

On Musicology's Responsibility to Music Education: The Case of Praxis II

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The *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* has been the home of lively discussion about the undergraduate music history sequence since its founding in 2010. Many musicologists have applied these ideas in their own pedagogical practice, whether by expanding beyond the canon's boundaries, rejecting colonial and supremacist framings, or shifting towards skills-based approaches.¹ We celebrate these developments and how they improve students' understanding of and engagement with music history. In these discussions, however, there has been little dialogue with the field of music education, even though at many universities a significant proportion of the students taking music history coursework are studying to become K–12 music teachers. Curricular change in music history coursework has consequences for these students as they prepare to join the teaching profession.

In this article we examine one of music education's gatekeeping exams to argue that musicologists have a responsibility to engage with these broader applications of music history. In most states, music education students must pass a series of certification exams in order to teach in public schools. One commonly required test is the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge Exam, a two-hour, multiple-choice exam that covers pedagogy, theory and aural skills, and music history and literature.² For successful completion of the music his-

1. See Alejandro Madrid, "Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics, and the Crisis of the Humanities in U.S. Academia," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 7, no. 2 (2017): 124–129; and the "Decolonizing Music History" issue of *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 10, no. 1 (2020). An excellent summary of curricular discussions can be found in Lucie Vágnerová and Andrés García Molina, "Academic Labor and Music Curricula," *Current Musicology* 102 (Spring 2018): 98–101. The recent antiracism colloquy published in the *Journal of the Society for American Music* also contributes to this curricular dialogue. See "Antiracism and the Undergraduate Curriculum," *JSAM* 15, no. 4 (November 2021): 447–473.

2. The test is administered by Educational Testing Services (ETS), an organization that runs over 90 different Praxis II exams in different subject areas. Students must pay for each attempt at the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge Exam; the current price is \$130. States that currently require the Praxis II Music are Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, D.C., Idaho,

tory portion, a student should "understand the history of major developments in musical style and the significant characteristics of important musical styles and historical periods" and should be "familiar with the style of a variety of world musics and their function in the culture of origin."³ In other words, the exam requires knowledge of the traditional canon as well as "world music," reinforcing colonialist approaches that many curricular reforms have been seeking to change. The exam is a firm barrier between music education students and the classroom; if they cannot pass the exam, they cannot teach in public schools. Our curricular reforms have the potential to positively influence the way that music educators teach, but what happens if failing a certification exam bars them from entering the classroom in the first place?

Musicologists have not yet had an extended conversation about what obligation we have, if any, in preparing our music education students to take this exam. Those among us committed to curricular revisions might be tempted to dismiss the Praxis II exam as irrelevant or antithetical to what we teach. But instead of disengaging, we argue that a genuine commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion requires that we face the exams on multiple fronts, preparing current students for the existing problematic exam while working to update how future iterations assess music history knowledge. As a case study, then, the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge exam illustrates the larger stakes and complexities of curricular reform in music history.

Further, the Praxis II exam draws attention to a long history of missed opportunities for musicologists to collaborate with music education scholars and public school teachers. Our field's nascent disciplinary ideology and deliberate separation from music education, we argue, still informs our interactions with students and colleagues invested in teaching music in public schools. We aim to confront the division between musicology and music education, exemplified by the troubling gap between the music history pedagogy represented in the pages of this journal and the music history knowledge tested on most teacher certification exams.

Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Tomisha Price-Brock and Heidi Welch, "NAfME Collegiate Chat: Praxis Practice: Prepare to Pass," NAFME Collegiate Advisory Council, January 31, 2022, <https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Praxis-Practice-Slides-NAfME-Collegiate-Chat.pdf>. Most states that do not require the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge Exam have other required assessments (not all of which are multiple-choice exams) and test students on similar knowledge. For details, see NAFME's "2020 Analysis of State Music Education Certification Practices in the United States," accessed March 30, 2022, <https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-Teacher-Certification-Update-7.1.2020-1.pdf>.

3. Educational Testing Services, *The Praxis Study Companion: Music: Content Knowledge* (2022), <https://www.ets.org/pdfs/praxis/5113.pdf>, 7.

We begin with a series of introductions: first of ourselves and our curricular approaches and then of the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge Exam and related music teacher certification exams. A brief survey of research in equity and assessment outlines the stakes of our curricular decisions. We recommend some actions musicologists can take at the individual, departmental, state, and field level to address the Praxis II exam and the concrete challenge it poses for curricular revision. In closing, we summarize the history of the larger divide between musicology and music education, positioning the Praxis II as a symptom of a broader disciplinary conflict.

Our Curricular Approaches

Both of us completed our doctoral work at the University of Virginia in a department with no music education degree. With little exposure to the concerns of that field, we experienced relatively steep learning curves as we began our positions in departments with active music education programs. We both initiated music history curricular revisions with very limited knowledge of music teacher certification exams.

Vilde has been teaching at the University of Rhode Island, the state's flagship public research university, since 2016. As the only musicologist in a lively department with many degree programs, Vilde has implemented revisions with the goal of addressing the distinct music-historical needs of all undergraduate majors. Currently, approximately 45% of the music majors are pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in music education.⁴ The new music history sequence, which launched in the fall of 2019, has three core classes. In their first semester, music majors take Music as Global Culture, a course inspired by the Vanderbilt curriculum, in which they consider musicking (both familiar and unfamiliar) through themes such as performance, ritual, dance, and migration.⁵ In their second musicology class, students learn about the history of Western classical music from Gregorian chant through 1900. The course balances canon conversancy with canon critique in a fast-paced tour of style and cultural history. The third and final course in the sequence examines genre and identity in 20th and 21st century music, with an emphasis on music in the United States. This course is heavily skills-oriented, with an emphasis on finding and working with

4. Included in this number are the first- and second-year students who have indicated that they are planning to become music education majors but are pending acceptance in the School of Education, an application that happens during their sophomore year. The department also has a rapidly growing music therapy degree program that is likely to change this number significantly in the coming years.

5. For more on the Vanderbilt curriculum, see Melanie Lowe, "Rethinking the Undergraduate Music History Sequence in the Information Age," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 5, no. 2 (2015): 65–71.

sources and developing cultural analysis and interpretive skills. For Vilde, the question of how her curricular revision will affect her students' certification chances is most pressing in the second class, which compresses the timeline of a traditional two- or even three-semester survey into a single semester.

Since 2013, Allison has worked at the University of Central Missouri, a regional public university with a long history of educating teachers. Like Vilde, she is the only musicologist employed in the department and is responsible for teaching all undergraduate music history coursework. The University of Central Missouri music department currently offers B.M.E. degrees in instrumental and vocal music, with music education students currently representing about 43% of the overall undergraduate music major population.⁶ As part of their general education coursework, all B.M.E. students take an introductory course entitled Music of the World's Cultures, which examines music from a cultural perspective and introduces ethnographic methods. B.M.E. students are also required to take two courses in a chronological three-semester music history sequence, which Allison revised in 2017.⁷ All B.M.E. students take the course that addresses music of the "common practice era," which she continues to revise in ways that challenge the traditional narrative of the European canon. But B.M.E. students no longer take the entire sequence. The teacher certification exam that they are required to pass in the state of Missouri assumes that they do.

Broader data on music departments in the United States confirms that the programs in which we teach are typical; musicologists are more likely than not to have music education majors as a significant segment of their student population. Statistics on music departments are tricky, in part because degree offerings vary so much from institution to institution, but the National Association of Schools of Music's participation in the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project offers a helpful, if incomplete, start. The HEADS data summarizes report statistics from NASM-accredited schools and breaks down

6. This percentage reflects the declared B.M.E. instrumental and vocal majors from the 2020–2021 academic year. Since 2013, the percentage of declared B.M.E. majors in the overall undergraduate music major population has averaged about 48%, with a high of 51% in the 2017–2018 academic year.

7. The vocal music education faculty were invested in keeping Renaissance music in the curriculum, so Allison compromised with a chronological approach spaced over three semesters, not all of which are required for B.M.E. students. Students pursuing a degree in vocal music education are required to take a course entitled Early Music, which explores medieval and Renaissance music and emphasizes the development of improvisation skills. Much of the curriculum in this course is inspired by Angela Mariani's book, *Improvisation and Inventio in the Performance of Medieval Music, a Practical Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Students pursuing a degree in instrumental music education are required to take Music Since 1900, which places art music traditions in dialogue with American popular music.

enrollment numbers by degree programs.⁸ According to the HEADS summary for 2020–2021, 49.7% of all music majors at NASM-accredited institutions in the fall of 2020 were enrolled in music education, music therapy, or music and some other related field (for example music technology), compared with 30.7% in performance degrees, and 19.5% in music liberal arts degrees.⁹ The proportion of music education degree enrollment varies by institution type, as summarized in Table 1.

Number of music majors in department	Percentage enrollment in music education, music therapy, or other related field	Percentage enrollment in music performance or other professional degree	Percentage enrollment in a Bachelor of Arts or other liberal arts degree
1–50	40.6%	9.4%	49.9%
51–100	51.2%	21.2%	27.7%
101–200	49.4%	27.2%	23.4%
201+	31.7%	52.6%	15.7%
Overall Private	41.1%	34.5%	24.4%

Table 1A. Private NASM-accredited Institutions. Music major enrollment distribution by size of department

Number of music majors in department	Percentage enrollment in music education, music therapy, or other related field	Percentage enrollment in music performance or other professional degree	Percentage enrollment in a Bachelor of Arts or other liberal arts degree
1–100	47.4%	16.6%	35.9%
101–200	58.0%	20.9%	21.2%
201–400	54.5%	29.1%	16.4%
401+	51.9%	38.1%	10.0%
Overall public	53.5%	29.1%	17.4%

Table 1B. Public NASM-accredited Institutions. Music major enrollment distribution by size of department

Although the NASM-accredited institutions represented in the HEADS data are more likely to offer music education degrees than non-NASM institutions,

8. Enrollment in different degree programs does not directly transfer into statistics about numbers of students in part because of the large number of double majors in music fields. Music education majors who also major in music performance will count towards each of those enrollment numbers in the HEADS reports.

9. Comparison of the 2020–2021 report with the 2004–2005 shows that the distribution of degree enrollments has held roughly steady through this time span.

many students in non-NASM programs are still pursuing music education, either through official music education degrees or by way of more general B.A. in music degree as a step towards a master’s degree in education. Using Missouri and Washington states as cases, we can see in Table 2 that approximately one third of non-NASM schools in these states offer separate music education degrees.¹⁰

	Missouri	Washington
Number of 4-year institutions offering music degrees	24	17
Percentage of 4-year institutions offering music education degrees	83%	65%
Number of non-NASM institutions offering music degrees	5	8
Percentage of non-NASM institutions offering music education degrees	40%	38%

Table 2. Regional case studies in prevalence of Music Education degrees, including non-NASM institutions

Introducing the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge Exam

The Praxis II study guide provided by Educational Testing Service (ETS) states that the exam “is designed to assess a beginning music teacher’s knowledge and understanding of music and music education.”¹¹ Material tested during the exam is drawn from four content categories with the following approximate distribution among the test questions: Music History and Literature, 15%; Theory and Composition, 16%; Performance, 22%; Pedagogy, Professional Issues, and Technology, 47%. One section of the exam tests across these topics using associated listening examples, and a second section is made up of standalone questions.¹²

10. The two non-NASM accredited institutions in Missouri that do offer music education degrees offer a B.A. in music education rather than a B.M. or B.M.E.

11. ETS, *The Praxis Study Companion: Music: Content Knowledge* (2022), 6. “Praxis II” refers to the Praxis II Music: Content Knowledge Exam for the remainder of the article.

12. Scoring processes for the exam are a bit opaque, as ETS uses a scaled score conversion to account for the difficulty of individual exam questions, but ETS reports an average score range of 160–176. Individual states determine what counts as a passing score, with a range from 139 to 161 out of a possible 200. Although music history content makes up a relatively small portion of the exam, the average score range’s proximity to the passing threshold for a number of states suggests that a student’s performance on the 15% music history content could make a significant difference in whether they pass or fail. “Praxis® Minimum/Passing Score

What music history knowledge is necessary for a beginning teacher, according to the exam? First and foremost, students need to demonstrate that they “understand the history of major developments in musical style and the significant characteristics of important musical styles and historical periods.”¹³ Although it remains unsaid in the ETS materials, the unqualified category of “music” here is almost entirely classical music in the Western European tradition. The study guide lists periods from medieval through “mid 20th century to present” and concludes with the category “jazz, rock, folk, and other popular genres.” Students are tested on their knowledge of parameters like melody, harmony, tempi, and forms typical of the style periods, and are expected to be able to identify “representative” composers, ensembles, and performers. Sample questions give a sense of how the exam approaches music historical knowledge. For example, students are asked to:

- identify the period of composition given an audio example,
- identify the composer of an excerpt (in the sample question, the piece played was *In C*), or
- order a list of musical genres in their chronological order of development.

An explanatory answer key makes glaringly plain the values that underscore these test questions. A question that asks students to identify Aaron Copland as the composer of a listening example justifies the question with this statement: “This question tests your knowledge of important composers and masterworks found in music history.”¹⁴

But the music history and literature section is not entirely focused on the canon of classical music in the European tradition. The study guide informs potential test-takers that they should be “familiar with the style of a variety of world musics and their function in the culture of origin.” As before, the guiding statement is followed by a list but now, rather than style periods, it itemizes continents. Suggested study questions include both the relatively specific (differences in style and instrumentation between traditional Chinese opera and Japanese Noh music) and the extremely general (“given an excerpt of world music, can you identify its country or region of origin?”).

It is worth pausing at this point to consider the underlying epistemology of this required barrier exam. No one should reasonably expect students to be familiar with all the musics of the world, just as no one should expect them to be able to identify every single work within the European classical tradition. In order to ask the kinds of questions that it asks, the exam relies on the very thing many musicologists have been moving away from in curriculum

Requirements,” Educational Testing Services, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://www.ets.org/praxis/institutions/scores/passing/>.

13. ETS, *The Praxis Study Companion: Music: Content Knowledge* (2022), 7.

14. ETS, *The Praxis Study Companion: Music: Content Knowledge* (2022), 30.

revisions: the canon, both in terms of the Western classical tradition *and* the most frequently taught “world music” examples. Further, it reinscribes the colonial division between “music” and “world music” wherein the latter is best understood through its “cultural function” and the former through its style and history. Clearly the exam does not capture current musicological concerns nor, we suspect, would most music educators agree with its epistemology. Like so many standardized exams, the Praxis II displays a vestigial version of the field.

Given the subject matter of the test questions, it is clear that the Praxis II draws its content from textbooks like *A History of Western Music* and the accompanying *Norton Anthology of Western Music* and Cengage’s *Worlds of Music*. ETS does not list exam authors, and our inquiries to the corporation about who writes the Praxis II were met with non-specific answers. Job listings on the ETS website indicate, however, that “assessment specialists” are responsible for test development. A recent job advertisement for an Assessment Specialist in Psychology notes, for example, that the person in that position “plans, develops, and evaluates tests and testing programs and related products that are closely aligned to the current subject-area standards and student-learning objectives and leads discussions with clients and stakeholders on the assessment of subject-related constructs.”¹⁵ Identifying the specific author(s) of the Praxis II music exam in any given year is not really necessary, then, given that the authors of the most commonly used textbooks in undergraduate musicology courses are already known. These textbooks likely provide the “subject-area standards” from which the ETS employees construct the multiple-choice standardized exams.

The Standardized Exam Problem

Public school teachers in the United States have long been required to meet certain credentials before entering the classroom, but the current Praxis II content exams for pre-service teachers are relatively new, taking hold within a broader standards and assessment movement initiated by politicians and corporate leaders in the early 2000s.¹⁶ Certification exams like the Praxis II

15. Job Ad for Assessment Specialist I, Psychology, Educational Testing Services, accessed August 28, 2022, <https://etscareers.pereless.com/83080/talent.cfm>. Qualifications for assessment specialists include a master’s degree in the related discipline and some collegiate teaching experience.

16. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) passed Congress with bipartisan support. NCLB required public schools to administer standardized tests in reading and math and to report results. Schools that missed achievement targets two years or more were subject to sanctions. The law also required that teachers be “highly qualified” in their area, which typically translated into state certification and a bachelor’s degree in their teaching subject. NCLB was replaced in 2015 with the Every Student Succeeds Act.

concerned music education scholar Julia Koza, who warned as early as 2002 that music content exams would challenge efforts in music education “to create a more diverse pool of music teachers and to institute culturally relevant music content.”¹⁷ She argued that codified standards for music students would most benefit corporations like McGraw Hill, ETS, and Sylvan Learning, which garner profits from standardized assessments, and that teacher certification exams would distract from equity goals and inhibit needed curricular change within music education.¹⁸

Koza's concerns were well founded.¹⁹ In 2015, Kenneth Elpus published data analysis of Praxis II music exam scores administered by ETS between 2007 and 2012 that indicates teacher certification exams could affect the racial demographics of public school music teachers. Among pre-service music teachers who took the exam, Elpus found that people of color were significantly under-represented: 86.02% of the teacher candidates self-reported as white, 7.07% as black, 1.94% as Hispanic, and 1.79% as Asian. Most damning, test scores were “significantly associated with race, sex, and other demographic characteristics,” with white candidates earning higher scores than Black candidates, and male candidates earning higher scores than female candidates.²⁰ Based on this empirical evidence, Elpus argues that “racial and ethnic minority music education majors—particularly those who are Black—may face an additional, and sometimes insurmountable, barrier toward earning teacher licensure after completing a music education program,” namely, a standardized multiple-choice exam.²¹

Elpus's data analysis indicates that pre-service teachers with higher grades were more likely to pass the Praxis II, leading him to argue that the exams are “valid measures of the knowledge learned in a postsecondary music education degree program.”²² Linking grades to “knowledge learned” belies how many factors contribute to successful test preparation, a matter that needs further

17. Koza, “Corporate Profit at Equity's Expense: Codified Standards and High-Stakes Assessment in Music Teacher Preparation” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 152 (Spring 2002): 1.

18. Koza, “Corporate Profit at Equity's Expense,” 13.

19. The most recent music education research shows that between 2000 and 2018, “the proportion of White music educators in U.S. public schools has remained at approximately 90%.” See David R. DeAngelis, “Recent College Graduates With Bachelor's Degrees in Music Education: A Demographic Profile,” *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 32, no. 1 (2022): 25. DeAngelis's research builds on the Kenneth Elpus's article cited below, as well as Elpus's research with Carlos R. Abril, “Who Enrolls in High School Music? A National Profile of US Students, 2009–2013,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 67, no. 3 (2019): 323–338.

20. Elpus, “Music Teacher Licensure Candidates in the United States,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 63, no. 3 (October 2015): 314.

21. Elpus, “Music Teacher Licensure Candidates,” 331.

22. Elpus, 323.

attention given the bleak data discussed above. Curriculum is one possible complicating factor. Praxis II assumes, of course, a curriculum that includes band, choir, and orchestra pedagogy; a two-semester chronological music history survey; several semesters of music theory that focus on harmonic analysis; and an introductory “world music” course. But coursework in a B.M.E. curriculum is rarely static within a music department, and B.M.E. curricula are not uniform across institutions, even with accrediting agencies like NASM. Elpus acknowledges that he received no data from ETS regarding how students from different colleges and universities performed and thus “could not determine whether there exists an institutional advantage on Praxis II music scores based on the admissions selectivity of a preparing institution or other institutional characteristics, for example, an institution's status as a historically Black college.” He also notes that curricula not aligned with the Praxis II “might account for at least a portion of the observed differences in individual Praxis II music scores” demonstrated in his study.²³ The changes that many musicologists have made to the music history sequence fall exactly in this category of curricula that may no longer align with the exam.

Koza foresaw a conflict between coursework and standardized exams, pointing to a 2002 case study in English education teacher preparation at Georgia State University. In a group of seventeen pre-service teachers taught by Peggy Albers, five students failed the Praxis II exam in English. All of those students identified as African American. In follow-up interviews, Albers found that the students were qualified to teach and knowledgeable in literature; however, the exam's focus on canonical white authors did not assess some of her students' knowledge of Black authors, nor the content generally prioritized at historically Black colleges and universities. The content exam in English, Albers noted, could potentially force teacher education programs at HBCUs “to align their curriculum to match the content of the Praxis II, often running against the very principles upon which these institutions were founded.”²⁴

Since Albers' early study, education scholars have continued to study teacher certification exams, the content they assess, the requirements of education degrees, and the racial demographics of America's public school teachers.²⁵ The challenges musicologists face when reimagining music history coursework are thus not unique. As we revise the traditional music history sequence away from white supremacist and colonial frameworks, we may inadvertently cause

23. Elpus, 331–332.

24. Albers, “Praxis II and African American Teacher Candidates (or, Is Everything Black Bad?)” *English Education* 34, no. 2 (January 2002): 109–111, 121.

25. Emery Petchauer is but one education scholar who has worked on this broad topic. See, for example, his article, “Teacher Licensure Exams and Black Teacher Candidates: Toward New Theory and Promising Practice,” *Journal of Negro Education* 81, no. 3 (2012): 252–67, <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.81.3.0252>.

some of our B.M.E. students to fail a music teacher certification exam needed for employment and in the process contribute to the lack of diversity among music educators. And yet “teaching to the test” is not a reasonable solution.

What Musicologists Can Do

So what are reasonable solutions? We want to be clear that our answer here is not to stop reforming curricula. But neither can we look the other way and expect the field of music education to address these newly forming gaps between what musicologists teach and how pre-service teachers are assessed. Among many possible courses of action, we offer thoughts at several levels: individual, state, departmental, and field-wide.

Faculty teaching musicology coursework in a department with music education students cannot change teacher certification requirements, but they should be aware of what certification exams their students face and how they are faring on those exams. Because teacher certification varies by state, the first step is identifying which exam is required in a given location. Music education faculty generally know this information and are excellent resources. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) also maintains an updated list of certification practices by state, including required content exams.²⁶ This list does not, however, track the details of each state's requirements, like the required passing score for a state's certification exam, and passing scores vary from state to state.

Tracking the scores of one's own students requires administrative legwork. Some schools of music may already be collecting data for their own self-study or program assessment. For example, as the chair of her department's assessment committee, Allison requested that the university's testing service provide her students' scores from the state's required certification exam, the Missouri Educator Gateway Assessment, Music: Instrumental & Vocal. Historically, her department has embedded certification exam data in NASM self-study materials and in reports the university submits in its accreditation process.²⁷ This

26. “2020 Analysis of State Music Education Certification Practices in the United States,” National Association for Music Education, accessed January 12, 2022, https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-Teacher-Certification-Update_7.1.2020-1.pdf.

27. Accreditation requirements in higher education and related assessment programs can vary quite a bit between different kinds of institutions and departments. Most colleges and universities are accredited by outside agencies (like the Higher Learning Commission or Middle States Commission on Higher Education), which require assessment data linked to learning outcomes that are designed by each degree program. Similarly, accrediting associations like NASM ask departments to conduct self-study reports to demonstrate how they meet their goals and objectives. Regarding music history curricula, NASM requirements are rather flexible and do not dictate how courses should be structured. See Don Gibson, “The Curricular Standards of NASM and Their Impact on Local Decision Making,” this *Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 73–76.

administrative approach to tracking test scores may not be possible or even preferable in other institutional settings, however. Some universities and colleges do not have a testing center on campus, and universities that do maintain a testing center may not have a culture of sharing data between administrative and departmental units. Moreover, if one's goal is to challenge the idea that standardized certification exams demonstrate a music educator's preparation and ability to teach, using the exams as part of an assessment plan is counter-productive, lending more authority to the exams than they deserve.

In the end, tracking exam scores is not necessary if students know that their professors are aware of teacher certification requirements and are interested in helping them pass required exams. Again, this does not mean teaching to the test within musicological coursework. Instead, musicology professors should maintain open communication with their music education students in regard to their exam preparation and exam scheduling, especially if they know students from their institution have struggled with certification exams in the past. Offering a test preparation session that drills historical eras and classical music terms might be of help for some students. Distributing basic study guides that pull key concepts and musical examples from the recent editions of musicology textbooks is another option. Finally, reminding students of effective testing strategies will aid them not only in the music history portion of the exam but other sections as well. Standardized certification exams will likely be around for the foreseeable future, and musicologists bear some responsibility in helping pre-service teachers plow through the testing barrier that stands between them and their future music classroom.

Simultaneously, musicologists can advocate at the state level for changing teacher certification requirements, supporting education scholars and other stakeholders who continue to challenge the cultural bias of certification exams and their effect on recruiting teachers of color. This might mean advocating for a slightly lower state-wide passing score on the Praxis II exam, especially in states like Colorado, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Virginia, which require a comparatively high passing score of 160 or above. In states where there are arguments for raising minimum certification scores in the name of teacher preparation, one might advocate for retaining a comparatively low minimum score, given that existing research on other kinds of standardized teaching tests has shown that raising a required passing score reduces the number of teachers of color.²⁸ Elpus warns, “Raising minimum cut scores may

28. See, for example, David M. Memory, Christy L. Coleman, and Sharron D. Watkins, “Possible Tradeoffs in Raising Basic Skills Cutoff Scores for Teacher Licensure: A Study with Implications for Participation of African Americans in Teaching,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 54, no. 3 (May/June 2003): 217–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487103054003004>. They found that “a one-point increase in the PPST reading test qualifying score for teacher licensure eliminates approximately 5% of African American test takers from entry into teaching, a one-point

seem like a worthwhile policy maneuver to increase the rigor of teacher licensure. However, if present trends continue, at least for the Praxis II, changes in passing scores may not substantially alter the overall academic performance of those who pass but may exacerbate further the lack of diversity in the music teacher workforce.”²⁹

In other contexts, education advocates might have the opportunity to challenge teacher standardized certification exams altogether. The COVID-19 pandemic led a few states to temporarily suspend other certification exam requirements, and anecdotal evidence suggests there are benefits to doing so. *Education Week* reported, for example, that when California suspended two standardized teacher exams in May of 2020, public universities saw more teachers of color entering the teaching profession.³⁰ The broader movement to dispense with college entrance exams like the SAT and ACT during the pandemic also offers a helpful parallel. As universities and colleges made standardized admission exams optional, some admissions officers have rethought their own admissions requirements, accelerating decades-long efforts to challenge standardized testing.³¹ Likewise, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) issued a report in January 2022 that once again advocated for rethinking standardized admission testing due to the “significant and long-standing concerns about inequitable differences in test score outcomes.”³² The pandemic has brought new energy, and most importantly, new ideas for those seeking an alternative to third party standardized testing in the realm of education. Musicologists and music educators frustrated by the Praxis II exam would do well to harness the energy of this broader wave of change.

Within our individual departments, a simple action we can take is to initiate conversations with our music education colleagues about contact points between our fields. Methodological divides within music departments are often necessarily wide as we engage with music using different tool sets for different outcomes, and musicologists might understandably bristle at the suggestion that our teaching be guided by what other music subfields think music history

increase in the PPST writing test qualifying score eliminates approximately 9% of African American test takers, and a one-point increase in the PPST mathematics test qualifying score eliminates approximately 4%.” Memory, et. al, 224–225.

29. Elpus, 332.

30. Eesha Pendharkar, “4 Changes Schools Can Make to Recruit Teachers of Color And Keep Them Around,” *Education Week*, 8 December 2021.

31. For one example, see Shawn Abbott, “My College Stopped Relying Heavily on the SAT. Enrollment of Students of Color Climbed,” *Washington Post*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/01/24/temple-university-sat-experiment-student-of-color-enrollment-climbing/>.

32. “Toward a More Equitable Future for Postsecondary Access,” Commission on Redesigning College Admission and Financial Aid Through a Racial Equity Lens (National Association for College Admissions Counseling, January 2022), 36.

should be. But if we retreat from these conversations, it is our shared students who experience the consequences of our inflexibility. None of us can fully track the developments in other fields, but we can be responsible for updating our colleagues' understanding of our own fields. Doing so allows for a collaborative approach to the challenges that emerge as our interlocking disciplines grow and change. If our music education colleagues bring a knowledge of musicology's concerns to their own discipline's conferences and committees, we have increased the likelihood that the testing decision makers will hear our critiques.

Confronting Our Disciplinary History

In order to productively collaborate with music educators, however, musicologists need to be cognizant of the historical intellectual disdain that our field has had towards music education and public school music teachers. This condescension has deep roots: it shaped the founding of American musicology in the early twentieth century and created an early fissure between music historians and music teachers. Attempts by musicologists to bridge that disciplinary divide in the mid-twentieth century were not successful, in part because musicologists still did not trust the expertise of educators. In the twenty-first century, the gap between musicology and music education remains entrenched. To build bridges, we need to confront our field's history and avoid our predecessors' mistakes.

The early history of musicology in the United States was defined by its intentional severing of professional ties with music teachers. Before the professionalization of American musicology in the 1930s, intellectuals interested in music history formed a U.S. section of the Internationale Musikgesellschaft (IMG) and met regularly with the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), a well-established organization that had an impressive history of supporting musical scholarship.³³ The yearbooks of papers and proceedings that MTNA published beginning in 1906 addressed historical, theoretical, pedagogical, and aesthetic issues, ignoring the disciplinary boundaries that structure so much of music research in the twenty-first century. Of all the topics featured in MTNA yearbooks from 1906 to 1930, music history received more dedicated articles and more pages than any other topic.³⁴

33. For a detailed history of this time period, see Tamera Levitz, “The Musicological Elite,” *Current Musicology* 102 (Spring 2018): 12–27.

34. Shelly Cooper and Robert Bayless, “Examining the Music Teachers National Association Papers and Proceedings, 1906 to 1930,” *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 29, no. 2 (April 2008): 137. Cooper and Bayless categorize articles as “music history” if they address “patriotism, biographies, military music, folk songs and multicultural music, and general histories of individual cities and countries.” The focus on music history in the MTNA publications may be in part due to the early editorship of Waldo S. Pratt, whose studies at Williams College

Despite the MTNA's clear interest in music history, musicologists nonetheless sought to separate themselves from the association beginning with the formation of the Organizing Committee of the American Musicological Society (AMS) in 1934. "In the early years," Tamara Levitz writes, "AMS members seemed to view the MTNA in general as their more recognized and organized but intellectually impoverished cousin."³⁵ The AMS nonetheless held annual joint meetings with MTNA, primarily to attract new members from the music teachers' more robust society. At these joint meetings, musicologists presented their work in close proximity to music teachers, articulating and defining their discipline more precisely.³⁶ Joint conferences continued throughout the Second World War, even as the disciplines grew more distant. With its first stand-alone conference in 1948, AMS finally usurped control of historical research from music teachers—or at least the historical research focused on Western art music traditions. Scholarship on the history of music education stayed with music educators, where it more or less remains today.³⁷

In her history of the AMS, Levitz describes the separation from MTNA as "harrowing": musicologists neglected "the intrinsic connection between their enterprise and music pedagogy" and weakened their field's "material and practical foundation."³⁸ She is not the first musicologist to observe musicology's elitist isolation, however. In the 1960s, Claude Palisca likewise noted music history's distance from music education and described the founding of the AMS as "in part a declaration of independence from the Music Teachers National

and John Hopkins University provided him with a background if not professional training in historical research. See Cooper and Bayless, 133, and Otto Kinkeldey, "Waldo Selden Pratt: November 10, 1857–July 29, 1939," *Musical Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (April 1940): 162–174.

35. Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," 25. It is worth noting that the field of music education also became more specialized and distanced from MTNA. In 1934, the Music Supervisors National Conference (MSNC) became the Music Educators National Conference, which would ultimately become the dominant conference for music education.

36. Levitz, 26.

37. For a helpful if dated overview of music education historiography and its relationship to musicology, see George Heller, "Music Education History and American Musical Scholarship Problems and Promises," *Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education* 11, no. 2 (July 1990): 63–75.

38. Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," 27. Levitz also claims that AMS ignored potential collaborations with "a wide range of music teachers—many of them women—across the country." The reality in terms of gender is likely more complicated, however, given that MTNA and other music education associations sidelined women from leadership positions in the early twentieth century. See Sondra Wieland Howe's articles "Reconstructing the History of Music Education from a Feminist Perspective," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 96–106; and "Women's Participation in the NEA Department of Music Education, 1884–1925," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26, no. 2 (April 2005): 130–143. Additionally, women were far less likely to publish articles in the MTNA yearbooks in the first decades of the twentieth century. Only 13% of MTNA articles published between 1906 and 1930 were authored by women. See Cooper and Bayless, 134.

Association."³⁹ He too saw this separation as a mistake and forcefully argued that musicologists should care about music education; that music history had a place in a public school setting; and that in order to effect change, music historians should collaborate with music educators.⁴⁰

In the summer of 1963, Palisca led a symposium hosted by Yale that was designed to give musicologists and other scholars a voice in music education. The Yale Seminar in Music Education had roots in the post-Sputnik context, in which there was a concern that the United States was failing in the education of its citizens. To improve public education, the Kennedy administration encouraged scholars to participate in content development for school subjects and offered funding for them to do so. The Yale Seminar is but one example of this broader federal effort. It was sponsored by the Office of Education of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and operated under the assumption that university music professors could offer new ideas for music educators.⁴¹ The Seminar's new ideas included diminishing the focus on marching band; creating better musical training for teachers; increasing rigor in terms of performance; bringing professional musicians and composers into the schools; and offering more high school courses in music literature and theory, including courses suitable for "those sufficiently advanced musically." The recommendation most relevant to music historians related to musical content: seminar participants advocated that repertory "should be more representative than it is, not only of our Western musical heritage at its best, but also of jazz and folk music, and of non-Western culture."⁴²

The ideas that Palisca developed in his music education efforts fed into the publication of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music* in 1980. This anthology represented Palisca's understanding of "Western musical heritage at its best," and as Jelena Simonović Schiff and Jere Humphreys make clear, even in its early editions, it was out of touch with public musical taste by several decades.⁴³ Though the Yale Seminar overall was not particularly effective in changing music education, the persistence of the *Norton Anthology* and other likeminded text-

39. Palisca, "The Challenge of Educational Reform," *Current Musicology* 4 (1966): 145.

40. Palisca, 145, 150.

41. Jelena Simonović Schiff and Jere Humphreys, "Claude V. Palisca as Music Educator: The Yale Seminar on Music Education and the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 41, no. 2 (2020): 183–185. Specifically, the seminar participants included "eleven music theorists and composers, five public and private school music teachers, four conductors, three musicologists, three university music education administrators, two performers, one public school administrator, one 'educationist,' and one music critic—a total of thirty-one participants, plus an additional thirteen observers. The geographical representation was highly skewed toward the Northeast region." Simonović Schiff and Humphreys, 184.

42. Quoted in Simonović Schiff and Humphreys, 184–185.

43. Simonović Schiff and Humphreys, 193.

books in undergraduate music history courses has ensured Palisca's influence in the field.⁴⁴ As noted above, musicology courses required in B.M.E. curricula frequently rely on such textbooks, and their content is assessed in the music history component of teaching certification exams like the Praxis II. Textbooks, it turns out, matter quite a bit.⁴⁵

Palisca's efforts offer another important historical lesson for any musicological attempt to re-engage with music education. The Yale Seminar recommendations insulted many music educators, who felt excluded from the Seminar itself and who had not experienced the alleged institutional failing in their field. In 1979, music education scholar Bennett Reimer argued that it was the Seminar that had failed, in part because it approached "curriculum concerns as separate from educational-social concerns."⁴⁶ Musicologists should be careful not to repeat this mistake. We need to listen to and respect music educators and address the realities they face in the public schools. Otherwise, our own curricular changes will remain idealist, divorced from the music education that reaches far more students than our colleges and universities do.

With this disciplinary history in mind, field-level action may be the most effective if also slowest route toward systemic change in barrier testing regarding music history knowledge. As a start, regular cross-disciplinary panels with organizations such as NAFME and MTNA would help establish a more vital connection between disciplinary understandings of music history. Musicologists could apply to present at regional and national music education conferences, sharing curricular and pedagogical developments. On a practical level, musicologists would benefit from field-wide tracking of the ways that students might encounter music history assessment. As the national organization for the field, the American Musicological Society is in a good position to house this tracking, especially if it reinstated its Committee on Music in Secondary Education, which had been active in the 1960s with Palisca at the helm.⁴⁷ This committee could work with AMS membership to develop statements about

44. For an overview of different editions of the *Norton Anthology*, see Paul Gabriel Luongo, "Constructing a Canon: Studying Forty Years of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*," this *Journal* 12, no. 1 (2022): 1–36.

45. For more on music history textbooks, especially Donald Grout's *A History of Western Music*, see S. Andrew Granade, "Undergraduate Development of Coursework in Musicology," *Oxford Handbooks Online: Music: Scholarly Research Reviews* (October 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935321.013.12>.

46. Reimer, "The Yale Conference: a Critical Review," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 60 (Fall 1979): 6. For an excellent summary of the 1979 retrospective on the Yale Seminar, see Simonović Schiff and Humphreys, 187–191.

47. Palisca references and cites this committee's reports in his discussion of the Yale Seminar. See Palisca, "The Challenge of Educational Reform," 149–150. Committee materials are archived in the American Musicological Society Records, University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections.

best practices of music history assessment, serve as a contact point with testing companies and other music studies organizations, and advocate for valuing music education research and service in professional evaluations related to hiring, promotion, and tenure.

Musicologists might also carefully consider the role of music history textbooks. Some writers have suggested that re-imagined music history coursework should not be standardized from program to program but rather shaped by the individual professors who teach it.⁴⁸ This dispersed approach works well at universities and colleges with musicologists who are eager to create such curricula. But many schools and departments of music do not have full time musicologists on staff at all, nor do they necessarily hire contingent faculty with a terminal degree in musicology or ethnomusicology to teach academic classes. Instead, it is the applied faculty who teach music history in many collegiate music programs, and to do so, they understandably turn to existing textbooks to guide their course plans. Textbooks thus remain an important tool for large-scale curricular change in our field. The revisions and updates that J. Peter Burkholder has made to Palisca and Donald J. Grout's *A History of Western Music* and the associated *Norton Anthology* are admirable, as are sample course plans that demonstrate how to supplement these texts with other materials.⁴⁹ In planning for future textbooks, musicologists might follow the approaches modeled by Esther Morgan-Ellis in her development of the open-access textbook *Resonances*, designed for general education music courses; by Danielle Fosler-Lussier in her book *Music on the Move*, which organizes content around themes of migration and mediation; and by the founders of *Open Access Musicology*, who seek to reconcile "recent academic developments in music scholarship with ongoing nationwide changes to the undergraduate music pedagogy and curricula."⁵⁰ Perhaps a multi-authored, open-access textbook for music majors,

48. Lucie Vágnerová and Andrés García Molina suggest, for example, that musicologists should "proceed to teaching curricula that are, perhaps, less packaged, more multivocal, full of situated perspectives and points of audition, more attentive to a broader range of musical practices, and more different from institution to institution than they currently are." Vágnerová and Molina, "Academic Labor and Music Curricula," 101. To challenge conservative curricula, they suggest including contingent faculty members into curricular discussions. Vágnerová and Molina, 106–107.

49. For an example of a unit plan that addresses white supremacy in eighteenth-century music, see Travis Stimeling and Kayla Tokar, "Narratives of Musical Resilience and the Perpetuation of Whiteness in the Music History Classroom," this *Journal* 10, no. 1 (2020): 30–34.

50. "OAM Mission," *Open Access Musicology*, accessed August 30, 2022, <https://open-accessmusicology.wordpress.com/>. *Resonances* developed from a learning community that Morgan-Ellis organized with contingent faculty at the University of North Georgia. See Morgan-Ellis, "A Faculty Learning Community for Contingent Music Appreciation Instructors: Purpose, Structure, Outcomes," this *Journal* 9, no. 2 (2019): 173–193. The textbook is available as a free download. See *Resonances: Engaging Music in Its Cultural Context*, <https://ung>.

one shaped by current curricular discussions, could find a home in music departments and ultimately guide assessments like the Praxis II.

Finally, real field-level change in our relationship with music education will require a reckoning of how our discipline's elitism-driven retraction from music education has shaped the training of musicologists. Although complete data about job placement is difficult to obtain, it is likely that many newly employed musicologists earned their degrees from institutions without any music education programs. Graduates from nine institutions filled 63% of the tenure-track jobs listed between 2016 and 2020. Only three of those nine institutions offer undergraduate music education degrees and only two offer graduate degrees in music education.⁵¹ Meanwhile, recent graduates from musicology programs who secure full-time employment are likely to do so in departments that offer music education degrees. Between 2016 and 2020, 373 full-time jobs in music departments in the United States were listed on the musicology job wiki.⁵² Of these, 218 (58%) were in departments that offered music education degrees.

It is no accident that the most prominent and well-respected United States graduate programs in musicology exist in isolation from music education. In 1938, the ACLS Committee on Musicology initiated a bulletin of musicological research and requested information from institutions where committee member D. H. Daugherty believed a person with sufficient musicological expertise worked. In the 250-person pool of teachers, independent scholars, and librarians, Daugherty deliberately excluded people who taught music education and music theory, because the ACLS Committee considered those fields "vocational rather than scientific."⁵³ Daugherty's approach, Levitz notes, "created a hierarchy of institutions of musicological higher learning that would be hard to

[edu/university-press/books/resonances-engaging-music.php](http://www.umich.edu/university-press/books/resonances-engaging-music.php). Fosler-Lussier's *Music on the Move* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020) is also available as a free download at the University of Michigan Press eBook Collection, <https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/m613n040s>.

51. These nine institutions are: UCLA, Harvard, University of Chicago, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Eastman, Cornell, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Virginia. Eastman and Columbia offer graduate degrees in music education; however, Columbia's music education program is housed in the Teacher's College.

52. "Musicology/Ethnomusicology 2016–17," Academic Jobs Wiki, accessed August 15, 2022, https://academicjobs.fandom.com/wiki/Musicology/Ethnomusicology_2016-17; "Musicology/Ethnomusicology 2017–18," Academic Jobs Wiki, accessed August 15, 2022, https://academicjobs.fandom.com/wiki/Musicology/Ethnomusicology_2017-18; "Musicology/Ethnomusicology 2018–19," Academic Jobs Wiki, accessed August 15, 2022, https://academicjobs.fandom.com/wiki/Musicology/Ethnomusicology_2018-19; "Musicology/Ethnomusicology 2019–20," Academic Jobs Wiki, accessed August 15, 2022, https://academicjobs.fandom.com/wiki/Musicology/Ethnomusicology_2019-20; "Musicology/Ethnomusicology 2020–21," Academic Jobs Wiki, accessed August 15, 2022, https://academicjobs.fandom.com/wiki/Musicology/Ethnomusicology_2020-21.

53. Quoted in Levitz, 32.

dismantle."⁵⁴ Many of the institutions contacted by Daugherty had or would develop music education programs, but the most elite, private music departments that replied to his inquiry would go on to create graduate degrees in musicology, but not undergraduate music education degrees. Our survey of current doctoral programs in musicology suggests that this historical separation is still in effect.⁵⁵ Graduate programs in musicology should consider if their own curricula provide a basic conversancy with music education, and if not, why not.

Conclusion

The future public school teachers in our music history classrooms offer musicologists a vital connection with the broader public. If we do our jobs well, lessons learned in music history courses will make their way into K–12 lesson plans, and in time the perspectives offered by our curricular revisions will ripple far beyond the reach of our own classrooms. But as we have learned more about the Praxis II exam, it seems that curricular changes in music history coursework may create consequences that work against our best intentions when completed in isolation from the realities of music education in the United States. After all, we would like to ensure that students educated in a music history curriculum that is increasingly inclusive and equitable actually do make it into the classroom as teachers. Reform itself cannot be the end goal; as Tamara Levitz asserts, in many cases curricular reform in the name of decolonization or antiracism "allows tenure-track professors to maintain the illusion that they are doing something to promote equality when in fact they may not be."⁵⁶ If we ground our revisions in the practical needs of our students, we have a better chance at realizing the ideals of our field.

More broadly, the Praxis II exam raises uncomfortable questions about the intersection between music education and musicology. Clearly, our coursework is shaped by musicology's retreat from music education. We are left wondering what musicological coursework would look like if we actively considered the needs of music teachers. Traditional music education topics, like the history of pedagogy and American band and choir traditions, are still marginalized in

54. Levitz, 32.

55. Approximately 62% of institutions that placed at least one graduate in a tenure track position between 2016 and 2020 were contacted by the ACLS Committee in 1938. Of the remaining doctoral-granting institutions, only about 35% were contacted. The ACLS's initial group of select musicology programs largely remain the musicological elite today and include Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Harvard University, New York University, Stanford University, University of Chicago, Yale University, and yes, our own fondly remembered graduate alma mater, the University of Virginia.

56. Levitz, 45.

the music history classroom. Should they be included? Asking music educators what topics are of value to them in their daily work might begin to answer that question. Of course, music education students are not the only music majors in our classrooms, but just as we believe that future music teachers benefit from a curriculum that expands beyond the boundaries of the canon, we also believe that all music majors would be well served by considering how music is passed on and taught in the American school system. Moving forward, we advocate for conversations and collaborations between musicologists and music educators so that we may address common goals regarding our shared students.