

**Russell E. Murray, Jr., Susan Forscher Weiss, and  
Cynthia J. Cyrus, eds. *Music Education in the Middle  
Ages and the Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana  
University Press, 2010. 424 pages. \$49.95.  
ISBN 978-0-253-35486-0  
Ebook (\$25.45) ISBN 978-0-253-00455-0**

JAN HERLINGER

**T**he book consists of the editors' introduction and seventeen essays concerning the pedagogy of music in Western Europe from the Middle Ages to the late seventeenth century, based on papers read at a conference at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University in 2005. Collectively, the essays address five questions. What pedagogical methods were used? What did students learn? Who were the teachers, and who the students? Where and when was music learned? Why was music learned?

In Part 1, "Medieval Pedagogy," Dolores Pesce explains how Guido's hymn *Ut queant laxis*, in connection with his didactic exercise *Alme rector*, helped beginning musicians identify the mode of a melody through a combination of sensory perception and intellection. Charles M. Atkinson, in a study of Carolingian glosses on late antique treatises, shows how ninth-century teachers intertwined the teaching of music and grammar. Susan Boynton studies glosses in hymnaries of the eleventh century (some of which were used directly by oblates and novices) that reflect the teaching of Latin vocabulary and grammar, scriptural interpretation, and performance of the liturgy.

In Part 2, "Renaissance Places of Learning," Gordon Munro determines that notwithstanding the virulence of the Scottish Reformation (1560), attitudes toward music remained ambivalent inside and outside the Church: fourteen years later the nephew of one of the leading reformers was still being taught plainsong; the triumphal entry of Anne of Denmark into Edinburgh (1590) was accompanied by polyphony, both mensural and, evidently, non-mensural; and by the seventeenth century civic councils were even supporting music teachers. Drawing on archival and literary documents, paintings, and

collections of music, Kristine K. Forney shows that music was an important element in the intellectual and moral education of young Antwerp women in the sixteenth century, some of whom achieved a high level of accomplishment. John Griffiths shows how Bermudo, in his *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* (1555), helped amateurs learn music fundamentals by teaching them to read mensural notation, notate vocal music in score, and then intabulate it for lute. His research suggests that vocal and instrumental musical cultures were not as separate as has often been thought.

In Part 3, “Renaissance Materials and Contexts,” Peter Schubert reads Montanos’s *Arte de musica teorica y practica* (1592) and Cerone’s *El melopeo y maestro* (1613) as commonplace books, showing how the authors taught students to mine Palestrina’s First Book of Motets for short contrapuntal models and to group these in *loci communes*. Pamela F. Starr surveys English conduct and courtesy manuals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to establish the place of music education in society. Susan Forscher Weiss studies marginal annotations in music theory books, developing a typology for them and showing how they clarify the interests and levels of accomplishment of their readers—including some who are well-known music theorists.

In Part 4, “Music Education in the Convent,” Cynthia J. Cyrus searches archival documents, showing that although Benedictine nuns in Salzburg first resisted Tridentine liturgical reforms (partly because they were unable to read new noted manuscripts), they acceded to them in the seventeenth century, obviating at least the imposition of *clausura* by introducing polyphony involving instruments and thus requiring the admission of professional music teachers within the walls. On the basis of convents’ constitutions, dowry waivers, and other documents, Colleen Baade determines that Early Modern Spanish nunneries could expect those granted dowry exemptions to arrive with, or attain, the ability to construct four-part counterpoint over a bass or tenor, to sing polyphonic parts, to compose freely in up to five parts, to play organ, harp, and various other instruments—and to teach all these to other nuns.

In Part 5, “The Teacher,” Blake Wilson draws on contemporary letters to bring to life the time (the 1480s) when Florentine musicians were just learning, from Northern visitors, to compose music in four parts. Russell E. Murray, Jr., sifts Zacconi’s *Prattica di musica . . . seconda parte* (1622), showing that the author recommended learning the practice of counterpoint through the repeated placement of standard melodic progressions against given tenors, a practice he seems to have acquired from his teacher Andrea Gabrieli. Gary Towne culls pedagogical principles from neglected chapters of Cerone’s *El melopeo y maestro* (1613), finding that the stress placed on a sound teacher-student relationship foreshadows modern pedagogy.

Interspersed among these essays are three treatments of a more general nature, styled as “Perspectives.” After introductory remarks on the nature of

musical pedagogy, James Haar sketches Zacconi's *Prattica di musica* (1592), a work he finds (despite its poor organization) full of advice for singers that he calls timeless: practice syncopated figures emphasizing accents until you can sing them smoothly; enunciate as if reading aloud; learn to execute a proper vibrato; don't shout when singing in church. Anthony Grafton illuminates the significance of commonplace books in humanist culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Jessie Ann Owens shows how Early Modern English publications dealing with various manifestations of what we call music theory tend to appear in characteristic formats: oblong quarto for practical works on such topics as intabulation, octavo for instruction books geared to amateurs but in which prose predominates over musical notation, and so forth. She intriguingly suggests that even though monumental treatises in folio like Glarean's *Dodecachordon* (1547), Zarlino's *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (1558), and Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597) have served as the basis for our construction of the history of music theory, they may have been "bought by few and read by even fewer" (p. 378), and that a history based on a review of works in more diverse formats might yield strikingly different insights.

The essays collected here show a wide diversity of approaches to musical pedagogy, which they illuminate in new and often suggestive ways; they make a significant contribution to the history of music pedagogy and will amply repay careful study. The book is attractively designed, well printed, and for the most part carefully edited.

A few caveats. Readers led by the book's title to assume that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance will receive equal treatment may be disappointed: only three of the book's seventeen essays—and only forty of its more than four hundred pages—are devoted to medieval topics, and not a single essay focuses on the period between the mid-eleventh century and the mid-fifteenth, a span that saw the development and refinement of mensural notation, counterpoint, and the theory of accidentals. "Early Modern" would have served the later period more appropriately than "Renaissance," as publications addressed include those as late as Mace (1676) and Playford (1683). Finally, a comprehensive bibliography would have been a service to readers, would have helped tie the disparate essays together, and might have obviated occasional editorial slips and inconsistencies: for example, the title of a book is stated variously on p. 20, note 15, and p. 239, note 15; and on p. 242, note 42, a scholar is identified only by middle and surnames, though his full name appears on p. 260, note 13.