

REPORT ON THE FIRST INSTITUTE FOR MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY STUDIES

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The Institute for Music Theory Pedagogy Studies sponsored by the College Music Society was conducted in Boulder, Colorado, June 12-18, 1988, and was hosted by the College of Music of the University of Colorado. The Institute was founded by Roger E. Foltz, University of Nebraska at Omaha and Gary Wittlich, Indiana University. Faculty for the Institute consisted of W. Kenton Bales, University of Nebraska at Omaha; Ann K. Blombach, The Ohio State University; Dorothy Payne, University of Connecticut; Mary Wennerstrom, Indiana University; Allen Winold, Indiana University; and Gary Wittlich. Roger Foltz served as Director of the Institute.

The Institute was organized around the theme "Materials, Strategies, and Relevancy for the College Teacher" to reflect the great amount of interest and activity in the development and restructuring of the undergraduate music theory curriculum during the past twenty-five years. The interest in curricular change has resulted in the theory teacher being confronted with a vast array of textbooks and pedagogical approaches, not to mention the many advancements in technology that have found their way into the theory classroom. As the initial announcement of the Institute indicated, "... this is an exciting time, but one in which it is difficult to keep up with the changes necessary to develop and implement effective theory curricula. . . ." It was with this thought in mind that the Institute was structured.

The Institute was divided into the following areas: skills teaching, including music fundamentals, drills, and the application of technology; demonstrations of analysis, including traditional tonal and twentieth-century music; curriculum design; various aspects of electronic technology; and student evaluation and testing. To each of these topics approximately one day was devoted. In addition, sessions were established during the

JOURNAL OF MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY

evening and noon hours to acquaint participants with a variety of computer hardware and software. These sessions consisted of presentations by the faculty with a variety of different formats whereby participants could discuss ideas with mutual problems related to the topic at hand.

At the conclusion of the week an evaluation was administered over the Institute. Of those who responded, 84% indicated that they would attend a future Theory Pedagogy Institute sponsored by the College Music Society if different topic areas were covered. This response, along with numerous positive remarks throughout the week, led all to believe that a worthwhile experience had been achieved.

There were 102 registrants representing conservatories, colleges, and universities throughout the United States and Canada. Of the group, 27 had been teaching theory at the college level 1-5 years; 18 for 6-10 years; 15 for 11-15 years; 16 for 16-20 years; 19 for 21-25 years; and 7 had been teaching music theory 26 or more years. Approximately half of the individuals received their advanced degrees in theory or theory and composition with the remaining having completed their advanced degrees in various areas, including conducting, performance, musicology, and administration. When asked how the participants identified themselves in relation to their teaching responsibilities, the following responses were given: theorists 17%, theorist/composer 19%, theorist/musicologist 2%, theorist/performer 39%, theorist/music educator 8%, and 15% indicated another designation. With regard to size of institution in which they taught, the following was reported: more than 400 music majors, 7.5%; 100-400 majors, 35%; 50-100 majors, 21.3% and, less than 50 majors, 36.2%. In terms of their experience with computer-assisted instruction (CAI), there was a wide range of expertise ranging from the novice to some who had done extensive programming. While this assemblage of theory teachers does not necessarily comprise a statistical representation of theory teachers across the country, the group did appear to represent a rather diverse cross section, as shown by the above figures relating to years of teaching experience, educational background, size of music program, and diversity of teaching focuses.

In reviewing the week, some issues surfaced that participants, as well as faculty, felt needed to be addressed. One of the first concerns that emerged was the incorporation of technology into the music theory curriculum. As stated earlier there was a wide range of experience dealing with CAI, and yet regardless of the expertise one had attained, the majority seemed to be concerned with the role technology will play in the theory curriculum in the years to come. Questions were raised about the types of

INSTITUTE FOR MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY

computers in which to invest, as well as how to integrate CAI into the curriculum. The faculty and a majority of the more experienced participants cautioned that CAI should not be viewed in any sense as a replacement of any facet of the theory sequence but rather as an enhancement of instruction. While questions were more numerous than conclusions, many found it comforting that other colleagues across the country shared some of the same concerns regarding technology.

Throughout the week there were discussions relating to overall curricular concerns. Some of the issues dealt with specific aspects of coursework, such as use of fixed "do," movable "do," scale-degree numbers, and neutral syllables for sightsinging. Thoughts were also expressed as to the integration of sightsinging and ear training, as well as the incorporation of keyboard harmony into the theory sequence. While these and many other such issues have long been debated, many found it helpful to undertake these discussions again, thereby gaining new insights into these perennial problems.

Discussion was also given to the evaluation of sightsinging and ear training. At one juncture during the Institute, three of the faculty performed a sightsinging example for participants to evaluate. They carefully rehearsed their respective errors and the manner in which they would sing a musical example, and they intended to demonstrate "obvious" differences of achievement among the three performances of the same melody. After the performances took place and discussion was undertaken, it became clear to all that many factors are taken into account when evaluating sightsinging and that there is no universal agreement on the ranking of these various criteria. Similar exercises were also undertaken in melodic dictation and comparable differences of opinions were found as well.

In the analysis sessions, once again the various presentations generated a number of questions. Topics relating to analysis in the undergraduate theory sequence that were discussed included the following: when in the curriculum do you use short examples versus entire movements of pieces? Should analysis examples be confined to excerpts from piano literature and/or piano reductions of orchestral scores, or should students be confronted with full scores at an early point? What proportion of the undergraduate theory sequence should be devoted to literature of the common-practice period, and what portion should be devoted to twentieth-century literature? And, finally, how much exposure to how many various analytical techniques should be given, and what is the appropriate depth of exposure during the undergraduate theory core? Once again, profitable, although not necessarily conclusive, discussion took place with some near consensus of thinking in a few areas.

JOURNAL OF MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY

Based on the success of the first Institute that took place in 1988, we decided to hold a second Institute with a different theme. For this second institute the focus will be centered on the problems of undergraduate theory instruction, with an emphasis on relating music theory and performance. The Institute for Music Theory Pedagogy Studies II will be held June 11-16, 1989 on the campus of the University of Colorado and will be hosted by the College of Music. For further information regarding the next Institute, please contact:

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