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 dis private studios across the United States, serving as a testimony to his influen teacher, scholar, editor and arranger. His life and career as a prominent U.S. 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 Voxmar interest in music until he was twelve years old. Fascination for the subject ca when Voxman’s classroom teacher submitted his name for instrumental instr. William Gower, private teacher and director of the Centerville Municipal Band. mother was hesitant, fearing that playing a wind instrument might be detrim boy’s asthma. However, the family doctor suggested he try it.

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

Lesson material of the time was limited to a few advanced conservatory meth prompted Gower to write out the first lessons for his beginning students, who transferred to the Klosé method. These experiences, coupled with the sight-r he did in silent movie orchestras, began shaping Voxman’s ideas about the ir rhythm and quality literature in music instruction.²
Voxman progressed quickly on the clarinet and was able to enroll in the high and orchestra by the beginning of the fall term. He recalled that although m instruction was exemplary, the orchestra director instructed the clarinetists to 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 decided to return to Centerville to finish high school. An attempt to return to upon graduation failed when thousands of theater musicians were thrown out because of talking motion pictures. McDonald, rather than rehiring Voxman as single musicians, felt obliged to hire former employees with families. While 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 enter the University of Iowa as a chemical engineering major. He also began 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 until 1936, exempting him also from the required military training. Several y further support himself in addition to his teaching, he formed a small orchest university plays in McBride Auditorium.5

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

A request to perform in Handel’s Messiah under the direction of the University music department’s head, Philip Greeley Clapp, in 1929, served as Voxman’s with the music department. This performance led to an orchestra librarian as and appointment as first clarinetist with the University orchestra under Frank Kendrie. Voxman recalled that rehearsals for Messiah were inconvenient, making necessary to wait until after rehearsal to go to his night job of washing trays in Quadrangle Dorm. Performing with the orchestra, however, led to Voxman’s to Carl E. Seashore through Scott Reger, an audiology student and principal c 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 ci studies at the University of Iowa in the psychology of music. Securing a reser
assistantship through Dean Seashore, Voxman began working on “The Harm of the Clarinet Tone,” using the clarinetists of the St. Louis Symphony as subject. Finishing the M.A. in 1934, he continued seeking a doctorate, planning to study differences in tone quality between metal and wooden clarinets. Disagreement with the 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, where he met his future wife, Lois, who was teaching strings. Voxman also taught part-time at the University of Iowa, and in 1936, Clapp hired him as the first full-time woodwind instructor. Gower, who took the job as band director at City High in 1939, later taught at the University. During these years, the major applied professors taught the education instrumental techniques classes—with future music educators receiving clarinet training from Voxman himself. Voxman’s ability to point out beginner mistakes 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 bringing himself as a performer. Playing regularly in the university orchestra with other members, Voxman provided a strong musical example and encouraged professional camaraderie. He remained a member of the Tri-Cities Orchestra for seventeen years and enhanced his reputation as a soloist in faculty recitals by studying with Langenus in New York and at the National Music Camp, Interlochen, Michigan. He 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 administrative judgment and foresight. Because of Clapp’s failing health in his later years, he requested Voxman to assist in some administrative tasks. In 1954, Voxman became Head of the Department of Music, and in 1963, he became Director, when the faculty voted to reorganize as the School of Music. He held the post in conjunction with that of 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. Clapp emphasized performance—a direction that the faculty felt Voxman would continue. Strengthening course offerings in theory, musicology, and music education, which were somewhat limited, were also of concern to the faculty. Consequently, under Voxman’s guidance, additional courses and advanced degrees gradually became available.

Clapp had been knowledgeable in musicology but was not enthusiastic about formal study of the subject. Until the early 1950s, the Department of Music offered courses in music history. The two-year sequence of music appreciation, which was taught, served this purpose quite adequately as far as he was concerned. To meet the demands of Clapp’s tenure, the Department created the musicology area upon the recommendation of the faculty. Professor Albert Luper was the first appointee. The area gained in importance 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, a two-year public school music course, instituted in 1916 to prepare students for 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 instrument playing were lacking, he was able to secure instruments and initiate courses in techniques. With the aid of Dean Elmer Peterson of the College of Education, Voxman 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 established 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 sellecting to teach in smaller colleges and universities. By reviving the pre-World War II All State Music Conference, along with summer sessions and workshops for teachers, the Department improved, and it provided a service for the state.  

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 expansion throughout the University of Iowa continued through the 1950s an 1960s, the music building question again came, and plans to build resumed. The new building, which comprised of classrooms, studios, four major rehearsal halls, recording studio, performance halls, and library facilities, gave the School of Music the space it needed for many years.

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 always been easy to work with, Voxman’s quiet demeanor served him well as a peacemaker. By letting exceptional people and letting them do their jobs, Voxman encouraged members of the School of Music faculty to make decisions in course development and structurization. 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.

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 the organization in 1952, attending meetings in Clapp’s absence. Working in the undergraduate years, Voxman soon became graduate commission chairman, visiting and co-visiting institutions who were seeking initial or renewed membership. Of concern were faculty salaries and teaching loads, course and degree requirements, an
While the University of Iowa Department of Psychology had been granting doctoral degrees in Psychology of Music since 1910, the Department of Music awarded its first Ph.D. in 1936. The Department awarded its first music education Ph.D. in 1939, followed shortly in 1942. During Voxman’s tenure as chair, one area of controversy for the NASM was the proposal 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., primarily 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 awarded, 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, located in Kansas City, Missouri, published the manuscript, leading to a successful first year’s sales of about 100 copies. Rubank, who published Voxman’s arrangement of the “Romanza” and the finale of 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 additional method books and numerous collections of brass and woodwind material.

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

Perceiving a gap in the continuum of sequential pedagogy, Voxman “hooked” the students needed in the beginning stages—filling in the gaps using quality literature. Writing intermediate and advanced books for all brass and woodwind instruments, and Gower were among the first to approach instrumental lesson material in a development sequence. Working along similar lines as Gerald Prescott, who I and published outlines for working with several conservatory methods, Voxman developed outlines for students and teachers to use with their methods. These outlines appeared on the first page of the methods, facilitating organized and systematic procedures for playing scales and arpeggios, melodic interpretation, articulation, exercises, ornaments, and solos.
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 Centerville movie theater orchestra. 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 satisfy Rubank’s desire for duet and ensemble books, which began a lifelong search for new material.

In 1954, Voxman and Charles Eble (of Eble Music in Iowa City and then secretary to Clapp) 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, 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.

National Federation Interscholastic Music Association has estimated that one in ten 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 these methods and arrangements to convenience. While some music stores had a selection of this type of 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 instrument families, using the publications and manuscripts that he had collected from archives through RISM. This gave students access to strong pedagogical material and quality literature that had been previously unavailable. Because of Voxman’s meticulous procedure for organizing methods, it has been unnecessary to revise or expand them.

Conclusions

Himie Voxman has been influential in the lives of generations of aspiring music students who have taken positions with prestigious musical ensembles, colleges, and universities. It is impossible to estimate the impact he has had on the students who have been instructed in schools and studios using his publications and manuscripts. Honors and awards testify to Voxman’s contributions, including the Bell Systm Baton, the Edwin Frank Goldman Memorial Citation from the American Band 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 Interscholastic Music Association, and in 1993 the University of Iowa honored him with a Distinguished Alumni Award. At the Mid-West International Band and Orches Conference in 1994, Voxman received the Mid-West Clinic Medal of Honor, an award that is given only once every five years. In 1995 the Iowa State Board of Regents agreed to rename the University of Iowa Voxman College of Music in his honor.
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 sinc scholarship of his students. In addition to overcoming the technical problems instruments, he expected students to investigate the historical and theore the literature they were playing. His vast knowledge of woodwind literature, his outstanding character as a gentleman, are qualities that will remain with him throughout their careers. Through his quiet demeanor, Himie Voxman gave nods, discipline and criticism with kindness, and advice with humility. Through impress upon his students that they were worthy of his time, Voxman, along revered as a scholar and musician, became regarded by all as a friend. 25

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1. ^Edwin Riley, “Featuring Himie Voxman,” Clarinet Network 6 (Fall 1987): 4; and Himie Voxman author, 27 January 1994, Iowa City, IA. Riley studied clarinet with Voxman and received 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 Éléanor Klosé, Méthode pour servir à l’enseignement de la clarinette à anneaux (Paris: Meissonnier, 1843). Numerous publishers have published this famous method in since then.


4. ^Ibid., 5.


6. ^Pearl West, interview by author, 24 March 1994, Iowa City, IA. West, also from Center Point, is founder of West Music stores in east central Iowa.


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 and became professor of bassoon and saxophone at the University of Iowa. Gustave Langenus (1857), 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 Dilliard School of Music, publishing many studies for clarinet. Voxman recalls that while in New York on hi spent several afternoons studying with Langenus. Himie Voxman, interview with author, 1994, Iowa City, IA.

10. ^The title “Head,” an appointment for an indefinite period of time (in distinction from “Chairman,” had been voted on by the music faculty. Many member 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 change of head would be simple to achieve. Himie Voxman, interview with author, 21 April 1994, Iowa City, IA.

11. ^Himie Voxman interview by James Beilman, Iowa City, IA, 20 January 1977, tape and transcriptions by David Nelson, Director of the University of Iowa School of Music, 7.

12. ^Ibid.


18. ^Ibid.

19. ^William Gower and Himie Voxman, Modern Clarinet Method (Kansas City, MO: Jenkins 1938). "Romanza" and "Polacca" are two different movements in the Weber concerto. V 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 Bettony Co. 1926). Jean-Baptiste Laurent Arban, Grande méthode complete pour cornet à pistons et de sax (1864). Numerous publishers have brought out the Arban method in various editions for I instruments in both treble and bass clef.


22. ^Christian Heinrich Hohmann, Praktische Violin-Schule (Nuremberg, Germany, 1849): 1

23. ^Himie Voxman, Selected Studies (Miami: Rubank, 1952); News, The University of Iowa Relations, 13 December 1991; and Voxman interview, 21 April 1994. Selected Studies c advanced etudes, scales, and arpeggios in all major and minor keys for various wind inst


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 and a Ph.D. in music education from the University of Iowa. Teaching under courses in music history and graduate courses in music education history, fou research, he also advises graduate research and at the time of this writing ha M.A. theses to completion. His research on military band history has appeare Society Journal; Journal of Historical Research in Music Education; Journal of State Historical Society; MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History; Journ Military Music Society; Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands Ensembles; Irish American Post; Journal of Band Research; Military Heritage; South, the Official Magazine of the Civil War Society; Military Collector & Hist of the Company of Military Historians; Renaissance; Piping Times; Historic Br. Journal; BDGuide; National Guard; and Winds, the Journal of the British Asso Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles. In 2013, the Encyclopedia of Military (Sage, ed. G. Kurt Piehler) will be published with Gleason’s article, "Bands an an active performer, he plays euphonium and trombone with several Twin Cit and is the senior choir director at Diamond Lake Lutheran Church and the Art of the Owatonna Community Orchestra. Gleason is the founding editor of Re: Issues in Music Education.