rarely broached in the classroom, Baroque organists routinely employed different harmonizations in their accompaniments of unison congregational singing to match more accurately the texts of a hymn’s various verses.<sup>11</sup> Some typical techniques included sudden key shifts, unusual harmonic progressions, sequences, momentary imitation, and chromatic passages.<sup>12</sup> The latter usually employed a half-step descent from scale degrees 1 to 5 in the bass voice, although ascending 5-6 patterns may also be found (the previous Example 2D demonstrates one such application of a chromatic bass). As an illustration, I composed four different harmonic settings of the same melodic phrase in Example 4 in order to reflect its changing texts. Following the rather neutral initial phrase, Example 4B

---

<sup>8</sup> For instance, compare the two settings of “Gelobet seinst du, Jesu Christ” (Nos. 160 and 288). Also see Lori Burn’s informative “J.S. Bach’s Mixolydian Chorale Harmonizations,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 15/2 (Fall 1993): 144-72.

<sup>9</sup> In this regard we examined “Aus tiefer Not schrei’ ich zu dir (No. 10) and two different settings of “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.” While No. 89 appears in Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* near the crucifixion scene (with an “A-minor orientation”), No. 80 occurs in the final triumphant chorus of his *Christmas Oratorio* (with a “C-major orientation”).

<sup>10</sup> Bach’s setting occurs as No. 181 in the Riemenschneider collection.

<sup>11</sup> Apparently Bach himself wrote down some of these “improvisations” for about thirty chorale tunes, but they have been lost.

<sup>12</sup> A particularly beautiful ascending stepwise sequence occurs in the seventh phrase of “In dulci júbilo (No. 143). Several unusual instances of quasi-imitation may be found in “Dir, dir, Jehovah, will ich singen” (No. 209) and “Liebster Gott, wann werd’ ich sterben” (No. 43). Two phrases containing intense chromaticism appear in “Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten” (No. 146). The striking treatment of the word *Sterben* in “Christus, der ist mein Leben” (No. 316) is unique among the chorale settings. Finally, a comparison of the texts and harmonizations between phrases seven and eight of “Es ist genug” (No. 216) is highly instructive.



displays an appropriate shift from C minor to its relative major (“night to day”). While the unexpected  $D\flat$  in Example 4C initiates the “wandering path” that culminates with a half cadence in the minor subdominant, the chromatic bass poignantly pictures the “pain and grief” of the last phrase.

The image shows a musical score for a chorale phrase in C minor, common time. It is divided into four settings, A, B, C, and D. Each setting consists of a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The lyrics are: "To Christ each day I turn. Til night shall turn to day. A wand'ring path I trod. For grief and pain a-bound." The settings show different harmonic and melodic treatments of the text.

Example 4 - Four different setting of the same chorale phrase, incorporating text painting

For their compositional project I chose the Dorian melody “Jesu, meine Freude,” a tune Bach harmonized many times. The selected stanza of text (in English translation) suggested varied opportunities for text painting. The students were instructed to write out their settings in full score with the text appearing between both the soprano/alto and tenor/bass staves. I had originally intended to perform all of their individual pieces by sight-singing them as a mini-choir, but some problems surfaced. A good distribution of voices was seldom possible in such small classes, since sopranos and tenors always seemed in short supply. Not only did the reading and recordings require an inordinate amount of class time, but the number of individual scores necessary for the entire group to sing each one became prohibitive. As a subsequent compromise, I collected all the scores, picked out at least one outstanding phrase from each setting, and consecutively strung my individual choices together to create a single “communal” harmonization. The results of one year’s collage (“Class of 2002”) appear in Example 5.

In your arms I rest me. Foes that would molest me,  
Can not reach me here. Though the earth be shaking,  
Ev-ry heart be quak-ing, Je-sus calms my fears. Sin and hell in  
con-flict fell, With their bitter storms assail  
me. Je-sus will not fail me.

Example 5 - Communal/collage harmonization of "Jesu, meine Freude"  
("Class of 2002")

However, as one might suspect in such patchwork methodology, the tonal relationships and voice leading existing from the cadence of one phrase to the opening of the next were not always ideal.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Following a performance of their communal harmonization in class, the students examined Bach's more polyphonic setting of this chorale in the third movement of his motet "Jesu, meine Freude," which may also be found as No. 283 in the Riemenschneider collection.

## PART 2: CLASSICAL MINUET FOR STRING TRIO

In preparation for the second phase of the course, I reviewed some paradigm shifts that occurred from the Baroque to the Classical era, focusing in the latter on formal designs that featured thematic contrast, changes in texture, harmonic rhythm, stereotypical sequence patterns, foreign modulations, and certain indigenous altered chords (such as augmented sixths or the Neapolitan).

The second project was the composition of a Minuet in Classical style scored for string trio. My rationale for this assignment was two-fold. First, the two-reprise (= rounded binary) design so typical of this genre was doubtless the most pervasive formal/tonal structure utilized by composers during this period, appearing not only in both the Minuet proper and its subsequent Trio, but also serving as the model for most themes in variation sets and frequently functioning as the refrain (or even an episode) in rondo movements.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, most creative assignments rarely involve musical settings in *three* voices, so that students are less familiar with the doubling and spacing characteristics of trio texture. After examining some schematic diagrams which highlighted stereotypical formal and tonal features of two-reprise design, the class then analyzed a number of short movements containing instances of less common procedures, such as cadential extensions at the end of each reprise, the closure of the first reprise in the tonic key, substitutions for the usual dominant-oriented retransition, and possible modifications in the restatement of initial material.<sup>15</sup>

Preliminary writing exercises focused on the eight-measure period that frequently constituted the initial reprise, with its typical motion either to the dominant (in a major key) or relative major (in a minor key). A number of note-against-note two-voice models were sketched, and both parts were elaborated employing some

---

<sup>14</sup> It may even occur as the first (and/or contrasting) section in slow-movement ternary constructs; see Mozart's Piano Sonata in C major K. 330, II. Obviously, the expansion of this design results in the typical sonata form of the period.

<sup>15</sup> I personally prefer to use the terminology proposed by Douglass Green in the second edition of his *Form in Tonal Music* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979), although one might also opt for those functional tags or abbreviations suggested by either Jan LaRue or William Caplin.

common motivic figure, as illustrated in Example 6.<sup>16</sup> The students were then required to compose a first reprise, using their own original two-part framework as the basis for its underlying voice leading. One problem frequently encountered in these exercises involved a sense of “correct timing,” or getting to the right place at the right time. This situation often arose during the modulation to the new key center and its cadential confirmation at the end of the first section—some students perpetually seemed to “arrive” there either too early or too late.

The image displays three systems of musical notation, labeled A, B, and C, illustrating voice-leading models and their elaboration in the first reprise of a Minuet. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. System A shows a simple harmonic progression with figured bass notation: c, 4/2, 6, 6, 6, 6/4, 5. System B shows a more complex elaboration with sixteenth-note patterns in the treble and bass staves. System C shows a further elaboration with a different harmonic progression and figured bass notation: c, #/2, 6, #, 6, 4/2, 6, 6/4, 5/3.

Example 6 - Voice-leading models and their elaboration in the first reprise of a Minuet

In presenting those characteristics typical of the second reprise, I began by employing Joseph Riepel’s three little models (the *ponte* = prolongation of V, the *fonte* = V7/ii to ii, V7 to I, and the *monte* = V7/IV to IV, V7/V to V, etc.) as paradigms which frequently occurred at its inception, although other sequential patterns were certainly viable.<sup>17</sup> Some students experienced difficulty in extending

<sup>16</sup> In addition to Example 6, another similar instance appears in the “Fux to Bach” article, cited previously.

<sup>17</sup> A short discussion of these models from Riepel’s *Anfangsgrunde zur musikalischen Setzkunst II* (1755) appears on pages 92-93 of my *A Practical Approach to Eighteenth-Century Counterpoint* (Prospect Heights, Illinois:

or bridging one of the Riepel devices (or some other sequence) to the succeeding dominant prolongation; a IV to It6 progression was recommended as an effective lead-in to the extended V area. Following the restatement of initial material back in tonic, our novice composers faced one additional challenge: modifying the music from the first reprise so that now it remained in the tonic key to the end of the movement. As a preliminary exercise I wrote out several first reprises for piano and then asked the students to complete an appropriate second reprise using the *same* motivic material. The relationship of the Trio to the Minuet proper was also briefly broached, stressing such issues as key relationships (if foreign, the necessity for a retransition to lead back to the Da Capo) or possible motivic similarities between the two sections.<sup>18</sup>

The final step involved a brief examination of the doubling and spacing procedures found in three-part texture in general and the string trio in particular, followed by some preliminary exercises incorporating these points. While analyzing several of the minuet or scherzo movements from Beethoven's Op. 9 String Trios, we discussed ranges, clefs, bowing, and effective voicing techniques for that medium, observing that double stops tended to occur most often in the viola at major cadences. While the students worked on their scores (with continual in-class "wet nursing" of their progress around the piano), we explored some of Beethoven's more innovative formal contributions to this genre.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the introduction of canonic or retrograde minuets allowed the class to appreciate how

---

Waveland Press, 1995), although the emphasis in that chapter is on two-reprise form in Baroque Minuets.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, in the Minuet from Haydn's Symphony No. 104 ("London"), the motion from the B $\flat$  major of the Trio back to the D major of the Da Capo incorporates an enharmonic augmented sixth.

<sup>19</sup> These included the Scherzo to his Op. 28 Piano Sonata (the significance of the pitch class F# throughout the movement and the subtle thematic relationships between the Scherzo proper and the Trio), the "Minuet" to his First Symphony (the disproportional relation between the first and second reprises, the motion to the Neapolitan key area, and the curious chromatic retransition), the Scherzo to his Fifth Symphony (where the repeat signs are missing, and one must look carefully to detect any remnants of two-reprise design), and the Scherzo to his Seventh Symphony (cast in the lowered submediant but with a continual emphasis on A, the tonic of the symphony, as well as the repeats of the Trio and Scherzo, resulting in a kind of "rondo" construct).

such imitative processes could be reconciled within the tonal and thematic framework of a two-reprise design.<sup>20</sup> The first reprise of a crab minuet, which I wrote to demonstrate the various problems involved in these types of pieces, appears in Example 7; its second reprise may be generated by reading the first reprise backwards; all basic characteristics of the two-reprise design are present.

The image shows a musical score for a minuet in G minor, 3/4 time. It is presented in three systems. The first system is marked 'f' (forte) and consists of 8 measures. The second system is marked 'p' (piano) and consists of 8 measures, with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking in the bass line. The third system is marked 'c' (crescendo) and consists of 8 measures, with a repeat sign at the end. The score is written for piano with treble, bass, and middle staves.

Example 7 - Demonstration of retrograde technique applied to a Minuet proper

After the completion of their full score (with appropriate rehearsal numbers), the students copied out parts, either in ink or with computer software. Following the reading and recording of the pieces in class, we engaged in some post-performance critique—what worked, what didn't work, and how a passage

<sup>20</sup> For instance, see the two-voice canon embedded in the Minuet of Haydn's D-minor "Quinten" String Quartet Op. 76 No. 2, the double-canon in inversion appearing as the Trio of the Minuet in Mozart's C-minor Wind Serenade K. 388, or the Minuet "al Roverscio" in Haydn's Piano Sonata in A major Hob. XVI 26.

might be rewritten to function more effectively. The string players themselves often contributed valuable insights of a more practical nature. Although I had first intended for the students to compose a complete Minuet, consisting of the usual Minuet proper, Trio, and Da Capo, I subsequently discovered that this project proved more challenging (see my former comments on “timing”) than originally anticipated. In addition, the rehearsal and recording of entire movements by the trio ensemble consumed too much class time. As a result, I eventually eliminated the Trio and concentrated solely on the Minuet proper.

### **PART 3: A LIED IN EARLY ROMANTIC STYLE**

In preparation for the last two projects, the class reviewed some features of the tonal language associated with the Romantic period. These topics included the escalation of accented melodic dissonance (especially by leap) for expressive purposes, both primary and secondary mixture harmonies, embellishing chromatic chords, more exotic forms of the augmented sixth, the tonicization of third- or minor second-related keys and various ways of effecting their modulation, the submergence of the tonic triad in favor of an emphasis on the dominant, the possibility of a “double tonic complex” (a la Robert Bailey), and above all, the increase in linear and vertical chromaticism. One assignment arising from this discussion included the writing of short passages which illustrated specified examples of particular techniques; for instance, the composition of a period which employed (1) an embellishing diminished-seventh, (2) a modulation from E minor to G# minor via an enharmonic German sixth, and (3) a Neapolitan chord in root position.

Our third project entailed the composition of a short German Lied. We first surveyed some basic attributes of this literature, observing that these songs were basically lyrical in nature, as opposed to more violent shifts of mood and material encountered in operatic recitatives and arias of dramatic origin. Other pertinent topics included certain properties of the poems themselves (recollective versus narrative, metric scanning, and typical rhyme schemes), the text as a formal determinant (strophic versus modified strophic, binary/ternary/quaternion, and through composed, as well as the overall tonal scheme), surface musical characteristics (phrasing and periodicity, harmonic rhythm, text repetition, text accentuation, and text painting), and finally the role of the piano accompaniment

(relation to text, texture and motivic development, possible doubling of the vocal line, and the use of introductions, interludes, and/or codas).

Several preliminary exercises preceded the actual project. I provided the German text and translation to the opening stanza of Schubert's "Gefrorne Thränen" (Müller) and asked the students to make two original settings, consisting of a single vocal line with commercial chord symbols beneath to denote the supporting harmonies.<sup>21</sup> I then gave them a melody of period length (Example 8), which had the possibility of multiple harmonizations, and assuming it to be the vocal line, asked them to provide two different textural and tonal settings in their piano accompaniments. During these assignments we also analyzed a selection of Lieder cast in different structural designs, beginning with the literal strophes in Schubert's "Heiden-Röslein" D 257 and progressing to more complex examples of modified strophic form in Brahms' "Feldeinsamkeit" Op. 86 No. 2 and "Wie Melodien zieht es mir" Op. 105 No. 1.<sup>22</sup> In addition, we examined Schumann's brief "Die Lotosblume" Op. 23 No. 7,<sup>23</sup> and two different settings of Franz Liszt's "Wer nie sein Bord

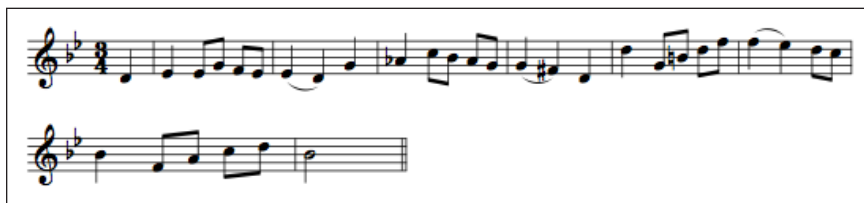
<sup>21</sup> We then examined Schubert's setting (No. 2 in his *Winterreise*) with its off-accent "tear drops" in the piano part and the modulation from F minor to its relative A♭ major. The song continues to vacillate between these two keys, especially in the middle section where both dominants are successively prolonged.

<sup>22</sup> In such literal strophic pieces as the Schubert, we discussed the possible conflict arising between the changing text in each strophe versus the exact repetition of the music. Here the composer purposely "juices up" the middle portion of each musical strophe with appoggiaturas and a phrase extension to reinforce the corresponding "emotional" section of each poetic stanza (see mm. 5-10 = 21-26 = 37-42). In Brahms' "Feldeinsamkeit" the approach to the dominant in the opening strophe is expanded chromatically via a momentary tonicization of flat VI during the same section of the second strophe (mm. 5-8 = 21-25). The "promissory" Neapolitan allusion in his "Wie Melodien" (m. 4) is repeated in each of its three strophes (m. 4 = 17 = 31) before its eventual tonicization at the song's climax (mm. 34-37). Both Edward Laufer and Patrick McCreless have discussed this aspect of the setting.

<sup>23</sup> While the tonal scheme of this brief song suggests a ternary structure, its thematic material continues to develop over the unwavering reiterated eighth notes in the piano accompaniment, much in the manner of a through-composed ballad. The enharmonic use of the raised-fifth versus the lowered-sixth scale degrees provides an excellent



mit Tränen aus," both of which date from 1862.<sup>24</sup> Finally, several selections from Gustav Mahler's more expansive orchestral songs ("Revelge" from *Lieder aus Des Knaben Wunderhorn* 1899 and "Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde" from *Das Lied von der Erde* 1909) rounded out our study pieces.<sup>25</sup>



Example 8 - Provide different harmonic settings in two piano accompaniments

For the song project I provided the class with a common German text — "Ein Stündlein wohl vor Tag" or "An hour before dawn," a short poem of three stanzas by Eduard Mörike.<sup>26</sup> The nature and structure of this poem is such that it can be set either in a ternary, strophic, or through-composed design; its opening line (the title of the lyric) also functions as a refrain for the subsequent stanzas. As the fledgling composers began to sketch their pieces, we discussed the range and tessitura for soprano (or tenor) voice, as well as some

---

demonstration of Steven Laitz's "submediant complex." See his "The Submediant Complex: Its Musical and Poetic Roles in Schubert's Songs," *Theory and Practice* 21 (1996): 123-65.

<sup>24</sup> Liszt's first E-major setting consists of two large strophes, each of which is divided into several smaller components. The Neapolitan relation assumes an increasing significance as the piece proceeds. While the second setting (without key signature) is much abbreviated, certain of its ideas suggest motivic reminiscences of the earlier song. In several classes we also found time to examine his "Blume und Duft" (1862), which is a real "Chinese puzzle" to unravel. I feel the published analyses by such scholars as Robert Morgan, Harold Cinnamon, and Edwin Hantz fail to adequately address certain crucial issues in this piece.

<sup>25</sup> Both employ complex strophic constructs and unusual key schemes. While the former contains "rotational" elements (à la Warren Darcy) and no less than three different refrains, the four strophes of the latter resemble a sonata design with a modified repetition of the exposition.

<sup>26</sup> Its text and literal translation may be found on pp. 199-200 of *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1984).

aspects of text setting in German. I found that most students tended to be a bit too adventuresome during their initial stanza, in some cases exploring distant tonal realms before first establishing a solid tonic “home base,” or exploiting the higher reaches of the vocal range too soon without sufficient dramatic justification.

Although I hired (out of my own pocket) some graduate vocal majors to practice on and record the songs, those pianists in the class were expected to supply their own accompaniment. After the recordings, the singers provided some excellent practical feedback. In hindsight, we examined two prior settings of this poem. The Robert Franz version (Op. 28 No. 2) is somewhat mundane, but Hugo Wolf’s more innovative approach (1888) features an opening prolongation of a German sixth to dominant, after which each successive strophe rises a half step higher before restating the introductory material as coda. I must confess I was not prepared for the unusual variety and excellent quality of original songs I received over the years. While most were cast in moderate tempo and tended to draw their stylistic inspiration from Schubert, the opening section quoted in Example 9 from a student setting resembles a Mendelssohn-like allegro.

#### **PART 4: ROMANTIC CHARACTER PIECE FOR SOLO PIANO**

As an introduction to our final project—the composition of a Romantic character piece for solo piano—we compiled a catalogue of the various types of genre found in the keyboard music of Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, and Brahms. Some students seemed to have picked up the mistaken idea that following the formal stereotypes of the Classical era, the subsequent designs in the 19th century were somehow more amorphous and free. Therefore I made a special effort to link certain genre with their preferred formal and tonal designs, such as minuet constructs with attendant two-reprise forms in mazurkas and polonaises, ternary structures in intermezzi, and sequence-like chains of repeated sections in waltzes.

Several preliminary exercises preceded the final project. After first demonstrating a wide variety of possible pianistic textures in which a melody in Romantic style might be cast, I gave the class a short passage in four-voice texture and requested that they provide two different textural settings. I next asked them to compose a harmonic progression of some twenty to thirty chords that could be elaborated in some consistent texture to form a kind of Romantic

The image displays a musical score for a vocal setting of "Ein Stündlein" by ManShan Yap. The score is written in G major and 6/8 time, marked "Agitato" and "mp". It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Der - weil ich schla - fend lag, Ein Stünd - lein wohl vor Tag. Sang vor dem Fen - ster auf dem Baum. Ein Schwäl - ble in nür, hört es kaum, Ein Stünd - lein wohl vor Tag." The piano accompaniment features a "figuration prelude" modeled after Chopin's Op. 28 No. 1 in C major, characterized by a continuous chromatic sequence in the right hand and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

Example 9 - First strophe of a setting of "Ein Stündlein" by ManShan Yap "figuration prelude" (modeled after Chopin's Op. 28 No. 1 in C major). In addition, we analyzed and extracted the basic voice-leading models underlying some typical chromatic sequences

utilized by Chopin.<sup>27</sup> His infamous little E-minor Prelude Op. 28 No. 4 afforded the opportunity to examine some non-sequential linear chromatic writing.<sup>28</sup>

After each student had chosen a particular genre for their project, we examined and discussed some of their preliminary sketching around the piano, homing in on such issues as overall design and tonal scheme, texture considerations, positioning of climactic points, the possible use of chromatic sequences and where they might be best employed, transitions versus retransitions, technical pianistic features, etc. While their compositions progressed, we analyzed several character pieces from the literature. The A-minor Mazurka Op. 7 No. 2 by Chopin proved to be a virtual treasure-trove of various devices, including the problem of its “off-tonic” opening. (Many students were surprised to note how closely the design of most mazurkas resembled the older Classical Minuet model with its two-reprise sections and “trio.”) I found that the unexpected harmonic twists and turns in Schumann’s miniature No. 21 from his *Album for the Young* Op. 68 provided an excellent illustration of Leonard Meyer’s hypotheses of expectation and realization.<sup>29</sup> In our examination of Chopin waltzes (the C# minor Op. 64 No. 2, the A $\flat$  major Op. 34 No. 1, and the A $\flat$  major or “two-four waltz” Op. 42), we observed the traditional succession of repeated sections (of which the more virtuosic second one often functioned as a kind of refrain), the typical key change at the trio, and the occasional abandoning of strict hypermeter near the piece’s conclusion as the

<sup>27</sup> For instance, the chromatic prolongation of an introductory dominant (Polonaise in A $\flat$  major Op. 53, mm. 1-13), a fifth-progression cycle compressed to descend by half-steps (Prelude in A $\flat$  major Op. 28 No. 17, mm. 50-54), as opposed to 5-6 chromatic ascents (Prelude in D minor Op. 28 No. 24, mm. 39-52), patterns by consecutive minor thirds (Nocturne in G major Op. 37 No. 2, mm. 129-32, which also features an almost complete cycle of falling perfect fifths) versus those of the major third (“New Etude” in A $\flat$  major 1839, mm. 13-29), as well as the “omnibus” progression (Nocturne in D $\flat$  major Op. 27, No. 2, mm. 29-46, where it extends the retransitional dominant).

<sup>28</sup> In passing we briefly examined two analyses of this piece by Carl Schachter: “The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph, Sources, and Interpretation” in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. by John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 161-82, and “The Triad as Place and Action” in *Music Theory Spectrum* 17/2 (Fall, 1995): 149-69. I personally believe the former more accurately “fits” the music.

<sup>29</sup> These theories were first postulated in his *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1956).

music built to a climax (Op. 34 No. 1). Schubert's  $A\flat$  movement from his *Sechs Moment Musicaux* D. 780 (featuring Edward Cone's famous "promissory note") and Brahms' E-Minor Intermezzo Op. 119 No. 2 (largely based on a single motivic gesture) rounded off

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "A Sunny Place in Autumn" by Sayaka Akiyama. The score is written for piano and is divided into four systems. The first system is marked "Cantabile" and "p" (piano). The second system continues the "Cantabile" tempo. The third system is marked "poco rit..." (poco ritardando). The fourth system is marked "a tempo" and "mp" (mezzo-piano). The score features a mix of treble and bass clefs, with various rhythmic values and articulations. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece is characterized by its flowing, lyrical lines and the use of triplets in the bass line.

Example 10 - Opening section of a Romantic character piece "A Sunny Place in Autumn" by Sayaka Akiyama

our analytical repertoire. I have included the initial section from a remarkable student piece in Example 10; the programmatic title suggests a pensive mood. I only wish there were more space to reproduce the complete composition.

Following the performances and recording of the character pieces, we engaged in a little post-mortem open discussion on various

facets of the course -- for instance, what aspects of the compositional process did they find either easier or harder than they had originally anticipated, and what were some possible reasons? Did they tend to have more trouble at predictable points in the assigned piece? Did secondary parameters such as texture, register, range, timbre, dynamics, text setting, etc. play a more significant role than they might have initially expected?

Finally, a few words on changes in the course's structure and material. During the first several years I had originally assigned an additional project—a Wagnerian operatic narrative!

After supplying a short text (paraphrased from Act II of *Die Walküre*), I asked them to sketch some possible short "leitmotives" that might be used to underscore certain associative references in the poem, during which time we also examined some instances of this genre in the Wagnerian literature.<sup>30</sup> But I soon realized that most students were simply not familiar enough with the style to cope with an assignment of this magnitude. In addition, coming as it did near the end of the semester, the class lacked sufficient time to do proper justice to the narrative. As a result I decided to substitute in its place a short piece for solo woodwind and piano in the manner of early Debussy. Since time restraints, however, once again prevented the establishment of those compositional techniques necessary for a proper understanding of Impressionistic style, it too was subsequently dropped. On the other hand, I continued to modify and fine tune the preliminary exercises mentioned above.

In retrospect many of the students remarked that this course had not only been a valuable learning experience from a purely pedagogical standpoint, but that their direct involvement with the creative process had compelled them to look at music from the composer's "side of the fence" (most had never previously written any original music to speak of). They also voiced the opinion that this stylistic-compositional approach doubtless influenced the manner in which they would analyze and perform tonal pieces in the future.

---

<sup>30</sup> These included the Dutchman's Monologue (*The Flying Dutchman* Act I), the Rome Narrative (*Tannhäuser* Act III), "In fernam Land" (*Lohengrin* Act III), and Loge's Narrative (*Rhinegold* Scene 2).