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## MUSIC AS A LIBERAL ART: THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF MEDIEVAL MUSIC PEDAGOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Subjects such as mathematical proportions of intervals, *musica mundana*, or the place of music in the medieval liberal arts are not often used in teaching children in public schools today. In the same way, the focus on practical music making for modern performance leaves little opportunity for elementary and secondary students to learn much about music's roles in culture and history. This division between a theoretical knowledge about music and a practical experience of musical activities (divisions that might be described as *musica speculativa* and *musica practica*) is also being played out in the training of public school teachers in debates regarding the concept of "praxialism" in music education. Extending the concept of praxialism broadly to include how we teach early music at the college level to future public school teachers may further the discussion of the relevance of medieval music in a positive direction.

This paper explores the enduring importance of medieval music writers on teacher education for American K-12 schools by reviewing the scholarly literature in four specific areas: 1) textbooks for courses on the history of music education; 2) resources used in teaching the philosophy of music education; 3) examples of medieval music in contemporary K-12 education; and 4) the scholarship on teaching and learning as applied to music of the Middle Ages. Such a review will demonstrate how the medieval concepts of 'practical' and 'speculative approaches' to music have continuing relevance to what and how we teach music at all levels.

### *Histories of Music Education*

Some of the earliest writers on the history of music education on America were focused exclusively on American issues and begin their histories with hymn singing in the American colonies (including Edward B. Birge, James A. Keene, and Joseph A. Labuta and Deborah A. Smith) and, therefore, have no information about music's tradition in the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, a number

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<sup>1</sup> See E. BIRGE, *History of Public School Music in the United States*, Washington, DC, Music Educators National Conference, 1966; J. KEENE, *A History of Music Education in the United States*, Hanover, NH, University Press of New England, 1982; and J. LABUTA and D. SMITH, *Music Education: Historical Contexts and Perspectives*, Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1997.

of more recent studies present a broader history of music education – extending back to ancient Greece – to argue for music’s continuing presence in human culture. As Michael L. Mark’s states in *A Concise History of Music Education*, “From earliest times, musicians and music teachers served their societies in many ways. Music was an important part of every society, and the relationship of music to the societies that sponsored it, and how music was taught, are relevant to the history of music education in America”.<sup>2</sup>

A sense of the historical perspectives can be gained by the writers selected in source reading textbooks used in history of music education classes. The selections used by Michael L. Mark in his *Music Education: Source Readings from Ancient Greece to Today* demonstrate that the debates on music existed since Ancient Greece and focused on music’s central role in education, the limits of musical expression, and the affects of music on the soul (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

Plato	<i>Protagoras</i>
Plato	<i>Republic</i> , Book III
Aristotle	<i>Politics</i> , Book VIII
Quintilian	<i>Institutio oratoria</i> , Book 1, Chapter 1
St. Augustine	<i>Confessions</i> , Book 10, Chapter 33
Boethius	<i>De institutione musica</i> , Book 1
Charlemagne	<i>Admonitio generalis</i> , 70, 72, 80

Table 1 – Early writers in Michael L. Mark’s *Music Education: Source Readings from Ancient Greece to Today* (4th ed., 2013).

#### *Philosophies of Music Education*

Today, music education in American middle and high schools focuses on the practical aspects of teaching students to play an instrument or sing to perform in large ensembles such as choir, band (both concert and marching band), and orchestras. As such, contemporary music educational philosophies focus more what David Elliott refers to as “music as a diverse human practice”, in his seminal 1995 book, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*, which argues for a “praxial” approach to music education.<sup>4</sup>

In placing making music as the central aspect of education, however, praxial philosophies tend to diminish the importance of reflecting on a musical work’s

<sup>2</sup> M. MARK, *A Concise History of American Music Education*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2008, p. 1. See also ID., “Music Education History as Prologue to the Future: Practitioners and Researchers”, *The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, XVI, n. 2, 1995, pp. 98-121.

<sup>3</sup> M. MARK, *Music Education: Source Readings from Ancient Greece to Today*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., New York, Routledge, 2013, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> D. ELLIOT, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 49.

historical or aesthetic contexts. As a result, some philosophers of music education have exhibited an “anti aesthetic” perspective. For example, David Elliott argued, “musical experiences are not rightly conceived of (or engaged in) as aesthetic experiences”.<sup>5</sup> In response, philosophers such as Philip Alperson have argued that a “robust praxialism” would include aesthetic activities as part of the many forms of intentional human actions with music. “To devalue the aesthetic appreciation of music or to insist on its displacement seems to me to be inconsistent with a principle tenet of praxialism, that philosophical theorizing should be driven by actual human practice”.<sup>6</sup> The debates on praxial music education have been extended into the teaching of music history at the college level, most clearly by James V. Maiello.<sup>7</sup>

However the music education philosophers work out the relative importance of teaching a musical work’s cultural, historical, or aesthetic value, the real-world experiences of music teachers in US public schools in the upper grades is that preparing students for performances leaves little time for any other aspect of interaction with music. Public school teachers who embrace a narrow, anti-aesthetic version of praxial philosophy may see little value in the roles of history and aesthetics in their studies, and thus they may see little importance in studying medieval writers on music.

#### *Examples of Medieval Music in Contemporary Music Education*

Several researchers, nevertheless, have studied the relationships between early music thinking and modern teaching. A few examples drawn from music education journals can demonstrate how music in the Middle Ages is relevant to K-12 teachers.

Samuel D. Miller’s 1973 article “Guido d’Arezzo: Medieval Musician and Educator”, in *Journal of Research in Music Education*, draws parallels between music instruction in the eleventh and twentieth centuries and today. Miller describes Guido’s contributions to improvisation and composition (*Micrologus*, Chapter 17), as “the first to conceive a method for this part of musical education” and relating

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<sup>5</sup> ELLIOTT, *Music Matters* cit. p. 124; quoted in P. ALPERSON, “Robust Praxialism and the Anti-Aesthetic Turn”, *Philosophy of Music Education Review* XVIII, n. 2, 2010), p. 183. Aesthetic education is also address by R. NELSON, “Aesthetics in the Band Room”, *Music Educators Journal*, LXXX, n. 4, 1994, pp. 24-27.

<sup>6</sup> ALPERSON, *Robust Praxialism* cit., p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> J. MAIELLO, “Towards a Praxial Philosophy of Music History Pedagogy”, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, IV, n. 1, 2013, pp. 71-108, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmbp/article/view/85>; (last accessed, 29.09.2019); and T. REGELSKI, “Music and the Teaching of Music History as Praxis: A Reply to James Maiello”, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, IV, n. 1, 2013), pp. 109-136, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmbp/article/view/100> (last accessed, 29.09.2019).

these ideas specifically to children.<sup>8</sup> Miller concludes that Guido was like a modern music teacher in seeking to find practical solutions to student problems. “To an impressive extent, Guido’s creative ideas on music pedagogy were aroused by his daily work with the young and the associated problems of teaching them music [...] Guido expressed concern over the same kinds of pedagogical problems that affect the interests of present-day music educators”<sup>9</sup>

John Grashel’s 1981 article “The Gamut and Solmization in Early British and American Texts”, in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, also studied Guido, but focused on a long historical evolution of how the gamut and solmization were presented in the earliest singing manuals published in North America.<sup>10</sup> Grashel begins by listing several British writers such as John Playford (*An Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, 1654) who continue the traditions of the gamut and solmization in their music manuals. It is not surprising that the American colonists relied greatly on English models. Grashel notes that “Playford’s influence on early American music texts cannot be minimized” and cited several tunes from Playford’s writings copied directly into the first American music publications, including the *Bay Psalm Book* (1640).<sup>11</sup> These writers establish the importance of the gamut and solmization in American music teaching before Lowell Mason (1792-1872), who is generally credited with establishing music as part of the American public school education.

#### *Pedagogy and Medieval Music*

The growing body of research on music history pedagogy may offer another avenue for education students to understand the continuing relevance of medieval writers in music education. Scholarship can demonstrate both the ways music was taught in the Middle Ages and also ways to teach the history of the era as engagingly as possible today.

Recent research on music education in the Middle Ages has focused on the practical solutions offered by early writers. While many assume that music’s importance within the liberal arts guaranteed it a place at medieval universities,

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<sup>8</sup> S. MILLER, “Guido d’Arezzo: Medieval Musician and Educator”, *Journal of Research in Music Education*, XXI, n. 3, 1973, pp. 239-245: 242.

<sup>9</sup> MILLER, *Guido d’Arezzo*, p. 245.

<sup>10</sup> J. GRASHEL, “The Gamut and Solmization in Early British and American Texts”, *Journal of Research in Music Education*, XXIX, n. 1, 1981, pp. 63-70.

<sup>11</sup> GRASHEL, *Gamut and Solmization*, p. 65. See also A. PROKOP, “Georgian Psalmody in America”, in *Georgian Psalmody 2: The Interaction Between Urban and Rural Practice*, ed. Sally Drage, pp. 95-102, Corby Glen, England, SG Publishing, 1997. For other examples of teaching early music in K-12 teaching see A. KRESTEFF, “Musica Disciplina and Musica Sonora”, *Journal of Research in Music Education*, X, n. 1, 1962, pp. 13-29; and P. HAWKINS and A. BEEGLE, “The National Standards and Medieval Music in Middle School Choral and General Music”, *Music Educators Journal*, LXXXIX, n. 3, 2003, pp. 41-45, and 59.

Joseph Dyer's study of music at the University of Paris reveals little evidence that music was a regularly taught as a university subject. "None of the extant derivatives of university teaching (lectures published as commentaries, disputed questions, etc.) suggests strong interest in speculative music or even music as a natural phenomenon. Still less is there much evidence that Boethius was carefully read."<sup>12</sup> Such a conclusion would support a "praxial" theory of music education in the Middle Ages – teachers and students were mostly focused on the day-to-day issues of how to sing chant and polyphony correctly. In the same way, the recent collection of essays *Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* mostly focuses on the practical aspects of teaching as seen in specific theorists (Guido, of course), historical eras (the Carolingian chant treatises), or populations (the musical education of nuns).<sup>13</sup> Speculative aspects of music theory and teaching are noticeably absent from the volume.

The way we teach the history of medieval music in the classroom today may have the strongest impact on future music educators and provide the most important avenue to maintain the relevance of early music writers for K-12 students. An appeal to more engaging teaching of early music was sounded by Cesarino Ruini, in his article, "Teaching Medieval Music Today: New Approaches to Paleography and Music History."

Of course, if we limit ourselves to the technical-theoretical aspects, our discussion will sound abstract and not particularly stimulating. But we can change this perspective completely, and generate productive didactic ideas, if we establish a connection between the introduction and development of notation in the transmission of Gregorian chant and the political factors and cultural implications behind its development. Students will find this much more realistic, immediate, and attractive than solely technical and theoretical discussion.<sup>14</sup>

A number of recent essays provide further examples of teaching early music history in ways that offer greater opportunities for the students' contribution and participation in the classwork, than lecture-based courses. Such pedagogical work provides practical, hands-on experiences regarding speculative and practical topics and, thus, bridges the *speculative/practica* divide. More importantly, these methodologies help change the focus of music history courses for students from the mere recitation of facts, towards an understanding of how music history is studied – introducing our students to the methods and practices of musicologists.

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<sup>12</sup> J. DYER, "Speculative 'musica' and the Medieval University of Paris", *Music & Letters*, XC, n. 2, 2009, pp. 177-204: 203-204.

<sup>13</sup> S. FORSCHER WEISS - R. MURRAY, JR. - C. CYRUS, *Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> C. RUINI, "Teaching Medieval Music Today: New Approaches to Paleography and Music History, this journal, VI, 2016, pp. 69-76: 69, <https://musicadocta.unibo.it/article/view/6569> (last accessed, 29.09.2019).

One example of engagement on a speculative subject in early music is described by Kathyryn Buehler-McWilliams and Russell E. Murray in their article, “The Monochord in the Medieval and Modern Classrooms”. The generation of the medieval gamut through mathematical proportions can be seen as a speculative issue with roots back to Pythagoras that can be quickly summarized in a lecture. But the authors describe classroom activities in which students recreate the divisions of the monochord described by Pseudo-Odo or Guido of Arezzo. The authors conclude: “As teachers, we are constantly faced with the demands of ‘engagement’ and we think there is no better route to engagement than through the kind of identification that a student gains from working with something like the monochord—an engagement both with the concepts and with the actual practice. The speculative becomes a little less so, and the practical takes on practical meaning”.<sup>15</sup>

The practical engagement with composing early music is addressed by James A. Grymes and John Allemier in “Making Students Make Music: Integrating Composition and Improvisation into the Early Music Classroom”, where they describe various composition projects (such as chant, organum, and Palestrina counterpoint) and improvisation examples (figured bass and ornamentation). The authors provide detailed musical examples of assignments and practical suggestions for how they can work in the classroom. Their goal is to bring the attention of music history students on to how music was made, which, in turn, deepens their historical understanding.

Integrating composition and improvisation into the early music classroom has transformed “the history of music” into “the history of music-making.” Instead of passively learning historical details and music literature, the students are actively scrutinizing and then replicating various artistic choices made by composers and performers of early music. In doing so, the students become engaged not only in mastering musical concepts, but – more importantly – in actually making music.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> K. BUEHLER-MCWILLIAMS - R. MURRAY, “The Monochord in the Medieval and Modern Classrooms”, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, III, n. 2, 2013, pp. 51-172: 171, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmbp/article/view/81> (last accessed, 25.09.2019)

<sup>16</sup> J. GRYMES - J. ALLEMEIER, “Making Students Make Music: Integrating Composition and Improvisation into the Early Music Classroom”, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, IV, n. 2, 2014, pp. 231-254: 254, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmbp/article/view/122> (last accessed, 25.09.2019). For other examples of student engagement in Medieval and Renaissance music see D. SHADLE, “Nothing Ordinary About It: The Mass Proper as Early Music Jigsaw Puzzle”, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, III, n. 1, 2012, pp. 1-37, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmbp/article/view/66> (last accessed, 25.09.2019); and K. BURKE, “Roleplaying Music History: Honing General Education Skills via ‘Reacting to the Past’”, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, V, n. 1, 2014, pp. 1-21, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmbp/article/view/134> (last accessed, 25.09.2019).

Margot Fassler describes how she introduces students to basic codicological study of chant manuscripts in “Medieval Religious Women and Their Music Books: Online Resources for Teaching and Learning”. Given the ever increasing number of digitized manuscripts and online, chant reference tools, Fassler presents an introduction to digital manuscript study by comparing versions of the antiphon *Ad te levavai* from two houses of medieval women: “The abilities to find manuscripts online, and then locate chants within them, are among the most important skills a teacher of medieval music can have. Once these abilities have been acquired, thousands of chants open up for teaching and learning, from every region in Europe, in all their glory and complexity, ready to be brought into the classroom at no charge”.<sup>17</sup>

In my own teaching of the music history survey, I’ve been able to adopt the ideas of Buehler-McWilliams and Murray as well as Grymes and Allemier in my classes. I am fortunate to own a monochord and can give each student a strip of cardboard equal to the length of the string. We do the first few divisions following Pseudo-Odo’s instructions in class with the aid of a ruler and they return the completed two-octave division as homework. When I collect their finished monochord divisions, we often discuss the difference between round b and square b for a considerable time, but with the students’ having some practical understanding of the issue they would not have acquired by sitting in a lecture on the gamut. For composition, I assign students a small passage from Psalm 118: 24 (This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it) and over the course of several weeks they compose (using modern notation): 1) a simple chant setting marking solo and chorus sections and having a melisma of at least twenty notes in a solo section; 2) organum in the Notre Dame style based upon their chant; and 3) using the melisma, an isorhythmic tenor in the style of de Vitry that could be the basis for a complete motet.

Grading creative student assignments in a music history course can be challenging both for the instructor and the students. In my own work, I grade mostly on the formal aspects of the assignment. For example, in the chant assignment I put more emphasis on the students’ ability to write correctly in the church mode they chose (using the correct range and final), rather than giving my judgment on the beauty of the musical line they composed. In the organum assignment, I am concerned that students clearly start the discant clausula on the melisma and that they use rhythmic modes consistently in it. Limiting my grading to the formal structures of the assignments helps students focus on the objective, historical information they will need to know for the class, such as identifying the mode in chants or describing the isorhythmic structure of a fourteenth-century motet.

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<sup>17</sup> M. FASSLER, “Medieval Religious Women and Their Music Books: Online Resources for Teaching and Learning”, in *The Norton Guide to Teaching Music History*, ed. by C. M. Balensuela, New York, W. W. Norton, 2019, p. 23.

Using the assignments described above can demonstrate to our students the praxis of musicology as a discipline. As James V. Maiello has argued, a praxial approach to music history teaching may result in less coverage of music history, but students who learn the methods of musicology as a discipline in their music history courses “will instead have the skills to seek out that content and apply it appropriately when they need or want to do so”.<sup>18</sup> Such work takes more time than lectures to prepare the assignments, to grade the work, and to discuss issues of the homework in class. Using these types of assignments results in less class time for traditional lecture-format presentations. For faculty who use a comprehensive textbook of music history, as is typical in American universities, it may mean skipping sections of the book and omitting coverage of a few musical examples in the anthology.<sup>19</sup> Faculty must balance the reduction in the coverage of materials to allow for the depth of investigation into selected areas. But these kinds of hands-on assignments of composing in earlier styles or confirming the Pseudo-Odo’s division of the monochord, are more in line with the methodology of musicology than lectures.

While a praxial philosophy of music education may, at first, seem to diminish the role of Medieval music in modern K-12 education, a praxial approach to music history teaching reinforces Ruini’s ideal of music history teaching that is “more realistic, immediate, and attractive”. Demonstrating the methods and practices of music, historians can resonate with music education students who are conceiving their own future teaching through a praxial lens. For those students going on to be public school teachers, these positive experiences in early music may be the best way to pass on an enthusiasm for early music to K-12 students.

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<sup>18</sup> MAIELLO, *Towards a Praxial Philosophy*, 92.

<sup>19</sup> C. M. BALENSUELA, “American Handbooks of Music History: Breadth, Depth, and the Critique of Pedagogy”, this journal, V, 2015, pp. 107-111, <https://musicadocta.unibo.it/article/view/5864> (last accessed, 29.09.2019).