

1-1-2008

## A Comparison of Four Sight-Singing and Aural-Skills Textbooks - Two New Approaches and Two Classic Texts in New Editions

William Marvin

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

---

### Recommended Citation

Marvin, William (2008) "A Comparison of Four Sight-Singing and Aural-Skills Textbooks - Two New Approaches and Two Classic Texts in New Editions," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*. Vol. 22, Article 6. Available at: <https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/jmtp/vol22/iss1/6>

This Book Review 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.

## A Comparison of Four Sight-Singing and Aural-Skills Textbooks: Two New Approaches and Two Classic Texts in New Editions

REVIEW BY WILLIAM MARVIN<sup>1</sup>

Carr, Maureen, and Bruce Benward. *Sight Singing Complete*. Seventh Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Karpinski, Gary, and Richard Kram. *Anthology for Sight Singing*. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007.

Carol Krueger. *Progressive Sight Singing*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Robert W. Ottman and Nancy Rogers. *Music for Sight Singing*. Seventh Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.

It seems that music departments throughout North America are perennially revisiting their curricula. Textbook choices are frequently part of those deliberations, as instructors strive to deliver the material efficiently, accurately, and musically. Even if one's department is not in the throes of reconsidering its approach to aural-skills instruction, current market forces might encourage such an exercise, for the year 2007 produced a wealth of sight-singing and aural-skills textbooks. Of the four texts under review here, two are new to the market, and two are revised editions of classic texts.

The two new books offer strong challenges to the established texts, and both provide more explicit pedagogical suggestions for students and instructors than the revised texts. (This statement may seem puzzling in relation to Gary Karpinski and Richard Kram's anthology, which contains very little prose; it refers largely to the companion volume by Gary Karpinski, *Manual for Ear Training and Sight Singing* (New York and London: W. W. Norton

<sup>1</sup> I give special thanks to Steve Laitz, Betsy Marvin, and Gregory Ristow for sharing their vast knowledge of aural-skills pedagogy with me as I wrote this review.

and Company, 2007). This latter volume, while devoted mainly to dictation, contains a tremendous amount of pedagogical material on sight singing, and can be used separately or as part of an integrated course with the sight-singing manual. While I will refer to both works in this review, I am mainly using the anthology for my comparisons with the other texts.) Carol Krueger incorporates exercise materials throughout her text, with explicit strategies for the teacher to implement, and for the student to practice. Krueger additionally offers an instructor's manual.

Lest the cynic believe that the melodies of the revised editions have merely been shuffled or renumbered yet again to thwart students searching for less expensive used textbooks, the revisions in question are by co-authors, and thus provide new pedagogical voices. Carr/Benward is the third edition of that text to be co-authored, and the first in which Maureen Carr receives primary billing; Ottman/Rogers is co-authored for the first time in its current edition. While Ottman/Rogers remains similar to earlier editions (but improved from them at the same time), Carr/Benward has been gradually transformed into a book that is quite different from its earlier incarnations.

Starting with the recognition that no single pedagogical approach can accomplish everything, and that a brief review cannot possibly do justice to every aspect of the texts under consideration, I have chosen to focus on pedagogical assumptions and how these shape the contents and learning outcomes for each text, rather than providing a survey of physical characteristics, repertoire used, layout, etc. I will also present my findings in relation to curricular considerations. My major contention is that while all four texts claim some degree of generality with respect to curricular and pedagogical approaches, close examination reveals that each is designed with a specific pedagogical and methodological approach, and failure to recognize and endorse those approaches can result in frustration for students and teachers alike.

#### STARTING POINTS, SCOPE, AND OUTPUT GOALS

While all four of these texts deal primarily with a single musical skill, namely literacy, each has a highly individualized approach, and each is directed toward different student populations. This of course explains the differences in starting points, output objectives, and amount of material covered. I define literacy as the ability

to translate symbol into sound. This includes rhythm (temporal placement of sound), pitch (the right notes), and so-called expression marks (tempo indications, dynamics, ornamentation, etc.). These are the very topics to which we will now turn.

Rhythmic exercises comprise an important feature of three of the texts under consideration. With the exception of the Karpinski/Kram anthology, each book provides introductory lessons on rhythmic pedagogy, addressing such topics as the maintenance of a steady pulse and the reading of exercises in simple time from rhythmic notation. In this reviewer's estimation, the initial and sustained focus of these three upon rhythm is not merely appropriate, but necessary; as any experienced aural-skills instructor is well aware, some students can be quite lazy about precise rhythmic performance, especially when they are concentrating upon pitch. The sequencing of rhythmic content in these three texts is variable, each effective in its own way. Individual instructors will have personal preferences, and any decision as to the advisability of one approach over another will likely consider sequencing as one of many relevant factors. Of the books surveyed, Carol Krueger's projects the most advanced rhythmic topics. Unfortunately, too many of the exercises involve unvaried four-measure groupings, as do the melodies composed for sight singing later in the text. This unremitting similarity of construction makes the exercises excessively predictable, and may cause some students to lose their concentration. Ottman/Rogers contains a large number of new exercises and rhythmic topics compared to earlier editions. Personal experience with the book suggests that most of the exercises (both old and new) are too short to be useful in successfully imparting rhythmic reading skills and steady pulse maintenance over time, and a separate book devoted to rhythmic pedagogy is necessary.<sup>2</sup> The rhythmic exercises by Carr/Benward are also integrated with melodic material throughout the text, and include both shorter and longer exercises in a variety of idioms and styles. None of the texts here addresses rhythmic pedagogy in the context of instrumental performance.

<sup>2</sup> Rhythmic pedagogy is dealt with in the following stand-alone texts: Anne Carothers Hall, *Studying Rhythm*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005); Daniel Kazez, *Rhythm Reading: Elementary through Advanced Training*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997); Robert Starer, *Rhythmic Training* (Milwaukee: MCA Music Publishing, 1969); Richard Hoffman, *The Rhythm Book* (Smith Creek Music, 2006) a textbook for aural skills development based on the Takadimi system of rhythm pedagogy (see *JMTP* vol. 10, 1996).

Turning to the realm of pitch, Carol Krueger's text is, in some ways, the most modest in scope. In consideration of its design, a one-year curriculum for beginners, and given the advanced rhythmic exercises in the book's first half, the disjuncture may seem odd. At a collegiate level, it certainly would not take students beyond the first year of study (perhaps not even beyond the first full semester at some institutions). Its audience includes junior-high and high school courses, two-year college music programs, adult continuing education and community music school programs, and four-year collegiate music courses that are looking for a text to address remedial aural training for students with weaker than expected backgrounds. Starting from the most basic musical problems, including maintaining a steady pulse, matching pitch vocally, and singing stepwise melodies confined to the major pentad, the text progresses through involved rhythms and diatonic melodies in major and minor keys, with emphasis on primary harmonies (I, ii, IV, and V). Many of these melodies arpeggiate the primary harmonies clearly, while others imply the target harmonies more subtly to students trained in traditional melody harmonization. The book concludes with a chapter on melodies in the diatonic modes. Of the four texts under review, Krueger's contains the largest proportion of melodies and exercises composed specifically for the text, with less than half of the content being drawn from the repertoire of folk music and the common-practice.

Gary Karpinski and Richard Kram's text overlaps with Krueger's in its coverage of rudimentary pitch material and diatonic melodies (major, minor, and modal), but also goes much further than diatonic harmony by including chromatic idioms and modulation. Carr/Benward and Ottman/Rogers are even more ambitious, for in addition to the tonal topics covered by Karpinski and Kram, these books conclude with extended chapters on twentieth-century tonal and post-tonal idioms.<sup>3</sup> Carr/Benward moves through the initial stages of training more rapidly than the other texts, and thus would be more appropriate for programs with advanced students. With their comprehensive inclusion of rhythm exercises, tonal melodies and ensembles, and post-tonal repertoire, Carr/Benward and

---

<sup>3</sup> The twentieth-century materials in Ottman/Rogers have been thoroughly revised; instead of a grab bag of melodies in haphazard order, there is now an effective pedagogical organization in this chapter. Karpinski/Kram advise a separate text for the study of post-tonal ear training.

Ottman/Rogers are appropriate stand-alone texts for an entire sight-singing curriculum; Karpinski/Kram will require supplementary texts for rhythm and twentieth-century music, and Krueger will be appropriate for the introductory contexts specified above.

The vast majority of material in all four texts involves single-line melodies for sight singing or for rehearsed singing. Canons are featured in all four texts as well, and all except Krueger include vocal duets and choral passages or movements for ensemble singing. Many of the duets in Ottman are quite difficult, especially at the earlier stages of study; frequently they consist of a folk song in which Ottman has composed an accompanying line that involves awkward vocal leaps or complicated contrapuntal interaction between the two voices. Carr/Benward has a clear advantage over the other texts in terms of ensemble singing, providing the greatest number of examples and the greatest variety of vocal textures (imitative, chorale style, duets, trios, SATB, sung string quartet movements, etc.)

#### PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Most of the texts under consideration proclaim some degree of neutrality regarding solmization systems. This is a contentious subject, and opinions are often divided sharply within individual institutions, with applied faculty generally preferring a fixed-do approach, music theorists frequently advocating scale-degree numbers or *do*-based minor movable *do*, and music education faculty arguing in favor of *la*-based minor movable *do*. While this is not the place for a complete survey of the advantages and disadvantages of all available systems, it is important to recognize that not only the target repertoire, but the ordering of material, and the overall pedagogical approach, reveal that none of these texts is as ecumenical as the authors claim them to be. Indeed, a close reading of each author's description of the various methods available for rhythmic reading and sight singing explicitly indicates the preferred methodology for employing each text most effectively.

Ottman/Rogers proposes three tools for sight singing (p. 13): solfège syllables (meaning movable *do*), scale-degree numbers, or letter names (either uninflected, or with chromatic inflections).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the chromatic note-naming system espoused here is not explained completely. The authors advocate German note names (G# = *gis*, E-flat = *es*, etc.), but do not provide all of the options

The suggestions for movable *do* are refined when the minor mode is introduced (p. 66): “In modern practice, there is a growing preference for designating the tonic as *do* in minor keys. . . .” In short: *la*-based minor movable *do* is not recommended with this text, and fixed *do* is relegated to a footnote (p.13).

The Karpinski/Kram anthology contains no explicit pedagogical suggestions; this is because the pedagogy is spelled out in great detail in the companion volume, which advocates either solmization by scale-degree number or movable *do*. Karpinski further elaborates (pp. xviii-xix): “For the most part, the book uses a parallel, functional approach to movable *do* (including *do*-based minor), with two exceptions: *la*-based solmization is used . . . when the natural minor mode is introduced, and . . . when the modes are introduced. . . . But readers should make no mistake—this is not a *la*-based-minor book.” In trying to have it both ways, Karpinski has virtually guaranteed that the curriculum will grind to a halt each time the solmization system is changed. If the texts truly are *do*-based minor texts, there is no compelling pedagogical reason for introducing *la*-based minor at all, and doing so will only lead to student confusion and frustration. Karpinski makes no suggestions for singing on letter names or fixed *do*.

Carr/Benward gives a very brief explanation of several systems in chart form (movable *do* in both forms, fixed *do*, scale-degree numbers, chromatic fixed *do*,<sup>5</sup> and pitch-class numbers 0-11 in a fixed system (C=0). There are very few explicit pedagogical suggestions for the use of these systems in the body of the text, and the authors recommend that the instructor use “a system with which they feel comfortable” (p. xvii). This suggestion will result in most instructors uncritically defaulting to the system in which he or she was initially trained, as few musicians are inclined to work through several sight-singing manuals utilizing multiple systems in order to determine which one is most effective.

---

(35 are necessary, with each of the seven natural pitches sharpened, double sharpened, flatted, and double flatted). While the virtues of one syllable per articulated note are obvious in the German system, it needs to be fully explained for students and teachers to use it effectively.

<sup>5</sup> The authors appropriate the chromatic syllables from movable *do* to create a chromatic fixed *do* system. A movable system requires 17 syllables, whereas a fixed system would require 35 as mentioned in footnote 4. Here, aside from excessive overhead of this many sung signifiers, I cannot see how some of these might be named effectively. For example, how do you brighten the vowel of *mi* when confronted by an *E#*?

Carol Krueger provides the most thorough descriptions of the available systems in a series of useful appendices, and also integrates scale-degree numbers, movable *do* (with both *la*- and *do*-based minor) at every level of the text. The appendices include comparative charts for a variety of rhythmic syllables (Takadimi, McHose and Tibbs, Gordon, and Kodály), as well as clear descriptions and comparisons of all of the pitch systems mentioned above, plus a representation of the Guidonian hand, Curwen's hand symbols for movable *do*, and a modernized version of Glover's tonal ladder. Krueger's own preference is revealed in the following (pp. 457-8): "The *la* based minor approach allows inexperienced singers to sing in tonalities other than major without knowledge of chromatic syllables, notation, or music theory. It is the 'only tonal syllable system based on syntax.'"<sup>6</sup> [*sic*] Krueger's use of the word "tonalities" here is typical of *la*-based minor solmization advocates: for these musicians, modes (major, minor, phrygian, etc.) represent different tonal systems, and modal mixture is not emphasized as a theoretical construct.

What is missing from all four of these summaries is a broader framework that recognizes what each system accomplishes, and what it does not. Gary Karpinski provides such a framework in his seminal 2000 study, *Aural Skills Acquisition*. In surveying the available systems, he advises: "...practitioners must be extremely careful in choosing two simultaneous systems for pitch solmization, one modeling scale-degree function and another modeling letter names."<sup>7</sup> To elaborate: all of the available systems can be classified either as *phenomenal* methods, which name notes, or *conceptual* methods, which place the notes into a hierarchy. Karpinski implies, and I agree, that expert musical literacy requires us to engage both the phenomenal and conceptual aspects of music, and thus our pedagogy should highlight two systems—one from column A, one from column B.<sup>8</sup>

Training in musical literacy, by necessity, must address competency in specific musical repertoires. Unfortunately, explicit recognition of

---

<sup>6</sup> Eric Bluestine, *The Ways Children Learn Music* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1964), 92.

<sup>7</sup> Gary Karpinski, *Aural Skills Acquisition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

<sup>8</sup> Given his explication of phenomenal and contextual aspects of music, it is surprising that Karpinski advocates a completely movable (i.e., contextual) approach to sight singing in his texts.



the relationship between musical repertoire and choice of solmization system is missing from all four texts. Greater awareness and understanding of this relationship would minimize the passionate arguments between musicians who espouse different pedagogical approaches to sight singing and aural musicianship. For example, the Kodály tradition of *la*-based minor movable *do* solmization is related to the diatonic modal music that characterizes folk song, and is thus an effective tool for music that explores the diatonic set and moves freely between relative modes. The Curwen/Glover tradition of *do*-based minor solmization, on the other hand, privileges the parallel modal relation, and is thus more appropriate for major-minor modal mixture as a structural feature of common-practice tonal music. More specifically: a Russian folk tune that alternates between F major and D minor will be modeled more effectively using *la*-based minor solfège, while a Schubert song that alternates between D major and D minor will be modeled more effectively using *do*-based minor solfège. The strong preference for common-practice melodies found in Ottman/Rogers and in Karpinski/Kram, the extensive use of folksong in Krueger, and the eclecticism of repertoire found in Carr/Benward, help to explain the particular orientations espoused in each of these texts. In summary: if one's curriculum emphasizes folk music and Kodály's *la*-based minor solmization, Krueger's book will be the best fit; for common-practice music with *do*-based minor, either Ottman/Rogers or Karpinski/Kram provide the appropriate materials. For curricula that emphasize music in the widest variety of historical styles and idioms, Carr/Benward is the most appropriate choice, using either fixed *do* (which will allow a single method of solmization across the full spectrum of repertoire), or a series of different methodologies employed for different musical idioms. It should further be noted that while fixed-*do* solfège or note-naming could be successfully employed in conjunction with a conceptual system in Krueger or in Ottman/Rogers, there is no way that a phenomenal system can be used effectively with the Karpinski/Kram text due to the necessity for vocal transposition throughout the book; phenomenal systems are meaningless unless one is singing the pitches that are actually sounding.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to considerations of target repertoire and the appropriate solmization systems to best model that repertoire,

---

<sup>9</sup> The author of this review has successfully employed a scale-degree plus fixed-*do* pedagogy using earlier editions of Ottman, both at Oberlin Conservatory and at the Eastman School of Music.

instructors need to consider the desired outcome for their students after the full course of study. If students are to achieve the ability to shape musical phrases over the course of an entire movement, then an aural-skills curriculum must provide materials for developing instantaneous reading skills, and also for learning through the rehearsal of lengthier excerpts. Here there is an instructive contrast between all of the current texts and the melodies in the classic *Solfège des Solfèges* series that originated at the Paris Conservatoire.<sup>10</sup> There, one typically encounters melodies that are 40-70 measures long, even at the earlier stages of study. Through examples of such length, students are encouraged to develop important skills (navigating multiple sequential modulations, developing long-term tonal memory, observing good rehearsal/practice techniques, recognizing musical forms, performing real-time musical analysis, etc.) that are not accessed as effectively in any of the more modern texts.

Carol Krueger's text offers no clear progression from shorter to lengthier examples. Karpinski and Kram are even more problematic in this regard: far too many of the melodies throughout their text are less than eight measures in length, and many of these do not even conclude with a logical cadence. The revised texts by Ottman/Rogers and Carr/Benward offer clear advantages here, with many lengthier examples and full movements for study in the later chapters.

#### THEORETICAL ORIENTATION AND SEQUENCING OF MATERIAL

Inevitably, the organization and sequencing of pitch materials in an aural-skills curriculum will progress in dialogue with other learning sequences, such as those found in written theory, music history, or performance. Many instructors of aural skills have experienced the tension between a harmonic organization of materials, which emphasizes coordination with written music theory classes, and the recognition that aural skills acquisition is often accomplished at a different rate of speed—more rapidly for a few advanced students, more slowly for the vast majority. Further, it is unlikely that any text will present materials in exactly the right order for a given curriculum and student population; instructors often find themselves attempting to re-order the materials in a

---

<sup>10</sup> A. Danhauser, L. Lemoine, and Albert Lavignac, *Solfège des Solfèges*, 34 vols. (Paris, Henry Lemoine, 1910-1923).

given text without rendering the exercises unperformable due to skipped steps in the revised pedagogy. The problems are most acute as departments decide which component of the theory curriculum addresses harmonic dictation: if placed in the written theory classroom, theory instructors are forced to address aural training (not necessarily a bad thing); if placed in the aural musicianship classroom along with sight singing and rhythmic reading, aural-skills teachers are constrained to move in lockstep with a written theory curriculum. Each of the texts under consideration takes a slightly different approach to these problems, and they are not equally flexible for differing curricular preferences.

Three of the texts share a common organizational approach for the initial stages of melodic study, in that they progress in a more-or-less tonally derived sequence. Specifically, the materials in Krueger, Ottman/Rogers, and Karpinski/Kram all begin with stepwise major-mode melodies, progress to leaps within the tonic triad, then leaps within the dominant triad, add leaps to predominant functioning scale degrees (including  $\hat{6}$ ), and move on to chromaticism. Within this common framework, the minor mode is addressed in slightly different ways in all three texts; this is related in part to the solmization preferences referred to above.

The Carr/Benward book is organized on quite different premises. Instead of emphasizing scale degrees and harmonic context as the primary strategy, this book is organized primarily around intervals, with harmonic context providing a secondary parameter of organization.<sup>11</sup> A third parameter is that keys are clustered together: students read several melodies in a row within a limited number of keys (a feature usually associated with fixed-do solmization).<sup>12</sup> As with the other three texts, Carr/Benward begins with stepwise melodies and leaps within the tonic triad, but limits those leaps to thirds, fourths and fifths, reserving leaps of an octave for later study, and sixths are not introduced until later yet. One appealing aspect of this organization is that it allows for clusters of

---

<sup>11</sup> Carr/Benward is similar to Samuel Adler's book in this regard. See Samuel Adler, *Sight Singing: Pitch, Interval, Rhythm*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Examples of texts organized by key include David Damschroder, *Listen and Sing: Lessons in Ear-Training and Sight Singing* (Belmont CA: Schirmer Books, 1995); Arnold Fish and Norman Lloyd, *Fundamentals of Sight Singing and Ear Training* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); and the 34 volumes of A. Danhauser, L. Lemoine, and Albert Lavignac, *Solfège des Solfèges* (Paris, Henry Lemoine, 1910-1923).

melodies by a particular composer, or within a given idiom (a series of chant melodies from Christian and Judaic sources appears in Unit 1; disjunct melodies by Baroque composers are grouped together, in Unit 11, to emphasize augmented seconds and diminished sevenths). These clusters, which have conceptually been a perennial feature of this text, are ideal for instructors who wish to teach across the curriculum, emphasizing repertoire, historical context, or performance practice within the aural-skills classroom. The approach may also result in a great deal of independence between aural training and written theory class. This is not necessarily a criticism, but instructors should be aware that this text is not the obvious choice if maximal theory/skills coordination is desired.

An additional feature of Carr/Benward's book is the merging of familiar and unfamiliar styles, clefs, tonal problems, and rhythmic problems throughout the book. The uneasy tension between intervallic and scale-degree strategies is part of this, and an unsympathetic teacher could find these systematic disjunctions to be a pedagogical inconsistency. It is clear from the Preface that these disjunctions are by design, and that the authors expect instructors to engage their students in the solving of problems together. Obviously, this places a tremendous emphasis upon planning and creativity. Instructors who are thoroughly committed to self-reflection in their own learning processes, and who are able to convey problem-solving strategies effectively to their students, should be able to use this book to great effect.

Karpinski and Kram order their fifty-four chapters mainly in terms of harmonic and scale-degree topics, but there are some unusual choices that may puzzle first-time users. For example, the same musical problem (namely, leaps within the dominant harmony) is spread out among four widely separated chapters: Chapter 4 (Skips to  $\hat{7}$  and  $\hat{2}$  as Prefix Neighbors), Chapter 12 (The Dominant Triad), Chapter 19 (The Dominant Seventh Chord), and Chapter 22 (The Leading-Tone Triad). This is complicated in that some of the most difficult melodies within this grouping are found in Chapter 4.<sup>13</sup> The logic of separating these chapters from each other has eluded this reviewer, and seems again to be an attempt to please everybody. While the book's organization may have been well intentioned, it requires extra work of instructors who prefer to introduce arpeggiations from the simpler to the more complex.

---

<sup>13</sup> Chapter numbers are provided only within the table of contents, and not within the body of the text.

The so-called prefix functions in Chapter 4 are an attempt to introduce Schenkerian hierarchy without the necessary theoretical scaffolding.

Another feature of the Karpinski/Kram text that will cause problems is the extremely late introduction to modulation. In the introduction to his companion ear-training manual, Karpinski indicates that this is intentional, because modulation “presents some of the most difficult challenges in tonal aural-skills training” (p. xviii). For this very reason, some instructors might assume that an earlier presentation, with more time to practice, would facilitate mastery of the essential skills associated with the topic. Further problems occur in the actual melodies chosen for some of the topics: for example, several of the melodies in Chapter 23 (The Supertonic Triad) involve arpeggiation between  $\hat{2}$ ,  $\hat{4}$ , and/or  $\hat{6}$ , but the musical context does *not* suggest a supertonic harmony. Example 1 illustrates the problem: Schubert’s melody clearly projects dominant harmony throughout measure five, in spite of the apparent arpeggiation of a supertonic triad on the third beat. To interpolate a ii chord at any level contradicts a student’s efforts to connect harmonic syntax as taught in written theory classes with their aural experience of the music. By my calculation, approximately half of the melodies in Karpinski and Kram’s Chapter 23 do not clearly articulate the target harmony suggested in the chapter title. The most common problem here is that the so-called supertonic arpeggiation implies two harmonies in many of the examples, usually a predominant moving on to a dominant.

Vocal transposition: down 2nd-3rd

Mäßig *pp*

490

Franz Schubert, "Im Haine," D. 738, mm. 4-8 (1822 or 1823?)

Son - nen - strah - len durch die Tan - nen, wie sie  
fal - len, ziehn von dan - nen al - le Schmerz - en,

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. It is in 3/8 time and D major. The melody starts on a G4 (sol) and moves through various intervals. On the third beat, there is an arpeggiated triad of G4, B4, and D5, which is a supertonic triad (ii chord) in D major. The lyrics are: "Son - nen - strah - len durch die Tan - nen, wie sie fal - len, ziehn von dan - nen al - le Schmerz - en,". The score is labeled "Mäßig pp" and "490". Above the score, it says "Vocal transposition: down 2nd-3rd". To the right, it says "Franz Schubert, 'Im Haine,' D. 738, mm. 4-8 (1822 or 1823?)".

Example 1: Melody from Karpinski and Kram, p.134, illustrating supertonic triad

Of the surveyed texts, the harmonic organization of the Ottman/Rogers provides for the most intuitive match of written and aural curricula. The sequencing of chapters and materials is generally quite compelling, but the actual pedagogical advice offered for

rehearsal is minimal, and often incorrect. A typical example is the advice for performing a grace note “as quickly as possible” (p. 29). This advice has appeared in every edition of the book at least since the fourth, and does not help the student who needs to decide whether to place the note before or on the beat. (The advice is further inaccurate, given that a long appoggiatura is certainly the appropriate interpretation for the specified melody by Haydn). Topics that do not fit into a harmonic framework provide awkward moments within the sequence of materials in this book. For example, the chapter on alto and tenor clefs is inserted arbitrarily, and these clefs are only intermittently utilized from this point on. (Perhaps this is unavoidable, as clef reading is by nature a phenomenal problem, and the book itself is conceptually organized around scale-degree or *do*-based minor solmization). Instructors are always free to assign melodies, notated in treble or bass clefs from later chapters, as if they are notated in alto or tenor (with the appropriate change of key signature and accidentals), and teach students to address the appropriate transpositions. Also, the book cycles back to harmonic topics each time a new rhythmic or metric topic is introduced. This is understandable, given that rhythmic topics require their own logical pedagogical sequence that is independent from tonal pedagogy. Krueger solves this problem by presenting, in effect, two books: a sequence of eighteen chapters on rhythmic reading, followed by a sequence of eighteen chapters on melodic reading. Instructors are thus free to move at different rates based on the needs of individual classes.

### WHAT SHOULD MUSIC LOOK LIKE?

The appearance of music on the page has a tremendous impact on how we read. In this respect, all four of the texts have an internally homogenous appearance that represents a publisher’s textbook house style, and none of the melodies, canons, ensembles, or rhythmic exercises has the true appearance of a score or orchestral part as musicians experience them in the real world.<sup>14</sup> Further problems appear in relation to font size and page layout: page turns in Ottman/Rogers are particularly awkward, and the small font size

<sup>14</sup> For sight-singing texts that print materials in a variety of fonts for this purpose, see Samuel Adler, *Sight Singing: Pitch, Interval, Rhythm*, second ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997) and Paul Cooper, *Dimensions of Sight Singing: An Anthology* (New York and London: Longman, 1981).

throughout Krueger for text and musical examples is particularly wearing on the eyes. Spacing issues within the melodies and rhythms also mar Krueger's book: poor layout to fill the margins frequently results in spatial distortions within individual measures that will ensure incorrect readings by students.

Regardless of repertoire, melodies appearing by themselves involve a *very* different skill from score reading in which the musician sees all of the sounding parts. Choral singers, vocal soloists, and instrumentalists must continuously tune against each other aurally and visually. While single-line instrumentalists typically read from their own instrumental part, vocalists almost never do (with the exception of singers training in the performance of early music), and keyboard players, guitarists, and harpists typically see the full musical texture in their notated music. The sight-singing manual, insofar as it rarely goes beyond unaccompanied excerpts that don't look like real music, falsifies the musical experience of many musicians here. While all of the texts include a good number of vocal canons, and each contains some ensemble singing exercises (Carr/Benward being richer than the others in this area), the textbook market has not served instructors well in providing graduated exercises and repertoire for visualizing music in a variety of score formats, or for concentrating on the problems of performing with an accompaniment (or with other voices; witness the violin player who gets lost while playing from the score with a pianist), tuning against other parts, or finding one's notes from contextual clues elsewhere in the score.<sup>15</sup>

Students and instructors should also know exactly what music they are singing. Here, Carr/Benward and Karpinski/Kram offer clear advantages, for they provide complete information about composer, title, opus or other catalogue number, movement, and measure numbers. In some cases, the actual edition is indicated as well, which is helpful in early music and folk music collections, where the instructor may wish to bring in alternative representations of the "same" music for comparison. Ottman/Rogers is a bit more variable in source attribution, and several of the melodies are editorially adapted for pedagogical purposes (transposition, cut-

---

<sup>15</sup> The sing-and-play exercises that are integrated throughout Sol Berkowitz, Gabriel Fontrier, and Leo Kraft, *A New Approach to Sight Singing*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997) are superb models for developing coordination of multiple parts, and for intonation studies.

and-paste elimination of rests or repeated passages, etc.). Such adaptation is not a problem *per se*, but it would be nice to know what has been done, especially since students are taught about the importance of performing from accurate editions.

Karpinski and Kram make a point of using *Urtext* editions and providing “authentic” versions of every melody included. This decision results in some extremely awkward pedagogical problems. Many of the melodies appear in difficult vocal ranges for untrained and trained singers alike, and the authors thus suggest transpositions throughout the book. Such an approach undermines any attempt to use a phenomenal system in conjunction with this text, an issue addressed earlier in this review. Further, the student is introduced to all of the keys early on in the book, but will never actually sing in some of them due to the enforced transposition. Another advantage of singing music at pitch instead of transposing is that students gradually become aware of their own vocal range; this cannot happen if the student is constantly transposing. Notwithstanding the authors’ goal of retaining “the most authentic versions possible” (p. x), the book betrays evidence of editorial decision-making at many levels. Given that the house style musical font will homogenize each melody’s appearance, the authors’ good intentions have not resulted in the pedagogical advantages that they claim.

#### IMPROVISATION AND OTHER NEW FEATURES

Nancy Rogers and Maureen Carr have both added an emphasis on improvisation to their respective texts, which is then integrated with other materials throughout each book. Rogers’s exercises are particularly helpful to students at the introductory stages, when they are frequently traumatized by the sheer prospect of creating melodies on the fly. It is hoped that instructors will expand upon these introductory exercises, and that future editions will provide additional materials to teach this important skill. What remains unarticulated at this stage is the *purpose* of improvisational studies. If improvisation is included merely to satisfy a NASM requirement, then these materials are sufficient; if the goal is to develop musicians who can improvise *Eingänge*, cadenzas, or variation sets on their instruments in real time in numerous specified styles, then we have a long way to go.

I have already mentioned the improved pedagogy for twentieth-century music and the increase in the number of rhythmic exercises



that Rogers brings to her text; there are also several new and effective melodies scattered throughout the text that teachers and students will enjoy. It is expected that Rogers's considerable pedagogical sensitivity will exert even greater influence on the text in future editions. Maureen Carr also brings many new features to her classic text, including repertoire drawn from early music, Duke Ellington, twentieth-century classical music, and some beautiful vocalises in several styles in the later chapters. Ultimately the Carr/Benward text has become a graduated anthology that lives up to its title in the sense that students will be exposed to, and work through, problems of reading music in a great variety of styles and idioms. Some of the pedagogical assumptions make considerable demands on student and teacher alike, but a dedicated instructor could make much of this material.

The first edition authors have also contributed several pedagogical features that are unique to their texts, and provide genuine contributions to our ability to teach music literacy effectively. Krueger's pedagogical materials are particularly effective in helping students to internalize and embody the patterns of musical fundamentals: diatonic scalar orientation, intervals and chord qualities within various scale forms, and the hardwiring of scale degrees or solfège that is necessary for the tool to become useful at later stages of study. These exercises, which are described without notation at the beginning of many chapters within Krueger's book, are at risk of being overlooked by students and teachers who might be more inclined to skip directly to the melodies. This would be most unfortunate, for the exercises themselves are in many ways the most important and effective portions of this text, being based in part on learning sequences developed by Edward Gordon.<sup>16</sup> Use of these exercises as warm-ups and as tonal orientation before sight reading will solve many of the musical difficulties beginning students face in aural training.

---

<sup>16</sup> See Edwin E. Gordon, *Learning Sequences in Music*, [3rd ed.] (Chicago: GOA Publications, 1997).

Krueger also addresses many elements of notation that are ignored, or introduced tacitly in other texts; tempo, expression marks, repeat and *da capo* indications, and other important notational conventions all receive their due, and they don't feel like add-ons in the book—they are systemically reinforced in the exercises from all chapters after their introduction.

Karpinski and Kram also introduce several very effective chapters on musical topics that are ignored, or under-articulated, in other texts. Chapter 11 (Conducting Pulse Levels Other Than the Notated Beat) is wonderful: by forcing the student to conduct “in one”, or in larger hypermetric patterns, it will be impossible for the student to revert to “sight-singing class tempo” (i.e., slower than real music should ever go). Chapter 40 (Melodic Sequence) contains many effective examples that are grouped well together (albeit a bit late in the text), and Chapter 44 (Reading in Keys Other Than the Notated Key Signature) is a unique contribution, helping students to find their tonal bearings in the middle of a composition. While Chapter 48 (Successive Modulations) delivers what it promises, it also conflates problems that should be maintained as distinct from each other, yielding a catch-all chapter that is too large as it stands.

## CONCLUSION

Each of these texts has considerable virtues, and all provide a wealth of material for sight singing and practice—more than any curriculum could effectively use in a given course sequence. The first-edition texts contain much more explicit pedagogical material than the revised editions, and even if not adapted, they should provide the instructor working from other anthologies with effective lesson-plan materials and strategies to supplement their teaching. The revised texts leave the pedagogy up to the teacher to a greater extent, but have compelling advantages in terms of breadth of repertoire, and proven success in their use by many students and teachers over the years. While we all continue to revisit our curricular and textbook decisions, it is good to have choices.