**Affordable Learning Georgia Affordable Materials Grants  
Continuous Improvement Grants Final Report**

# General Information

Date: December 10, 2021

Grant Round: 18 (Fall 2020–Fall 2021)

Grant Number: M149

Institution Name(s): Kennesaw State University

Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):

* Benjamin K. Wadsworth, Professor of Music Theory, Bailey School of Music, [bwadswo2@kennesaw.edu](mailto:bwadswo2@kennesaw.edu)
* Jeffrey S. Yunek, Assistant Professor of Music Theory, Bailey School of Music, [jyunek@kennesaw.edu](mailto:jyunek@kennesaw.edu)

Project Lead: Dr. Benjamin K. Wadsworth

Course Name(s) and Course Numbers:

* Aural Skills I, MUSI 1111
* Aural Skills II, MUSI 1112
* Aural Skills III, MUSI 3111
* Aural Skills IV, MUSI 3112

Final Semester of Project: Fall 2021

***If applicable to your project:***

Average Number of Students Per Course Section: 15

Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation of Revised Resources: 15 per AY

Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation of Revised Resources: 225 per AY

# Project Narrative

*Describe the course of your revision or ancillary creation project, including*

* *A summary of your project’s purpose, plan, and timeline.*

This project built upon our online, free music dictation website, freemusicdictations.net. We received a Transformation Grant in 2017 to fund this no-cost text, which teaches students how to write down melodies that they hear to build musical memory. The Transformation Grant replaced Karpinski’s *Manual for Ear Training and Sight-Singing*, which sells for $104.39 on Amazon. Likewise, our current Continuous Improvement Grant (2020) adds a new sight-singing textbook in parallel with the dictation textbook to replace Ottman and Rogers’s sight-singing textbook, which retails for $90.66 on Amazon. Our Aural Skills courses are now no-cost to all students. Our new sight-singing textbook is organized into 49 chapters that are organized in parallel with the dictation textbook. Each sight-singing chapter includes warmup exercises, melodies (or rhythm patterns), duets, excerpts for larger sung ensembles such as trios and quartets, and guided improvisations. 31 recorded accompaniments for melodies (e.g., see the play button to the right of 46.2 at <https://www.freemusicdictations.net/copy-of-chapters-41-45>) are provided to help students make connections between their melodies and their underlying harmonic frameworks. In all, the combined dictation and sight-singing textbook makes a more attractive option for universities seeking a well-published, visually attractive, and focused curriculum for their ear training and aural skills classes. Our plan was to have Wadsworth work on composed melodies, Yunek on finding melodies from the literature, both to put melodies into notation software, Yunek to put the melodies on the website, then Wadsworth to compose and record the accompaniments. Our timeline was from the Fall of 2020, when we would start researching and organizing the melodies to the late Fall of 2021, when we would insert the recorded accompaniments into the website and assess our future direction.

*A narrative description of how the project’s plan was carried out.*

In our development of the ancillary resource, in the fall of 2020 we started with a textbook review and organized the chapters by theory topics, or by a focus on another skill (e.g., rhythm patterns in Aural Skills I to get students conducting). By the start of 2021, we created a draft of sight-singing melodies for Aural Skills II that Dr. Wadsworth tested in his section and received feedback from students as to effectiveness. Over the summer of 2021, we composed some melodies and found others in the literature, although as we progressed past Aural Skills I, the melodies from the literature were more interesting and challenging, so we included more of them. Overall, there were over 120 melodies. We then converted those melodies to professional music notation software, tested our procedures for a uniform appearance, and transposed those melodies in some cases to keys that classes could sing more easily. Yunek put the finished melodies onto the website and tested for ease of use across PC and mobile formats. We also searched for excerpts by underrepresented composers, then included all excerpts in a pdf document that lists the composer and title of each excerpt. By the early fall of 2021, we composed accompaniments to 31 of the melodies, whenever possible drawing from published music but when that was impractical, composing our own. The accompaniments have been published in this pdf, and they should be helpful to instructors since they give a full harmonic analysis plus the accompaniment in an easy keyboard texture. We were able to insert the accompaniments into the website, but for now they are only in the pc, not mobile version of the website. It turned out that we did not need the funds for copyright assistance since our melodies were either newly composed or already in the public domain. (We have included the final invoice from Kennesaw State in our materials.)

Throughout the year, we redesigned course syllabi to incorporate sight-singing melodies. (Syllabi for Aural Skills I and III are included with this report.)

By November 2021, Wadsworth collaborated with the Bobbie Bailey Center at Kennesaw State to record the accompaniments, which he performed on piano. With the help of recording engineer Collin Derrick, we have professional-level mP3s of each harmonic accompaniment. These accompaniments have been interspersed into the text. Lastly, Wadsworth assessed an Aural Skills I class’s satisfaction with the new sight-singing text in comparison with the old Ottman and Rogers sight-singing text. The survey results showed a high level of satisfaction with the new, online textbook plus student requests for a greater number of melodies, especially more challenging ones.

* *The original works which were revised or added to, with links. For example, if you revised an open textbook, give the title, author, and link.*

The original textbook is by Jeffrey S. Yunek and Benjamin K. Wadsworth. It can be found at this website; look under the tab “Dictation Assignments” and “Dictation Practice” for the dictation materials:

<https://www.freemusicdictations.net>

The sight-singing, ancillary textbook can be found at the “Sight-Singing Excerpts” tab.

The database of composer names, excerpt titles, and the inclusion of works by BIPOC composers can be found by clicking on the “Sight-Singing Excerpts” tab. You may also find a pdf of the composed accompaniments at the bottom of this page.

[*https://www.freemusicdictations.net/sight-singing-excerpts*](https://www.freemusicdictations.net/sight-singing-excerpts)

All the sight-singing excerpts can be found under ten tabs, each of which includes around five chapters.

* *Lessons learned, including anything you would do differently next time.*

We have learned that freshly composed melodies are not as useful as we thought. Our primary investigator (Wadsworth) started composing melodies, but these were most effective in Aural Skills I and in warmups, less so in Aural Skills II–IV. The newly composed melodies lacked the spontaneity and element of surprise found in the literature. Due to this discovery, both Wadsworth and Yunek started searching the repertoire for melodies. To promote greater variety, we also inserted several excerpts where students improvise over a harmonic and melodic framework.

Due to time constraints, we decided to avoid melodies under copyright and instead include those in the public domain.

We also learned that the most useful warmups are vocalises that can warm up the voice and be transposed to different keys.

We decided to take a highly consistent, minimalist approach to the melodies, not labeling any chords, solfège or scale degrees, or any analytical labels with isolated exceptions in the warmups. We decided to keep the melodies clear of annotations (e.g., syllables) to encourage their use by instructors with different approaches.

For next time, we would like to add to the quantity of melodies included on the website to turn the online textbook into a one-stop resource for aural skills classes. Second, we would like to add a greater number of challenging melodies with unusual aspects like syncopation (events off the beat) or grace notes (musical ornaments). These aims were suggested by the students’ responses in the questionnaire in Aural Skills I in the Fall of 2021. Third, we would like to increase the quantity of multimedia resources on the website, including singing demonstrations, vocal warmups in the keys of excerpts, and more accompaniments. And finally, we would like to fix the issue of recorded accompaniments in the mobile version of the website.

This year, our two linked textbooks have continued to gain users. In September of this year, for instance, a colleague from Montana State in Billings expressed interest in using our textbooks. They said: “I have been poking around for a while now in search of high quality OERs and I have been very impressed with your project. You have completed an impressive resource that is really pushing the teaching of fundamental musical skills into the future—a worthy endeavor, if you ask me.”

# Materials Description

*Describe all the materials you have created or revised as part of this project. These descriptions may be used in the* [OpenALG](https://alg.manifoldapp.org/) *repository description field. Include the* [*open license your materials will be shared under*](https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/)*—for most materials, this will be an Attribution 4.0 License (CC BY) as required in the Grants Request for Proposals.*

The materials include the following:

* “Sight-Singing Melodies” tab under the [freemusicdictations.net](https://www.freemusicdictations.net/) website. This tab includes 49 chapters of sight-singing warmups, melodies, ensemble excerpts, improvisations, and harmonic accompaniments. There are, for instance, 96 melodies and ensemble numbers.
* Under the “Sight-Singing Melodies” tab, a listing of composers, titles, and where appropriate, their BIPOC status.
* Under the “Sight-Singing Melodies” tab, a pdf showing all accompaniments with harmonic analysis.

The materials are all licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 International License.

# Materials Links

*If you are hosting your materials in places other than OpenALG, please provide these links in this section. Otherwise, leave blank. Note: we cannot access D2L or Canvas links.*

The website housing the ancillary resource is <https://www.freemusicdictations.net/sight-singing-excerpts>, and the textbook proper is found under the “Sight-Singing Excerpts” tab under ten groupings of chapters.

# Future Plans

* *Describe any planned or actual papers, presentations, publications, or other professional activities that you expect to produce that reflect your work on this project.*
* *Describe any plans to revise or add to these materials in the future.*

In the future, as explained in our latest grant proposal, we plan to apply for one more Continuous Improvement Grant to add more accompaniments, more melodies (especially by BIPOC composers), demonstration videos, and vocal (or piano) warmups to get students established in a key. We hope to strengthen our case that [freemusicdictations.net](https://www.freemusicdictations.net/) can be a one-stop shop for aural skills and ear training.

Once the website is ready to our satisfaction, we plan to draft a proposal examining different OERs in aural skills and submit it to music theory pedagogy conferences, for instance the “Pedagogy into Practice” ones that are hosted by the Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy (<https://jmtp.appstate.edu/conference>). Through this and similar events, we hope to build awareness in the theory field of our minimalistic and multimedia approach.