
EDITORIAL

By

Brian Bersh, *guest editor*

The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning Reprint Series
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

“We want to be different, iconoclastic, unconventional, and we want to feature the thinking of the brightest and best of our profession. Finally, we want to raise broad issues and confront our readers with significant scholarship and ideas that others often ignore.” Manny Brand’s editorial for the final issue of *The Quarterly*’s second volume illustrates the bold ambition of the journal’s editors. This volume serves as a vehicle for critical inquiry into theories, philosophies, and teaching practices that continue to be discussed, debated, and adapted in contemporary classrooms.

Issues 1 & 2 present an objective examination of the research of Edwin Gordon, an educator and researcher whom this issue’s authors regard as one of the most productive and significant contributors to music education in our time. Walters states that “to be prolific is to be controversial, and to be controversial is to be subject to examination.” Accordingly, the first two sections of this double issue review Gordon’s contributions to the field and others’ perceptions of the worth, problems, and promise of Gordon’s work. The remaining sections examine music aptitude, audiation, and music teaching and learning through the lens of Music Learning Theory (MLT).

Nearly twenty years ago, Byrd suggested that while MLT was to be commended, it lacked the longevity that other methods in music education provided. While MLT has continued to gain exposure and acceptance among public school teachers and university professors, many of the criticisms offered in this journal have yet to be fully addressed. Terms coined by Gordon, such as audiation, have become more commonplace and accepted by music educators, yet the complexity of Gordon’s work continues to be misinterpreted and misunderstood. Contributing authors recognized the need for more research to support and understand Gordon’s ideas, and while Gordon continues to publish literature, external research that critically examines the principles and foundations of Gordon’s innovative theory remain wanting. Fortunately, this examination of his work, encompassing MLT, music aptitude, music instruction and evaluation, can serve to reintroduce some of challenging issues that MLT presents.

Among the debate, praise, and criticism found within these articles, certain truths collectively emerge. Gordon’s groundbreaking research on music aptitude may indeed be his most significant contribution to music education. As Cutietta explains, “It is one of the first theories to systematically unify nature and environment instead of placing them in opposition.” Gordon’s understanding of music aptitude undoubtedly informed the

learning sequences which structure Music Learning Theory. Still, the comprehensive framework for music instruction that has been drawn from MLT remains an issue of controversy. In a recent keynote, Gordon professed that the *Jump Right In* method books are perhaps his biggest mistake. This statement may relate to a belief that having a published method affiliated with MLT took focus away from his conviction that MLT is “designed to embrace many methods that are based on sequential objectives.” However one may interpret Gordon’s writings, it is constructive to review the inspiration that spawned his research. He was a man in search of understanding “how we learn when we learn music.”

In issue 4, Richard Colwell shares that the original purpose of *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* was to facilitate an exchange of ideas among professionals in music learning and teaching. This objective seems particularly relevant for issue 3. The dialogue between authors presents a captivating discussion on philosophy in music education – a discussion that Bennett Reimer refers to as “mental warfare.” Within this issue, Reimer responds to criticisms and reviews of his second publication of *A Philosophy of Music Education* from Elliott, Bowman, and Knier. Reimer has since published a third edition of this text, and Elliot’s second edition of *Music Matters* is forthcoming. This issue offers a provocative glance at a philosophical debate that continues among these philosophers today.

In addition to a critical examination of Reimer’s *A Philosophy of Music Education*, issue 3 presents a myriad of philosophical challenges as authors pick apart past practice and question current educational aims. Have educators succeeded in aligning philosophy and practice? What assumptions and connections should be present within a music education philosophy? Can universal truths be found within music? How should teachers approach the multimusical culture of America within their classrooms?

The inspirational function of philosophies of music is apparent in the authors’ expressions, and today music education has grown as a field to incorporate an array of philosophies, each given serious consideration. Still, a contentious debate continues regarding the *rightness* of one philosophy over another, and no singular philosophy presently serves to unify music educators. However, Bowman relates that “the profession will have taken a tremendous stride forward when it finally comes to accept that its strength and integrity do not require that all its members ‘have’ the *same* [philosophy]: that unity does not require conformity, either on the practical or the ideological level.”

Issue 4, a kaleidoscope issue, celebrates the completion of the journal’s second year, and provides an eclectic compilation of music education research. Boomgaarden addresses the role of cultural diversity within undergraduate music history curriculum, suggesting that the inclusion of “non-western” music may bring western traditions into focus. Kostka and Riepe describe two diverse pedagogies for undergraduate music theory, differing mainly in their approaches to composition and time allocated toward the study of twentieth-century music. Duerkson presents the University of Kansas extended teacher education program as a possible model for other institutions in the process of reform.

After observing music practices in China, Patricia Shehan Campbell shares her perspectives on the current and future states of Chinese music, musicians, and musical instruments in the post-Tianamen era. Describing children as the carriers of their musical cultures, Anderson explores children's song acquisition development and theory. She maintains that a better understanding of children's learning processes will promote effective instruction and enable the continuance of musical culture from one generation to the next.

Carole Harrison demonstrates the importance of selecting appropriate analytic techniques through her analysis of data from a study involving first semester music theory coursework. Results from her analysis using linear structural equation modeling and multiple regression techniques are compared.

Davenport focuses exclusively on matters of articulation present in Mozart's clarinet concerto, K 622. He identifies the non-legato norms of the eighteenth century and calls on performers to rethink their articulation practice for woodwind works from this period.

Lastly, issue 4 revisits issues 1 and 2, providing a platform for Edwin Gordon to continue the conversation regarding his research. The majority of this article is dedicated to addressing the criticisms of Colwell and Abrahams, to which Colwell is given an opportunity to respond. In his reply, Colwell reminds us of the importance and the need for meaningful and valuable criticism in the field of music education.