

2014

“Years of Progress” -- Music Educators Journal from 1964 to 1989 (Volumes 51-75)

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Recommended Citation

Freer, Patrick K., "“Years of Progress” -- Music Educators Journal from 1964 to 1989 (Volumes 51-75)" (2014). *Music Faculty Publications*. 4.

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DOI: 10.1177/0027432113519244

Music Educators Journal Month XXXX

www.nafme.org

From the Academic Editor

“Years of Progress”—*Music Educators Journal* from 1964 to 1989 (Volumes 51–75)

by Patrick K. Freer, Georgia State University, Atlanta

Photo by Doreen Birdsell

This is the third issue in *Music Educators Journal*'s centennial volume. The third quarter-century of *MEJ* was one of expansive growth. Under the leadership of editor Charles B. Fowler from 1965 to 1971 (see Craig Resta's tribute to Fowler on pp. 23–24 in the December 2013 issue), *MEJ* added new features, developed themed issues to provide depth and perspective, and purposefully invited multiple views about controversial topics. From a production standpoint, this period saw a large increase in MENC (now NAfME) staff positions focused on the production of *MEJ*. This allowed for the journal to move from six issues per year to nine annual issues beginning in September 1964. That same issue (Volume 51, No. 1) began the standard practice of publishing covers that featured full-color illustrations and photographs. One exception was the October 1972 issue that is notable for at least four reasons: the cover was the only one in *MEJ* history printed with a horizontal orientation; the issue was one of only three in the last fifty years with a black-and-white cover (the others were April 1972 and May 1974); the issue contained 214 pages—tied for the most *MEJ* pages with the February/March 1966 issue; and it was devoted to a single topic (“Music in World Cultures”).

Single-Topic Focus Issues

The practice of focusing content on single topics became quite common during Volumes 51 to 75. The first single-topic issue appeared in November 1968 with the theme of “electronic music.” Other similarly focused issues published during this period included topics that continue to be of great interest today. Many of these issues are now considered pivotal in the development of contemporary American music education:

Facing the Music in Urban Education (January 1970)

Technology in Music Teaching (January 1971)

Music in Special Education (April 1972)

Music in World Cultures (October 1972)

Music in Open Education (April 1974)

The Charles Ives Centennial (October 1974)

Careers in Music (March 1977)

Improvisation (January 1980)

The Crisis in Music Education (November 1981)

Music for Every Child: Teaching Special Students (April 1982)

Careers and Music (October 1982)

Technology (January 1983)

Major Approaches to Music Education (February 1986)

Computers and Music Education (December 1986)

Music and Movement (November 1987)

The Sesquicentennial: U.S. Music Education (February 1988)

Additionally, a variety of *MEJ* issues during this period contained multiple articles on the same topic. Some of these collections that have become historically important include:

The Tanglewood Symposium: Music in American Society (November 1967)

Youth Music (November 1969)

The Music Critic (March 1970)

Research in Musical Behavior (April 1971)

Early Childhood Education (March 1974)

Computers in Music Education (January 1984)

The Digital Music Room (January 1985)

Two of the topics listed previously generated some of the most controversy among readers of any content published in *MEJ* history. In his May 1970 article tracing the development of the *MEJ* Editorial Board (“Years of Progress,” pp. 71–72), Charles Fowler wrote of how the editorial staff and board members handled the controversy following publication of the article collections devoted to youth music (November 1969) and music in urban education (January 1970). The result was a stated goal for *MEJ* to contain multiple and divergent views rather than be perceived as promoting a singular, official message to a disparate profession.

MEJ Reader Surveys

For quite a long time, *MEJ* readers were polled annually about their perceptions of the journal. These surveys also revealed demographic information about the readership, distribution information about the journal and its reach, and how content was used by its multiple constituencies. Some of the first information was gathered in 1970, with results reported in the May 1970 issue (p. 72). Among the interesting findings: Over 51 percent of *MEJ* readers were under the age of fifty; the average reader spent more than two hours reading each issue; 89 percent of readers retained back issues for future reference; and the audience was estimated at 207,000 individual readers plus those who accessed the journal through libraries.

A similar survey was reported in September 1984 (p. 5), noting that over 50 percent of readers wanted more “how-to” practical articles, while 51 percent wanted more theoretical and philosophical articles. (Apparently some readers wanted more of both!) The vast majority of readers in 1984 wanted to read articles about current issues, with one reader commenting, “Don’t be afraid to be controversial. Be a leader. Come up with practical solutions.”

The 75th Volume and Bennett Reimer

In the current *MEJ*, we sadly note the passing of Bennett Reimer. Reimer's final *MEJ* article, along with two contextual essays, can be found on pages **XX-XX**.

The March 2014 issue of *MEJ* has long been planned to highlight volumes 51 to 75 of our journal. It is therefore of interest to note that the 75th volume of *MEJ* contained two of Bennett Reimer's most influential articles on the topic of "Music Education as Aesthetic Education" (February and March 1989). We are reminded of the lasting power of the written word when we take the time to review our profession's past publications. Thank you, Bennett, for contributing your words to our journal for nearly six decades.