

Distinguished Lecturers in Music Theory Series



Dr. J. Daniel Jenkins

Associate Professor of Music Theory
University of South Carolina

Heavenly Music and the Framing of (Public) Music Theory

Tuesday, September 28, 2021
12:45pm EDT
Via Zoom

Register for Zoom Webinar at
<https://bit.ly/3z3iBj4>

**Informal conversation with graduate
students immediately to follow**

Lecture Abstract:

The film *Heavenly Music*, winner of the 1944 Academy Award for Best Short Subject, follows the story of a recently departed band leader, Ted Barry, as he arrives in heaven. Barry is brought in front of a tribunal of composers including Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner who sit in judgement on him, deciding if he is worthy to join their ranks. On the surface, the film seems to show how musical analysis can reveal hidden commonalities between classical compositions and popular songs, employing the kind of similarity measures that Leonard Bernstein would soon be adding to his television broadcasts and pre-concert lectures. But the film carries other lessons, too, about who gets to be a musician and who gets to decide what music is. By extension, these are lessons about the ontology of music theory as well.

In this paper, I will provide a close reading of the film. I will discuss other examples of public music theory that it either borrows from or foreshadows. I will conclude by considering the ontological lessons of the film and how public music theory can lead us to a deeper understanding of what we mean when we say “music theory.”

Guest Teaching:

MUS 970 Pedagogy of Music Theory
Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 3:00pm EDT

Please contact Dr. Bruce Taggart (taggartb@msu.edu) if interested in attending.

Bio:

J. Daniel Jenkins is Associate Professor of Music Theory at the University of South Carolina. He has published research on Elliott Carter, Arnold Schoenberg, and public music theory. A dedicated pedagogue, Jenkins has received teaching awards from the Eastman School of Music, the University of Rochester, and the University of South Carolina. In addition to his university teaching, Jenkins has taught at Lee Correctional Facility in Bishopville, SC, and at the Lourie Center in Columbia, SC. Currently he is editing the Oxford Handbook of Public Music Theory.