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Who is Allowed to Be a Music Theorist? Sarah Mary Fitton and *Conversations on Harmony* (1855)*

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ABSTRACT: As a field, we must work to recognize and elevate music theorists traditionally excluded from our histories of music theory. In this article, I introduce and examine one such excluded figure, Sarah Mary Fitton (ca. 1792–1874). Fitton's *Conversations on Harmony* (1855), a series of dialogues between the fictitious young Edward and his mother, was popular with students and amateur musicians in Great Britain and France during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Study of her work (Shteir 1996; Rainbow 2009; Maust 2022) has centered almost exclusively on its pedagogical merit and not its music-theoretical content. I take Fitton's *Conversations* beyond its usual music-educational context: while affirming all of her work as music theory, I highlight Fitton's distinctive approach to augmented sixth chords, which encompasses generation, resolution, enharmonic reinterpretation, modulation, and chromatic-scale harmonization. Her work represents an important contribution to our historical understanding of chromatic harmony.

I also consider several crucial questions about Fitton and her *Conversations*. How might Fitton's gendered dialogue both reinforce and subvert contemporaneous stereotypes about gender and professionalism? Why has her pedagogically oriented *Conversations* been largely ignored by the field of music theory? Why do Fitton and other women—such as Anne Young (Raz 2018a, 2018b), Oliveria Prescott (Lumsden 2020, 2022), Nanine Chevé, Louisa Kirkman, Fannie Hughey, Clare Osborne Reed, and Amy Dommel-Diény—traditionally not count as music theorists? How can the study of these authors and those from other marginalized communities help us reframe our music-theoretical questions? How can such studies help us understand and reform our methods of discipline formation?

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Introduction

[0.1] "Why are C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, called the Scale of C?" This is the first question that little Edward poses to his mother in Sarah Mary Fitton's *Conversations on Harmony* (1855), a dialogic harmony manual written for young British students and amateur musicians.(1) Over the course of thirty-six dialogues or

"conversations," Edward and Mother progress from notes and scales to extended chords, enharmonic modulation, and florid melodic accompaniment in four parts. The book's author makes her purpose clear: she aims to "explain the rules of Harmony, in so simple a manner, as to bring their practical application within the reach of young students, and, also, to increase the pleasure of mere lovers of music, by enabling them to understand, in some degree, the theory of 'sweet sounds'" (Fitton 1855, v).

[0.2] Fitton's "theory of 'sweet sounds'" was a resounding success across Great Britain.(2) Contemporaneous reviews laud its "remarkable clearness" and "ingenious diagrams," which represent "a method eminently successful in awakening the interest, fixing the attention, and lessening the difficulties of youthful learners" (*Morning Post* 1855; *Daily News* 1855; *Sun* 1856). "This present publication," opens an anonymous review in *The Sun*, "evidently from the pen of a highly-gifted person, will be welcomed by all who desire to please the ear, and through the ear to afford delight to the mind" (1856). The reviews do not attempt to identify the manual's "highly-gifted" author, whose name does not appear on the title page.(3) Instead, they highlight its dedicatee, Cipriani Potter, principal of the Royal Academy of Music.(4) His approval of *Conversations on Harmony* "may be taken as a guarantee of its excellence" and "sterling merit" (*Morning Post* 1855; *Sun* 1856).

[0.3] Motivated by the success of her English-language book, Fitton swiftly published a French version: *Manuel pratique et élémentaire d'harmonie: à l'usage des pensionnats et des mères de famille* (1857). The *Manuel pratique* is much more than a translation; it is a complete reworking for an audience of female boarding school students and mothers.(5) Attributed to the gender-neutral "S. M. Fitton," the book bears a mark of approval from the Paris Conservatory and a dedication to Fromental Halévy, a respected composer and member of the Institut de France. Again, Fitton's work met with success: according to the *Revue et gazette musicale*, the first edition nearly sold out within three months of publication.(6) Several reviews from the time confirm a positive reception. Adrien de La Fage (1857, 131) lauds Mr. [*sic*] Fitton's clear presentation, thoughtful ordering of material, and particularly helpful coverage of the rule of the octave. Hector Berlioz extends even higher praise in a satirical review: he cautions that Mr. [*sic*] Fitton's "perfectly written" manual will certainly corrupt "the musical morality of young people and the safety of their parents and friends," inciting innocent female boarders "to compose sentimental romances, passionate airs, love scenes, even damnable and damned comic operas." Be warned, remarks Berlioz—over a thousand copies of the textbook have already been sold (1857, 228).

[0.4] Despite her work's international popularity, Sarah Mary Fitton has largely been forgotten. The Irish writer, also a co-author of the celebrated *Conversations on Botany* (1817), remains virtually unknown in scholarly circles.(7) The few existing studies on Fitton focus almost exclusively on her pedagogical contributions, emphasizing her clear instructional approach and effective use of dialogue form. Ann Shteir's (1996) discussion of *Conversations on Botany* highlights Fitton's pedagogical style and her male influences.(8) Shteir credits Fitton's brother William, a gentleman scientist who regularly hosted scientific *conversazioni* at the family home, with facilitating her botanical literacy. By virtue of her male guidance, Fitton's work is both "exemplary in substance" and "exemplary in method": she "educates the mother by giving her content and teaches her so that she can teach her children" (Shteir 1996, 91). Likewise, Bernarr Rainbow (2009, 247) describes *Conversations on Harmony* as a "domestic primer," "lesson-notes of a student teacher" "framed as to prompt the reader who wished to instruct a child to go about it methodically."(9) As detailed in Rainbow's account, Fitton's music-theoretical training "depend[ed] upon her upbringing as the younger daughter of a village clergyman of good family who had been educated at Eton and Oxford": her father, who made a "serious study of harmony as a youth," taught his daughter "all she knew" (2009, 245–47).(10) Following Shteir and Rainbow, Paula Maust (2022) emphasizes Fitton's role as an educator.(11) According to Maust, Fitton's explanations of quadruple meter and parallel perfect intervals in *Conversations on Harmony* testify to her "effective pedagogical strategies and her skillful prose." Maust does not discuss Fitton's music-theoretical contributions.

[0.5] In this article, I move the discussion of Fitton and her *Conversations on Harmony* beyond its usual music-educational context. Fitton's pedagogical acumen is certainly noteworthy, as Shteir, Rainbow, and Maust rightfully attest. But she is much more than an exemplary educator: her work as a music theorist should be recognized. This shift is long overdue. Why should other instructional dialogues—such as Johann Joseph Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725), Joseph Riepel's *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst* (1752–68), and Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny's *La seule vraie théorie de la musique* (1821)—warrant critical study while Fitton's *Conversations on Harmony* does not?(12)

[0.6] This article proceeds in three parts. First, I provide a brief introduction to Fitton's background and her harmony manual, both of which are practically unknown within the music-theory community. Then, I examine Fitton's distinctive approach to augmented sixth chords, which encompasses generation, resolution, enharmonic reinterpretation, modulation, and chromatic-scale harmonization. While affirming all sections of Fitton's *Conversations* as music theory, I intentionally highlight her music-theoretical inventiveness: her work on augmented sixth chords represents an important contribution to our historical understanding of chromatic harmony.(13) Finally, I suggest several historiographical lessons that we can draw from Fitton and her *Conversations on Harmony*. Why does the work of Fitton and other marginalized figures typically not count as music theory?(14) What does her modern reception tell us about our field's construction of historical narratives? What can her story reveal about the values that underwrite our methods of discipline formation?

1. Sarah Mary Fitton and Conversations on Harmony (1855)

[1.1] Almost nothing is known about Fitton's early life or musical training. She was born in the early 1790s in Dublin, Ireland.(15) An entry on Fitton's brother in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that the family relocated to England around 1809, spending several years in London and Northampton.(16) The specific details of Fitton's time in England are unknown. Her dedication of *Conversations on Harmony* to Cipriani Potter suggests a possible affiliation with the Royal Academy of Music; however, to my knowledge, no records link Fitton to the Academy.(17) She may have studied music privately with an Academy professor, but this cannot be confirmed.

[1.2] At some point, Fitton moved to France.(18) While clearly devised as a fictional coming-of-age novel, Fitton's *How I Became a Governess* (1861) could have been inspired by her own experiences working abroad: during the nineteenth century, many British women were employed as governesses in France, where they enjoyed cheaper living costs and generous wages.(19) By the 1860s, Christina de Bellaigue remarks, "the number of English teachers in Paris was so large that it was feared that many would not find work" (2007, 207). Several letters written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning confirm Fitton's Paris residence; in a letter dated May 29–30, 1852, the poet notes that "Miss Fitton had lived in Paris above twenty years & knew everybody" (quoted in Lewis 2000, 484).(20) Fitton apparently called Paris home for the rest of her life: she died on March 30, 1874, at 15, rue de la Ville-l'Évêque.(21)

[1.3] Fitton had a successful career as a writer of educational texts and children's books. Her best-known work is *Conversations on Botany* (1817), distributed in nine editions between 1817 and 1840. Fitton's earlier *Conversations* shares several features with *Conversations on Harmony*: beyond their similar titles, both books were published anonymously, employ dialogic form, and feature Edward and Mother as main characters. However, while *Conversations on Harmony* addresses both children and amateurs, *Conversations on Botany* is written expressly for children. The botany manual is also much shorter, comprising eighteen conversations in comparison to the thirty-six included in *Conversations on Harmony*. Furthermore, Fitton's discussion of botany is largely derivative, as she adapts William Withering's version of the Linnaean biological taxonomy.(22) In contrast, Fitton does not reference any outside sources or systems in *Conversations on Harmony*.

[1.4] The success of *Conversations on Botany* reflects botany's widespread popularity during the Victorian age.(23) Botany should "form a favourite subject of study for females," writes Emily Marshall in *Woman's Worth, or Hints to Raise the Female Character* (1844). "Indeed there is scarcely one so beautiful or congenial to the female mind" ([Marshall] 1844, 82). Beyond giving "pleasure to the mind," botanical pursuits were considered "healthy and invigorating," granting "to the body the inestimable blessing of health" (1844, 83). As Fitton explains in the preface to *Conversations on Botany*, "[botany] is not a science of parade, it affords occupation and infinite variety, it demands no bodily strength, it can be pursued in retirement; —there is no danger of its inflaming the imagination, because the mind is intent upon realities" (1817, iv–v).(24) Botanical study was considered especially important for mothers, who "would use nature's lessons to teach their families" about beauty, morality, and religion, among other topics (Von Glahn 2013, 14). The outdoors functioned as "an extension of the domestic sphere"; consequently, it was deemed "an acceptable place for women" (Von Glahn 2013, 14, 16).(25) As I discuss in the final section of this article, many nineteenth-century women—particularly middle- and upper-class white women—were subject to similar norms of social acceptability when engaging with music.

[1.5] Fitton published several other works after *Conversations on Botany*. In *The Four Seasons: A Short Account of the Structure of Plants* (1865), she adapts lectures given at the Working Men's Institute in Paris. Her short stories—often misattributed to a Mr. John Robertson—appear in *Household Words*, Charles Dickens's weekly literary magazine.(26) Fitton penned several fiction books, including *The Grateful Sparrow* (1859), *How I Became a Governess* (1861), *Dicky Birds* (1862), and *My Pretty Puss* (1866). In addition to *Conversations on Harmony* (1855), she also published *Little by Little: A Series of Graduated Lessons in the Art of Reading Music* (1863). While *Conversations on Harmony* offers comprehensive music-theoretical training, *Little by Little*—written for "young mothers with the hope that they may find it useful in teaching their children"—centers on piano playing and conveying "some slight knowledge of the theory of 'sweet sounds'" (Fitton 1863, i). This later music manual is not written in dialogue form. Beyond introducing many of the music-theoretical concepts from *Conversations on Harmony*, its ninety-one short lessons focus on piano-specific topics, notably fingerings and finger exercises.(27)

[1.6] The 248-page *Conversations on Harmony* is Fitton's most substantial music-theoretical work. **Example 1** shows the table of contents, which I divide into three main sections: music fundamentals, the basics of common-practice harmony and voice-leading, and advanced topics. The first section (Conversations 1–10) introduces notes, rhythm and meter, clefs, scales, intervals, and triads. The second section (Conversations 11–23) focuses on voice-leading, figured bass realization, and cadences. The third section (Conversations 24–36) covers various advanced topics, including extended chords, altered chords, augmented sixth chords, modulation, the rule of the octave, and florid melodic accompaniment in four parts. Augmented sixth chords first surface in the twenty-fifth conversation, which centers on altered chords. Fitton returns to the topic in the thirty-first conversation, where she discusses enharmonic reinterpretation and modulation. Her chromatic-scale harmonizations—several of which involve augmented sixth chords—appear in the thirty-second conversation, which examines the rule of the octave and the accompaniment of diatonic and chromatic scales.

[1.7] While not explicitly modeled after *Gradus ad Parnassum*, Fitton's dialogic construction recalls Fux's approach, albeit with teacher and student replaced by mother and son.(28) The conversations between Edward and Mother mirror those between Josephus and Aloysius: Edward typically asks short questions that elicit lengthy technical answers from Mother. However, unlike Fux's Josephus, Edward does not submit model compositions for the instructor's review. Mother—concerned with theoretical knowledge, not compositional practice—eschews error detection, arguably the cornerstone of Aloysius's pedagogical approach.(29)

[1.8] Beyond linking to Fuxian precedent, Fitton's *Conversations on Harmony* reflects a wider vogue for the "conversations" genre in nineteenth-century Britain. As Rainbow (2009, 245) describes, this "new type of elementary treatise" was popularized through Jane Marcet's *Conversations on Chemistry* (1805). Marcet subsequently wrote several other manuals in the format, including *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816), *Conversations on Natural Philosophy* (1819), *Conversations on the Evidences of Christianity* (1826), and *Conversations on Vegetable Physiology* (1829). The success of Marcet's books "prompted other anonymous writers to adopt both her manner of exposition and, perhaps somewhat less candidly, her use of *Conversations* as a title" (Rainbow 2009, 245). In her preface to *Conversations on Botany*, Fitton acknowledges Marcet's influence: "it may be due to the author of the admirable 'Conversations on Chemistry,' to state, that the title of the present volume was chosen, because it was the only one that seemed to be adapted to the nature of the subject, which had not been appropriated by previous writers" (1817, v). While Fitton borrows from a popular trope for *Conversations on Harmony*'s title, she does not borrow any of its content: as the next section of the article shows, Fitton's music-theoretical ideas are very much her own.

2. Fitton's Approach to Augmented Sixth Chords

[2.1] In this section, I provide a thorough overview of Fitton's unique approach to augmented sixth chords and their uses. In brief, Fitton derives augmented sixth chords from ascending and descending alterations of diminished triads, fully diminished seventh chords, dominant seventh chords, and minor triads. She focuses on linear processes rather than traditional scale-degree mapping and functional assignments. For Fitton, augmented sixth chords also trigger modulation and participate in various chromatic-scale harmonizations. As I discuss briefly at the end of this section, Fitton's ideas alternately align with and depart from those of her British contemporaries, most notably John Holden (1770), Anne Young (1803), William Crotch (1812), Louisa Kirkman (1845), and Alfred Day ([1845] 1855). To be clear, it is not known whether Fitton engaged

with any outside sources while writing *Conversations on Harmony*; she only references Cipriani Potter, who evidently provided her with "valuable suggestions" (1855, iii). However, this broader contextualization with contemporaneous music theory is necessary: it positions Fitton as an important voice in the historical conversation on augmented sixth chords.

[2.2] Fitton offers three methods of augmented-sixth-chord generation, all linked to alteration. She does not invoke John Wall Callcott's (1806) ethnic labels, which—as Daniel Harrison (1995, 182n29) remarks—did not become commonplace in British music-theoretical writing until the end of the nineteenth century.(30) Rather, she groups all three sonorities under the broad banner of "Chords of the Augmented Sixth" (Fitton 1855, 149).(31) To more closely reflect Fitton's wide-ranging conception of augmented sixth chords, I abstain from using the traditional French, Italian, and German monikers: instead, I refer to these sonorities as Aug1, Aug2, and Aug3, respectively.

[2.3] **Example 2** shows the first method. In the first progression, an Aug1 chord arises from a second-inversion dominant seventh chord with a lowered chordal fifth.(32) In the second progression, an Aug2 chord derives from a first-inversion diminished triad with a lowered chordal third. In the third progression, an Aug3 chord arises from a first-inversion fully diminished seventh chord with a lowered chordal third. Both Aug2 and Aug3 chords "have the leading tone for fundamental" (Fitton 1855, 149).(33) The D in each sonority is lowered to D♭; this note appears in the bass voice. Fitton's placement of D♭ in the bass aligns with her claim that "chords that are altered in descending are, principally, used in such of their inversions as have the altered note in the bass" (1855, 149).(34) All three augmented sixth chords resolve to a root-position C major triad.(35)

[2.4] After introducing the first method of generation, Fitton turns to voice-leading guidelines. While she does not demonstrate how to resolve augmented sixth chords, she does use arrows to highlight the parallel perfect fifths in the third progression of Example 2. Mother quickly reassures Edward: "this fault is overlooked because the harsh effect of the two fifths is, a good deal, softened by the movement of three of the parts which, simultaneously, descend a half tone." By contrast, a simultaneous descent by whole tone apparently would have made the effect of the parallel perfect fifths "much more disagreeable" (Fitton 1855, 191).

[2.5] As shown in **Example 3**, Fitton then provides a way to avoid this tricky situation entirely: a three-chord progression in which Aug3 transforms into Aug1, and Aug1 then resolves normatively to a root-position C major triad. This harmonic shift inserts a tritone between the two perfect fifths in the bass and alto voices, which are bracketed in the example. Surprisingly, Fitton does not suggest the conventional method for avoiding parallel perfect fifths; Mother never mentions to Edward that the Aug3 chord could resolve to a second-inversion triad or a cadential six-four.

[2.6] **Example 4** illustrates Fitton's second method of generation, which only involves the Aug3 chord. Mother explains that "when, in the chord of the dominant seventh, the seventh, only, is changed enharmonically, the chord is transformed into a chord of the augmented sixth" (Fitton 1855, 189). In Example 4, F4, the chordal seventh of the dominant seventh chord, is enharmonically reinterpreted as E♯4, which becomes the root of an Aug3 chord. Edward immediately objects to Mother's derivation of an augmented sixth chord via enharmonic reinterpretation, noting her apparent departure from the earlier alteration-focused approach. "I thought you said that the chord of the augmented sixth was either the second inversion of a chord of the dominant seventh, with the fifth altered in descending, or the first inversion of a chord of the seventh degree, with the third altered in descending," he remarks (Fitton 1855, 189).(36) Mother clarifies that the Aug3 chord in Example 4 ultimately derives from a first-inversion fully diminished seventh chord with a lowered chordal third. The enharmonic reinterpretation functions as a surface-level shortcut, masking the actual derivation via alteration.

[2.7] **Example 5**,(37) almost immediately following Example 4 in the harmony manual, illustrates Mother's point. The first measure includes a root-position E♯ fully diminished seventh chord. Arrows show the minor third (E♯3 to G♯4) between the bass and tenor voices. In the second measure, this interval, again marked with arrows, inverts to a sixth. Furthermore, G♯ falls to G natural: the change from a major sixth to an augmented sixth results in an Aug3 chord. (Note the typo on Example 5: the Aug3 chord is in first inversion, not in third inversion; Fitton provides the correct inversion in the text.) Therefore, the augmented sixth sonority does not arise from the enharmonic reinterpretation of F as E♯ but from the alteration downwards of G♯ to G natural,

an approach taken in the first method of generation. Linking to her previous discussion of parallel perfect fifths, Fitton transforms the Aug3 chord into an Aug1 chord at the end of the second measure: C♯5 replaces D5, avoiding parallel perfect fifths (G3 to D5, F♯3 to C♯5) between the bass and alto voices. Following the models in Example 2, the Aug1 chord resolves to a root-position major triad positioned a half step below.

[2.8] **Example 6** illustrates Fitton's third method of generation, which focuses on the Aug2 chord.[(38)] She shows a root-position A minor triad in (1.) and a first-inversion A minor triad in (2.); in both measures, A4 is in the soprano voice. In (3.), the soprano voice rises to A♯4 while the other voices hold: consequently, the major sixth bracketed in (2.) becomes an augmented sixth in (3.). This procedure, featuring a raised fundamental, reverses the process in the first two methods, where the bottom note of a major sixth descends a half step to create an augmented sixth. Ever the perceptive student, Edward asks if he can apply the same method to a first-inversion major triad. No, Mother explains—the minor sixth would expand to a major sixth, creating a diminished triad, not an augmented sixth chord.

[2.9] Augmented sixth chords also play important roles in Fitton's theory of modulation. Mother begins the discussion of modulation by telling Edward that "any transition from one scale into another scale is called Modulation" (Fitton 1855, 152). She presents three varieties: "Modulation into a Relative Scale," "Modulation into a Distant Scale," and "Half Modulation."[(39)] When discussing the enharmonic reinterpretation in Example 4, Mother remarks that "this transformation of a chord of the dominant seventh into a chord of the augmented sixth, enables us to modulate into very distant scales" (Fitton 1855, 189). However, the augmented sixth chord does more than induce movement to distant scales; Mother notes that "we can use it [the augmented sixth chord] to modulate from one scale into *all the others*" (Fitton 1855, 190; italics added). Furthermore, any type of augmented sixth chord—if placed "immediately after a chord of the tonic"—initiates modulation (Fitton 1855, 190). This statement aligns with Mother's earlier claim that "any chord of which the fundamental is either the dominant or the leading note of a scale, may be used in modulating" (Fitton 1855, 164).

[2.10] **Example 7** demonstrates the role of augmented sixth chords in modulation. The example shows the first two modulating progressions in a series of twelve; the following ten progressions illustrate the same modulatory process for the remaining diatonic and chromatic keys (Fitton 1855, 190–91).[(40)] The first progression (1.) shows modulation from C major to C minor. The initial root-position C major triad and subsequent Aug3 chord, boxed in the example, trigger this modulation. Fitton uses arrows to mark the parallel perfect fifths, which are acceptable here because the soprano, tenor, and bass voices descend by half step. The second progression (2.) modulates from C major to D major. The initial root-position C major triad and subsequent Aug1 chord, also boxed, initiate modulation. Not surprisingly, both augmented sixth chords resolve to root-position major triads a half step below.

[2.11] Fitton's coverage of augmented sixth chords extends beyond generation, resolution, and modulation: augmented sixth sonorities also feature in her inventive harmonizations of the chromatic scale. Mother explains that while the diatonic scale has a fixed rule, the chromatic scale does not, as "a chromatic scale is, in reality, a succession, by half tones, of every musical sound" (Fitton 1855, 196). Therefore, the harmonization represents "a succession of unfinished modulations" (Fitton 1855, 196). New diatonic collections, while constantly suggested by chromatic pitch classes, are always deferred. Precocious Edward notes that Mother's exercises in chromatic-scale harmonization depart from musical practice, as "we seldom meet with an entire scale, completely accompanied, in music for the pianoforte" (Fitton 1855, 199). While acknowledging the artificiality of these studies, Edward recognizes their pedagogical merit. "The music I play will be much more interesting than it used to be," he admits at the end of the thirty-second conversation, "now that I begin to see how each note helps to form a chord of some kind" (Fitton 1855, 199).

[2.12] Three of Fitton's six chromatic-scale harmonizations feature augmented sixth chords.[(41)] **Example 8** includes two augmented sixth chords, both boxed: an Aug3 chord resolves to a D major triad, and an Aug2 chord resolves to a C major triad. Per Fitton's usual practice, both chords resolve downward by half step in the bass to a root-position major triad. The Aug3 chord derives from the preceding E fully diminished seventh chord; G4, D♭4 (enharmonically reinterpreted as C♯4), and B♭3 hold while the bass falls from E3 to E♭3. The Aug2 chord, theoretically derived from an altered B diminished triad or an altered B♭ minor triad, comes directly from a D major triad and resolves to a root-position C major triad. **Example 9** features the Aug1

chord: boxed in the example, Aug1 chords alternate with root-position major triads positioned a half step below.(42)

[2.13] Fitton also uses augmented sixth chords in various omnibus and passacaglia progressions. **Example 10** shows her harmonization of an ascending chromatic scale on C. While not containing augmented sixth chords, this example sets up the forthcoming discussion of Example 11, where augmented sixth chords feature. The first and last five measures comprise an ascending chromatic sequence with applied chords. Boxed in the example, the middle three measures prolong a dominant seventh chord through what I call—adapting Paula Telesco's (1998) term—a reverse small omnibus. A second-inversion B minor triad passes between third-inversion and root-position versions of a dominant seventh chord. B4 and D4 function as common tones throughout; the alto and bass voices form a voice exchange.

[2.14] **Example 11**, showing Fitton's harmonization of a descending chromatic scale on G, extends her initial omnibus procedure via a classic omnibus progression. In the right-hand box, the progression (tonicizing C major) begins with a first-inversion dominant triad, not the conventional first-inversion dominant seventh chord: F5, the chordal seventh, enters with the second chord and continues for the rest of the progression. D5 and F5 hold throughout; the bass and soprano voices participate in a voice exchange. Fitton balances this classic omnibus with a chromatic harmonization of the passacaglia bassline, shown in the left-hand box.(43) The bassline continues chromatically beyond the dominant scale degree, denying the passacaglia progression's typical harmonic goal: a root-position $V^{(7)}$ chord. Note that the initial tonicization of C major in mm. 3–4 foreshadows the extended tonicization of the same key via the classic omnibus progression in mm. 9–13.

[2.15] Fitton's approach to augmented sixth chords both aligns with and departs from ideas circulated in contemporaneous British music theory texts.(44) Notably, her coverage is much more comprehensive than that of most of her peers; beyond the typical topics of generation and resolution, she addresses enharmonic reinterpretation, modulation, and chromatic-scale harmonization.(45) To my knowledge, her chromatic-scale harmonizations find no precedent in British treatises from the time.(46) Her harmonizations vaguely recall those in Georg Joseph Vogler's *Gründe der Kuhrpfälzischen Tonschule in Beyspielen* ([1776] 1778) and *Handbuch zur Harmonielehre und für den Generalbass* (1802), shown in **Examples 12**(47) and **13**, respectively.(48) However, Fitton's contributions stand apart. Departing from Vogler's practice, her harmonizations do not represent modified extended omnibus progressions; furthermore, her fourth and fifth harmonizations include the Aug1 chord, which does not appear in Vogler's harmonizations.(49)

[2.16] Fitton's alteration-focused method of augmented sixth chord generation also intersects with work by compatriots Holden (1770), Young (1803), Crotch (1812), and Kirkman (1845), all of whom view augmented sixth chords as altered diatonic sonorities.(50) According to Holden, an augmented sixth chord arises when a diatonic chord is modified via "license" to include an "extreme interval": "if the flat 6th be in the bass, and the ♯4th in an upper part, the chord will consist of an *extreme sharp sixth* . . . This last chord has been called the *Italian sixth*; probably because they [the Italians] first introduced it" (1770, 100; italics original).(51) Similarly, Young's "chord of the superfluous sixth" "is a license in the use of the first inversion of the subdominant chord, in the minor mode, when that is to pass into the perfect chord of the 5th, or dominant" (1803, 218–19). Young does not use the "Italian" label: she merely explains that the chord "consists in sharpening the note which is 4th of the scale, or 8ve to the fundamental, while the bass note, the 6th of the scale, remains unaltered" (1803, 219).(52) Crotch aligns with Holden's and Young's methods, explaining that "the Italian, German, and French sixes are extreme sharp, both in the major and minor key; and are inversions of the triad of Fa" (1812, 71).(53) Kirkman only identifies one augmented sixth chord, which is "merely a modification of the chord of 4/3, (second inversion of the dominant seventh)"; "the bass note [is] accidentally depressed a semitone, augmenting the sixth in the chord, from which it derives its name" (1845, 37). While not following Day's ([1845] 1855) unorthodox generation of augmented sixth chords via the overtone series, Fitton's consistent resolution of her augmented sixth chords to a root-position triad mirrors his approach, which offers the same resolution.(54)

3. Concluding Thoughts and Questions

[3.1] Fitton offers much more than pedagogical clarity in *Conversations on Harmony*. She is doing music theory: her manual provides young students, amateur musicians, and their (presumably female) instructors with

comprehensive training in music fundamentals, the basics of common-practice harmony and voice-leading, and advanced topics. While her approach to augmented sixth chords merits particular attention for its depth of coverage and originality, all of Fitton's work reflects deep music-theoretical thought. Her contributions—along with those of other marginalized figures, female and otherwise—should be recognized, celebrated, and foregrounded within our decentered histories of music theory.

[3.2] In this section, I examine several crucial questions raised by Fitton's work. First, how might Fitton's choice of gender roles intersect with contemporaneous stereotypes about gender and professionalism? As Paula Gillett (2000, 3) describes, nineteenth-century British society was "sharply divided by gender." In all areas of life, women "were subjected to the domination of the unfair sex"; "the law undoubtedly regarded almost every woman as under tutelage to some man, usually father or husband" (Perkin 1989, 1).(55) Women were considered physically, mentally, and emotionally fragile by nature: they "needed men to play the role of 'sturdy tree' to which their 'vine' could cling" (de Groot 2002, 99).(56) Put more bluntly, "women remained virtual chattels in the hands of their fathers, and later, their husbands" (Gay 1984, 174).

[3.3] As a result, many nineteenth-century British women—specifically middle- and upper-class white women—were restricted from the male-dominated public sphere and relegated to the home.(57) This widespread "cult of domesticity," writes Deborah Gorham, "assigned to women both a separate sphere and a distinct set of roles" (1982, 4). Consider the so-called "Angel in the House": this idealized woman was a meek, submissive, and comprehensively feminine figure wholly consumed with cultivating a domestic haven for her family.(58) While inhabited by women and children, this private sphere centered on men; it acted as "a place for renewal . . . after their rigorous activities in the harsh, competitive public sphere" (Gorham 1982, 4). Women were expected to relish their place within the confines of the home and live as contented homemakers under male authority.

[3.4] To be sure, the "Angel in the House" ideal did not apply to all nineteenth-century British women. "Women were seen as delicate and located within the home in the Victorian domestic ideology," writes Radhika Mohanram, but "the reality was something different, given that vast numbers of women did *not* comply with the dominant ideology and worked outside their home for a living" (2007, 27; 32–33; italics original). Mohanram cites a 33-percent increase in British female domestic servants between 1851 and 1881, noting that "in short, millions of working-class women participated in heavy manual labor" (2007, 27). Nancy Reich comments that the "cult of domesticity" "caused considerable conflict for professional women musicians": while recognizing their social deviance, they continued to work outside the home, as "earning money was a real necessity" (1993, 132).(59)

[3.5] These attitudes deeply influenced how white women of a certain class privilege engaged with music, both as amateurs and professionals. Women were certainly encouraged to play and teach music within their "allotted sphere" (Hyde 1998, 1); for instance, "a moderate level of skill at the piano was the core element in the 'accomplishment' curriculum of the well-bred girl, and an important prerequisite to success in the marriage market" (Gillett 2000, 4).(60) Ruth Solie points out that piano playing "had become thoroughly associated with young women by the middle of the nineteenth century; for better or worse, the piano-girl was ubiquitous" (2004, 89).(61) However, a well-to-do woman was discouraged from making music her profession.(62) As Matilda Pullan (1855, 81) proclaims in her *Maternal Counsels to a Daughter*: "Who would wish a wife or daughter, moving in private society, to have attained such excellence in music as involves a life's devotion to it"?

[3.6] According to Gillett, the negative perception of female music professionals was largely driven by the widespread "belief that women [with music careers] compromised respectability by making themselves objects of the public—that is, of the male—gaze" (2000, 7). John Tosh (2005, 37) identifies a deeper issue, one tied to "the gender coding of the world of work." While men readily accepted "the reality of women's labor in the domestic setting as servants or home-workers," they could not allow women to be paid workers outside of the home. Tosh explains that this refusal to admit women to the workplace did not stem from the fear that "there might be less work (or less well-paid work)" for men. Rather, these men feared that "their masculine identity as the working sex was at stake" (Tosh 2005, 37).

[3.7] In constructing her *Conversations* as a dialogue between mother and son, Fitton both reinforces and subverts these contemporaneous attitudes toward gender and professionalism. On the one hand, she portrays Mother as an "Angel in the House": fulfilling her familial role, Mother, presumably an amateur musician,

dutifully teaches her son the requisite music-theoretical concepts and analytical skills. This instruction takes place within the confines of the family home, Mother's designated domain. On the other hand, Fitton characterizes Mother as a highly trained, intellectually gifted, and pedagogically savvy instructor. To recall Pullan (1855, 81), Mother exhibits "excellence in music"; she expertly explains a wide variety of music-theoretical topics without outside aids.

[3.8] Fitton's mother/son casting also represents a striking departure from the student/teacher pairings in other nineteenth-century dialogic textbooks, where female teacher/male student duos rarely feature.(63) That Fitton includes Edward as a main character in her harmony manual is even more surprising given the subject at hand: at the time, music making and music teaching were viewed as highly effeminate endeavors, usually associated with women musicians.(64) In particular, "Victorian society rejected piano playing for the gentleman" (Burgan 1986, 60). Gillett notes that "piano-playing carried such strong feminine connotations that boys were often discouraged from studying the instrument" (2000, 5); as a result, piano instruction was generally "absent from male education" (Vorachek 2000, 26). This is certainly not the case for Edward, as both mother and son frequently reference the piano and piano playing.(65) "You must always play our examples on the pianoforte," Mother advises, "that you may understand perfectly what we are about" (Fitton 1855, 21). Perhaps the study of music theory—a rational and seemingly scientific subject befitting the Victorian male mind—justifies the learning of a characteristically feminine instrument.

[3.9] Furthermore, how have Fitton's gender and likely occupation as a governess affected her modern reception as a music theorist? Not surprisingly, misogynistic practices have played a role in Fitton's omission from our histories of music theory. Her work, published anonymously and praised on the merits of its male endorsers, has never been recognized for its music-theoretical contributions. While perhaps not an unequivocal barrier in her own era, Fitton's alleged position as a governess has likely not helped her modern reception. According to Bellaigue, governesses—especially those working during the first half of the nineteenth century—have historically been dismissed as "inexperienced and untrained amateurs," a negative reputation that needs "substantial modification" (2007, 231).

[3.10] Unaided by her supposed occupation, Fitton's work has been relegated to the educational arena, received as yet another unremarkable example of domestic pedagogical writing for young students, amateurs, and their instructors. Fitton has not benefitted from our field's historically anti-pedagogical mindset, which deems music-educational works too elementary to merit serious study.(66) These pedagogical offerings may not meet contemporary demands for significance, originality, and rigor. They may not employ academic language. They may not propose new technologies or feature virtuosic analyses; instead, they may rehearse common tropes or highlight ostensibly uncomplicated repertoire. Our field's degradation of music education has not been without consequence. We have shut out many music theorists and their ideas. Female music theorists, because of their frequent association with educational genres, have suffered particularly severe neglect from this bias against pedagogy. Fitton is just one of these victims: other pedagogically oriented writers —such Anne Young, Oliveria Prescott, Nanine Chevé, Louisa Kirkman, Fannie Hughey, Clare Osborne Reed, and Amy Dommel-Diény, to name just a few—have suffered similar fates.(67) The music theories of these women are not only "hidden," to borrow Thomas Christensen's ([2011] 2016, 69) description, but they themselves are invisible.(68)

[3.11] Thankfully, our notion of who counts in our histories of music theory has slowly begun to shift. Carmel Raz (2018a, 2018b) discusses Young, whose musical board games and 1803 treatise extend far beyond juvenile music pedagogy. Young's theoretical approach, comments Raz, "neither entirely reflected the musical practice of the day, nor disclosed its own grounding in earlier traditions of speculative thought" (2018b). Despite her work's originality, Young denies her own music-theoretical innovations, instead affording credit to two men: her brother Walter and the aforementioned theorist John Holden. The story of late nineteenth-century music theorist Oliveria Prescott, chronicled by Rachel Lumsden (2020, 2022), follows a similar path. Prescott's discussions of fundamental and advanced topics reflect deep music-theoretical thought and strong engagement with the literature, particularly the writings of George Macfarren. Lumsden confesses her own bias against Prescott's work, which she initially dismissed as "unscholarly," "straightforward," and "primarily pedagogical" (2020, [6.1]). "Sometimes music theory can be discovered in the most unexpected settings," she concludes, "if we take the time to look—and if we dare to read with an open mind" ([6.2]).

[3.12] Lumsden is correct: we should engage all kinds of music theory with intellectual curiosity. Beyond broadening our music-historical and music-theoretical horizons, the study of music theorists such as Young, Prescott, and Fitton should also cause us to examine our own prejudices and historiographical habits. We must begin by admitting that our adherence to and glorification of music-historical and music-theoretical canons have deeply influenced the figures, musics, concepts, and technologies that we study.(69) We must also acknowledge our natural predilection for familiarity and convenience, our propensity to blindly protect the status quo. We return to the same composers and theorists; we recycle well-worn research questions. We continually grasp for neat, comprehensible, and untroubling historical narratives. These reductive, doxographical tendencies have severely limited our histories of theory: we assume that we have already answered all of the important music-historical and music-theoretical questions.(70) But what if this is not the case? What might happen if we entertained the idea—even provisionally—that there are historical figures we can learn from?

[3.13] This article has spotlighted Sarah Mary Fitton, a female music theorist who surely belongs within our decentered histories of music theory. However, Fitton is just one figure in a potentially wider, richer, and more complex music-historical narrative, one where women and members of other underrepresented communities not only count but are celebrated. While encouraging us to broaden our music-historical horizons, I also urge us to reflect on how we might initiate a historiographical transformation. How have we created and perpetuated disciplinary boundaries? How might these boundaries be re-negotiated? Can we weave together fresh perspectives, concepts, and contexts with our traditional narratives? Can we embrace a plurality of music-historical accounts, and in so doing open up a greater web of interpretation? Finally, how might these more diverse histories of music theory lead our discipline not only to deeper musical knowledge, but also to an increased sense of belonging, accessibility, and potential?

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Footnotes

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1. Sophie Fuller (2018, 151) discusses notions of "amateur" and "professional" in nineteenth-century Great Britain: during the first half of the century, the professional musician was associated with "the lower social classes, often [stereotyped as] a European immigrant with a poor general education." In contrast, the amateur musician "was regarded as widely cultured and firmly situated in the middle or upper classes of British society" (Fuller 2018, 151). Julianne Grasso and Cory Arnold (2022) highlight a twenty-first-century version of the "amateur"/"professional" binary: music theory YouTubers ("amateurs") versus music theory academics ("professionals"). Grasso and Arnold conclude that an "overall freedom of knowledge-sharing distinguishes MTYT [Music Theory YouTube] from academic music theory," and "this relative freedom. . .can shed light on a number of issues that circulate in the larger music theory community, helping us to critically evaluate what music theory is, and who gets to do music theory."
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2. The book's publication coincided with the increasing professionalization of music in Britain. Rosemary Golding (2018, 129) identifies an important shift in the 1820s: while private music teaching remained popular (as detailed in Ehrlich 1985), teaching institutions—such as the Royal Academy of Music, founded in 1822—began to appear, creating "opportunities for formal teaching contracts and a steady income, together with an element of prestige for teaching as an aspect of a musical career." However, as Golding notes, many women "were seeking to avoid exactly this [professional] identity, working part-time, avoiding professional 'working' status, and making money in a piecemeal way" (2018, 129).
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3. The title page identifies the author of *Conversations on Harmony* as the author of *Conversations on Botany* (1817). Fitton wrote two books on botany: *Conversations on Botany* (1817) and *The Four Seasons: A Short Account of the Structure of Plants* (1865). I discuss these books in more detail, as well as explain botany's popularity during the Victorian age, in [1.3]–[1.5].
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4. Potter (1792–1871) was an important musical figure in nineteenth-century Great Britain. Born into a musical family, he studied with Thomas Attwood, William Crotch, and Joseph Wölfl, among others. He was the first piano teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, where he also held the title of principal from 1832 to 1859. In addition, Potter composed numerous instrumental works and served as a music editor. For more on his contributions and legacy, see Macfarren 1883 and Peter 1972.
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5. Fitton's two harmony manuals differ in their organization, conversational modes, and music-theoretical content. The 248-page *Conversations*, discussed in more detail in [1.6] and [1.7], comprises thirty-six dialogues; the 164-page *Manuel pratique* includes twenty chapters. Fitton notes this size difference in her dedication to Fromental Halévy, remarking that—with his assistance—she has made the French manual as concise as possible. Out of twenty total chapters in the *Manuel*, twelve combine at least two English conversations; and the eleventh, twelfth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters each comprise three English conversations. Fitton also includes new material: an eleven-page summary (inserted after the fourteenth chapter) and a section on transposition with clefs (part of the eighteenth chapter). The latter addition aligns Fitton's book with the pedagogical tradition of her new French audience. While both manuals are written in dialogue format, they feature different conversational modes: Edward plays a primary role in the English version; Mother is the main character in the French version. The books feature similar music-theoretical topics. However, in the French version, Fitton simplifies her discussions of augmented sixth chords and the rule of the octave, arguably her most novel material. I suggest that the changes from the English *Conversations* to the French *Manuel* reflect prevailing French attitudes regarding female education and gender ideals. Fitton's revisions in the *Manuel* are neither minimal nor trivial: they represent a thorough and calculated reworking for a new

French—and thoroughly female—audience. The French book does not present the science of harmony to a wide audience of children and amateurs. Rather, it offers practical skills for the supposedly delicate female mind.
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6. The *Revue et gazette musicale* provided extensive coverage of Fitton's *Manuel pratique*. Two notices—circulated in March and June 1857, respectively—advertise the forthcoming French edition. The first notice ("Nouvelles" 1857a, 70) boldly claims that Fitton's *Conversations* caused a sensation in Great Britain, where it quickly became the harmony manual of choice for all public and private schools. The second notice ("Nouvelles" 1857b, 197), appearing three months after the French book's publication, announces that the manual has nearly sold out. Fitton's *Manuel* also received two full-length reviews: one by Adrien de La Fage, published in April 1857, and one by Hector Berlioz, published in July of the same year. Both reviewers praise Mr. [*sic*] Fitton's clear presentation of harmony.
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7. Elizabeth Fitton, Sarah Mary Fitton's sister, is sometimes listed as a co-author of *Conversations on Botany*. Her exact contribution to the book is unknown. In 1865, botanist Eugène Coemans dubbed a type of Peruvian mosaic plant the "Fittonia" in honor of the sisters.
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8. Shteir (1996, 92) briefly mentions that Fitton wrote *Conversations on Harmony* but does not provide further detail.
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9. Rainbow (2009, 245) does not discuss *Conversations on Botany* in any detail: he merely mentions that "a clue to the true identity of the author of *Conversations on Harmony* appears on its title-page, where we are told that it was written 'by the author of *Conversations on Botany*.'"
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10. Rainbow does not cite the source(s) of these biographical details, which he takes from Fitton's *How I Became a Governess* (1861). This work is not autobiographical, as discussed in endnote 19.
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11. While providing a bibliographic entry for Fitton's *Conversations on Botany*, Maust does not mention the book in the main text of her blog post.
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12. Fitton's *Conversations* appears in Robert Lang's (2012, 108) table of music-theoretical treatises written in dialogue form, but her work is left undiscussed.
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13. My approach is influenced by Michelle Dowd's (2018) work on early women's writing. Dowd highlights the "differential treatment" often given to these women: their writing is regularly divorced from broader literary tradition, "read instead in terms of what it can tell us about women's historical circumstances, especially their resistance to gendered structures of power" (2018, 268–69). While this is an important critical lens, it can also have a "narrowing effect" (Wray 2016, 62). Fitton's work—like the writing of these earlier women—deserves comprehensive coverage that considers both her historical circumstances and her music-theoretical ideas.
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14. Music theory has long excluded women, a practice recently documented by Ellie Hisama (2021).
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15. Fitton's obituary in *The Pall Mall Budget* (April 10, 1874) notes that she was 78 years old at the time of her death. However, French records state that she was 82 years old; see the succession and absence table for the Département de la Seine (1868–80) and the civil status register for the eighth arrondissement (1873–74).
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16. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the geologist William Henry Fitton moved to London in 1809, "where he continued to study medicine and chemistry" (1889, 85). He relocated to Northampton in 1812: his mother and three sisters (left unnamed) reportedly "kept house for him" until 1820.
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17. Per personal email correspondence (dated November 6, 2023) with Ilse Woloszko, library assistant at the Royal Academy of Music, Fitton does not appear in any Academy prospectuses, minute books, club magazines, or museum catalogs.
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18. Fitton presumably moved to France before 1841, as she does not appear on the United Kingdom census taken on June 6 of that year. Unfortunately, the 1841 census records for Ireland are incomplete: the majority were destroyed in a fire at the Irish Public Record Office on June 30, 1922.
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19. Rainbow (2009, 245) claims that Fitton's *How I Became a Governess* (1861) "describes her early career." This is speculation; Fitton does not characterize the book as autobiographical. Christina de Bellaigue (2007, 209) identifies *How I Became a Governess* as a "fictional account" aligned with contemporaneous English travel writing on France. Similarly, Elisabeth Jay (2016) connects Fitton's book to popular coming-of-age stories from the time, including Rachel McCrindell's *The School Girl in France* (1840), Anne Thackeray's *The Story of Elizabeth* (1863), and Henrietta Jenkin's *Once and Again* (1865). "All of these novels," writes Jay, "depict a crisis in which, before the heroine can regain the healthy normality and respectable marriage promised on English shores, she, or a comparator female figure who exists merely to offer a timely warning, will have to endure a life-threatening illness brought on by the moral dangers to which France has exposed them" (2016, 280).
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20. For other letters that mention Fitton, see Browning 1899, Browning and Browning 1958, and Lewis 2000.
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21. This death date appears in several places, including a succession and absence table for the Dèpartement de la Seine (1868–80), a civil status register for the eighth arrondissement (1873–74), a notice in *The Pall Mall Budget* (April 10, 1874), and a record from the National Probate Calendar for England and Wales (June 2, 1874). The probate record notes that Fitton's effects in England are under £20; two beneficiaries—Roger Trappes and Francis Roger Trappes, the executors of her will—are listed. Fitton's connection to these beneficiaries is unknown. Another French table of deaths (1873–82) lists her date of death as March 21, 1874.
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22. Fitton (1817, iv) explains her alignment with Withering's version of Linnaean classification: while Fitton dislikes the system, it is the only suitable method available in English.
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23. Several dialogic manuals cover botany. Representative examples include Maria Jacson's *Botanical Dialogues between Hortensia and Her Four Children* (1797), Harriet Beaufort's *Dialogues on Botany, for the Use of Young Persons* (1819), Jane Marcet's *Conversations on Vegetable Physiology* (1829), and three selections by Charlotte Smith: *Rural Walks* (1795), *Rambles Farther* (1796), and *Conversations Introducing Poetry Chiefly on the Subject of Natural History* (1804).
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24. Fitton quotes from Maria Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795, 66).
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25. Bellaigue (2007, 176) notes that women of the time were often charged with "safeguarding religion," a responsibility that resonates with the "rhetoric of Protestant domesticity" that prevailed throughout the Victorian age.
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26. Fitton's *The Grateful Sparrow* first appears as "A Companionable Sparrow" in *Household Words* (August 8, 1857), where it is attributed to John Robertson. "Mosses" (*Household Words*; December 11, 1858) is also

attributed to Robertson. However, the text is lifted almost verbatim from Fitton's *Conversations on Botany* and *The Four Seasons*. Fitton may have written "Boulogne Wood" (*Household Words*; July 25, 1857); the author is listed as "Robertson's friend."
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27. Fitton's piano-focused manual aligns with the rise of the "domestic piano" throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, as detailed by Derek Scott (2002, 62).
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28. I discuss the gender implications of Fitton's mother/son pairing in [3.7–3.8]. There is no evidence that Fitton took inspiration from Fux's *Gradus*, but the similarities between the two manuals are apparent. Ian Bent (2002) covers Fux's modes of discourse and his treatise's reception. To be sure, dialogue form also has a long history outside of music theory: Nicolas Malebranche's *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion* ([1688] 1997), David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* ([1779] 2007), and Jeremiah Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues* (1861) are just a few examples.
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29. William Clemmons (2001) provides thorough coverage of the Fuxian approach and its relation to seventeenth-century contrapuntal pedagogy.
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30. For more on the evolution of the augmented sixth sonority and its labels, see Ellis 2010.
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31. Mother tells Edward that these sonorities are called "Chords of the Augmented Sixth, because the interval of a sixth, between the bass and one of the higher parts, is augmented" (Fitton 1855, 149).
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32. Many authors have discussed the relation between this type of augmented sixth sonority and a dominant seventh chord with a lowered chordal fifth: see Lester 1982; Harrison 1995; Biamonte 2008; Aldwell, Schachter, and Cadwallader 2019; Hutchinson 2020a; and Laitz and Callahan 2023 for representative examples. I discuss Fitton's connections to contemporaneous British theorists presently.
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33. For recent discussions of augmented sixth chords as modal variants of vii° and vii°^{7} chords, see Hutchinson 2020a, 2020b, and 2022.
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34. Fitton (1855, 144) excludes the altered diminished triad in root position, citing the "disagreeable" diminished third between the bass and an upper voice. "We ought never to form a combination of sounds likely to produce a disagreeable effect," Mother reminds Edward, "as the sole object of music is to please the ear, and, through the ear, to afford delight to the mind" (Fitton 1855, 53).
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35. Example 11 in the thirty-first conversation (Fitton 1855, 191) raises questions about this seemingly fixed resolution: an Aug3 chord resolves to a cadential six-four, not to a root-position triad. Example 2 in the thirty-second conversation (1855, 199) includes a similar resolution, with an Aug3 chord followed by a cadential six-four. While unsurprising to twenty-first-century readers, these resolutions are unusual for Fitton, representing an apparent disconnect between her theoretical rule, where augmented sixth chords resolve to root-position triads, and compositional practice, where the voice-leading context often necessitates resolution to inverted triads. Fitton's resolutions also prompt questions about the harmonic function of augmented sixth chords. As Kyle Hutchinson (2020a, 94) notes, this is "a complicated topic." While many contemporary scholars label augmented sixth chords as predominants or subdominants, some—such as Joel Lester (1982) and Hutchinson (2020a)—explain augmented sixth chords as dominant-functioning sonorities. Fitton does not have a theory of harmonic function. If considered under modern categories, her augmented sixth chords would be functionally fluid: depending on the musical context, they would function as predominants or dominants.
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36. Edward recalls Example 1: Aug1 derives from a second-inversion dominant seventh chord with a lowered chordal fifth, Aug2 derives from a first-inversion diminished triad (built on the leading tone) with a lowered chordal third, and Aug3 derives from a first-inversion fully diminished seventh chord (built on the leading tone) with a lowered chordal third.
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37. This example contains a typo—"same chord in its 3rd inversion" should be "same chord in its 1st inversion." Fitton provides the correct inversion in the text.
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38. Modern textbook authors often describe this type of augmented sixth chord as an altered iv or iv^6: see Benjamin, Horvit, and Nelson 2003; Gauldin 2004; Aldwell, Schachter, and Cadwallader 2019; Snodgrass 2020; Clendinning and Marvin 2021; and Laitz and Callahan 2023 for representative examples.
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39. Fitton's coverage of "Modulation into a Relative Scale" spans Conversations 26–28. For Fitton, a scale's "relative" is "a scale of which the [key] signature is the same as its own, and, also, those other scales of which the signature contains one ♯ or one ♭, more or less" (1855, 152). She covers "Modulation into a Distant Scale" in Conversations 29–31. Conversation 29 includes four methods of modulation: modulation from a major scale into the relatives of the same scale (minor) and from a minor scale into the relatives of the same scale (major), demonstrated by Examples 1–4 (Fitton 1855, 176); modulation via the "double resolution of the dominant," shown in Examples 1–5 (Fitton 1855, 177); modulation via a half-step bass ascent from a dominant chord to a root-position tonic chord in a new scale, depicted in Examples 1–6 (Fitton 1855, 177–78); and the placement of "the chord of the tonic of one scale immediately after that of another scale, to which it has no affinity," illustrated in Examples 1–8 (Fitton 1855, 179). Conversation 30 focuses on enharmonic modulation via the chord of the diminished seventh. Conversation 31 covers enharmonic modulation via the tonic chord, the dominant seventh chord, and the augmented sixth chord; in addition, Fitton discusses "Half Modulation," which she designates with a + sign and defines as when "we meet with one or more chords that do not belong to the scale in which that music is written," as shown in Examples 1–4 (1855, 191).
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40. Fitton's modulating progressions recall the nineteenth-century "predilection to modulate often and without proper preparation" (Clark 2011, 76). Discussing critic Gottfried Wilhelm Fink's reactions to Schubert's frequent and distant modulations, Suzannah Clark (2011, 76) concludes that for Fink, "a remote key becomes justifiable from a musical point of view if its presence is announced frankly at the local level." Fitton's modulations exhibit this type of local-level key confirmation: the modulation-triggering augmented sixth chord is always followed by "a perfect cadence of the new scale" (Fitton 1855, 188). This practice aligns with Mother's earlier statement that "no modulation is complete, unless we make a perfect cadence of the scale into which we wish to enter" (Fitton 1855, 160). As discussed in endnote 35, the eleventh progression departs from the others: a cadential six-four—not a root-position triad—follows the augmented sixth chord (Fitton 1855, 191).
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41. The three chromatic-scale harmonizations not shown here feature sequences involving applied chords, as well as an isolated common-tone diminished seventh chord (Fitton 1855, 197–98).
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42. Fitton does not mix Aug1 chords and other augmented sixth chords; in contrast, Aug2 and Aug3 chords appear in the same scale harmonizations. She does not explain this practice.
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43. Telesco (1998, 258) catalogs similarities and differences between the classic omnibus and the passacaglia progression, concluding that "the evidence strongly suggests that this chromatic harmonization of the passacaglia bassline is the prototype of the omnibus."
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44. Fitton might also be compared to nineteenth-century music theorist Sarah Glover. While both Fitton and Glover focus on teaching children and amateurs, they have different pedagogical aims: Fitton helps her readers

"understand, in some degree, the theory of 'sweet sounds'" (1855, v); Glover (1834, 1835, 1850) emphasizes practical musicianship skills, presenting instructors with her Norwich sol-fa system.
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45. Kirkman (1845, 37) mentions that augmented sixth chords can trigger modulation through "the Enharmonic Change of Notation," but she does not explain this practice.
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46. According to Victor Yellin (1998, 22), Bonifazio Asioli offers the first music-theoretical discussion of a full chromatic-scale harmonization in his *L'allievo al clavicembalo* (1819). As Robert Wason (1985, 19) notes, "Asioli may well have appropriated the progression from the Abbé [Georg Joseph Vogler] (who had studied and worked in Italy) just as the Viennese theorists did." Chromatic-scale harmonizations appear in Louisa Kirkman's (n.d., 11) *Improved Method for the Guitar*, but they do not include augmented sixth sonorities. As mentioned previously, Fitton does not cite any outside sources in *Conversations on Harmony*; it is unknown whether she knew work by these theorists.
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47. The first figure (F.1.) shows modulation to all of the major and minor keys, as discussed in Posen 2023. The second figure (F.2.) shows the harmonization of the chromatic scale.
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48. For more on Vogler's Table XXX from *Gründe der Kuhrpfälzischen Tonschule in Beyspielen* (Example 12), see Wason 1985, Damschroder 2008, and Posen 2023; Posen also covers Vogler's other circle diagrams. For more on Vogler's Table XII from *Handbuch zur Harmonielehre und für den Generalbass* (Example 13), see Wason 1985, Telesco 1998, and Telesco 2002. To my knowledge, Vogler's treatises were never translated into English during Fitton's lifetime, and there is no evidence that Fitton read German. Fitton and Vogler also share an alteration-focused method of augmented sixth chord generation; Floyd Grave and Margaret Grave (1987, 24, 36) discuss Vogler's procedure. Fitton's approach to chord generation also partially aligns with that of A. B. Marx in the first volume of *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch-theoretisch* (1837–47) and *Die alte Musiklehre im Streit mit unserer Zeit* (1841). These works were first translated into English in 1852 and 1997 (selected excerpts), respectively. David Damschroder (2008, 185–90) provides a helpful summary of Marx's methods. According to Marx, all augmented sixth chords "arise from a chromatic alteration of one of the dominant chords, or chords of the diminished seventh" (1852, 261); Fitton's approach is more liberal, as she allows for an Aug2 chord to derive from an altered minor triad. The first volume of Gottfried Weber's *Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst* (1817–21), translated into English in 1842, also offers chord generation via alteration; however, Weber (1842, 214) considers augmented sixth chords to be altered $^{o}II^{7}$ chords.
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49. The term "extended omnibus" comes from Wason (1985, 15–19). Telesco (1998, 2002) discusses Vogler's chromatic-scale harmonization and its similarity to the extended omnibus progression: "Like the extended omnibus, the dominant seventh of the Vogler harmonization serves a dual role (enharmonically) as both a V^{7} and a Gr^{6}, and four overlapped statements are required to traverse an octave" (2002, 364). However, the omnibus includes a third-inversion dominant seventh chord where Vogler's progression includes a diminished seventh chord (Telesco 2002, 365).
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50. These alteration-based approaches contrast with those of William Shield (1815) and Oliveria Prescott (1888; 1904). While associating his two augmented sixth chords (Italian and German) with the "extreme sharp sixth," Shield identifies these sonorities as standalone "chords of the Seventh, which cannot be formed with the notes of the Diatonic scale"; furthermore, he continues, "some Denominators have termed them [the two augmented sixth chords] Anomalous and others Spurious" (1815, 14). Shield's Italian augmented sixth chord is equivalent to Fitton's Aug1 chord. In her analysis of the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in E♭, Op. 7, Prescott (1888, 411) identifies an augmented sixth chord in the secondary theme, noting that it is "built upon the dominant and super-tonic roots in the key of B flat." She does not provide additional commentary. In her last book, Prescott (1904, 89) presents German, French, and Italian sixths in C major. She does not explain these sonorities; she merely comments on how they reflect "the three schools of the Continent." According to Rachel Lumsden (2022), Prescott usually discusses chromatic harmonies "with a pithy, matter-

of-fact tone, without laborious explanation." Fitton, in contrast, provides thorough music-theoretical explanations. For more on Prescott, see Lumsden 2020 and Lumsden 2022.
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51. Holden remarks that each of the chords will be followed by a dominant chord, the so-called "adjunct fifth" (1770, 100). For Holden, "every key . . . has its two adjuncts": "these adjuncts are always the perfect fourth and fifth to the key," and "the harmony chiefly dwells upon the chords of the key, and of these adjuncts, so long as that key is retained" (1770, 84). Damschroder (2008, 166–67) discusses the augmented sixth chords included in Holden's Example LXV (Plate IX), as well as the theorist's possible connections to Jean-Philippe Rameau. Carmel Raz (2018c; 2022) covers Holden's speculative theories in detail.
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52. The "chord of the superfluous sixth" also appears in Young's (1801) "Resolution of Discords" game, played with dice: if a discord—such as the chord of the superfluous sixth—is thrown, it resolves via contrary motion to the dominant triad. For more on Young's music games, see Raz 2018a.
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53. Crotch (1812, 71–72) goes on to detail each chord's constituent pitches and its resolution; he explains that "these and the Neapolitan sixes are denominated after the nations which invented them" (71).
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54. For a complete catalog of resolutions, see Day [1845] 1855, 145. Day's introduction to augmented sixth chords occurs within his discussion of "chromatic harmony, or harmony in the free style" ([1845] 1855, 60). He claims that chromatic discords, including augmented sixth chords, do not need preparation: "they may be said to be already prepared by nature [the overtone series]" ([1845] 1855, 60). For Day, augmented sixth chords involve both primary and secondary harmonics; in other words, they derive from two overtone series—one based on the tonic scale degree and one based on the dominant scale degree. A comprehensive discussion of Day's theory is beyond the scope of this article; for his explanation, see Chapter XXII of Day [1845] 1855. Henry Banister (1891) and Lumsden (2020) discuss Day and George Macfarren, his main disciple, in more detail.
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55. Joanna de Groot identifies similarities between the treatment of women and non-Europeans during the nineteenth century, noting that "the use of a parental concept of authority combined a sense of care and involvement with the subordinate sex or race as well as power and control over them, and as such was equally appropriate for the definition of the power of men over women or of dominant over subordinate races" (2002, 98).
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56. Groot (2002, 99n16) identifies this metaphor in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987, 325, 397) discuss its appearance in contemporaneous poetry and sermons.
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57. As Mohanram remarks, "middle-class comprehensions of femininity are *definitive* to representations of Victorian femininity. In fact, so central are the class markers of Victorian femininity that they have become unmarked, invisible, and yet fundamental to their very comprehension" (2007, 31; italics original).
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58. "Angel in the House" comes from the eponymous Coventry Patmore poem, first published in 1854. For feminist responses to Patmore, see Perkins Gilman 1891 and Woolf 1942.
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59. According to Reich (1993, 134), "the concept of home as 'refuge,' the new domestic roles for women, the legalization of their disenfranchisement, and the prevailing romantic ethos affected all women, but most particularly the professional woman musician of the artist-musician class." For Reich, this class "includes actors, artists, artisans, dancers, writers, and practitioners of allied professions," who shared "an artistic output and a low economic level" (1993, 125). For a list of female members of Reich's artist-musician class, see Reich 1993, 127–29, Table 1. Reich notes that "professional women musicians were working women but did not belong to the working class"; rather, they belonged to families where "the participation of women in

professional life was taken for granted" (1993, 126).
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60. Gillett (2000, 4) notes that the violin and piano were the instruments of choice for middle- and upper-class nineteenth-century women. The piano proved particularly popular, "seen as the perfect companion for the homebound woman whose life of self-sacrifice, at once an expression of her familial duty and her essential nature, often produced pent-up emotions unsettling in their intensity" (Gillett 2000, 4–5).
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61. Solie comments on the myriad meanings of the piano for nineteenth-century women: the instrument was "as often sinister and manipulative as exalted or comforting," acting "as furniture, as discipline, as emotional confidant, and as medium of sexual apprenticeship" (2004, 116).
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62. Golding (2018) discusses women music teachers and their formal organization during the nineteenth century.
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63. Michèle Cohen (2015) covers the typical character castings within the "conversations" genre, as well as the pedagogy of conversation in the home more generally.
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64. By the end of the nineteenth century, British music conservatories were overflowing with female students, a consequence of the "serious and relentless glut of solo [female] pianists and violinists" (Gillett 2000, 190). Cyril Ehrlich (1985), Deborah Rohr (1999), and David Kennerley (2018) discuss the rise of female music professionals throughout the nineteenth century.
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65. The pianoforte is mentioned 21 times throughout the harmony manual (Fitton 1855, 2, 10, 18–21, 32, 36, 40, 53, 110, 115, 120, 124, 126, 172, 184, 199, 240).
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66. Aaron Girard (2007), Stephen Lett (2023), Noriko Manabe (2023), and Leigh VanHandel (2023) discuss how this bias against pedagogy has shaped the Society for Music Theory.
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67. Anne Young and Oliveria Prescott are discussed elsewhere in this article. French music theorist Nanine Chevé (1800–1868) worked with her brother, husband, and Pierre Galin to develop the Galin-Paris-Chevé system for sight-singing. Chevé published several treatises, including *Nouvelle théorie des accords (servant de base à l'étude de l'harmonie)* (1844b), *Méthode élémentaire de musique vocale* (1844a), and *Méthode élémentaire d'harmonie* (1856), co-authored with her husband. Little is known about the English music theorist Louisa Kirkman. Kirkman published several music-theoretical works under the name "Mrs. Joseph Kirkman," notably the undated *Improved Method for the Guitar* (n.d.) and *A Practical Analysis of the Elementary Principles of Harmony* (1845). American music theorist Fannie Hughey (1857–1929) ran the Hughey Color-Music Model School for young children and provided training classes for mothers and teachers at the Millikin Conservatory of Music in Decatur, Illinois; she disseminated her method, which reflects the widespread vogue for color-music at the beginning of the twentieth century, through *Color Music for Children* (1912). Clare Osborne Reed (1864–1954)—an American music theorist, concert pianist, and founder of the Columbia School of Music—published *Constructive Harmony and Improvisation* (1927), which teaches diatonic and chromatic harmony through improvisational practice. French music theorist and composer Amy Dommel-Diény (1894–1981) taught harmony and counterpoint at the Schola Cantorum in Paris and at the Strasbourg Conservatory; according to Serge Gut (1976, 10), she was "the only renowned representative of functional theory in France." Her main theoretical work, *L'harmonie vivante* (1953), went through three editions and eventually expanded into a six-book series.
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68. According to Christensen, the "text-centric inculcation within print and academic culture has led us to make certain expectations of what a music theory text should look like, and we have understandable trouble seeing outside of these frames" ([2011] (2016), 69–70). While agreeing with Christensen, I argue that we

have even more to reframe: when writing our histories of music theory (whether centered on the partimento tradition or early nineteenth-century chromatic harmony), we must actively seek out and elevate "hidden" music-theoretical contributions, particularly those by women and members of other underrepresented groups. This shift will help us, as Christensen notes, "represent the music theorist in a more realistic light" and learn to "see music theory as a living, engaging, and ultimately human pursuit" ([2011] 2016, 71).
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69. An intrinsically hegemonic practice, canonization "is a process of selection, of ruling in and ruling out, of choosing how attention ought to be distributed. But it is by no means a process of natural selection" (Flannery and Griffin 2024, 202). For music-specific critiques of canonization, see Randel 1992, Citron 1993, Goehr 2002, Christensen [2011] 2016, Shreffler 2011, Bradley 2017, Madrid 2017, Palfy and Gilson 2018, Vágnerová and Molina 2018, Walker 2020, Hannaford 2021, Kim 2021, Luong and Myers 2021, Slater 2021, Leonard 2022, and Kim 2023.
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70. While a full discussion of this issue beyond the scope of the current article, I argue that our staunch commitment to linear timelines has also fostered a sense of tunnel history, with beloved major figures "sealed off from contact with or contamination by anything . . . going on in any of the other tunnels" (Hexter 1961, 194–95). As David Hackett Fischer warns, these tunnel histories are "not merely incomplete but seriously inaccurate, which is what happens when a complex problem of development is taken apart and its components are extruded into long thin ribbons of change" (1970, 143). Speaking directly to music theorists, Cristle Collins Judd (2000, 59) exposes this ahistorical, "beads-on-a-string" approach to the past—which "strives for comprehensiveness while stressing continuity and highlighting innovation"—as a form of disciplinary gatekeeping.
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