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What is a recapitulation in music theory exam

Jenine Brown, Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University Background and goals of this essay One goal of my aural skills curriculum is to teach students to hear aspects of formal design. Students aurally identify cadences and periods in the freshman year, and hear elements of binary and sonata forms in the sophomore year. Throughout, I'm interested in encouraging students to hear formal events in real time without a score, which has numerous applications outside of the classroom. This essay will summarize previous approaches to teaching aural analysis of sonata-form movements and then describe progressive assessments that measure the student's aural comprehension of sonata form. Previous articles have described ways to encourage students to listen to sonata-form movements without the help of a musical score (e.g., Alegant 2008, Duker 2013, Monahan 2011, Moseley 2014, Peebles 2013, Santa 2017, Yorgason 2018). However, with the exception of Monahan (2011), the existing literature on the aural analysis of sonata form does not explain how to test this ability through progressive, graded assessments in which students are unable to access the musical score. In the take-home assignments described by Alegant (2008) and Peebles (2013), for example, students could access the musical score without the instructor's knowledge. Indeed, in the graphics provided by Peebles, students are given the title of the piece in the Audacity file, and as Alegant acknowledges, "students were on their honor not to use [a] score to complete the assignment" when describing another take-home project on hearing formal sections in a sonata-form movement (p. 163). Though Duker (2013) describes excellent ungraded in-class activities, it is only Monahan (2011) who suggests a way to actually test the student's ability to hear sonata form. However, his mostly multiple-choice exam focuses solely upon a sonata's exposition. Below, I expand upon this by describing four graduated assessments in which students are tested on their ability to hear aspects of entire (and unfamiliar) sonata-form movements without access to a musical score, with listening in real time as the ultimate goal. Description of the classes that precede the assessments Prior to administering these assessments, numerous classes are devoted to developing strategies for hearing formal events in a variety of sonata-form movements of increasing levels of difficulty. In all of these classes, a score is never referenced. During the in-class exercises, I project the timer of the musical recording on a large screen while listening to the movement numerous times to parse the music into its formal sections. Alegant (2008) describes this approach, as well as its accompanying student learning outcomes: "The main objectives of the sonata-form module were to provide students with the skills to acquire a non-trivial understanding of movements without score and to develop their ability to analyze in 'real time.' By the end of the unit students were expected to hear the formal divisions and subdivisions of a sonata form (ideally, in real time); recognize vocabulary items and the large-scale harmonic structure; and identify and write convincingly about 'marked' features. They also were expected to apply these skills to unfamiliar repertoire" (p. 150). Throughout our in-class discussions, the listening strategy that students hone is to first list the times (minutes and seconds within the recording) of all of the cadences in the exposition, and then determine the location of the medial caesura and EEC to parse the formal sections within the exposition. (Cadences are likewise emphasized in Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, Monahan 2011, and Peebles 2013.) Students then become familiar with the thematic and harmonic techniques typically heard in the development section (references to the exposition's themes, harmonic sequences, etc.). They also learn to build expectations for what to hear in the recapitulation (and thus experience excitement when something thwarts these expectations). Students are encouraged to use these listening strategies in the assessments described below. While there is no one model of sonata form, students are provided with a set of expectations to bring to the sonata-form movement under consideration. In each class, they are tasked with filling out a Sonata Form Chart while listening to and discussing the work (similar to the timeline chart used by Alegant 2008, p. 163). Note from the chart that I use Hepokoski and Darcy's terminology. (All supplementary material for this essay has been made available here so that readers can download and modify the files as needed.) As one might expect, my students struggle most with parsing the exposition into its constituent sections, largely because they are trying to make formal decisions based upon thematic (dis)similarity. One initial pitfall is identifying a dependent transition as part of the primary zone (e.g., hearing it as a consequent phrase). For example, in Mozart's String Quartet No. 18 in A major, K. 464, first movement, students sometimes incorrectly hear the dependent transition at m. 17 as an extension of the primary zone; they then hear the secondary zone at m. 37 as an independent transition, and so on. My students have defended this hearing because the section at m. 37 contains sequential material (e.g., mm. 50-57), which is often heard in transitions. What my students need to learn to recognize is that the rhetorically strong HC in the secondary key at m. 33 and subsequent dominant lock is more form-defining than surface-level thematic events. (Some students even label the brief C major theme (bIII!) at m. 25 as the start of a new section.) Moreover, once they understand that the memorable pause at m. 36 is the medial caesura, the rest of the formal analysis falls into place. Similarly, students often have difficulty when there are multiple cadences and contrasting themes within individual thematic zones. For example, when hearing Mozart's Piano Sonata in F major, K. 332, first movement, some may incorrectly understand mm. 13-22 not as a tonally-stable reinforcement of the home key that concludes the primary zone, but, given its new melodic material, as the transition. They then incorrectly label the section at m. 23 as the secondary zone due to its initial relative stability in a new key. To rectify these common errors, I encourage students to focus upon two factors when making formal decisions. The first is cadences. Although there can be numerous cadences within the exposition, certain ones will reveal the formal divisions. Students learn to specifically listen for the HC or PAC in the tonic that ends the primary zone, the HC either in the tonic or secondary key that ends the transition, and the PAC in the secondary key that ends the secondary zone. Learning to hear when cadences occur, their type, and their significance in real time is crucial. The second factor I encourage my students to focus on is tonal stability. The primary and closing zones tend to be tonally stable, while transitions and secondary zones tend to be more harmonically adventurous. While this may be a bit of an overgeneralization, emphasizing it helps students listen to the interplay between tight-knit and loose-knit phrases and its relevance to hearing formal function (Caplin 1998). Repertoire heard in the assessments The sonata-form movements heard in these assessments are relatively straightforward and unambiguous. As Monahan writes, "To recognize and celebrate the atypical, one must know what is 'typical'" (2011, p. 87). Recordings typically range between four to six minutes in length. While learning about sonata form in my aural skills class, students are concurrently exploring longer, more difficult pieces with debatable interpretations in the theory classroom with the help of the musical score. Both Monahan (2011, pp. 114-121) and Alegant (2008, p. 174) list ideas for repertoire organized by difficulty. I also provide additional suggestions for pieces to use in each of the assessments described below. Assessment 1: Take-home test (developing aural familiarity with an entire sonata-form movement and parsing its formal sections at home) Assessment 1 encourages students to listen to a sonata-form movement repeatedly, which is recommended by Karpinski (2000) as a crucial initial step in teaching students to develop formal listening skills. In Assessment 1, students are given 24-hour access to a recording of a lesser-known sonata-form movement that is uploaded to Blackboard. The recording is "un-Shazam-able," meaning that it is a recording of a student group or some other live recording that Shazam does not recognize. Thus, students cannot easily use technology to determine the composer and title of the work, and therefore do not have access to the musical score as a reference. They are also reminded that they are deliberately not being given the composer and the title of the work and that they should not attempt to find the musical score. As they practiced in class with other sonata-form movements, students fill out the Sonata Form Chart at home while listening to the composition as many times as desired. The chart is collected at the start of the next class and is worth 20% of Assessment 1. The other 80% of the assessment consists of an in-class exam, where students hear four sections from the movement (similar to a "drop the needle" exam) and are asked to indicate which formal section they hear on this document (Assessment 1). Students are allowed to hear each of the sections I've chosen two times, and each section is played in its entirety. When choosing repertoire for this assessment, it is best to select a sonata in the minor mode, where the secondary zones in the exposition and recapitulation are in the relative major and tonic minor, respectively. Listening to mode is one way that students without absolute pitch can aurally differentiate between the secondary zone in the exposition versus the secondary zone in the recapitulation. I also recommend choosing a sonata-form movement with an obvious Grand Pause for the MC and an overt rhetorical marker such as a trill at the EEC. Haydn's Keyboard Sonata in B minor, Hob.XVI:32, first movement, works well for this assessment. (Note that the recapitulation lacks a transition.) Assessment 2: In-class 25-minute test (concentrates primarily upon the exposition) Assessments 2, 3, and 4 more closely replicate real-time listening experiences. In these 25-minute in-class tests, students hear an unfamiliar sonata-form movement and answer questions about its formal design. As in Assessment 1, they are not told the composer or title, and they do not have access to the musical score. Monahan's Appendix C (2011, pp. 122-124) is the inspiration for Assessment 2, but whereas Monahan concentrates solely upon the exposition, this assessment also asks some basic questions about the development and recapitulation. In this test, students first hear the exposition repeated four times, followed by the entire sonata-form movement played two times. Students are asked more detailed analytical questions than in Assessment 1, while the multiple-choice format helps direct their listening. They can also defend their analysis in an open-ended question at the end of the assessment. Mozart's String Quartet No. 4 in C major, K. 157, first movement, is a good option for this assessment. Assessment 3: In-class 25-minute test of the entire sonata-form movement (many hearings allowed, students have control over what they hear) In this assessment, students are asked to bring headphones and their phone or laptop to class. They then have 25 minutes in class to stream a musical recording of a sonata-form movement posted to Blackboard and make analytical decisions about what they hear. Students can adjust the slider on the recording to listen to any part as many times as they wish. My classes are small enough that I can make sure students are not texting answers to one another, although I still worry about potential issues with academic integrity. (A graduate assistant's additional set of eyes also helps.) To alleviate this concern, an alternative is to have students listen to the recording using players without online access, such as iPods (Alegant 2008) or more affordable mp3 players. (Chris Endrinal uses mp3 players in his courses and is the inspiration for this idea.) Note that the last three pages of Assessment 3 allow students the opportunity to defend their analysis in the chart on page one, an approach motivated by Wennerstrom (2008). Mozart's Duo for Violin and Viola in G major, K. 423, first movement is a good choice for this assessment. Assessment 4: In-class 25-minute test of the entire sonata-form movement (only two hearings allowed) Assessments 3 and 4 are similar, but Assessment 4 more closely simulates real-life experiences by playing the sonata-form movement in its entirety only two times on the classroom's loud speakers. Students fill out a handout identical to that shown in Assessment 3. Haydn's Keyboard Sonata No. 50 in D major, Hob. XVI, 37, first movement, could be played in this assessment. Conclusion An alternative to having students fill out a paper handout is to implement Assessments 2, 3, and 4 online. Using video annotation software (such as GoReact, WeVu, or VoiceThread), instructors can post a musical recording and ask students to make numerous time-stamped comments when they hear the start of different formal sections. Instructors can also create markers such as "primary zone," "transition," etc., that students drag into the video at particular times, all of which can be graded activities. Some software will even integrate with learning management systems (e.g., GoReact integrates with Blackboard), facilitating online grading of the assessments. Instructors can impose a time limit to the activity and prohibit students from seeing comments written by their peers. An instructional demo of GoReact can be viewed here. A similar alternative is to have students annotate audio files using software called Audio Timeliner. Brian Moseley (2014) describes how he uses this technology to help students notate their understanding of sonata form, and Brent Yorgason (2018) illustrates various ways to use the audio timeline tool when assessing students' understanding of formal structure in a variety of musical genres when listening to music without a score. The assessments described in this essay can help theory teachers test their students' ability to aurally identify formal sections within a sonata movement without worry that students are referencing a score to inform their responses. These tests culminate in real-time analysis of sonata-form movements, teaching musicians skills that can be applied to other aspects of their everyday lives, such as attending concerts and sight reading new works. Although these assessments on the surface are largely concerned with my students' ability to aurally identify where a particular formal section begins, the ultimate goal is to teach students to attune to cadences to govern their analytical decisions. Listening for the two staccato chords on "sol" marking the medial caesura or the trill on V at the ESC helps students not only to hear formal elements, but also to aurally ascertain stylistic elements of the Classical period. Moreover, students learn to hear the unfolding of a sonata as an "expressive/dramatic" event, organized by cadences (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 13; Monahan 2011, p. 69). I am grateful to Stephen Gosden, Bryn Hughes, and Jeff Lovell for their helpful feedback on this article. References Alegant, Brian. 2008. "Listen Up!: Thoughts on iPods, Sonata Form, and Analysis without Score." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 22: 149-76. Caplin, William. 1998. *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Duker, Philip. 2013. "Capturing Thinking in Time - Using 'Clickers' to Measure Student Understanding." *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy* 1. Accessed May 23, 2018. Hepokoski, James and Warren Darcy. 1997. *The Medial Caesura and its Role in the Eighteenth-Century Sonata Exposition*. " *Music Theory Spectrum* 19.2: 115-54. Moseley, Brian. 2014. 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