

Unit III – Form and Text-Music Relationships in Pop/Rock Music Music Theory II (MUSI 134) Spring 2012

For our final unit, we will explore formal structures in pop/rock music and contemporary Christian worship music, with an introduction to text-music relationships in Christian worship music.

Inverted classroom

For this unit, we will primarily be following a “flipped” or “inverted” classroom approach. That means that *information transfer* will take place primarily outside of class meetings through readings or videos rather than lectures, and *active practice work* will take place primarily during class meetings rather than through homework assignments. Projects will still take place outside of class (as will a couple homework assignments), but only after we’ve done sufficient practice work in class.

This is somewhat of an experiment, but based on our prior experience with lectures, readings, homework, and in-class practice, I believe it will improve our ability to grow in understanding of the material.

This format will require you to be diligent about the readings and videos (which are all very short). It will also allow you to go through the material at your own pace and to revisit material as necessary, even in the middle of a “lecture” (video). You are also encouraged to interact with your colleagues as you study—perhaps watching in pairs; emailing, texting, or calling classmates when you encounter something confusing; and posting questions for your classmates or for me on the course website. Do everything you can to come to class prepared, so that you can get the most out of the practice work we do in class, and so that you can contribute to the learning of your classmates during group work.

Objectives and evaluation

We have completed our study of materials relating to several of the course objectives listed on the syllabus: *voice-leading in strict keyboard style*, *functional bass analysis*, *harmonic syntax*, *cadences*, (*classical*) *phrase and theme type identification*. If you do not have passing grades in any of these categories, please see me to discuss how to bring those grades up individually before the end of the semester.

I am canceling three categories: *hermeneutics (classical form)*, *formal functions*, and *pop/rock harmony*. *Formal functions* was tested primarily through *phrase and theme type analysis*; we did not have time to discuss *hermeneutics* but will cover it in great detail in Musicianship III and IV; and we will cover pop/rock harmony sufficiently in Aural Skills II this semester.

The *music software* category so far has covered notation software and remains open as we will encounter one music analysis application in our pop/rock study that you will be required to know.

The remaining objectives will guide our study for the rest of the semester: *voice-leading in pop/rock vocal style*, *pop/rock form type identification*, *writing about music*, and *music software*. There is also one objective that I mistakenly left off of the syllabus (though it was listed under “Units and topics”): *text-music relationships*. Following is a list of metrics and requirements for passing grades in each category. Note required assignments/projects for specific categories. If these are missing, the category grade (and thus the final grade for the course) will not be passing.

Voice-leading in pop/rock vocal style

In addition to voice-leading elements discussed in strict keyboard style, mastery of voice-leading in pop/rock vocal style will include adherence to vocal ranges for specific voice types, inclusion of a few new chord types (e.g., sus4, sus2, and add9) and a new kind of dissonance (pedal), and invertible counterpoint (writing voices that can be rearranged in different orders—e.g., men singing the melody *below* the “inner” voices—while remaining free from voice-leading errors like illegal parallels).

Assignments: Take a lead sheet (melody, lyrics, and chord symbols), renotate the melody, transcribe the bass line from the chord symbols, and compose two harmony parts (alto and tenor) that match the harmonies stipulated by the chord symbols and follow principles of good voice-leading.

Metric: A passing assignment (3) will be relatively free from wrong notes, illegal parallels (including fourths), and other voice-leading/harmonic realization errors; will contain singable alto and tenor parts; and will treat dissonances appropriately. A superior assignment (4) will be flawless or nearly so.

To pass this category overall, you must produce two passing assignments in a row (an assignment which passes after a single redo can count toward the two in a row). Once you have done that, you are done. (Though you can submit an additional arrangement to attempt to bring a 3 up to a 4 if you like.)

Pop/rock form type identification

The bulk of our time between spring break and the final exam will be dedicated to the study of pop/rock form. This will come largely via readings, videos, and in-class practice analysis. Your grade for this category, however, will be determined by individual analytical work that you do.

Assignments: Take an audio recording of a pop/rock song and produce a timeline graph in Variations Audio Timeliner that delineates and properly labels all phrases, modules, and cycles in the song. These will come in the form of homework and a final project (discussed below).

Exam: Listen to several pop/rock songs. After 2–3 hearings of each song, indicate the overall form type (strophic, AABA, or verse-chorus) and the sequence of modules in the song (with timings).

Metric: A passing analysis (3) correctly identifies the song form, correctly identifies the start and end points and the function of all modules, correctly identifies the start and end points of most phrases, and correctly labels most phrases according to function and pattern of deployment (such as *srdc* or *aa'b*). A superior analysis (4) will be flawless or nearly so. To pass the exam, you must correctly identify at least one example of each formal type, in addition to the above criteria for individual analyses.

The overall grade will be determined primarily by the final aural analysis exam and the final analysis project. Generally speaking, you must pass both to pass this category. However, an exam or final project that falls just short of passing can be made up for by multiple passing grades on homework analyses. (So don't slack off on the homework!)

Text-music relationships

This unit of study is an *introduction* to the study of text-music relationships, which will take place primarily in the study of contemporary Christian worship music. You will be expected to analyze the text of a worship song, state the doctrines that are taught or referenced in the song (according to the London/Charleston Confession of Faith) and any references to Scripture that you find, and discuss how the the form of the song (and any other salient musical factors such as volume, instrumentation, register, harmony) effects the meaning, impact, and memorableness of those doctrines.

Project: Most of our work in this area will involve in-class discussions. However, your grade for this category will come from a final project (discussed in detail below). In that project, you will analyze a song's text and form and write a short paper explaining the impact of the music on the text.

Metric: A passing analysis (3) of the relationship of text to music in a Christian worship song will correctly identify the central doctrinal category of the text and most of the others referenced in the song and will insightfully interpret the effects of the most salient formal features of the song's form on the central doctrines. A superior analysis (4) will correctly identify all doctrinal categories and insightfully interpret the effects of the most salient formal features and some more subtle features of the song's form (or other musical features) on the doctrines communicated by the song's text.

Writing about music

This unit of study is also an *introduction* to writing about music. Mainly, you will be communicating your text-music analysis through writing, but we will also be covering some of the basics of orthography for writing about music, as well as some of the basics of writing with a thesis and an argument.

Project: A final written analysis paper (discussed below).

Metric: A passing paper (3) will be the required length, will make few mistakes in orthography and layout, will have a clear thesis statement, and will generally only include details that support the thesis

and form a coherent argument. A superior paper (4) will make no mistakes in orthography or layout and will have a clear, coherent linear argument with few or no extraneous details.

Music software

A superior grade (4) for music software is achieved by demonstrating that you 1) can typeset a keyboard-style voice-leading assignment with proper stem directions, figures, functional bass, clefs, key signatures, and time signatures; 2) can typeset a worship song with melody, alto, and tenor voices as well as lead-sheet chord symbols; and 3) can produce a timeline analysis with all required elements in Variations Audio Timeliner. A passing grade (3) is achieved by demonstrating all three of the above requirements, but with a few small mistakes. Lacking any one of the three, or lacking key elements of any of the three, results in a failing grade.

General note on homework submissions

All *homework* assignments are due by the end of the last day of classes. No new assignments will be accepted during finals week, nor will redo assignments for classical harmony, form, or voice-leading. I will, however, accept *redo assignments for pop/rock topics* during finals week (one redo per assignment per student).

Final exam

The final analysis exam will be similar to Part I of the classical form analysis exam before spring break. For several pop/rock or worship songs, I will play a recording three times in a row with timings projected on the screen. You will be required to note the overall song form type (strophic, AABA, or verse-chorus), and make a list of all modules (not phrases) that occur, in order and with timings. For example:

0:00 Intro
0:15 Verse
0:45 Prechorus
0:55 Chorus
etc.

This exam will be *open note*. If you come to class regularly and do the homework, this exam should be easy.

This exam will only cover the *pop/rock form type identification* grade category.

Final analysis project

In addition to the exam, you will submit a final analysis timeline and paper. You will be given a Christian worship song (or list of songs from which to pick) with an audio track to analyze. Your analysis will come in two parts: a timeline and a paper.

First, use the audio file and create a timeline analysis in Variations Audio Timeliner that properly delineates and labels all phrases, modules, and cycles (unless the song is strophic). Submit this timeline on the course website.

Second, analyze the text of the song and note every doctrinal category in the London/Charleston Confession of Faith that is taught or referenced in the song. Also note any references to or quotes of Scripture that you find. Think about the ways in which the form of the song (and any other salient musical features) emphasizes, highlights, detracts from, or enhances the meaning of the text, its emotional impact, its potential to be memorized, and the easiness with which it can be understood by laypeople.

Then write a paper of 400–600 words (about two pages, double spaced) that explains this relationship. Your paper should have a clear thesis statement, and all analytical details included in the paper should support that thesis and be laid out in a clear, logical argument. *Not every analytical detail you come up with should end up in the paper*, nor should you waste ink stating in the paper things that are obvious from your timeline.

The paper should be single-sided and double-spaced, using an 11- or 12-point serif font, with 1-inch margins on each side. The paper should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed., and/or Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (They present the same style guidelines, though CMoS provides more detail on musical terminology and nomenclature.) If quoting authors, use CMoS's author-date style of citation, rather than footnotes or endnotes.

Be sure that in addition to following the general guidelines of CMoS, you pay attention to include a proper title page, a header on all pages except the title page that includes your last name and page number, and a references page at the end for any source you site or which you make substantial use of in your preparation (including course textbooks, and any scores or recordings you consult in your studies). No paper is complete without those elements.

The paper is due *printed, stapled, and in my hand* at the beginning of the final exam time. Late papers will not be accepted.