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MUSIC HISTORY PEDAGOGY ON THE GROUND FLOOR

Every semester I can plan on meeting at least one first-year student ('freshman' or 'sophomore') who initiates a discussion that I am sure is familiar to many musicologists. After shyly admitting how much they enjoy my class, this student will then ask if musicology is something they could pursue in graduate school and beyond. As their enthusiasm grows, they will eventually say something such as "I really like history, and I really like music, but I didn't know you could do both together!". Early in my career this type of discussion frustrated me. How is it that these students had so little experience with music history and no idea that the field of musicology existed? It seemed that there was a serious failure in the public school music curriculum and that music history was being all but ignored. But as I met more teachers, and learned about the realities of K-12 teaching, my feelings shifted radically. Instead of naively criticizing pre-collegiate teachers, I began to reevaluate my own role in this situation. Am I not teaching the next generation of primary and secondary teachers? What am I doing to improve this situation?¹

I have come to believe that the relationship between collegiate music history teachers and the K-12 system is a significant issue that deserves a new look as our scholarship of teaching moves forward; not necessarily a crisis, but something that should be considered if we are concerned with the current and future state of our discipline. In short: how much does the scholarship of teaching and learning actually apply to *all* music history classrooms? To put it more dramatically: how can our professional dialogues benefit the K-12 teacher dealing with twenty ninth-graders in a general music course? These educators may have ten weeks in which to teach guitar, piano, songwriting, and American music. Are our books, articles and conference presentations of any use to them? University musicologists rarely concern themselves with pre-collegiate general music programs – maybe it is time that we did.

¹ While my experience with K-12 teaching is limited to the United States and in New York State in particular, the fascinating exchange of ideas at the Transmission of Knowledge study group in New York City on 21 June 2015 led me to hope that there is enough international crossover to make this discussion of some value to readers of this journal. I am extremely grateful to a number of teachers who offered enthusiastic support for this paper and provided many wonderful ideas, including Jennifer Davis (Chautauqua Lake Central School, NY), Jessica Lotyczewski (Waterville Junior High School, NY), Rick Lundquist (Jamestown Community College), and Kevin Michki, Christian Bernard, and Rick Webb (SUNY Fredonia).

While some have advocated for revitalizing musicology in the K-12 classroom, few musicologists today seem interested in examining how this can be done.² I fear many college teachers simply assume that what we do in our classes already influences primary and secondary teachers through passive reception and modeling, and while this is true to some degree, a more discriminating look is overdue. One could claim that this is precisely what transpires in the pages of *The Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, *Musica Docta*, *Rivista digitale di Pedagogia e Didattica della Musica*, or *Symposium*, but this is true only up to a certain point; few writers on music history pedagogy have addressed how they can influence – or *are influencing* – the next step of transmission to younger students.

I am not arguing that K-12 teaching is something all musicologists need worry about. Over half of my students are music education majors, so it is a particular concern on my part; a friend of mine at a different institution teaches only research seminars for musicology graduate students, and I do not expect him to worry about how his courses connect to K-12 classrooms. For those whose students are planning on a career as primary or secondary teachers, however, a realistic picture of the K-12 environment is necessary before any useful discussion can ensue. At the risk of offending any of my colleagues, I fear that college-level musicologists can be somewhat disdainful or dismissive of those who teach in primary and secondary schools without understanding the unique circumstances facing these teachers and the constraints under which they work. It is not a simple matter to translate a college-level music appreciation course into something suitable for high school students. Indeed, it is arrogant and naive for college history teachers to assume they know how to work with young students, that teaching middle school general music is somehow “easier” than teaching a college course. K-12 teachers face challenges that college teachers seldom encounter, most of which have a direct impact on the inclusion of music history into their curricula.

These challenges begin with the amount of time spent with students; some general music teachers get one or two forty-minute classes a week, for anywhere from one quarter to a full year, to present a history unit. Others may only have 10-20 weeks total to cover whatever topic they intend, which is why more and more K-12 teachers are abandoning the “history of music” model in favor of focused units on American Music, Music Theatre, African Drumming, etc. Then there is assessment – that is assessment of both the student *and* the teacher. Needless to say the recent moves at both state and federal levels towards outcomes-based assessment is a huge concern, not only in that teachers feel the need to produce and document successful activities with corollary progress in their classes, but their own effectiveness is now evaluated

² For example, see E. BORROFF, “A New Look at Teaching Music History”, *Music Educators Journal*, LXXIX, n. 4, 1992, pp. 41-43.

in part from their students' performance. It is inevitable that K-12 teachers will approach music history topics and materials in ways that are colored not only by the significance or relevance of the material but by how easy it is communicated and documented. Add to this the pressure to integrate specific courses or units within school-wide initiatives (technology, common core, etc.) and satisfying both state and federal standards – the hurdles are substantial, to say the least.

Finally, much of K-12 music education is centered around performance. In secondary schools the band, orchestra, and chorus concert is the most visible means by which a music teacher's success is gauged (by both parents and administrators), which can lead to General Music courses being relegated to a distant second place. In addition, the field of music education has seen a discipline-wide shift from "aesthetic education" (based on traditional book and lecture situations and the transmission of facts) to "praxial education" (which emphasizes learning music by doing music). While few musicians would argue that learning to make music at any level is a wonderful and beneficial endeavor, the liberal arts component of what we do has been increasingly de-emphasized.³

With all this in mind, here are some initial thoughts and questions regarding how we can strengthen the bonds between musicology and the K-12 classroom.

Professional Dialogue

Open a dialogue with music education faculty at your institution to see how musicologists can support their efforts. Curricula vary from school to school, so it is difficult to suggest any single solution. It may be no more than a presentation or two to a methods class that outlines the unique challenges when teaching the basics of music history, or suggesting lesson plans or topics that would be particularly useful to younger students. This dialogue can be expanded to include professional music teacher organizations that cater to K-12 teachers at the regional or national level.

Student/Teacher Dialogue

I suggest that some of the most important questions and suggestions should come from K-12 teachers (and student-teachers) themselves. What can we do to help them? What can we provide to make their jobs easier and more effective? For example, are you aware of how the recently published National Core Arts Standards actually work? Ask your students how the topic you just

³ See J. V. MAIELLO, "Towards a Praxial Philosophy of Music History Pedagogy", *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, IV, n. 1, 2013, pp. 71-108, and the reply by TH. REGELSKI, "Music and the Teaching of Music History as Praxis: A Reply to James Maiello" in the same issue, pp. 109-136.

covered in your music history survey might be adapted to suit specific standards at different grade levels. This is a guaranteed prompt for beneficial and enjoyable classroom discussion.

Resources

It would be valuable for musicologists to prepare lists of quality history-related materials – articles, books, recordings and web sites – that are useful for primary and secondary teachers. For example, my students are thrilled when they learn of the online resources available through the Library of Congress and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, or how Google Classrooms can maximize their time with history assignments.⁴

Courses

The first music history pedagogy course I taught was marginally successful, mostly because I created a class directed towards teaching collegiate music appreciation or survey courses, something of limited value to most of my students. I am now in the process of getting approval for an undergraduate section that is specifically designed to prepare undergraduate music education majors for integrating musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory into their primary and secondary classrooms. But pre-collegiate pedagogy need not be confined to pedagogy courses; designing a pre-collegiate music history course would seem an ideal capstone exercise for any number of upper-level music history courses. In addition, the history of music education is a subject already in place in many college programs that begs for interaction between musicologists and their colleagues in music education.⁵

Post-Baccalaureate Programs

In 33 states, music educators are required to complete a graduate degree within a certain time after being hired. Some states also require a set number of continuing education credits at various points throughout a teaching career. In New York, the discipline of the degree is not specified, though a certain number of credits need to be in the teacher's area of specialization. While many K-12 teachers pursue degrees in education, many take the opportunity to study conducting or performance. Why not a music history degree? I have had

⁴ Other disciplines have already created music resources for teachers; for example, see J. C. HALL *et al.*, "Teaching Private Enterprise Through Tunes: An Abecedarium of Music for Economists", *Journal of Private Enterprise*, XXIII, n. 2, 2008, pp. 157-166. See also B. LEE COOPER - R. A. CONDON, *The Popular Music Teaching Handbook: An Educator's Guide to Music-Related Print Resources*, Westport, CT, Libraries Unlimited, 2004.

⁵ M. MCCARTHY, "The Past in the Present: Revitalising History in Music Education", *British Journal of Music Education*, XX, n. 2, 2003, pp. 121-134.

countless students who have expressed interest in pursuing graduate studies in history and theory, but had no desire to follow-up with a doctoral degree. They are motivated by personal interest, and most want to learn how to bring their collegiate history and theory experience into their own classrooms. Are our Master's programs designed to accommodate these students? If not, how can we adapt our programs to be more inviting to such students?

Workshops

The Center for American Music at the University of Pittsburgh offers a biennial program – *Voices Across Time* – for K-12 teachers. This outstanding institute, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, brings together teachers of all levels and disciplines for five weeks of immersion in American music history and instructional strategies.⁶ Perhaps other colleges should investigate creating summer workshops for teachers in their region?

Deep Research

We should investigate ways in which our traditional scholarship can be rendered into something useful at lower levels. Having finished a major research project, is it possible to produce an article for high school teachers that outlines your findings and proposes ways to incorporate this material into the classes? I have learned from former students that a surprising number of “advanced” musicological subjects translate well to a pre-collegiate situation. A quick glance at musicological trends from recent decades reveals issues that younger students are eager to discuss, issues that can also provide useful themes around which K-12 teachers can organize their teaching units.

Outreach

Why aren't we promoting our 'programs' beyond our own classrooms to where there is an eager audience already in place? Perhaps in addition to reaching out to music teachers we should investigate ways to connect with social studies and history teachers. Many of these educators will be equally if not more grateful for examples of useful materials as well as suggestions as to how to make music a contributing factor within their larger objectives.⁷ I would point out something I find to be quite depressing. A scan of the journals

⁶ <http://www.voices.pitt.edu/>. Site consulted on 22 February 2016.

⁷ Many primary and secondary teachers already use music in their classes, in both predictable and creative ways, with excellent and sometimes surprising results. See J. BERGLUND, “Teaching Islam with Music”, *Ethnography & Education*, III, n. 2, 2008, pp. 161-175; M. COPELAND - C. GOERING, “Blues You Can Use: Teaching the Faust Theme through Music, Literature, and Film”, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, XLVI, n. 5, 2003, pp. 436-441; S. J. MASTIN, “Now Listen to Source A’: Music and History”, *Teaching History*, CVIII, 2002, pp. 49-54.

The History Teacher and *Teaching History* revealed six articles in the last ten years that directly address the use of music in secondary or collegiate classrooms. One was written by a music professor (a performer), one by a librarian, and the remaining by collegiate historians. A quick scan of a most recent issues of *Music Educators Journal* revealed a number of interesting articles involving music history in some way, but nothing submitted by a professional musicologist.

National History Day

An excellent model for connecting K-12 students, teachers, and collegiate historians already exists in the form of this non-profit, nation-wide organization that sponsors regional and national competitions and gatherings where student researchers can present their work in a variety of formats, including research papers, documentaries, dramas, etc. Each year student papers are selected for publication in the journal *The History Teacher*. The National History Day organization now boasts *The History Channel* as one of their sponsors. What about creating a similar event for music history but on a smaller scale? A local university could network with its county's K-12 teachers, inviting students to create research projects and then gathering for a one-day event where the results are shared. This would also be an excellent opportunity for collegiate music students (undergraduate and graduate) to get involved by interacting with the student-participants.

Academic Societies

The American Historical Association and the Society for History Education offer a joint membership for K-12 teachers. Perhaps the International Musicological Society, American Musicological Society, Society for American Music, or College Music Society could partner with the *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* or *Musica Docta* to offer the same?

State Teacher Convention

The New York State School Music Association hosts two conferences a year for K-12 and collegiate music educators. This excellent opportunity is overlooked by musicologists. The K-12 teachers in attendance would likely flock to a session featuring a musicologist with suggestions and materials for incorporating specific topics into their classrooms.

Regional, State and Federal Governance

Most counties, regions and/or states in the U.S. have music teacher organizations, many of which are affiliated with the National Association for Music Educators. These organizations not only provide opportunities for students (such as All-State ensembles), they also provide innumerable resources and support for teachers and administrators. It would be invaluable

for all parties involved were musicologist part of a statewide discussion on curricula, standards, assessment and evaluation, etc.

What I am proposing here leads naturally to the issue of advocacy. I know that many of us have spent a depressing amount of time defending our field from administrators tasked with curricular revision and faculty reductions. I doubt such battles will end any time soon, but perhaps one way to protect ourselves is to build a larger base of interest and impact, a foundation with roots further back than the freshman year. There is some sense of urgency here. While college curricula have suffered external critiques and unwanted revisions for years, I believe that the current economic climate makes what is happening now of more significant impact than in previous years. Public accountability, the “business model” for higher education, outcomes-based assessment, vocational training in place of liberal arts experience – such agendas have and will continue to have a potentially lethal impact on our profession. Tasking ourselves with a reformulation and strengthening of music history pedagogy at all levels may be a necessary step in our survival. This is a challenge I hope we can take up.

Appendix – A Table of Equivalence of School and University Systems in Italy and in the USA
by Lorenzo Bianconi and Pierpaolo Polzonetti, in collaboration with James A. Davis*

		Italia		USA		
età	ciclo	grado	(curriculum musicale)	age	Grade	
3		scuola dell'infanzia		3	Preschool	
4				4	preschool or pre-kindergarten	
5				5	kindergarten	
6	I ciclo	scuola primaria: 5 anni		6	primary education: 1 st grade (elementary school)	
7				7		2 nd grade
8				8		3 rd grade
9				9		4 th grade
10				10		5 th grade (sometimes already considered secondary education)
11		scuola secondaria di I grado: 3 anni	scuola secondaria a indirizzo musicale: 3 anni	11	secondary education: 6 th grade (middle or junior high school)	
12				12		7 th grade
13				13		8 th grade
14	II ciclo	scuola secondaria di II grado: 5 anni	liceo musicale: 5 anni	14	secondary education: 9 th grade (high school): freshmen	
15				15		10 th grade: sophomores
16				16		11 th grade: juniors
17				17		12 th grade: seniors
18				18		Bachelor's degree (BA or BS): 1. freshmen
19	università	laurea triennale: 3 anni	conservatorio	diploma di I livello: 3 anni	2. sophomores	
20						diploma di II livello: 2 anni
21		laurea magistrale: 2 anni	master I livello: 1 o 2 anni	4. seniors		
22					dottorato di ricerca: 3 anni	master II livello: 1 o 2 anni
23		Doctorate or Philosophy Degree (PhD): usually 5 years				
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						

* This is an attempt to compare two systems that present many differences, and we are aware of the many variations within the US system, not to mention other English-speaking countries. We only took into account what we understand is the norm.