

# The Application of Traditional Music Theory Practices on both Religious Worship Groups and Non-Classically Trained Volunteer Musicians

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## Music Theory pedagogy *OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM!*

### Abstract

Music Theory pedagogy *OUTSIDE the classroom!*

*That same old piano sonata is not your only friend...*

Music theory classes are traditionally taught within an academic setting, but there are great advantages to offering classes in different locations. Moving theory programs *outside* the classroom has the potential to not only reach a variety of different types of learners, from the teacher's point of view, it offers us a unique opportunity to develop vital pedagogical skills. This also allows for repertoire not commonly found in textbooks to be utilized for the presentation of certain concepts as it relates to the student, and it creates an experience anew to the usual classroom setting. **My poster documents my Public Outreach Project from two perspectives: the uniqueness and benefits of teaching music theory classes in a worship group setting, and the invaluable pedagogical skills I learned along the way.**

### Working with Students

#### Objectives:

- Strip music topics down so they are concise and easy to teach for novices, using: *informal powerpoint lectures, sound-to-sight correlation, analysis of contemporary songs, and brief fluency-oriented activities*
- **Provide exceptional learning experiences that connect worship music performance to applications of formal analysis**
- Show benefits of retaining fluency by comparing rehearsal of songs with and without implementation of music theory

### Developing my Pedagogy

#### Objectives:

- **Create lectures correlating traditional music theory terms and concepts with familiarity of faith-based music**
- Explain beginning theory by tapping into shared-experience of preparing and playing worship songs
- **Refine and grow my pedagogical skills as a young music theory teacher with this experience**

### My Approach

I found a teaching opportunity to bring **traditional music theory learning to a group of faith-based performers** diverse in gender/age and musical background. This class provided valuable music theory knowledge to achieve both efficient rehearsal practices and cohesive performances within the worship group.

**I explored the uniqueness of teaching** music theory to volunteer musicians in a worship group setting by **relying exclusively on contemporary worship songs to teach the class** as opposed to classical repertoire, as I surveyed the knowledge gap in proficiency of participants to create a flexible syllabus-style lesson plan. My plan was to teach applicable music theory to the worship group.

### Key Takeaways

*Student Perspective:*

- “Great refresher course covering the basic concepts of the ‘why/how’ behind music theory practices”
- “Loved how clear the teaching was (remembered learning same exact thing in school but not understanding)”

*My Perspective:*

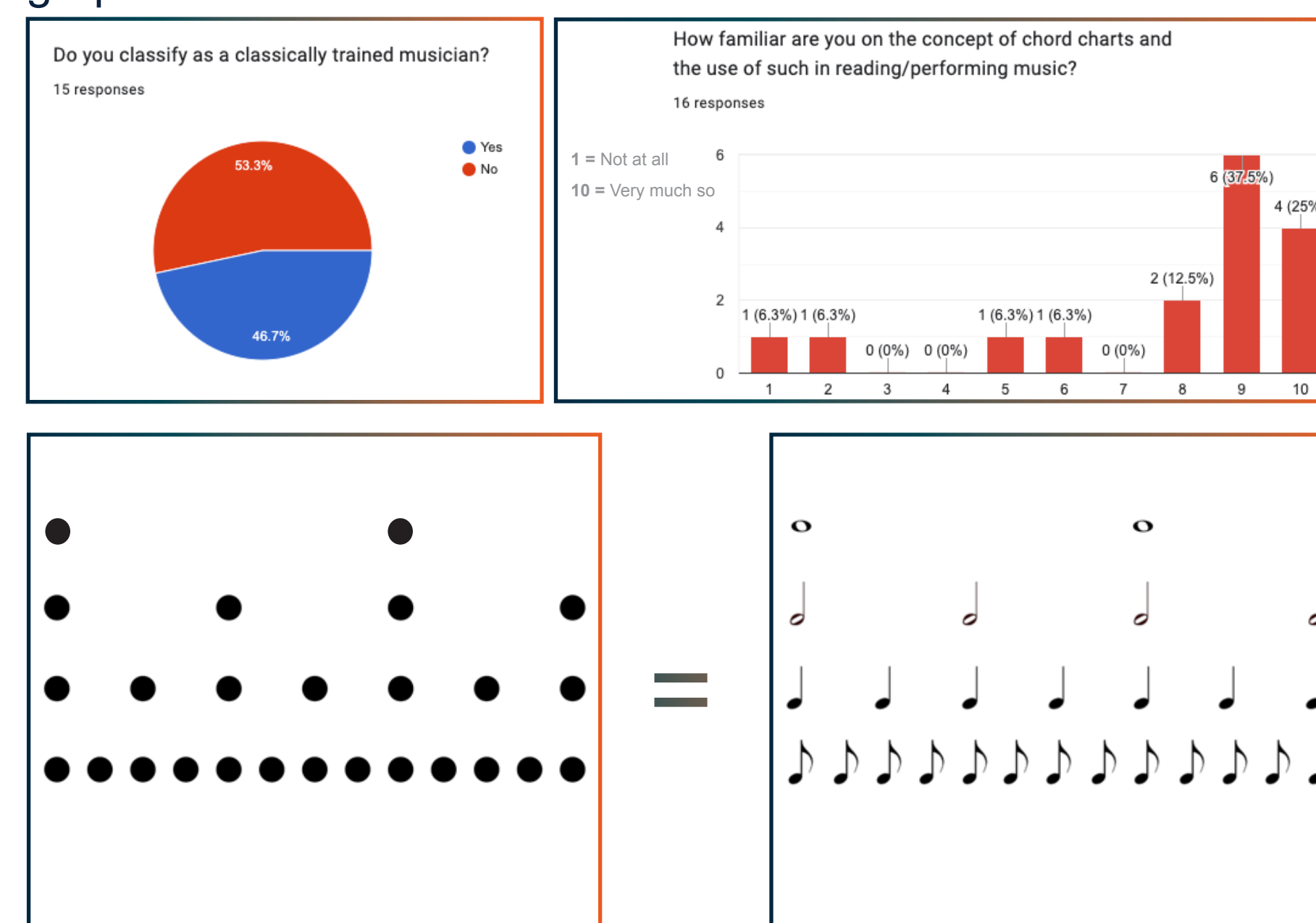
- Combination of worlds: spiritually and musically
- Real-life application for graduate school teaching
- Confirmed: I really love teaching

### Future Application

- **Utilize repertoire outside textbooks to present certain theory concepts as it relates to the student**
- **Create fun and new activities reaffirming more traditional concepts to a variety of audiences**
- **Engage with teaching beyond the classroom in familiar and “unscary” environments to improve the retention of the learner**

### Survey Responses + Beat-Hierarchy Chart

Responses from worship group + a powerpoint sample graphic



### Syllabus Overview

Lecture-based course with powerpoint accompanying lessons

WEEK	TOPIC
1	<b>What is Music Theory?</b> Introduction to Pitch: Letter Names The Piano Keyboard
2	<b>What is Rhythm?</b> Beat, Beat Division, and Meter Counting Rhythms in Simple and Compound Meter
3	<b>What is Intervals?</b> Interval Size and Interval Quality Scale Degrees and Constructing Major Scales
4	<b>What is Key Signatures?</b> Circle of Fifths Order of Sharps and Flats
5	<b>Music Theory Survival Tournament</b> Competitive activity applying beginning theory Work as a team to recall terms and concepts
6	<b>What is Harmony?</b> Chord Structures and Progressions Passing Tones and Improv
7	<b>Wild Card (CLASS DECIDES)</b> Further practice of fundamentals Establishment of practical applications for theory
8	<b>Special Projects</b> Opportunity for class to explore deeper aspects of theoretical approaches within their worship setting

### Sample Sound-to-Sight Exercise

Students had to listen to the example and feel its pulse, then identify its classification and beat divisions.

Listen to, distinguish, identify, and clap the following groupings, divisions, and subdivisions in the perceived meter of Cory Asbury's "Reckless Love" (2017).

Question: Simple or Compound? Duple or Triple? What possible time signature?

Answer:

Time signature is 6/8  
Meter is compound duple

### Sample Analysis Exercise

Students had to refer to major/minor key signatures to identify triads and spell chords

Spell the chord-tones used for each triad used in this song-graphic and identify the key signature.

Intro 1  
E | |  
A | |

Intro 2  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |

Verse 1  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |

Chorus  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |

Bridge 1  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |

Bridge 2 (B)  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |  
Cm | | B | | A | | E | |

Chord-tones:  
C#m = C# - E - G#  
B = B - D# - F#  
A = A - C# - E  
E = E - G# - B

Key signature:  
E major