

Touching Music Theory

- The integration of keyboard into the undergraduate theory classroom provides a tangible representation of common practice music theory and aural skills - connecting to more types of learners.
- When students hear and feel theoretical concepts at the piano, they engage in meaningful application of theory.
- Music Theory courses often only adapt to those who are visual learners or aural learners. But what about those who learn by doing? What about haptic learners?
- Yes, students have piano classes, but unfortunately they are not making the connections between those classes and their theory classes.
 - One of my current group 1 piano students said to me in class one day, “Oh! We are learning this in music theory class right now!”
 - If this student had made this realization that the classes go hand-in-hand earlier in the semester, both classes would have been easier to understand.
- In theory classes, they learn the concept. In piano classes, they apply the concept.
- An ideal situation would allow each student in the class to have a keyboard, an area to write, and a monitor that is connected to the teacher’s computer.



- Pictured is a portion of the piano lab at LSU.
- There are 16 pianos total in groups of 4. Each piano has a monitor that shows the students the information from the computer at the front of the classroom.

- If music theory is offered 3 times a week, 2 of those days could be in a normal classroom with the 3rd day being held in a piano lab.
- If neither of these situations are achievable, one piano in the classroom can still suffice. There is time for students to rotate on and off the bench to experience a theory lesson on the piano.
- Although piano style is in most keyboard harmony books, choral style allow students to feel and hear each pitch of a chord due to the wider range.



Choral Style



Piano Style

- Having students play *My Country 'tis of Thee* is an example of how to explain and experience functionalities of the cadential I 6/4 chords.



Selected bibliography

Callahan, M. R. (2015). Teaching and Learning Undergraduate Music Theory at the Keyboard: Challenges, Solutions, and Impacts. *Society for Music Theory* 21.3.

Sadek, A. (1985). Transferability of Music Learning. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, (85), 187-194.

Trantham, W. (1970). A Music Theory Approach to Beginning Piano Instruction for the College Music Major. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 18(1), 49-56.

Wildman, J. M. (1982). A Re-Evaluation of Keyboard Harmony. *College Music Symposium* 22.

For more information:
 Sarah Jenkins
jenkinsesarah@gmail.com