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### Bennett Reimer and MEJ: a 58-Year Partnership

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by Patrick K. Freer, Georgia State University, Atlanta

### ***Bennett Reimer and MEJ: a 58-year partnership***

The following article by Bennett Reimer was submitted to the *Music Educators Journal* just days before his passing on November 18, 2013. Reimer's first professional publication was in the June-July 1956 issue of *MEJ* ("College Course in Supplementary Instruments," pp. 42 & 44), and it is fitting that his final writing offers a critical examination of our journal some 58 years later. In his article, Reimer exhorts music education, and *MEJ* in particular, to remain focused on scholarly approaches to thinking and teaching rather than succumb to fads and trends that undermine the profession.

Reimer's contributions to *MEJ* spanned nearly six decades and included 22 articles, a full-length interview, and five letters to the editor. One of these letters is extraordinary ("Music Matters," January 2004, p. 10). In the space of a few hundred words, Reimer eviscerated the notion espoused in then-current *MEJ* advertisements that music education should be valued because of its impact on non-music subject areas.

Reimer's singular contribution to music education was his *Philosophy of Music Education*, first published by Prentice-Hall in 1970. In *MEJ*'s February 1971 review, Gerald L. Knieter wrote, "It is fortunate that this work appears at a time when the MENC is deeply concerned about establishing goals and objectives . . . To make the best use of this work requires that music educators critically examine the state of music education . . . when we meet this challenge, music education will have come of age" (p. 75).

Reimer's philosophical views were encapsulated in a two-part *MEJ* article series ("Music Education as Aesthetic Education," February & March 1989), in which he foreshadowed the shifts in music education that would be required as technology redefined how people interact with music. Reimer held that music education would become more important—rather than less important—because of the ubiquity of personal music listening devices and concurrent interest in the creation and manipulation of music. In his 2007 retrospective of the *MEJ* articles he had written during the previous 50 years, Reimer offered, "Having grown from young activist a half century ago to a no-longer-young activist now, I find that the battles of relevancy still need to be fought. Half a century is too long for us to have evaded the reforms we must undertake if we are to become an essential component in and foundation for the musical world that thrives all around us" (January 1997, p 61).

Six decades after his first *MEJ* article, Reimer's final challenge is for music educators to seek "adjustments of and innovations to the long-established beliefs and practices of the roles of teaching and learning, conceptions with which we have become too comfortable" (cite from the to-be-published article).