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Himie Voxman: His Contributions to Music Education

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Abstract

Himie Voxman is a name few instrumental teachers and students of the past would fail to recognize. His method books and arrangements are in school and private studios across the United States, serving as a testimony to his influence as a teacher, scholar, editor and arranger. His life and career as a prominent U.S. music educator is certainly worthy of the attention of anyone with an interest in the American music education.

Early Years

Born in Centerville, Iowa in 1912 to Morris and Mollie Voxman, Himie Voxman's interest in music until he was twelve years old. Fascination for the subject came when Voxman's classroom teacher submitted his name for instrumental instruction to William Gower, private teacher and director of the Centerville Municipal Band. His mother was hesitant, fearing that playing a wind instrument might be detrimental to her young boy's asthma. However, the family doctor suggested he try it.

Himie's earnings from a local grocery store provided the wherewithal for clarinet and armed with an old \$35 rubber Albert system instrument, Voxman began playing in the summer following his eighth-grade year. Whether playing the clarinet, or becoming a saxophone player, when the family moved to a different house and new surroundings, Voxman's asthma disappeared. He was on his way to establishing the Voxman name as a mainstay in instrumental music education.¹

Lesson material of the time was limited to a few advanced conservatory methods. This prompted Gower to write out the first lessons for his beginning students, which he transferred to the Klosé method. These experiences, coupled with the sight-reading he did in silent movie orchestras, began shaping Voxman's ideas about the importance of rhythm and quality literature in music instruction.²

Voxman progressed quickly on the clarinet and was able to enroll in the high school band and orchestra by the beginning of the fall term. He recalled that although his instruction was exemplary, the orchestra director instructed the clarinetists to use "joints" of their instruments to cover the parts for "A" clarinet.³

In addition to the Centerville municipal band, Voxman began playing in other bands conducted by Gower, and began teaching privately. A stint with the McDonald band at the Missouri State Fair in 1928 led to a short tour, ending with a decision to return to Centerville to finish high school. An attempt to return to the city upon graduation failed when thousands of theater musicians were thrown out because of talking motion pictures. McDonald, rather than rehiring Voxman as a single musician, felt obliged to hire former employees with families. While this was the end of Voxman's professional band career, it set the stage for his teaching, research, and orchestral careers.⁴

Undergraduate Years

In addition to music, Voxman had a fascination for chemistry, which was in an advancement in synthetic drug development in the late 1920s. This fascination led him to enter the University of Iowa as a chemical engineering major. He also began playing the clarinet privately at this time. Voxman recalled that he selected chemical engineering rather than chemistry because engineering students were exempted from physical education requirements. He joined the band, which was part of the military corps until 1936, exempting him also from the required military training. Several years later, to further support himself in addition to his teaching, he formed a small orchestra to perform university plays in McBride Auditorium.⁵

Voxman continued to play in the Centerville Municipal Band during his first two years at the University, hitchhiking from Iowa City to sight-read the Thursday evening concert and the next morning he would ride with Gower to the city limits to find another ride home to Iowa City. During his junior year he began playing in the Tri-Cities (now Quad-Cities) band under Ludwig Becker, which led to a position teaching woodwinds in the Dave Schaefer schools.⁶

A request to perform in Handel's Messiah under the direction of the University of Iowa music department's head, Philip Greeley Clapp, in 1929, served as Voxman's introduction to the music department. This performance led to an appointment as orchestra librarian and as first clarinetist with the University orchestra under Frank Kendrie. Voxman recalled that rehearsals for Messiah were inconvenient, making it necessary to wait until after rehearsal to go to his night job of washing trays in the Quadrangle Dorm. Performing with the orchestra, however, led to Voxman's meeting with Carl E. Seashore through Scott Reger, an audiology student and principal clarinetist. This encounter would set the stage for Voxman's graduate work.⁷

Graduate Years

Upon completion of his degree in chemical engineering, Voxman decided to continue his studies at the University of Iowa in the psychology of music. Securing a rese-

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assistantship through Dean Seashore, Voxman began working on "The Harmc of the Clarinet Tone," using the clarinetists of the St. Louis Symphony as subj Finishing the M.A. in 1934, he continued seeking a doctorate, planning to stud differences in tone quality between metal and wooden clarinets. Disagreeme advisor over the use of an artificial blower led him to abandon the project and the degree.

Career at the University of Iowa

In 1934 Voxman began teaching woodwinds at City High School in Iowa City. met his future wife, Lois, who was teaching strings. Voxman also taught part University of Iowa, and in 1936, Clapp hired him as the first fulltime woodwin Gower, who took the job as band director at City High in 1939, later taught b at the University. During these years, the major applied professors taught th education instrumental techniques classes—with future music educators recei clarinet training from Voxman himself. Voxman's ability to point out beginner' quickly and concisely gave countless music educators a strong background in pedagogy.⁸

In addition to being an excellent teacher and scholar, Voxman persisted in br himself as a performer. Playing regularly in the university orchestra with othe members, Voxman provided a strong musical example and encouraged profes camaraderie. He remained a member of the Tri-Cities Orchestra for seventeen 1947 and enhanced his reputation as a soloist in faculty recitals by studying v Langenus in New York and at the National Music Camp, Interlochen, Michigan took part in Langenus's workshops at the University of Iowa.⁹

An administrative position had not been a goal of Voxman's. He maintained a working relationship with Clapp, who had learned to trust Voxman's administr judgment and foresight. Because of Clapp's failing health in his later years, h Voxman to assist in some administrative tasks. In 1954, Voxman became He Department of Music, and in 1963, he became Director, when the faculty vote reorganize as the School of Music. He held the post in conjunction with that o teacher and graduate student advisor until his retirement in 1980.¹⁰

The University of Iowa Department of Music had already reached a position of significance under the leadership of Clapp, who had become Head in 1919. C emphasized performance—a direction that the faculty felt Voxman would cont Strengthening course offerings in theory, musicology, and music education, w somewhat limited, were also of concern to the faculty. Consequently, under v guidance, additional courses and advanced degrees gradually became availab

Clapp had been knowledgeable in musicology but was not enthusiastic about formal study of the subject. Until the early 1950s, the Department of Music c courses in music history. The two-year sequence of music appreciation, whic taught, served this purpose quite adequately as far as he was concerned. To of Clapp's tenure, the Department created the musicology area upon the reco of the faculty. Professor Albert Luper was the first appointee. The area gainc during Voxman's tenure with appointments of additional faculty.¹²

Music education had long been a part of the curriculum at the University of Iowa back to the early days of normal school training. The first music education program was a two-year public school music course, instituted in 1916 to prepare students to become school music supervisors. By the time of Voxman's tenure, the University was offering a four-year degree in music education. Perceiving that techniques courses in music were lacking, he was able to secure instruments and initiate courses in music techniques. With the aid of Dean Elmer Peterson of the College of Education, he was able to acquire a large number of instruments to build up the band and orchestra at the University Schools, where music education students were practicing teaching.

Voxman was concerned with the image that the University of Iowa and the Department of Music had developed throughout the state. A fairly general feeling had been that the department was not seriously interested in the training of public school teachers. Consequently, musicians from some of Iowa's best music programs were seeking education at colleges and universities. By reviving the pre-World War II All State Music Camp for high school students, along with summer sessions and workshops for teachers, the Department improved, and it provided a service for the state.¹⁴

A significant advancement for the School of Music occurred in 1971, when the school moved from its old overcrowded, Jefferson Street facilities to a new, multi-million dollar facility on the west bank of the Iowa River. The number of faculty and students increased significantly in the two decades of Voxman's tenure making this move imperative. Overcrowded facilities had brought about plans for a new building but the University had to drop these plans with the onset of World War II. As the expansion throughout the University of Iowa continued through the 1950s another music building question again came, and plans to build resumed. The new building comprised of classrooms, studios, four major rehearsal halls, recording studios, performance halls, and library facilities, gave the School of Music the space it needed for many years.¹⁵

Along with advances in program development, an important factor in Voxman's success was his ability to work with people. While Clapp's iron-handedness had not worked with the faculty, Voxman's quiet demeanor served him well as a peacemaker. By listening to exceptional people and letting them do their jobs, Voxman encouraged members of the School of Music faculty to make decisions in course development and structure. He concentrated on administering the School. The expanded instruction in most areas of music, joined with a real commitment to music education and a reputation for high performance, led to the School of Music's growth in size, diversity, and stature.

National Association of Schools of Music

The University of Iowa had long played a major role in the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), becoming a charter member in 1928. Voxman became involved in 1952, attending meetings in Clapp's absence. Working in the undergraduate department at that time, Voxman soon became graduate commission chairman, visiting and consulting with institutions who were seeking initial or renewed membership. Of concern were faculty salaries and teaching loads, course and degree requirements, and

holdings.

While the University of Iowa Department of Psychology had been granting doctorates in Psychology of Music since 1910, the Department of Music awarded its first Ph.D. in composition. The Department awarded its first music education Ph.D. in 1934 and its first doctorates in musicology-theory following shortly in 1942.¹⁷

During Voxman's tenure as chair, one area of controversy for the NASM was the proposed degree that institutions were proposing in performance: the Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.). Before this time, a doctorate in music meant the Ph.D., or in some cases the Ed.D., which most people considered research degrees. The proposed D.M.A. performance based degree, called for a series of recitals in place of the dissertation.

The University of Iowa first granted the Ph.D. in performance and literature, with a substantial research component, in 1957. In 1968, under Voxman's guidance the University of Iowa became one of the first institutions to grant the D.M.A. in performance. The Ph.D. in performance and literature continues as one of the doctoral degrees but the D.M.A. is the more popular of the two degrees for performance majors.

Publishing

Voxman began music publishing in collaboration with William Gower in 1938. Gower's written-out lessons with his own students, Voxman suggested that he collaborate and write out a year's worth of lessons. Jenkins Music company, Keokuk, Missouri, published the manuscript, leading to a successful first year's sales of 10,000 copies. Rubank, who published Voxman's arrangement of the "Romanza" and from Carl Maria von Weber's Second Clarinet Concerto, agreed to publish a follow-up when Jenkins Music did not express an interest. This led to the publication of numerous method books and numerous collections of brass and woodwind material.¹⁹

Up to this time, wind instrument instruction books consisted mainly of cradle-to-conservatory methods: huge books that moved rapidly from simple rhythm and scale exercises to virtuoso pieces. Among these were the Klosé and Lazarus methods for clarinet and Arban's method for brass instruments. Although they contained excellent material, it was difficult to use these books with beginners.²⁰

Perceiving a gap in the continuum of sequential pedagogy, Voxman "hooked" students needed in the beginning stages—filling in the gaps using quality literature. Writing intermediate and advanced books for all brass and woodwind instruments, Voxman and Gower were among the first to approach instrumental lesson material in a sequential development sequence. Working along similar lines as Gerald Prescott, who had written and published outlines for working with several conservatory methods, Voxman developed outlines for students and teachers to use with their methods. These outlines, which appeared on the first page of the methods, facilitated organized and systematic procedures for playing scales and arpeggios, melodic interpretation, articulation exercises, ornaments, and solos.²¹

Duet and Ensemble Music

The idea of expanding the repertoire for wind instruments had been developing in Voxman's mind ever since playing violin duets with Frank Minckler, the conductor of the movie theater orchestra in Centerville. This experience, coupled with a familiarity with Hohmann's *Method for Violin*, had convinced Voxman of the importance of duet and ensemble playing and that wind instruction could also use good string literature. Consequently, after the success of the *Advanced Method*, Voxman was eager to fulfill Rubank's desire for duet and ensemble books, which began a lifelong search for materials.

In 1954, Voxman and Charles Eble (of Eble Music in Iowa City and then Secretary of the National Federation of Music Clubs) went to Europe to collect out-of-print material for the University of Iowa. Eble already had established contacts in Europe, where he had been purchasing music for some time. Making the rounds of used music dealers to collect items of interest to musicologists, Voxman also began collecting suitable duet, ensemble, and method materials for his proposed collections. Using the *Répertoire International des Musicales* (RISM), this initial search turned into nearly twenty such expeditions over many years, with Voxman searching libraries, archives and music dealers throughout England, Germany, Italy, France, Poland, Russia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. The gathered material yielded nearly 300 editions, articles, and compilations for wind instruments with U.S. and European publishers.²³

The National Federation Interscholastic Music Association has estimated that one million high school musicians use Voxman's *Selected Studies* annually, and that it is in virtually every high school band room in the country. Voxman attributed the continued use of his methods and arrangements to convenience. While some music stores had access to his literature, for most it was difficult to find literature of this type in one volume. His approach was to write and arrange music and studies for all of the wind instruments. The publications and manuscripts that he had collected from archives throughout the world. This gave students access to strong pedagogical material and quality literature that had been previously unavailable. Because of Voxman's meticulous procedure in organizing his methods, it has been unnecessary to revise or expand them.²⁴

Conclusions

Himie Voxman has been influential in the lives of generations of aspiring musicians of whom many have taken positions with prestigious musical ensembles, colleges, and universities. It is impossible to estimate the impact he has had on the many students who have been instructed in schools and studios using his publications. His honors and awards testify to Voxman's contributions, including the Bell System National Band Director Award, the Edwin Frank Goldman Memorial Citation from the American Bandmasters Association, the Iowa Music Educators Association's Distinguished Service Award, an honorary degree of Doctor of Music from Coe College, and a Doctor of Human Letters from DePaul University. In 1991 he received the First Place Award from the National Federation Interscholastic Music Association, and in 1993 the University of Iowa honored him with the Distinguished Alumni Award. At the Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Conference in 1994, Voxman received the Mid-West Clinic Medal of Honor, and in 1995 the Iowa State Board of Regents agreed to rename the University of

building the Voxman Music Building.

Comments from former students attest to Voxman's dedication, expertise, an attitude. Along with technical and musical expertise, Voxman demanded sincere scholarship of his students. In addition to overcoming the technical problems of instruments, he expected students to investigate the historical and theoretical literature they were playing. His vast knowledge of woodwind literature, his outstanding character as a gentleman, are qualities that will remain with them throughout their careers. Through his quiet demeanor, Himie Voxman gave them a nod, discipline and criticism with kindness, and advice with humility. Through his impress upon his students that they were worthy of his time, Voxman, along with his wife, became revered as a scholar and musician, became regarded by all as a friend.²⁵

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1. ^Edwin Riley, "Featuring Himie Voxman," *ClariNetwork* 6 (Fall 1987): 4; and Himie Voxman, author, 27 January 1994, Iowa City, IA. Riley studied clarinet with Voxman and received a degree in clarinet performance from the University of Iowa in 1977. He is professor of clarinet at Columbus [Georgia] College and principal clarinetist with the Columbus Symphony. Edw telephone interview by the author, 2 November 1995, Columbus, GA.
2. ^Hyacinthe Eléonor Klosé, *Méthode pour servir à l'enseignement de la clarinette à anne* (Paris: Meissonnier, 1843). Numerous publishers have published this famous method in various languages since then.
3. ^Riley, "Featuring Himie Voxman," 4.
4. ^Ibid., 5.
5. ^Riley, "Featuring Himie Voxman," 20.
6. ^Pearl West, interview by author, 24 March 1994, Iowa City, IA. West, also from Center City, was a founder of West Music stores in east central Iowa.
7. ^Riley, "Featuring Himie Voxman," 20.
8. ^Ralph Paarmann, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1994, Davenport, IA. Paarmann earned his B.A., 1950, and his M.A., 1953, in music education. He studied trombone as a major and clarinet techniques with Voxman. Paarmann retired after thirty-nine years of teaching in Iowa, twenty-nine of those in Davenport.
9. ^Ronald Tyree, interview by author, 29 March 1994, Iowa City, IA. Tyree earned the Ph.D. in music performance and literature. He studied bassoon, saxophone and clarinet with Voxman. Tyree became professor of bassoon and saxophone at the University of Iowa. Gustave Langen (1897-1957), eminent performer and teacher, was principal clarinetist with the New York Symphony and later with the New York Philharmonic. He taught at the Juilliard School and at the D. J. Langen Music, publishing many studies for clarinet. Voxman recalls that while in New York on his sabbatical he spent several afternoons studying with Langen. Himie Voxman, interview with author, 1994, Iowa City, IA.
10. ^The title "Head," an appointment for an indefinite period of time (in distinction from "Term," which carried with it an allotted term), had been voted on by the music faculty. Many members felt that an indefinite appointment would serve the department better. If the department made satisfactory progress, there would be no need for a vote for additional terms; if it did not, a change of head would be simple to achieve. Himie Voxman, interview by author, 21 April 1994, Iowa City, IA.
11. ^Himie Voxman interview by James Beilman, Iowa City, IA, 20 January 1977, tape and in the hands of David Nelson, Director of the University of Iowa School of Music, 7.
12. ^Ibid.

13. ^Lauren T. Johnson, "History of the State University of Iowa: Musical Activity, 1916 – 1944" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 1944), 2; and Voxman, interview by James Beilman, 6.
14. ^Voxman, interview by James Beilman, 10 – 11.
15. ^Daniel H. Culver, "A History of The University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra" (Ph.D. diss. of Iowa, 1978), 69.; and "Engineer, Psychologist, Head of U. of I. School of Music," *Des Moines Register*, 8 March 1970, 2-T.
16. ^Ellen Buchanan, "One of a Kind: Himie Voxman," Iowa City, IA, Public Library, video call with Culver, "Iowa Symphony Orchestra," 68 – 69.
17. ^William F. Bunch, "An Evaluation of the Ph.D. Curriculum in Music at The University of Iowa from 1916 to 1967 Through an Analysis of the Opinions of Its Doctoral Graduates" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 1969), 5.
18. ^Ibid.
19. ^William Gower and Himie Voxman, *Modern Clarinet Method* (Kansas City, MO: Jenkins I & J, 1938). "Romanza" and "Polacca" are two different movements in the Weber concerto. V. Voxman's arrangement has the title "Romanza and Polacca."
20. ^Klosé, *Méthode pour servir*; Henry Lazarus, *Lazarus' New and Modern Method for the C and Ordinary System*, revised by Gustave Langenus (Boston: Cundy Bettoney Co. 1926) and Jean-Baptiste Laurent Arban, *Grande méthode complete pour cornet à pistons et de saxophone* (Paris: 1864). Numerous publishers have brought out the Arban method in various editions for both instruments in both treble and bass clef.
21. ^Gerald R. Prescott, *Prescott Technic System Outline* (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1938) published this for Arban, Klosé, and Paul Deville, *Universal Method for Saxophone* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1908).
22. ^Christian Heinrich Hohmann, *Praktische Violin-Schule* (Nuremburg, Germany, 1849): 1. Himie Voxman and William Gower, *Advanced Method*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Rubank, 1939). | 1861) was a German composer and teacher. The Voxman and Gower books were [are] for wind instruments.
23. ^Shirley Strohm Mullins, "The Voxman Method," *The Instrumentalist* 47 (June 1993): 15. Interview, 27 January 1994, Iowa City, IA. Mullins completed the B.A. in 1957 and the M.A. in cello performance and music education at the University of Iowa. She teaches orchestra at Yellow Springs High School in Yellow Springs, Ohio. *RISM*, a publication project sponsored by the International Musicological Society and the International Association of Music Libraries, contains 1800 manuscript and printed music and writings about music submitted by libraries from around the world. Voxman spent time at the central collection in Kassel, Germany perusing catalogs and subsequently traveling to the respective countries in search of appropriate music for future publications.
24. ^Himie Voxman, *Selected Studies* (Miami: Rubank, 1952); *News*, The University of Iowa Office of Public Relations, 13 December 1991; and Voxman interview, 21 April 1994. *Selected Studies* contains advanced etudes, scales, and arpeggios in all major and minor keys for various wind instruments.
25. ^Joseph Messenger and Charles West, "Paying Tribute to a Unique Master-Teacher," *Clarinet* (December 1987): 4; James Messenger, telephone interview by author, 28 March 1994; Kelly, telephone interview by author, Bowling Green, OH, 8 March 1994; Donald McGinnis, telephone interview by author, 23 February 1994, Columbus, OH; Eugene Rousseau, telephone interview, 28 March 1994, Bloomington, IN. Messenger, M.A., 1968, and D.M.A., 1971, in clarinet performance, 1968, is Professor of Clarinet at Iowa State University. West, D.M.A., 1975, in clarinet performance, 1975, is Professor of Clarinet at Virginia Commonwealth University. Kelly, B.A. in music education, 1950, M.A. in music education, 1952, is Director of Bands at Bowling Green State University. McGinnis, M.A. in music education, 1953, is Professor of Music at Bowling Green State University. Rousseau, M.A. in music theory-composition, Ph.D., 1953 in music education and theory-composition, is Retired I & J Professor of Music at Ohio State University. Rousseau, Ph.D., 1962 in music literature and performance in music education, is Distinguished Professor of Music and teaches saxophone at Indiana University.

About the Author

Bruce Gleason, Associate Professor at the University of St. Thomas, holds a B from Crown College, B.S. and M.A. in music education from the University of Iowa and a Ph.D. in music education from the University of Iowa. Teaching undergraduate courses in music history and graduate courses in music education history, for research, he also advises graduate research and at the time of this writing has M.A. theses to completion. His research on military band history has appeared in *Society Journal*; *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*; *Journal of State Historical Society*; *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*; *Journal of Military Music Society*; *Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles*; *Irish American Post*; *Journal of Band Research*; *Military Heritage*; *South*, the Official Magazine of the Civil War Society; *Military Collector & Historian*; *of the Company of Military Historians*; *Renaissance*; *Piping Times*; *Historic Brass Journal*; *BDGuide*; *National Guard*; and *Winds*, the Journal of the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles. In 2013, the *Encyclopedia of Military Music* (Sage, ed. G. Kurt Piehler) will be published with Gleason's article, "Bands and the Active Performer," in which he plays euphonium and trombone with several Twin Cities bands and is the senior choir director at Diamond Lake Lutheran Church and the Artistic Director of the Owatonna Community Orchestra. Gleason is the founding editor of *Research Issues in Music Education*.

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