

# Reading and Writing the Pedagogy of the Renaissance: Students, Teachers, and Materials of Musical Learning, 1470-1650

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This conference seeks to raise the question of how music was taught and learned in the past. The answers to these questions will not only inform our understanding of musical literacy and learning in the Renaissance, but can help guide our investigations of the subject in other eras. Because of the overarching interdisciplinary nature of the conference, a number of contributions examine issues of learning in musicology's sister disciplines. While the object of our study is ultimately music, the broader issues of pedagogy derived from these other areas serve as an important methodological adjunct at this stage of our work.

Many of the most valuable observations on musical learning of the Early Modern Era have heretofore been found in asides or excursions in other kinds of studies--biographies, institutional or regional histories, source studies, iconographical research, history of theory, investigations of compositional process and of performance practice, and so on. We seek now to place the issue of musical learning at the center of our investigation.

In order to bring these questions into better focus, we have limited the chronological and the geographic scope of this initial foray into the history of musical pedagogy to music in the Western European Art tradition in the period dating roughly 1470 to 1650. Even within these parameters, we could not aim for comprehensive coverage, nor could we expect a consistency in scholarly approach. Rather, we have asked authors to identify strands of investigation that merit further pursuit. We provide here a sampling of strategies for approaching the question. The result is, thus, as much prescriptive of further study as it is descriptive of the present state of inquiry.

We began our investigation with the classic "who, what, when, where, how and why?" that serves as a pedagogical base for much of modern Western education. Specifically,

- **Who are the teachers and learners?** How does their identity shape the choices they made about musical learning?
- **What was learned?** In part, this involves fitting the act of learning into the broader context of music and music-making in the Renaissance. It may also involve comparisons to other repertoires or even other kinds of pedagogical endeavors of the time.
- **When was music learned?** While this in part connects with the question of where music was learned, it also suggests the need to understand its cultural place (was music learning a professional or amateur activity) and its place within the life-span of the learners.
- **Where was music learned?** Besides the physical locations associated with the formal and informal institutions of learning, we need to address the cultural locations of class and gender.
- **How was music learned?** What were the pedagogical methods? How did they parallel and/or depart from those of other disciplines? How much variation was there in the accepted methods of teaching?
- **Why was music learned?** What were the motivations of the learners and the teachers? How was their activity supported and encouraged by the institutions and social structures of the time? What was the value of music learning in the culture?

While no individual author can address all of these issues, in the aggregate they create a broader portrait of musical pedagogy that embraces all of these issues, often in intriguing combinations. Our pool of contributors comprise a cross-section of the discipline of musicology brought together with scholars from the

social sciences and humanities; among them, art historians, cultural historians, historians of medicine, science and technology, economic historians, linguists, bibliophiles, and curators. What unites these scholars is an interest in the ways in which knowledge and the materials of learning were passed from one individual to another.

By working together with scholars in musicology's sister disciplines, we hope to establish useful methodological approaches to the educational practices of the period. Comparing the materials and techniques of our colleagues in the humanities and social sciences will bring us closer to defining the parameters of our own field. The end result will be a more coherent picture of musical learning within the larger socio-cultural context of education in general. In short, the organizers see this project as the beginning of a discussion that we hope will inform investigations of the past for decades to come, for the question of how music was passed on from one individual to another is fundamental to the understanding of music's place in that culture.

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Although a number of musicologists have worked in the area of musical literacy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (examining such topics as musical institutions, didactic sources, and compositional practice), there existed until the present time no comprehensive scholarly source on the subject of musical pedagogy in the Early Modern Era. Some scholars have, in the last decade, begun to address the broader issue of what musical education meant in the medieval and Early Modern Eras: how and where it took place, who had access, what its content might have been in a particular time and place, what its social and cultural contexts might have been, and what educational practice has to teach us about musical repertoires and their performance. The current project, which focuses on Western Europe in the period from 1470 to 1650, emerges from these larger discussions about musical educational practice that have grown up over the last decade.

Our own interest in the subject began with symposium held at the opening round table of the 14th Congress of the International Musicological Society in Bologna. A wide range of topics was addressed ranging from music curriculum to treatises to what was being taught within the university as well as in non-university settings, from the surrounding cathedral schools to the dance halls. Additionally, participants discussed what was learned in private lessons and in self-instruction, with or without manuals or texts.

A question raised by Craig Wright, the session chair, was whether the bulk of treatises from the period were actual texts of lectures given within the universities. Wright's question merely scratches the surface of the larger questions of the place of music in the new print culture. For example, what role did innumerable other printed books of musical learning play in the educational process? We find everything from children's primers to manuals for amateurs such as how to play instruments such as the cittern. More fundamentally, it is one matter to know what materials were used in musical instruction and yet another to know what actually went on in music lessons, be they in the classroom or on a one to one basis. Beyond that, we need to discover what the practical results of this instruction were.

Nor was Wright the only one to call for more attention to the many issues surrounding musical learning. IN 1997, Jessie Ann Owens stated in her book *Composers at Work* that "musical education remains an area badly in need of further investigations." Following a paper presented by Susan Weiss at Duke University in April of 1998, "Musical Pedagogy in the German Renaissance," James Haar also registered surprise at the lack of attention to the topic of musical learning. In the meantime, a few studies had appeared but had received little attention in the discipline as a whole. Bernarr Rainbow addressed this problem directly in "The Challenge of History," written in 1995. He highlighted the need for historical awareness as an integral component of music education and attempted to arrive at a deeper understanding of and justification for music education by concentrating on its application in two historic periods, antiquity and the Middle Ages. Rainbow is also the author of a text, *Music in Educational Thought and Process*, published in 1989 in Wales, that traces the development of music education from 800 BC to 1985. The book concentrates on the place of

music in general education and looks at the subject from the point of view of a social historian.

Since the IMS in Bologna, the publication of *Composers at Work*, and meetings in Durham, North Carolina and York, England in 1998, a group of scholars interested in historical musical pedagogy began meeting and corresponding regularly. In November 1999, the organizers and others joined together in a panel discussion at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society in Kansas City. At that time we defined the scope and magnitude of the topic of historical musical pedagogies and sketched an approach to future scholarship. We set up methodologies that would include the sharing of bibliographies and source materials, seminars, interdisciplinary symposia, a collaborative volume of essays, and the creation of models for further studies. The panel explored issues relating to learning, focusing particularly on the conditions of education and on specific pedagogical sources. Questions of historical access to education in music and the various roles of age, social status, gender, and professional/amateur status were of particular interest for our understanding of the role of musical pedagogy in earlier cultures. This session launched study groups at each of the subsequent annual meetings at the AMS in 2000 in Toronto and in 2001 in Atlanta. We also began regular e-mail correspondence both as individuals and as a group, discussion which has been useful for expanding our various methodological approaches. An interim discussion took place in a session devoted to *Pedagogy of Music in the Renaissance* at the International Musicological Society Meetings in Leuven (August 2002) with five papers by members of our group. Here we attempted to establish a clearer perspective on the pedagogical activities of the late sixteenth century. The first session devoted entirely to issues of musical learning, chaired by one of our three organizers, took place at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in November 2003. Now sessions on learning are a regular feature of the national meetings.

Work in other disciplines, of course, has much to teach us about general educational practices of the Early Modern Era. Some of our scholarly models take as their focus a broad array of educational strategies. Addressing topics ranging from in-home education through apprenticeship to the various kinds of schools and universities, scholars such as Nicholas Orme, Paul Grendler, Anthony Grafton, Rebecca Bushnell, and others have provided a solid cultural backdrop for educational practice. Hints of themes such as emerging notions of childhood, shifts of methods and approaches to scholarship and learning in sixteenth-century practice, the impact of humanism, and the financial and intellectual import of education have emerged as serious foci over the last 25 years. We have encouraged our participants to invoke a broad range of cross-disciplinary experts, for the historical study of music was situated in a broader institutional context for the education of children and adults in the historical past. A more extensive survey of the scholarly literature will be provided in the web-bibliography which is forthcoming in December 2005.

A central goal for the conference is to develop a cross-disciplinary perspective. To that end, contributions have been selected to showcase a range of approaches. Anthony Grafton will speak on *How Renaissance Students Learned to Read the Classics: Visions, Techniques, Memories*. Andrew Morrall will join in a round table discussion with fellow art historians, humanists, and bibliophiles to talk about issues related to the way children of the nobility were taught geometry and math. Session chairs and respondents have been selected from among our colleagues within and outside of musicology properly speaking. The rich range of perspectives should be further enhanced by round-tables and interdisciplinary discussion sessions.

These broader investigations will serve to frame our more specific explorations of music learning. One of the central issues that we have been grappling with is precisely what "historical musical pedagogy" entails. We are interested in how music was taught, not just what was learned. We are interested in the institutions that sponsored musical learning: monasteries and convents, urban and Latin schools which incorporated musical curricula, as well as the more traditional choirboy schools (*Maistrise*) that were the training ground for the composers and performers of the era. We are also interested in the people who took part in the learning process--students and teachers--as well as the repertoires they studied and the materials that they used in their lessons, be they formal or informal. Our goal is to study the ways in which music was learned by performers and composers, professionals and amateurs, men and women, singers, instrumentalists and hearers of music

in the period from 1520-1650.

We begin by looking at those institutions that provided musical instruction, contrasting the social and educational practices of the secular music school, the instrumental apprenticeship system, and the cathedral and convent environments. These studies address the need to place learning in a larger context that matches the studies of repertoires and practices. Music was taught in a wide variety of situations, and with various rationales.

Within those institutions, we focus on both the teacher and the student, beginning with the teacher--in this case focusing on those teachers who presented themselves publicly through the publishing of didactic treatises. Questions of who the readers of these volumes were, the nature of these works' use by students, and the larger context of music instruction in the growing book culture of the Early Modern Period are important adjuncts to this study. We need also to ask questions about the students themselves: who were they? What did they learn and how did they learn it? What were their expectations of musical study, and how did they use the results of this study?

A third strand of investigations involves the study of the materials for learning music that survive to the present day, focusing on the music itself. The weakness in the musicological investigation of these artifacts to date is that we have too often tied them to the practice of music in performance and ignored their function as teaching tools. This is true of individual manuscripts as well as widely disseminated printed volumes. We need to begin the process of reading these sources from the standpoint of their student users, with a keen eye toward recreating their pedagogical roles apart from, or in conjunction with, any practical performance role they may have served.

In the end, our study of institutions and individuals, as well as of sources and their uses, points us toward the most fundamental of questions, and that has to do with the basis of knowledge that stood behind all teaching in this period. Teachers of any discipline had implicit understandings of the ways of knowing and the ways of teaching. This philosophy of teaching is recoverable from the writings that were left behind as well as the materials used and how they were employed. It is especially important to understand that the teaching of music was not a thing separate from other areas of knowledge, and that many of the same conditions held consistent in all fields. It is therefore our task to outline these philosophical and pragmatic underpinnings and to relate them to the larger context of education in the Early Modern Period.

While our scope is broad, its focus remains firmly fixed on recognizable figures and materials from the musicological tradition. The major figures to be discussed are familiar from the musicological literature. Champion, Morley, Cerone, Pontio, Zacconi, Scaletta, Henry VIII, and a variety of other theorists, teachers, patrons and students will be the subject of individual investigations. Each author has developed his or her own methodological approach to the materials. Student notebooks, manuscripts and prints with marginalia, traditional theory treatises, and musical anthologies all play a part in our efforts to decode the teaching strategies of our historical ancestors.

Together, the conference papers focus our attention on an often-ignored part of musical life. While the results of pedagogical practice--the music itself--is justifiably our primary concern, it is incumbent upon scholars to recognize the need to explore the learning and teaching that led to the creation of these musical works. By identifying the methods and materials of musical pedagogy, we come that much closer to understanding the subtleties of the musical discourse that preceded and surrounded musical creativity.