

## Incorporating Music Theory into a Capstone Presentation

### I. What information to include in your outline

- A. Overall form of the piece you are discussing
  - 1. Name of the form
  - 2. Main sections of that form, with measure numbers
- B. Important themes
  - 1. The motivic basis for those themes (*if applicable*)
  - 2. The phrase & period structure of those themes
  - 3. Interesting melodic & harmonic features of those themes
- C. Important key centers, and how they relate to the form
  - 1. Learn to discern *important* key centers from keys that are part of rapid, unstable tonal motion
    - a. Number and strength of cadences in a certain key
    - b. Length of time the piece remains in that key
    - c. If the arrival of that key lines up with a new section in the form
  - 2. Discuss significant and/or interesting modulatory techniques to move from one key center to another (*always include measure numbers*)
- D. Interesting and/or unusual techniques within the piece
  - 1. Departures from standard forms or key relationships
  - 2. Tonal, motivic, or thematic relationships between sections and/or movements
  - 3. Techniques that are not typical of the composer's style
  - 4. EMBRACE THE UNUSUAL!

### II. How to verbally discuss your information

- A. Develop a coherent **thesis**
  - 1. The thesis is the overall point you are trying to make and/or the general purpose of your discussion
  - 2. The thesis should be clearly stated within your introductory comments
  - 3. The rest of your discussion should support and further clarify this thesis
- B. **Move from large, overall concepts to small, specific concepts**
- C. Avoid the trap of "measure-to-measure" speaking in music theory discussions
  - 1. Most chord progressions are unimportant and uninteresting
  - 2. Discuss themes, periods & phrases instead
  - 3. For small details, highlight motives or unusual chords that make the piece

#### IV. Plagiarism risks

##### A. Concept of Plagiarism

1. Using the words or ideas of another person without proper attribution
2. Less likely with music theory information than music history, but still possible

##### B. Proper attribution

1. If you are quoting from another source, or using information learned from another source, make sure to mention it on your outline AND in your discussion

##### C. When attribution is necessary

1. When directly quoting a source
  - a. EXAMPLE: As H.C.R. Landon stated, "The London symphonies of Haydn are the pinnacle of his symphonic writing."
2. When *closely* paraphrasing a source (same information *and* sentence structure)
  - a. EXAMPLE: H.C.R. Landon stated that the London Symphonies of Haydn are the high point of his symphonic style.
3. When making a controversial statement
  - a. EXAMPLE: Haydn's London Symphonies clearly show that he was heavily intoxicated with gin.

##### D. When attribution is *not* necessary

1. When mentioning straightforward details from a musical score
  - a. EXAMPLE: Measure 10 has a C major chord.
2. When making a commonly known or non-controversial statement
  - a. EXAMPLE: J.S. Bach was born in 1685.

##### E. Advice for avoiding plagiarism

1. Take notes from your sources *away from a computer*. Hand-write them onto index cards or into a notebook
2. Always write the bibliographic information for your source at the top of your notes, in case you wish to quote it or just look it up again later
3. Write your paper from your *notes*, never directly from your sources
4. Avoid copy and paste at all costs, even if you plan to "put it in your own words" later

## EXAMPLE OF A POOR CAPSTONE OUTLINE APPROACH

### Beethoven, "Pathétique" Sonata, op 13, Movement 2

#### I. Chords for opening theme

- A. Measure 1: I to V  $4/2$  chord.
- B. Measure 2: I6 to V  $6/5$ .
- C. Measure 3: I – V6 – vi – V  $4/3$  of V
- D. Measure 4: V
- E. Measure 5: vii $\emptyset$  $4/3$  to V $4/2$ .
- F. Measure 6: I6 to V7/ii
- G. Measure 7: ii to V7
- H. Measure 8: I

*(et cetera...)*

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## EXAMPLE OF A BETTER OUTLINE APPROACH

### Beethoven, "Pathétique" Sonata, op 13, Movement 2

#### I. Overall Form

- A. Five-part rondo
  - 1. A at m. 1
    - a. Key of Ab Major
  - 2. B at m. 17
    - a. Key of f minor
  - 3. A' at m. 29
    - a. Key of Ab Major
  - 4. C at m. 37
    - a. Key of ab minor transitioning to E Major
  - 5. A'' at m. 51
    - a. Key of Ab Major

#### II. Important Themes

- A. The A Theme
  - 1. Continuous contrasting period
  - 2. 4-measure phrases
  - 3. Lyrical, with a dramatically-climbing character
  - 4. Tonic anticipation in the bass underneath a dominant 7th chord (m. 8)

*(et cetera...)*

## EXAMPLE OF A POOR CAPSTONE THEORY DISCUSSION

### Beethoven, "Pathetique" Sonata, op 13, Movement 2

"The second movement of Beethoven's "Pathetique" Sonata is quite interesting. It has a lot of good chords and key changes.

The first measure has a I chord that moves to a V2 chord. Then, in measure 2, a I6 moves to a V6-5. This is followed by I – V6 – vi – V4-3/V in measure 3. Measure 4 is a V chord. Measure 5 has a vii half-diminished 4-3 moving to a V2. Measure 6 is I6 to V7/ii, and measure 7 is ii moving to V7. Measure 8 has a I chord, and this completes the opening theme. The opening theme is a contrasting period.

Measure 9 has a I chord that moves to a V2 chord. Then, in measure 10, a I6 moves to a V6-5. This is followed by I – V6 – vi – V4-3/V in measure 11. Measure 12 is a V chord. Measure 13 has a vii half-diminished 4-3 moving to a V2. Measure 14 is I6 to V7/ii, and measure 15 is ii moving to V7. Measure 16 has a I chord, and this completes the second period."

*(et cetera...)*

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## EXAMPLE OF A BETTER THEORY DISCUSSION

### Beethoven, "Pathetique" Sonata, op 13, Movement 2

"The second movement of Beethoven's "Pathetique" Sonata provides a calm contrast to the energy and pathos of the first movement. However, beyond the lyricism and generally calm tone of the music, Beethoven continues his rule-bending experiments with formal expectations of the Classical Period. The most obvious of these experiments is the overall form of the movement itself. The second movement is organized as a five-part rondo, where most second movements are written either in ternary form or theme and variations form. Beethoven also uses unusual techniques to move between keys, including a particularly interesting and sudden modulation to a foreign key within the C section.

The movement opens in Ab major with a lyrical and dramatically climbing theme. It is structured as a continuous contrasting period, with 4-measure phrases. Of particular note is the use of a tonic anticipation in the bass underneath a dominant seventh chord at the end of the period (measure 8). This dissonance heightens the sense of lyricism, as do the triplets that follow. Measures 9 through 16 repeat this theme an octave higher, with an identical accompaniment and phrase structure.

What follows is the first of Beethoven's unusual modulations. The note C is used in a common-tone modulation, moving the music from Ab major to F minor. The music only stays in this tonal area for about 3 measures, however, serving more as a tonicization of F. After these few measures, F minor is treated as a supertonic (ii) harmony, leading eventually to a strong cadence in Eb major at measure 23."

*(et cetera...)*

A  $\text{A}^{\flat} \text{M}$

Adagio cantabile.

II

Handwritten musical notation for measures 1-4. The score is in G-flat major (two flats) and 3/4 time. The tempo is Adagio cantabile. The dynamics are marked *p*. The bass line includes handwritten chord symbols: I,  $\text{V}^{\flat}2$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}5$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat} (\text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat} \text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat})$ , and  $\text{V}^{\flat}$ .

Handwritten musical notation for measures 5-8. Measure 5 is circled with the number 5. The bass line includes handwritten chord symbols:  $\text{VI}^{\flat}3$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}2$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat} \text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat}$ , and  $\text{V}^{\flat}7$ .

Handwritten musical notation for measures 9-12. Measure 9 is circled with the number 9. The bass line includes handwritten chord symbols: I,  $\text{V}^{\flat}2$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}5$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat} (\text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat} \text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat})$ , and  $\text{V}^{\flat}$ .

Handwritten musical notation for measures 13-16. Measure 13 is circled with the number 13. The bass line includes handwritten chord symbols:  $\text{VI}^{\flat}3$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}2$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat} \text{V}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat}$ , and  $\text{V}^{\flat}7$ .

Handwritten musical notation for measures 17-20. Measure 17 is circled with the number 17. The bass line includes handwritten notes:  $\text{mi} = \text{sol}$ ,  $\text{Common tone Mod}$ ,  $\text{Fm}^{\flat} \text{I}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}5$ ,  $\text{Eb}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}$ , and  $\text{VII}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat}$ .

Handwritten musical notation for measures 21-24. Measure 21 is circled with the number 21. The bass line includes handwritten chord symbols:  $\text{VI}^{\flat} \text{VI}^{\flat}5$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat}6$ ,  $\text{V}^{\flat}7$ ,  $\text{I}^{\flat}$ , and  $\text{V}^{\flat}7$ . The word *cresc.* is written in the right margin.