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Reconnecting Music Education With Society

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Reconnecting Music Education with Society

Thomas A. Regelski, Editor

Schooling in a Changing World

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. For most of the last century, school change has been both glacial and superficial. While today we use white boards, overhead projectors, computers and PowerPoint, and while students' seats are no longer fixed to the floors in straight rows, schools remain frozen in certain basic instructional and curricular paradigms established long ago. Schools as physical environments have profited from architectural and technical advances, but schools as educational 'institutions' are organized around a conception of basic "subjects"—the traditional disciplines—that are still largely taught for their own sakes and that students thus see as "merely academic." There is little if any concern, then, with whether or the degree to which the ideas and information conveyed to students actually contributes to the *life well-lived* that a general education supposedly promises.

What students ultimately *can* do or *actually* do with their learning later *in life* is most often not a question teachers or curriculum designers ask. Even raising the question risks eliciting a defensive recitation of taken for granted assumptions, or it is regarded as irrelevant, or even as an insult to the educator's professional integrity. While Sunday school teachers and parents are (presumably) concerned that moral lessons carry over into daily lives of students, most teachers and school administrators are unconcerned with whether lessons learned in school even *have* tangible applications—concrete counterparts—in personal life and society. While, fortunately, there are exceptions,¹ most schools are still conceived according to a 1930s factory model.² However, it continues to be unclear what the 'product' is that the assembly line produces, or whether or how individuals and society profit from this product.

A usually unholy mix of educational *essentialism* and *perennialism* prevails. Thus, 'basics' that are said to be "essential" to being well-educated are stressed; yet what they are

supposedly ‘basic’ to is not modeled or otherwise addressed in classes, or required of graduates at any level of in-life functionality—what progressive educators call “authentic” education and assessment. And the perennial values, great ideas, major books, art ‘classics’ and classical experiments of science all get taught,³ but most typically without students graduating with values, tastes, or dispositions other than what they brought to school from home, without dynamic insights and latent ideas that can guide their present-day decisions and those of adult life, without much more than an ability to recall the names of a few authors, artists, and musicians (if that),⁴ and without an understanding of how science proceeds—for example, of what a scientific theory is, how theory works, and why theories are not proven or disproved.⁵

Given such conditions, schools are increasingly in direct competition with the media and information technologies, particularly with television, film, and the Internet. This is not just competition for students’ out of school study time; it is competition because, in so many instances, students are often learning more and more of relevance and interest to them, formally or informally, from these sources than they are from school. For students, it is difficult not to assume that school is less and less relevant to what they think they want or need to know. While schools have always attempted to fill gaps in students’ informal educations and to overcome certain liabilities of such learning (e.g., racism learned in the home), it is not at all empirically clear that these claims are actually fulfilled predictably. Too many students, particularly those who regularly misbehave or ignore their teachers, obviously go to school either because they must by law, or to be with friends.

Given increasing recognition of these problems in schools, business leaders are concerned that students are insufficiently prepared for the increasing demands of the workplace and globalization. Social critics worry about the mounting complexities of life in pluralistic societies that are ever-more connected and conflicted by information technologies. Political theorists worry about the inability of average citizens and voters to understand increasingly complex changes and conditions in contemporary society. And cultural critics bemoan the dominance of so-called “popular culture” as represented by the commercial media; or they note that the lack of a thriving, multifaceted cultural life (but not necessarily only ‘high’ Culture) is a

leading factor in the failure of communities to attract new employers and employees who will stay and contribute to a vital community life.

Music Education's Distantiation from Society

Music teaching, too, has exhibited little fundamental change. Its history in Westernized countries is associated with the efforts of cultural patrons, namely the socially elite patrons of the fine arts, to bring High Culture to the masses. In the late 19th century, virtually all educational institutions—museums of various kinds, theater associations, musical societies, and the like—were established on such egalitarian premises,⁶ only to eventually weed out the troublesome riffraff⁷ by making such hallowed halls expensive and thus prohibitive to all but the rich. As a consequence, with the rise of the idea(l) of universal and general education, the fine arts and literature, and the Culture assumed to go with them, were relegated to schools where they would be available to all, regardless of socioeconomic class, and where audiences could be properly ‘trained’ and developed.⁸ While the economic dimension of this hierarchy functions differently in countries that highly subsidize the arts, it is still typical that, for example, most people cannot afford to attend the opera—assuming they want to! Furthermore, a socio-artistic gulf arises between urban centers where arts are at least readily available, and rural regions where they are often completely unavailable. Thus, in many places, the school has become in effect the cultural/Cultural center of a community (even in some cities) and the ‘front lines’ of attempts to spread Culture to the masses.

In schools, so-called “general” or “classroom music” classes address the musical needs of the general population of students as part of their general education. Such teaching remains focused on teaching “concepts” and facts ‘about’ music that are supposed to facilitate ‘music appreciation, and on “basic skills,” such as keeping a steady beat, matching pitch, and reading music. Whether students actually end up ‘appreciating’ the kinds of music they are ‘exposed’ to, is not seriously questioned; nor is whether the skills addressed in fact reach levels of functionality that allow and promote life-long musicking.

Basal series are at hand in many countries to simplify the teacher's planning—or to standardize curriculum across an entire country, state, or system.⁹ Young students, of course, enjoy the singing, dancing, moving, and playing of instruments—perhaps as a ‘musical recess’ from their academics.¹⁰ But as students approach adolescence, such activities, done for their own sake, with no connection to their musical lives outside of school, often seem increasingly childish and irrelevant to them. So, depending on the student behavior patterns in a country, community or school, students in such classes respond more or less politely. Being polite, however, doesn't insure effective or lasting learning: it demonstrates only obeisance. If such classes are required during the adolescent years (e.g., in the US), “failing” the class (assuming any reasonable degree of *musical* assessment) is not likely on its own to warrant educational or musical rehabilitation. Students by then have adopted the ‘hurdle theory’ that prevails with all required but otherwise meaningless classes: they struggle until they are “over” the required class and it is safely behind them.¹¹

In countries where ensembles are a part of school life, they are often the tail wagging the dog; they tend to dominate the public's idea of what school-based music education *is*. Some among the public even mistakenly assume that the musical ‘quality’ (or number or prizes, etc.) of an ensemble “program”¹² is an indication of the excellence of the overall music education *curriculum*—ignoring, thus, the vast majority of students who are not in or touched by such ensembles.¹³ Ensembles usually reach only a small population of either select or self-selected students—a musical elite among the general population. These few certainly deserve to have their abilities and interests advanced, but “To what end?” isn't an oft-asked question by ensemble directors and no further basis than *claims* for musical quality in performance exist for assessment of the role of ensembles in students' educations. All kinds of benefits are *assumed*, most non-musical in nature,¹⁴ yet it is taken for granted that students have profited *musically* despite the lack of any compelling empirical evidence that their musical lives, habits, dispositions, and tastes have been benefited in tangible or lasting ways. The claim is made that simply performing in an ensemble automatically produces a musical or “aesthetic” education,¹⁵ which in many respects is as naive a belief as assuming that religious or moral education (or

simply attending services) somehow automatically produces religious and moral people, or that sex education predictably prevents pre-marital sex.


Despite the tangibility of the musical learning, then, any contribution to the actual *musical lives* of graduates of school-based ensembles—the actual musicking they are enabled and choose to engage in—is as doubtful as the contribution of most other school subjects to graduates' lives. Students who have been in instrumental ensembles, particularly large ones, do not in any great numbers seek out (or create) such musicking in adult life: many don't even avail themselves of such opportunities during their university studies, unless they are music majors. It is difficult to determine whether being in a school chorus is a necessary or useful stepping stone to church choir singing, but judging from the problems churches usually have in maintaining volunteer adult choirs, it would seem not. And while there are places, sometimes entire countries, where adult choirs are popular, it is not at all clear that prior school-based choir experience is the reason. Often, in fact, a community tradition or national culture apart from the school environment inspires choral amateurism.

Part of the *educational* problem, of course, is that large ensembles are led by teacher-directors who, as highly trained musicians, make all *musical* judgments and decisions. Students, then, become mere functionaries of the director's musicianship and do not acquire the personal musicianship skills that can guide their own musical decisions. This is certainly most often the result, and while much musicking of this kind does provide important and pleasurable musical experiences (even sometimes, by professional standards, excellent ones), most students don't seem to enjoy the experiences enough to make time in their lives for such musicking after they graduate. And, of course, ensembles of any size contribute to the social development of students; however, this sociality-via-musicking alone appears to be a value that, once the adolescent need is behind the student, is insufficient to inspire adult musicking for other reasons, of other kinds. Whether the musical experiences and learning provided by such ensembles actually leads to a greater 'appreciation' of such music is taken for granted by teachers. But dwindling audiences for such music does not give great assurance that such ensembles are a significant source of audience development,¹⁶ and '*appreciation*' that goes unused is a *contradiction in terms*: it makes little educational, personal, social, or cultural difference.


Regelski, T. "Reconnecting music education with society," *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 5/2: http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski5_2.pdf



In the case of voluntary music schools and elected private study where students take lessons and play in ensembles, these often function as kinds of “pre-conservatory” training—at least as far as those that feature (or offer only) classical music—or are “pre-professional” in leading to potential careers with other musics. In any case, instruction is often predicated on the models of higher education and professional players, and students are either selected by audition, or self-selected by reason of intrinsic interest, parental decision, and so on. The classic example might be the student who takes piano lessons. The commonplace is that the student often quits playing when studies are over—another example of “been there, done that.” Revealingly, however, studies done years ago by an industrial association of music instrument manufactures showed that students who were self-taught continued to play as adults and that instruments like piano, guitar, and (at the time, the very popular) home organ (and, today, probably the many electronic keyboards sold by department and music stores), instruments that are musically “complete” and require no accompaniment, also continued to be played by adults. While the repertory played was not studied, it no doubt extended considerably beyond “easy classics” to other idioms—those seen, in fact, on sale today in music and book stores.

The nature of music teaching at the community level, that is, outside of “school music,” is obviously as variable as the teachers and institutions that sustain it. But it seems clear that for all the instruction being offered, for all the practicing by students, not nearly enough continue to be rewarded in predictable and profound enough ways to inspire, enable, or seek musicking in their later lives. Put another way: (a) if such lessons are not focused on developing a *functional* degree of musical independence from the teacher; and (b) if the literature is *limited* in scope (particularly as judged in terms of the student’s interest); and (c) where an interest in *playing by ear* and (d) in *listening* to the literature for the performance medium is not promoted and advanced; and (e) where adult models of *amateur musicking* are not part of the instructional plan; then, (f) it is predictable that many students will quit taking lessons or try to convince their parents to let them quit in favor of competing interests. Those students who do continue (not infrequently due to parental insistence), given their lack of independence and the narrowness of literature and skills, will be uninterested, unlikely, or unable to bring their musicking to their adult lives and to the musical and social life of their communities. Fortunately, new thinking

 about community-based music education is in gestation¹⁷ and this represents the possibility that “music education” might move from its previous singular identification with “school music” to musicking in life, throughout life, in the community, and beyond.

Transformation versus Reproduction of Society

A university chancellor once told me, “There is more than a casual relationship between conservative and conservatory.” In the next breath he added, only half-jokingly, “It’s easier to move a cemetery than to change a Music Faculty.” While this conclusion was no doubt reached after many years of educational leadership involving university musicians, and no doubt had political complications and economic considerations mixed into the judgment, it is worth considering a bit more deeply by understanding “music faculty” as music teachers of all kinds, at all levels. For example, *teaching as a conservative activity*, as Neil Postman described in his book of that title,¹⁸ is a valid and necessary function of schooling of any kind. However,  *teaching as a subversive activity*, the title of an earlier book,¹⁹ is also a necessary function of schools—at least to the degree that society needs to be *transformed* and not just *reproduced* on past and present models, many of which are widely admitted to be problematic.

Thus, an inherent tension between *social transmission* and *social transformation* faces schools and teachers; indeed, virtually all educational institutions in society, from churches, to museums, to the family, face a kind of *dialectical tension*—the pull of these contrasting values and concepts against each other. Creative transformation in the direction of educational and social improvement is needed simply because past values do not necessarily offer effective solutions for the inevitability and challenges of social change and the resulting problems of the ‘progress’ promoted by modernity.²⁰  Dialectical tension is not overcome by seeking compromise or conciliation in the middle of the continuum connecting opposing positions; this only captures the weakest parts of the opposed forces. It is ‘resolved’ (so to speak) at a higher level of *dialectical synthesis* where, in fact, a *creative tension* remains, but in newly informed, newly  focused, newly productive or newly relevant terms.²¹ Forces comfortable with the status

quo—indeed, those who promote it—will resist such unfolding creative transformation and, though necessary, such transformation can thus be discomfiting for all involved.

The metaphor of the difficulties of “moving a cemetery” may refer, then, to the inevitability of resistance to and discomfort adapting to change. Thus, there is a perilous sense in which the status quo regard for the *music* in “music education” risks becoming a ‘museum’ praxis rather than a ‘living’ praxis. As a result, there is also the danger that students become ‘deadened’ not ‘enlivened’ by their musical studies. Being ‘enlivened’ means, I would suggest, being positively transformed. And the degree to which students are thus enlivened and transformed musically can only lead to an eventual musical transformation of any society and culture.

Transformation, by definition, requires change. Not superficial change, but systematic, focused, substantial, fundamental change; in a word, improvement. First of all, to effect improvement in music education, a change in comfortable assumptions about music education is needed on the part of music teachers and other music educators; a realization of the need for transforming the “cemetery”—the inert and deadening collection of so many current practices that music teachers should have “moved on” from long ago.²² This, in part, is the basis of the “Action for Change in Music Education” agenda of the MayDay Group, the organization that sponsors this journal. The seven action ideals²³ in that agenda challenge a wide variety of taken-for-granted ‘truisms’ that are the stock-in-trade of much contemporary teaching practice and of many weaknesses of that practice.

Secondly, change will not result when ever-more reflexive apologia of the status quo is the response to the legitimation crisis that faces music education seemingly everywhere: more or new strategies of advocacy are not the answer! Nor are superficial changes, such as lip-service to multiculturalism and musical pluralism, or using new media (like computers) in educationally questionable or ‘old-fashioned’ ways (like PowerPoint ‘improved’ lectures),²⁴ or the endless nostrums of “how to” show-and-tell advocates, ‘methodolatrists’, and curriculum merchants featuring ever-new variations on “it works” teaching materials and methods that end up in practice being “the curriculum.”

Change, and the eventual transformation of music education itself, requires a complete rethinking from the ground up of the why, what, how of music teaching—not to forget “whether” music education has actually added musical value to, and thus transformed students in musical ways that enrich and enliven their lives forever. Change also requires new thinking about and approaches to research. Research that is predicated on taken-for-granted assumptions, on topics which produce only “journal science”²⁵ that advances careers rather than teaching, or using methods that produce findings that simply don’t have relevance for the real world of musicking and teaching, and the like—no matter how well-designed, no matter how valuable otherwise as “pure research,” such research is not going to change how we teach, hear, or think about music.²⁶

The most fundamental change will come only from two sources. The first involves the need for a complete rethinking of what music “is” and is “good for” in human life and society, as the basis for professional judgments at each and every step in the music education enterprise. The habit of uncritically regarding music in terms of ‘works’ contemplated (i.e., understood and ‘appreciated’) for their own sake by the supposedly isolated Cartesian brain/mind at rare moments is, to begin with, the primary source of the disconnection between music education and society. While no reader will be unfamiliar with the pleasures and values of audience listening, the assumption that ‘good’ music is made and listened to “for itself” and is somehow aesthetically sanitized of all down-to-earth human and social ‘goods’ is simply a philosophical and sociological mistake. Concerts (of any kind) are major forms of social praxis where much more is always at stake than the sound-patterns we narrowly have come to accept as “the music”: however, even those sounds, their patterning, and their purposes—their *raison d’être*—are totally imbued with sociality of various kinds and the results are undeniably social.²⁷ As cognitive scientist William Benzon describes, music “allows individuals to couple their nervous systems together,” and thus “is a group activity in which the interactions between individuals are as precisely timed and orchestrated as those within a single brain. The individuals are physically separate but temporally integrated. It is one music, one dance.”²⁸

But, beyond the supposedly ‘pure’ audience listening of the Cartesian brain, any music is also “good for” a multitude of other praxes for which its affordances can be appropriated. That

music is “good for” dancing, such as jazz, does not prevent us from also listening to it with benefit, and that music is “good for” worship does not prevent us from savoring it in secular ways (or the reverse, as when a secular song gets used in worship). In fact, most music in the world is not created to serve audience listening! Too often, then, most of the musicking that enlivens any society is either ignored by music educators because it is not intended for



‘contemplation’,²⁹ or is rejected on aesthetic grounds for so-called ‘extra-musical’ reasons. In other words, the plentiful and lively world of music outside the school doors is willfully shut out, and “school music” (or “the music lesson”) becomes a short-term musical praxis of its own that rarely outlives adolescence.

Thus, for music education to ‘reconnect’ with society, for it to reconnect with the very social roots of all musicking, a major conversion is needed from traditional aesthetic premises to an expanded philosophy of music that considers music a central praxis of humankind, a vital part of our individual and social ‘being’. In this expanded view, as just briefly noted, audience listening (even listening to a recording), is but one format of music praxis. Focus on the praxial aspects of music, thus, stresses music “in action”; it focuses on music as it has been and is *used* in society for a multitude of ‘goods’ that, regardless of aesthetic rationalizations, are never devoid of the sociality brought by and invigorated by the music that occasions its use. As Benzon



counsels, “Cartesian individuals do not make music,”³⁰ nor do they compose or listen to it.

The second source of fundamental change requires a major shift of attention from the “how to” focus of ‘methods’ and ‘conducting’ classes to the “what to teach” issues addressed by curriculum. *How* to teach is fundamentally, inescapably, dependent on *what* is to be taught! Today, the ‘methods’ taught to aspiring music teachers in their music education programs all assume a host of curricular ‘content’ that is rarely made explicit, let alone ‘critically’ examined. Furthermore, music education students are almost universally deprived of any study whatsoever of curriculum theory, curriculum development, and curriculum praxis. New (and “student”) teachers, then, teach as—and thus what—they were taught, or teach as—and thus what—they were taught to teach. And this rarely involves any attention to “authentic” music learning and assessment and, thus, little if any attention to whether or to what degree what is taught or learned can or does actually ‘transfer’ to life as the praxis of musicking. Only when music teachers are

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concerned to make a tangible musical difference in the lives of their students, a difference that students can and do take with them into life and that adds important musical value to their lives, will music education make a contribution to general education that is notable and noticed by students and society.³¹ Only then will the need for advocacy subside.

This Issue

The present issue offers a diverse array of research and analysis that lends support to the foregoing considerations, and suggests remedies and alternatives for the current distantiation of school music from ‘real’ life.

First, Hildegard Froehlich asks music teachers to examine the host of questions and contradictions that teachers—all teachers—regularly take for granted, to their own and their students’ risk. From the perspective of *social interactionsm*, Froehlich asks music teachers to examine their own ‘life stories’ for autobiographical clues to understanding their roles and practices as social beings, engaged in social acts, in social settings, for social ‘goods’. She points out the kinds of predictable paradoxes that music teachers profit from simply knowing of if they are to cope with important decisions always at hand. For example, she focuses on the curricular paradox of music education that attempts to be *inclusionary* in reaching all students, while at the same time being *exclusionary* in seeking to protect musical quality. She unpacks the “script” of teaching—of schooling as an institution—that is either going to totally dominate, if not dictate, a music teacher’s choice-making over the years; or, as she urges, can instead become a career-long project of *re-scripting* music education as it will be known locally and, eventually, across society. Thus, she concludes: “Self-analysis is an important step in identifying sources of hegemony, power, and exclusion that can be perceived as negative forces in music education.” And, this kind of ‘critical’ self-scrutiny, as it relates to music education practices we inherit, adopt, and perpetuate, is a necessary first step to improving music education.

Wilfried Gruhn begins his exploration of philosophical and scientific ‘foundations’ for music education with the premise that such change is needed “because there is a big gap between extra-curricular activities and the way music is taught in the classroom, and between musical experience in real life and musical experience in a school setting”; and because “when school as

a whole suffers from countless recent social developments, then music cannot stay untouched and we cannot just sing and play as before.” He stresses music as a social phenomenon, and as a matter of praxis—of ‘doing’. He analyzes many of the particular problems facing music educators today, including the history of inherited arguments for justifying music education—arguments he critiques in terms of contemporary thinking. He summarizes neurobiological and other scientific bases for understanding how students learn, and for guiding how and what we teach, and calls for “a school curriculum of music education that is founded on genuine music learning” where “students actually learn music skillfully and praxially”—which is to say, where they acquire authentic learning that is used in life.

Vernon Howard’s account of rekindling interest in singing that had been, in a way, ‘put on hold’ by a career as a philosopher, professor, and book author can be seen as one kind of autobiographical reflection advocated by Froehlich. In fact, his accounts of exchanges with his voice teacher and his autobiographical reflections on the process of such teaching and learning are good examples of the themes of interactionism stressed by Froehlich. But Howard’s story also illustrates the important connection between music and life that is so often missing for people of all ages where performing and ‘being’ a performer are central to who one *is*—an existential outcome of *all* avocational musicking, not just performing. In this, Howard’s underlying philosophical theme is Dewey’s pragmatism, particularly the idea of the “reconstruction of experience.” In this case, what is at stake is not just the ‘reconstruction’ of the singing voice after years of not studying, but the ongoing reconstruction of Self that is inherent to the pragmatic notion of experience—and, often, as a result of musical experience more than most kinds of experience. “Like it or not, we are each of us a ‘thing of histories’, telling, retelling and reconstructing our personal stories or versions of events as new slants or facts come available. Things don’t just happen to us; we *take them in*, in various changeable versions.” But, Howard stresses, there can be a darker side to this ‘selective’ attention (or inattention)—dangers, for example, that can lead music educators astray just as they have lead musicians astray.

Christopher Naughton also uses a philosophical theme, in his case from Nietzsche, to illuminate the existential experience of ‘samba’. With Nietzsche’s Dionysianism seen as “total embodiment in the art experience,” the samba—as sonorous experience, dance, celebration, and

social bonding—is shown to involve the kind of *disindividuation* that, for Nietzsche, paradoxically encouraged the creative self-renewal that results when “the individual remakes herself, in whatever way, through the revaluation of values . . . within the context of the individual’s cultural understanding.” We learn from Naughton that samba is not just music from Brazil, but a world-wide praxis that is capable of capturing and enhancing life and of building community wherever it is found. Furthermore, samba ‘schools’—both formal and as community institutions—are dynamic forms of social practice that arise directly from the musical praxis, and vice versa! This is not music contemplated for its own sake; it is music for realizing Self through living creatively and fully within and through community. The freely adaptable samba, in its connection with the Dionysian embodiment of experience, also leads Naughton to raise challenging questions about curricular matters in music education—questions related, perhaps, to the discussion earlier, concerning whether music education’s effect ‘deadens’ or ‘enlivens’ students’ musical lives. There seems to be no question of this when it comes to samba.

Finally, Deborah Bradley explicitly challenges music educators to reconnect music education with society by no longer ignoring or avoiding the important consideration of race and music. While analyzing the many reasons and ways in which dialogue about race in music, music education, school, and society are inhibited, even masked, by language and other social practices, she argues that “learning to bring race into the dialogue is, I believe, absolutely necessary for those educating for social justice.” This, to begin with, charges music educators with social responsibilities that also go well beyond the classroom or rehearsal studio. As an example, Bradley identifies and analyzes certain racist implications in positions articulated by certain leaders in the music professoriate. She also analyzes how the discourses of “official multiculturalism” often subsume and reinforce racist concepts. As with Howard’s self-analysis, Bradley also engages in the autobiographical analysis recommended by Froehlich and thereby also demonstrates some possible disappointments of committing oneself to tangible change as a result of a socially-focused and responsible music education. As with Howard, Bradley shows that realistically and honestly comparing one’s aspirations to one’s actual achievements is a test of Self, but that only with the risk can change become a reality.

Mistakes and Progress

Progress in musical performance comes in part from noting and correcting errors. Practicing presumes awareness and progressive realization of an aural goal—a goal that, beyond notation, also involves informed and creative insights governing the ‘goodness’ of the result. It can also be said that progress in medicine comes in part directly as a result of learning from failures and mistakes; the goals and visions served by physicians are not only quite obvious, they are also usually tangible. While it is fortunate that our ‘patients’ don’t literally die (though some *are* caused pain³²), too many are ‘deadened’ rather than ‘enlivened’ by their ‘treatment’ in music education. To a significant degree, this is due to the fact that music educators, unlike doctors and performers, too frequently have no concrete goals or creative visions that could lead to self-reflection, self-scrutiny, concerning even the *possibility* of weak or mistaken practice.

The overtness of students’ performances in the short-term (and even these involve only the relative few students in ensembles) only masks the overall covert teaching and learning conditions that fail to inspire the lifelong reconstruction of experience and Self that music can and should promote. When music is understood actively in terms of its ‘doing’—as musicking—then the ‘doing’ of it becomes empirical evidence of its value to the ‘doers’. ‘Doing’ music is appreciating music! Different kinds of musicking evidence different kinds of appreciation. When music education focuses curriculum on increasing opportunities for and the praxis of lifelong musicking, success and failure of teaching and learning—the musical ‘health’ of students—can be judged tangibly. Then, the improved benefits of music education will readily become apparent by and for students and society.

Notes

¹ Aside from various progressive experiments, vocational schools, much language instruction, and the “new physical education” (predicated, in part, on promoting a lifelong interest in individual sports hobbies), schooling overall is typically distanced from real-life. If the latter were the focus, rather than “subjects” based on the accumulated literature of academic disciplines, school curriculum would have a decidedly more pragmatic character. Then, the difference would be students who were both more interested in their studies (because they could see the usefulness of them) and, because they can use what they learn, who will continue to build

on it in functional ways by using it. The problem varies, of course, from country to country, and even within countries and large school systems. Yet, the basic role of schooling in today's world continues to be chained to dominant practices of the past and is distanced from much, if not most, of everyday life relevance.

² Notably, a philosophy of management called "Scientific Management," advocated by industrial engineer Fredrick W. Taylor around 1910 in America. Aside from being applied worldwide to management and planning in virtually all the major industries of the time, from 1915-1930 Taylor's model was increasingly implemented in schools. It has had considerable impact to this day on the organization and management of schools in many countries, and on teaching praxis; administrators became 'managers' more than educators ("the principal"—or headmaster—originally meant "principal teacher"), teachers became 'section bosses', and students became 'workers'. In fact, until children reach school, they typically can't distinguish between the words "work" and "play." Shortly after starting school, "work" becomes what teachers demand, as in "homework," and the natural play of learning is progressively lost. For details on Taylorism, see: K. B. DeMarrais and M. D. LeCompte, *The Way Schools Work*, 3rd Ed. New York: Longman, 1999; 74-79.

³ This word needs to be examined. If being "taught" something means only that 'it' was 'delivered' to students in some form, then the all-too convenient cop-out arises of, "Well, I taught it to them; if they forgot, it's their fault." If being "taught" something means an instructional process that results in effective, functional *learning*, then clearly too little gets taught in traditional schooling. Thus, it is helpful to observe at least a technical distinction between "instruction" and "teaching," understanding the latter as applying in situations where effective learning is the result of instruction. In contrast, common use of "taught" allows the fallacy that simply delivering instruction is "teaching," and that a separate stage called "evaluation" (i.e., "testing") determines for the very short-term whether what was "taught was caught" (most usually according to non-authentic means and tasks). Even in this two-step process, the common assumption is that the students (with the complicity of society, parents, TV, sports, computers, etc.) are to blame when such "teaching" doesn't result in "learning" as shown by school tests. In addition, there is the so-called "hidden curriculum" where students learn indirectly, without being instructed, a variety of ideas, values, dispositions that are either educationally negative or unintended (e.g., that "the music of my ethnic group is not important enough to be included in the formal curriculum") or are contrary to the explicit curriculum (e.g., that "I am no good in music because I didn't get into choir"). Despite these technical distinctions, I shall use "taught" and "teaching" in their imprecise colloquial sense.

⁴ Why does it so rarely occur to so many teachers that they start from the position of *love* for their art, but that the students don't? Or that teaching 'about' the art, on the assumption that academic knowledge and information are necessary to or breed 'appreciation', as often as not turns off students? Furthermore, has it gone unnoticed that the intensity some teachers have for their art is almost of the same kind exhibited by some over-zealous religious evangelists and itself can be off-putting, particularly to adolescents who are not typically interested in being 'converted' to or from anything by adults? And, finally, what of teachers of the arts who teach in

a way that is calculated more to *protect* the art from the typical student, rather than to entice students and to make the art more accessible not more formidable (or ‘forbid-able’)? All of the above questions assume a true love for the art; but who hasn’t experienced a teacher for whom year after year teaching it has become like driving a subway train, with the same ennui on the part of the ‘passengers’ who are dragged along?

⁵ Lack of this ‘basic’ understanding has led to countless idiocies, from people who say with conviction, “The theory of evolution has never been proved,” to “That’s OK in theory, but it doesn’t work in practice.” The latter is a common cop-out of teachers who prefer not to become familiar enough with a new (to them) theory to ‘practice’ its benefits for students’ learning, thus continuing with their personal and comfortable but shopworn educational theories. Who was it who said, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory”?

⁶ This was as true in the US as anywhere, one difference being the inclusion of music education in schools so that students might read music from their hymnals. For a classic account of the historical emergence of cultural hierarchy in America, one that develops only a few decades later than its European models, see: Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

⁷ Who talked too loudly, dressed ‘inappropriately’, talked during performances and clapped at the wrong time, brought food (etc.); see Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow*, 171-242 for details of the evolution of the “sacralization” of the arts whereby houses of Culture were transformed into houses of worship.

⁸ On the perceived need for such ‘training’, see *ibid.*, 213-219.

⁹ Thus producing a “standard” student, the usual result of any “standards” and “standardizing” in schooling. One might question why music educators, who otherwise might consider themselves part of the “creative arts,” would be interested in producing a musically “standard” student. Teachers simultaneously committed to “standards” and “aesthetic education” thus must seek *standardized aesthetic education*, an oxymoron if ever there was one!

¹⁰ And in some countries, such classes also provide a legally required “break” for the regular classroom teacher while the students are with the music teacher. In many communities where music education is otherwise under pressure for its survival, this is often a major reason for continuing to have music class in the schedule at all.

¹¹ Also commonly referred to as the ‘immunity theory’ where, as with certain diseases, once you have ‘had’ a course, you are immune from ever having to have it again!

¹² This is an odd term. It often seems to be used as a synonym for curriculum; however, at least as far as ensembles are concerned, the “program” amounts typically only to instruction for performing a certain literature over a given period of years. It is not even clear that the literature is necessarily chosen for long-term educational benefits, as opposed to its programming appeal for audiences, competitions, festivals, and the like. And whether or how the ensemble program of a school is connected to the overall music *curriculum* of the school is at best unclear, and doubtful.

¹³ The same mistake can be made when (in countries where school sports are important) the success of the school's extracurricular sports teams is taken as an indication of the effectiveness of the physical education curriculum for all students.

¹⁴ Despite the noble sounding rationale of "music education as aesthetic education," most of the tangible benefits cited to legitimate typical approaches to ensembles involve social growth, learning cooperation, and the development of discipline and personal responsibility. These benefits, of course, are (or should be) a focus of all studies in a student's general education and by themselves cannot legitimate music instruction.

¹⁵ There is a difference! An important one. A properly praxial music education exhibits tangible music learning and progress of a pragmatic nature but, given the intangibles associated with aesthetic experience, aesthetic education does not! Without empirical evidence of "aesthetic" learning and progress, then, the putative benefits of aesthetic education are held as a matter of blind faith.

¹⁶ A new feature of the MayDay Group website (www.maydaygroup.org) is an eColumn by composer, critic, and educator Greg Sandow, called "The future of classical music," in which he, at two-week intervals, 'rehearses' an on-line book that begins with a quite dim view of the present situation with audiences for classical music, and analyzes many of the current problems of audience development.

¹⁷ A new feature of the MayDay Group website (www.maydaygroup.org) is an eColumn hosted by community music specialists from three countries, that explores the promise offered by music education in a community setting—a trend, if it becomes that, that may begin to redefine "music education" in much broader terms and re-align "school music" with music in and of the community. See, too, *ArtsPraxis*, an e-journal examining innovations in the arts for both school and community contexts, edited by MayDay Group members David J. Elliott and Kari Veblen (<http://www.intljcm.com>); and <http://musekids.org>, a community-based music education project developed by MayDayGroup member and ethnomusicologist (or 'sociomusicologist', a term he has coined) Charles Keil (see n. 29 below).

¹⁸ Neil Postman, *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*. New York: Delacorte, 1980.

¹⁹ Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Penguin, 1971

²⁰ In part, this is because the values and concepts of the past cannot simply be 'transmitted' in the sense of 'transported' or 'passed on' *tout court* or *tout compris* because they are holistically wed to the terms and complexly synergic historical situations that begot them or by which they were modified over time. From the 21st century, there is no twenty-twenty hindsight of the past. "Traditions" and other values take their form in the past, according to the meanings, standards, conditions, needs, and situated practices of the time, but they are inevitably understood through the lens and needs of the present (and that is true for how the past saw the traditions it inherited). Thus, even attempts to 'pass on' traditions and values change them. For example, musical performance practices today in classical music may be informed by history, but comparisons to early recordings show that the traditional pedagogical theory of "my teacher taught me . . . , and his teacher taught him . . . , (etc) back to Beethoven himself" results in the same changes over

time as any aural-oral process of transmission. See, Charles Rosen, "Playing Music: The Lost Freedom," *The New York Review of Books* (November 3, 2005, 47-50), an essay-review of Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2005.

²¹ Estelle Jorgensen has spoken of "transforming music education" in her recent book of that title (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2003) that continues themes from her earlier *In Search of Music Education* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997) where she outlined "a dialectical view of music education." However, following a tradition that concluded with Kant, she sees dialectics as a kind of discourse searching for some point of balance or consensus between competing arguments that resolves the tension, not as the kind of continuing interplay of "dialectical moments" detailed by Hegel which result in a superior, hybrid synthesis that creates ever-new dialectical moments (new and more powerful dialectical concepts and tensions) and thus the kind of progressive understanding and possibilities for tangible action that result from each new advance in the dialectical process. For more on dialectics in relation to music education, see, Thomas A. Regelski, "A ride on the dialectical seesaw," *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 7 (March 1975); 28-33—though the title furnished by the editor (nor the graphic similarly provided), implying a balance-point, does not accurately reflect the analysis.

²² This, of course, involves not "throwing out the baby with the bath water," a parry often made when anyone dares to suggest wholesale change. This danger must be avoided, but the attempt cannot be allowed to preserve the detritus.

²³ <http://www.maydaygroup.org/php/actionideals.php>

²⁴ Soon, an eColumn dealing with music and educational technology will be maintained on the MayDay Group website (www.maydaygroup.org) to help music educators keep up to date in this rapidly changing field.

²⁵ A term coined by sociologist Ben Agger. See his *Critical Social Theory: An Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

²⁶ This is not, however, an argument against pure or basic research; rather, it is an argument for more and better research that can inform teaching music. Among other virtues, such more relevant (i.e., useful) research is more likely to be attended to by teachers and teacher-educators than the preponderance of esoterica filling journals and monographs at present.

²⁷ See, for example, Kurt Blaukopf, *Musical Life in a Changing Society*. Portland OR: Amadeus Press, 1992; John Shepherd, *Music as Social Text*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991; Kathleen Marie Higgins, *The Music of Our Lives*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991; Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2000; Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*. New York: Routledge, 2004; Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, eds. *Music and the Racial Imagination*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000. A series of Essay Reviews of the last three books cited, with replies by the authors, are respectively Vol. 2, No. 1 (December 2003), Vol. 4, No. 3 (September 2005), and Vol. 5, No. 1 of *Action, Criticism, and Change for Music Education*, <http://www.maydaygroup.org/ACT>. Each book is analyzed and critiqued specifically in relation to implications for and issues in music and music education.

²⁸ Willam Benzon, *Beethoven's Anvil: Music and Mind in Culture*. New York: Basic Books, 2001; 184, 164 respectively.

²⁹ Indeed, it is often not even “good for” audience listening. However, too many teachers think that “multiculturalism” and “pluralism” are advanced by listening lessons featuring ‘examples’ of “world” musics in their classes, as though such music is intended for listening or could or should be listened to self-sufficiently for contemplative pleasure. To the contrary, ethnomusicologists are always faced with the dilemma of wanting to record such musics for preservation and study purposes while realizing that what can be sound-recorded is not fully “the music.” Virtually everything social involved in the musicking of the moment—dance, costumes, movement, interaction, ceremony, ritual (etc)—is lost in sound recordings; thus recorded ‘examples’ played in classes fail to properly capture the full sense of the holistic praxis, “the music.” See, Charles Keil and Steven Feld. *Music Grooves*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

³⁰ Benzon, *Beethoven's Anvil*, 25. As he clarifies later, “However important it is that we understand events inside individual heads, we must also understand how the neural processes in these heads are affected by coupling” (77)—viz., of brains and minds via, in particular, music and, generally, culture.

³¹ A related problem is worth mentioning, though it cannot be examined in depth. That is the “how to/what to teach” dimension of *student teaching*. Presently the assumption is that student teachers ‘teach’ whatever curriculum is (supposedly) in place during the student teaching internship. However, typically, that curriculum is equally taken for granted by the cooperating teacher and, just as typically, the neophyte teacher apes both the “how to” and the taken for granted “what” is taught, and just as typically fails to be concerned with long-term results—thus perpetuating *a paradigm of focusing on the delivery of individual lessons*. The apparent success of “instructing” a particular lesson or “conducting” a certain rehearsal is the immediate short-term ‘unit’ of interest, concern, and evaluation by and of student teachers (and often that amounts to whether the lesson went smoothly, without behavioral problems, not with what, if anything, was learned). And, not surprisingly, the assumption that “good results” (in the long-term) are the automatic result of “good delivery” of this or that lesson (for the short-term) leads beginning and later experienced teachers to continue the short-term thinking and practices initiated in and by student teaching.

³² Many music educators are unaware of the various health problems that are created by performing and listening to music. Some of these problems amount to professional mal-practice by teachers and some are even ending up in courts or in other legal proceedings. See <http://www.maydaygroup.org/php/ecolumns/musicandhealth.php> for an eColumn hosted by Leon Thurman that offers considerable fund of information on “music and health” Music educators also can create or contribute to problems of mental health where, for example, conspicuous embarrassment and failure can be devastating for more than a few adolescents.

