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Certain Trends in Instructing Musical Theory Courses Abroad

Tatiana N. Krasnikova✉

*Gnesin Russian Academy of Music,
Moscow, Russian Federation,*

t.krasnikova@gnesin-academy.ru✉, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9538-374X>

Abstract. This article contains an analysis of educational literature on music theory outside of Russia, forming the perceptions of the trends in teaching this subject in Western Europe and America. Using the methods of comparative studies, the author aims to characterize the traditions and innovations of historically established pedagogical styles imprinted in 20th and 21st century textbooks and tutorial manuals. The result of the analysis is the conclusion arrived at about the variability of the subject, volume, structure, and dramaturgy of the courses, as well as the differences in the interpretation of the concepts and terms contained in them. The author of the article emphasizes that the experience of teaching courses on musical and theoretical disciplines outside of Russia has not been sufficiently studied in Russia and, undoubtedly, it should be considered by musicologists in our country when creating manuals pertaining to a new generation.

Keywords: musical pedagogy, teaching experience outside of Russia, methodology, textbooks, music theory, music analysis, terminology

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Introduction

The study and development of the cumulative experience of musical-theoretical pedagogy and such a field pertaining to it as the theory of music is prospective for the practice of instruction of educational-theoretical courses in regard to the development of musical pedagogy as a discipline, as well as for the perfection of the methodologies of instruction of this subject on all the levels of the system of contemporary musical education. Being at the junction between practice and musicology, representing the “upper layer” of musicological knowledge, the methodology of Russian textbooks contains the most abundant materials on the basis of which the content of the course may be expanded, its structure and practice of teaching renewed. At the same time, the present sphere of musicology has been insufficiently researched. However, there has been a noticeable rise of interest toward it during the last decade. The articles of Lyubov Buryakova and Irina Dabaeva, [1] as well as Liudmila Varavina [2] dwell upon this subject. Comparison of Russian musical pedagogy with the European experience of instruction of professional disciplines is presented in the work of Kseniya Muslanova. [3]

Since the traces of new approaches, such as, for example, complex instruction, the creation of tutorial manuals along the lines of “small encyclopedias,” as well as courses of music theory as a composition course, have been formed already within the scope of traditional pedagogy, it is practical to study the particular

features of Russian theoretical courses in connection with the aims of music theory instruction on the contemporary level. At the basis of the present analysis lies the comparative method, making it possible to examine all the phenomena in the sphere of development of this subject in the unity of their prospection and retrospection. The focus of our analysis of textbook literature is narrowed to that of music theory courses implemented into the tutorial process in the USA and Italy. Following this subject, I shall observe that the present courses are connected, first of all, with the instruction of music theory in higher educational institutions.

The Particular Features of the Courses Abroad: the Subject Matter, the Volume and the Terminological Apparatus

Among the textbooks that present 20th and 21st century authorial methodologies, the following manuals should be highlighted: *Allgemeine Musiklehre* by Paul Schenk,¹ *Rudiments of Music* by William Lovelock,² and *Traité de théorie musicale* by Henry Lemoine,³ all of which are the predecessors of the contemporary methodological course, as well as *Material and Structure of Music* by William Christ, Richard DeLone, Vernon Kliever, Lewis Rowell, and William Thomson.⁴

The two-volume textbook *Material and Structure of Music* represents a methodology in which the boundaries between the information from the sphere of elementary music theory are

¹ Schenk P. *Allgemeine Musiklehre*. Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1974. 201 p.

² Lovelock W. *The Rudiments of Music*. London: G. Bell, 1957. 128 p.

³ Lemoine H. *Traité de la théorie musicale*. Paris, 1952. 265 p.

⁴ Crist W., DeLone R., Kliever V., Rowell L., Thomson W. *Material and Structure of Music*. Vols 1, 2. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980.

diffused. It includes all the traditional elements of a music course: notation, rhythm, scales, modes, tonalities, melodicism with its structural characteristic features, and texture, smoothly “migrating” into harmony. The method of “terrace-like” changeovers that the authors of the textbook make use of has certain advantages that are taken into consideration in the thematic plans of the third generation (pertaining to higher education). While mastering the present method, the young musician prepares himself for a harmony course by immersing himself into the interval system, comprehending the “basic” (according to Heinrich Schenker) [4] or the “prevailing” (übergeordnete — according to Paul Hindemith) two-voiced contrapuntal progression combined with an intonational-intervallic sensation of the vertical harmony. The traditions of contour-based intonational melodic two-voice contrapuntal progressions have been firmly established on the Russian soil, having found reflection in textbooks on harmony by Yuri Tyulin and Alexei Stepanov, and have been interpreted in an original way in the works of representatives of theoretical courses in France.⁵

At the present time, the connection between harmony and theory is being realized in the conditions of modular teaching, during which the beginning sections of harmony are included into the course of music theory. It has received a peculiar type of manifestation in an experiment carried out on the basis of specialized music schools in the early 1980s, while at the present time it is presented in the tutorial manuals of Alexander Dadiomov [5], Damira Shaykhutdinova [6] and other authors. It is obvious that the “sampling” of numerical indications into a tight and the tightest dispositions while mastering the symbols

of jazz notation on music theory and jazz departments of higher educational institutions and sections of secondary specialized colleges prior to taking courses of transcribing and improvisation is becoming quite natural. This practice has already been reflected in Alexander Dadiomov’s textbook and several other manuals by contemporary authors outside of Russia, such as Svetoslav Chetrikov, Mario Fulgoni and Anna Sorrento.

The textbook *Basic Materials in Music Theory: a Programmed Course* by doctor of the Administrative Academy Paul O. Harder (California) [7], as well as the textbook *Music Fundamentals: a Performance Approach* by Phyllis A. Irwin [8] published in the USA and Canada at the end of the previous century are noteworthy examples of illustrating new types of combined courses on the fundamentals of music theory. Each of these publications reflects the particular features intrinsic to these authorial courses.

Thus, for example, Harder’s course is noted by the author’s special attention to the phenomenon of the time of music. This category becomes the core element in his conception, as well as that of sound, with which his course begins (see: Chapter 1. *Time and Sound*). The third chapter is devoted to the issues of classification of temporal structures, the fourth — to the relative nature and essence of time values, the specific features of the expression of time in meters, and syncopated rhythms. As for the intervals, modes and chords, their mastery is limited by the quantitative and qualitative level of intervallic formations, compound intervallic constructions, triads, major and minor, which is clearly insufficient. The phenomenon of enharmonic pitches is elucidated solely within

⁵ See: Dommel-Diény A. *L’Harmonie vivante: en 5 vols.* Neuchatel; Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1958–1963.

the framework of intervallic vertical formations. The information about all of the historical C clefs is placed between the sections dwelling on the intervals and modes. Another illustrative section of the textbook is the appendix, which contains an extensive glossary of musical terms in English, French and Italian, supplementary information about all the themes of the course and, finally, practical homework assignments.

As the author acknowledges, “the musical styles of the 20th century are based on the technical resources of traditional music,” [7, vii] What is also demonstrative is that Harder views his course as based on a program, since, in his opinion, it presents a “system of instructions” for mastering a method that results in a rapid and purposeful study of the subject by means of carrying out diverse and multitudinous assignments given at the end of each theme.

Phyllis Irwin’s textbook, *Music Fundamentals: a Performance Approach* is in keeping with the selfsame direction. It consists of two parts, one of which is devoted to the facts of music theory, and the other, titled as “Introduction to the Profession,” reveals the specific features of instruction of theory in secondary and higher educational institutions at vocal and piano departments. For example, in this book information is concentrated on vocalism and its functions, choral and solo singing articulation techniques and performance strokes that, according to the author, are especially important for instrumental performers. Examples of exercise in descant singing and vocalizes are given for vocalists. In this regard, the book can be compared to Puzyrevskii’s textbook, the author of which during his time period recommended

those who pursue a musical education not only to sing, but also “to read with their eyes, i.e., — simply to imagine any melodic progression and any chord.”⁶ This type of attitude towards the activity of the inner auditory control has acquired the character of a leading melodic principle both in Russian musical pedagogy and that in other countries.

In the section devoted to choral singing, examples of music of the time of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are included, using all the historical C and G clefs. The appendix containing a glossary of musical terms in Italian, information about the jazz symbols, and recommendations for the solution of various tasks becomes a benign impulse for the formation of a complex approach to the development of the course connected with a multiangle mastery of it.

The author’s intentions, according to his own acknowledgment, are directed towards familiarizing the students, primarily of the elder courses, with the foundations of music and the expansion of their perceptions of it by means of the direct connection with the profession, with which the second part of the course is marked. [8, vii]

It is necessary to settle upon the methodology of the theory of pedagogy written by contemporary Italian authors Mario Fulgoni and Anna Sorrento, published in Florence in 2010 by the Italian music publishing house, “La Nota.” [9] According to the authors’ testimony, it is an inseparable part of the complex basic course developed by Fulgoni that generalized its experience of instruction. The publishing house contains courses of music, solfège, music theory and

⁶ Puzyrevskii A. *Znachenie i prakticheskii sposob izucheniya glavneishikh otdelov elementarnoi teorii muzyki* [The Importance and Practical Means of Studying the Most Primary Sections of Elementary Music Theory]. St. Petersburg, 1903. P. 3.

three compact discs. It is also noted that the present course was successfully tried out in musical practice and directed at the reform of musical education in conservatories. [9, p. 2]

In its turn, the music theory textbook consists of three parts: musical semeiography, rhythm, and the foundations of melody and harmony. It is published with the use of the latest computer technologies: multicolored outflux of the typeface is applied in its text, and numerous diagrams and tables conducive to a qualitative mastery of the material are brought in.

In the section titled “Musical Semeiography” the authors elaborate in detail on the foundations of musical notation, and dwell upon the palette of instrumental strokes and dynamics, as well as articulations with the consideration of sound-production on various instruments. The latter, as one of the most important spheres of the art of performance, are brought out to the foreground of the course as its seminal parameters. A special part of this section is devoted to agogics, which is also examined by the authors as the “emotional level,” [9, p. 8] with indications of an amplitude of pulsation according to the metronome mark and translations of the most frequently used terms into English, German and French.

The second chapter of the “Musical Semeiography” section contains a concentration of information about the varieties of ornamentations and abbreviations, as well as about phenomena of “musical stenography” presented with various melismas, along with their deciphering and abbreviations, or signs of curtailment of the musical notation.

A special section of the first part is dedicated to information about the voices and orchestral instruments with the indications of their ranges and varieties, considering such rare types of voices as the countertenor, the contralto, and the countersoprano. Next, the authors bring in diagrams of the ranges of instruments of the symphony orchestra, marking the

transposed instruments into a separate group. For this reason, the transition to the theme of the “Fundamental Principles of Transposition,” and then to the choral and orchestral scores, adheres to a certain logic underlying the present course.

Its second part is devoted to the students’ familiarization with the foundations of teaching about rhythm, making it possible to learn the more complex phenomena in this sphere, such as hemiolas, multimetry and polymetry. In the section titled “The Typology of Accents,” the authors concentrate their attention on the poetic measures that are skillfully applied to musical texts by composers; here also the classification of accentuation is carried out with the division of the accents into the metric, rhythmic, dynamic, melodic, harmonic and timbral varieties.

The following chapter, “Rhythm and Melody,” researches the laws of musical phrasing that are studied within the boundaries of such a form of statement of the theme as a parallel period, and the interaction of rhythm with the form-generating processes is ascertained. The so-called “final” rhythms are correlated by the authors with the phenomenon of cadencing. These subjects are undoubtedly connected with the art of interpretation and therefore are extremely important for performers.

The section titled “Rhythmic Transformations” examines the types of rhythmic transformations encountered in jazz compositions and works by 20th and 21st century composers. The authors also include with this category such phenomena found in early music as the durations of the *longa* and the *brevis*, as well as the French and the Lombardic rhythms, as well as various types of arbitrary division of durations, and take into consideration the interaction of rhythm with a symmetric and asymmetric articulation, and many other things connected with the techniques of “mutations of the basic rhythmic formulas.”

In the section titled “Melody and Harmony,” the authors concentrate the students’ attention, first of all, on the phenomenon of modulation and the varieties of the tonal system. In the paragraph devoted to chords, all the varieties of tertial structures and their inversions, as well as all the possible harmonic inversions of chords at the cadences. Here information is provided about jazz notation with a rather complete characterization of the jazz symbols. In addition to that, an important part of the content is comprised by the varieties of modes, such as hemitonic and anhemitonic pentatonicism, the whole-tone construction, labelled as “the Debussy scale,” the double harmonic majors and minors (i.e., the Hungarian gypsy scale), Verdi’s chromatic-enharmonic scale and, finally, the realization of chromaticism in the phenomena of dodecaphony is examined.

At the end of each of the sections, and sometimes — of each of the textbook’s chapters, valuable historical facts are provided, sometimes accompanied with illustrations of genuine autograph scores and their facsimiles, and elements of modular teaching facilitating the students’ transition to the harmony course are presented. Of special merit in this section is the dictionary of terms in English, German, French and Italian, a knowledge of which is indispensable for the majority of young musicians.

Another obvious merit of the textbook lies in its very diverse musical illustrations of a broad stylistic radius selected by the authors with great taste and aim at an organic combination of theoretical information with aural perceptions conducive for the accumulation of auditory information. They contain very rare and precious examples extracted from compositions of the baroque period, the Viennese Classicist style, Romanticism, Post-romanticism, Impressionism and 20th

century music. These are the compositions of Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, George Gershwin, Alban Berg, Leonard Bernstein, and other composers, as well as illustrations of early music by d’Anuzzio, Jacob Obrecht, Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa, Nicolas Gil and Élizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, as well as anonymous composers of the Medieval period. Facsimiles of genuine autograph scores are published in the supplements to each chapter. This illustrative side of the textbook is so vivid and diverse, that so far it does not have any analogies in either Russian pedagogy, or in that of other countries. No less striking is the abundance of diagrams, tables, and classifications as the techniques of visualization of the course carried out in an elegant and refined manner with the application of computer graphics.

Conclusion

As the result, we can arrive at the conclusion that the experience of teaching music theory courses outside of Russia has so far been insufficiently studied in Russian pedagogy, and, undoubtedly, it is necessary to take it in consideration in the work on textbooks of a new generation. It may be used in vocal and popular and jazz music departments of musical higher educational institutions, and in all of the departments of the musical secondary schools and colleges. At the same time, it must be taken into consideration that “with the exception of Fulgoni’s and Sorrento’s textbook, information about contemporary music that transforms the perceptions of the musical language are either not presented at all, or are presented very little, which is ultimately connected with an insufficient observance of the principle of having the theory follow artistic practice.” [10, p. 44]

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Information about the author:

Tatiana N. Krasnikova — Dr.Sci. (Arts), Professor at the Department of Music Theory, Member of the Editorial Board of the *Pedagogy of Art Journal*, Gnesin Russian Academy of Music, Moscow, Russian Federation.

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