

JONATHAN B. NEWTON
Instructor, PSU Department of Music

Scholarly Agenda/Self-Appraisal

Revised: January, 2015

Research And Other Creative Activities

Previous to my employment at PSU, I worked as a free-lance music producer, conductor, composer, performer, arranger, and critic.

My goal as a college student was to compose music for film, and during my career I scored five theatrically released feature films along with several television shows, songs, trailers, and opens. IMDB page:

<http://imdb.com/name/nm0628543/>

With the purpose of being able to produce music locally, during a time when the recording business in Portland was still developing, I joined with partner Michael Bard to create what became a successful audio and music recording facility, Newton/Bard Inc. The bulk of our work became music and sound design for television and radio commercials and corporate video, and we generated a great deal of creative content from 1986-1994.

Along the way I conducted nearly fifty music theater projects, composed serious music, arranged for ensembles small and large, produced numerous stage shows (including the opening ceremonies for both the Portland Performing Arts Center and the Oregon Convention Center) and wrote concert reviews. I created comedy shows, including the popular D'Anse Combeau and Tony Del Mar, and performed, mostly as a bluegrass fiddler—I played on the first recording by popular country singer Colin Wray, and shared the stage with notables such as Vince Gill, John Hartford, Doug Kershaw, Mason Williams, and Byron Berline.

In 1994, I joined the staff at Will Vinton Studios, an pre-eminent animation production company, the studio that produced, for example, the California Raisins commercials (now called Laika). During my seven-year tenure at WVS, I went from Music Director to Director of Creative Development, and supervised the creation of two network TV shows, *The PJ's*, which starred Eddie Murphy, and *Gary and Mike*, both for Fox Television.

A result of these pursuits was an increasing interest in the technology used to produce them. Newton/Bard was the first Portland studio to adopt digital audio capabilities, and my partner was a guru in this exciting new technology. Later, at Will Vinton Studios, I witnessed its transition from stop-motion clay animation to animation created on computer, sometimes at a very high level. I had innumerable opportunities to learn these computer concepts from some innovative folk who were themselves changing the rules regarding their craft.

I had developed a desire to teach early on, but did not have an opportunity other than occasional private lessons. So when Will Vinton Studios downsized in 2001, I took the opportunity to return to school for a Masters of Arts in Teaching degree, thinking I would seek a secondary school music position. I was very fortunate to happen upon PSU at this point; at that time the Music Department needed an individual qualified in both music technology and education to help form a recording arts program. I started at PSU in fall of 2003.

I started at PSU with two main goals: 1) to provide curricular and resource material on music technology to PSU Music Department faculty and students, and 2) to improve my skills in technology generally, by following a passion for computer and web application programming.

I address the curricular/resource focus below. Regarding computer and web programming, I started with the idea of producing music or audio software that I could apply either to the courses I was teaching or to fill some gap in available software. I completed four undergraduate courses from the PSU Computer Science degree program, MUS 161-163 and MUS 202. With the help of a great instructor, Karla Fant, my skills rapidly improved. I also completed a course on web programming.

I have been able to apply quite a bit of my growing web programming skills to student and departmental service, which I describe in more detail below.

Now in my 12th year at PSU, I am creating my own course websites and content, creating web content for the Music School, and generating the school weekly email newsletter.

Teaching, Mentoring & Curricular Involvement

When I came to PSU in fall, 2003, there was some curriculum in place regarding music technology. Charley Gray was then teaching a two-term series called MIDI Applications, and Brad Hansen had outfitted a very well-designed computer lab. Dr. Hansen had also laid out a plan for a program called Recording Arts and Music Production (RAMP) that, upon completion, would prepare students to work at a high level in music and audio production.

Dr. Hansen had created some general course concepts, but there were no curricular materials, and I discovered that there were few pre-designed text-based courses available publicly. As a result, I created curricula for six new music technology courses during my first year at PSU.

During my second year, I revamped the structure of the RAMP program to better reflect certain realities, forming the six courses that constituted the official program for the next four years. I determined that though students were eager to get started using the computer to make music, they were better served by a single term during which they would deal only with “analog” audio, and thus get a firm grounding in microphones, speakers, mixing boards, musical acoustics, and electronics before turning the page to the more modern technologies. To my surprise, students were eager to study analog audio, even using outdated technologies like tape recorders.

During the next two terms, students moved to the computer, first studying MIDI sequencing and the use of computers to provide music notation, then focusing on audio recorded and edited using digital technology. In the second year of the program, students worked on larger, “real-world projects,” which included recording and mixing various student ensembles, scoring and providing sound design for film, and finally producing a large, self-selected project over the course of an entire term.

For each of these courses, I created new curricula, along with new assignments, exams, and resources. The resources included many tutorials and informational pages designed to broaden student scope as they worked narrowly on assigned projects. The exams mirrored the project-related work closely, in some cases asking students to demonstrate facility by producing a music technology product during allotted test-time.

The assignments, exams, and resources were all made available to students online. To access these items, one can visit this URL:

<http://www.ramp.pdx.edu/>

Linked from that central location are all course sites, syllabi, assignments, and resources including static and video tutorials, list of links, and other helpful guides.

Courses are linked here—

<http://www.ramp.pdx.edu/ramp/info/prevterms.html>

Informational resources are listed and linked here—

http://www.ramp.pdx.edu/ramp/info/info_page

Some of the linked pages are protected with a password. To access these pages, input the following:

Name: psu

Password: lincoln

In 2006-2007, the RAMP program was discontinued, with the final cohort finishing its second year in 2007-2008. Music students are now provided a sharply focused program still called MIDI Applications, and we provide a survey course for non-musicians called Modern Music Technology, co-created with Dr. Hansen. I also developed a series of three courses in film music: Classic Film Music, Modern Film Music, and Cartoon Music. For all these courses, I created new curriculum, assignments, and tests, which are also linked from the site mentioned above. As it happens, these courses have been conflated into a single course called Film Music, offered each spring term.

In spring 2008, I began teaching History of Rock Music, a course developed by Dr. Joel Bluestone of the PSU faculty. With his course-work as a foundation, I created new visual and audio material, and made them available in a new online site.

The site for that course can be found here (see above for user name and password):

<http://www.ramp.pdx.edu/ramp/courses/fall2008/hrmF08/>

Students expressed appreciation for the ease of use of the site, and the accessibility of the audio resources. I have created similar materials for Dr. Bluestone, and also for Charley Gray's History of Jazz course.

In Fall, 2009, I created a new class called Introduction to Music Technology targeted at non music-majors, which has proved popular, nearly filling our 25-seat Music Technology Lab in most terms it is offered.

In 2010-2011 I revamped the MIDI Applications program. The one-size-fits-all program made it difficult to address the technology needs of the three areas where the courses were required. We now offer three courses with different emphases to fit these three areas: composition, education, and jazz.

In Summer, 2013 I created a new class Business of Music, with a good enrollment and result.

Starting in the 2008-2009 school year, I began generating an increasing number of yearly student credit hours.

In the school year 2011-2012 I was responsible for 2,184 SCH, 37% of the what the Music Department as a whole generated. In the following two years, my SCH were 1,287 and 1,230 respectively, both about a quarter of those generated by the department/school.

I am on track to continue that level of contribution, and hope to increase those numbers by marketing my courses and adding an existing course, Film Music, to the Popular Culture cluster.

Looking Ahead (Curricular)

During subsequent years, I hope to provide these improvements and changes:

- I would like to see us provide more in-depth, targeted music technology instruction to our music majors. I believe all music majors should be required to achieve a minimum level of music technology proficiency in the same way that they are required to play piano at a basic level. To that end, I would like to require Intro to Music Technology of all music majors, ideally in their sophomore or junior year, giving all our musicians the basics in this challenging field.
- Once students were exposed to basic music technology concepts, the MIDI Applications courses required of Education, Jazz, and Composition majors could take on a more intermediate level, and expand into production, notation, and live sound.
- It's becoming increasingly clear that a program (major, minor, emphasis) in music technology is needed at PSU. I would like to see us create a new program building on the success of the retired RAMP program that prepared folks for careers in music production. This would have

the added benefit of creating a cohort of students capable of recording fellow students in both live and studio settings and take advantage of our recording facilities in LH326D and in LH75.

Regarding mentoring, I believe that spending three terms together with the students in Basic Materials sequence allowed me a fertile opportunity to mentor them. I try to include some career counseling in all the classes I offer. Additionally, many of these students approach me regularly, formally or informally, for advice on career options, equipment purchase strategy, or just life challenges. I have followed the careers of several since they have left school. I have written many letters of recommendation and references for students, and seen many use those references as they successfully find employment or admission to further study.

I also try to be accessible in the MIDI Lab during open hours, and frequently am in a position to assist students with technology problems, and sometimes with course work.

Service to the Music Department

When I came to PSU in 2003, several things were clear: we had a good music lab, the use of which was not required of many students; there were very few online music technology resources for music faculty and students; many on the faculty were interested in music technology but sometimes had not been trained in its use at a high level; and the general music facilities were in poor condition technologically.

I also sensed mixed feelings from various faculty regarding music technology in general. Is it a discipline worthy of study like one would study music history or theory? Or was it a peripheral subject of interest to only a few, on the order of piano tuning or guitar repair?

I have tried to make it my mission to assist faculty with music technology challenges as often as I can. I have personally offered my help to every faculty member, and by now I have provided direct assistance to most every one. I have repaired computers, hooked up MIDI keyboards, installed office software, provided simple tutorials, helped with web resources, helped with graphics, helped with live recordings, helped strategize equipment purchases, trained some faculty in seminars, provided computer assisted notation help, set up equipment for concerts, configured lab software, trained student engineers, and edited web profiles. I now sense a growing openness to the value of these tools, and less resistance to their inclusion in student instruction.

When asked to chair the Marketing & Publicity Committee in 2005, the committee's first thought was to try to find ways to help faculty presenters promote their own events. After researching various methods and outlets, we posted a faculty help page, still online here—

http://www.ramp.pdx.edu/marketing/top_ten.html

As part of that research, we opened lines of communication with the PSU ticketing office and improved our cross-marketing efforts. We also connected with the PSU Communications office, and I joined the committee that helped created the new PSU branding tools including the new logo. Partly as a result of the committee's efforts, a new Music Department poster

was created this year, which used the slogan I developed, “Music Excellence At The Heart Of The City” using a faculty poll that I helped implement.

In 2006-2007, the committee moved its efforts towards marketing internally. Struck that information regarding events was somewhat inaccessible to our own faculty and students, the committee created a new weekly email newsletter, now in its ninth year. Several faculty (especially emeritus faculty) have expressed appreciation for this offering. I was able to automate gathering of email addresses, and our list now exceeds 2000 names.

In the next several years I served on the PSU Communications committee that developed new guidelines including the adoption of the new PSU logo and also on a consortium that examined online portfolios.

Finally, I should mention that my daily work for the School of Music includes maintenance of the Music Technology Lab. The lab is consistently kept in good working order, with up-to-date software configured properly for a public lab. I believe we have the best music lab of any school in the Northwest by a fairly wide margin. Maintaining the lab is time-consuming and occasionally frustrating, but I have developed some tools that make this process if not easier at least more efficient.

I also had the opportunity to contribute ideas regarding both the temporary move to the Extended Studies Building and to the new installations completed in Lincoln Hall, some of which (e.g. tie lines) are even now paying a dividend.

Service to the Community

My involvement with the Portland music, art, theater, media, education, and production communities extends back to the early 1970’s--my livelihood depended on it. Examples: I provided music prepreparation for Norman Leyden and the Oregon Pops Concerts, I wrote arrangements and/or provided sound design for numerous plays, I music-directed or conducted nearly fifty musical theater projects, I worked with TV and print journalists to promote projects, even critiquing music events for *Willamette Week*. I created performance art events with numerous local artists, and presented various musical shows at schools. And I built a business that interfaced daily with the film & video production community.

In 1994, I moved to a job with Will Vinton Studios (now Laika) that expanded my focus to include markets outside Portland, in particular the production community in southern California. During my seven years at WVS, I formed relationships with Hollywood folks, some of whom are now in very high positions in the entertainment and production industries.

When I enrolled at Pacific University in 2002, I began to make contacts in the academic world, especially in Oregon colleges. When I graduated in 2003, I had taught a music technology course at Pacific, I had started a music technology club at Forest Grove High School, and I had met with other post-secondary folks at various conferences, including the OTEN conference at which I made a presentation in 2003.

After starting at PSU in 2003, I continued to provide music technology consultation to Pacific, and currently assist with their MIDI Lab. I was also approached to provide similar consultation to Linfield College in McMinnville, to whom I also provide lab supervision assistance and some curricular materials. My relationship with both schools is close and rewarding, and it is nice to be able to put these skill to work to benefit their students. I have also provided informal consultation to Mt. Hood Community College, and made presentations on music careers at Clackamas Community College for the last several years.

During my time at PSU, I've built relationships with high school and middle school teachers. One example: after a conversation with Jennifer Fero, principal of Roosevelt High School, I expressed surprise that there was so little music being taught there. She invited me to join her task force on the arts to attempt to remedy this sorry situation. I spent several meetings and conversations strategizing on how to expand their offerings given their limited resources.

Partly as a result of these conversations, I met Carol Egan, then arts director for the Portland Public Schools, and was asked to join her committee, the Portland Public School Arts Advisory Council.

I have built a fledgling database of HS music teachers in the surrounding areas, and hope to expand that project to make contacting that community more efficient and accessible.