

**Comprehensive Musicianship:
An Innovative Approach to the Music Curriculum**

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Department of Music

Abstract

This project seeks to develop an innovative curriculum for upper-division music courses by creating a sequence of courses that survey the history, literature, theory, composition, and improvisation of music from classical antiquity through the present. The integration of the two seemingly disparate fields of Music History and Music Theory—an approach known throughout the discipline as “Comprehensive Musicianship”—has been explored by a variety of musicians over the past several decades, but efforts to generate a sustainable collegiate curriculum based on its principles have thus far failed. UNC Charlotte music professors John Allemeier and Jay Grymes plan to solve this longstanding problem by pioneering a novel approach to the academic study of music that combines their expertises in the fields of Music Theory/Composition and Music History, respectively, with their passions for undergraduate instruction and commitments to collaboration.

The Comprehensive Musicianship curriculum will increase the efficiency of instruction on our campus by consolidating five courses into a three-course sequence. It will also improve learning outcomes for the majority of music majors for whom three of those five courses are not currently required, thereby enhancing student professional development and better preparing all of our music majors for the complex demands of the twenty-first century. Most importantly, this project will provide both a methodology and a variety of pedagogical materials for Comprehensive Musicianship that will revolutionize the teaching of Music History and Music Theory through an integrated survey of the history of musical thought.

Budget Request for SOTL Grant Year 2010–2011

Joint Proposal? X Yes No

Title of Project Comprehensive Musicianship: An Innovative Approach to the Music Curriculum

Duration of Project May 24, 2010, to May 12, 2011

Primary Investigator(s) John Allemeier and Jay Grymes

Email Address(es) allemeier@uncc.edu; jagrymes@uncc.edu

UNC Charlotte SOTL Grants Previously Received (please names of project, PIs, and dates) None

Allocate operating budget to Department of Music

Account #	Award	Year One	Year Two
		January to June	July to June
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	\$ 3850.00	
911250	Graduate Student Salaries		
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)		
915000	Student Temporary Wages		
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages		\$ 3183.00
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)		
921150	Participant Stipends		
925000	Travel - Domestic		
926000	Travel - Foreign		
928000	Communication and/or Printing		
930000	Supplies		
942000	Computing Equipment		
944000	Educational Equipment		
951000	Other Current Services		
	Subtotal	\$ 3850	\$ 3183
	GRAND TOTAL	\$ 7033.00	

Attachments:

1. Attach/provide a narrative that explains how the funds requested will be used.

The costs of this project are divided between one faculty member and one research assistant for the 2010–2011 academic year. The faculty stipend will allow John Allemeier to complete the curriculum design stage of the project in the 1st Summer Session of 2010, during which time he will be neither teaching nor receiving a stipend from another Faculty Development Program. The research assistant will work 10 hours per week for 30 weeks during the academic year and will be paid \$10.61 per hour, which according to Human Resources is the statewide minimum wage for non-student temporary employees ($\$10.61/\text{hour} \times 10 \text{ hours/week} \times 30 \text{ weeks} = \3183.00).

2. Has funding for the project been requested from other sources?

Yes No.



Office of the Dean

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22 October 2009

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grants Committee
Center of Teaching & Learning
Atkins 149 C
UNC Charlotte
9201 University City Blvd.
Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Re: **“Comprehensive Musicianship” (Drs. Allemeier & Grymes / Department of Music)**

Dear SOTL Grants Committee Members,

It is with great enthusiasm that I endorse the proposal by Dr. Jay Grymes and Dr. John Allemeier to create a Comprehensive Musicianship sequence. As outstanding teachers and scholars in their respective disciplines of Music History and Music Theory/Composition, I have no doubts that this project will strengthen the Department of Music curriculum and also serve as a model for music programs throughout the country. Their leadership in curriculum design and innovative approaches to classroom teaching are a valuable resource to the Department of Music, and their many achievements as scholars ensures that they will follow through with presentations, articles, and other publications that will highlight the success of this venture.

Last year, the Department of Music restructured its first and second year core music curriculum, and it is with the unanimous endorsement of the Department of Music's Course and Curriculum Committee and the Chair of the Department of Music that Drs. Grymes and Allemeier move forward with the restructuring of the upper-division music history and theory courses outlined in this proposal.

I endorse this project without reservation. This project will have a significant impact not only on the Department of Music and UNC Charlotte, but also the field of collegiate music instruction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Ken Lambla".

Ken Lambla, AIA
Dean of the College of Arts + Architecture

Comprehensive Musicianship Proposal
IV: Letter of Support

Project Narrative

Specific Aims

This project will develop an innovative curriculum for upper-division undergraduate Music History and Music Theory courses by merging five seemingly disparate courses into an integrated sequence of three courses. At nearly every university in the United States (including UNC Charlotte), upper-division academic courses in music are divided into two distinct subjects: Music History, which typically surveys music from classical antiquity through the present in a two- or three-semester sequence, and Music Theory, which includes courses in sixteenth- and eighteenth-century counterpoint; a study of the major musical forms from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries; and an introduction to the music theory of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While there is a consensus within the discipline that all of these subjects intertwine to form crucial aspects of musical training, there is also a widespread dissatisfaction with the way in which these branches of learning are treated as distinct sub-disciplines that bear little relation to each other. Since these courses are commonly taught by experts in highly specialized fields, they tend to focus exclusively on their particular subject matter, squandering excellent opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and leaving the students with an unclear concept of how the various subjects intersect in all musical pursuits.

In *Soft Boundaries: Re-Visioning the Arts and Aesthetics in American Education*, Claire Detels rightfully laments the fact that this fragmentation of musical studies into separate sub-disciplines “has made curricular reform in music very difficult at a time when the need for that reform is paramount.”¹ Last year, the UNC Charlotte Department of Music took great strides to

¹ Claire Detels, *Soft Boundaries: Re-Visioning the Arts and Aesthetics in American Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 107.

address this common problem by implementing a Comprehensive Musicianship curriculum for its lower-division courses. This new approach, which has required an additional faculty position and a sweeping overhaul of the freshmen and sophomore curricula, has successfully capitalized on the cross-curricular nature of the four introductory semesters of music theory, ear training, and piano by restructuring those courses as a unified and overlapping whole.

With the unanimous endorsement of the Department of Music Course and Curriculum Committee as well as the Chair of the Department of Music, we now seek to extend these efforts into an upper-division Comprehensive Musicianship curriculum that will combine five current courses—MUSC 3130 (Counterpoint), MUSC 3170 (Music History I), MUSC 3171 (Music History II), MUSC 4230 (Form and Analysis), and MUSC 4131 (Post-Tonal Processes)—into a three-semester sequence of courses that will be team-taught by the two music professors who are currently teaching the five courses. As active scholars in each of our respective fields, we will be able to offer practical perspectives that will inform both the historical and theoretical approaches to the study of music. The team-teaching approach to these classes will also increase faculty-student interaction, encourage active learning, strengthen student engagement, and create a positive and collaborative learning environment.

The three new courses in the upper-division Comprehensive Musicianship curriculum will survey the history, literature, theory, composition, and improvisation of music from classical antiquity to 1750 (material that is currently introduced in MUSC 3130, MUSC 3170, and MUSC 4230); from 1750 to 1900 (currently MUSC 3130, MUSC 3171, and MUSC 4230); and from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (currently MUSC 3171 and MUSC 4231). By harnessing the theoretical approach that is inherent to the teaching of Music History with the historical approaches that are inevitable in the study of Music Theory, and by synthesizing material that is

now dispersed among—and sometimes duplicated in—a variety of courses, the project will resolve a longstanding problem in the teaching of music and offer a methodological model that can be applied to any music program in the world.

Literature Review

The concept of a comprehensive approach to musical training has been something of a “silver bullet” for curricular innovation and the subject of hundreds of papers, articles, and dissertations over the past several decades.² The first major proposal to integrate the music curriculum was a Seminar on Comprehensive Musicianship sponsored by the Contemporary Music Project and the Music Educators National Conference in 1965. The result of this conference was a report titled *Comprehensive Musicianship: The Foundation for College Education in Music* and a book on *Comprehensive Musicianship and Undergraduate Music Curricula*.³

By 1968, thirty-two institutions across the United States had adopted a Comprehensive Musicianship curriculum, but most had abandoned this approach by the early 1970s. An examination of college music programs in the southeast—including our sister institution East Carolina University—found that the faculty members who had embraced Comprehensive Musicianship believed that it had been a catalyst for improving their teaching, but the curricular reforms had failed because they had relied too heavily on specific faculty members to foster the

² For early examples, see Walter Watson, “New Approach to Teaching Theory,” *Music Journal* 24 (March 1966): 98; Robert W. Sherman, “As Taught, Music Theory is an Anachronism,” *Music Educators Journal* 56 (October 1969): 39; William Thomson “The Core Commitment in Theory and Literature for Tomorrow’s Musician,” *College Music Symposium* 10 (Fall 1970): 35–45; and David J. Boyle, “Teaching Comprehensive Musicianship at the College Level,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 19:2 (1971): 326–36.

³ *Comprehensive Musicianship: The Foundation for College Education in Music* (Washington, D.C.: Contemporary Music Project, 1965); David Willoughby, *Comprehensive Musicianship and Undergraduate Music Curricula* (Washington, D.C.: Contemporary Music Project, 1971).

programs and/or work closely with other faculty members.⁴ When those faculty members left the institution or were unwilling to collaborate, the programs were discontinued.

Although the early experiments were widely considered to be failures, the debate over how to effectively inculcate Comprehensive Musicianship has continued. By 1980, A. Cutler Silliman responded to renewed calls to integrate the curriculum with the usual concerns about faculty expertise.

The comprehensive musicianship programs described in the literature demand extremely well-trained, non-specialist instructors, men and women equally at home in the intricacies of counterpoint, aesthetics, historical and stylistic developments, composition, and methodology of teaching such basic skills as ear-training and sight-singing. Such individuals are rare. Most university and conservatory faculties are comprised of many specialists, each of whom contributes an area of expertise.⁵

Indeed, the same determined focus on a specific area of research that is required to achieve tenure at most universities has resulted in an increased compartmentalization of teaching. This is especially true for advanced courses in Music History and Music Theory, which are almost always taught by highly specialized researchers in those distinct fields.

Because of this odd division of responsibilities, there is no regular connection of theoretical concepts and constructions to historical styles and circumstances in theory classes, and there is little connection of harmonic theory to other aspects of musical form and style. . . . On the history side, the limited discussion of theory and, in a larger sense, philosophical questions leads to a tedious proliferation of historical data, disconnected from questions of how and why styles and practices of music change.⁶

⁴ David Michael Bess, "Comprehensive Musicianship in the Contemporary Music Project's Southern Region Institutes for Music in Contemporary Education," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 39:2 (1991): 101–12.

⁵ A. Cutler Silliman, "Comprehensive Musicianship: Some Cautionary Words," *College Music Symposium* 20:2 (Fall 1980): 125–29. This article was in response to Leland Bland, "The College Music Theory Curriculum: The Synthesis of Traditional and Comprehensive Musicianship," *College Music Symposium* 17:2 (Fall 1977): 167–74. For a response to Silliman, see David Willoughby, "Comprehensive Musicianship: Some Encouraging Words," *College Music Symposium* 22:1 (1982): 55–64.

⁶ Detels, 109.

While there is still a great need for—and desire for—Comprehensive Musicianship in undergraduate education, attempts to implement such an approach have thus far failed because faculty simply lack the expertise and instructional infrastructure to implement such innovations on their own.

UNC Charlotte music professors John Allemeier and Jay Grymes plan to remedy this by combining their expertises in the fields of Music Theory/Composition and Music History, respectively, to create an integrated curriculum for the academic study of music. We will collaborate in developing both the methodology and the pedagogical materials necessary for such an approach, and will pilot the results by team-teaching the three courses. Once the methods and materials have been classroom-tested, they will be compiled into a groundbreaking textbook that will allow faculty members at any institution—either by themselves or in collaboration with colleagues—to enhance their Music History classes with exhaustive studies in analysis, counterpoint, composition, and improvisation, thus finally achieving the Comprehensive Musicianship ideal.

Methods

The first step of this project will be to design the structure of the three-course curriculum. Because one of the limitations of current pedagogy is the tendency to separate theoretical constructs from their historical contexts, we will use the existing Music History courses (MUSC 3170 and MUSC 3171) as the foundation for our new approach. In the first of the new courses, concepts from MUSC 3130 and MUSC 4230 will supplement the material that is now introduced in MUSC 3170. For the second and third courses, MUSC 3171 will be divided roughly in half to accommodate additional material from MUSC 3130 and MUSC 4230, as well as the entirety of what is now MUSC 4231.

The next step will be to conduct research to locate historical sources (compositional treatises, theoretical writings, etc.) that will be placed alongside the musical documents (scores, recordings, etc.) that are already in use in the Music History courses. A number of treatises from the medieval period through the present give concrete examples of how musicians have conceptualized the improvisation, composition, performance, and analysis of the music of their time, but these valuable resources have been all but ignored in Music History textbooks, which tend to emphasize the “great works” and “great men” approach to the study of music. We will locate primary sources that exist in facsimile and/or modern editions, and identify instructions and examples from those manuals that can contribute to our integrated survey of the history of musical thought.

While it is likely that our new curriculum will be able to draw from a handful of existing pedagogical materials, such resources were developed based on a different methodology and will therefore have to be reevaluated from our new perspective. In most cases, we will have to develop new resources that reflect the unique focus of this innovative curriculum. This will be the third and final step of this project: the synthesis of current and newly discovered materials to develop a Comprehensive Musicianship sequence. All of the materials will be assembled into lectures, written projects, and coursepacks that will serve as textbooks for the courses.

Evaluation

The expected outcomes and impact of this project will be an increased efficiency of instruction through the consolidation of five courses into a three-course sequence, as well as an improvement in the quality of instruction through the combination of the expertises of the two instructors. The success of this project will therefore depend on the success of the new courses

themselves, as measured through student feedback on both specifically designed questionnaires and teacher evaluations.

Success will also be assessed through improved learning outcomes. In the current curricula, only Music Performance majors are required to take all five of the original courses, while the students in our other two degree programs—80% of our enrollment—are required to take only the two courses in the Music History sequence, limiting their access to advanced musical training. The new curriculum will introduce all music majors to all of the material that is now dispersed among the five courses, enhancing student professional development and better preparing our students for the complex demands of the twenty-first century.

Knowledge Dissemination

If this project is funded, we will, of course, happily agree to have our proposal and any related output published on the UNC Charlotte SOTL website and through other appropriate university communications, and we will be honored to share our results during Teaching Week. Furthermore, any publications or presentations resulting from this SOTL award will credit the UNC Charlotte Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Program.

It is also our intension to disseminate our findings with a number of publications and presentations though professional organization such as the College Music Society (CMS), which is the largest organization in the United States dedicated to teaching music in higher education. We will present our innovative curriculum at regional and national conferences of the CMS, and submit articles based on our research to the *College Music Symposium*, the leading journal for research in college music teaching and the principal forum for publications about earlier approaches to Comprehensive Musicianship.

Our ultimate goal is to assemble all of our research and materials into a textbook that will be used by institutions across the country to replicate our Comprehensive Musicianship curriculum. While a collaborative partnership between a theorist/composer and a historian will be required to devise such an approach, the textbook will surpass earlier attempts at Comprehensive Musicianship by providing individual faculty members of all expertises with the methodology and materials they need to transcend their specific disciplines and bring elements of composition, theory, and improvisation into their Music History classrooms.

Timeline

This project is a multi-year endeavor that will involve three stages: 1.) the design, research, and development of the methodology and materials; 2.) the classroom-testing of the new approach; and 3.) the preparation of conference papers, journal articles, and a textbook that disseminate the results. With this proposal, we are seeking funding only to support the first stage of this project, which will be completed within one year. The teaching and publication stages will naturally be considered part of our normal duties as members of the university faculty.

Design (May 24 – June 30, 2010). The design for the comprehensive musicianship curriculum will be completed by John Allemeier during the 1st Summer Session of 2010. Allemeier will create the framework for the new three-course curricular structure by expanding on the chronological approach that Jay Grymes is currently using in his two-semester Music History sequence. By evaluating all of the topics and materials from the current courses, Allemeier will ascertain which portions of the existing courses can be incorporated into the new courses and identify aspects of the courses that need to be augmented.

Research (August–December 2010). With the help of a research assistant, Allemeier and Grymes will conduct research to locate primary sources such as compositional treatises,

pedagogical exercises, and corresponding musical works from throughout history. The team will carefully evaluate each of the sources to ensure that they represent the course topics clearly and effectively and to make certain that they are appropriate for potential inclusion in the materials for the new courses.

Development (January–May 12, 2011). Allemeier, Grymes, and their research assistant will compile all of the course materials using music notation equipment and software already available in the Department of Music. The resources drawn from the existing courses will be merged with the materials generated during the research phase of the project and synthesized into lectures, written projects, and coursepacks that will be ready for implementation in the Fall 2011 semester.