

Colloquium September 18, 2026
Sarah Marlowe (Eastman School of Music)

Title: “Eleonora Petrovna Fedosova’s *Diatonic Modes in the Works of D. Shostakovich* (1980)”

Abstract:

Studies centering on modal-tonal features in the music of Dmitri Shostakovich are largely of two types. The first type, comprising the earliest studies, observes and explains modal characteristics at the musical surface, usually through analyses of short excerpts. While these studies provide compelling theoretical support for chromatic elements in isolation, they do not inform a long-range view of his compositions. The second and more recent type of study demonstrates the utility of analyzing Shostakovich’s music through linear voice leading; when viewed through a tonal lens, one finds that much of the chromaticism in this music can be accommodated by the concepts of modal mixture and tonicization, and interesting deep-level structures can be uncovered as a result. But this second approach falls short where the rules of common-practice tonality end. In particular, bVIII and bIV are both melodically and harmonically prominent in Shostakovich’s music, yet they fall outside the bounds of common-practice tonality.

Part of a larger project that combines both aforementioned methodologies, this presentation provides an overview Eleonora Petrovna Fedosova’s theory of mode in Shostakovich (1980), which includes special emphasis on bVIII and bIV. Building upon folk-music principles, along with earlier Russian-language studies of mode, Fedosova suggests that Shostakovich’s melodies are constructed from fourths and fifths, rather than an octave-based system, and chromatic inflections are explained within these parameters. Smaller segments can then be combined together as part of a more expansive, flexible system. I will consider aspects of her theory that resonate with Western theoretical concepts, and share some thoughts regarding the analytical potential for integrating her ideas with existing rules of tonal counterpoint.

Bio: Sarah Marlowe is Assistant Professor of Music Theory at the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester. Her research interests include counterpoint, fugue, Schenkerian analysis, Russian music theory, the music of J. S. Bach and Dmitri Shostakovich, and music theory pedagogy. Recent projects focus on the analysis and promotion of music by women composers. She holds degrees from the University of Massachusetts Amherst (B.Mus., piano performance; M.M., music theory and accompanying) and the Eastman School of Music (Ph.D., music theory).

Marlowe has presented her research at regional, national, and international conferences. In 2013, she received the Patricia Carpenter Emerging Scholar Award for her work developing Schenkerian voice-leading paradigms in fugue expositions. This work was later published in *Theory and Practice*. Her research also appears in *Music Theory Online*, the *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, *The Norton Guide to Teaching Music Theory*, *BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute*, and the *Oxford Handbook of Musical Variation*.

Marlowe is a recipient of numerous teaching awards, including the University of Rochester's G. Graydon (?58) and Jane W. Curtis Award for Nontenured Faculty Teaching (2025), the NYU Steinhardt Teaching Excellence Award (2018), the University of Rochester's Edward Peck Curtis Award for Excellence and Teaching by a Graduate Student (2010), and the Eastman School of Music's Teaching Assistant Prize (2008). Beyond her success in the classroom, she is also dedicated to training new music theory instructors. She leads the graduate seminar in music theory pedagogy at Eastman, and served as a clinician for the inaugural Graduate Student Pedagogy Workshop sponsored by the Gail Boyd de Stwolinski Center for Theory Pedagogy in May 2025.

She has served as a board member (2013–2017) and Secretary (2021–2025) for the Music Theory Society of New York State, was co-editor of *Theory and Practice* (2016–2019), and recently completed her term as editor of the Society for Music Theory *Newsletter*. Prior to joining the Eastman faculty, Marlowe was Assistant Professor and Associate Director of Music Theory at New York University, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.