

Dictation Journal

The ability to write down music that you hear is an incredible tool to possess. It is something that the Creative Music Theory classes at the Longy School of Music strive to help each student achieve. The Dictation Journal will be your record of progress through the year in mastering this tool.

The first thing here is a guide to taking dictation, and you'll notice that it is called "dictation analysis." The reason for that name is that if one really hears, remembers, and understands the features of a melody, one can write it down pretty quickly. And the way one comes to understand what something is made of is through analysis. Notice how far down the list it is before you come across the direction to "write the dictation"!

Dictation analysis

1. Is this melody in major or minor mode?
2. What kind or kinds of minor are used?
3. Listen to the last note, identify tonic.
4. Recall a key signature for this key, write it.
5. Guess the meter, check your guess with conducting.
6. Conduct to define number of measures.
7. Write a time signature, prepare space for writing dictation (divide staves with bar lines, make a double line at the end).
8. Identify structure or form of the dictation: can you divide it in parts?
How many parts do you hear?
9. Are these parts similar or different?
10. Does the dictation end on a stable note, is it tonic? Write the last note.
11. Does it also begin on tonic? Write the beginning note.
12. Listen to endings of other parts or cadences, identify their endings, write them.
13. Identify the lowest and the highest notes.
14. Are there any patterns in the melody?
15. Are there any rhythm patterns?
16. Identify specific rhythms, if there are any (syncopations, dotted rhythm).
17. Sing rhythm of the dictation.
18. Write the rhythm above the dictation.
19. How does the melody develop: does it jump, ascend, descend?
20. Write the dictation.
21. Check your writing to make sure it includes all things analyzed.