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Volume 16 *Special Volume: Historical Reprint of
The Quarterly Journal for Music Teaching and
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Article 3

2021

A Place At The Table

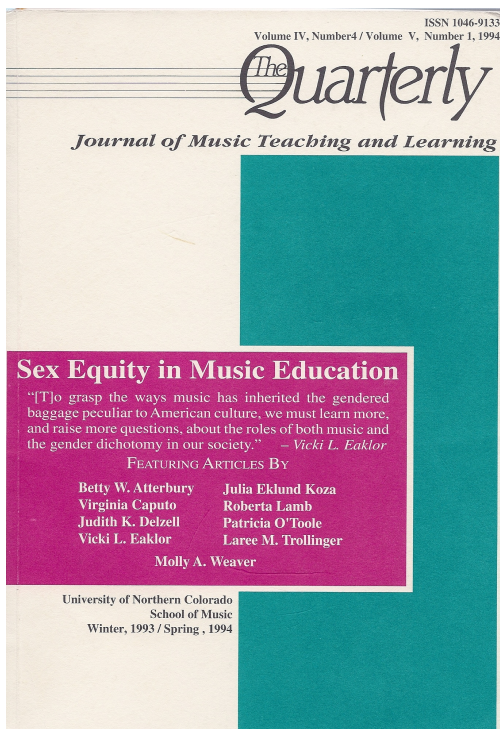
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Title: A Place At The Table

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Source: Koza, J. E. (1993-1994). A place at the table. *The Quarterly*, 4-5(5-1), pp. 3-4. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(5), Autumn, 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.

A Place At The Table

By Julia Eklund Koza

University of Wisconsin - Madison

The advisor stood silently as the student told him of her plans to base her doctoral dissertation on feminist theory. After a long pause, he turned to her and in an avuncular tone responded, "Feminism is a fad, a flash in the pan, and just like every other fad in education, it will have its day and be gone. You need a dissertation topic that will be of interest to the whole music education community and will stand the test of time. So start thinking about something else. Besides, if you get yourself labeled as a feminist, you'll never be hired once you finish. You will be considered a troublemaker, and there are all kinds of schools that won't give you a second look."

Versions of this scene have been played out countless times in our institutions of higher learning. Not only does this vignette speak volumes about what constitutes legitimate knowledge in academe, it also tell us *whose* knowledge is perceived to be of greatest importance. Sadly, until fairly recently the lives and experiences of women, as well as the complex politics of gender relations, have not constituted legitimate knowledge.

There is irony in this advisor's intimation that people do research on gender or incorporate feminist theory merely because they see an emerging trend and want to be a part of it. There are many scholarly topics far less dangerous and far more likely to provide financial reward. Why would anyone want to be a part of a "trend" that might lead to ostracism, vilification, and perhaps even loss of employment? I cannot speak for all, but I believe I represent the views of many in say-

ing that people are drawn to this work by an intense and sometimes viscerally painful need to understand themselves and the people around them, knowing full well that to choose this course is to run the risk of "shooting themselves in the foot." Given the options, however, some of us believe we have no viable alternative but to proceed; as a wise friend who has taken many risks in his own academic life once quipped, "Better to shoot yourself in the foot than to shoot yourself in the head!"

Many of us know that lives are at stake as a consequence of current gender relations — our lives, as well as those of our colleagues, students, and children. The effects of these relations are too numerous and complex to detail here, but let us consider just one example. According to a report by the College Music Society, the percentage of women faculty holding tenure-track positions in music education, which showed gross inequity in the baseline year of 1976-77, actually declined from 32 percent in that year to 28.4 percent in 1986-87.¹ Adrienne Fried Block, editor of the report, concluded that although there was a slight increase across subspecialties in the representation of women in tenure-track positions during the ten-year period, it was "not commensurate with the percentage of qualified women available."²


When Manny Brand contacted me nearly two years ago and invited me to co-edit an issue of *The Quarterly* that would focus on gender, I was cautious. He may have been taken aback by my first questions: "How much freedom will these authors have to say what they think needs to be said?" and "Are you willing to be iconoclastic?" I was wary because I have slowly and painfully learned that getting invited to the party does not mark the end of problems. In the estimation of some, only newcomers who follow the

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rules and mind their manners should be allowed to sit at the table. When we outsiders are invited, however, there are bound to be surprises, some of which vex, bewilder, and perplex those whose places at the banquet were assured long ago. When marginalized groups are brought to the table, they may not know the rules or may think the rules are irrelevant; they may want to change rules that do not serve them well. They may ignore standard table talk and instead bring up subjects that are not to be discussed in polite company. They may say things people do not want to hear, upsetting and disturbing things, and sometimes they may seem to have no manners at all. Most of all, once they have been invited and especially if they speak up, things are never the same, never the way they used to be in the "good" old days.

In answer to my cautions inquiries, Manny replied, "You will have free reign." He kept his promise and even expanded the issue in response to an outpouring of excellent manuscripts. I am proud to have played a role in the creation of this ground-breaking issue. I thank Manny not only for inviting us to the table but also for listening and, chiefly, for recognizing the importance of a subject that has been overlooked by the music education community for far too long. No matter what the old guard may say, feminism is not a mere fad, gender research *is* important, and we will not go away.

Notes

1. *Women's Studies/Women's Status: CMS Report Number 5*. (Boulder, CO: College Music Society, 1988), 90.
2. Ibid, 91-92. 

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