



Music Theory Department
Electives



Music Theory Course Catalog Fall 2020

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The Music Theory Department comprises a diverse faculty, including professional music theorists, composers, scholars in education and musicianship, and performers. We are united by our shared desire to teach our students every aspect of musicianship through a thoughtful and holistic approach.

The educational mission of the NEC Theory Department is to help students experience the close connections between musical understanding, creation, and performance. We believe that this mission is best achieved by honoring and nurturing the diverse perspectives, interests, and strengths of our faculty, and recognizing each of our students as individuals with unique interests and needs.

Our students aspire to be excellent performers, composers, scholars, and teachers, so our courses are designed to promote creative learning through which they will gain extraordinary insight into the music they perform and love.

Course: THYU 315 Analysis and Performance of 19th-century Lieder

Instructor: Deborah Stein

Description:

*Die Lotosblume ängstigt
Sich vor der Sonne Pracht,
Und mit gesenktem Haupte
Erwartet sie träumend die Nacht.*

The lotus-flower fears
before the sun's glory,
and with bowed head,
awaits, dreaming, the night.

The German Lied flourished in the 19th century, as poetic nuances and complexities inspired Lied composers (Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, among others) to create new languages that conveyed ambiguity and confusion (tonal, metric, formal), dichotomies and dualities (double tonality, metric duality), transformation (beginning and ending in different keys), and emotional expressivity (musical tensions, irresolution, fragmented melody, harmonic progression and form). In this course we explore how every aspect of the music reflects the poetic text. This includes study of melodic expressivity and many of the instrumentalists in class have transcribed Lieder to perform in their recitals! The text for the course is by me and pianist Robert Spillman, *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).



Course: THYU 371: American Experimental Music since 1960

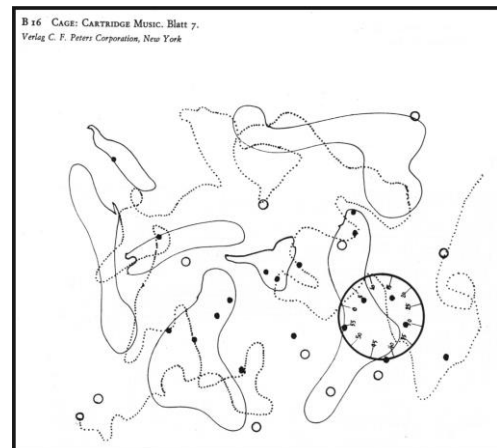
Bio: Katarina Miljkovic

Description:

The course is centered around works of John Cage, his innovative thinking about music and ways of music organization. Beginning with the seminal works *Lecture on Nothing* and *4'33*, students follow the development of American Experimental Music through the study of Morton Feldman, Christian Wolf, Earl Brown, La Monte Young, and Fluxus movement, Cornelius Cardew, James Tenney, Marianne Amacher, Pauline Oliveros, Michael Pissaro, Jurg Frey and Wandelwiser group. The interdisciplinary aspects of experimental music-making reflect in the study and sonification of selected texts, including writings by John Cage, Samuel Beckett, recent American experimental writers, followed by sonification of scientific data and modeling of selected processes occurring in nature. Experiential aspect of the course reflects in preparation and performance of verbal, mobile, graphic and other indeterminate scores, including the creation of original works. At the core of the course is a concept of “deep listening” as a basis for making creative decisions while studying or writing scores, or in real time during the performance. The goal of the course is an understanding of the necessity for close connections between music, plastic arts and sciences, and an infinitely rich, ever-changing sound world around us.

Bio:

Katarina Miljkovic began her career as a composer influenced by minimalism and extreme reduction. Her creative work is based on the concept of “music as a gradual process” that eliminates subjective choices and micro-managing of musical material. The processes used in her music are of algorithmic nature. After carefully choosing an initial state and the rules for the development of musical material, she runs the process without further interventions thus allowing multiple interpretations by a performer as well as an observer.



Course: THYU 442: Music in Ghana: A Theoretical Look

Instructor: Felicia Sandler

Description:

In this course, students engage select traditional and contemporary music created in Ghana, West Africa. As a theory offering, the focus is analytical, yet performance is a strong component of the course. Members will:

1. Drum, sing, and transcribe traditional repertoire such as Kete, Sikye, Tora, Kpanlogo, Adowa, Nnwonkoro, Sanga, and Bamaaya. Course members participate in a concert at the end of the term, providing the singing component of a dance/drum performance with the Agbekor Drum and Dance Society, and the Kiniwe Ensemble at Tufts University, led by Mr. Emmanuel Attah Poku – master drummer of the Ashanti Palace in Kumasi.
2. Transcribe select traditional musics.
3. Transcribe and analyze contemporary art music and popular music in Ghana: Palm-wine high-life, Big band high-life, and works by Dr. Ephraim Amu, J.H. Kwabena Nketia, and others.
4. Read and write about our own understandings of the ways that theorists have described the music of Africa and the delights and controversies of that work.

Bio:

Felicia Sandler has a keen interest in West African music in general and West African choral music in particular. Her drumming teachers include C.K. Ladzekpo, Johnson Kemeh and Attah Poku. She has studied song with Nani Agbeli, Attah Poku (Ashanti), Emashie Cultural Group (Ga), Faustina Dugbenu (Ewe), Obi Nyim Nda (Fanti), and Zablong Zakania Abdallah (Dagomba). She is project director for a critical edition of the complete works of Ephraim Amu.



Course: THYG 429/529

Instructor: Katarina Miljkovic

Description:

The course will introduce theoretical writings by James Tenney, focussed on a phenomenology of Twentieth-Century musical materials, and an innovative approach to the study of musical form as proposed in Tenney's treatise *Meta/Hodos*. Students study and apply analytical techniques to non-linear and modular organization in Tenney's musical works based on the principles of auditory perception, cohesion and segregation. The class will engage in building perceptual models of the excerpts from musical works based on the morphology of music material. After examining theories and music of James Tenney, the class will shift the attention to Morton Feldman's music, the embodiment of modularity and non-linearity of the 20th century. Driven by the composer's intuitive approach to the organization of musical materials and works by Abstract Expressionist painters, the selected works by Morton Feldman will be examined using Tenney's analytical techniques and perceptual models. At the end of the course, the students will engage in comprehensive analysis of Feldman's late works.

Bio:

Katarina Miljkovic is a dedicated researcher of the connections between music, plastic art, nature, and science. Using computational models of processes in nature, she is researching crossover between science and music of our heritage as well as music of today. Dr. Miljkovic presented her works and research at national and international conferences and music festivals.



Course: THYG 578: Asian Modal Systems

Instructor: Nima Janmohammadi

Description:

Based, in part, on Harold Powers' profoundly important contribution to the study of modal concepts, this course explores the nature of modality across and within several musical cultures: Arab, Persian, Indian, Javanese, Chinese and Japanese. The theoretical systems of each culture are studied and are applied analytically to pieces within the repertoire of each culture.

Bio:

Nima Janmohammadi is an Iranian multi-instrumentalist and composer. As a performer, he has been playing Persian Classical Music for more than 27 years and has studied with great masters of Persian Music, including legendary Tar and Setar players, Mohammad Reza Lotfi and Hossein Alizade. He has played in numerous recordings and concerts and has performed in venues such as Boston's historic Jordan Hall, MIT, Harvard University, Tufts University, Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY, and many more. As a performer, Nima mostly performs solo recitals with Setar, and frequently with Oud, and Kamanche. Recently, he has published a solo Setar album "The Kiss Belongs to Nobody" with a-side records. As a composer, however, Nima's focus is on contemporary classical music. His principal composition teacher is Professor Stratis Minakakis.

Nima is on the faculty at New England Conservatory and previously taught at Harvard University in 2014. He is the recipient of Presser Award.

Nima holds a bachelor's degree in the performance of Persian Classical Music from Tehran School of Music, as well as a master's degree and a graduate diploma in Contemporary Improvisation from New England Conservatory. He is currently a doctoral candidate in Composition with a minor in Music Theory at New England Conservatory.



Course: THYG 581: Interpretive Analysis

Instructor: John Heiss

Description:

Analysis for performers; concepts of rhythm, line, harmony, and form; performance implications of analytic conclusions; performance and analysis of works from students' areas of specialization.

Bio:

John Heiss is an active composer, conductor, flutist, and teacher. His works have been performed worldwide, receiving premieres by Speculum Musicae, Boston Musica Viva, Collage New Music, the Da Capo Chamber Players, Aeolian Chamber Players, Tanglewood Festival Orchestra, and Alea III. He has received awards and commissions from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, Fromm Foundation, NEA, Rockefeller Foundation, Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, ASCAP, and the Guggenheim Foundation. His principal publishers are Boosey & Hawkes, E.C. Schirmer, and Elkus & Son.

Heiss has been principal flute of Boston Musica Viva and has performed with many local ensembles, including the BSO. His articles on contemporary music have appeared in Winds Quarterly, Perspectives of New Music, and The Instrumentalist. Along with Juilliard faculty Joel Sachs, Heiss has designed and written a book/CD-ROM classical music primer for Blue Marble Music entitled Classical Explorer.

Starting in the 1970s, Heiss has directed many NEC festivals dedicated to composers or themes, and has spearheaded visits to NEC by many composers, including Ligeti, Lutoslawski, Berio, Carter, Messiaen, Schuller, and Tippett. At Commencement 1998, John Heiss received NEC's Louis and Adrienne Krasner Teaching Excellence Award.



Course: THYU 361 Beethoven String Quartets

Instructor: Roger Graybill

Description:

Beethoven's string quartets reveal the full sweep of his stylistic development as a composer, starting with his six op. 18 quartets, which emerge directly from the quartet-writing tradition of Haydn and Mozart, and culminating with his profound and forward-looking utterances in his late quartets. On a purely compositional level, virtually all of these seventeen works merit close analytical attention; just as remarkable is their astonishingly rich and wide-ranging expressive language. Considered together, this entire collection works represents one of the major artistic achievements in Western music.

This course begins by focusing on selected sections or passages from the quartets, which will allow us to explore particular issues in depth by means of multiple examples (for instance, phrasing, form and harmony, and instrumental interactions.) However, by the fourth week, we will begin working entirely with complete movements. In his middle and late periods, Beethoven paid increasing attention to the ways in which movements relate within the larger context of the quartet as a whole, so we will also explore two complete quartets in depth by the end of the semester. The goal here is for class members to gain the conceptual and analytical tools for approaching any of Beethoven quartets, even those we do not have time for in class.

Bio:

Roger Graybill's research has focused on rhythm and gesture, theory pedagogy, the music of Brahms, and musical narrative. In addition to his publications and presentations, he has extensive experience as a church organist.



Course: THYU 411T/THYG 511T: Sixteenth-century Counterpoint

Instructor: Lyle Davidson

Description:

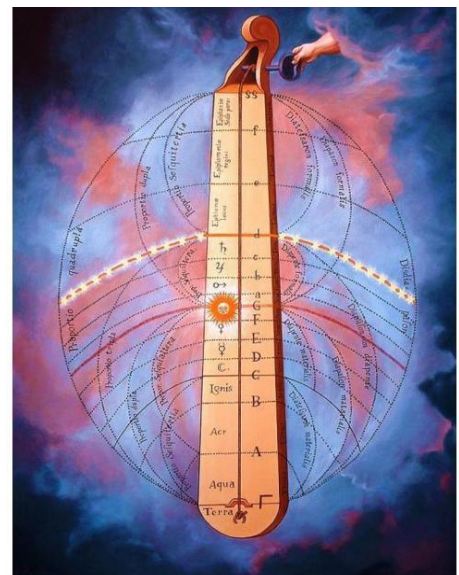
The objective of this course is to master contrapuntal thinking and technique. Therefore, this course is not about analytical exposure to music, nor using Fux's 1725 *Species Counterpoint* for compositions. Counterpoint concerns more than that. Renaissance Music reflects an ordered creation in sound. The maker of Renaissance pieces is responsible for creating a sounding structure in a manner that is audible to the listener. That goal is reached when a student's motets sound like those written by the 16th century master, Lassus.

In successful counterpoint, one voice enters while other voices listen. Then, one or more of the other voices enter. In this way, a dialogue ensues in which the flow of attention moves throughout the texture, from one voice to another. Phrase by phrase the process continues. One voice begins, other voices support it. In this way, cooperation and respect among the voices animate the Counterpoint.

Writing 32 canons a2 and three motets during the first semester builds the foundation. The second semester focuses on contrapuntal textures. Students complete four versions of five textures (including canons) a3 and two motets plus a movement of a mass (a3, a4 or more) that is based on one of the three techniques commonly used in the period (*cantus firmus*, *paraphrase*, and *parody*). The role of accents in forming rhythmic textures and Renaissance solmization is practiced. Representative pieces of Lassus and others are analyzed. When possible, pieces are performed in an appropriate space.

Bio:

A composer, Lyle Davidson actively pursues a long held interest in the relation of Music to Psychology, Development, Cognition, and pedagogy. A strong advocate of basic skills in Solfege and Harmony, his passion is 16th century counterpoint.



Course: THYU 413T / THYG 513T: Invention in the Style of Bach

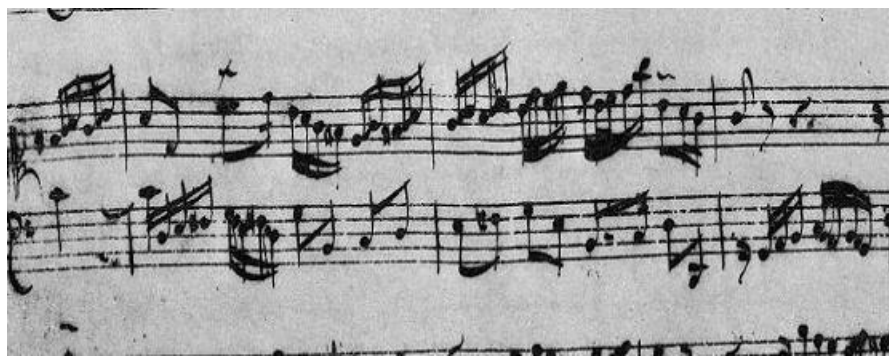
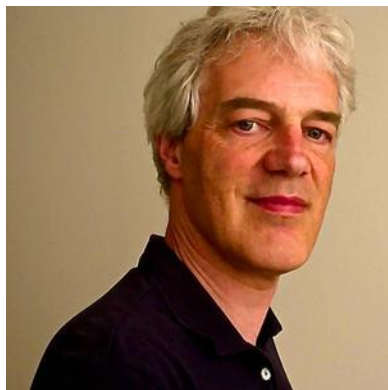
Instructor: Matthias Truniger

Description:

How does it feel to invent music in the manner of Johann Sebastian Bach? What does it take to develop a short melodic idea into a full-fledged polyphonic piece? What are the technical and stylistic principles of Baroque counterpoint? Bach's *Fifteen Two-Part Inventions* for keyboard (BWV 772-786) provide an ideal basis to explore such questions. Originally designed as "honest instructions" for aspiring clavichord players and composers, each of these pieces addresses a specific musical problem and demonstrates a way of solving it. By focusing on Bach's *Inventions*, this course offers an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of early 18th century counterpoint, harmony, and form. Activities include analysis, listening, and performance, as well as constant writing of compositional exercises modeled on Bach's music. As a final project, each student will compose an Invention for keyboard or two melodic instruments. All projects will be performed and discussed in class.

Bio:

Matthias Truniger earned Master degrees in cello performance and music theory from the Musikhochschule Zürich, Switzerland, and a DMA degree in music theory from NEC. He has held teaching positions at the Musikhochschule Luzern (1991-1999) and NEC (since 2000), and conducted courses at the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana and the Lucerne Festival Academy. He is also active as a composer.



Course: THYU 417T/ THYG 517T: Microtonal Composition and Performance

Instructor: Julia Werntz

Description:

Musicians are increasingly drawn to microtones—intervals from outside the Western equal-tempered system—as they search for alternative modes of expression. In Microtonal Composition and Performance, students learn to hear, sing, play, and compose in 72 equal temperament—first learning quarter-tones, then sixth-tones, and finally twelfth-tones. Ear training drills and short compositional exercises lead the student through an exploration of microtonal melody and harmony. Students are encouraged to develop an awareness of their reactions to the new sounds and a sense of organization, and also to pay attention to the practical matters of performance technique on different instruments. By semester's end students are performing each other's own short compositions.

Bio:

Since the mid-1990s the music of composer Julia Werntz has been almost exclusively microtonal. Through her music, her published writings, her teaching, and her activities as Artistic Director of the Boston Microtonal Society, she has emerged as an important voice in the field of microtonal music. Her compositions have been performed at concert series and festivals around the Northeastern United States and Europe. She has several times been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Werntz's manual on microtonal ear training and composition, *Steps to the Sea*, was published both in the U.S. (Frog Peak Music), and in Germany, as part of the book *1001 Microtones* (von Bockel Verlag). She has published articles on microtonal and other contemporary music in *Perspectives of New Music*, the *Sonneck Society Bulletin*, *ParisTransatlantic*, *NewMusicBox*, and *New World Records*.

Werntz is both Artistic Director of the Boston Microtonal Society and co-founder of its chamber ensemble NotaRiotous.



Course: THYG 564: Ambiguity in 18th and 19th Century Music

Instructor: Deborah Stein

Description: The notion of ambiguity is a critical element in the artist's workshop. Ambiguity can create many different kinds of confusion, including a lack of clarity or a duality of perception. For music performers, artistic interpretation of such ambiguity is a challenge and this course investigates the many ways composers use ambiguity as an expressive device. I introduce ambiguity through a famous poem by Theodore Roethke (1942): "My Papa's Waltz "

*The whiskey on your breath/ Could make a small
boy dizzy;/ But I hung on like death:/
Such waltzing was not easy.*

*We romped until the pans /Slid from the kitchen
shelf;/ m y mother' s countenance/ Could not
unfrown itself.*

*The hand that held my wrist /W as battered on
one knuckle; /A t every step you missed/M y right
ear scraped a buckle.*

*You beat time on my head/
With a palm caked hard by dirt/, Then waltzed me
off to bed/
Still clinging to your shirt.*

The poem can be interpreted in at least two different ways: First, it can depict a boy's delightful romp with his inebriated father before bedtime; or second, it can be a portrait of a boy suffering from child abuse from his drunken father.

Like this poem, music also is full of ambiguity. As it evolved from the Baroque through the 19th century, the tonal language is rich in complexity, and composers explored and developed every aspect of the language from harmony and tonality to rhythm and meter and various formal designs. The challenge of understanding and performing this music is being able to recognize when the music is really ambiguous, where you cannot know where you are harmonically or tonally or the meter is unclear, or where you don't know where you are in the form. In this course we explore how to recognize ambiguity and how to determine between two or more interpretations of both small-scale and larger aspects of the work. For performers of this wonderful music, this course can help transform a hesitant or an uncertain performance into one that is powerful and full of conviction.

Bio:

Throughout my career, I have focused on music of the 19th-century, especially how the philosophical and literary aesthetic known as German Romanticism inspired composers to develop new languages of heightened expressivity and unusual structure. The music that evolved was rich in innovation and imagination, and expressed a new immersion into the emotions of everyday people who, in the genre of the German *Lied*, projected their hopes and dreams, their fears and regrets onto the numinous world of nature surrounding them. Many of my courses focus on this magical musical world, in some cases exploring the poetic verse as well as the music setting, in others focusing on purely instrumental music that also demonstrates the richness and mystery of the German Romantic spirit.



Course: THYG 591 Perspectives on Spectral Music

Instructor: Bert Van Herck

Description:

When Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail began their compositional adventures that would lead to the spectral movement, some of their ideas were appearing elsewhere as well. Independently or not, other composers developed music with similar ideas. As a result there are many different kinds of music that belong to the spectral school at large. While this class focuses French spectral music, other kinds of music closely related to spectralism will be presented. Examples are: Romanian spectralism, the Feedback group from Cologne, and American spectral composers. Also individual composers such as Magnus Lindberg, Hans Zender, Marc-André Dalbavie, Julian Anderson, Luc Brewaeys, Kaija Saariaho, and Georg Friedrich Haas, each in their own way, are indebted to the spectral movement.

Spectral techniques as developed by the French spectralists will be discussed in detail with an introduction to OpenMusic. OpenMusic is the software that Murail and Grisey developed to help them realize their compositional tools. Students are expected to understand the basics of spectral techniques, and how OpenMusic facilitates the use of spectral techniques. The goal is to enhance a profound understanding of spectral music through analysis and – if applicable – compositional work.

Bio:

Bert Van Herck is a composer, originally from Belgium. He studied composition with Jonathan Harvey, Magnus Lindberg, Julian Anderson, Chaya Czernowin, Brian Ferneyhough, Helmut Lachenmann, and Tristan Murail. With Hans Tutschku, he studied electroacoustic music. From his fascination with spectral music and electronic music he explores different ways of how sound and harmony can interact.

His music has been played by various performers and ensembles such as Le Nouvel Ensemble Modern, Ensemble FA, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and has been presented at the ISCM World New Music Days in 2009 (Sweden) and 2010 (Australia).





Music Theory Major

The mission of the Music Theory Program is to provide NEC students with a flexible and individualized curriculum that builds on students' potential future roles as music writers, collaborators, educators, promoters and, credentials that will make them stronger candidates for teaching positions in private schools, colleges, and university levels. The program addresses the emerging need for interdisciplinary music artists and scholars.

Music Theory Program offers the following concentrations:

Music Theory with a concentration in Pedagogy

Music Theory with a concentration in Composition

Music Theory with a concentration in Performance

Analytical approaches to Music

A three-member committee, comprised of the department chair, the student's advisor and another faculty member, provides guidance to each Theory major student throughout the study. A theory major is also expected to complete one or multiple theses during his or her tenure at NEC.

In addition to coursework, students are given private theory lessons (called studio theory) for two years with the faculty member of their choice. This includes systematic study of various topics, keyboard harmony (figured bass and score reading), and work on a thesis during the second year.

Please see the NEC website for further detailed information.



Another musical treatise from the 16th century is discovered.

Music Theory Minor

The Music Theory Minor prepares students for further in-depth theoretical study and work, such as graduate placement exams, a major or double major at the graduate level, and teaching assistant positions in graduate schools. The Music Theory Minor consists of 10 credits, including a Capstone Project.

Students may pursue a Music Theory Minor in one of the following tracks:

Performance and Analysis

Studies in Contemporary Music

Music Theory and Applied Composition

Research in Music Theory

The Capstone Project

The Capstone Project for the Music Theory Minor is a one or two-semester course of individual study with a member of the Music Theory faculty, the duration and scope of which is determined by the Music Theory Minor track elected by the student; it is undertaken after the student completes their Music Theory elective requirements.

During the completion of the Capstone Project, Music Theory Minors will receive ongoing individual support from their Advisors and collegial support from the other students in their department Minor cohort at scheduled meetings

Please see the NEC website for further detailed information.

Music Theory Department Resources and Opportunities

The music theory department welcomes interest in any and all of the department offerings.

Theory majors and minors, and indeed the entire student body, can utilize our many resources.

Music Theory Learning Center

All undergraduate and graduate students are welcome to take advantage of the Learning Center's resources and regularly available student teaching assistants.

Our teaching assistants can:

Answer your questions and help with class assignments

Assist with the cultivation of keyboard harmony and ear training skills using interactive computer-based exercises

The learning center operates on a regular schedule during the academic year. Times and location will be announced at the beginning of each semester, and the center is free and open to any member to NEC college students regardless of major.

Student Employment Opportunities

The Music Theory department employs many students that serve many different functions.

Some areas students are employed include:

Mentorship Program

The Music Theory mentorship program is for teaching assistants in the undergraduate core courses (i.e., Solfège and Tonal Practice). The mentorship is meant to function as an internship, with the mentor-mentee relationship between the faculty member and the teaching assistant being key to the process. Through this program, mentees will work as a teaching assistant with a professor to plan and facilitate a course (or courses), acquire a behind-the-scenes understanding of classroom teaching in higher education, and grow as future educators, receiving invaluable supervision and guidance from their mentor.

Department Assistants

Working with faculty and staff on administrative and organizational duties: common tasks include, providing audio/visual support for department events, assisting with the maintenance of the electronic testing system etc.

Learning Center Teaching Assistants

Working one-on-one or in small groups of students on keyboard and ear training exercises, using the music theory software in the NEC computer lab.

Other employment opportunities offered include proctoring and grading exams, assisting with keyboard harmony classes, and other jobs as needed. For more information on these or other opportunities in the Music Theory department, please contact the Department Chair.