

Editorial

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN MUSIC THEORY TEACHING

Two parallel (and sometimes blended) streams of interest in music theory, on the one hand, and in its teaching, on the other, have been gradually expanding for several decades now. The inception of music theory as an academic specialty, with its own sense of identity and self awareness, can be seen in the early issues of the *Journal of Music Theory* (1957): its earnest striving for definition and purpose; its persevering to clarify boundaries and to seek legitimacy. Several years earlier the "modern era" of theory pedagogy commenced with the "Literature and Materials" program created by William Schuman at Juilliard in the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹ Schuman's vision was to shift attention away from part-writing exercises and common-practice harmony (the mainstays of earlier decades) toward music literature itself and toward a wider range of historical styles and compositional issues as the core of undergraduate theoretical training. This curricular revolution at Juilliard—really an ongoing experiment individualized by particular teachers—eventually generated ripples of influence at other schools and intermingled with additional undercurrents that were soon to emerge.

These undercurrents took at least two directions during the early and middle 1960s. One general and long-term series of events involved (and evolved) the Contemporary Music Project² which included composers and music educators; and the other, more specifically related to college-level theory, culminated in the publication (1966) of the *Materials and Structure of Music* textbooks conceived at Indiana University. The "M & S" books were especially notable, for their time, because they stressed single-line melodic analysis, an extremely wide range of musical examples, and the exploitation of conceptual frameworks not bound by conventional stylistic categories. These two ventures (perhaps they were adventures as well) of CMP and M & S were among the direct antecedents of the Comprehensive Musicianship movement³ which gathered momentum during the late 60s and early 70s and whose pre-eminence is now somewhat diminished, perhaps, but whose influence and legacy continue to linger today.

During the 1970s additional trends materialized—some in

JOURNAL OF MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY

pedagogy but more concerning the growing self-confidence of the profession as a whole—which advanced the maturation of music theory as a discipline in its own right.⁴ The foremost development was the formation of the Society for Music Theory (1977) which has generated, during the past decade, new respect and esteem for our field as an intellectual domain of value and integrity.

In the 1980s the continuing ascendance of music theory in the world of scholarship, research, and creativity has spun off renewed concern and curiosity about pedagogical matters. The proliferation of new textbooks and materials (can anyone keep up anymore?); programmed instruction and its more sophisticated offshoot, the computer-assisted revolution; advancements in cognitive psychology, perceptual research, learning theories, and artificial intelligence; the explosion of scholarly journals in history and analysis; increasing awareness of the benefits, risks, tradeoffs, and diversity of competing pedagogical methodologies; the permeation into undergraduate teaching of sophisticated analytical systems (e.g., structural reductions, set theory); the expansion of graduate theory courses, programs, and degrees (although, sadly, not jobs); the increasing frequency of pedagogical presentations and papers at regional theory societies and, sometimes, national meetings; experimentation, revision, tinkering, and fine tuning of curricula and course syllabi; and, finally, the publication of two new, and complementary, theory pedagogy textbooks⁵ all continue to spur a national interest in issues related to the teaching and learning of music theory.

One measure of the longevity and substantiality of theory pedagogy as an identifiable branch within our larger discipline is that it has sustained its existence and influence far and long enough to have experienced fads, backlashes, and cycles. The pendulum has swung now from isolated harmony and ear-training courses to total packages of integration in all shapes and sizes and back again to individualized focus on specialized and specific topics at some schools. One current mark of a more conservative and back-to-basics mood in the 80s is that Bach chorales are now in style again as teaching material. The status of some fashions, however, would be difficult to document; it depends on what circles one travels in, and even more importantly on one's whole lifetime of accumulated teaching experience and training (i.e., the particular mind set or filtering system through which one makes judgements). Consider, for example, all the possible answers and reactions to the question, "Are computers now *in* or *out* for teaching music theory?"

One fact seems indisputable, though: theory teachers are hungry for information about teaching, goals, content, testing, music,

TRENDS AND ISSUES

curriculum, approaches, research, philosophies, classroom dynamics (rapport; motivation), and dozens of other aspects of a vigorously evolving field. Many, I think, are also eager to contribute their knowledge, advice, experience, enjoyment—even frustrations—about teaching to their colleagues. It is out of such a cumulative background of pent-up interests and needs that the idea for the *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* was born.

The timing is opportune, then, for a major new national journal that will a) provide an outlet for existing scholarship and research; and b) encourage the collegial sharing of ideas about teaching music theory. Since no current journal is devoted exclusively to theory pedagogy, by concentrating just on issues directly and specifically related to the problems and solutions of teaching and learning music theory, this publication should be viewed as a complement rather than as competition to the many distinguished theory journals already in existence.

We envision an extremely eclectic and extensive array of potential topics for this publication that will help, over a period of time, to reveal more fully the breadth and limits of this specialty. A long-term series of articles (spread out over several issues) on curriculum design at specific schools (beginning, we hope, in the second issue) and a special topics forum on teaching Aural Skills for the third issue (Spring 88) are just two of many areas that will be highlighted in the future. Submissions are encouraged for additional subjects as well: the goals and purpose of music theory; computer-assisted instruction; analyses of standard teaching literature (either whole pieces or groups of examples that illustrate a particular concept or approach); evaluation and grading procedures (the crafting of theory examinations is virtually unknown as a topic of serious discussion; instead, faculty members typically construct their tests almost instinctively); theories of perception, psychology, and learning; reviews of textbooks and other monographs and materials related to teaching; bibliographies; comparative teaching techniques and course outlines for specific classes (fundamentals, harmony, counterpoint, form, orchestration, composition, ear training, keyboard, advanced graduate seminars, analytical systems, etc.); group dynamics (teacher/student interaction, discussion and lecture styles); conceptual approaches (writing exercises, critical thinking skills); and reports on pedagogy dissertations and theses.

A wide variety of formats for articles will be accepted: controlled empirical, behavioral, and statistical studies; fully documented scholarly investigations and research; well-supported speculative hypotheses; short, practical teaching tips; multiple viewpoints on controversial subjects; and interdisciplinary approaches.

JOURNAL OF MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY

We hope to stimulate more people to contribute to (and draw from) the accumulating fund of knowledge about which methodologies, technologies, orientations, perspectives, attitudes, curricula, biases, and old-wives tales work—and under which conditions. Two specially important uses for the journal include: a) providing aid for the many non-specialist theory teachers (over 4500 are now listed in the latest CMS directory); and b) providing resource readings for the growing number of graduate theory pedagogy courses.

We are especially looking forward to the inevitable evolution that any such new project undergoes during its beginning stages of development. Defining the mission and standards of an emerging field such as theory pedagogy will be a joint enterprise involving not just the leadership and direction the journal provides but the response from our readership as well—their comments and contributions. Shaping and refining the scope, format, and image of the journal to fit the concerns of our fellow teachers will be among our highest priorities. And achieving a level of quality and sensitivity in teaching that matches the excellence of the richest intellectual attainments in music theory itself is a challenge that all of us can collectively aspire to.

High achievement in *doing* music theory—creating stimulating ideas, concepts, and interpretations; seeking explanations; and seeing relationships—is, of course, something to be proud of. We hope, in a modest, yet tangible, way that this new journal will promote the notion that accomplishment in *teaching* theory well—reaching students' ears, minds, and hearts; intensifying a love for and aesthetic response to music; sharing knowledge in a way that helps to communicate what it means to be human; and making a positive artistic difference in someone's life—ought to be important, too. Because it is.

Michael R. Rogers, for the Editors
University of Oklahoma

TRENDS AND ISSUES

NOTES

¹See William Schuman, "On Teaching the Literature and Materials of Music," *Musical Quarterly* (April 1948):155-68; William Schuman, *The Juilliard Report* (Norton, 1953); and William Bergsma, "L & M Revisited," *Julliard Review* (Fall 1955): 29-36.

²See "Contemporary Music Project," *Music Educators Journal* (March 1968): 41-72 and (May 1973): 33-48.

³See David Willoughby, *Comprehensive Musicianship and Undergraduate Music Curricula, CMP⁶* (MENC, 1971); see also *CMP²* (1965) and *CMP⁵* (1971).

⁴See "Music Theory: The Art, the Profession, and the Future," *College Music Symposium* (Spring 1977): 135-162.

⁵See Michael R. Rogers, *Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1984); and John D. White, *Guidelines for College Teaching of Music Theory* (Scarecrow Press, 1981). For older books, see also Karl Eschman, *Teaching Music Theory* (Schirmer, 1965) and especially Howard Murphy, *Teaching Musicianship* (Coleman-Ross, 1950).