

C. Matthew Balensuela, ed. *Norton Guide to Teaching Music History*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019. xxi + 304 pp. \$42.42. ISBN: 978-0-393-64032-8 (paper)

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Reviewing this book after the onset of COVID-19 and all its associated complications has given me the opportunity to consider its important ideas and suggestions in a new light, given the compounded realities of online and hybrid learning in the face of extraordinary global anxiety and grief that we all faced in the spring of 2020 and will continue to navigate for at least the foreseeable future. While I can offer little in the way of additional pedagogical vision in these uncertain times, I can recommend this book and its contributions to all instructors who teach classes in music history, appreciation, theory, musicology, education, or any other associated area. Its findings and recommendations, as well as many helpful chapter bibliographies, can be useful resources as we navigate these newly turbulent waters.

The Norton Guide to Teaching Music History is structured in four broad parts, preceded by an Introduction by the General Editor, C. Matthew Balensuela: Part I: Style Periods in History and the Survey; Part II: Student Work, Research, and Writing; Part III: Classroom Methods; and Part IV: Approaches. Opening Part I with Peter Burkholder's reflections on "Renewing the Survey" was a smart editorial choice. Burkholder is, of course, the author of Norton's widely used survey textbook *A History of Western Music* (now in its ninth edition), and all but one of the other writers in Part I contributed to the recent series *Western Music in Context: A Norton History*. Written by a well-known and respected senior musicologist, the chapter, taken along with the Introduction, sets up the rest of the book for a winding journey that visits a variety of perspectives and approaches on teaching music history.

The six chapters that follow engage with the traditionally framed periods of music history, giving both voice to and suggestions for pedagogical excellence and associated resources that relate to concerns particular to that time period.

Margot Fassler's chapter, "Medieval Religious Women and Their Music Books," for example, draws attention to a variety of free online resources related to music in the Middle Ages. These are invaluable for instructors at smaller or less extravagantly endowed institutions without funding for paid databases. Her suggestions for in-class activities on medieval chant, while specific, could be easily customized by faculty working in a variety of institutional environments.

This is true of the book as a whole and is one of its best attributes: all the recommendations for and reflections on classroom activities are adaptable as readers see fit for their own institutional and pedagogical objectives. Such ideas and reflections appear in the contributions from Richard Freedman, Wendy Heller, Melanie Lowe, Walter Frisch, and Joseph Auner, taking into consideration along the way such history-specific concerns as performance practice, the limitations of and opportunities inherent in listening to recordings of early music, historicization and historiography, and student music-making. I, for one, will be exploring with my students the 4'33" app, which was made available by the John Cage Trust, and referenced in Auner's "Learning from Contemporary Music" (p. 85, www.johncage.org/4_33.html).

The essays in Parts II and III, "Student Work, Research, and Writing" and "Classroom Methods," respectively, focus on more specific tools and frameworks that again can be applied not only in the music history classroom but throughout our work as educators in higher education. As an excellent example, Jessie Fillerup's "What If? Counterfactual Thinking and Primary Source Study" offers an explication of counterfactuals, that is, thinking along the lines of what *did not happen* or *is not the case*. I have always assumed that it would be a pointless exercise to spend time imagining "what might have been," had Beethoven not lost his hearing or Mozart died so young, as in the case study she shares. Yet it was delightful to read Fillerup's spirited examination of how she uses this device in her classes. For example, students used primary sources as models to create their own "primary materials" —reviews, advertisements, even costume designs and baptismal records—and through the process learn that "alternative history can function as a metacognitive simulation of historiographical processes" (p. 103). Further, Fillerup remarks, "students discover that . . . multiple conclusions may be reasonable in the face of ambiguous or contradictory evidence" (p. 103). These additional, higher-level learning outcomes (as described in Bloom's Taxonomy) enrich and strengthen the fact-based learning that students get in examining the lives and works of these two composers.

Sara Haefeli's "A Survey of Writing Pedagogies in the Music History Classroom" gives an overview of the scholarship of "teaching writing (and thinking) to undergraduate music history students" (p. 120). Her well-researched essay offers much to consider in regard to the structure of writing assignments in our music history classes. She skillfully presents a concise review

of several options for short and long formats, as well as alternative formats, use of primary materials, disciplinary integration with other music courses, and assessment and grading. She closes with a call for further research and “A Word of Encouragement,” ending with a plea for readers to “share what they have learned” and to “join the scholarly discourse” (p. 130).

Misti Shaw’s recommendations for “Information Literacy in Music: Opportunities for Integration in Music History Assignments and Curricula” offer simple but effective strategies to leverage the skills of librarians. She summarizes the simple but powerful *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* produced by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL; <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>), applying it to the learning objectives of the music history class to great effect. As a former interim music librarian, I was delighted that Shaw’s voice was included among the authorship of this volume, and I second her call for professors to foster strong connections with their institution’s librarians. Information literacy is a vital skill set, and as we forge ahead into the uncharted territory of teaching in a global pandemic, often with plans to incorporate additional practices such as Project-Based Learning and interdisciplinary intersections in our classes, it is only becoming more important for our students and ourselves.

The brief entry titled “Quizmasters, Lectures, and Facilitators: A Qualitative Study of Methodologies in Music History Survey Courses” by Matthew Baumer takes a peek inside the classrooms of our peers, faculty teaching music history at a diverse range of institutions across the U.S. If nothing else, this one study gave me the insight that we are all doing things differently and that there is always room for reconsideration and change. Chapters on worksheets, educational technology, performance studies, and Seaton’s eloquently thoughtful reconsideration of “the Canon” round out the two central Parts of the volume.

Part IV, ambiguously titled “Approaches,” frames the teaching of music history through several specific lenses, including race, gender, politics, international education, and disability. While I recognize the difficulty of titling this group of essays, it seems to me to contain the most important work in the collection, work that calls out the places of marginalization inherent in the study of music. Melanie Zeck and Gillian M. Rodger present comprehensive surveys of the history of musicological pedagogy, in chapters titled “The Transformation of Black Music Pedagogy: A Fifty-Year History” and “Feminist Pedagogy in Musicology: Its History and Application in Teaching.” Both chapters are indispensable for pedagogues just beginning to reconsider the historic narrative centralizing the European white male composer in Western music history. Zeck and Rodger provide models for intersectional learning in our classrooms; their bibliographies alone are well worth investigation. As we are still experiencing the reverberations of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the aftermath

of George Floyd's death, Stephen C. Meyer's statement in "Teaching Across Difference: Music History Pedagogy in an Era of Polarization" feels especially prescient. Meyer writes: "The polarization of American culture—and the attendant politicization of the academy—thus presents us with daunting pedagogical challenges precisely in the moment in which we feel least equipped to meet them" (p. 226).

Finally, the last chapter in the collection, Andrew Dell'Antonio's "Crippling the Music History Classroom: Disability, Accommodation, Universal Design for Learning" had the most impact on me. As an individual who myself experienced the pain and frustration of temporary cognitive and physical impairment in 2018 due to two separate accidents, I spent time reflecting on his articulation of the differences between "impairment" and "disability," the latter of which I have taken to hyphenating as "dis-ability" in my own thinking, so as to keep foremost in mind the ways in which our social life dis-ables the full experience of many impaired individuals. It gave me pause to consider, even after my accidents, how little I had thought about bringing disability into the discourse of the music history classroom, both in regard to course content and in terms of universal design. Moving forward, and especially after the challenges of planning courses in the midst of a global pandemic, my syllabi will be significantly impacted by what I gleaned from Dell'Antonio's essay.

In some of the volume's chapters, authors position their suggestions in a way that seems to presuppose that readers will be teaching music majors in a robust music program at a large university. As a solitary full-time music professor at a liberal arts institution, this struck me at times as out of touch with my own teaching situation, but it did not detract significantly from the overall positive experience of reading the book. One of the aspects of this volume I enjoyed most was its diversity of author perspectives. While the vast majority (17 of the 21 contributors) are Associate or Full Professors at US colleges or universities, many of whom seem to enjoy associated advantages such as graduate assistants, music libraries, and motivated music majors, all of them bring to light their individual challenges in the music history classroom. If nothing else, this diversity gives readers space to recognize their own places as teachers of music history, revealing what I now view as an indisputable truth: there is no "one right way" to teach our subject.

In sum, to borrow from Meyer's chapter, our job is not to "cover" the entire history of human music (or even Western classical music), but "to help students think critically about the ways in which music becomes bound up with powerful emotions and ideas" (p. 232). If all the established musicologists in this collection are going about this work differently, then readers might feel a welcome sense of freedom from the methods and patterns of our own academic training in graduate schools, and begin to turn inward in reflection to discover the "right

way” for ourselves. We should all have the freedom to ask: how best can I teach music history, at my institution, with my students, and acknowledging my own skills, knowledge, and limitations? Further, what are the right choices for me at this time—in my own life and in the present historical moment? Finally, how might my answer change, as the musicological field expands and changes, as I grow and mature and continue to learn? *The Norton Guide to Teaching Music History* cannot supply all the answers, but it helps us navigate the questions and offers many thoughtful, creative, and well-informed inspirations along the way.