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Michael Buchler

REPORT ON AMERICAN MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS IN MUSIC THEORY

Summarizing American master's degree programs in music theory is a difficult task. In the United States, there are no national standards, either official or implicit, for what constitutes a master's degree in music theory (which we Americans generally take to mean music theory *and* analysis) and there are at least three different sorts of master's degrees offered: a "stand-alone" degree that helps students prepare for doctoral studies either at that same school or elsewhere, a master's degree that is earned en route to a Ph.D. at the same school and does not have separate (and separable) requirements, and a master's degree in theory pedagogy, which is not especially common, but which is generally meant for students who either have an interest in teaching music theory at a non-research university or to help musicians who are earning doctorates in performance or music education gain the training they need to teach some undergraduate theory courses.¹ A degree in theory pedagogy can be particularly helpful for performers who get jobs at smaller schools or who will have small studios (e.g., some bassoonists and harpists) and will also need to teach another subject to be a full-time professor.

This report will focus on American master's degrees that emphasise research. While most schools that confer graduate theory degrees offer the master's degree in music theory, an increasing number of prominent schools have elected to do away with the master's degree in music theory altogether and simply accept students directly from undergraduate work into doctoral study.

That direct link from bachelor's to doctoral study has been the norm at several of our Ivy League universities (Yale, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania) for years, but a growing number of other programs including the University of

1. At least three American schools offer a master's degree in theory pedagogy: The University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music, Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Conservatory, and Michigan State University (where one can focus on teaching, research, or both during the master's degree)

Rochester's Eastman School of Music and the University of Michigan now allow students to bypass a master's degree altogether. Some of these schools confer the master's degree (usually Master of Arts) en route to the Ph.D.² It is generally awarded after successfully completing a certain number of classes and/or exams, but in these programs the M.M. (Master of Music) or M.A. (Master of Arts) requirements are not separable from the Ph.D. requirements. (Some schools offer an M.A., others an M.M. in music theory; it does not appear to me that there are definable and consistent differences between M.A. and M.M. theory degrees in the United States.) Yale University even offers two non-separable master's degrees: a Master of Arts, awarded after completing seven classes and a language exam, and a Master of Philosophy after completing all of the other Ph.D. requirements other than the dissertation. These are milestones en route to the Ph.D. and they are also often junctures where faculty can elect to dismiss students whose work has fallen short of doctoral expectations.

Most American universities that offer graduate work in music theory do offer master's programs. I surveyed colleagues at sixteen different schools that offer stand-alone theory master's programs (M.M. or M.A. degrees that are not defined subsets of a Ph.D. program at the same school) and asked the following questions:

1. What are the central goals of your theory/analysis master's degree? How do they differ from your goals for doctoral students (if you have doctoral students)?
2. What are the core courses that all theory/analysis master's degree students must take at your school?

The responses I received suggest that we American music theorists share some broad common goals for and curricular requirements in our master's degrees. However, there were also some marked differences that I had not expected.³

2. It might be worth noting that I earned my master's degree in music theory from the University of Michigan (in 1990).
3. Many thanks to the following forty professors, who teach at a wide variety of schools across the United States, and who responded to my brief survey and helped me gain a firmer grasp of the landscape of American music theory master's degrees: Byron Almén (University of Texas at Austin), Vincent Benitez (Pennsylvania State University), Jack Boss (University of Oregon), Matthew Bribitzer-Stull (University of Minnesota), Steven Bruns (University of Colorado), Guy Capuzzo, Adrian Childs, David Clampitt, David Damschroder (University of Minnesota), Gregory Decker (Bowling Green State University), Nora Engebretsen (Bowling Green State University), Anna Gawboy (Ohio State University), Cynthia Gonzales (Texas State University), Sumanth Gopinath (University of Minnesota), Christopher Hasty (Harvard University), Dave Headlam (Eastman School of Music), Áine Heneghan (University of Michigan), Julian Hook (Indiana University–Bloomington), Jason Hooper (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Eric Isaacson (Indiana University–Bloomington), Michael Klein (Temple University), Stanley Kleppinger (University of Nebraska), Edward Klorman (Queens College, New York), Daphne Leong (University of Colorado), Catherine Losada (University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music), Elizabeth West Marvin (Eastman School of Music), William Marvin (Eastman School of Music), Timothy McKinney (Baylor University), Jana Millar (Baylor University), Sam Ng

In stand-alone programs, many of my respondents viewed the central aims of master's degrees to be a general introduction to the field of music (particularly music-theoretical) scholarship and to prepare them for doctoral studies. Students in our undergraduate programs generally do not have a chance to engage in detailed study of what we might think of as the core topics of music-theoretical scholarly research. Indeed, the courses commonly called "music theory" for our first- and second-year undergraduate (bachelor's degree) students often train students to part-write in four voices, label harmonies, write simple counterpoint, and understand common tonal forms. These are important skills, to be sure, and they're integral to undertaking advanced study, but they constitute only a small part of what we do as theorists.

I estimate that a substantial majority of our undergraduate students who are in performance or music education programs never take courses that require them to meaningfully engage with so-called advanced topics. Such students often have to satisfy long lists of degree requirements that are proscribed by our universities and by our accrediting agencies, so it can be difficult to squeeze in an extra class in Schenkerian analysis, history of theory, advanced post-tonal analytical techniques, or music theory pedagogy. Accordingly, those are the courses that most commonly form the core of American masters' degree programs in music theory.

By and large, the purpose of American stand-alone (research-oriented) master's programs in music theory is to introduce students to the breadth of our scholarly field. Here are three similar perspectives from distinguished scholars who teach at large public universities with music theory graduate programs:

Keith Waters, University of Colorado–Boulder: «[Our program provides] students with a sense of the landscape of the discipline, with sufficient training to be accepted into a nationally-ranked Ph.D. program [and they] develop appropriate research skills via a master's thesis».

Stanley Kleppinger, University of Nebraska–Lincoln: «As much as is possible in limited time [two years], our curriculum tries to provide a broad (if shallow) introduction to the main "streams" of theory. Our thinking is that doctoral work, should the student choose it, will provide the chance to select a specialization within music theory for deeper exploration».

(University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music), Jeffrey Perry (Louisiana State University), Ian Quinn (Yale University), Nancy Rogers (Florida State University), William Rothstein (Queens College and City University of New York Graduate Center), Phillip Ruprecht (Duke University), Matthew Santa (Texas Tech University), David Schwarz (University of North Texas), Stephen Slottow (University of North Texas), Dmitri Tymoczko (Princeton University), and Keith Waters (University of Colorado).

Julian Hook, Indiana University–Bloomington: «The objective of the master’s program is a broad-based familiarity with the important areas of contemporary music theory scholarship. It contrasts with our Ph.D. program in that the latter is much more specialized and individualized, emphasizing in-depth study of areas of particular interest to the student. The master’s program consists of a nearly-fixed curriculum of theory courses, essentially the same for all students, while Ph.D. students choose the seminars of greatest interest to them».

Our field was once stereotyped rather narrowly, as nothing but Schenkerian analysis, set theory, and history of theory, but a glance at any recent Society for Music Theory program or a perusal of the contents of our Society’s journals (*Music Theory Spectrum*, *MTO*, and the brand new video journal, *SMT-V*) reveals a dramatic expansion of our field’s topics for scholarly inquiry. In addition to the subdisciplines that have formed the traditional (or simply stereotypical) core of our field, we now embrace research on cognition and perception, on various epistemologies and methodologies of tonal and atonal analysis, on narrative and semiotic readings, on music theory pedagogy, on music and philosophy, and on the interrelationship of mathematics and music (and I certainly don’t intend this list to be a comprehensive summary). A two-year master’s program can scarcely transform one into a music-theoretical polymath, but we can, I hope, give students the basic training needed to engage with the diverse range of music-theoretical scholarship in the twenty-first century.

At Florida State University (where I teach), that entails completing one-semester courses in Schenkerian analysis, atonal analysis, and pedagogy of music theory (though two semesters of each are offered). In the analysis courses, the first semester is devoted to becoming adept at applying the methodology in relatively straightforward and clear musical situations and the second semester is devoted to more advanced techniques, to analysis of complex music, and to critical readings that both expand and problematize the discipline. Our students then have a menu of other options: they can either take a course in current music theory readings or a course in history of theory, they take a counterpoint class, a history class, a music bibliography class, and some electives. Our students can either write a master’s thesis that serves as the capstone of their degree or they can choose to take three more courses in music theory. Almost all of our students choose the non-thesis option, and we believe that this is a good fit with our goal of giving students a strong taste of our field’s breadth.

Beyond our own coursework, we also encourage our graduate students (both master’s and doctoral) to attend national, regional, and occasionally international conferences. This way, they can explore the most current trends and, when we travel to conferences with our students, we can use the scholarly talks as springboards

for productive discussions. Our students also host their own small scholarly conference at Florida State University every spring.

Our master's degree program substantially resembles those at Indiana University, University of Colorado, Bowling Green State University, Ohio State University, Queens College (CUNY), Louisiana State University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Penn State University, University of Nebraska, University of Texas at Austin, Texas Tech University, Texas State University, Temple University, Baylor University and other schools.

Some master's degree programs have more required courses (minimising the number of electives a student can take); some have fewer requirements, thereby giving students greater freedom to take courses that interest them (but perhaps creating a situation where students of a particular program graduate with less baseline knowledge).⁴

We want our master's students to be comfortable speaking the language of music theory, reading articles, and hearing talks in the field. We recognise that there is a huge difference between reading and producing great scholarship (just as there is a difference between reading books and being able to write them). If the goal of our M.M. program is to develop reading knowledge; the goal of our Ph.D. program is to develop writing and researching skills. Of course, all Ph.D. students must ultimately produce a considerable and original piece of research and the doctoral coursework is geared toward helping students narrow their research focus, write substantial papers, develop their own scholarly voices, and become productive members of our academic community.

4. One program where required classes are minimised is the University of Minnesota, where students must take at least six music theory seminars, but no particular classes on any given music theoretical subject.

NOTIZIE SUGLI AUTORI

Mario Baroni

Ha insegnato Storia della musica all'Università della Calabria e Metodologia dell'educazione musicale all'Università di Bologna, dove è stato direttore del Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo. Nel 1990 ha fondato l'associazione Gruppo Analisi e Teoria Musicale e la «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale». È stato fra i promotori della fondazione dell'European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music, che ha presieduto dal 2003 al 2006. I suoi interessi di ricerca riguardano la musica del xx secolo, la musicologia "sistematica" e l'educazione musicale.

Anna Maria Bordin

Diplomata alla Musik-Akademie di Basilea con il massimo dei voti, ha svolto attività concertistica da solista e in formazioni cameristiche. Docente di pianoforte presso l'Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali "Vittadini" di Pavia, è autrice di due libri di didattica musicale e di numerosi articoli. Ha collaborato con l'Università di Pavia nell'ambito di un Master di Psicologia della Musica e ha progettato e condotto una sperimentazione decennale sulla formazione pianistica di allievi autistici. Da anni si dedica alla ricerca negli ambiti teorici e applicativi della metodologia dell'insegnamento pianistico.

Michael Buchler

Professore associato di Teoria e analisi musicale presso la Florida State University, College of Music. Attualmente è vicepresidente della Society for Music Theory (SMT). I suoi lavori più recenti si concentrano sul teatro musicale e sugli aspetti metodologici dell'analisi della musica atonale e dell'analisi trasformazionale.

Pietro Cavallotti

Ricercatore presso l'Universität der Künste di Berlino, dove dal settembre 2011 dirige (insieme a Dörte Schmidt) un progetto di ricerca sui Corsi estivi di Darmstadt 1964-1990. Si è laureato in Musicologia all'Università di Pavia e nel 2002 ha conseguito il dottorato di ricerca presso la Humboldt Universität di Berlino. Le sue pubblicazioni sono dedicate alla storia, estetica e analisi della musica del xx secolo, con particolare riguardo alle indagini filologiche sul processo creativo.

Antonio Grande

Professore di Analisi musicale al Conservatorio di Como, ha studiato composizione con Bruno Bettinelli e Franco Donatoni. È stato Vice-presidente della SidAM (Società Italiana di Analisi Musicale) e dal 2012 è membro del Comitato scientifico del GATM (Gruppo di Analisi e Teoria Musicale), nonché redattore della «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale». Ha pubblicato saggi sulle riviste «Analisi» e «Spectrum» e il volume *Il moto e la quiete. Dinamica delle strutture musicali in età tonale* (Aracne, 2011), in cui discute l'organizzazione del pensiero musicale in età tonale nella prospettiva delle dinamiche temporali.

Massimiliano Locanto

Ricercatore presso l'Università degli Studi di Salerno. Le sue ricerche e le sue pubblicazioni si muovono in due ambiti distinti: la storia della monodia medioevale – canto gregoriano, tropi liturgici – e la musica del Novecento, con un particolare interesse per l'opera di Igor Stravinskij e per i rapporti tra teorie musicali, tecniche compositive e pensiero scientifico.

Nicolò Palazzetti

Dottorando presso l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) di Parigi. La sua tesi dottorale, diretta dal Prof. Esteban Buch, è incentrata sulla ricezione italiana di Béla Bartók. Ha partecipato a numerose conferenze internazionali e sta pubblicando i risultati delle sue ricerche in riviste accademiche italiane e straniere come «Dissonance», «International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music», «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale», «Rivista Italiana di Musicologia».

Egidio Pozzi

Professore Associato di Musicologia e Storia della musica all'Università della Calabria. Presidente del Gruppo Analisi e Teoria Musicale dal 2012, partecipa a seminari, tavole rotonde e convegni in diversi atenei e istituzioni pubbliche. Ha pubblicato numerosi saggi sull'ermeneutica, sull'interpretazione e sull'analisi musicale, tra cui *Analisi schenkeriana. Per un'interpretazione organica della struttura musicale (LIM)*, scritto nel 1995 insieme a William Drabkin e Susanna Pasticci e giunto nel 1999 alla sua seconda edizione. Nel 2007 ha pubblicato il volume dal titolo *Antonio Vivaldi (Epos)*.

Andrea Taroppi

Docente di chitarra nella Scuola media a indirizzo musicale, Sound Designer e compositore *freelance*. Dalla sua tesi per il diploma accademico di II livello in Musica Elettronica è nato il progetto *Echi tra le volte*, un'installazione eseguita in numerosi e prestigiosi contesti e intesa a indagare il rapporto tra suono e architettura. Scrive musiche per opere teatrali e spot pubblicitari. I suoi interessi vanno dalla composizione assistita allo sviluppo di algoritmi compositivi auto-generativi, dall'*environmental music* allo studio del paesaggio sonoro.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Mario Baroni

He taught Music History at the University of Calabria and Methodology of Music Education at the University of Bologna, where he also held the position of Head of the Department of Musicology. In 1990 he founded the Italian Association for the Analysis and Theory of Music (GATM) and its journal, the «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale». He was one of the promoters of the foundation of ESCOM (European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music), and ESCOM President from 2003 to 2006. His research interests are devoted to twentieth-century music, systematic musicology and music education.

Anna Maria Bordin

She graduated from the Musik-Akademie Basel with honors and has since carried out an intense concert activity. Professor of piano at the Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali “Vittadini” of Pavia, she is author of two books on music pedagogy and numerous articles. She has collaborated with the University of Pavia as part of a Master of Psychology of Music and has planned and conducted a ten-year experimentation on the piano training of autistic children. She spent the last ten years researching in the fields of theoretical and applied methodology of piano teaching.

Michael Buchler

Associate Professor of Music Theory at the Florida State University, College of Music, and Vice President of the Society for Music Theory (SMT). His recent work focuses on both musical theater and on the methodological issues that surround atonal and transformational analysis.

Pietro Cavallotti

Assistant Professor of Musicology at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, where he is director (together with Dörte Schmidt) of a research project on the Darmstadt Summer Courses 1964-1990. He graduated in Musicology at the University of Pavia and in 2002 he completed his doctoral studies at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin. His publications focus on history, aesthetics and analysis of twentieth-century music with particular interest in philological investigations of the creative process.

Antonio Grande

Professor of Music Analysis at the Conservatory of Como, he studied composition with Bruno Bettinelli and Franco Donatoni. Former Vice-President of the Italian Society of Musical Analysis (SIdAM), he has been a member of the scientific committee of the Italian Association for the Analysis and Theory of Music (GATM) and editorial assistant of the «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale» since 2012. His articles have appeared in the journals «Analisi» and «Spectrum». He has recently published the book *Il moto e la quiete. Dinamica delle strutture musicali in età tonale* (Aracne, 2011), a broad theoretical investigation into the relationship between musical thought and temporal perspective in the age of tonality.

Massimiliano Locanto

Lecturer in History of Music at the University of Salerno. His research interests and publications are in two main areas: the history of medieval monody – Gregorian chant, liturgical tropes – and twentieth-century music, with a particular focus on the music of Igor Stravinsky and on the relationship between music theories, compositional techniques, and scientific thought.

Nicolò Palazzetti

He is a PhD candidate at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, Paris). His doctoral research, supervised by Professor Esteban Buch, focuses on Bartók's reception in post-war Italy. His research interests include twentieth-century music, aesthetics, music analysis, and sociology of culture. He attended several international conferences and he has publications on «Dissonance», «International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music», «Rivista Italiana di Musicologia», and «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale».

Egidio Pozzi

Associate Professor of Musicology and History of Music at the University of Calabria. Since 2012 he is President of the Group of Analysis and Music Theory and participates in research sessions, seminars and round tables in various public institutions. He has written articles on musical hermeneutics and interpretation, on western classical music and on analytic methodologies, among which *Schenkerian analysis. Towards an organic interpretation of musical structure* (LIM), written in 1995 with William Drabkin and Susanna Pasticci (1999, second edition). In 2007 he published the volume *Antonio Vivaldi* (L'Epos).

Andrea Taroppi

Guitar teacher, Sound Designer and freelance composer. He earned his Master Degree in Electronic Music with a dissertation on the relationship between music and architecture, which led to the production of *Echi tra le volte*: a sound installation performed in many and prestigious places. He also composes music for theatre performances and commercials. His interests range from algorithmic and self-generating music composition, from environmental and acousmatic music to the soundscape studies.