

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Colin Roust

In today's world of MP3s, ring-tones, and i-Pods, music is more portable and more omnipresent than ever. This almost constant exposure to music has led to an increase in passive listening—we negotiate rush-hour traffic while the radio plays; we work or study with music in the background; and we use soothing music to lull us to sleep. One of my primary goals as a musicology professor is to teach my students a variety of skills associated with active listening so that they can (when they choose to) appreciate at a higher level the art of any type of music.

Active listening begins with the knowledge and comprehension of a basic musical vocabulary—harmonic/melodic/rhythmic structures, compositional techniques, and standard forms. This is particularly important in music appreciation classes, where students have had little to no formal training in music. In teaching the basic structures to a recitation or discussion section, I find that students learn best through participation—gathering around the piano to see and hear how scales and chords are built or clapping metrical and rhythmic patterns. For example, while one half of the class provides a steady beat, the other half can be coached through simple and compound meters, syncopation, and patterns like the *son clave* or *habañera*. Once they have mastered these rhythms, they can demonstrate their comprehension by identifying them in recorded examples or applying them in composition assignments.

Concert reports and writing assignments give students an opportunity to apply this knowledge and connect the abstract terms to actual sounds. After attending concerts appropriate to the class material, the students must try to characterize the music as if they were describing it to a friend in the class. Comparative analyses have also been helpful for my students in this way—for example, when studying the final three numbers of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, students are asked to identify and explain three modes of operatic singing (recitative, aria, and chorus), two distinct forms (ground-bass aria and strophic form), a variety of textures, and a host of other vocabulary words (such as ostinato, basso continuo, and lament bass).

Students next need to be able to analyze and articulate principles of musical organization based on listening, score analysis, or a combination of both. During one of my music appreciation courses, I broke each discussion section into four groups, each of which was assigned one piece to analyze. The students had ten minutes to complete analyze the piece using a worksheet, and then had to explain to the rest of the class how their movement was organized. While paradigmatic examples (such as the first movement of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*),

show the principles of sonata form, aberrant examples (like the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5) demonstrate possibilities for manipulation of the form.

In upper division courses, I want to challenge students to synthesize course material in more personal and individualistic ways. Though students will always be able to demonstrate their understanding through research papers, my assignments will also give students an opportunity to engage with music in other creative ways. For example, after explaining the history and cultural significance of a particular dance, a student might teach the rest of the class a Tahitian *'ori* or some of the gestures of Hawaiian *hula kahiko*. Another student might compose a piece based on a specific historical/cultural model or aesthetic philosophy (such as one of Webern's *Bagatelles*, a piece for Javanese gamelan, or a minimalist piece). In-class performances of specific works, framed by appropriate commentary, would also be an option for music majors. Regardless of the format, the students' work on these assignments will represent research into a specific topic (such as a composer, a piece, or a genre) and at least one mode of musical analysis (formal, stylistic, etc.), which will be synthesized into a formal presentation of their original work.

In seminars, students will be expected to fully evaluate a topic of their choosing that is related to the course's theme. While preparing a substantial term paper, the students will also explore their topic through a series of smaller analysis and synthesis assignments. For example, in a seminar on film music, one week's readings might present students with various models of audiovisual scores that combine graphic representations of the image and sound in various ways. The students would then be asked to construct an audiovisual score for a film clip related to their term project. A discussion of these projects would invoke several of the key issues in film music studies, particularly synchronism of sounds with images and notational problems in mediated music. Other sessions might ask students to write an encyclopedia entry on a film composer/director, analyze film segments from various perspectives, or compose their own cue for a segment of one discussed in their project.

Active listening comprises a wide variety of skills that operate on various levels, from appreciation to analysis to scholarly study. For my non-music majors, I hope that these skills increase their enjoyment of and interest in music. For my music majors, I want to challenge them to engage with music at increasingly higher levels, to balance their performing skills with analytical skills and historical/cultural knowledge.