

The Independent Music Teacher: Practice and Preparation

MARIENNE USZLER

Life is what we make it, always has been, always will be.

—Grandma Moses

The music community is currently experiencing a stimulated awareness of itself *as* a community. Individual members—composers, instrumentalists, educators, singers, and conductors, for example—are concentrating less on self-reflective, self-protective issues and more on the need to acknowledge and protect objectives shared by the music community as a whole. College faculty members and administrators are beginning to become more aware of the interdependency of all levels of music education, from preschool through university. Vocal and instrumental teachers are reexamining how performance majors are being prepared to make a living in, and an impact on, a society and culture that, to a large extent, is musically illiterate. Because many graduates with performance degrees teach at least part time in home studios, attention is being redirected to independent music teachers, a group regarded benevolently, yet often patronizingly. This renewed interest in independent music teachers has also revealed complications connected to thinking of them as a unified group.

The independent music teacher (IMT) is a vital segment of the arts education community, but writing about the IMT is like trying to assemble a puzzle that has many missing pieces and for

which there is no model picture. Piecing together what can be known about this puzzle in progress will be helpful, if only because seeing some of the picture is better than not looking at all. The IMT is now more visible and is asking to be taken seriously by all sectors of society, not just by fellow arts educators. The so-called private music teacher is speaking more boldly and pushing boundaries. It is a good, unquiet time.

The Microcosm

The world of the independent music teacher is a microcosm. Statistics and facts are not plentiful. Information gained from the small number of sources is, however, neither negligible or questionable. As long as we keep in mind that what can be drawn from the available facts is fragmentary, we will not be misled. Equally, if we use information about the microcosm to extrapolate to the larger world, we must do so with caution.

Figures derived from an abstract published in 1992 by the United States Department of Commerce list over 72 million children in the United States aged nineteen and under.¹ A 1994 survey conducted by the American Music Conference claims that in 62 percent of U.S. households, one or more persons over the age of five currently plays a musical instrument.² Assuming that not

all of this population is under nineteen, it would still be reasonable to conclude that a large number (a conservative estimate might be 30 million) of people nineteen and younger are represented in this group.

The AMC survey also notes that 16 percent of the instrument-playing population currently takes private lessons.³ Another cautious guess (perhaps at 10 percent, since younger, rather than older, people are more likely to be studying music privately) suggests that 3 million children between five and nineteen take private lessons. If we assume that the average private music teacher instructs twenty students, there could be approximately 150,000 active independent music teachers. Those whom we can identify, and what we know about them, constitute the microcosm.

Sources of Information

The principal sources of information about the IMT come from three national professional music organizations—the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), and the American String Teachers Association (ASTA). Throughout its long history, MTNA has been the voice of the independent teacher. In an informal survey conducted within the last three years,

NATS was able to verify that nearly half of its members were independent teachers. ASTA, although offering no hard figures, assumes that many of its members also fit this category. None of these organizations, however, is composed solely of IMTs. In all cases, members includes college faculty members who, in addition to academic commitments, often operate an independent studio (which further clouds the distinctions between who is, and who is not, a private music teacher). Members of these organizations are predominantly teachers who offer studio instruction, rather than teachers whose instructional environments are chiefly large-group oriented, such as public school music teachers or band, choral, or orchestra directors.

To complicate the fact-gathering process, IMTs may hold membership in other groups—such as the Music Educators National Conference (MENC); the American Guild of Organists (AGO); the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA); the National Federation of Music Clubs; the National Guild of Piano Teachers; the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE); associations representing specific string, wind, brass, and percussion instruments; and organizations connected with specific teaching methods (for example, the Suzuki Association of the Americas or the Dalcroze Society of America). A single independent teacher may be a member of two or more of these groups.

These facts are caveats that must be kept in mind when organizational membership numbers are quoted in an effort to determine the visible IMT population. Using membership numbers as an indicator and figures drawn only from the three principal organizations, we can account for approximately 38,800 studio music teachers. MTNA lists its 1995 membership as 24,000, ASTA as 9,600, and NATS as 5,200. Since these numbers, however, include members who are not IMTs, and since a single person may hold multiple memberships, the actual number of IMTs must be calculated at somewhat less than 38,800—perhaps 30,000 would come closer to the mark. To that must be added a con-

servative estimate of 20,000 teachers who use particular methodologies (such as Suzuki or Kodály) but who may not hold professional memberships other than in groups connected with the specialty, as well as teachers who are members of other national groups (the National Federation of Music Clubs, for instance) and other independent state organizations.⁴ A summary guess at the number of visible IMTs, therefore, would be in the area of 50,000. That is only one-third of the postulated 150,000 who might be offering private music instruction, but it does target an accountable population about whom we may draw conclusions and from whom we may gain information reflecting current thinking and practice.

It must be acknowledged that some highly competent independent music teachers are not joiners. They resist organizational affiliations for many reasons, but the greater number who choose to stand alone probably question involving themselves with a group that, they feel, does not represent them or meet their needs. It is equally true that many *non-competent* IMTs do not belong to a local or national organization. The assumption here (there is no way to prove this point) is that organizational affiliation is threatening and that association with other teachers will result in comparison, challenge, and/or competition. They do not wish to examine the status quo because they do not want it to change.

The lack of professionalism in this latter group of non-joiners encourages organizations to seek them out in an effort to raise standards for *all* independent music teachers. Whether organizations have succeeded in reaching some of these teachers, or whether the continued growth of organizations with a high percentage of independent teachers among their members means that they are attracting younger professionals as they graduate and begin careers, these organizations are healthy and developing. MTNA (the only group that can offer hard figures over a period of time) has nearly doubled its membership in the last two decades, and NATS and ASTA report a steady, though not

remarkable, membership increase as well.

What's in a Name?

Most people in the music world refer to the "private music teacher." This generally indicates an individual who offers one-on-one instruction in a home studio. Since the early 1970s, teachers not connected to an institution have begun to refer to themselves as independent, rather than private, music teachers. Although the title change may not seem significant, the implications, at least to independent music teachers, are. In the words of Virginia Campbell:

An IMT [is] defined as a teacher who operates a studio on her own, the success of which is dependent entirely on the business acumen and professional skills of that individual. The IMT is concerned with business issues . . . communicating policies and procedures, scheduling programs, and determining repertoire and methods. Legal issues such as meeting local licensing requirements, conforming to zoning laws, and staying on top of taxes—property, income and self-employment—also impact the life of the IMT.⁵

The matter of independence is paramount. Being known as an independent creates a strong image, something especially important to music teachers who regard themselves, and who wish to be regarded by the public, as self-reliant, self-supporting professionals. This status represents choice and autonomy, rather than the second-class citizenship that results from not being associated with a school or conservatory. It is a point about which IMTs feel strongly and speak passionately.

The MTNA Independent Music Teacher Survey

In the late 1980s, MTNA conducted a professional survey of its members, primarily to uncover and document the income and lesson fees of independent music teachers. The survey was sent to a random sampling that included fifteen hundred MTNA members and approximately five-hundred nonmembers. The published report provides statistics and percentages about many issues, not just those with financial implications.⁶ We

learn from this survey that virtually all IMTs are female, that the average and median age is in the mid-forties, and that 85 percent of IMTs teach in their own homes. Only rarely do IMTs organize their studios as partnerships or corporations. Over 75 percent of this group have professional degrees (50 percent have bachelor's degrees and 27 percent have master's); just a few have performance diplomas (2 percent) or doctoral degrees (2 percent). Few IMTs (close to only 1 percent) teach adults or preschoolers.

The majority (over 75 percent) of IMTs have a written studio policy statement, and a high percentage (82 percent) collect tuition in advance. The reported median values of lesson fees—while differing considerably depending on region, locality, size of the community, teacher training, and teaching experience—are embarrassingly low.⁷ Although many regard these figures skeptically (everyone knows some independent teachers whose fees are much higher than the median), the reality of what the survey reports cannot be denied.⁸ Many IMTs work for the proverbial pittance.

Less than 12 percent of the IMTs, in fact, derive from 61 percent to 100 percent of their family income from music teaching. (Even those who do reported a yearly median gross under \$20,000.)⁹ Additional income is gained from involvement in church music (nearly twice the percentage of any other supplemental source); freelance performing; teaching music in private (especially Christian) schools; part-time teaching in local and community colleges; and giving lectures and workshops. Income is also derived from work that is not music related. Clinicians report that many workshop attendees are involved in other service fields, particularly in the health industry and in real estate.

Information from this survey is corroborated—not in detail, but in principle—by extensive interviews conducted with independent music teachers in many parts of the country.¹⁰ While each individual pointed out that the situation is improving (especially with regard to lesson fees) and that exceptions to

almost everything the survey claims should be noted, the interviews indicated that the survey findings are not unduly skewed. Independent music teaching is still a cottage industry, and the majority of IMTs do not make a living wage as music teachers.

Issues within the Ranks

Independence is the crux of many issues relating to the IMT. It is both a plus and a minus factor. As one string

rent hot-buttons, but it is difficult to place these issues in a hierarchy. Ideas on a single issue often fuse with opinions on others, as is the case when concerns about zoning, licensing, standards, and professionalism blend. I will consider issues in turn, nonetheless, in an effort to give each its due.

Zoning

Zoning problems do not affect all IMTs. Zoning policies are, and probably

Writing about the independent music teacher is like trying to assemble a puzzle with many missing pieces, for which there is no model picture.

teacher put it, “Independence is invigorating, but also very difficult; you are an island.” On the one hand, IMTs can frame individual rules and set personal standards; on the other, many IMTs sense the loss of validation that comes from meeting qualifications established by a visible and unified group. Wanting to go it alone and yet have society take one seriously as a professional is neither easy nor convenient. The IMT faces this dilemma time and again. One way to achieve financial independence, for example, is to operate the independent studio as a genuine business. Civic governments, however, then expect the IMT to meet business standards (which often involve licensing, taxes, and other forms of bureaucratic accountability). To cite another example, some individual teachers question the idea of national certification advocated by organizations (principally MTNA), yet they are faced with the legal definitions regarding professionalism that generally require standard-setting norms and groups. Catch-22 is the description used by many.

Issues concerning professionalism top the list of what IMTs see as the cur-

will remain, local issues. Yet concerns about zoning are surfacing everywhere, even if each teacher is recounting unique conditions and obstacles. In some cases, teachers have moved their studios in order to escape the complications and acrimony arising from zoning problems. Zoning regulations are being enforced for a number of reasons. In most instances, objections arise from within the neighborhood itself. People are defending their residential rights as never before and, as many IMTs attest, all it takes is just one neighbor who complains—usually about parking or traffic flow. Some teachers believe, or know through experience, that matters of zoning have been aggravated by an increase in group teaching, or of home recitals, since some congestion may result when cars and children congregate at the same time.

Not all zoning problems, however, are fomented by unfriendly neighbors. In one Pennsylvania township, “cease and desist” orders were sent to local music teachers because of a change in the law that stated that no clients, patients, or customers could come to a

residence.¹¹ The music teachers enlisted legal help and fought back, but it was necessary to marshal widespread community support and even confront challenges about noise pollution before a new ordinance that allowed music instruction could be enacted. Here, also, the matter of group teaching was a point of dispute. As one of the teachers later summarized, "The biggest frustration in this episode was the lack of public knowledge about our profession and the importance of music education."¹²

It is also true that zoning regulations are being enacted or enforced in certain communities because local governments are looking for additional revenue. Requiring music teachers to obtain home occupation permits, purchase business licenses, and sometimes pay state taxes as well, is one way to help fill coffers. In some cases, the business license costs only \$15; in others the license may cost as much as \$242, or the state business and occupation tax may exact as much as 1.5 percent of the yearly business gross. The solution, getting the license or paying the tax, is not as simple as it seems. In some cases, licenses have been denied because of traffic regulations, fire codes, the amount of home floor space used for teaching purposes, and similar specific ordinances. By purchasing a license, most IMTs feel that they are opening a Pandora's box. A public declaration that one is involved in a home occupation invites continued surveillance. The more visible and business-like IMTs become, the greater the legal complications they may have to face.

Teaching outside the Home

A small number of IMTs have formed multiteacher studios or do contract teaching in public and private schools, work that takes them outside the home. Although that may seem an answer to home-teaching difficulties and a move in the direction of greater professionalism, working in each of these environments has engendered different concerns.

Interest in multiteacher studios (some of these are small schools) was greater in the 1980s than it appears to be at pre-

sent.¹³ Teachers who succeeded in these ventures have business acumen and a passionate desire to see the studio or school flourish. In most cases, they list camaraderie and collegiality (the antidote to the "island" experience) as the chief benefits of this arrangement, although they are quick to underline the educational values to students—values that include chamber music opportunities, a broader curriculum, and use of better (especially technological) equipment, among others. The business acumen includes choice of location and partners, skill in communication with the public and press, and the leadership abilities of at least one group member who assumes major (often financial) responsibilities. Those who have been less successful are apt to have misjudged the financial complications (the high overhead, for example) rather than the ideal behind the premise that there is strength in unity for both teachers and students. That the creation of small corporations of music teachers no longer seems so promising or ideal is probably the result of lessons learned as experiments took place in recent years.

Although this was not the primary intention of those who founded them, in some cases multiteacher schools provide teaching that compensates for the lack of music education in public schools. Not too long ago, some misguided IMTs took the view that the erosion of public school music instruction would benefit the IMT, and that students unable to receive musical training within the school system would flock to independent studios. That supposition has always been in error, and now even those who once held that opinion are seeing first-hand that *all* music programs are suffering from lack of public support. Today, many IMTs who have been accustomed to having waiting lists are actively seeking students not only to keep their studios alive, but because they fear the disappearance of a culture and art they hold dear. Activities to keep music making in the public eye, thereby reminding parents of the values and discipline that accrue from music study, are becoming the major projects of some local and state IMT associations.

Students are now giving informal concerts in malls, parks, civic centers, and department stores.¹⁴

Other factors may contribute to the IMT's greater need to seek students rather than take comfort in waiting lists. Each year, hundreds of music school graduates join the ranks of those hoping to attract private students. This is probably most noticeable in larger cities and their environs because graduates, many of whom attended schools in metropolitan areas, wish to remain in the proximity of the cultural riches afforded by big city activities. The result is an inverse ratio of students to teachers. At the same time that parents and students are less interested in seeking classical music teachers, music schools continue to prepare yet more teachers eager to offer such instruction. Another factor may contribute to this situation. In order to protect their existence, many schools have found it necessary, or at least expedient, to lower standards, accepting students who would not have been admitted formerly. Thus, not only are more students being trained for a market in which there is less opportunity, but some of these students are not the strongest or best representatives of the music teaching profession. It is not an encouraging trend.

In certain areas, IMTs do contract teaching in public and private schools. A single IMT may be hired to teach classroom music or offer instruction on assorted instruments. In other cases, several IMTs are employed to teach particular instruments or to conduct specific ensembles. Although contract teaching provides opportunities and revenue for the IMT and certainly benefits the children in those schools, this has aroused the rancor of many teachers' unions, which object to the practice on the grounds that hiring part-timers compromises the position of union members and is no more than a cost-cutting device to save school systems from providing compensation and benefits to full-time employees. Although some IMTs state that the practice of contract teaching works well in their area, the idea seems a questionable, however immediate and practical, solution to

ensuring adequate music education in the basic school curriculum.

Independent Music Teaching as a Full-Time Career

The documented picture of the IMT microcosm indicates clearly that, at present, independent music teaching provides mostly part-time employment. In many cases, this is by design. Teachers determine how many hours they wish to work weekly, and as long as they have additional income (whether from working in other musical capacities, in various nonmusical jobs, or relying on the income of a spouse), they prefer this arrangement. There are teachers, however, whose sole occupation is independent music teaching. Some have impossibly heavy teaching schedules, some have built prominent studios that attract high-paying clientele, and some, through canny manipulation of their time and individual talents, have diversified their studio programs or extended what they mean by teaching to include organizational involvement, publishing, composing, and arranging. These latter teachers best exemplify what the successful twenty-first-century IMT will need to do. As one teacher who has learned how to diversify wisely observed, "I am my own business."

The pedagogy programs that have mushroomed during the past two decades are part of the reason why the notion of the music studio as a busy hive of private lessons is changing into that of a music studio as a center in which more diversified activities may take place. The MTNA survey already offers evidence that, in general, younger teachers charge more for instruction, raise tuition more regularly, and are more likely to work outside the home.¹⁵ As any pedagogy teacher can attest, today's students, of whatever gender and background, are greatly concerned about how they will make an independent living. Although a number of these students seek institutional positions, the majority are aware that some form of independent teaching is apt to be part of their future. They want information that will spell out what it takes to be a successful independent music teacher and

guidance in forging skills that will make this goal possible.

Who Is a Professional?

Most people, and many IMTs, believe that one is a professional when one demonstrates the highest standards of a particular occupation. According to *Webster's*, an occupation qualifies as a profession only if it requires "advanced education and training, and involves intellectual skills" and a professional is someone "engaged in, or worthy of the high standards of a profession."¹⁶ Most IMTs have college degrees in a discipline that involves intellectual skills. Many IMTs can justly claim to demonstrate the high standards of the profession. Why, then, are IMTs confronted with legal challenges to their claims as professionals? The state of West Virginia, ruling that private music instruction was not exempt from a state sales tax on services, declared that:

Musicians are classified as providing *nonprofessional* services. . . . We have found no minimum level of education that would apply equally across the spectrum of private music instruction. Likewise, there are no nationally recognized standards of performance, no state or national licensing requirements and no formal continuing education requirements. Please note that it is not the quality of the service which determines whether it is professional; rather, it is the type of service being performed. A person is not a professional for tax purposes merely because he or she is performing services in a competent or expert fashion.¹⁷

This legal opinion cuts to the quick of the matter and exposes perhaps the most sensitive issue facing IMTs as a group—the matter of national licensing requirements, or certification. There is perhaps no subject that causes greater controversy among IMTs themselves—whether among members of the same organization (such as MTNA, which has had certification policies and granted certification since midcentury); between members of different organizations (such as NATS and ASTA, some of whose members are trying to move their respective organizations in the direction of licensing or certification); among teachers espousing a particular teaching

approach (e.g., who is an "authorized" Suzuki teacher and who is not); and certainly between those independent of any organization and the organizational advocates of certification and licensing.

It is difficult to sort out the arguments. There are, presumably, some teachers who oppose licensing of any kind or by any group, who regard music teaching as an art and therefore not measurable by objective standards. But it is likely that the greatest dissension surrounds which standards and competencies qualify one for certification, and by whom compliance to these standards and competencies is determined. The matter of college degrees is a case in point. A degree does not guarantee that the recipient can teach, yet certification requires at least one degree. There are different majors within degree programs and several kinds of degrees. Should a national IMT licensing qualification demand a particular degree, say a degree with a major in pedagogy?

Teaching experience is usually expected in order to qualify for certification, or for some organizational memberships. Can successful teaching be measured in years, in numbers of students taught, in levels of students taught, or by the number of audition and competition winners? If teaching expertise is to be demonstrated live, who sits in judgment? Many music teachers believe that what constitutes good teaching cannot be categorized or that a definition cannot be achieved by consensus. Just as many music teachers believe the opposite.

The issues are thorny and the debate often acrimonious. Certification is available, but no one can mandate that teachers obtain it in order to operate an independent studio. Becoming certified is voluntary. Even within MTNA, the organization most in favor of certification, only about one-fifth of its membership is certified (although within the last five years, the number of those certified has increased dramatically). Because of that, as a former MTNA national certification chair points out:

We cannot advertise ourselves to the public as an organization of qualified teachers. Because we cannot do this, our qual-

ifications will continue to mean absolutely nothing to the public at large. We will forever be regarded as equals: members, non members, college professors, and the infamous "little old ladies down the street."¹⁸

Although the path is strewn with potholes and detours, IMTs will have to travel this road, wherever it leads. Public regard for them as professionals may hinge upon national licensing, not just because of the opinions and findings of

schools, and since internship teaching is an important component of such programs, preparation for teaching is more practical. Yet even these courses and majors fall short of offering a completely realistic education for the independent music teacher. There are several reasons why this is so.

A Broader Approach to Pedagogy

Most pedagogy training focuses on teaching performance. Acquiring teach-

pedagogies (specific methods and repertoire classes) could expand, and do so in a broader context. This would assist the future performance instructor to instill those skills embodied in the national standards for arts education that are directed toward comprehensive, rather than exclusive, competence. "What is wanted . . . is the teaching of the *perception*, the *understanding*, the *comprehending* of great works of music that will accompany the teaching of the doing of it."¹⁹

A Broader Range of Music

Classical music training, in itself, requires knowledge of multiple music styles and performance practices. The music student spends a large amount of time in the studio, rehearsal, and practice room learning to differentiate among these styles and practices. Theoretical and historical courses similarly focus almost entirely on Western classical art music. Since such music represents high artistic achievement that cuts across several cultures and many centuries, it rightly forms the bulk of serious music study.

Yet it is not the music of daily life. To most people, "music" means country and western, rock, blues, soul, and easy listening. It is true that

musical tastes are like other public tastes, and the popularity of each type of music changes over time, . . . [yet] the most evident trend in America's musical tastes is a hefty increase in the popularity of blues, rhythm and blues, and soul music. The proportion of adults who like these forms of music has grown from 43 million in 1982 to 75 million in 1992.²⁰

No one would argue that much attention should be paid to these forms of music within the professional music curriculum, but it seems equally questionable that such music should receive *no* attention.

It is true that many music schools have jazz programs. In the minds of some musicians and educators, inclusion of jazz studies is sufficient encroachment on the "seriousness" of professional music education by forces representing populist culture. Jazz, however, is itself a classic form. Those

National licensing will become a reality only if independent music teachers muster the determination to make it happen.

West Virginia attorneys, but because society generally believes and trusts the qualifying imprimaturs that groups impose upon themselves. National licensing will become a reality only if IMTs muster the determination to make it happen.

Changing How the Independent Music Teacher Is Educated

Although IMTs themselves will have to confront and try to resolve the issues already discussed, additional concerns could be addressed by the larger music community, particularly by those responsible for educating the IMT. Should the professional training of musicians be expanded or modified to enable graduates to become effective independent music teachers? Most music schools and conservatories assume that attainment of a performance degree (the bachelor of music) provides a strong, if not perfect, launching pad for a number of careers, including teaching. Pedagogy courses are often included, but the content of such courses (or frequently just *one* course) is more in the nature of a survey of materials than training in the actual process of teaching. A major in pedagogy is now available in many

ing skills that relate to making music, usually on a specific instrument, is the chief—often the only—goal. Imitation is more frequently praised than are exploration or invention. Little attention is paid to techniques that develop critical listening or thinking, creativity, evaluation, problem solving, or placing things in historical perspective. Learning how to ask good questions or pose problems is less important than learning how to teach phrasing, pedaling, bowing, or breathing. The music graduate is better equipped to coach playing than to encourage appreciation or direct analysis.

It would be healthy to examine how underlying pedagogical concepts about music learning might be taught to *all* music majors, not only in discrete classes (such as string pedagogy, voice pedagogy, and the like), but in courses in which a heterogeneous group of performers would be exposed to learning theories, developmental cycles, and personality styles as well as to strategies to foster divergent thinking, stimulate curiosity, encourage problem solving, and support integration of theoretical/historical/performance modes of inquiry. Such a course (or courses) would serve as a platform on which individual

who play and appreciate jazz—like those who play and appreciate classical music—form a minority. To include the study of jazz in the curriculum is to acknowledge its importance and its development as a separate style, not to have it serve as an example of vernacular music. The forms and aesthetics of everyday music are quite different from those of jazz. Jazz education, even if the classical performer participated in its classes or ensembles, does not speak to the issue being addressed.

The point made here is that it would be useful to offer a music student the opportunity to examine critically music that speaks to broader populations, if only to enable that student to speak with some intelligence (and less bias) to those to whom this music provides pleasure and meaning. Doing so, however, can pose a difficulty even for the college interested in providing such experience since, just as in all other styles, insight and appraisal is best offered only by those who know and practice the styles under consideration. The majority of colleges do not have full-time faculty members (with the possible exception of those with studio guitar programs) who can provide such a critical survey, nor are they often willing to hire a part-time specialist in this area.

The music graduate, therefore, usually emerges from an intense (and often expensive) education prepared to deal only with a small segment of society that appreciates, or can be motivated to appreciate, a certain kind of music. IMTs find that most of their students are attracted by and want to play music that teachers find unworthy. Because they often lack any insight into music of this kind (at least to the extent of knowing something of its forms, styles, and performers), they find themselves in a musical cocoon. What they know, love, and can teach is not valued by most people.

A Broader Perspective on Preschool Education

Recent educational research has begun to highlight the extreme importance of musical development in the early childhood years and the special sensitivity of the preschool child to

musical stimuli. This is less a matter of regarding the very young child as a passive receiver of music than of more directly drawing attention to the very young child as an early singer, drummer, dancer, and creator. Yet pedagogy (even music education) courses and programs seldom provide training that would help prepare preschool music teachers. This void, of course, has opened the doors for specialized groups such as Suzuki, Yamaha, Kindermusik, and the like, to develop curricula to provide early music instruction and to train teachers in particular methods. The music graduate could, and should, be more involved in preschool teaching, not only to expand the scope and productivity of independent studios, but to reach children when they are most aurally alert and responsive. IMTs are sometimes frustrated that their musical education has not prepared them for working with preschoolers and that they must invest further training, requiring yet more time and expense, to do so.

At the tertiary level, there are no easy-to-hand solutions for filling this need. The area of preschool education is relatively new, dominated by various systems and methods (however good these may be individually or collectively) that represent different approaches and espouse separate philosophies. Even were it feasible, a cafeteria-style curriculum (some Kodály, some Dalcroze, some Suzuki, some Kindermusik, or the like) might be counterproductive, rather than helpful. There are not yet many educators (although their number is growing) who are able to offer an eclectic overview of these varied methods, or who can speak with educational objectivity about the advantages and disadvantages of each.

A Broader Sense of Career

Most successful IMTs function in a number of capacities—as performer, teacher, and entrepreneur. Whatever may be said about the insufficiency and inconsistency of collegiate pedagogical training, it cannot begin to compare with the almost total lack of courses that would enable musicians to develop business skills. In musical academia,

money and merchandising are unmentionables, and devoting time to teaching marketing, development, and communication skills is regarded as both unworthy and unnecessary. Many music graduates are naive about what it takes to cope in the real world.

Beyond marketing and business, however, there is the matter of preparing the young professional to face the realities of planning a career. Traditional career-planning models (models with which faculty members are familiar) have been linear (there is a single goal and an acknowledged path to reaching it) and incremental (small jobs within systems or communities lead to positions of increasing power and responsibility). Such viewpoints assume a stable external condition into which one gradually fits oneself. Professional career consultants, however, emphasize that now the safest strategy is to plan for change and to focus on multiple, short-term objectives. As one futurist explains,

Tomorrow's career strategists will develop flexibility in skill development and application and will constantly reevaluate their personal needs and desires . . . [and] instead of *job security*, career strategists will seek *job resiliency*.²¹

An IMT, describing what success in the independent world requires, says it quite simply, "You need to have your fingers in a lot of little pots." It is doubtful that most music students are being prepared for anything but a career with a single goal.

A Broader Use of Technology in the Curriculum

Dependence on technology has become an end-of-the-century characteristic. One of the striking observations of the American Music Conference 1994 survey is that

the most successful competitor with musical instruments has been the home computer. . . . Given a choice between spending money on a computer and software for their children and buying a musical instrument and lessons, more and more parents are choosing the former.²²

What are IMTs doing to meet this challenge?

For the past eight years, MTNA has conducted special computer and technology sessions as part of each national convention. The sessions have always been well-attended; usually one-third to one-fourth of the convention registrants pay extra to participate in the technology seminars. At the 1994 session (attendance at this session exceeded that of 1993 by nearly one hundred), it was clear that teachers were no longer window shopping, but *using* technology. Questions were more sophisticated and discerning. Discussions centered more on the issues of musical and educational quality of the software and the technical delivery (especially the sound) of the equipment than on whether, or what, to buy. Teachers reported that students "have become more involved in their own learning process, and consequently are more self-directed, self-reliant, and self-confident in their music study" and that "parents appreciate leading-edge professionalism, customized curricula, and documentable results."²³

In another 1994 survey, one developed by the MTNA national advisory committee on technology and mailed to one-thousand members, the interest of IMTs in technology is again revealed by the number of respondents (nearly six hundred) as well as by the copious and passionate essays that accompanied the return of the questionnaire. Two issues of particular note surfaced. The first concerns the ages of those teachers using technology. Most were over forty, and the greatest number of responses came from teachers aged fifty-one to sixty. Although this response is both surprising and encouraging, the inference is not entirely clear. Is it just that older teachers have greater financial means to purchase equipment and software, and thus are able to experiment with it? Does it mean that younger teachers felt less need to attend technology sessions (respondents were drawn from this population), and thus not so many were surveyed? Did older teachers respond because adapting to methods involving technology was either more exciting or more challenging, and thus cause for greater comment? Conducting such surveys and correctly read-

ing their results is still in incipient stages.

The second item of interest was the use of technology to foster creativity and individualism. Many teachers spoke of technology as giving them more time to teach *music*, but also noted that using technology required greater planning and preparation time in order both to keep up with materials and to design programs of study for specific students.²⁴ This is, perhaps, the most heartening trend. Using technology as a glorified and amplified drill-and-practice platform—as a "thousand-dollar flashcard"—is still commonplace. Current software design, however, is moving in directions that relate directly to more creative and holistic goals, and

it should not be too difficult to see how flexible practice, simulation, and multimedia software can be used to encourage creative improvisation, composition and listening during each stage of the creative process.²⁵

The more teachers see and use hypermedia as an aid to placing the learner in a position of discovery, problem solving, and decision making, the more valuable will be the link between human being and machine.

It is evident that some IMTs are finding ways to educate themselves about teaching with technology and, because most IMTs are in older age brackets, they have had to do so as an extension of their formal education. Younger teachers, however, are still in much the same position. Technology is seldom used in their own professional education (except, perhaps, in certain majors such as electronic composition, studio guitar, recording arts, and the like), and most performance majors receive little, if any, training in how to use technology to teach. Colleges must provide far more technological instruction if graduates are to thrive and lead, rather than merely survive, in the techno-world.

Not only should today's professional students learn how to manage hardware and evaluate software, but their pedagogical education must deal with how technology affects the learning process itself. *Understanding the process* must infuse and supersede getting results,

connecting cables, and pushing buttons. Sam Holland suggests that "teachers should have both a working knowledge of the computer (something like taking a piano proficiency exam) and a conceptual understanding of MIDI and its applications."²⁶ George Litterst includes performers in his view of the future:

Young performers are entering a period of "haves" and "have nots." Performers able to express themselves in several media are likely to be much more competitive than those who have concentrated all their energies on perfecting a single performance mode.²⁷

Equipping the young professional to be a "have" is not yet part of the curriculum.

The Challenge to the College

Curriculum changes and/or additions of the sort just described are not easy to incorporate in existing programs of study. Whether or not adaptation requires adding new courses or revamping the content of those already in existence, curriculum planners will need to be creative as well as enlightened and courageous. It is one thing to acknowledge the need for change or diversification, and quite another to cast it in viable form. Each institution has its own strengths and priorities, and adjustments must take these into consideration even where the desire to effect change is lively and welcomed.

There is a further, daunting aspect to this challenge. If and when curriculum changes are considered and incorporated, particularly on behalf of providing stronger and more relevant preparation for those whose career plans include functioning as an independent music teacher, it is important to realize that adjustments will need to be at the undergraduate and master's level, since most IMTs do not pursue education beyond these stages. And if (as is claimed by many in higher education today) incoming first-year students are less qualified to pursue collegiate study than they were, remediation must be factored into the mix, and thus the problems of devising a satisfactory curriculum are exacerbated. How much can a curriculum be telescoped (or, conversely, stuffed)

before it becomes ineffectual or impractical?

The sense of *community* alluded to at the beginning of this article is, perhaps, the single most compelling reason to address possibilities for change—whatever, and however extensive, these may be. The interdependency of all levels of music education—music education taken in its broadest sense—is important not just because independent music teachers need and desire better professional preparation, for careers that require equal parts of musicianship, educational expertise, and entrepreneurial skills, but because all arts educators are finding themselves in the position of relating to a society that is challenging them to demonstrate the value of arts education beyond providing pleasure and entertainment. If all arts educators take the new national standards seriously, they *will* need to reconsider whether current professional training programs are preparing educators who will be able “to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines”²⁸ or who are able to guide students in conceptual, evaluative, and integrative—in addition to performance—processes. It is now time to stand and deliver. The question is, just what will we deliver?

Life Is What We Make It

In this article, I have tried to assemble pertinent facts about the IMT, to list issues of great concern to the IMT, and to suggest ways in which higher education could offer the IMT more adequate professional preparation. Most of these issues and ideas are in ferment, and different groups must sort and separate the less valuable from the useful. Some actions—especially those dealing with professionalism, certification, and standards—can be initiated or developed only by IMTs themselves. Other actions—such as refashioning or streamlining the education of the IMT—can be undertaken on behalf of IMTs by colleges and professional music schools. Shifts and changes within society will influence each of these populations as they act independently or together.

As stated earlier, the *independence* of

the IMT is the key factor. No other group can determine or mandate what IMTs do. Every IMT interviewed spoke of the need to raise standards. Which standards? Are these educational standards? Financial standards? Ethical standards? Musical standards? Cultural standards? Who will determine the standards, and how can they be enjoined? If these are not the standards of a group, but standards espoused and proclaimed by individuals, what power or meaning will such standards represent to society at large? Will it be enough that thousands of individual music teachers take separate stands, in separate communities, on matters relating to education, finance, ethics, music, or culture? A simple, critical question must be asked. Do independent music teachers really want to be a group?

There are further issues that the IMT must examine, issues not touched upon directly here, but ones that nonetheless may have ramifications relative to music education in this country within the next decades. Are IMTs, or do IMTs wish to be, the bastion of Western European art music? (Few IMTs today teach anything but classical music.) Do IMTs see themselves as wishing to attract only a segment of society, a separate—if not elite—group that appreciates what the IMT has to offer? (It is probably accurate that the majority of IMTs do not have studios in ghettos, inner cities, or economically disadvantaged areas.) What is the IMT’s responsibility to the musical education of the general public? (Are IMTs culturally, musically, or pedagogically ready to reach out to the broader community—to others such as adults, ethnic groups, the handicapped, or senior citizens?)

These questions are not easily answered at present and are being addressed, if at all, only by individuals on their own terms. Grass-roots responses are effective, and they often generate energy beyond their origins, but unless some type of coalition develops from the fusion of numerous individual actions, initial momentum is often side-tracked or lost. IMTs themselves will need to determine whether any comprehensive and meaningful, perhaps

national, federation is possible. It will take an effort from within the ranks to shape a “continent” from the multitude of existing “islands.” There has never been such a ground swell of determined and vigorous independent music teachers as now. The moment is theirs to seize. Grandma Moses had it right. “Life is what we make it, always has been, always will be.”

Notes

1. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1992* (Washington, D. C.: United States Department of Commerce, 1992), 15. Actual figures (in thousands) list children under 5, 19,222; children 5–9, 18,237; children 10–14, 17,671; children 15–19, 17,242.

2. *Music USA 1994: Statistical Review of the U. S. Music Products Industry* (Carlsbad, Calif.: National Association of Music Merchants, 1994), 18.

3. *Ibid.*, 18.

4. Many organizations, such as the American Orff-Schulwerk Association and the Suzuki Association of the Americas, list memberships near 5000. Most specialized (e.g., harp, trumpet, French horn) associations claim about 3,000 members. The National Guild of Piano Teachers lists membership at 11,800, IAJE at 6,800. The National Federation of Music Clubs is the largest, claiming 500,000 members. The difficulties of determining which of these members are IMTs is fraught with even greater complications than sorting out MTNA, NATS, and ASTA memberships. The projection of 20,000 IMTs, while conservative considering collective membership numbers in the above organizations, is probably reasonable.

5. Virginia F. Campbell, “What Is the IMTF?” *American Music Teacher* 42, no. 4 (February/March, 1993): 58.

6. *The MTNA Foundation National Survey of Independent Music Teacher Income and Lesson Fees* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Music Teachers National Association, 1989).

7. *Ibid.*, 9. Median fees for 30-minute private lessons are \$9.00; for 30-minute group lessons, \$6.00. Median values for 45-minute private lessons are \$13.50; for 45-minute group lessons, \$8.00. Median values for 60-minute private lessons are \$20.00; for 60-minute group lessons, \$8.00.

8. Keyboard Teacher Videoconferences, produced and underwritten by the Baldwin Piano and Organ Company and presented by *Clavier* magazine, were held in January and October, 1987. Using satellites and telephones, teachers across the country addressed issues, and gave responses, similar to those in *The MTNA Foundation National Survey*.

An independent research study, using 3,432 randomly selected piano teachers, was conducted by Marsha Wolfersberger, and an article reporting her findings was published as "Independent Piano Teachers: Where Do They Stand," *Clavier* 26, no. 1 (January 1987): 46-51. The lesson fees ranged from a low of \$12.50 per hour in the Mideast and Midwest to a high of \$23.80 per hour in the Southwest.

9. *The MTNA Foundation National Survey*, note 6 above, 10. The mean gross income was \$23,915 and the median was \$17,177.

10. Interviews were conducted with Martha Brueggeman (Wisconsin), Virginia Campbell (Florida), Brenda Dillon (Texas), Dorothy Fahlman (Oregon), Jean Fox (Pennsylvania), Kenneth Guilmartin (New Jersey), Suzanne Guy (Virginia), Barbara Kreader (Illinois), Wilma Machover (New York), Elizabeth Manduca (Maine), Marian Perkins (Virginia), Charles Peterson (Washington), Joan Reist (Nebraska), and Scott McBride Smith (California). Thanks are extended to Shirley Raut (executive director, MTNA), William Vessels (executive director, NATS), and Galen Wixson (executive director, ASTA) for assistance in furnishing information, resources, and statistics.

11. This same restriction was noted in Gainesville, Florida. "No home occupation shall be permitted which involves the visitation of clients, customers, salesmen, suppliers or any other persons to the premises." Quoted in *Licensing and Zoning Issues for the Independent Music Teacher* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Music Teachers National Association, 1990), 8.

12. Jean Fox, "Winning a Zoning Battle with MTNA's Help," *American Music Teacher* 44, no. 3 (December/January 1994/95): 53.

13. A multiteacher studio is one in which two or more teachers share space, expenses, and equipment and, possibly, teaching philosophy, assorted musical/educational specialties, and support staff. In most cases, this involves a physical location apart from any single teacher's home, such as rented space in a small shopping or community center. Sometimes, however, teachers have restructured their living space to accommodate the needs of associates working together.

14. The Oregon Music Teachers Association (OMTA) has formed an alliance with Nordstrom. Children play in Nordstrom department stores, and the teachers are allowed to advertise OMTA and distribute brochures.

15. *The MTNA Foundation National Survey*, note 6 above, 9, A-35, 6.

16. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2d college ed. (Cleveland, Ohio: Williams Collins, 1979), 1134.

17. Virginia F. Campbell, "What is a Professional?" quoted in *American Music Teacher* 44, no. 1 (August/September, 1994): 54.

18. Harriet Green, "The Problem: Parents and the Music Teacher Jungle," *American Music Teacher* 43, no. 4 (February/March, 1994): 10.

19. Dennis C. Monk, "Who Will Teach the Understanding of Music? The 'Flaw' in the Ointment," *Design for Arts in Education* 89, no. 2 (November/December, 1987): 3.

20. Nicholas Zill and John Robinson, "Name That Tune," *American Demograph-*

ics 16, no. 8 (August 1994): 25.

21. Robert Barner, "The New Career Strategist," *The Futurist* 28, no. 5 (September/October, 1994): 12, 13.

22. *Music USA 1994*, note 2 above, 4.

23. Christine Hermanson and Joan Kerfoot, "Technology Assisted Teaching: Is It Getting Results?" *American Music Teacher* 43, no. 6 (June/July 1994): 20, 21.

24. Information gleaned from this survey was shared by Wilma Machover, chair, MTNA National Advisory Committee on Technology.

25. Peter Webster, "Beyond Drill and Practice," *American Music Teacher* 43, no. 6 (June/July 1994): 19.

26. Sam Holland, *Teaching Toward Tomorrow* (Loveland, Ohio: Debut Music Systems, 1993): 6.

27. Marianne Uszler, "A Byte Out of the Future," *American Music Teacher* 43, no. 6 (June/July 1994): 26, 91.

28. Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts* (Reston, Va.: Music Educators National Conference, 1994), 19.

Marianne Uszler, director of undergraduate studies and a professor of keyboard studies at the University of Southern California, is the articles and reviews editor for *American Music Teacher*.