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Review of: Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance by Russell E. Murray, Susan Forscher Weiss, and Cynthia J. Cyrus

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Russell E. Murray, Susan Forscher Weiss, and Cynthia J. Cyrus, eds. *Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*

Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance by Russell E. Murray; Susan Forscher Weiss; Cynthia J. Cyrus

Review by: Paul Harris

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Publications of the Early Music Institute. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. xviii + 406 pp. index. append. illus. tpls. bibl. \$49.95. ISBN: 978-0-253-35486-0.

Our understanding of music pedagogy before the eighteenth century has tended to be an emergent property of studies dealing with other questions, such as biography and the history of theory. So says the introduction to this collection of essays culled from a conference titled “Reading and Writing the Pedagogy of the Renaissance: Students, Teachers, and Materials of Musical Learning, 1470–1650,” hosted by John Hopkins University in 2005. Just under half of the thirty-two conference papers appear in this collection, representing a summit of prominent early music scholars across the disciplines of music history, theory, and performance. The introduction goes to great pains to suggest an underlying unity to this volume, a claim that carries greater weight than is often the case for a collection in that the generative conference was almost a decade in the making, and particular treatises, theorists, and practices ultimately emerged as the focus for the conference and this subsequent

collection. Yet, a broad temporal and geographic coverage is achieved. Most of the articles rely on, and often helpfully appendicize, archival materials, providing a uniformly high level of seasoned, well-documented scholarship.

The editors identify five main issues: what pedagogical methods were used? What repertory, musical and intellectual, was learned? Who were the teachers and the learners? Where and when was music learned? Lastly, why was music learned? While varying greatly in length and approach, most of the articles address all five issues.

The book is divided into five sections, framed by three broader “perspective” essays derived from the keynote addresses. In perspective 1, James Haar discusses instructional manuals, first for children (*cantorini* featuring the ubiquitous Guidonian Hand), then for more experienced musicians, focusing on the idiosyncratic *Prattica di musica* of Lodovico Zacconi (1592). Part 1, “Medieval Pedagogy,” begins with Delores Pesce’s examination of how Guido d’Arezzo actually envisioned using solfege and the *Ut queant laxis* hymn (the fount of our present-day solmization syllables) in acquiring facility in relative pitch singing. Similarly, Charles Atkinson argues that while we know a great deal about what was considered valuable in the education of boys in Carolingian France (ca. 800), we know little about how these principles were actually implemented. His approach, mirrored by Susan Boynton in her article on music education outside the context of theory manuals (and in Susan Forscher Weiss’s well-illustrated contribution to part 3), is to turn to glosses from several sources.

Part 2, “Renaissance Places of Learning,” includes two particularly readable articles in a more purely historical vein: Gordon Munro describes the Scottish post-Reformation efforts to reestablish music schools after their virtual elimination in the 1560s, while Low Countries specialist Kristine Forney, in a nicely illustrated article, examines the role of musical education in the ethical development of girls in Reformation-era Antwerp. John Griffiths’s study links the rise of music printing with the proliferation of self-instruction methods, stressing the deep-seated — but often ignored — connection between instrumental and vocal practice.

Anthony Grafton’s Perspective 2 departs from a strictly musical focus providing a broad, example-laden examination of the humanist practice of commonplacing, the compiling of snippets of diverse learning in notebooks for subsequent retrieval and resynthesis. Part 3, “Renaissance Materials and Contexts,” includes Peter Schubert’s detailed essay on musical commonplaces by Montanos (1592) and Cerone (1613) as tools for the composition of polyphony, and Pamela Starr’s collection of excerpts from English courtesy books canvassing diverse attitudes toward the role of music education. Part 4, exemplifying this book’s balanced treatment of gender, is devoted to two articles by Cynthia Cyrus and Colleen Baade providing case studies of the musical education of nuns. Part 5, “The Teacher,” further ties the collection together with Russell Murray’s “Zacconi as Teacher,” which includes an analysis of Costanzo Festa’s application of Zacconi’s method, and Gary Towne’s examination of Cerone’s sprawling ruminations on the qualities of an effective teacher. Blake Wilson discusses how the composer Isaac was

essentially a teacher through his participation with a group of young Florentine musical enthusiasts. Finally, Jessie Ann Owens's Perspective 3 closes the volume with a cautionary tale that our perception of early music "theory" (her scare quotes) might be skewed by the higher survival rate of large-format books that rarely belonged to everyday musicians.

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