

## Project #2: Sight-Singing Textbook Review

All of the textbooks below are on reserve in the music library.<sup>1</sup> 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.

Adler, *Sight Singing: Pitch, Interval, Rhythm* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Berkowitz, Fontrier, Kraft, Goldstein, and Smaldone, *A New Approach to Sight Singing* (7<sup>th</sup> edition)

Carr and Benward, *Sight Singing Complete* (8<sup>th</sup> edition)

Damschroder, *Listen and Sing*

Optional: Karpinski, *Manual for Ear Training and Sight Singing* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Karpinski and Kram, *Anthology for Sight Singing* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Krueger, *Progressive Sight Singing* (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

Phillips, Murphy, Marvin, and Clendinning, *The Musician's Guide to Aural Skills: Sight-Singing* (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

Rogers and Ottman, *Music for Sight Singing* (10<sup>th</sup> edition) [actual book is spiral-bound]

**Overview:** Briefly summarize each of these sight-singing textbooks. Write an essay (optional; 20% penalty if omitted) 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, frequently 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.)

<sup>1</sup> 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 important symbols (e.g., dynamics, tempos, and repeat signs) that students will encounter in their musical lives?

### **What to turn in on Friday, October 17:**

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):

Approximate overall proportion of newly-written vs. pre-existing melodies (concert repertoire, folk music, etc.)

Are there enough very easy melodies suitable for students with no prior sight-singing experience?

Are there enough challenging melodies suitable for capable students near the end of their studies?

Primary organizational approach for introducing melodic leaps (e.g., intervals, harmony, scale degrees, etc.). Is the plan explicit? Does the book deviate from this plan so that new features are included unexpectedly?

The first three sets of leaps (more if you like) and when leaps first arise (e.g., melody #3 vs. melody #50). If multiple specific leaps fall into a single overt organizational category (e.g., thirds, or leaps within the tonic, or leaps to the leading tone, etc.), that will be considered one set of leaps.

Types of exercises/activities

Coordination of different exercise types and activities. Is it obvious which different exercises go together? Do all different exercise types follow the same consistent plan?

Distinctive features, significant strengths/weaknesses, organizational peculiarities, etc. If something distinctive appeared in your previous answers, it should also be mentioned here. (Please don't list common features and mundane information in this section.)

2. A short essay (3 pages, double-spaced — may be omitted with a 20% grade penalty) that addresses the questions below.
  - 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 (not the author's perspective!), what are some advantages and disadvantages of each approach?
  - B. Identify another general parameter that you find especially important. Explain why it is important, and discuss all books with respect to this topic, emphasizing their significant differences. Please note that layout is not likely to be a good choice.