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Music Teaching in the Late-Nineteenth Century: a Professional Occupation?
Rosemary Golding

Music teaching formed an important source of income for many musicians in the nineteenth century, whether as part of a ‘portfolio’ career, to support composing or performing activities, or as part of the ‘flood’ of dedicated private teachers in the expanding market of the last quarter of the century.1 As such, however, it has a reputation as a low-status part of the profession. This was particularly true given its association with female teachers, many of whom were part-time, unqualified and often ill-equipped. Sources from throughout the century suggest music teaching was often a thankless task, with musicians working extensive hours in order to make ends meet, and established teachers complaining of being undercut by young ladies and amateur practitioners.

Attempts to professionalise music teaching in the last decades of the nineteenth century cast a new light on the status of this part of the music profession. The Union of Graduates in Music [UGM] and the Incorporated Society of Musicians [ISM] were both involved in a scheme to introduce registration for music teachers, largely in response to government plans to register all secondary school teachers. While many musicians were in favour of ousting ‘bogus’ music teachers, the practicalities of developing a formal scheme for accreditation or establishing basic professional standards were significant obstacles. Responses to formal inquiries reveal the complexities of managing professional identity, this time from the perspective of senior members of the music profession. The ongoing difficulties in the relationship between the UGM and ISM also expose fractures within the profession, especially where formal accreditation and identity were at stake. In this chapter I pay particular attention to the attempts the UGM made to define professional identity and improve status, and the ways in which the character of the profession, music teachers in particular, made this an impossible task. Set against conscious attempts to align music with other professions were the barriers of gender, the realities of part-time and portfolio workers, and a mass of available qualifications and career pathways.

Music teaching: practice and status

It is well-documented that in the early nineteenth century, many performers took on teaching as a sideline, usually to boost income in the context of unreliable fees from composing or conducting. William Sterndale Bennett is the classic example, and Nicholas Temperley notes Bennett’s ‘regular teaching and administrative duties were burdensome, and barely provided him with an income adequate to support his family’.2 In these cases, teaching drew the composer away from their art and, where the income from teaching was not generous, could significantly harm a compositional or performing career simply by diverting energy and time. For others, teaching could open doors into mixing with higher strata of society, potentially lucrative contracts, patronage and even a change in one’s own social status. Howard Irving demonstrates that William Crotch was able to make a

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significant sum from a ‘fairly modest teaching schedule’, while social contacts built through private teaching were an important part of Sir George Smart’s astonishing rise through the ranks. Teaching could be comfortably remunerative, and a country teaching practice built up over a number of years could be a valuable asset. Likewise, other positions (such as a piano tuner, music seller or church organist) in areas with potential for building a large teaching practice could be advertised as a possible route to a satisfactory ‘portfolio’ career.

As teaching establishments appeared from the 1820s, opportunities for formal teaching contracts and a steady income, together with an element of prestige for teaching as an aspect of a musical career, appeared. The Royal Academy of Music, founded in 1822, was one of numerous colleges of music to take advantage of the increasing market for music tuition, particularly among amateurs. Its professors were drawn from among the most prestigious performers in Europe. However, student numbers were relatively low and professors were paid by the hourly lesson, rather than a regular salary. Henry Chorley revealed that the low remuneration meant many professors sub-contracted their teaching duties to deputies, many of whom were little-known performers. The dubious status of even these teachers was borne out in the Royal Society of Arts’ investigation into the management of the Royal Academy of Music in the mid-1860s, when interviewees were questioned over whether the Academy might best be run by musicians or ‘professional men’.

At the same time as other occupations were concerned with increased professionalisation and regulation of employment, hours and status, many music teachers were women seeking to avoid exactly this identity, working part-time, avoiding professional ‘working’ status, and making money in a piecemeal way that disrupted the market. Professional work was not always an aim for women, particularly those who married. As David Golby suggests, for many women music teaching was ‘a rare respectable source of income, most often on a temporary, premarital basis’. The 1841 census listed 501 female musicians, of whom 438 were listed as teachers. Between 1841 and 1861 women increased their share from 29% to 56% of all music teachers. Many women were able to teach on a roughly equal basis to men; the young lady who described her teachers in the 1885 article distinguished between female governesses and male specialists, but also included a young female teacher from the Royal Academy of Music. In other ways, women remained distinct from men. Dave Russell notes that, in both the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, female music teachers were on average much younger than men; the vast majority were unmarried. Part-time teachers cannot be traced in the same way, as

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5 See interview with the Principal, Mr Lucas, *Journal of the Society of Arts* [JSA] 13/661 (21 July 1865), 569.
6 JSA 13/668 (8 September 1865), 656.
7 Reports are carried in the JSA Volumes 13-14.
9 Ibid., 310.
10 Ibid.
few were recorded by the census or trade directories, but the image of the young lady or spinster contributing to a family income by teaching music for a few hours a week is a recurrent one in both contemporary journals and records of individuals.\textsuperscript{12} Professional associations also tended to single out women, and admitting women was not a given. The Royal Society of Female Musicians was founded in 1839 in response to such an exclusion, its members being admitted to the Royal Society of Musicians in 1866 when the two societies merged. Yet women remained excluded from full membership and privileges, ‘their delicate frames being unsuited to the laborious offices to which members are liable to be called’.\textsuperscript{13} On this occasion it was not music per se, but music as a professional occupation, which was deemed unsuitable for women.

The association between women and teaching had a direct impact on the status of the profession. If music itself was often seen as an effeminate activity, teaching, with a clientele of young ladies gaining drawing-room accomplishments, shared the same connotations. Thomas Danvers Worgan commented in 1829 that ‘Musical education is wholly effeminate, and the teacher of music sinks into the manufacturer of a female ornament’.\textsuperscript{14} Musical females – both poor teachers and disinterested pupils – could shoulder much of the blame for England’s apparent musical poverty. Nevertheless, as Deborah Rohr suggests, the teaching profession was at least respectable, ‘protected from the low social status of orchestral instrumentalists and stage singers’.\textsuperscript{15} The disparities clearly demonstrate that potential earnings and social status did not always go hand in hand.

The music profession was not without organisation. Indeed, perhaps part of the problem was the plethora of different institutions and societies aiming to draw professional musicians together, to give status, and to divide the ‘serious’ professionals from amateurs, dilettantes and professional parasites. Music Teachers contributed to the Teachers’ Guild, particularly female teachers able to comment on music within formal settings of schools and colleges. The Tonic Sol-fa College also took a keen interest in teaching, again particularly due to the connection with music teaching in board schools. The most substantial formal attempt to regulate music teaching at the end of the nineteenth century was the result of two interested groups: the Union of Graduates in Music and the Incorporated Society of Musicians. The discussion and debate surrounding parliamentary bills for the regulation of teaching shed light on the music teaching profession from the perspective of some of its highest-status members, and illuminate some of the problems involved in the professionalization of music. The Union, in particular, deserves scrutiny for its attempts to align music with other professions.

**The Union of Graduates in Music**

The shield of the Union of Graduates in Music features the arms of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Dublin and Durham. A rose, shamrock, thistle and leek adorn the arms, surrounded by a rope, signifying unity. At the centre, the title of the institution is superimposed on a lyre. Thus the Union set out its stall: its connections to the prestigious higher

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{13} The Musical Examiner 4 (11 November 1842), 16, quoted in Deborah Rohr, ‘Women and the Music Profession’, 322.
\textsuperscript{14} Thomas Danvers Worgan, The Musical Reformer (London, 1829), 37.
\textsuperscript{15} Rohr, The Careers of British Musicians, 1750-1850: A Profession of Artisans (Cambridge, 2001), 139.
Education establishments of England and Ireland, its aim to cover the four nations of the United Kingdom, its intention to unite the disparate sectors and members of a widespread and almost completely unregulated profession, and its claims on tradition and history. Yet the Union’s activity was both conservative and progressive. It sought to protect the ancient rights and status of degrees in music and their holders – degrees which, while having undergone rapid transformation in the nineteenth century, had maintained the status of association with the ancient universities as a key imperative. At the same time, the Union was founded in an age of progressive unionisation of musicians, as the industrialisation of music led to corresponding developments in the behaviour of musicians, working precariously between the status of artists and labourers.

The UGM was formally set up early in 1893, with Sir John Stainer continuing to provide the main impetus behind its early activities. The initial meeting drew representatives from all the universities offering degrees in music, both ancient and newer foundations, together with holders of the honorary degrees bestowed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The scope of the association went beyond the five universities later represented in the Union’s emblem, encompassing holders of degrees in music from Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, Durham, London, the Royal University of Ireland, St Andrew’s and the federal Victoria University, based in Manchester. The Union was not isolated in its endeavours. John Warriner’s ‘A List of Qualified Musicians holding British Degrees or Diplomas compiled from Official Sources’ had been published in 1888, although with no indication of an official organisation behind it. Introducing the list, Warriner explains the reasons behind its publication as twofold: first, that private societies and individuals exist which award ‘fanciful and fictitious degrees’, and second, that there are other examining bodies which have ‘not as yet succeeded in obtaining entire public confidence’. Warriner also offered a suggestion for the lack of official regulation of the music profession: ‘as music is purely a luxury and not a necessity, and, moreover, is of no direct influence on life, property, or morals, it is hopeless, at present, to expect any government to make any exception to the rule (in favour of musicians) which declines to grant protection to teachers alike of Divinity, Law, or Medicine.’ There were, however, regulatory bodies and recognised qualifications providing a boundary of sorts to entry into the so-called higher professions, together with published lists of practitioners, and it was these that Warriner, and the Union, aimed to emulate.

The Union was also established within a context of increasing unionisation across trades and occupations, with musicians not immune. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, many small musicians’ organisations had been set up, chiefly as a form of insurance for musicians and their families. The Royal Society of Musicians, founded in 1738 as the ‘Fund for Decay’d Musicians’, is perhaps the best known, but other groups united musicians in local areas (most notably the industrial towns of the north) or within certain sectors of the profession. From the 1880s, more formal arrangements were made for musicians, intended to improve working conditions, negotiate contracts with employers and provide mutual support as well as financial security.

The Union had found its origins in response to a threat to the market in academic music qualifications from Trinity College in Toronto. Trinity had begun offering its music degrees via itinerant examiners and examination of musical exercises sent by post, significantly undercutting the

16 John Warriner, *A List of Qualified Musicians holding British Degrees or Diplomas compiled from Official Sources* (London: Novello, 1888), v.
17 Ibid., vi.
cost of a degree gained through the English universities. However, it was not long before the Committee turned its attentions to the wider problem of status among musicians, bogus degrees, and the need for a systematic approach to regulating the work of the music profession, both in order to improve standards and protect the public, and to enhance the working conditions and pay of musicians. In a letter from October 1892 and signed by Stainer, Charles Villiers Stanford, Robert Prescott Stewart, John Frederick Bridge, Philip Armes and Henry Hiles, the union was proposed with its object ‘not only the promotion of closer personal intercourse among its members, but also the protection of the value and dignity of the musical degrees legitimately conferred in this country.’

As Stainer put it, ‘our present object is simply to defend our own property.’ The group had faced significant criticism over their work to discredit the Toronto degrees, and Stainer’s argument for the restriction and protection of the ‘intellectual property and acquirements’ that constitutes academic qualifications goes into considerable depth. Comparing degrees to currency, he first focusses on the importance of recognised value and meaning. Secondly, Stainer uses the analogous situation for medics and lawyers, pointing out that barriers against foreign-qualified men practicing in Britain were raised not ‘in the interests of our solicitors and medical men, but in the interests of the country at large.’

Musical qualifications enjoyed no legal protection, however, and so Stainer was forced to rest his case on the weight of public opinion. And thus the Union would rely on the strength and influence of its members to garner that public opinion in favour of recognised qualifications from the approved universities. Once again, the benign intentions of the Union were emphasised: the purpose of the meeting was ‘strengthening our cause by unity, and protecting our rights by that power, that influence that is possessed by a powerful body having legitimate objects. We are, in fact, forming today a defensive association, we have not the least intention of attacking anybody’.

Stainer concluded his speech by underscoring again the mutual support that was to lie at the heart of the Union, having no legal recourse. Friendship and fraternity were to be core attributes, and the ‘progress of our art’, together with appropriate ‘social status and respect’ for its professors the key outcomes. Reliant on the public to take note of a new resource for identifying the authenticity of degree qualifications, Stainer was confident of the scheme’s benefits: ‘The public generally, the clergy in particular, and the authorities of our educational institutions, would be very glad to know of the existence of a recognised body who could give exact information as to the true worth of the many claims now made to graduateship.’

Perhaps mindful of more militant associations recently developed in imitation of trade unions, the proposals were clear that the Union would ‘not be an aggressive institution’. Its immediate predecessors, in particular the Incorporated Society of Musicians, founded in 1892, had avoided the term ‘union’ altogether. Angèle David-Guillou explains that many musicians’ associations were

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18 Union of Graduates in Music [UGM] Minute Book 1892- (University of London MS 841/1), 1.
19 MN 4/97 (7 January 1893), 8.
20 Ibid., 9.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 UGM Minute Book, letter dated October 17 1892.
reluctant to adopt the term ‘union’ ‘for fear it would tarnish the respectability of their members’. The effect of changes in the market for musicians had upset their delicate status: ‘the conflating of interests of art and labour, implied by the use of the word ‘union’, was simply unbearable to most of them.’ The early minutes show that the details of the Union and its work were still under negotiation, but that its serious purpose and aims of status and regulation were modelled closely on similar arrangements for other professional occupations, drawing music away from any possible comparisons with labour trade unions. In March 1893, for example, the committee considered the problem of admitting graduates from universities in the colonies, referring to ‘the practice of the Law Societies as to the admission of Colonial Barristers & Solicitors to practise in England.’ ‘Colonial Clergy, Doctors & Lawyers were not accepted by the several professions’, and so the same premise was adopted for music.

By May 1893, while the membership issues had been addressed, the precise information to be collected on the Union’s members was under discussion. The Roll was to be modelled on Crockford’s Clergy List, maintaining the parallels sought between music and the higher professions. Here the particular nature of musical training and accreditation made decisions more difficult. At a meeting of Roll Sub-Committee to consider what information should be contained in each entry, Stanford ‘wished the Returns to be confined to the University Musical distinctions only’. However, a set of specimen entries also included conservatoire diplomas, and Stainer urged ‘that the Particulars afforded should be as ample as possible’. Bridge argued in favour of RAM and RCM diplomas, and appointments such as conductor, organist, claiming these were analogous with entries on clergy lists and other professional directories, as well as Grove’s recently-published Dictionary of Music and Musicians. A further motion was carried to include diplomas from chartered schools of music and also ‘from the incorporated and recognised institutions whose deeds of association do not permit them to work for profit.’ The Return was also to include details of the compositional ‘Exercise’ still required for most D.Mus., and some B.Mus., degrees, including the text, title and orchestral and choral forces.

This final agreement illustrates both the proliferation of options for accreditation in music, and the lack of a single, recognised type of qualification. Music degrees covered history, stylistic composition, theory and analysis; some maintained free composition (though within strict guidelines); performance was just beginning to be introduced as a specialist option (for example in the Edinburgh degrees, newly approved in 1893). Few bore any real relation to the demands of music professionals, apart from church musicians. Thus the importance of the Union’s work came not in recognising a common educational standard and preparation for a career musician, but in attempting to provide a measure of exclusiveness, and the seriousness within public opinion originally identified by Stainer.

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25 Ibid., 18.
26 UGM Minute Book, March 21 1893.
27 UGM Minute Book 16 May 1893.
28 Ibid.
By February 1894 the Union was able to report a membership of 368, with the majority continuing to represent Oxford and Cambridge. The First Report and balance Sheet 1893 dated February 27 1894 recorded that

The establishment of the Union has been welcomed by all interested in Music, and desirous of upholding the dignity of the Degrees in Music granted by our Universities. The official list of Members the Union has put forth, has proved to be of distinct use, and the book has met with the same recognition and acceptance as is accorded to those of similar character issued by the Clerical, Medical and Legal professions. It is believed that the public are in sympathy with the Union in its determination to safeguard the Degrees in Music granted by the authorized Institutions, and are glad to possess an authoritative list of those holding titles.²⁹

The Union remained far from comprehensive in its membership, and of course the vast majority of practising musicians had no formal qualification, but the confidence expressed within just a year of its foundation suggests the new institution was beginning to establish itself, at least within a certain sector of the profession.

Periodically the union received complaints that musicians had advertised themselves falsely, either lying about their degrees or stating them wrongly as to imply higher status. Other business derived from unauthorised institutions advertising or granting qualifications, both in Britain and the United States. In fact, American correspondence accounted for a large proportion of the issues raised with the Union, demonstrating the increasingly close ties in musical markets across the Atlantic.

False claims in advertising dominated the cases presented to the Union. At a Council Meeting in November 1895 the records note that complaints had been received regarding Mr John Hayman Righton, advertising in Bedford newspapers with claims to a “Doctor of Music, Graduate of Oxford University”.³⁰ The Secretary had already corresponded with Mr. Righton inviting him to join the Union, but this had not had the desired effect. By March 1896 it had been established that Mr. Righton’s degree, rather than having been awarded by Oxford, was one of the offending ‘in absentia’ degrees from Trinity College, Toronto.³¹ The episode led to more extended discussion on the appropriate response to individual miscreants and the Council agreed not only to pursue individuals privately, but to publish notices denouncing their false claims in the relevant newspapers. A steady stream of complaints and enquiries reached the Union: in 1897 the Secretary reported that he was ‘constantly receiving applications for information as to the working and examinations of the so-called “Colleges”, as well as enquiries as to persons using “degrees”.’³² In addition to individuals, bogus institutions continued to create work for the Union. In the early days, institutions based in northern America and advertising ‘in absentia’ degrees for UK candidates remained the main source of complaint, operating outside the real authority of British laws and obligations, yet causing difficulties within an increasingly competitive professional context. One case involved a fictional University of Leavenworth, Kansas, which became entangled with the British-based Church Choir Guild and English Church Union, whose offices were used as an address and basis for advertising.

²⁹ ‘First Report and Balance Sheet 1893’ dated February 27 1894 contained in UGM Minute Book.
³⁰ Council Meeting 13 November 1895 contained in UGM Minute Book.
³¹ Council Meeting 25 March 1896 contained in UGM Minute Book.
³² Council Meeting 4 February 1897 contained in UGM Minute Book
The Registration of Music Teachers

The Union’s first significant activity was intended to extend its reach beyond existing formal qualifications towards regulation of music teachers across the country. In this endeavour it worked together with other recently formed professional bodies. A draft scheme for registration of teachers of music was presented to the Union by Rev. Dr. Mee in February 1894, and this was swiftly followed with plans for a conference, to take place in April. Once again Stainer took the lead, and the draft resolutions again emphasised the benefits to the public from such a scheme, rather than overt protection of bona-fide music teachers: ‘It is believed that such a measure would raise the standard of music-teaching in this country, and assist in protecting the public against incompetent teachers, and those who pretend to hold Diplomas, &c. to which they are not entitled.’\(^{33}\)

The Union’s drive to deliver a scheme for registration of music teachers took place within a context of regulation, both of general teachers and within music. A Bill for the ‘Organisation and Registration of Teachers engaged in Intermediate Education in England and Wales’ was brought before the House of Commons in 1879. Similar Acts had already been passed to regulate the elementary schools (1870) and Public Schools (1868). In this case, however, the Bill as drafted would apply to music teachers. An Education Council would be formed, in order to examine and register teachers, requiring a University degree or Certificate from a number of recognised departments. Music was specifically included, along with ‘drawing,… or the like’, and teachers of such specialised subjects would merely have to satisfy the Council ‘that he or she is qualified, or… that at the passing of the Act he or she is bonâ fide engaged as a teacher in a school under the Act.’\(^{34}\) As The Musical Times reported, the Bill had resulted in widespread consternation among practising musicians, and the journal recommended music be left out of the Bill’s purview.

Although this Bill was not successful, registration remained an important topic of discussion for the new musical societies. Early in 1883, for example, the Society of Professional Musicians’ Liverpool branch heard a paper by Dr. Allison ‘On the Registration of Teachers’. After discussion, the members resolved to instruct the Council of the Society to develop a scheme to be presented to Parliament, ‘with a view to legislative action.’\(^{35}\)

When the Bill reappeared in 1891, the National Society of Professional Musicians put forward similar arguments, objecting to a general Committee overseeing the specialist demands of music. Henry Hiles, a key member of the NSPM, proposed to a meeting of the Manchester Branch of the Teachers’ Guild, that music be omitted from the Bill:

> It is really monstrous, as we pointed out last month, that an important and unique subject like Music, requiring, as it does, for its satisfactory cultivation, special faculties and specific education, should be, as it were, just casually included amongst the ordinary items of a general education, and that without even adequate representation of musicians on the controlling Board.\(^{36}\)

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33 ‘Suggestions for drafting a bill for the registration of teachers of Music’ in UGM Minute Book.
34 MT 20/437 (1 July 1879), 362.
35 MT 24/479 (1 January 1883), 25.
36 Monthly Journal of the National Society of Professional Musicians 3/10 (1 June 1891), 149.
In the same issue a letter from Duncan Hume supported the NSPM’s actions against the registration bill, but set out corresponding arguments for musicians conducting their own regulatory scheme:

Registration of music teachers, if carried out by some competent musical body (such as the National Society of Professional Musicians) would give to the Musical Profession that status which, without registration, it may never gain, notwithstanding the talent, ability, and integrity of its members; but a registration, such as that proposed in the present Bill, would be little short of an insult to a noble and hard-working professions... since it would place us all under the control of a body which is not recognised as a musical authority... I should like to see the musical profession placed on the same legal basis as the medical, so far as to render it impossible for an unqualified person to teach.37

The three musicians interviewed by the Select Committee on Teachers’ Registration and Organization Bill, Arthur Sullivan, Alexander Campbell Mackenzie and William Hayman Cummings, agreed that the proposals would not suit the complexities of the music profession, Sullivan and Mackenzie suggesting that the Bill would in fact harm the progress made in recent years in extending music tuition and examination, particularly via the work of the Associated Board.38 As proposed, the Bill had significant flaws: it would, initially, encompass all practicing music teachers, including those deemed ‘incompetent’ (Sullivan believed this accounted for a ‘very large’ proportion of the estimated 100,000 working music teachers).39 The Committee would be ill-qualified to judge quality among musicians, and there was no single body whose examinations could stand in lieu. Mackenzie noted

The Associated Board naturally has, I think, the best scheme, but I would not go so far as to say that other bodies should be ignored. It is drawing the line between the bodies from where it is, but that is so dangerous and difficult that it presents a new feature; where are you to draw the line, and who is to do it?40

In contrast to the opinions of the music specialists, most of the Committee’s witnesses were of the opinion that music should be included in the scheme, in order to bring it into line with other subjects and to protect the public from unqualified practitioners.

It was from this standpoint that the National Society for Professional Musicians began to position itself as the representative organisation for music in Britain, and at the core of attempts to provide a system of registration for music teachers. Proposals for the Incorporation of the Society were closely connected with the need for a single, recognised body:

No one can doubt that such a legalized society would increase the educational power and usefulness of the profession, would afford a definite guarantee to the public of the bona fides of each member, would tend greatly to unite, elevate, and consolidate the community of musicians, would provide a nucleus from which a fund could be drawn for the assistance

37 Ibid., 158.
38 Special report from the Select Committee on Teachers’ Registration and Organization Bill; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix, and index: Parliamentary Papers 1890-91 (335), 262-286.
39 Ibid., 266.
40 Ibid., 279
of sick and aged teachers, performers, &c.; whilst it would unquestionably raise the standard of musical art in the land.41

It is clear that, while the NSPM and its successor the Incorporated Society were important drivers in the moves towards registration, it was the Union of Graduates in Music that provided both the organisation and high-status connections needed to draft and present the Bill. That the two organisations were so different in membership and purpose serves to illustrate ongoing fractures in the music profession and some of the complications inherent in legislating for a profession lacking unity of purpose or identity. In advance of the conference on Registration, held jointly by the UGM and ISM in April 1894, The Musical Times’s writer considered the benefits of registration for music teachers in the context of encroaching Parliamentary regulation (the 1891 Bill was still ‘looming’), the need to improve standards of entry to the profession, and the increasing number and status of recognised music examinations and certificates.42

The draft bill prepared by the Union in advance of the 1894 conference included accepting degrees, diplomas and certificates ‘issued by certain Universities, Chartered and Incorporated Institutions’, establishing and conducting examinations for other candidates, and maintaining a register of accredited music teachers. The proposals therefore went beyond the work of the Union, collecting a wider range of information and offering new forms of accreditation for candidates without formal qualifications. This idea was perhaps a logical extension to the local examinations introduced by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, itself only founded in 1889.43

The conference, held at the rooms of the Royal Society of Musicians, attracted ‘hundreds of musicians from all parts of the kingdom’ and investigated arguments both for and against registration, as well as more general debate on the current state of the profession. Stainer took the chair, his speech alluding again to the problem of abundance of certificates and lack of centralised oversight, which enabled anyone with very little training to set up as a music teacher. He tackled head-on the issue of whether music teaching should be regulated, arguing that ‘it is the legitimate function of our legislature to see that a man gets what he pays for.’44 Alongside this ‘injury to property’ (the public, or consumer), Stainer identified that ‘there is wrought much mischief to young fully qualified practitioners, who find the ground cut from under their feet by these unqualified competitors, who, it should be remembers, can always undersell the qualified teacher, partly because there has been little or no initial cost of training, partly because the profession of music is so often tacked onto a business.’45 Stainer suggested that the main responsibility for registration should lie with the institutions responsible for training music teachers; the Tonic Sol-fa College was an unusual example of an institution which already kept a comprehensive register of approved practitioners. The formal resolution focussed on the ‘advantage to the public’ and ‘improvement of

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41 Ibid., 3/11 (1 July 1891), 165.
42 MT 35/614 (1 April 1894), 232.
43 Stainer and Stanford were both on the Board, and Stainer’s work as Inspector for Schools would also have provided an insight into the importance of appropriate training and accreditation for music teachers in schools.
44 MN 6/166 (5 May 1894), 413. Stainer compared ‘sham’ music tuition to margarine sold as butter, a contemporary scandal. Margarine was patented as a low-fat alternative by French chemist Mège-Mouriès in 1869. It was banned in Canada and Australia, while many American states imposed restrictions, such as the requirement to dye it an off-putting pink.
45 Ibid. 413
musical education’ that would result from regulation, but the wider benefits to the professionals themselves were also acknowledged.\textsuperscript{46} 

Stainer also recognised some of the complications inherent in setting up a new scheme. As had been the case with the medical profession some two generations earlier, the registration scheme would initially need to include all current practitioners, since there was no adequate means of distinguishing bona fide music teachers from ‘sham’ professionals. The benefits would not be felt for ‘25 or 30 years at the least.’\textsuperscript{47} The legislation would also need to deal with foreign certificates, an issue shared by the regulation of school teachers still under consideration. A more pressing issue concerned the lack of penalty available to enforce any regulations. For the scheme to be effective, it would require the support of the whole profession, most particularly its leaders and institutions.

Letters of approval for the scheme were received from many of the leaders of the profession, including Sir Herbert Oakeley, Sir Joseph Barnby, Sir Arthur Sullivan, and Dr. Philip Armes. Despite the proposals being sold as chiefly in the public interest, some musicians quickly recognised the potential for improved status. Bridge, for example, ‘greatly desired that the musical profession should be elevated and that its members should occupy a proper position in the country.’ Albert Peace (1844-1912) had written in support of registration, emphasised its importance for the status of the music profession, noting that equal status to other professions would never be attained while ‘quacks and imposters’ were admitted through open doors.\textsuperscript{48} George Garrett similarly believed that organisation would lead to protection.\textsuperscript{49} Charles Pearce (1856-1928), who was seconding the initial motion, elaborated on some of Stainer’s concerns: the ISM, after all, had been pursuing the issue of registration for some time, stumbling mainly on the problem of ‘sifting the wheat from the tares’: as we have seen, plenty of young musicians combined teaching with other occupations simply in order to make a living, while some unqualified teachers or young ladies might restrict themselves solely to music, through connections or additional private income.\textsuperscript{50}

Others expressed misgivings: there was a concern that fees might be raised in such a way that the poor, and many others currently studying music, would not continue. Musicians specialised, and there was a need to ensure registration would include details of competencies on specific instruments. It was clear, again, that registration would not make any difference unless the public chose to use it as a method of choosing and engaging teachers – possibly ignoring the temptation of lower fees from non-registered teachers in the process.

The final part of the meeting, including the vote taken on the resolution, concerned matters of administration and representation. Although the resolution was passed with minimal objections (five hands were raised against), Curwen, representing the Tonic Sol-fa College, did not feel able to vote as the College had not yet discussed the proposals. Mr Churchill Sibley raised a concern about whether ‘the meeting [was] supposed to be a representative one, or… convened by a certain sector of the musical profession’.\textsuperscript{51} Stainer was confident that the meeting was ‘very representative’, but

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 414 
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 413 
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.413 
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 414 
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 414 
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 415.
despite the company having assembled from throughout the United Kingdom, it was not clear that the different sectors of the music profession, and particularly the teaching branches, were adequately accounted for. The meeting agreed that the matter should be taken forward by a new Committee based on that already appointed by the ISM, with the addition of representatives from the main London Conservatoires and U.K. Universities. A number of attendees complained of the restricted nature of this selection, moving that other colleges, including the London College of Music and Hampstead Conservatoire, be included. The motions were ridiculed and the original proposal passed, but already the fractures were showing.

The plans to establish a scheme for registration of music teachers made little headway through the 1890s. The Committee established by the 1894 conference, under the auspices of the ISM, prepared a Bill for Parliament which was eventually submitted in 1900. Revisiting the details of the proposals raised again some of the issues that had begun to surface at the conference. A Musical News report of a UGM meeting records that the Bill had been drafted by the ISM committee, who refused to supply a copy when requested to do so by the Union’s Secretary Southgate. On reiterating his request, Southgate argued that the Union’s memberships consisted of over 600 members ‘who ranked as Qualified Teachers, by virtue of holding University Degrees in Music’. At the same meeting a letter was read from Professor Prout, who was of the opinion that ‘all holders of University Degrees in Music were not entitled to be registered’. The matter of professional identity, status and qualification was to come to the fore in the divisions between the two professional associations.

Clifford Edgar took up the protest against the ISM, arguing against its claims to a representative function on behalf of musicians. In particular, Edgar alluded to the place of amateur musicians, not represented by the ISM but ‘on which the profession depends for its very bread and butter.’ A low proportion of ISM members held recognised qualifications; on the contrary, the Union defined its membership by means of qualifications from independent bodies. Dr Warriner, a member of both the Union and Society, noted that the Society represented music teachers ‘of a certain kind’, a ‘particular class of professional musicians’, excluding many of the more successful composers and performers. Warriner characterises one key distinction between the Union and Society: ‘the more qualifications [a person] may have, the more brains they have, that is all the more reason why the I.S.M. people would exclude them!’ Much of the argument centred around ownership and control of the proposed bill – the two societies, despite sharing a large proportion of members and maintaining a veneer of politeness, were clearly at odds when it came to representative function and their views on the different sectors of the profession. Dr Charles Vincent accused the Union of having undermined the work of the ISM in 1894, suggesting they ‘cut in, took the ground from under their feet, and drafted a Bill of their own’.

The working definition of a professional musician used by the ISM required a man to rely entirely on music for his income – of course, this would have excluded many of the Union’s members, who had private means or other sources of income, as well as many at the opposite end of the social

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52 Ibid., 415.
53 MN 18/478 (28 April 1900), 399. The registration committee appointment by the 1894 conference had met only once, according to one of the UGM members. See Ibid., 400.
54 Ibid., 400.
55 Ibid., 400.
56 Ibid., 403.
spectrum. Prout’s letter referred specifically to clergymen, but Southgate also identified members of the Union who were headmasters of ‘important grammar schools’ and those teaching classics and mathematics as well as music.\(^{57}\) Dr Markham Lee, another member of the UGM, was one of those who pursued music as one of a series of sources of income, working for the Cambridgeshire County Council in Science as well as in Music.\(^{58}\) Commenting on his portfolio career, Lee suggested that ‘the change of work is very pleasant; one does not always wish to be hearing scales and arpeggios’ and, furthermore, that ‘You probably all have your hobbies; and if you can utilise them to turn out a little £ s. d. it is all the better.’\(^{59}\) The Union agreed at this stage to seek amendment to any Bill which did not make provision for those holding University degrees to be included on any proposed register.

Following the heated debate, the two Societies attempted to patch up their differences. Prout wrote to explain that he had meant only that a register of teachers should include only those engaged in teaching, rather than all those ‘competent’ to teach. He based his claims on assumptions about the forthcoming register for school teachers, but was happy to alter his ideas if the more general register also proved more liberal.\(^{60}\) Southgate also attempted to mitigate the affront felt by the ISM, yet pointed out that, had the ISM supplied a copy of the Bill in question, the ‘tone’ of the meeting would have been more amenable.\(^{61}\) Southgate added a detailed analysis of the rights of degree-holders in music, including translations of the statutes that demonstrated his argument that graduates were ‘invested by their University with the right to teach… and they require no further license or permission from an outside body’.\(^{62}\)

Other supporters of the UGM’s position were less mealy-mouthed in their comments, submitted anonymously to the *Musical News* correspondence section. One took particular issue with the exclusion of those who used music as part of their employment, arguing that

> For the life of me I cannot see why a poor parson, if duly qualified, should not supplement his income by taking pupils in music, just as well as that several teachers of music have an interest in music shops, and receive a portion of their income from the sale of instruments, etc... It is something new to be told that an University man is not allowed to make used of his qualifications.’\(^{63}\) This correspondent also questioned the composition of the ISM, asking ‘who has sat in judgement on them and pronounced all to be qualified teachers of music?

A second writer also contrasted the strictly regulated membership of the Union with the ‘self-constituted’ ISM, suggesting that ‘If all that the I.S.M. aims at is compiling a list of persons who call themselves “professionals,” this will let in the ambitious ex-mill girls who work at 6d. a lesson, and throw in prandial extras by way of attraction.’\(^{64}\) Several clergymen wrote to describe their situations,
including music as a smaller or larger part of their income and objecting to Prout’s comment that clergy might be excluded from the list of practical musicians.\textsuperscript{65}

Finally, the issue was raised among schoolmasters, many of whom, if specialising in music, would also teach general subjects. Charles Herbert Kitson from St.Edmund’s School in Canterbury noted the increase in professional musicians holding not only degrees in music, but also in Arts.\textsuperscript{66} This had led to school masters teaching across the Arts subjects. Moreover, it was often financially necessary for the school to employ a music master who could teach additional subjects. Doing so would, according to Kitson, assure the teacher ‘of a proper status in the school’. The same issue carried a report from the Conference of Organists and Directors of Music in Secondary Schools, which had considered the ongoing proposed Board of Education Act for the registration of teachers. There, too, the attendees resolved ‘That the fact of teaching other subjects beside music should not disqualify music-masters from being registered teachers of music.’\textsuperscript{67}

Some correspondents took the ISM’s view: George Bell, a clergyman holding a music degree, suggested that the proposed scheme would only remove a right to which he had no genuine claim in the first place. This graduate argued for a considerable difference between qualification and practice, that ‘To certify one is a graduate is all right; to go further and declare him a teacher is quite another thing.’\textsuperscript{68} Bell’s separation of academic qualification and teaching ability was also addressed by those wishing to see ability in teaching taught and assessed: Annie Curwen argued forcefully thorough training in her paper ‘The Training of Music Teachers’, read at an ISM conference of 1892.\textsuperscript{69} Curwen suggests registration of music teachers would ‘do infinitely more harm than good’ as there was no examination available on teaching ability, and no ‘definite theories about teaching to go upon’. Taking the example of training for general teachers, she gave an outline of a teacher training course offered in various places including the Maria Grey Training College for Women Teachers and Cheltenham Ladies’ College. In music schools, with the exception of the Tonic Sol-fa College, students were not taught to teach.\textsuperscript{70}

The final version of the Bill, the \textit{Musical News} recorded, was drafted by the Council of the Union of Graduates in Music, with input from Cummings on behalf of the ISM.\textsuperscript{71} The Bill that was eventually introduced to Parliament in 1900 bore many of the hallmarks of the original teachers’ registration bill, though avoided some of the issues raised by the relevant bodies. The proposed Registration Committee was similar to that set up by the 1894 conference, include representatives of the main universities, music colleges and other bodies (including both the Union of Graduates in Music and Incorporated Society of Musicians).\textsuperscript{72} Two routes to registration were proposed: first, holding a degree or diploma from ‘one of the examinations considered by the Council as satisfactory’; second, having been ‘engaged for not less than two years in teaching or practising music as a profession and means of livelihood’.\textsuperscript{73} The Bill avoided the issue of exactly which institutions might be included

\textsuperscript{65} See MN 18/481 (19 May 1900), 476.
\textsuperscript{66} MN 18/480 (12 May 1900), 452.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 442.
\textsuperscript{68} MN 18/481 (19 May 1900), 472.
\textsuperscript{69} ISM Journal 4/10 (1 June 1892), 156.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 157.
\textsuperscript{71} MN 19/491 (28 July 1900), 79.
\textsuperscript{72} Teachers of Music Registration Bill: Parliamentary Papers 1900 (309), 1-2.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 3.
under the scheme, though a preliminary list was narrow compared to the vast array of music schools and colleges in operation. Nor did it address whether part-time practice as a music teacher was sufficient. It retained the power to exclude or remove the names of persons deemed unfit by ‘moral character’ or ‘misconduct’, and fines and punishments adopted for fraudulent behaviour.\footnote{Ibid., 3-4.}

Introduced on 20 July 1900 and scheduled for a second reading on 30 July, the Teachers of Music Registration Bill was dropped without further debate. With a change of government, it was reintroduced on 22 February 1901 and again scheduled for a second reading on 6 March, but dropped before further discussion could take place. Although the Education Act of 1899 provided for a register of teachers, this was not well-received and the Teachers’ Registration Council, set up in 1902, was withdrawn in 1907. Registration began again in 1914 but it was not until 1929 that the Royal Society of Teachers was set up to address professional concerns together with the problem of registration. The issue of music teachers was abandoned with informal methods of regulation left to the music colleges, the unions and, ultimately, the public.

**Regulation and the profession**

The scheme for registration not only points up the differences between two professional bodies, but highlights some of the ongoing characteristics of the music profession that hindered its chances of gaining recognition, regulation and improved status. One of the key features of professional organisation in the nineteenth century was established and centralised accreditation. The Union of Graduates represented just one form of accreditation in music, centred on academic qualifications and knowledge – the kind of formal body of knowledge identified by Larsson as a form of ‘cognitive exclusiveness’. The Incorporated Society of Musicians encompassed a different kind of knowledge basis for professional recognition, focussing their examinations on elementary theory and practical accomplishment. Some of the Society’s members had no formal qualifications. Instead, the Society based its identification of ‘professional’ musicians on practice – a controversial and less-tangible characteristic that formed only a minor part of the ‘professional project’. Aspiring professions could not gain status by such an unquantifiable measure, particularly when it would exclude many higher-status members of the profession at the same time. The perceived difference in social status between the Union and the Society was pointed up by a remark made in 1897 at the Union’s annual banquet, when J.C.B. Tirbutt ‘humorously described the Incorporated Society of Musicians as the Musical House of Commons, whilst the Union of Graduates stands for the Lords.’\footnote{MN 12/314 (6 March 1897), 218.} Despite the significant overlap in membership, the two societies took quite different places in relation to the profession as a whole.

Neither organisation catered for the majority of those engaged in earning a living from music teaching; throughout the 1890s the ISM recorded a membership of less than 2000, while total numbers of musicians (including teachers) stood at 38,600.\footnote{Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 235.} Both bodies united in their wish to exclude the inexperienced, poor-quality teachers but difference in their views on the proper constitution of the profession and the route to regulation. Other musical associations were also
excluded: the Orchestral Association, for example, had been omitted from the 1894 conference ‘in error’, and noted that the 1900 Bill ‘must not be taken to represent our profession.’

The question of the relationship between the definition of the profession and its status was raised by the Musical News, acting as always with the interests of the Union at heart through the influence of Southgate. Comparison with other professions was, again, important as Southgate asked ‘Is music to be ranked among the other liberal professions, and considered subject to similar conditions as those attaching to these professions; or, is it to be counted among the trades unions, with all the restrictions attached to such exclusive bodies?’ Southgate gave examples from a wide range of ‘professions’, each of which allowed members to gain income from subsidiary employment – barristers from journalism or literary work, clergymen from teaching, and doctors from research and lecturing, among others. The main point was, however, hammered home: the ISM’s proposals to base the register on practice rather than qualifications and to exclude many of the music graduates amounted to ‘Trades Unionism’ rather than respectable professional regulation. The purpose of the registration proposals was essential in distinguishing the music profession from a trade union. While professional bodies acted in the public interest, raising standards for the public good, trades unions acted in the interest of the employee, to secure wages and rights for the worker. The difference played an important part in the conscious efforts to secure professional status within defined social expectations.

The short debate highlights many of the sectors of those teaching music as some or all of their work, as well as other interested parties. While school teachers who specialised in music might also teach other subjects, clergymen might teach music or other Arts subjects in order to subsidise their wages. Although the number of musicians qualified to teach and not engaged in teaching was small, they made up a large proportion of the highest status and most powerful group in the profession.

Female music teachers emerge as a particular stereotype – whether unqualified ‘ex-mill girls’ or qualified amateurs teaching a few hours a week. The implied inferiority of women was not unnoticed: one correspondent writing on the registration issue asked ‘who has a greater claim to be registered as a teacher of music, Mr. Jones, M.A., Mus.Bac., organist, choirmaster, and assistant of a certain school, or Miss Smith, who advertises herself as ‘Professor of music, piano, banjo, mandolin, guitar’?[sic]? The writer, Charles Herbert Kitson, was reprimanded the following week by a correspondent under the alias ‘Fair Play’, who suggests the example might have avoided the implication of the inferiority of women as musicians’ had the two characters both been sketched as male. Commenting on the Bill’s progress through Parliament, the magazine Truth identified female teachers as ‘the crux’ of the problem, as they were most likely to combine music teaching with other sources of income, particularly via the standard model for employment as a governess. Later on in the twentieth century, an anonymous writer pointed out a further hindrance in the profession’s reliance on the public for recognition and demand for registration: as he notes, ‘the analogy

77 MN 18/484 (9 June 1900), 537.
78 MN 18/481 (19 May 1900), 469.
79 Ibid., 469-470.
80 Ibid., 470.
81 MN 18/480 (12 May 1900), 82 MN 18/481 (19 May 1900), 475.
82 MN 18/484 (9 June 1900), 537.
between the medical profession and the musical profession is a false one, and it is best candidly to admit it, in dealing with the question of compulsory registration. In the one case, you have a profession dealing with matters often of life and death; in the other a profession dealing with something that to the public is a luxury.\(^{84}\) Quite simply, the music teaching profession would not succeed in establishing ‘cognitive exclusiveness’ unless the public were persuaded to buy into the programme.\(^{85}\)

**Conclusion**

Seen as part of a drive towards professional identity, the episode of the registration bill tells us much about the state of the music profession, its fractures, and the obstacles in the way of formal organisation. The attempts of the two unions to unite the music profession behind a parliamentary bill, to formalise their identity, exposed the many different walks of life and approaches to professional identity that sat within the broad spectrum of music teacher. The teaching arm of the profession was simply too disparate to bring under a single piece of legislation. Teachers were seen as insufficiently professional at both ends of the spectrum: among those represented in the Union of Graduates in Music or elsewhere were gentlemen for whom music was a serious hobby, for whom professional qualifications would be anathema; in contrast, a professional qualification would seem unnecessary to the young seamstress or governess for whom music teaching offered a few extra hours’ work a week. Calls for regulation also exposed the potential tension between maintaining relatively low fees, and therefore wide access, to music lessons, and making the profession viable and fairly remunerating those who were highly-skilled and trained. The desire to produce a musically literate country fell within this tension between quality and quantity of music teaching.

Music teachers were no alone: as noted, the general registration of teachers met with significant problems. Barry Bergen suggests this, too, was due to the working-class backgrounds of elementary schoolteachers and the ‘feminization’ of teaching proving barriers to professional status.\(^{86}\) This failure was despite efforts to emulate the professional model by introducing employment associations, certification and establish a body of professional knowledge.

The ultimate failure to secure registration for music teachers was due to the lack of recognised accreditation, as well as the problems of identifying bona fide professionals among the mass of part-time and unqualified practitioners. In contrast to the great success of examinations for amateur students, parts of the profession resisted regulation (whether on their own behalf or that of others), and the multiplicity of examinations available by the time the Unions were considering a register would have made the task of assessing each certificate and body a complex one. The Victorian penchant for measurement had not yet progressed into a systematic or recognised order for such qualifications, and as such the market for certificates was messy. It was not until the twentieth

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\(^{84}\) MT 78/1132 (June 1937), 548.


century that, as David Wright notes, ‘Music’s new professional training landscape... emerged out of the examination culture’.87

The Union’s eagerness to avoid association with ‘Trade Unionism’ was a key part of maintaining the respectability of a profession, rather than a trade. Professionalism was about serving the public, rather than self-interest, and the interests of the public in increased regulation of music teachers via a register was emphasised time and again. Both a system of accreditation and the use of a scheme for regulating practitioners would have brought the music teaching profession more closely in line with recognised characteristics of ‘professional’ status, and in turn lent credibility to the music profession as a whole. Estimates of thirty years – more than a generation – before this would be accomplished show that the business of professionalization could be painfully slow.

The case of music teachers was, arguably, replicated on a larger scale across the music profession as a whole. It was impossible to regulate the music profession because it was composed of such disparate elements, which could not be grouped by status or identity. The most senior members of the music profession were often not identified as professionals at all, while unions of musicians shied away from association with their counterparts in other trades and avoided imposing the traits of regulation and standardisation which would earn professional accountability. It was ironic that the teaching branch of the profession, for so long the most ‘respectable’ and reliable sector of musical work, was also where a predominance of semi-professionalism, resistance to regulation and undervaluation prevented moves towards professional status.

Yet in other ways the teaching branch exhibited attributes that made it particularly problematic, especially where gender was concerned. Women musicians were predominantly engaged in teaching, where they formed the majority of the sector from the middle of the nineteenth century. As noted above, women and professionalism were difficult bedfellows. Professionalism implied a public status; women were often relegated to the private sphere. Deborah Rohr alludes to ‘doubts about women’s abilities to endure the rigors of professional life’;88 indeed, as we have seen, the part-time or short-lived nature of women teachers’ employment was contrary to the commitment needed to claim professional status. Where women sought to develop a career, the structures and support of professional organisations were sometimes simply not available, particularly in the early part of the century. It was therefore the individual members and characteristics of the sector, as well as deep-rooted fractures in its organisation and identity, that prevented music teachers from gaining the regulation and reform that would have stood as the bedrock for improved professional status at the end of the nineteenth century.