

September 25, 2018

Paul Besaw  
Professor of Music, Chair, Department of Music and Dance  
CAMPUS

Dear Paul:

I am happy to respond to your request for a letter evaluating aspects of the teaching of our colleague, David Feurzeig, whose work is being reviewed this year with an eye toward promotion to professor. I have seen Dr. Feurzeig teach on several occasions over the years, and have attended some of his public lectures and recitals. I feel that I know his teaching very well. This letter reports particular observations of a class I attended on September 25, 2018, MU 109: "Harmony and Form I" (a course I taught for many years).

Class began on time, with most students in place slightly before the beginning of the session. Prof. Feurzeig enticed early-comers with a video presentation of some 1960s pop music (The Beach Boys) that featured a melodic sequence he intended to use in his morning lecture. Students were clearly ready to go as the hour began, a certain signal that Prof. Feurzeig expects attention. The students clearly feel comfortable in the classroom and seemed eager to listen and follow the material.

The session began promptly at 9:40 with papers handed back to the roughly 20 students. The quick interaction between professor and each student in this exchange struck me as a useful way to engage each student.

Prof. Feurzeig encouraged questions in a leading way; he interacted well with students who called out answers, although he did not challenge quiet students. This is a hard lecture topic. The subject was presented as a series of writing rules with (many) exceptions, rather than as a rationale for writing and analysis. Students seemed attentive to those rules which were referred to as material previously taught. In any case, it was clear that Prof. Feurzeig was demonstrating that student creativity requires focus through clear and articulate music writing, connected to an understanding of melodic and harmonic structure.

The class began wrapping up at 10:25, with a brief mention of assignments and due dates for projects. At 10:27, Prof. Feurzeig handed out a brief reading fluency quiz, reminding students of the many tasks that are covered in the first semester music theory course. Students were dismissed at 10:30, with a lot of positive energy in the classroom.

The class exhibited some of the chief characteristics of fine teaching: focus on the day's material (presentation of a particular kind of melodic composition and analysis), clarity of presentation, clear goals, many references to material previously taught and how it supports the day's topic, an understanding of reasonable goals that students can attain, and an excellent rapport with the students.

I am happy we have such a useful colleague of excellence on our teaching staff.

With best wishes,

David Neiweem, D.M.A.  
Professor  
Department of Music and Dance