

The Chorale Curriculum

using numbers to ignite our students' musicianship

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Background & Framing

- Chorales originated and have evolved out of necessity
 - How do I best serve the students I have the privilege to teach?
- Chorales originated from time teaching public schools in Massachusetts
 - Rebuilding a program that had suffered years of cuts and decline
 - Due to cuts, vast range of abilities, small and unbalanced instrumentation
- COVID / Virtual Learning
- Framing today's session

Guiding Questions

- What are we actually teaching in the large ensemble setting?
- How do we intentionally develop students' fundamental musicianship within the large ensemble setting?
- How do we intentionally develop students' pitch sensitivity and active-listening skills within the large ensemble setting?
- How can we approach every aspect of “teaching music” as a creative act?

lack of time
+
lack of resources
+
optimism
=
innovation

-Simon Sinek (Via Arris Golden's Facebook!)

The Chorale Curriculum

- Scale degree chorales serve as a jumping-off point for more in-depth and rigorous study
- Learning Goals
 - Develop one's core musicianship through the study and exploration of chorale repertoire
 - Develop pitch sensitivity through the lens of ensemble performance
 - Develop critical and real-time active-listening skills
 - Develop performance (singing and playing), analysis, transposition, improvisation, and composition skills
 - Improve technical facility on one's instrument

THE CHORALE CURRICULUM

Chorale 2

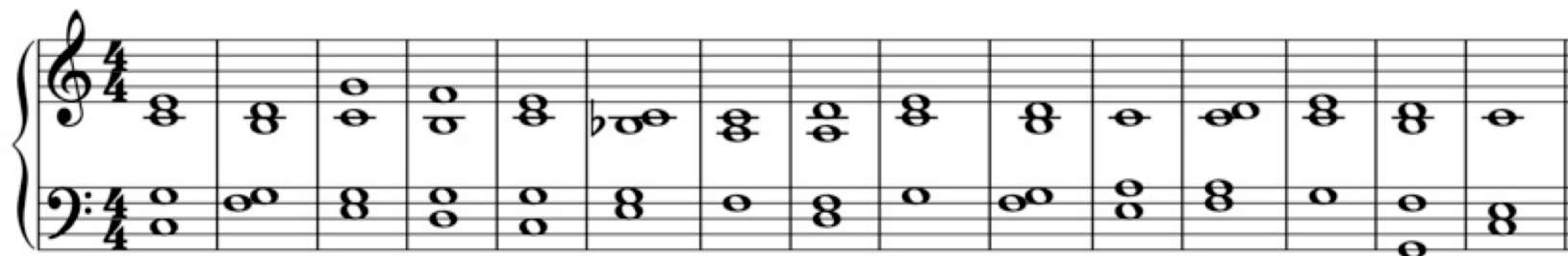
S: 3 2 5 4 3 1 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1

A: 1 → 7 1 7 1 ^b7 6 6 1 7 1 1 1 7 1

T: 5 5 5 5 5 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 5 4 3

B: 1 4 3 2 1 3 4 2 5 4 3 4 5 5 1

Piano Reduction (C Major)



At The Core: Singing & Playing

At The Core: Singing & Playing

- Perform and sing all parts in all twelve keys
 - Culture building through scaffolded instruction
 - Develop a culture of singing and support students' vocal development
- Perform and sing in sections
- Perform and sing in quartets
 - Advanced students as a way to promote peer modeling / exemplars
 - Younger students as a way to build confidence and belonging

At The Core: Singing & Playing

- Active Listening & Questioning
 - Can you hear...
 - the bass part?
 - all four parts at all times?
 - the tenor saxophone?
 - Eric?
 - What...
 - Instrument can you not hear?
 - Part do you hear the most?
- Who...
 - is playing the alto part?
 - the same part as you?
- Choose...
 - Someone in the room and determine their part
 - Someone different on each note and figure out their part

At The Core: Singing & Playing

- Connect chorales to repertoire being studied
 - Select key areas from the repertoire
 - Specific instrument combinations
 - Rhythmic motifs (consider different motifs for each part)
 - Articulations, note lengths, dynamics, entrances and releases
- Instrument specific development
 - Brass buzzing
 - Percussion: multiple mallets / play and sing combinations / rudiments

Going Further: Other Applications

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- Bassline Performance
 - Develop: physical technique, familiarity with all key-areas, transpositions
 - Variations: singing, tempi, slur and articulation patterns, multiple tonguing, apply pattern to all SATB parts, brass buzzing

B: 1 4 3 2 1 3 4 2 5 4 3 4 5 5 1

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Start in Concert C Major
Condensed chorale bassline

New key (Concert F Major);
same melodic pattern

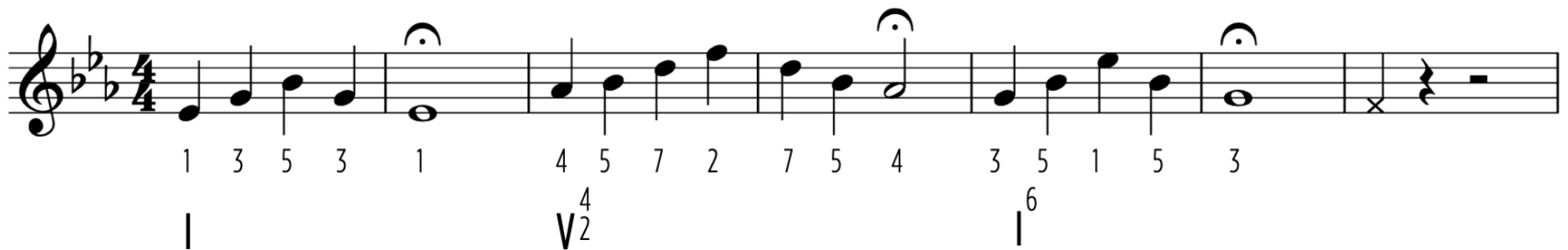
New key (Concert ? Major);
same melodic pattern

The musical notation shows a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It begins in 4/4 time with a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. This is followed by a 2/4 time signature change, then a 4/4 time signature change, and finally a 2/4 time signature change. The notation includes various rests and accidentals to indicate the melodic pattern across different keys and time signatures.

1 4 3 2 1 3 4 2 5 4 3 4 5 5 1 1 4 3....

Going Further: Other Applications

- Arpeggiations
 - See, hear, and understand harmonic function
 - Variations: different tempi, sing, buzz, play in all twelve keys
 - Combine SATB chorale playing/singing with select students arpeggiating



Going Further: Other Applications

- Arpeggiations

I V_2^4 I^6 V_3^4 I V_{b5}^6 / IV IV ii $V_4^6 -$ V_2^4 vi^6_4 ii^6_5 $V_4^8 - 7^5_3$ I

Additional Possibilities & Flip the Ensemble Room

Flip the Ensemble Room

- Technology
 - Students used [BandLab.com](https://www.bandlab.com) (free)
 - Alternatives: Soundtrap, Garageband, etc.
- At-home / online structure: seven units, each with backing tracks, and different levels
 - Unit 1: Harmonic Analysis
 - Unit 2: SATB Performance
 - Unit 3: Bassline Performance
 - Unit 4: SATB Singing
 - Unit 5: Arpeggios
 - Unit 6: Improvisation
 - Unit 7: Composition

Flip the Ensemble Room

UNIT 1: HARMONIC ANALYSIS

GOALS

- Increase comfort and fluency with harmonic and roman numeral analysis
- Increase understanding of harmonic function through analysis
- Increase understanding of chord-member function
- Develop critical and real-time ensemble listening skills

OVERVIEW

- In Unit 1, you will complete a harmonic and roman numeral analysis of Chorale 2. This analysis will inform your real-time tempering of pitch in Units 2,4,5, and 6

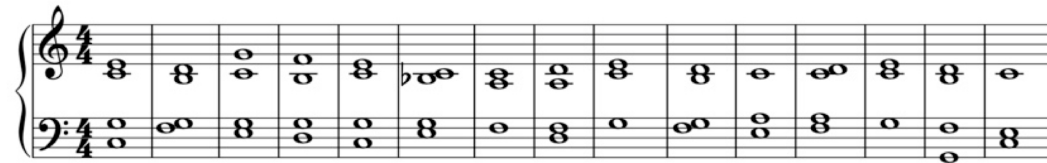
SUBMISSION LEVELS

LEVEL 1: Label the chord qualities: Major (M), minor (m), diminished (dim), or Dominant 7th (Dom7)

LEVEL 2: Level 1 + apply a roman numeral to each chord and label the tonal areas of the chorale

LEVEL 3: Level 2 + include a figured bass analysis (where applicable)

LEVEL 4: On the notation, shade/circle any chord members that must be tempered down **green** and any chord members that must be tempered up **red**.



**CHORD
QUALITY:**

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

**ROMAN
NUMERALS
+ FIGURED
BASS:**

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

TONAL AREAS:

Flip the Ensemble Room

- Harmonic Analysis
 - Scaffolded options:

LEVEL 1: Label the chord qualities: Major (M), minor (m), diminished (dim), or Dominant 7th (7)

LEVEL 2: Level 1 + apply a roman numeral to each chord and label the tonal areas of the chorale

LEVEL 3: Level 1-2 + include a figured bass analysis (where applicable)

LEVEL 4: Level 1-3 + on the notation, shade/circle any chord members that must be tempered down **green** and any chord members that must be tempered up **red**.

LEVEL 5: Level 1-4 + choose one line in concert B-flat major, indicate the specific pitch tendencies of your instrument on each note of your selected line. Use a **green** arrow to indicate any note that must be tempered down and a **red** arrow to indicate any note that must be tempered up.



Flip the Ensemble Room

- Opportunities for at home practice / expansion on experiences in the ensemble rehearsal

- SATB playing and singing

Performance

PRACTICE PROCEDURE

1. Download the .pdf chorale and be certain you can access all backing tracks (above). At a minimum, you will need the F Major Backing Track (all backing tracks are in concert pitch).
2. Listen to the SATB Backing Track and perform each line on your instrument along with the backing track
 1. The focus here is tone quality and intonation; focus on this in three ways: 1) listening ahead and anticipating pitch, 2) making pitch adjustments in real-time, and 3) recording and listening to your work.

RECORDING PROCESS (using backing tracks)

1. Log in to you bandlab.com account; click 
2. Upload the appropriate backing track (if relevant/see below) into bandlab.
3. Add a total of four additional Voice/Mic tracks by clicking the  button. Rename the tracks soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
4. You will listen to the backing track through headphones while performing each part into your microphone.
5. Select the bass track and record the bass track; listen back to your recording and re-record when necessary.
6. Once you are happy with the bass track, hit the  (mute) button on the track to mute your bass recording.
7. Repeat the record process for each part, muting the track once you are finished with the track.
8. Once you have successfully recorded the S,A,T & B parts, **delete the backing track** and trim your recording.
9. Adjust the Pan on your recording to spread out SATB from left to right.
10. Download your file and submit via Canvas.
11. Repeat steps 2 - 9 if relevant

SUBMISSION LEVELS

LEVEL 1: Using a backing track, submit the chorale in **Concert F Major**

LEVEL 2: Using backing tracks, submit the chorale in **Concert F, E, and A-flat Major**

LEVEL 3: Without backing tracks, submit the chorale in **Concert F, E, and A-flat Major**

LEVEL 4: Without backing tracks, submit the chorale in all twelve keys

note: if not using backing tracks, use the metronome feature in bandlab to create a click. Record the bassline first and then record the other three parts over your recorded bassline.

OPTIONAL/EXTENSIONS

1. Record yourself on auxiliary instruments (piccolo, e-flat clarinet, bass saxophone, etc.)

Flip the Ensemble Room

- Opportunities for at home practice / expansion on experiences in the ensemble rehearsal
 - SATB playing and singing
 - Bassline performance

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 - Arpeggiations

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- SATB playing and singing
- Bassline performance
- Arpeggiations
- Improvisation

Improvisation

PRACTICE PROCEDURE

1. Download the chorale and appropriate backing track (see submission levels for which backing tracks to use)
2. For Submission Levels 1-3, Improvise over the backing tracking using the following parameters:
 1. Rhythmic Content: perform four quarter notes in each measure
 2. Melodic Content: use two different chord tones on beats 1 and 3 of each measure (repetition of the same chord tone is acceptable though be intentional in your use of repetition). Use chord tones or non-chord tones on beats 2 and 4 of each measure; consider the roll of passing tones and neighbor tones.
3. Consider the following factors when improvising:
 1. Melodic contour and shape—strive to create a melodic line using the parameters above
 2. What is the dynamic, articulation, shape, and character of each note? What is the shape and character of your overall improvisation?

RECORDING PROCESS

1. Log in to you bandlab.com account; click 
2. Upload the appropriate SATB backing track into bandlab
3. Add one Voice/Mic track by clicking the  button.
4. You will listen to the backing track through headphones while improvising on your instrument.
5. Select the empty track and record your improvisation; listen to your recording and re-record when necessary.
6. Once are happy with your performance, download your file and submit via Canvas. (Note: you don't need to delete the backing track for this unit).

SUBMISSION LEVELS

LEVEL 1: Using a the parameters listed above, submit your improvisation in **Concert G Major**

LEVEL 2: Using the parameters listed above, submit improvisations in **Concert G, and F Major**

LEVEL 3: Using the parameters listed above, improvise and record using your voice in **Concert D Major**

LEVEL 4: Expanded parameters: use any rhythmic and melodic content (related to the progression) to record your improvisation. Explore this on your instrument or using your voice.

OPTIONAL/EXTENSIONS

1. Loop the backing track in bandlab and create a longer improvisation
2. Improvise in all twelve keys (access all backing tracks via the link above)

Flip the Ensemble Room

- Opportunities for at home practice / expansion on experiences in the ensemble rehearsal

Composition

PROCEDURE

1. Part 1: Compose!

1. Your goal is to create a new harmonization of either the melody **or** bassline of Chorale 2. You have complete creative freedom here; while the provided material provides some context, approach this work as a blank slate. Start by selecting either the soprano or bassline as your source material.
2. Compose from an aural standpoint! Work at a piano, use your voice, or use a composition program (Sibelius, noteflight, etc.) to hear your arrangement as you compose.
3. Consider the many ways you can interpret each note from a harmonic standpoint (Scale degree 2 could be: the 1) root of a ii chord; 2) 3rd of a vii° chord, 3) 5th of a V chord, 4) ???)
4. Analyze your composition both vertically (what sonorities do the combined SATB pitches create?) and horizontally (what is the melodic contour of the soprano line?)
5. Consider composing the soprano/bassline first and then filling in the inner voices.

S: 3 2 5 4 3 1 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1
B: 1 4 3 2 1 3 4 2 5 4 3 4 5 5 1

2. Part 2: Perform and Record

1. You will either record your composition by yourself or with your peers. If recording by yourself, follow the protocol for SATB recording. If recording with your peers, follow the steps below:
2. Assign each group member a **part of your chorale**; email group members their part assignment and .pdf of your chorale arrangement.
3. Log in to your bandlab.com account; click 
 1. Click the invite button  in the upper right corner and add your group members as collaborators.
 2. Based on part assignments, record your chorale from bottom to top (B,T,A,S). Use the metronome feature to be certain parts align.
 3. When recording is complete and you are pleased with your performance, download the file and submit the recording and a .pdf of your arrangement via Canvas.

SUBMISSION LEVELS

LEVEL 1: Compose a new harmonization and record all four parts by yourself

LEVEL 2: Compose a new harmonization and work with three of your peers to record your composition

LEVEL 3: Compose two new harmonizations, one based on the bassline and one based on the soprano line, and work with three of your peers to record

LEVEL 4: Use either the bassline or soprano line as inspiration for larger/more diverse composition

- SATB playing and singing

- Bassline performance

- Arpeggiations

- Improvisation

- Composition

Flip the Ensemble Room



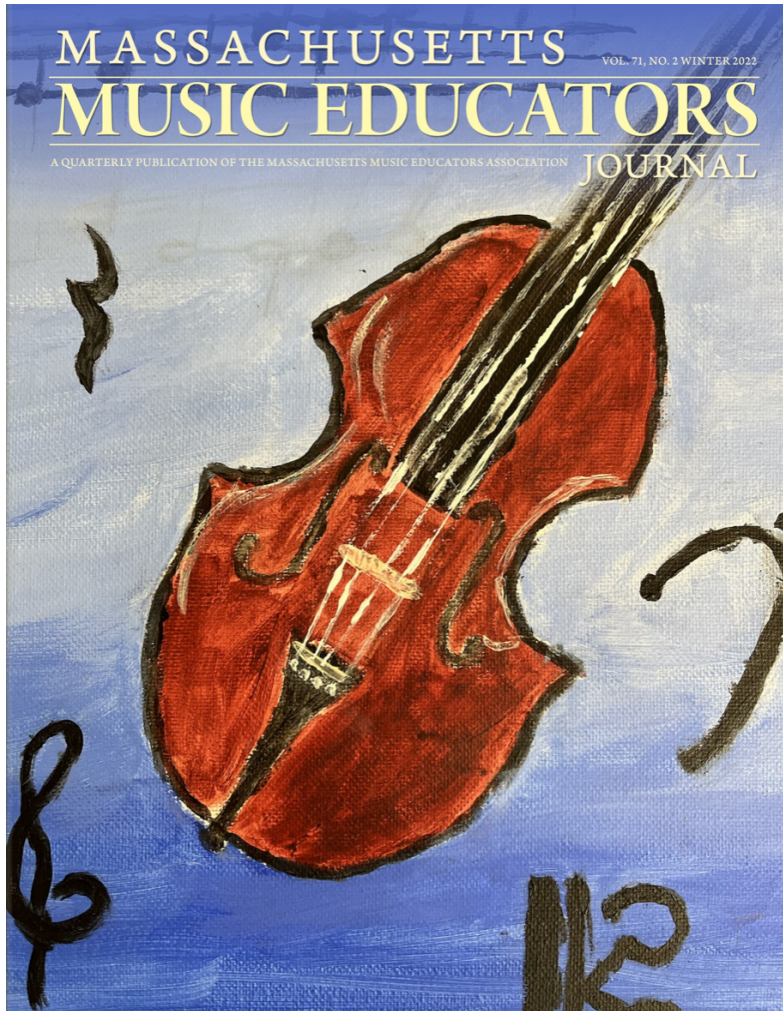
Reflections & Next Steps

Reflections

- Reflections
 - Minimal material / maximum opportunity
 - Application directly linked to needs of students and program structure
 - Opportunity to develop program culture
 - Increased investment and motivation in repertoire study and performance
 - Opportunity to develop the creative-artist within each student

Next Steps

Resources



THE CHORALE CURRICULUM Chorale 2

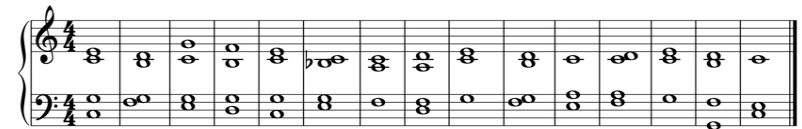
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A: 1 → 7 1 7 1 ♭ 7 6 6 1 7 1 1 1 7 1

T: 5 5 5 5 5 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 5 4 3

B: 1 4 3 2 1 3 4 2 5 4 3 4 5 5 1

Piano Reduction (C Major)



Series developed by Eric Laprade
More information: lapradee@tcnj.edu

Thank You!

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