

The boundary between art and science may appear a fixed and precise border: the objective and logical focus of science traditionally stands opposite the subjective and aesthetic aspect of art. Yet science and art share much in common, both functioning as human efforts to imitate, recreate, or understand the natural world. The term “art” itself can imply a pragmatic approach to a discipline (*The Art of War* or *The Art of Electronics* for example), an approach attained through study, observation, and practice—methods strikingly similar to those of science. Thus science and art are inexorably linked, a connection especially evinced through music theory.

Schenker once wrote “music is always an art—in its composition, in its performance, even in its history. Under no circumstance is it a science.” Noticeably absent from Schenker’s aphorism, however, is any mention of music theory. Certainly Schenker attempts to warn against applying formulaic, numerically consistent approaches to music, but such a broad discounting of scientific methods seems untenable. The definition of science—the identification, description, investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena—doubles easily as a definition for music theory.

This inherent overlap between art and science in the study of music has consistently acted as an underlying motive in my academic pursuits. Transferring to the music department at Cornell from a biochemistry major, I concentrated on theory and composition in the hope of more completely comprehending the procedures of how to write music. My senior thesis of a forty-minute symphonic composition, however, left me feeling that while I could work through the writing of complicated forms and counterpoint, most of my compositional process was still trial and error.

Such intrinsic mysteries of musical creation vexed my scientific side. In a search for satisfaction, I enrolled in a Master’s program at NYU for music technology. The study of music technology offered a chance to understand the nature of recording, which, since its invention, has played a major role in the art of composition itself, particularly with more contemporary styles. My focus at NYU was tonmeister studies, a discipline interweaving science and art through an emphasis on the coordination of technical demands and musical skills in audio engineering. I also recently completed a degree in Electronics Engineering via distance learning. While this recent educational foray might seem an academic lark, the two years of devoted, solitary study helped bring my audio engineering abilities to a high level of technical proficiency.

While my education has been a balance of art and science, a purely academic track tends to emphasize theory over practice. Augmenting my NYU degree with real-world elements, I worked as a technical engineer at Right Track Recording. From famous solo artists to major motion picture orchestral soundtracks, the breadth of projects at Right Track forged my training into a skill, a skill further burnished by my current post at the New School. My artistic side mimics this technical seasoning via a similar pragmatism, as I have composed music for a variety of theater productions, films, and radio stories since Cornell, as well as written, arranged, and recorded hundreds of songs, each its own

small experiment in form. Coupled with a classical training in cello and piano, my agility and ability on guitar and bass allow me to directly tackle composition and analysis in a multitude of genres.

Through advanced studies in music theory, I hope to continue my attempts at unraveling the undocumented techniques of music composition. Music theory ultimately encompasses a two pronged approach: the first a theoretical, reductive method and the second a practical, constructive corollary. I am an adherent to the spirit of Schenkerian reductions, especially as codified by Salzer, but feel the graphical notation could be streamlined somewhat to better elucidate compositional processes across large bodies of work. Specifically, I am interested in more closely tracing the harmonic and contrapuntal tools used in Baroque dance suites, chorales, and other forms from that era. Such research heeds William Rothstein's call for Schenkerians to "not only acknowledge but investigate the differences between individual idioms, between genres, and between historical periods," an analytical challenge first posed by Schenker himself. American Schenkerism, first nurtured at Mannes, has migrated across town to CUNY and there flourished into a musical institution. The depth of adept Schenkerian practitioners on The Graduate Center's faculty is a strongly attractive facet of the program.

As the duality of art and science drives my interest in music theory, a duality of genres underpins my musical focus, too. Years of songwriting have led me to see patterns in song structure, especially as to how different types of germinal phrases engender certain formal constructions. Songwriting also provides a compelling analytical situation in that thousands of examples exist, all attempting to resolve the same basic compositional issues, yet research has often relied on a piece-by-piece approach instead of a broader comparative overview. Much as how Riemann saw professional musicians as necessarily overtaking the discipline of music history from "philologists and lawyers" a century ago, the study of modern songwriting is currently branching out from mere social and cultural commentary to encompass all aspects of analysis and thus requires theorists with more than simply superficial compositional experience in and knowledge of those styles. This perspective adds strength to Mark Spicer's declaration that "...the analysis of pop and rock music has now jettisoned its renegade status to become one of the hottest sub-disciplines in [music theory]."

Combined with my expertise in music technology, a terminal degree in music theory would make me a strong applicant for a collegiate teaching position, extending a pedagogical tradition in music that includes my grandfather, grandmother, mother, and brother. At the same time, a PhD program and eventual faculty post would cultivate the large-scale analytical research needed to resolve my theoretical interests. So, like the equilibrium between pedagogy and research, practice and theory, or art and science, doctoral study in music theory would create a unique intersection at which I could further navigate towards understanding and explaining the mechanics of musical creation.