
How was music taught and learnt in the past? That is the central question of this impressive book which has preoccupied its editors and contributors, individually and collectively, over several years. The idea was conceived in the course of a round table discussion on music education at the Fourteenth Congress of the International Musicological Society held in Bologna in 1987. One of its major conclusions was that the history of the practice of music pedagogy — what actually went on in the music lesson — was significantly under-researched. That there was a general scholarly awareness of the materials of music teaching — manuscripts and printed books containing theoretical treatises, vocal and instrumental repertory — was not in doubt. But how these were used. i.e., to what extent they represented prescriptive as distinct from descriptive sources, had not previously been the subject of much indepth investigation. And so a conference was organised in 2005 at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University which in due course resulted in the present publication. It is complemented by an extensive searchable online bibliography on how music was taught and learned c. 1450–1650, entitled *MIML: Musical Instruction and Musical Learning*, designed and edited by Cynthia J. Cyrus with Susan Forscher Weiss and Russell E. Murray, Jr, and hosted by the Jean and Alexander Heard Library at Vanderbilt University: http://miml.library.vanderbilt.edu/ (first posted in April 2006).

The scope of the book is far-reaching, covering the education of both professional and amateur musicians, vocal and instrumental practices, institutional (university, cathedral, convent), public and
private spheres of activity, from an interdisciplinary perspective ranging over questions of philosophy, theology, pedagogical theory, patronage, the emerging notion of childhood and the education of children, shifts in method and approaches to learning in the course of the Renaissance, the impact of humanism, the social role and profession of the music teacher in different times and places, the role of women musicians as performers, teachers, and spouses — the whole embedded in the wider context of medieval and Renaissance pedagogy and ideas about education in general. It thus borrows from parallel work in other disciplines (such as literary studies) while contributing in turn to wider discussion of questions respecting the nature of knowledge, how knowledge was organised and transmitted, and the relationship of teacher to pupil in various parts of Europe in the long period under consideration. The centrality of the question makes it much more than the sum of its parts in that it provides a longer-term perspective, and a diversity of viewpoints, on topics which are just as relevant today, such as how to teach music theory, instrumental and vocal technique, composition; the music education of children; music and health (for both mind and body); music and emotion; patronage; the role of music in society (private and public).

Five central issues are addressed: pedagogical methods (how was music taught?); intellectual content (what repertories were taught?); teachers and learners (who were the teachers and learners?); locales of music learning and teaching (where were music lessons held?); and the purpose and motivation behind music education, how it was supported materially, and the cultural value attached to it (why was music taught and why was it important?).

In their Introduction the three editors provide a brief review of recent literature, with reference to the work of Bernarr Rainbow (who devoted much of his writing arguing for the importance of historical
awareness in music education), Craig Wright (music at Notre Dame), Anna Maria Busse Berger (memory and music), among others. The book contains seventeen essays divided into five sections entitled ‘Medieval Pedagogy’; ‘Renaissance Places of Learning’; ‘Renaissance Materials and Contexts’; ‘Music Education in the Convent’; ‘The Teacher’. These are framed by three position papers or ‘Perspectives’ by James Haar (‘Some introductory remarks on musical pedagogy’); Anthony Grafton (‘The humanist and the commonplace book’), and Jessie Ann Owens (‘You can tell a book by its cover: reflections on format in English music “theory”’). Thus it is weighted more in the Renaissance direction (perhaps understandably, given the nature of the sources — and the questions), but the issues addressed have implications across the board.

In his opening essay, James Haar discusses the development of pedagogical thought in the Renaissance with particular reference to Ludovico Zacconi’s *Prattica di musica* (1592). This is followed by three case studies of medieval pedagogy (Part 2). In an examination of Guido d’Arezzo’s system of solmisation, Dolores Pesce argues for less emphasis on a positivistic practical understanding of Guido in favour of a Boethian perspective which goes far beyond mere skill-based application of Guido’s ideas. She analyses some of his *exempla*, such as ‘Ut queant laxis’, which is usually viewed simply as an exercise for teaching the hexachord (six-tone scale, ‘Doh’ to ‘La’), each phrase commencing on a different pitch. Pesce shows, however, that these were used not only to learn the modes and intervals but also as a means of helping students to memorise and absorb a sense of *proprietas*, the ‘feel’ of modal style and melodic nuance as an aid to learning composition. Taking this one step further, she suggests that it is very much in keeping with Boethian philosophy and theology, and the medieval notion of reason, in extrapolating symbolic sense and meaning from the way material shapes and figures relate to one another (which is also related to mathematics).
Charles Atkinson too challenges present-day interpretations of medieval teaching materials in the light of the wide range of ancient sources and the traditions of grammatical instruction in Carolingian schools. With particular reference to glosses in the works of Martianus Cappella and Boethius, he shows how in their commentaries on older texts schoolmasters such as Martin of Laon and Remigius of Auxerre provide insight on contemporary practice. Atkinson also points to the fine line between (or at times the intertwining of) the study of music and of grammar, with respect to terms such as *accentus, sonus, tropus*.

Susan Boynton similarly addresses extra-musical questions, examining glosses in monastic customaries and hymnaries for evidence of teaching practice. She focuses in particular on a group of eleventh-century hymnals, and discusses how the texts of hymns — once they had been learnt by the pupils in monastic schools along with the psalms, canticles — also served as didactic texts for other areas of learning including scripture, grammar, syntax, poetic metre, textual criticism, doctrine, liturgical theology.

This is followed, in Part 2, by three contributions dealing with the question of locale: Renaissance places of learning. Gordon Munro focuses on Scotland with a discussion of the effects of secularisation and the rise of Protestantism on music education and the profession of the music teacher in the period 1560–1650. Due to an imposed restriction to the singing of simple metrical psalms, much of what had existed in the church-run ‘sang schwylls’ disappeared, along with their teachers (most of whom were clergy). Only with the arrival of James VI was the future of music education again secured, following which (lay) music teachers began to enjoy high professional status, being made burgesses of many towns where they lived. Munro’s paper also discusses Scottish treatises on the teaching of music, and practical issues such as tuition fees.
Kristine Forney examines the music education of young Antwerp women who appear to have enjoyed particular opportunities and privilege in both religious and secular environments in the sixteenth century. It was a wealthy city and women from merchant families were expected to have musical ability along with a good general education. Forney examines financial documents from the schoolteacher’s Guild of St Ambrose as well as a rich array of textbooks of instruction in both religious and secular music, providing insight into several spheres of musical activity.

John Griffiths’s study deals with the impact of printing on the production of music books and on systems of learning instrumental performance. Referring to the Spanish Franciscan friar Juan Bermudo’s *Declaracion de instrumentos musicales* (1555), he illustrates how this work provided access for musicians, both professional and amateur, to information on matters beyond musical practice, such as the history, science and art of music, thus serving as a kind of pedagogical work for the ‘inquisitive player’ (134). He was much influenced by Boethius and in another work complained that there were few Spanish musicians worthy of the title *musicus*, i.e., learned musicians as distinct from those who simply engage in the composition or practice of music (135, n. 4).

Looking further into contemporary musical works, Griffiths also underlines their value as material for the study of musical practice, as for example in the case of musical parodies, which may offer insights on improvisation and other unwritten aspects of performance in the sixteenth century, assisting in our understanding of both compositional process and ‘the way that urban amateurs became musicians’ (135). This paper rounds off part 2 while also linking across to several other contributions which focus on teasing out from written sources evidence for what were usually unwritten practices.
In the second Perspective, Anthony Grafton addresses learning methods in the Renaissance with reference to the use of classical texts. In a broad-ranging discussion, he focuses particularly on the role of the commonplace book or notebook as a strategy for learning, by assisting in the understanding and memorisation of texts — in the ancient world as in the Renaissance (when it was consciously revived). The copying and circulation of such anthologies, whose contents were culled, in the words of Seneca, as with the bees, from ‘flowers ... suitable for producing honey’ (141), provided learning material for memorisation and as material for new composition, including music. This theme is followed through in the next paper by Peter Schubert in an investigation of how musicians compiled musical commonplaces and used them as a basis for their own compositions. He first of all outlines the various categories of anthology, including notebooks, commonplace books, and instances of both commonplaces and original writing in music treatise exempla (e.g., Banchieri and Fattorini, who supplied their own examples [163]). This discussion concludes with an examination of polyphonic materials used as examples in Montanos’s *Arte de Musica theorica y pratica* (1592) and Cerone’s *El melopeo y maestro* (1613).

Pamela Starr explores early modern courtesy books from England for information on attitudes towards music and music teaching. Her motivation was to study music and music patronage in ‘those segments of early modern English society that were viewed as marginal’ (194). As a preparation, she examined standard treatises and music theory texts, manuals of conduct for men and women between 1500 and 1700, extrapolating references to music and music-teaching. She presents nineteen excerpts from courtesy books to which she provides a brief commentary, revealing a range of attitudes to the role of music, including as a means of inculcating moral virtue, religious devotion, relaxation and leisure; encouraging amorous inclinations; as an education in good
behaviour, a means of beneficial physical exercise, and as an unsuitable pursuit for young women (particularly in the case of the flute which causes them to distend their cheeks in unladylike fashion and make their faces look deformed — an issue which greatly exercised Thomas Salter [204])!

Susan Weiss, in a paper entitled ‘Vandals, Students, or Scholars?’ highlights the importance of annotations and marginalia in providing invaluable insight into readers’ thoughts on their understanding and reception of music, and the development of theoretical ideas. She regrets the misguided aesthetic value-judgements which would regard these annotations as defacements of the sources, and appeals for their retention in facsimile publications. They not only represent the fuller history of individual books but also preserve unique information on their users and the history of ideas about music. Weiss includes a useful typology of marginalia, along with several illustrations.

The specific context of the convent is the focus of the fourth section which consists of two contributions. Cynthia Cyrus provides an account of Nonnberg Abbey of Benedictine nuns in Salzburg. In addition to its own internal practice of liturgical plainchant, the convent had been a centre of education for local girls since the twelfth century. Cyrus’s focus is on what she terms ‘shifts in both the knowledge base and the musical practices’ resulting from the reforms of the Council of Trent. She observes a distinct movement towards a more literate approach to the practice of music in the post-Tridentine period. From an essentially oral environment of an elaborate local plainchant tradition involving ‘luxuriously melismatic practices’, the nuns adopted the new liturgy late and with some reluctance. This led to radical changes such as the need to purchase new chant books, learn to read square notation, and indeed engage outside teachers for instruction. However, they used the opportunity to continue to satisfy their desire for aesthetic joy and
beauty by laying emphasis on elaborate polyphony and instrumental music.

Colleen Baade looks at the levels of training in the more prestigious convents of early modern Spain where she outlines the importance of family dynamics and accounts for the role of women musicians in a selection of case studies. One particularly interesting aspect is how musical skills could serve as a dowry waiver whereby a girl or young woman from a poor family who entered a convent could pay in kind by providing services as an organist, or as a teacher of plainchant or an instrument (organ, harp, violón, guitar, psaltery, bajón). In such instances, she first of all had to submit to a formal examination which included external assessors (in one case, an official from the Royal Chapel [276]).

The final group of papers focuses on those involved in the processes of teaching and learning. Blake Wilson discusses how, with the advancement of literacy among the general population, the ideals of pedagogy were often woven into daily practice through greater interaction with musicians and composers, which gave increased opportunities for learning. Complementing Peter Schubert’s essay on musical commonplaces in Part 3, Russell Murray examines Zacconi’s *Prattica* (1602) for evidence of the pedagogical approach to teaching counterpoint, and compares this with the views of other teachers.

Gary Towne discusses Pietro Cerone’s teaching philosophy in his *El melopeo y maestro* in a remarkably detailed account of an individual teacher. Cerone’s attitude to discipline and correction was somewhat remarkable for its time, showing psychological insight and humane concern for those in his charge, and stressing the importance of treating each pupil as an individual, tempering his approach accordingly. For example, he states: ‘But whatever the manner of correction one chooses, with whatever type of person, one must always be diligent that the one
rebuked remains subdued and consoled, [and is] not left totally disconsolate and afflicted’ (331).

The final essay, and third Perspective, by Jessie Ann Owens, addresses the history of the book in the Early Modern period. In an investigation of how books containing music treatises framed their contents according to particular conventions of size and format, she shows how these aspects may be decoded to understand patterns of readership, content and use.

In conclusion, the many vignettes of individual teachers and pupils make this a very humanistic book, and topics that might otherwise seem dry take on a dynamism in the light of the particular questions addressed. Also noteworthy is the presence of so many women teachers and performers. They take their place in the scheme of things, without any strident feminist agenda or special pleading. They are simply there in the social fabric — in the sights of the authors as in life itself.

This is a fine book containing a wide range of well-written and engaging essays. It is attractively produced and copious illustrations add substantially to the discussions — not least the beautiful dust jacket featuring Lady Musica holding up an image of the hexachord, in the company of a poet and a group of musicians. It is taken from a copy of Gregor Reisch’s *Margarita Philosophica Nova*. Its rich hues of predominantly red, blue, and gold, and its visual energy do seem to be signalling to the reader that you can tell *this* book by its cover. It is highly recommended, not only for scholars of historical musicology, but for anyone with an interest in medieval and Renaissance pedagogy and the history of educational theory and practice.

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