

2021

Comprehensive Musicianship

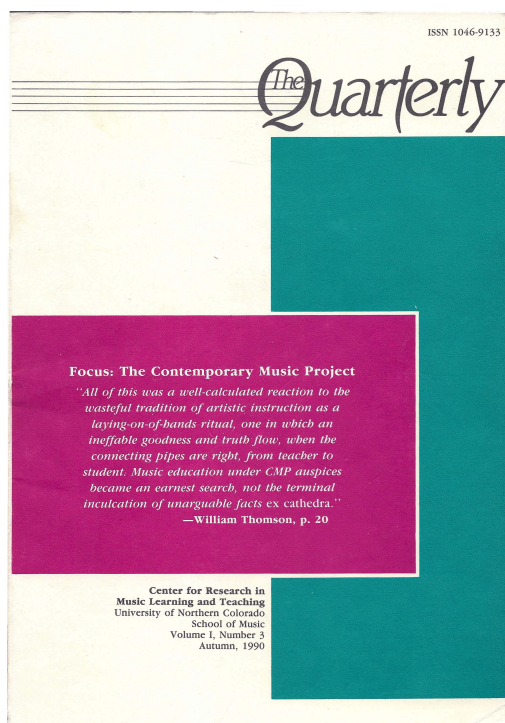
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Recommended Citation

Willoughby, David (2021) "Comprehensive Musicianship," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 16 ,
Article 28.

Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol16/iss1/28>



Title: Comprehensive Musicianship

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Source: Willoughby, D. (1990, Autumn). Comprehensive musicianship. *The Quarterly*, 1(3), pp. 39-44. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(1), Summer, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/>

It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

Comprehensive Musicianship

By David Willoughby
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The purpose of this article is to examine the concept of comprehensive musicianship (CM) as articulated by the Contemporary Music Project (CMP) and to share some thoughts as to its present status.

The Context

To understand the meaning of CM, it would be helpful to know the context in which it came into practice by CMP.¹ First, comprehensive musicianship is a symbol—jargon, if you will. It was given definition to focus on perceived needs in the profession. The needs were articulated as the direct result of experiences in CMP's Young Composers Project, later the Composers-in-Public-Schools program and the Professionals-in-Residence program.

The composer-in-residence programs created an environment in which living composers were to interact with public school music teachers and their students. It became clear that composers felt that their music was not understood or appreciated by many teachers, for the teachers were not educated well enough in the understanding of the mid-century musical language which most composers were using. CMP concluded that college music curricula needed to do more to prepare all music students to deal with contemporary musical literature, indeed a wide variety of literature, and to bring students from all the music disciplines into a more common frame of reference to facilitate communication and understanding. Thus, the need emerged for a more comprehensive musical education.

The Concept

CM was promoted as an attitude and an approach, not as a method or an easily identifiable package of musical learning that could be purchased and used totally or not at all. The concept of CM devel-

oped between 1965 and 1969 (see CMP₂ and CMP₅). From 1969 through 1973, it was refined and promoted. In the grand scheme of things, four years of promoting change was hardly sufficient.

Comprehensive musicianship stresses the following concepts, applicable at all educational levels:

1. The development of competencies in creating music, performing music, and critical listening and analysis;
2. Experience with the totality of musical styles—particularly those in the twentieth century, and a wide variety of non-Western styles—brought into a common frame of reference by the common-elements approach to terms and principles found in all music;
3. The integration of content and musical experiences;
4. The students' active involvement in the application of concepts with emphasis on music making and discovery, rather than on routine memorization and a passive learning environment.

CM was perceived as a wide-ranging, flexible, idealized concept; CMP was not intending to promote the *status quo*. We

“The aspiring professional performer needs to be versatile, adaptive, and accommodating in repertoire and style of presentation, and yet must strive continually to be discerning in artistic judgments.”

wanted to promote the ideal to the fullest extension of the concept, the boldest approach—in hopes that even small results would be obtained. We were in a position to draw attention to a concept that symbolized needs in the profession as perceived by those associated with the

project. CMP attempted to forge new or renewed links: teachers with students, educational institutions with communities, teachers with performers and composers, one culture with other cultures, and the future with the past.

CMP served as a catalyst for questioning past values and practices. It promoted communication and cooperation among professionals from all parts of the music world. It promoted a revitalization and revision of music curricula at all levels. It promoted the nurturing of creative and student-oriented approaches to teaching and learning. And it promoted growth in understanding the processes of music. Probably more than anything, CMP promoted an expansion of knowledge and attitudes beyond that which most of us acquired in our formal education.

By their very nature, these pursuits created problems and risks. For many people the suggestion of change meant that what was happening was not quite good enough. Defensiveness and protectiveness, rather than growth, too often were the result. Great ambitions and idealistic aspirations came easy, but fulfilling them was a different matter.

Certain aspects of CM have been part of the commitment of many teachers and of many schools for many years. Again, these disparate principles were collected by CMP and placed under an umbrella for purposes of national focus and attention, an umbrella that was called "comprehensive musicianship."

We knew that a few schools or a few teachers would respond with the fullest possible implementation of CM principles. We hoped that many more would respond with at least a small degree of expansion in the way they looked at music or at the teaching and learning of music. We had no illusions of grandeur. At best we hoped for a small contribution to the betterment of our profession.

Comprehensive Musicianship Extended

Although most of the applications of CM principles were in theory and general music classes, extensions of these principles were advocated by CMP beyond the traditional classes. Again, the context was

the addressing of certain perceived needs in the profession.

Three particular issues to which national attention was drawn through invitational forums remain pertinent today: (1) the education of performing musicians, (2) the education of music consumers, and (3) the education of college music teachers. The comments that follow are derived from the published reports of these forums.²

The Education of the Performing Musician

Assuming a musician can presently earn a living by performing, will he be able to do so in 20 years? Where will he perform? How many symphony orchestras will be left to provide employment for the classically trained musician? Will classical recordings still be made? Will specialization on one instrument result in narrowness that limits the possibilities of a performance career? Can a performer afford to be educated only in an elite language intended for a relatively few connoisseurs?

A conclusion: Performers must be versatile in order to be successful professionals in today's world.

To Bethany Beardslee, singer, versatility meant the solid grounding in twentieth-century techniques and repertoire to assure the ability to perform music of our own time.

To Richard Clark of Affiliate Artists, versatility meant the ability to relate to an audience as a person as well as an artist, to develop a performing personality.

To Stephen Sell, arts administrator, versatility meant the ability to perform different kinds of music in different size ensembles before different types of people in varied settings.

The versatility embodied in comprehensive musicianship would not lower standards of performance by dissipating the talent of each individual but would instead allow a flowering of creative energy. As pianist Claude Frank said, this would allow performers to be emotionally specialized while adding breadth to their whole musical background; so the catholicity of a student's musical education both develops from and relates to his or her central interest.

The aspiring professional performer will undoubtedly teach in some way, through the classroom, studio, concert hall, or Kiwanis Club. The teaching potential of artists must be nurtured throughout their careers.

The aspiring professional performer needs to be versatile, adaptive, and accommodating in repertoire and style of presentation, and yet must strive continually to be discerning in artistic judgments.

The Education of Music Consumers

A consumer of music is one who wants musical experiences for purposes other than a profession—the audience, those who participate in musical activities for purposes of enrichment or entertainment.

In higher education it is difficult not to be pragmatic and self-serving in reaching out to find new and more consumers—to build audiences, to fill classes, to generate dollars, to compensate for the declining enrollment of the traditional college student. Philosophically, however, is it important to educate the consumer? Are consumers needed? Is there a demand or can a demand be generated by an effective teaching and learning environment—whatever that may be?

We assume that virtually all humans need music; they want to experience it and to respond to it, in some form and for some purpose. Music is for everyone, and the nature of the musical experience is essentially the same for everyone. Whether composing, performing, or listening, the differences in experience are a matter of degree, not of kind.

In attempting to reach out to new constituencies, preparatory programs, ensemble participation, and concert and recital attendance are traditional and good ways of providing musical experiences for the community. Often, newer avenues are being explored—for the aging and the young, frequently through noncredit programs, including such diverse areas as recreation and leisure, the educationally disadvantaged, society and culture, and non-Western repertoires.

Special projects or workshops can be made available to take music to the people. Concerts by nontraditional performance

ensembles, visiting artists' residencies designed for community interaction, and participation in such activities as jazz groups, recorder ensembles, guitar classes, and music theater productions should be provided.

In college-level introductory music courses the emphasis has been too much on music as a historical product, as the lives of great (to whom?) composers, and as key signatures, scales, and chords. All musically related behaviors relate to composing, performing, and the all-pervasive activity—listening.

The Graduate Education of College Music Teachers

Preparing aspiring professionals to teach in colleges and universities is, again, related to career opportunities, to changing economic and curricular circumstances in higher education, and thus to the need to be versatile and adaptable.

The NASM Basic Musicianship Statement is appropriate as a basis for graduate as well as undergraduate study, suggesting that graduate programs should strive for:

1. Balance between depth and breadth in competence and perspective.
2. Awareness of an expanded repertoire that is representative of many musical styles and cultural values.
3. The incorporation of pedagogy into all disciplines.
4. Ideological cohesion and sense of common purpose among the various segments of the music school.

The issue of what pedagogy is needed in all disciplines arises from a recognition that teaching will be a probable vocation for most graduate students, hence the need to develop skills in communication, particularly in the preparation of college music teachers.

The education of future college music teachers must begin not so much with graduate curricula as with present graduate school faculty as they influence future teachers. Faculty, students, and administrators must be aware of the importance of pedagogy in programs other than public school music and must promote the importance of excellent teaching skills for all students, particularly future college teachers who someday will be exerting

influences—for good or ill—on other graduate students.

Current Status

Those of us closely involved with CMP have frequently been asked how CM stands now: Who are the good CM teachers? Where are the good CM programs? These questions cannot be answered easily or accurately.

Many teachers or schools now incorporate CM principles, perhaps extensively, without labeling their approach CM. Conversely, teachers or schools can label their programs CM without incorporating many of its principles. Both circumstances obscure any attempt to assess the status of CM teaching.

Philosophies, methods, and approaches designed to assist teachers in fulfilling their goals come and go, but CM principles remain evident today in published materials such as textbooks and anthologies for general music classes and college music theory courses, in convention programs, particularly of MENC and The College Music Society, and in music curricula at all levels.

Comprehensive Musicianship as an explicit, identifiable program implemented to its fullest according to principles outlined by CMP is not very prevalent. Judging from current textbooks, instructional materials, convention presentations, workshops, reported research projects, and journal articles, CM principles such as expanded repertoire, creative activities, and classroom performance are evident at all educational levels.

Repertoire

CM principles are relatively common in school general music classes and are also taught in college music teacher preparation courses. Virtually all current music appreciation texts give at least token acknowledgment to the worth of nonclassical repertoires in the teaching and learning process. However, these texts do little to encourage class performance or to stimulate creative activities. Attempts at incorporating CM in ensembles, studios, class lessons, and upper-division music courses have, at best, been sporadic.

The College Music Society (CMS), perhaps more than any other national organ-

ization, has continued to promote CM ideals at the college level. Expanded repertoire and active student involvement have been at the core of its Music in General Studies program. Its seven annual summer Institutes, held in Boulder, Colorado, since 1982, have regularly explored ways of incorporating a global repertoire in music appreciation classes.

In addition, CMS, dating from its 1984 annual meeting in Nashville, has organized at each meeting a regional music and culture track. These sessions have focused on musics common to the region where the meeting is held and on the place of these repertoires in the local and national culture.

The Nashville meeting in 1984 included traditional folk music of the Appalachian Mountains and the South, as well as considerable attention to the entertainment music industry. The 1985 meeting in Vancouver highlighted folk music of the Pacific Northwest. The 1986 meeting in Miami concentrated on music of Latin America and the Caribbean. The 1987 meeting in New Orleans featured black, creole, and cajun music with a strong emphasis, of course, on jazz. The 1988 meeting in Santa Fe emphasized the musics of the Hispanics and the Native Americans. Regional musics, likewise, were given prominence in 1989 in St. Louis.

Music in Higher Education

Although undergraduate musicianship (theory) programs labeled “Comprehensive Musicianship” are not prevalent, they do exist. CM programs also exist but under different labels, sometimes Theory I and Theory II. One can conclude, when considering the ways music is taught in freshmen/sophomore core theory or musicianship programs, that the selection of repertoire used for music study and the types of musical experiences expected are considerably expanded from those of decades ago. The musical experiences now encompass much more than merely filling in the inner voices of a Bach chorale. In fact, one now sees more program titles such as Basic Musicianship, Literature and Materials, and Literature and Structure as well as Comprehensive Musicianship.

Many CMP experimental programs in the late 1960s³ combined previously frag-

mented offerings into an integrated core curriculum. Cognitive studies were combined with skill, development, theory with aural skills, or harmony with performance. Theory in some instances was combined with history or literature, aural skills and sight-singing, instrumentation, form and analysis, and conducting. The purpose of this super-course was to study music holistically, beginning with musical examples of a wide variety of musical styles. The attempt was to encourage synthesis, seeking to explore music as a totality, seeing the whole and how the parts relate to the whole. Previously fragmented offerings were integrated. Music was taught as a total experience rather than as a series of unrelated events.

Many teachers have been uncomfortable with the CM super-course concept. It takes considerable time and effort to find or educate effective CM teachers. CM faculty frequently emphasize their own expertise, perhaps at the expense of rudiments. Some courses cover too much material, sometimes superficially. Giving one grade for overall musicianship, although having some measure of logic, does not indicate level of achievement in specific areas, and to balance the component parts is difficult. CM classes need to be relatively small, thus expensive. Problems are created with transfer students who have not had the integrated approach. A super-course has been difficult to achieve, and many of those who tried it have reverted to a more fragmented approach. Schools have encouraged cooperation and coordination, rather than combination, to achieve the same goals.

A global view in the selection of repertoire is becoming common. Virtually every introductory music listening textbook and music series incorporates musical examples from pop, jazz, folk, India, Indonesia, Africa, Japan, etc. Additionally the folk repertoire has been raised in quality and authenticity. The selection of literature for music study has expanded geographically and chronologically to include within the Western classical tradition more pre-Baroque and more recent experimental music based on both traditional and nontraditional notation. Theory texts and many sight-singing books rely

more on examples from music literature than on abstract exercises.

CMP has not been alone in promoting the principles of comprehensive musicianship. MENC urged its adoption in the training of teachers through its Interim Report of the Commission on Teacher Education. NASM adopted many of its principles in the Basic Musicianship Statement included in its Handbook. The activities of CMS in the area of comprehensive musicianship have been wide-ranging, involving many people and many ideas.

Research

Principles of comprehensive musicianship have become the topic of numerous dissertation research projects since CMP ended in 1973. Many of these dealt with specific repertoires and their incorporation in school music curricula, including Hispanic music, black music, contemporary popular music, folk music, and the music of Indonesia. Other projects have explored CM principles through performance, as related to individual instruments and ensembles, especially bands. A considerable number of projects have dealt with general music classes or introductory music listening courses from elementary school through college. A surprising number of projects explored the application of CM in instrumental performance in order to increase the musical understanding and musicality of individual students. Most involved the development of instrumental music curricula. A full report of this research is beyond the scope of this article, but a sample of those dealing with instrumental music curricula follows.

For elementary instrumental music teachers, authors found that the teaching of musical elements along with performance skills does not result in less performance ability (Whitener, 1980) and that teaching musical concepts can be practical (Cargill, 1986).

Central to those projects relating to high school instrumental music programs was the development of curricula and planning guides for rehearsals. One project explored the incorporation and integration of theory in a program designed to nurture creative musical development

and to stimulate an understanding of the relationship between the aural and visual elements of music (Taylor, 1983). In another project, a four-year planning guide was developed to enable students to supplement their performance activities with listening and creative activities with content integrated and coordinated by unifying factors drawn from musical concepts and the music literature (Lawler, 1976). Another project used the CM approach to develop, through rehearsals and supplementary activities, a deeper and broader understanding of music (Warner, 1975). And another curriculum was developed at the college level for conductors and conductors-in-training to teach musical understanding using the conceptual method of instruction (Gelpi, 1984).

Summary

The Contemporary Music Project, in promoting the concept of comprehensive musicianship as it applied to the study of music from elementary schools through the university, assumed the role of a catalyst for reassessment regarding the nature of music and the use of musical processes in teaching and learning. CMP was aware that CM principles were not new to many teachers and were in fact not accepted by many. Yet it recognized a need in the music profession to create an awareness and a national consciousness of these principles. Thus CMP refined and promoted the concept of comprehensive musicianship.

Any approach to teaching and learning that demands an expansion of attitudes and knowledge, that requires continued study and contemplation about music and music learning, and that involves extensive risk-taking and perhaps failure intimidates many teachers. The tendency is to carve out a comfortable rut and feel cozy in the security of the known and proven.

Two words are symbolic to those of us who worked with the project—evolving and ideas—ideas about the nature of music and evolving strategies about music

teaching and learning. CMP promoted ideas, and they were always in a state of refinement and evolution. The project itself evolved in stages as new needs were identified. Perhaps that is why CMP titled one of its publications *Comprehensive Musicianship: An Anthology of Evolving Thought*. □

End Notes

1. David Willoughby, "Comprehensive Musicianship: Some Encouraging Words," *College Music Symposium*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (September 1982) p. 55.
2. National Association of School of Music, *Monographs on Music in Higher Education*: Papers from the "The Education of the Performing Musician," 1973; "The Education of Music Consumers," 1974; and "The Graduate Education of College Music Teachers," 1974.
3. Cheryl R. Carnahan, *The Ford Foundation Institutes for Music in Contemporary Education (1966–1969): An Update*, unpublished master's thesis, American University, 1983.

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