Affordable Materials Grants, Round 18:

Continuous Improvement Grants

(Fall 2020 – Fall 2021)

Proposal Form and Narrative

# Notes

* The proposal form and narrative .docx file is for offline drafting and for our review processes. Submitters must use the online Google Form for proposal submission, including uploading this document.
* The only way to submit the official proposal is through the Google Form. The link to the online application is on the [Round 18 RFP Page](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/about/rfp_r18).
* The italic text provided below is meant for clarifications and can be deleted.

The Round 18 Kickoff will include an asynchronous training module, required for all team members to complete, followed by the synchronous Kickoff Meeting on October 30, 2020 from 1pm-4pm. At least two team members from each awarded team (unless the award is for one individual) are required to attend the synchronous Kickoff Meeting.

# Applicant and Team Information

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| Requested information | Answer |
| Institution | Kennesaw State University |
| Applicant name | Benjamin K. Wadsworth |
| Applicant email | [bwadswo2@kennesaw.edu](mailto:bwadswo2@kennesaw.edu) |
| Applicant position/title | Associate Professor of Music Theory/ Coordinator of Music Theory, School of Music |

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| Team member | Name | Email address |
| Team member 1 | Benjamin K. Wadsworth (Project Lead) | bwadswo2@kennesaw.edu |
| Team member 2 | Jeffrey S. Yunek, Assistant Professor of Music Theory, Coordinator of Aural Skills, School of Music | jyunek@kennesaw.edu |

# Project Information

| Requested information | Answer |
| --- | --- |
| Type of Project | Creation of a new, ancillary online text for an existing OER course, *Aural Skills I-IV (KSU)* by Jeffrey Yunek and Benjamin Wadsworth |
| Requested Amount of Funding | $4,000 for the two team members’ salaries  $800 for recording costs  $500 for copyright permissions  Total requested = $5,300 |
| Course Titles and Course Numbers | Aural Skills I, MUSI 1111, Fall Semester  Aural Skills II, MUSI 1112, Spring Semester  Aural Skills III, MUSI 2111, Fall Semester  Aural Skills IV, Music 2112, Spring Semester |
| Final Semester of Project | Fall 2021 |
| Currently Existing Resource(s) to be Revised/Ancillaries Created  *Please provide a title and web address (URL) to each of the currently existing resources that you are revising, creating new ancillary materials for, or replacing. If replacing, please include a title and web address (URL) to the new OER as well* | Aural Skills I-IV (KSU) by Jeffrey Yunek and Benjamin Wadsworth, *Fine Arts Grants Collections* 6. URL: <https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/arts-collections/6/>  https://jyunek.wixsite.com/multimediaasconcept |

# Project Goals

Our courses Aural Skills I-IV already received a Transformation Grant in2017 to fund the creation of a free, no-cost dictation text, in which students write down melodies they hear so as to build musical memory. This text has gained some interest nationally, especially in light of the Covid-19 outbreak, and has been adopted by six faculty at highly regarded music schools besides our own. However, it has not yet been adopted widely across the US because aural skills courses typically use two textbooks instead of one. The other textbook used at our school is a sight-singing book, the tenth edition of Ottman and Rogers’s *Music for Sight-Singing*, which retails for $90.66 on Amazon. This textbook, which is used frequently across the country, has been coming out every few years with new editions. Each new one scrambles the order of exercises and changes incidental details such as keys and clefs, while leaving the approach and material virtually unchanged. These new editions keep the price of the textbook elevated. On the other hand, our textbook will be free of cost, and will remain free to students years after its publication. Accordingly, **this grant would nearly double the textbook savings for each student and eliminate all textbooks, resulting in four no-cost classes spanning fourteen sections and serving over 150 students per year**.

**We plan to increase the sustainability of our current OER and save students additional money ($90.66) by adding a new, ancillary textbook, a course of sight-singing melodies in all four semesters, for the courses Aural Skills I** **(fall semester), Aural Skills II (spring), Aural Skills III (fall), and Aural Skills IV (spring)**. Our plan for this grant is to create a concise, highly focused ancillary textbook for all four Aural Skills courses, and then to pursue one final Continuous Improvement Grant for the four courses to add further multimedia capabilities. We believe that providing the essential content needed for student assessment across all four semesters in this round of ALG grants gives our textbook a better chance of adoption than providing complete chapters in just Aural Skills I–II, then waiting for the next round to complete Aural Skills III–IV. This proposal takes into account ALG’s feedback on our previous proposal in Round 17: “one or more mini-grants for revision and ancillary materials creation could be possible instead of trying to make this case in a standard or large-scale grant proposal.”

Sight singing is the ability to read a new melody and sing it back, showing a knowledge of the rhythm, meter, and pitch organization. Sight singing is necessary for a professional musician since it improves their sight-reading, which is necessary for any gig-ready musician, as well as their internal awareness of pitch and rhythm. This ancillary textbook, when complete, will make our textbook a one-stop source for aural skills teachers, increase the adoption of our previous OER, and will ultimately showcase pedagogical refinements such as improvisation exercises, integrated audio, and excerpts by minority and women composers. Our college is contributing $1,000 in funding for a student worker, who will research melodies by underrepresented composers. As well, we are seeking $500 in copyright permissions to help ensure that this will be an ancillary resource featuring music by a diverse number of composers. (We thank our Director of the School of Music and Associate Dean of the College of the Arts for their support of the student worker.)

The transformation replaces our current $90.66 traditional textbook with a free, online interactive website. Eliminating this expense not only saves students money, but also increases their chances of success in all four aural skills courses. Each semester, multiple students fail to practice their sung assignments, particularly early in a course, because they cannot afford the textbook. Accordingly, their success on the sung exams, indicative of their overall ability in sight-reading music, is hampered by their inability to practice assignments and receive feedback. Traditional sight-singing textbooks are limited because they only include a succession of melodies to be sung.

By contrast, an online sight-singing book can be a more accessible, interactive, flexible, and high-quality resource having both audio and visual capabilities. Once it is finished after this and the final grant, our textbook will set the keys and tempos of its melodies, which students can click on and hear. It will give an option to play a chord progression that supports a student’s singing, in both regular melodies and in improvisation exercises. We can play a melody that the students sing while harmonizing it on the keyboard. We can include error-detection assignments in which the printed melody does not correspond to what a student hears, and they have to identify errors. We can also include basic singback exercises in which students mimic what they hear. Our textbook will ultimately contain instructional videos, in which singing and practicing techniques will be demonstrated, especially vocal patterns (called vocalises) for warming up. All of these embedded audio clips will be of high quality, professionally recorded using our in-house sound engineers. And lastly, the entire textbook will have the capability to be embedded within a school’s online course management system such as Blackboard, D2L, or Moodle. These innovations represent a significant increase in instructional quality compared to a printed textbook, and point toward a larger, multi-media model for other ancillary materials in a music school’s curriculum.

The current textbook provides melodies for sight-singing, arranged ostensibly from easy to hard, but often bunches difficult and easy melodies into successive chapters, or even the same chapter. Second, its later chapters are simply too difficult for most music students across the country. And third, its organization is often not based on the chords that students study in concurrent written theory classes.

Instead, our web-based textbook, preliminarily titled *A Multimedia Approach to Sight-Singing*, will move more slowly from easier to more difficult melodies, with the challenging ones short and focused. Our organizing principle will be a progression from easier to more difficult chords parallel to that in our previous dictation textbook. With the new textbook selecting shorter, more focused melodies, and our ability to reevaluate our selections in terms of class progress, our own aural skills classes (and by extension, many others) should be able to finish the book.

In our previous ALG grant, we created a web-based textbook by combining music compositions and videos in a free webpage-creating site that makes content accessible across both laptop and mobile formats. In this proposal, we plan to compose some of the sung melodies, then mine thematic catalogues for others that are in the public domain. We will then enter each melody into an industry-standard notation software program such as Finale. In addition, we will insert several more complex songs for multiple voices in each unit of each course (each course consisting of three units). This should challenge the students with an exciting goal and getting them used to singing in a four-part choir. The melodies having been chosen, we will use in-house recording services for ancillary features such as harmonic accompaniments, and in a later grant, vocal warmups and singback exercises.

For this grant, we are including approximately 30 melodies per course (120 total), and about one-third of those will have recorded accompaniment while two-thirds will not. There will be approximately 15–20 four-part choral excerpts across the four courses. The overall workload required to create these materials will be doable within the parameters of the proposed grant. The remaining multimedia features will be added following a later grant. We have created a sample page demonstrating our new format, found at this website: https://jyunek.wixsite.com/multimediaasconcept.

Our new textbook will stay current since we will be able to revise errors, tailor the material to our curriculum, and swap out exercises. As a result, we expect that the new textbook will remain a valuable resource for aural skills instructors around the world for years to come.

# Action Plan

Much of the content of our new, online textbook will be loosely based on the content of our current sight-singing textbook, which aligns with the presentation of concepts in the companion course, Theory I. We will thus organize the new textbook using our previous OER textbook as a basis.

In creating our concise, focused text, we will start with a textbook review, analyzing popular textbooks for content and approach. We will review the literature on aural skills teaching for innovative ideas that drive student engagement. We will then determine the content, ordering, and pedagogical strategies of our ancillary resource, and will align its topics with our previous OER. All of these tasks should take around 5 hours for each faculty to accomplish them. To date, there are no low-cost OER sight-singing textbooks that align with the theory concepts from a written class. The only practical option is thus to develop new ancillary materials for our preexisting OER.

Our team features two faculty with terminal doctoral degrees in the area of music theory, the field that studies the pedagogy of aural skills. The Principal Investigator, Dr. Benjamin Wadsworth, will be in charge of composing new melodies and uploading materials to the website, tasks that should take about 60 hours to accomplish. Other exercises such as sing-and-plays, and creating pedagogical videos, will wait until another grant. The second team member, Dr. Jeffrey Yunek, will be in charge of selecting previously composed melodies and choral works, tasks that should also take about 60 hours to accomplish. For a later grant, Dr. Yunek will develop improvisation exercises. Both team members’ abilities can be seen in our impressive, recent aural skills dictation textbook, at the website freemusicdictations.net, in which Dr. Wadsworth composed most melodies and developed instructional videos, and Dr. Yunek inputted the melodies into music dictation software, converted them to audio files, and designed the website. Our audio engineers are expecting to put in about 10 hours of work to record, edit, and mix two hours of audio files for the recorded accompaniments (40 across all four courses).

There will be very little changed in the syllabi of the four aural skills courses because the general course content is being preserved. Sight-singing melodies from the current textbook will be exchanged with similar ones from the new one. After a later grant, we eventually intend to offer an increased number of improvisation activities. In addition, we eventually plan to include instructional videos that will help support flipped instruction, in which students learn content outside of class, leaving class time for the active practicing of skills.

The plan to provide the content to the students is to simply have them open and use the website, hosted by GALILEO Open Learning Materials, with any internet browser. We will ensure that the website is accessible to all formats by optimizing it for laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. In addition, the melodies will be uploaded as music notation files, and half of those as music notation and sound. Our materials will be under a Creative Commons license, making them accessible to other instructors and allowing them to be freely distributed. And finally, we will make our new ancillary materials fully accessible by using principles of accessible document design, captions on all videos, transcripts on audio, accessible PowerPoint design, and descriptive alternative text.

Once the draft version of the website for Aural Skills II is complete, in the spring of 2021 we will test it on selected sections of our Aural Skills II course, and will solicit feedback (5 hours per investigator). Additional revisions to the website, with the help of the IT department at our university, should take approximately 5 hours total per investigator. Finally, we will compile, analyze, and interpret the quantitative data from our questionnaires on the ancillary resource so that we will be able to ascertain its educational impact, a task that should take approximately 5 hours per investigator.

# Timeline

Overall: November 2020 – December 2021

November 2020 – August 2021

Notification of award.

Attend Online Kick-Off Meeting on October 30, 2020.

Review the literature on aural skills pedagogy with a specific focus on aural skills textbook reviews. Analyze popular textbooks for content and approach.

Review the literature on online teaching for new ideas, innovations, and resources.

Based on the materials review, determine the concepts to cover, determine the ordering of concepts, and the pedagogical strategies to incorporate.

Align new textbook content with the previous OER in Aural Skills I–IV.

Create a draft version of the website for Aural Skills II, which will be used in the following semester to get feedback on the final project. Test the website across all expected formats (laptop, mobile, etc.).

Wadsworth will focus on the website, newly composed melodies, and keyboard accompaniments.

Yunek will focus on melodies from the literature and choral works.

The recording engineers will record accompaniments to half of the Aural Skills II melodies.

Each member will review each other’s work to ensure quality, and reach out to IT help at KSU to create the best user experience.

Apply for IRB approval to test the effectiveness of the new textbook.

September 2021 – December 2021

Create the draft version of the textbook for Aural Skills I, III, and IV.

Incorporate the draft version of the textbook into Aural Skills I to test for audio and visual bugs.

Get written feedback from the students in Aural Skills I on the website and ancillary textbook.

Improve the areas of the website based on student feedback.

Revision and finalization of instructional content will be completed.

Do a final test of the resiliency of the website across different formats.

Quantitative information on Aural Skills II or I will be compiled, analyzed, and interpreted.

The recording engineers will finish recording accompaniments to remaining melodies in Aural Skills I, III, and IV.

Data from Aural Skills I or II will be shared with colleagues and administrators at KSU and may be presented in upcoming conferences and meetings.

# Budget

The total budget includes the investigators’ salaries, professional recording expenses, and copyright permissions. Professional recording, editing, and mixing services for the audio files of around forty accompanied melodies will be provided by sound engineers Mark Fucito and Joseph Greenway at Kennesaw State University. Copyright permissions are necessary to include more current repertoire and satisfy our goal of including music by more diverse composers. We have included a relatively low expense within the category of copyright permissions as we gain more familiarity with average copyright expenses, and thus may request more or less than this amount in our next grant.

The requested total budget is $5,300:

Salary for Jeffrey Yunek = $2,000

Salary for Benjamin Wadsworth = $2,000

Professional recording expenses = $800

Copyright permissions = $500

# Letter of Support

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| Dr. Leslie Blackwell, Interim Director, School of Music, Kennesaw State University, [lblackwe@kennesaw.edu](mailto:lblackwe@kennesaw.edu) |

# Grants or Business Office Letter of Acknowledgment

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| --- |
| Amanda DesLauriers, Pre-Award Specialist, Office of Research, [adeslaur@kennesaw.edu](mailto:adeslaur@kennesaw.edu) |