Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The California Open Educational Resources Council has designed and implemented a faculty review process of the free and open etextbooks showcased within the California Open Online Library for Education (www.cool4ed.org). Faculty from the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California were invited to review the selected free and open etextboks using a rubric. Faculty received a stipend for their efforts and funding was provided by the State of California, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Textbook Name:

Sound Reasoning
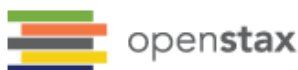
License:

Find it: eTextbook Website

Textbook Authors:

Anthony Brandt

Reviewed by:

Amy Bauer

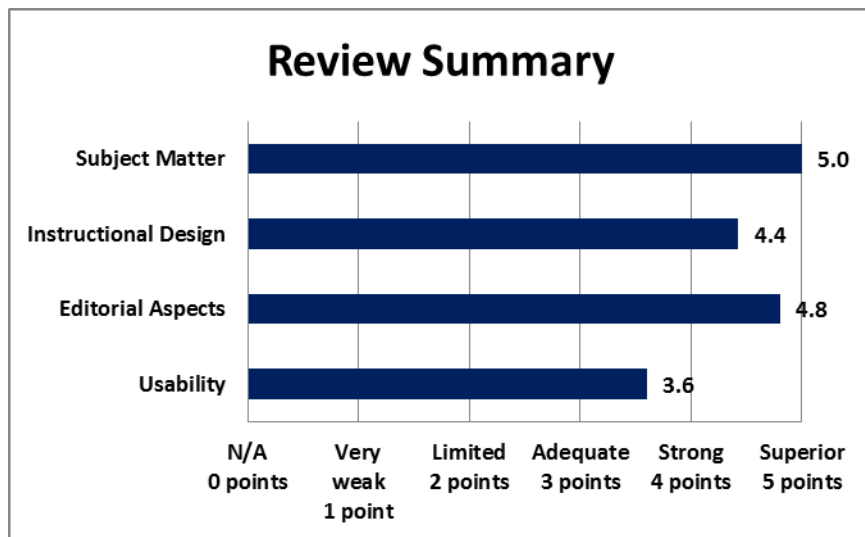Institution:

University of California, Irvine

Title/Position:

Professor

Format Reviewed:

Online

A small fee may be associated with various formats.

Date Reviewed:

March 2015

Review Summary

Subject Matter	5.0
Instructional Design	4.4
Editorial Aspects	4.8
Usability	3.6

N/A 0 points | Very weak 1 point | Limited 2 points | Adequate 3 points | Strong 4 points | Superior 5 points

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: MUS 100

Subject Matter (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the content accurate, error-free, and unbiased?						X
Does the text adequately cover the designated course with a sufficient degree of depth and scope?						X
Does the textbook use sufficient and relevant examples to present its subject matter?						X
Does the textbook use a clear, consistent terminology to present its subject matter?						X
Does the textbook reflect current knowledge of the subject matter?						X
Does the textbook present its subject matter in a culturally sensitive manner? (e.g. Is the textbook free of offensive and insensitive examples? Does it include						X

examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds?)		

Total Points: 30 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of the subject matter of this textbook:

- There are as many different approaches to teaching the Music Appreciation course as there are textbooks. The classic model that focuses on inculcating a taste for Western art music through acquiring knowledge of its development (preserved most completely in Craig Wright, Listening to Music (Schrimer/Cengage), and Joseph Machlis, The Enjoyment of Music: An Introduction to Perceptive Listening (Norton)), has expanded to incorporate various world and vernacular music (these include Roger Kamien, Music: An Appreciation (McGraw-Hill); Joseph Kerman and Gary Tomlinson, Listen (Macmillan); Michael Brown, An Introduction to the History and Literature of Music in Western Culture (Pearson); Mark Evan Bonds, Listen to This (Prentice-Hall); and Jeremy Yudkin, Understanding Music (Pearson)). But there also exist a plethora of methodological approaches: those which approach music less as an object than as a cultural product embedded in a social nexus (notably Steven Cornelius and Mary Natvig, Music: A Social Experience (Pearson); Jay Zorn, Listening to Music (Pearson); Kay Kaufmann Shelemay, Soundscapes (Norton)), and, finally, those which approach musical listening with a phenomenological bent (Thomas Forrest Kelly, Music Then and Now (Norton)). Sound Reasoning is a superb example of the latter approach, encouraging an "up close" experience of the music "without mediation or interference" (I will not unpack that loaded phrase here).

- Sound Reasoning focuses clearly on listening skills, beginning with "style-transcendent principles" that ideally advance the listener's agency and subjective appreciation of music. The text takes a top down approach to listening designed to help listeners' focus on developing form in music. I find it the most effective guide to listening I've seen, with dozens of terrific examples chosen from wide varieties of genres. Most music examples are accompanied by listening guides, which range from the rudimentary (visual analogues to musical form) to the sophisticated (prompts to further analysis and critical discussion).

Instructional Design (35 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Does the textbook present its subject materials at appropriate reading levels for undergrad use?						X
Does the textbook reflect a consideration of different learning styles? (e.g. visual, textual?)				X		
Does the textbook present explicit learning outcomes aligned with the course and curriculum?						X
Is a coherent organization of the textbook evident to the reader/student?						X
Does the textbook reflect best practices in the instruction of the designated course?					X	
Does the textbook contain sufficient effective ancillary materials? (e.g. test banks, individual and/or group activities or exercises, pedagogical apparatus, etc.)					X	
Is the textbook searchable?						X

Total Points: 31 out of 35

Please provide comments on any aspect of the instructional design of this textbook:

- Each module presents a particular topic, illustrated with musical examples, but divided into three parts, each of which could be used individually, as they address different audiences. The first part, "How Music Makes Sense," develops listening skills based on salient aspects of music: repetition, musical emphasis, form, expository vs. developmental passages, goal-oriented passages, temporal aspects of design, and "making music modern." The second part separates our various technical details, beginning with harmony, while the third part, "The Language of Transformation," synthesizes some of the skills gained earlier. The course is offered through OpenStax CNX, an initiative of Rice University, and is designed to be used online, with a flexible interface (more on the limitations of that below). The table of contents can be accessed from each page. I would recommend the latter parts of the text as adjuncts to music major courses in music history and musicianship.

Editorial Aspects (25 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the language of the textbook free of grammatical, spelling, usage, and typographical errors?						X
Is the textbook written in a clear, engaging style?						X
Does the textbook adhere to effective principles of design? (e.g. are pages latid0out and organized to be clear and visually engaging and effective? Are colors, font, and typography consistent and unified?)						X
Does the textbook include conventional editorial features? (e.g. a table of contents, glossary, citations and further references)						X
How effective are multimedia elements of the textbook? (e.g. graphics, animations, audio)					X	

Total Points: 24 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The many audio examples are embedded in the text for easy access (see below for issues). The textbook is also available in ebook and pdf (see below for issues).

- One of text's many strengths is a "listening gallery" that follows the presentation of each new topic; students are asked put new concepts into practice by interactively analyzing musical examples. But in most of the units, the answers to each query are given directly below the examples, rather than in a more effective javascript "popup" as in listening galleries 4, 6, et. al.

Usability (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the textbook compatible with standard and commonly available hardware/software in college/university campus student computer labs?						X
Is the textbook accessible in a variety of different electronic formats? (e.g. .txt, .pdf, .epub, etc.)					X	
Can the textbook be printed easily?				X		
Does the user interface implicitly inform the reader how to interact with and navigate the textbook?						X
How easily can the textbook be annotated by students and instructors?		X				

Total Points: 18 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.

- Audio examples rely upon macromedia flash, and thus will not work on Apple tablets or phones. I had problems with loading all of the examples in my browser (ideally a future iteration of this course would rewrite the interface in HTML 5). Musical examples are not embedded in the epub or pdf versions of the text; the epub contains links that bring the reader to the original web page, while the pdf version links directly to mp3 files, and thus would be the preferred format for users without flash. The link to download the files in html format does not provide a useable output. Regardless, clever instructors could extract portions of the course for their own use.

Overall Ratings						
	Not at all (0 pts)	Very Weak (1 pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3 pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
What is your overall impression of the textbook?						X
	Not at all (0 pts)	Strong reservations (1 pt)	Limited willingness (2 pts)	Willing (3 pts)	Strongly willing (4 pts)	Enthusiastically willing (5 pts)
How willing would you be to adopt this book?						X

Total Points: 10 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?

- I intend to recommend this textbook to all of my colleagues. I believe it provides a superior introduction to listening skills that would benefit   students in music appreciation courses with no previous instruction in music, but it also serves music majors, many of whom arrive at university with poor listening skills and little exposure to complex repertoire. I plan to incorporate parts of it into my future music theory and musicianship classes.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?
- As noted above, the only changes I'd make are technical: a revision of flash-based audio examples to a format that works more widely. As a course focused squarely on listening skills, the text offered needs no improvement, although many instructors will want to use it as an adjunct text rather than the primary focus of a course, should they also wish to teach music in a historical/social context.

We invite you to add your feedback on the textbook or the review to the textbook site in MERLOT
(Please register in MERLOT to post your feedback.)

CALIFORNIA
OER
COUNCIL
CSU + CCC + UC

For questions or more information, contact the CA Open Educational Resources Council.