Project #2: 
Sight Singing Textbook Review

All of the textbooks below are on reserve in the music library. Please be careful to get the correct edition; several of these books have changed significantly. As you look at them, keep in mind that one does not expect a great deal of explanatory text in a skills book; it is assumed that conceptual information will be presented in a separate theory book and/or by a teacher. Instead, these books tend to be a collection of exercises that will ideally complement other components of the curriculum.

Carr and Benward, *Sight Singing Complete* (8th edition)
Damschroder, *Listen and Sing*

Overview: Briefly summarize each sight-singing textbook; textbooks not on the list and dedicated rhythm books are optional. Write an essay that compares these books, discussing their important differences and distinctive features, and addresses some common practical concerns that arise when teaching sight singing.

You are welcome (indeed, encouraged) to discuss these textbooks and your reactions to them with your classmates. However, you are not permitted to divide the workload with anyone (for example, you can’t look at half of the books while a friend looks at the other half). Additionally, the written work you turn in must be strictly your own.

Suggested Approach:

Start by taking a fairly quick look at each book just to get a sense of its style and content.

- What kinds of exercises does the book provide (e.g., duets, sing-and-play, dictation)? If many different activities are included, is this in addition to sight singing or at the expense of sight singing? If there is a trade-off, does it seem worthwhile for your convenience?
- Does the book unavoidably promote a particular pedagogical approach — for instance, basing exercises on written solfège syllables or idiosyncratic notation?
- Is the musical notation comfortably readable? Do page turns often interrupt melodies? (Facing pages aren’t a major issue.)

---

1 Some of these textbooks address aural skills beyond sight singing. Others have a supplemental website or a coordinated companion book focusing on listening skills that you may want to examine on your own, assuming you have access.
Look for some common practical problems:

- Is rhythm adequately addressed? Is it treated separately from pitch? If so, is it still clearly and sensibly coordinated with the melodies?
- Are there enough melodies to provide for a reasonable amount of homework as well as true sight-reading practice in class? (Keep in mind that an abundance of exercises does not necessarily force you into a slow pace because you can usually skip ahead. A shortage of exercises, on the other hand, is a significant problem.)

Now focus specifically on the organization of single-line melodies.

- Are melodies grouped according to an explicit overall plan? If so, what is it, and do the melodies conform to the advertised criteria? (For instance, do minor keys, chromatic notes, or triplets appear in an exercise before they have been officially introduced?)
- Would the ordering of concepts likely coordinate well with a written theory curriculum? Is the order practical — in other words, are common musical features introduced early? (Notice that these interests may occasionally conflict.) In your opinion, do exercises get gradually and predictably harder?
- Are the melodies musically pleasing? Also, do they include dynamics, tempos, repeat signs, and other important symbols that students will encounter in their musical lives?

**What to turn in on Wednesday, October 16:**

1. **Textbook summaries** — Provide a brief factual summary for each textbook (in alphabetical order); one page each should be sufficient. For convenience, please use consistent headers to convey the following categories of information (you may also add your own categories):
   - Proportion of pre-existing music (concert repertoire, folk music, etc.) vs. music written for pedagogical purposes
   - Approximate number (not proportion) of very easy melodies (i.e., suitable for students with no prior training)
   - Approximate number (not proportion) of very difficult melodies (trust your judgment)
   - Introduction of melodic leaps (the very first set of leaps used, next set of leaps, third set of leaps… more if you like) and when the first leaps arise (e.g., melody #3 vs. melody #50); definitely address the overt plan, if there is one, although you may also feel the need to point out deviations from this plan.
   - Types of exercises/activities and the clarity/consistency/extent of their coordination with one another
   - Distinctive features, significant strengths/weaknesses, objective errors, etc.

2. **A short essay** (5-6 pages, double-spaced) that addresses the following questions:
   
   A. Sight-singing melodies may be drawn from existing music (concert repertoire, folk songs, etc.) or they may be composed specifically for the textbook by an author. From the instructor’s perspective, what are some advantages and disadvantages of each approach?
   
   B. Of the required books, select four that you think represent especially diverse approaches. (Please be aware that book selection itself is an important part of this question.) Compare their various approaches and content, explaining why their differences are significant, and convey the authors’ apparent priorities and reasoning. Don’t address layout unless you think it has a real impact.
   
   C. Now consider the remaining four required textbooks (and any additional books that you wish). To which of the above textbooks does each seem most similar? Explain. (If it seems more accurate to say that a book falls midway between two other books or simply forms its own group, that’s also fine.)

   Suggestion: you might find it helpful to picture all of the eight assigned textbooks within a three-dimensional space that represents their relationship to one another with respect to three attributes you find especially important. These three attributes would correspond to the three axes of this space.