

“GIANT STEPS”:

Forming a New Concept of Music Education

Brian McGillen, 2006

Preface

That which follows is the product of two years of nurture and growth, sprouting from a seed I planted as I started my undergraduate studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. The project has defined itself slowly, my original concept being, quite broadly, “music education,” and I have spent a good deal of time exploring topics that I eventually abandoned altogether. It was not time wasted, however, as I have found that good ideas evolve in the mind slowly and only after having turned around from many dead ends. In its final form, this paper represents the radical changes in my philosophy that emerged as I was completing the project. That said, I passionately believe that completely throwing my mind into contemplation of the idea – the concept itself – of music education has invited profound thoughts that one does not stumble upon easily.

Patently seeking out meaningful ideas in this way is something that I have ultimately come to believe would be of great benefit to the institution of music education. Yet we seem to resist it, frustrated by the questions that arise for which we have no answer. We leave philosophy to philosophers, but they are but leaders in a process into which we must throw ourselves if we thirst for positive change. At the very least, philosophical thinking needs to find its way into the academy, and must be especially embraced by undergraduates as they form expectations that may last their entire career. Students must take hold of their education if they value it. We cannot

learn idly.

Fear that the profession is not taking reform seriously has consumed me more than the interest that I have in possibilities for reform. Therefore, articulating my philosophy is not the primary purpose of this essay, though it is impossible to comment on the reform process without expressing the need for reform. Here, my desires for the future of music education may expose themselves, but they should not become a central part of the essay.

Is the institution of music education open to change? Do the institution's professionals understand music education too narrowly? Are we challenging ourselves philosophically? Does the organization of music education invite new concepts? These are the central questions of this essay.

To begin the essay, I claim that constant reform keeps education alive and in good health, and then I look at how the institution of music education handles these calls for reform. I will clarify this perspective in the second section by drawing the distinction between meaningful, conceptual change and weak, accommodating change. In the final section, I focus on the undergraduate pre-service music teacher. How can he be a pioneer and create new concepts of music education and not fall into the habit of reproducing old ways of teaching that are perceived as normal? Finally, in the first and last section there is a "Defining Moment" section, a narrative section that describes moments that strongly shaped the views presented in this essay.

SECTION I

The Need for Change

Calls for reform in music education are nothing new or unusual. I am certain that talk of

change has existed ceaselessly since music education was institutionalized. It is so pervasive that I believe it is essential to the profession, a necessary check for an institution prone to wandering off course and defining itself according to abstract regimented sets of practices.

Institutionalized education ought to reflect the evolving needs of society, yet, as established, it is resistant to change. To elaborate on this phenomenon, I will first speak of education generally and draw the implications for music education later as the concept forms.

Education, as I idealize it, would thrive if the teacher held absolute freedom in making choices in guiding learning and had an infallible sense of what knowledge would be most useful for the learner. The teacher would be constantly adapting to the changing learner. Verily, clarifying what knowledge is “right” for the learner is fickle business; men do not come standard and neither does their environment. To suggest that a single understanding of the world is proper is to say that we all experience that which falls before us identically; therefore, education idealized embraces individuality. I do not mean to suggest that culture is not valuable; rather, society and its patterns, beliefs, arts, institutions, and other products have no inherent value and rather have value only in their service of the individual. The individual’s life is enriched by the social and cultural aspects of his existence, but no particular culture needs to be preserved for its own sake.

This vision of education is unrealistic in application; the teacher I described who completely understands his learner does not exist. Further, the teacher could not teach two students simultaneously and would need to spend an amount of time so great developing a curriculum for just a single learner that another one could not be accommodated. The closer education comes to this idealization, the fewer the people that can be educated.

Collective activity, like public school education, expands the opportunities available to the individual while simultaneously diminishing the importance of the individual. The education system is organized to satisfy collective interests efficiently and effectively. With standard goals established as approximations of societal interests, education can be structured to make teaching more students easier. Witness the creation of curriculum guides, which lifts some of the weight of decision-making off of teachers. System organization goes deeper. Knowledge is split into subjects, units, and topics, and teachers may specialize in a particular subject. Then evaluation is standardized, judging students' progress toward the goals of the system (nevermind knowledge that is not on the test at the end of the year). It is packaged so that the most people can learn and teachers can still have a manageable amount of work.

To work within the system, teachers must specialize their knowledge to fit one of the molds we find in education; the music teacher specialist arises in such an environment. Even more divisions in the system are made as music teachers train specifically to teach band, orchestra, chorus, or general music, or specialize in Orff, Kodaly, or Dalcroze pedagogies among others. In such an educational climate, the importance of the individual is diminished as students become "machine-made." I might call myself, for example, the Clarinet model running on a Kodaly engine.

There is an obvious conflict between my idealization of education and the organized educational system in reality. The conflict needs to be resolved to optimize student learning; the resolution might be summarized as "pluralistic offerings in an organized system."¹ To a degree,

¹See, for example, a recent special focus edition of the "*Music Educators' Journal*" entitled "Reconceptualizing Curriculum". See especially: Betty Hanley and Janet Montgomery, "Challenges to Music Education: Curriculum Reconceptualized," *Music Educators' Journal*, vol.

this is what the current educational system looks like, and it seems that current trends in thought attempt to push education closer to my idealization (and making teaching that much harder). At the same time, however, efforts to standardize curriculum continue, justified by concerns over teacher accountability. It is testament to the volatility of today's educational climate that at the same time that NCLB is extending itself into our schools, ideas about a looser curriculum like those mentioned in the article cited above are coming into the mainstream of educational thought.

Moreover, where we put education on this spectrum has other, more severe, implications, and it is here that I return to the concern I expressed at the beginning of this section pertaining to reform and the education system. Very simply, system organization resists change. Through the establishment of very specific sets of practices, the profession defines its role narrowly. As the practice of music education becomes more organized, the conceptual understanding of their role held by music educators becomes more rigid. With a strong understanding of who they are already set, music educators hardly have their ears open to calls for change.

Change and adaptation are imperative to keeping education alive. The transmission of understanding occurs through education, and the progress of the past provides the foundation for the progress of the future. As currents of thought evolve, education must be constantly updated to remain relevant to the society that supports it. That said, I admit that I often ask myself, "To what end are we progressing?" While I am unconvinced that man lives any happier today than he did a thousand years ago, I am certain that he would find misery never known if he abandoned his pursuit for new knowledge and became satisfied with one grasp of the world. Education

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needs to follow man on his journey through thought, never supposing that the experience of the man of the past will satisfy the man of today. John Mueller suggests we treat this instability of thought, when found in a social context, to which I believe education belongs, as “. . . a dynamic, ongoing concern, accepting the natural necessity of continuous competition of interests, and consequently of continuous compromise, a constant readiness and alertness to change, and a *concurrent restatement of what we consider as truth, right, and beauty.*”² Mueller would urge teachers to never believe that they can repeat the same lesson exactly. Instead, we, as teachers, must run to catch up with our students, whose lives are on the edge of discovery, the front of progress. Keeping instruction relevant requires a constant reevaluation of what is relevant. If education is to stay alive and healthy, everyone involved in the institution must adopt such a perspective.

In my idealized concept of education, this necessary educational evolution could occur easily and completely. As education moves toward the other end of the spectrum and becomes organized and standardized, making necessary adaptations is increasingly difficult. The resulting problems are obvious and might include the following: (1) Teachers spend little time on content that might be important for their students because the content is not part of standardized evaluation; (2) Advanced skills are difficult to develop because the system focuses excessively on easily described, quantifiable skills; (3) Teachers, produced as technicians of the education system, are often unwilling to open discussion to student interests or concerns, and instead silence them so that their lesson can be delivered easily; (4) Teachers have difficulty making

²John H. Mueller, “Music and Education: A Sociological Approach.” Basic Concepts in Music Education, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago), 1958, 89.

interdisciplinary connections and are hard-pressed to answer student questions that are important to the student but outside the scope of the teacher's specialized knowledge.

Music education suffers from over-organization more than most other subjects. The system rejects changes in thought about the education of music, built strong by tradition, and twists musical study to fit its rigid molds (the latter a problem that will be the subject of the second section of this essay). I will develop this argument as I describe the music education system in the United States.

The American Music Education Machine

No setting of music education in America deserves more scrutiny and careful development than the public school. Here, music education finds its greatest number of students and carries the honor of being publicly supported and mandated. Equality echoes clearly here; "Music for every child," public school teachers proudly proclaim. As the predominant source of music education in America, music education in the public schools should be on the leading edge of change and innovation, its teachers acting as pioneers, not technicians. And yet, when I look, I see an alarming narrowness in what ought to be the honored home of music education.

Music education in American schools really means Western art music education. The heavyweights of the system (the bands, orchestras, and choruses) are performing groups born from this tradition, and their repertoire is still grounded within this tradition. I use "Western art music" broadly, meaning to include its close relatives; e.g., music for wind ensemble or marching band, jazz music adapted for large ensembles, and "school music." It is music that is notated strictly and in which the composer has already made most of the choices for the performer. Also,

it is generally performed with a conductor and rehearsed in a setting that stresses a hierarchy with the teacher at the top. Calls for multicultural approaches to music instruction have been strangled by these “one sound” ensembles that rehearse all music as if preparing a classical symphony (although implementing a curriculum focusing on diverse musics in the general music classroom is quite feasible if the teacher is flexible). Multiculturalism as I understand it need not refer to less familiar music of non-Western cultures; it includes other more familiar musical cultures such as gospel, rock, and bluegrass that define our total culture. Rather than perform this music with authentic instrumentation, composers attempt to integrate elements of this music into the Western idiom. And these composers are all trained in Western compositional techniques! A borrowed rhythm or pentatonic scale from another culture’s music does not bring the colors of different cultures into the classroom; rather, it makes “educational music” seem even more inauthentic. Furthermore, the setting in which students learn this music must be authentic as well. Students gain an incomplete understanding of what music-making means if they only learn it in an orchestral rehearsal setting with a conductor. (*Research about positive experiences learning music in informal settings*)

Michael Mark tells us that this lack of appreciation for diversity in music was a perennial problem up until the 1960s. He suggests that music education was once a tool of the “melting pot,” and “played an important role in trying to homogenize a highly diverse population” He admits, “This unbalanced approach probably failed to interest many pupils in art music,” but adds, “Music educators were not to blame, though. They were helping to implement a massive social movement to assimilate immigrants and their children.”³ A homogeneous culture might

³Michael Mark, Contemporary Music Education, 3rd ed., (Schirmer: London), 1996, 9.

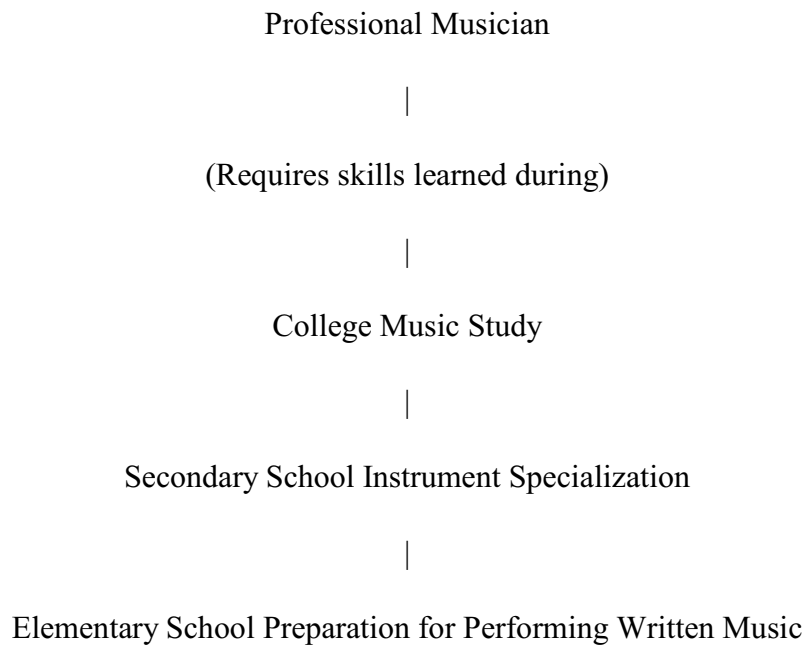
have seemed appealing at the turn of the twentieth century, but the preservation of a strong national identity may be a memory of the past in the new millennium's increasingly global society. Besides that, is Western art music really even at the center America's music culture? The country is young and historically diverse, and the style crossed the ocean with immigrants from Europe. We might argue that its prevalence in American music education represents a tool of oppression against those with non-European heritage. Any imposition of culture is arguably oppressive, and this is especially true in an immature nation like the United States; it is difficult to argue for the preservation of cultural homogeneity because United States culture is hardly defined.

Regardless of how we argue the merits of a diverse or a homogenous culture, Mark seems to believe that the problem of a lack of diversity in American music education was resolved in the 1960s.⁴ I believe that changes in response to calls for reform were superficial or insubstantial. I argued earlier that when ideas from other cultures are integrated into Western art music, the result is still fundamentally Western art music. While the audience member or administrator may be satisfied with this outward appearance of multiculturalism, it is unrealistic to believe that students received any serious challenge to their musical expectations. Again, the problem lies in the specialized ensembles through which we teach music; the wind ensemble, for example, is simply not equipped to play the music of most cultures in the world. System structure resists change.

Organization around the Western art music idiom lies even deeper in the American school system. The public school music education system acts as an extension of college music

⁴Ibid., 10

programs based on the European conservatory, as a tool to select and encourage qualified candidates to become professional musicians.



Higher levels of education put pressure on lower levels to prepare students for advanced study, even though some students will not continue their studies. Thus, music education at the lower levels is excessively concerned with teaching students prerequisite knowledge and cannot change without affecting the higher levels. Organization this deep creates a formidable barrier to change as small changes have large consequences. This is especially the case in elementary general music, where knowledge is taught that has little importance beyond preparing students for performance of Western art music in ensembles. Could an elementary school teacher reasonably change from a focus on music making from notation to music making by ear in such a system? Even students performing in ensembles suffer from a curriculum that is trapped in a larger system. Middle schools must prepare students for high school ensembles and high schools

must prepare students for college ensembles. Changes in educational content at any level are made to the detriment of the goals of the higher level.

That said, two flaws in such a view come to mind. First, it neglects the positive impact performance in ensembles can have on students, even if they do not follow the career path to become professional musicians. Certainly the benefits are many; besides their greater understanding of ensemble performance and music-making, students learn to be disciplined and work cooperatively. Some even continue to play their instruments or sing in amateur ensembles throughout their lives. Often the benefits of music education seem to remain invisible, but I am sure that they exist. Even as I hear countless number of people tell me, “I used to play the trumpet,” I remain convinced that an education in music has benefitted them. But I also wonder whether that majority of students who do not continue to become professional classical musicians would not be better served by a broader, more general education in music. I think with delight upon the many positive, diverse experiences that they could have in the time that is spent perfecting one way of making music. And what a challenging music it is; Western art music may be the most difficult music to master that humans have created! Does the average school student musician ever reach a level of understanding where he is free to express himself, or is he forever stuck as a technician, engaged in a simple task of decoding notation?

Second, it can be argued that part of the role of education is to refine students’ interests and help them develop vocation. Indeed, education serves this purpose, but a better balance needs to be struck between teaching for those that will specialize in music and those that will not. Bennett Reimer writes, “The mistake we have made in general music, often made in other subjects as well, is to have so overemphasized the professional/amateur aspects of education (that

is, the specialized knowings and doings those levels demand) as to have overly neglected the base of our responsibility—the overwhelming majority of people who do not and will not aspire to those levels.” Reimer suggests that three types of interest in music exist—the professional interest, the amateur interest, and the aficionado interest—and recommends the most attention be paid to the aficionado, and the least to the professional.⁵ Public school music education has a responsibility to challenge and train the advanced student, but not at the expense of the average student’s education.

The general music classroom seems to offer what specialized programs in performance cannot. Here, students can change their musical roles freely and frequently (rather than being committed to playing an instrument part). Success in reaching beyond the Western art music idiom is seen in the various approaches to teaching world music in today’s curricula. Even this setting, however, suffers from being resistant to change. In addition to the problems described above, it should be mentioned that the instructors of these general music classes are all trained in a Western art music conservatory setting and usually know little about any music other than classical music. Music instruction from these teachers, regardless of the content, is tainted by Western art music ideas and goals. Furthermore, general music suffers from curriculum content that succumbs to faddishness. The numerous general music textbooks that seem to offer an easy solution to music education are written around educational fads that quickly become outdated. Well-known methodologies, like those of Orff and Kodaly, also provide a structure for music teachers that is difficult to change. Adaptation, food for music education, is blocked by these prescriptions for education.

⁵Bennett Reimer, A Philosophy of Music Education, 3rd ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), 2003, 255.

Moving students from general music instruction to more specialized musical instruction as they start to define a musical identity for themselves makes sense, and the current system operates according to this philosophy. Unfortunately, the current system of specialization is counterproductive. Students are routed into an instrument specialization too early – often as early as the fourth grade – at which time they frequently lack the foundational skills required to perform music well, especially on complicated instruments. While teaching basic skills to students who have specialized in an instrument is possible, the process is confounded by the heterogeneity of ensembles, external expectations for concert performances and the expectation set by secondary school ensemble directors to produce good note-readers. Furthermore, students are being forced to define the future emphasis of their musical studies at a young age when their musical preferences may not be fully developed. As they discover their musical identity, they may or may not choose to continue specialized study in the instrument (or in voice) that they have chosen. They may even decide that their musical interests lie outside the offerings of traditional school ensembles. What is the role of the public school in defining students’ musical interests? Given the difficulty in instructing students with vastly different goals or with different instruments, should the public school take a more general approach that supplies students with the musical tools to pursue their own goals individually or guided by private study? How we define the role of the public schools in music education will determine the extent of reform that is necessary and how deep it must penetrate into the system.

A Vital Role?

We might argue that, in continuing the Western art music tradition, American schools

play a narrow, yet vital function in society. If we view schools as extensions of the imported European conservatory system in America, they play a very specific role in our musical culture. Indeed, I hear it argued a good deal that music education in the public schools is *charged* with preserving this classical art form. Within this statement we find the universalist claim that this music, when properly understood, will bring the most satisfaction of any music to all people. Music education saves us from failing to see what is great in this music.

It seems that the institution of music education may be failing itself, however, as attendance in concert halls around the country continues to decline. Is this music relevant to our culture anymore? Do we teach it because we have a strong justification for doing so, or because it is what we have always done?

At the same time, seeing this music fade away would bring me great dissatisfaction. Despite seeing no strong philosophical justifications to teach it, I *want* to pass along my love of this music. This is a contradiction that must bother many in the profession. Peter Kivy writes of his struggle justifying the inclusion of music in a liberal education in his essay, “Music and the Liberal Education.”⁶

Thus, it seems, I have come again to a distressing conclusion that there is no real rational justification for requiring students of the humanities to be familiar with such masterworks of the Western musical tradition as Beethoven’s Third Symphony. But why should I say that this is a “distressing” conclusion? Why should I not simply accept it with equanimity? Well, that is because I find myself confronted here with something in the form of a familiar kind of philosophical dilemma: a very strong inclination to believe that something is the case; and not for lack of trying, no acceptable argument to *show* it is the case. I am a very serious performer on a musical instrument; and I have spent a good part of my

⁶Peter Kivy, “Music and the Liberal Education,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1991), 79-93.

career in philosophy writing on musical subjects. I am up to my ears in music.”⁷

These are problems without an easy resolution. But I pose this question: If we ceased to teach Western art music to the degree that we do now in the public school, would it soon stop being performed and consumed? Do great musical traditions fail so easily? Or would the other players in the transmission of this music simply take a larger role?

These questions lead to a question that I think the music education profession needs to face. *Is the public school the most appropriate place to teach Western art music?*

Of course, neither answer to this question would mean taking Western art music completely out of the public school music curriculum. Rather, it calls to question whether it deserves such a dominant place in this curriculum.

Broadening the scope of music education makes sense in today’s global society. America’s population continues to become more diverse, and the walls of cultural separation around the globe are quickly crumbling. How, then, do we determine *what* music is appropriate for the public school? A complete answer is beyond the scope of this essay, though I suggest these criteria in selecting which styles of music to teach: accessibility, diversity of sound and mode of transmission, and potential for interdisciplinary connections. Ultimately, which styles we choose are unimportant, excepting that it is essential that we learn the music of our own culture, as they are but experiences on our students’ way towards larger goals we set.

Defining Moment

Beauty! Is this the aesthetic experience? I wonder.

⁷Ibid. pg. 88

I am listening to a recording of the Mozart Requiem and the fourth movement, the Tuba mirum, sweeps me from reality. A bass voice begins calmly in duet with a single trombone, a stately and elegant recitation. Suddenly, a tenor voice enters, breaking the peaceful state the bass voice and horn had carved for me. Supported by the more pressing timbre of his string accompaniment, he sings a melody of piercing grief. Enters the alto voice, lifting the melody recited by the tenor even higher. Finally, the soprano voice comes, taking the melody out of the depths of melancholy to a new soaring hope. She reaches what seems to be a definitive statement of hope and the melody floats with shimmering simplicity. Then, at what feels to be the height of my emotional response to the music, the statement is repeated, harmonized by the three voices that sang earlier. I close my eyes in a moment of euphoria, trapping myself in the heavenly sound. I feel as if I've reached the pinnacle of human experience. As the movement ends, I sigh and remove myself from the music, my entire body shaken.

This is an experience that I would like other people to enjoy I think. Yet I can't shake the feeling that I hardly have the power to do so. I think about the great majority of my classmates from grade school, who, despite being taught in the Western classical tradition for twelve years, never listened to classical music on their own and would certainly never perform it again since graduating. If I were to play the recording to them now, would they be affected at all or would they shake their heads and snicker in misunderstanding? Twelve years of education to grasp the heavenly beauty of Mozart, and no one wants to.

But there are the few that do! For them I teach! We teach to uncover talent, not create it, perhaps. Gratifying as this is to believe, I still am not satisfied that 95% of students leave having gained almost nothing (though they do add performing music to their list of life

experiences — I used to play the clarinet I hear too often). Where is the democracy in that?

How it pains me to attack you, close friend of mine whom I know so well and love dearly!

But are you the music of an elitism that I denounce? Are you the music for everyone?

I have reached a troublesome impasse.

The Question of High Art

The assumption underlying the arguments I have made above is that there is no one ideal version of human experience that fits every person (Recall my argument: “To suggest that a single understanding of the world is proper is to say that we all experience that which falls before us identically”). The idea fits in my worldview easily; it is not as congruent, however, with the history of thought in music education and, more broadly, in arts education. The notion of a “high art” still endures in the hearts of many educators, the concept part of the larger organization that threatens to push music education to an irrelevant place in our society. This is not the place to suggest new ways to place value on art; instead, I will suggest several reasons why current beliefs in the supremacy of “high art” are flawed and are ill-suited for the public school education system.

The label “high art” suggests a divinely inspired perfection and implies that there is a value in studying such art that does not exist in other art. Making such a distinction between good art and bad art is not misguided; indeed, some art offers greater insights, more valuable lessons, and stronger impressions than other art. We go astray when we assume that high art exists only in the Western art music idiom. And we misguide ourselves still further if we believe that the study of Western art music will give our students the tools to discriminate between good

and bad music in other idioms.

Often, as Mueller notes, “the criterion of long life of a composition gain[s] recognition as a criterion of merit.”⁸ Have not we witnessed the rise of jazz to the edge of high art status in the last century, with the public education system finally deciding that it is “worthy” of study? Jazz, like Western art music, has grown its own elite audience through the passage of time. There is danger in this criterion of music, it serving what Mueller describes as “the monopoly of the classics as a dead hand of the past, which preempts the ‘rightful’ place of contemporary products.”⁹ For students of music, such a view of music is restrictive and discouraging. The successes of the past being recognized as supreme, students try to grow musically through imitation rather than exploration. When this takes place, music is inspired by old rules rather than present insights and ideas; creativity is suppressed and artistic progress is defeated.

If we are to teach students to find power of expression through music, we can certainly not limit them by suggesting a “high art” mentality. The student must feel safe to express himself in a way that is personally meaningful even if the product is less complex and refined than other art. Participation should be valued over perfection.

Systemic Problems

We cannot blame teachers directly for the mistakes that the institution of music education makes. Calls are made for student-centered instruction and comprehensive curricula, but educators are hard-pressed to implement these changes in a way that is intelligent and effective.

⁸Mueller, pg. 108

⁹Ibid.

The source of the problem is, simply, that the institution is not open to sizeable and meaningful changes.

Perhaps this lack of freedom given to music educators explains some of the issues afflicting the field. Has something gone sour in music education? Why is student enrollment in music education courses declining in some schools? Why have teacher burnout rates been rising? Why do we need to spend so much effort recruiting students into music programs and keeping them in them? Why is the musical culture students engage in outside of the classroom so different from that inside the classroom? We research these problems, but the cure might be less complicated than we suppose: teachers are teaching and students are learning music in a way that is not comfortable nor appropriate for either participant.

SECTION II

Changing Holistically

Music education in the public schools, having suffered from years under a strict paradigm, now exists as an anachronism in today's educational environment. To escape the fate that follows all things worn out, music educators must synthesize a profoundly new and different concept of music education, not merely make changes to the periphery of the old paradigm. Legitimacy in today's educational environment will come as teachers reorient their programs completely, changing their objectives and the modes in which music is taught.

On Modes of Teaching

Reviving music education, I feel, depends on letting the objectives we establish dictate

the mode of teaching, rather than letting the mode inform the objectives. I define “mode of teaching” in the context of this argument broadly to mean the methods, materials, and organizations teachers employ to foster learning. Instrumental, choral, and general music instruction are modes of teaching. Other examples include:

- Teaching in a rehearsal setting where the teacher takes the role of conductor
- Using notation to teach a song
- Teaching music in the jazz idiom
- Allowing students to lead their own ensembles

By limiting the number of modes of teaching we utilize, the breadth and depth of objectives we can achieve is restricted. We are limiting the potential of education! Open synthesis of appropriate objectives for a given class based on observation and interaction with the class, which are crucial elements in my idealization of education, cannot exist in a culture of repetition, habit, and passivity. Especially when music education is split into the categories of general, instrumental (subdivided further into band and orchestra), and choral, the breadth of musical experiences available to students is limited. Furthermore, there exist modes that are commonplace within these categories that guide our teaching very specifically. That an outsider might see little difference in what happens in a music classroom from day to day should be evidence that we are employing too few modes. To counter the negative effect that this has on student learning outcomes, we need to take an “objectives-before-mode” approach in which what we wish to achieve defines how we teach rather than the mode of teaching we employ defining what goals we are able to set for our student.

Often the music teacher whom we describe as one who knows how to teach well simply

knows how to disseminate knowledge efficiently, and we are impressed by this teacher's students who progress quickly in learning the material for the next standardized examination or performance test that they will take. These teachers often rely on few modes of teaching and repetition to make sure that their students "have" certain, very specific knowledge. I fear that we even treat musical expressiveness as a hard fact, teachers often breaking expressiveness into categories and actions with labels like "following dynamic markings." Though we fundamentally believe that it should not be so, music education has become concerned with the memorization and repetition of the qualities of "good" music. And suddenly, music, rife with creative potential, becomes standardized! I am tempted to write off the problem as a result of our methods of evaluation, a familiar scapegoat, but I know that this would not cure our illness, which lies quietly within us, hidden by our excessively defined understanding of what "music education ought to be."

Instead, I suggest that we construct a paradigm in which the music teacher builds on the traditional modes of music education but, while learning *alongside* his students, actively seeks new modes of instruction that reflect his new knowledge of his students, music, and the web of relationships that arise between the two. Eventually, the traditional modes of teaching might be abandoned altogether. This is consistent with my initial contention in this section; if we limit the number of ways in which music education can occur, we are limiting the positive effect that music education can have on our students. The relationship between students and music is especially important; only if careful attention is paid to how the student feels about music can the teacher help the student make meaningful connections with music.

This view might seem problematical for many who understand music education as

synonymous with musical transmission. Indeed, we ought to ask the question, “*How is music education?*” over and over again. I find Jorgensen’s description of the forms that music education takes very helpful in starting to answer this question in the context of the public school¹⁰. She uses the terms *schooling*, *training*, *education*, *socialization*, and *enculturation* to describe the forms that music education takes. For the purpose of this discussion, I will look at them in terms of the attitude they imply towards conservation and growth. It is important for us to realize that music education is responsible for both the preservation of sets of beliefs about music, which we can group into genres, and for the growth of progressively-minded musicians who will push the boundaries of music. Art is essentially discovery; if we remove this creative dimension, music will founder. How can we best cultivate creative individuals? Perhaps our attitude towards the education process serves as a model for how students should engage in making music; are we teaching dogmatically or with an openness to new ideas?

In answering these questions, Jorgensen’s categories are useful. Three of the categories listed above, schooling, training, and socialization are concerned with the continuation of a practice; the student takes on the role of an apprentice. In schooling, Jorgensen explains

“one is ‘formed’ or ‘patterned’ in a particular mold desired by a particular sponsoring group, institution or the public. Students are pointed in particular directions and constrained such that their independent, hedonistic tendencies are shaped into beliefs and actions that the school public deems desirable, and they follow paths laid out for them by their teachers . . . schooling provides an organized way of ensuring the survival of groups, institutions, and states . . .”¹¹

Schooling, in Jorgensen’s view, promises the continuation of the values, beliefs, and cultural

¹⁰Estelle Jorgenson, *In Search of Music Education*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 1997, 1-31.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 5

practices that society wishes to preserve. We cannot dismiss the worthiness of this goal; however, it is easy for the preservation of old traditions to turn into the suppression of creative-thinking and for the practice of education in this view to fall into a dangerous state of narrow-mindedness. Would this view of schooling favor looking at music in society holistically or would it favor teaching the few forms of music it “deems desirable”?

Similarly, training encourages a conservative approach to education by which the teacher assumes a dictatorial role and commands his students, imparting the skills and ideas in a content area that have accumulated throughout the past. Jorgensen writes, “Its appeal to reason, precedent, standardized procedure, predictability, reliability, and safety, among other things, explains its widespread popularity as a way of conceptualizing instrumental and vocal music.”¹² Training is concerned with procedural knowledge; this form of music education is frequently present in public school music education, as significant time must be spent developing the technical skills needed to meet the demands of music in Western art music idiom. Good expressive music making demands technical aptitude, but an overemphasis on training should be avoided. Spending years developing technical skills in students limits the range of musical experiences available to them as they must limit themselves to one way of interacting with music. This view of music, like schooling, constitutes a conservative approach to music education because it is more concerned with continuation of old practices than with exploration of new ideas in music.

The third conservative view, socialization, shares characteristics with schooling. Jorgensen writes:

¹²Ibid., 12

Socialization is the process whereby a group or institution inculcates its beliefs, values, and mores in its membership and ensures that its members continue to act in certain approved ways and hold particular shared beliefs. As such, it represents one of the social processes that characterize all groups and are essential to their survival. Without socialization, a group or institution cannot achieve and maintain a sense of unity by which members share values and expectations about how they should think and act individually and collectively.¹³

Like schooling, socialization can be viewed as essential but potentially oppressive. The school, in this view of education, powerfully controls the scope of the musical experiences to which a student has access. If a music program is structured around one set of ideas about music-making, it will demand that the student accept these ideas to become part of the social culture. Social pressure can promote a homogeneity of classroom experience that is unsuitable for some students; they may, however, still feel compelled to participate, having been given the impression that “this is what *we* do.”

Thus, it is very easy to understand learning music as joining a musical culture. Music, it is argued, is best learned experientially¹⁴; i.e., we know music by completely immersing in the role of the musician. We might fear that in removing ourselves from this traditional, largely informal process of musical transmission, we our looking at music from the outside, missing what is essential about music: music is an activity rich with social meaning. I might say that there are no ways to teach music other than in the ways that *belong* to the style of music being studied. For example, we would be misrepresenting classical orchestral music if we taught it without taking the role of a conductor. Becoming an artist is to a degree a matter of

¹³Ibid., 18

¹⁴In particular, David Elliot, Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1995.

socialization; we must approach our presentation of music with narrowness to an extent.

It is possible, however, to apply this idea of experiential learning in a multi-faceted approach to music education that allows students to experience many different ways of knowing music. I imagine a classroom in which students are exposed to both familiar and unfamiliar music that is wide in the scope of its differences and in which students have a plethora of modes of interaction: performing, listening and learning from expert musicians, learning by rote, learning by reading music, composing, etc. Here we ought to refer to the National Content Standards¹⁵, which would make much more sense if we were to push past the boundaries of the traditional music classroom. Implementing the national standards does not always make sense in a classroom that focuses on Western art music. For example, is it worthwhile to look into the historical background of a middle school orchestra piece written for its pedagogical opportunities, and is it entirely appropriate to play improvisation games in a band class that will be performing all of its music by reading notation? Instead, we ought to seek music to teach that is rich in historical meaning and music to teach that is largely improvisatory. In adopting an “objectives-before-mode” approach, we will be forced to leave one musical culture for another when another serves our objectives more effectively.

My critics might counter that no student will ever reach an expert level in any musical culture. To which I pose what I intend to be a question of critical importance: What is the role of the public school in music education? And can this education in music that we are providing not be easily obtained outside of the public school? What can the public school offer in music that

¹⁵“National Standards for Music Education,” [www.http://www.menc.org/publication/books/standards.htm](http://www.menc.org/publication/books/standards.htm), Accessed 5/23/06.

our society will deem valuable, even necessary? For while I do not disagree that learning to perform Western art music (and, as it is, occasionally some other music) in the schools is valuable, many would construe it as extracurricular learning, especially in today's educational climate obsessed with "fundamental" skills. Our current paradigm for music education in the public schools promotes a vulnerability to such criticisms. Too often we are narrow in our approach and teach in ways that make music class resemble the after-school sports or chess teams; the conservative understandings of education listed above easily fall under this accusation. Is there something broader with which we are concerned?

A conservative concept of music education limits a teacher in his use of varying modes of teaching. Furthermore, student objectives in a conservative approach seem more appropriate for the future music specialist than for the average person. Recall Reimer's description of the three types of learner interests: the professional, the amateur, and the aficionado interests. Using fewer modes of instruction expands the opportunities available to someone interested in becoming a specialist in the style of music being favored but reduces the opportunities available to someone wanting a more broad appreciation of music or instruction in another style.

An alternate paradigm that seeks to maximize the number of modes of teaching is more likely to teach a holistic understanding of music education. The student learns about music as an expressive means that is manifested in a variety of ways. Music is understood as it fits in human life, how it gives greater insight into what it means to be human. Under this paradigm, music education is a more integrated member of the total curriculum (self-examination and identity-building are major goals of education) and more defensible as a necessary subject. When we make meaningful self-expression through music more accessible to the average student, our

communities will become more convinced of the potential benefits of making music.

Meaningful Change

Expanding the objectives of music education, we have seen, is far from simple. We are limited by the modes of teaching we employ and a system that largely defines these modes. We expect new or changed objectives to yield significant change in the institution of music education, but the changes we have in mind are blocked by the core modes of instruction with which we have become accustomed. We might conceptualize in this way:

Systemic concept —> Possible modes of teaching —> Possible learner objectives

I have already suggested that it is important that learner objectives dictate modes of teaching rather than the reverse. We also suffer if the larger, restrictive organization described in the first section of this essay constricts the possibility of desirable learner objectives. Again, we must reverse the order:

Learner objectives —> Possible modes of teaching —> Possible systemic concept

In Section I, I argued that change is essential if we are to keep music education relevant to the learner; this can only occur if our understanding of our role as a music educator permits it. Reversing the order in which we effect change, as I have done in the second diagram, ensures that this will happen and that the change will be real.

However, many would object, calling a radical reworking of institutionalized music education an unnecessary step given today's increasingly comprehensive music curriculum. The National Content Standards seem to offer a convenient checklist for music educators to use to

ensure that they are offering students a multitude of musical experiences. The movement towards comprehensiveness has given birth to a multitude of “creative” instructional ideas that integrate diverse musical content into the traditional music class or ensemble rehearsal.

But I warn of a hidden danger in this sort of educational problem-solving that cleverly integrates extra objectives into the normal music curriculum; specifically, small changes to the way we conceptualize music education and carry it out will yield small changes to student achievement in the classroom. If content is taught in a cursory way, students will learn it in such a way, attributing a secondary importance to it. For example, does a band arrangement of African music really give students an understanding of what it is to be an African musician and what music in Africa means culturally?

In her book, Transforming Music Education¹⁶, Jorgensen describes nine images of transforming education that I find useful in the clarification of my argument. It is useful to characterize them in terms of meaningful change and peripheral change. I will attempt to summarize these terms below, largely in Jorgensen’s own words.

Modification	Reorganization of some elements or properties without changing a thing’s central condition or function
Accommodation	Embracing a willingness to compromise, to let go of things that are regarded as nonessential, and even to change those things regarded as distinctive or fundamental in order to ensure the survival of the system

¹⁶Estelle Jorgensen, Transforming Music Education, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 2003, 48-56.

Integration	An “add and stir” approach where new elements are combined in a mix that is sufficiently accommodating to enable them to coexist
Assimilation	One thing overpowers and absorbs another, forming a single more potent entity
Inversion	the order of things is turned upside down and values are reversed
Synthesis	blending opposite values into a larger idea, concept, or thing that might encompass both
Transfiguration	a profound and internal change that begins with the individual’s experience focusing on a convictional moment of insight that dramatically changes those who witness or hear about it
Conversion	a spiritual change where the nature of knowledge and truth claims are understood in a different light; a change that is both emotional and physical as well as rational, intuitive, or imaginative; it is felt rather than simply thought about
Renewal	assuming there has been a loss of energy, vitality, and purposefulness in something, a recovery of what was lost; fundamentally a change of attitude.

I draw the distinction between meaningful and artificial change in this way:

Meaningful Change

Inversion

Synthesis

Transfiguration

Conversion

Peripheral Change

Modification

Accommodation

Integration

Assimilation

Renewal

The images of change that I have delineated as meaningful are larger conceptual shifts that, when applied to the public school music education institution, have the potential to create systemic changes that will enable a multitude of learner objectives to exist in an environment in which they fit well. They are changes in thought, in mental orientation, and in belief. Values are disturbed and redefined, and the very structure of our organization is rebuilt, though hopefully with a less restrictive rigidity. For example, only if we seriously reconsider our secondary elective instrumental music education “rehearsal class” paradigm can we give fair attention to opportunities such as exploring diversity in music or music’s place in total culture; in the context of a band or orchestra rehearsal, these become peripheral topics if they are included at all.

Conversely, the images of change that I have labeled as peripheral project a facade of expanded learner opportunities while offering essentially the same opportunities that existed before the change. They are conservative approaches in the sense that they assume that the traditional paradigm is sufficient. Changes of this sort, however, do not fundamentally change the way music is taught to students, and students leave school having had the same type of experience that those before the change had.

The new National Content Standards have largely resulted in peripheral changes in the music classroom that take a checklist-approach to comprehensiveness; i.e., they are primarily concerned with presenting the image of comprehensiveness. Thus, the content areas are included in instruction, but often to an insignificant degree and then checked off. Simply *adding* singing activities to a band rehearsal does not guarantee that students understand and appreciate singing.

Is the experience of singing being treated seriously? Do we evaluate students in a band on their ability to sing? Do we sing vocal literature in band class?

There is danger in this false change! Incomplete knowledge can easily become knowledge misunderstood. In the transformation that music undergoes when it is altered to fit into one of the modes of teaching that are currently available, it loses part of its original identity so that it might fit (this is accommodation). It becomes distorted and false. Do students understand folk music having played an arrangement of a folk song in a band ensemble? Is what we lose in this transformation something we should be giving up?

Jorgensen constructs similar categories to mine, stating that some transformation is metamorphic (e.g. transfiguration) and some is incremental (e.g., accommodation, assimilation, modification).¹⁷ These labels might be appropriate in most instances, though I hesitate to accept “incremental” as an entirely adequate label. As I described above, these small changes can have a negative, inhibitive effect; they construct a facade of progress that wrongly seems to suggest the problem has been solved. This type of change is not the beginning of systemic change; rather, it bolsters the current paradigm.

Only a conceptual change that is committed to an authentic approach to new objectives can promote meaningful progress. Admittedly, change of this magnitude is far from easy, but given the severe need for reform in music education that I expressed in Section I, I believe no other form of change will be adequate. In the following section, I will suggest one way to achieve this change that I believe to be of crucial significance.

¹⁷Ibid., 56

SECTION III

The Pre-service Teacher: Agent of Change?

Changing within an oppressive system is not easy, and as I have argued, our problem calls for a change of concept in a very broad sense. The hearts and minds of music educators must change; they must reconstruct the way they understand their function! This type of shift is not easy, especially as educators grow more experienced and routinized in their instruction; therefore, I consider the training of pre-service teachers an excellent place to direct our reform efforts.

My current place among the ranks of college undergraduate pre-service music educators has been a major part of the impetus for writing this paper and this section in particular. I have been occupied with answering the essential questions that underpin music education (many of which I have asked throughout this essay), the answers to which will eventually define what and how I teach, but I have also spent a good deal of time thinking about how my peers have been answering them. Frankly, I have been disappointed, not by their answers, but rather by the lack of effort that is put into the search.¹⁸ I notice a lack of idealism and eagerness to seek out new approaches to teaching music. At the same time, perhaps the course of study which the pre-service teacher follows does not open many doors for exploration; are we too obsessed with teaching “techniques”? I am sure that a progressive approach to music education cannot be

¹⁸I have felt the need when writing statements such as this one to be painstakingly careful to convey a tone that is not accusatory. Although in one sense I feel more qualified than anyone else to comment on the attitudes of my peers, I do feel that I may at times step out of my place. I remind myself that in this society it is primarily the teacher who criticizes the learner; when a learner criticizes another learner, he uncomfortably rubs against social rules that are not entirely clear. I take these risks in order to show that the pre-service teacher might *become* something very important beyond what he is now.

“taught” in the same way that we train our teachers in Kodaly methodology, for example. Instead, we must start by liberating the minds of our future teachers and encouraging them to conceive of creative approaches to music education. Innovation ought to be sought by the pre-service teacher and rewarded by his or her mentor.

Defining Moment

In my second semester as an undergraduate, several of my new pre-service music education colleagues and I were charged with listing ways that the National Content Standards for Music Education could be incorporated in the orchestra class that we are to observe all semester. We assembled as a group and immediately ideas were called out as if this was an easy task! “We can have them sing their parts,” someone suggested. Another said, “My high school band director used to do did this and it worked well...” We had no difficulty defining ways in which the students could get experience “performing on instruments.”

How hastily we thought we were solving the problems of music education; we had achieved comprehensiveness systematically in a matter of minutes. And to my dismay I heard again and again the words, “My high school teacher used to do this.”

My strong objections to the ideas that were being generated were soon ignored when I could think of no better way to integrate the Standards into our orchestra class. Yet I was still sure that a comprehensive music education could not be achieved in the addition of a few ancillary activities.

At this moment, I realized how entrenched we all were in the traditional paradigm of music education and how difficult it would be to become teachers in ways that we did not know.

Then again, isn't that why we came?

An Unwillingness to Change

The concept of music education that the music education profession holds is one deeply entrenched in a restrictive paradigm. I have observed what might be termed an *unwillingness* to conceive of music education beyond its current state in both novice and veteran teachers. In a fast-paced environment that is largely unorganized by nature (students' behaviors cannot always be accurately predicted), today's music educator relies on old habits, often teaching in a way that strongly reflects the way in which he was taught.

Edwin Gordon, who describes the typical undergraduate teacher preparation program as “a mile long and an inch deep,” suggests such a reliance on old paradigms: “Undergraduates' memories of their own school experiences form a benchmark of what they expect to hear from professors of music education, and rarely are they disappointed.”¹⁹

The problem worsens after educators graduate and pass through the first several years of teaching where, for lack of familiar routine, they are actually creative in their approach to teaching. As experience accumulates, the mind's sense of possibility narrows in scope, and there is less openness to new ideas. Gordon states the problem succinctly: “The fear of change can never be overestimated.”²⁰

The undergraduate pre-service teacher is often content to merely learn procedural

¹⁹Edwin Gordon, “The Stakes are Low but the Consequences are High,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 151 (2001), 4.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 3

knowledge about teaching, perhaps considering his role similar to that of the music director. Being satisfied with the few modes of teaching that are foundational to the traditional paradigm of music education, the student accepts new trends in music education (e.g., the standards movement) but often fails to give them serious attention, instead concerned with what is considered *essential* to teaching. Gordon recognizes the problem, and attributes it to an emphasis on technique over method in the undergraduate classroom. He draws the distinction between method and technique in this way:

A method presupposes a sequential curriculum that elucidates what students need to know in order to learn what is being taught. Technique describes how to teach what is intended to be taught. Method has to do with learning; it emanates from inside the student. Technique has to do with teaching; it emanates from outside the student.²¹

Technique, as Gordon describes it, is what is essential for the teacher to stay alive in the classroom and achieve any goals at all. Serious attention to method, however, will make all the effort being put forth worthwhile. It is really the student's progress with which we should be concerned, not the teacher's progress towards covering content in a way that we hope will be easy for students to understand. The teacher ought to experience no comfort while coming closer to understanding *what* it is that his students need.

The problem is one of considering education in finite terms. We cannot allow teaching to be reduced to several good "tricks" or suppose that we have easily described objectives that can be reached in a definite manner. We are missing something if we do not see our interaction with music and students as something dynamic and exploratory in nature. The role of music educator

²¹Ibid. 5

in the public schools is immeasurably more complicated than that of orchestra conductor.

Mark Campbell conducted a relevant study investigating how novice teachers learn to teach.²² He concludes that pre-service teachers' beliefs and images of teaching music are highly socialized around the culture of performance (and I would add that this is the culture of Western art music performance), and further suggests that

Particularly evident in this socialization process is the reproductive nature of the values and practices and definers of successful teaching as filtered through high school music education performance programs and students' current university curriculum.²³

Campbell's conclusions about the beliefs held by undergraduate pre-service teachers are disconcerting; at the onset of their training, they already have a concrete idea about the nature of their role as teacher, and this idea is constructed around the character of their own personal interaction with music. This implies that the teacher persona grows out of their primary interaction with music, namely performance. The prospect that pre-service teachers never stop being performers and start becoming educators is a cause for serious concern.

My last comment might excite readers who believe that only an excellent musician will make a good music educator. Or perhaps they believe that I meant that the music educator ought to stop being an artist altogether; this is certainly not my intention. I recall devoting a good deal of thought to this question posed by one of my professors: Which is the more important word in "music education" – music or education? The answer, I was told, is music. And I think this is the prevailing sentiment among current educators and would-be educators: that we are in service

²²Mark Campbell, "Learning to Teach Music: A Collaborative Ethnography," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 139 (1999), 12-22.

²³*Ibid.*, 21

of our art. I finally decided that the question is of little import, but I also believe that the answer we are apt to give leads to the wrong approach to music education. We, as music educators, are concerned with people first, and especially *their* interaction with music. We must be wary of thinking that because we have produced great art we have taught great lessons.

The pre-service teacher that Campbell describes who enters the teaching field through the lens of a performer will suffer from a limited concept of music education. The performer of Western art music functions in a restricted system where roles are stringently defined and in which the music is for the most part specified by the experience of the conductor. Care must be taken to steer the pre-service teacher away from becoming something of a professional conductor. The professional conductor is less concerned with the experience of the musicians that play for him than with what they can do for his experience.

The disinterest among musicians in becoming educators and music teacher burnout can be attributed to the phenomenon I have described above. If the music educator is only concerned with perfecting his art, he will be tragically disappointed by the quality of music that his middle school orchestra produces. How often do music teachers choose repertoire that they like over repertoire that their students like or that would teach them something very valuable? The undergraduate who resists becoming something like the conductor or leader of a music class is in many ways stepping away from his college experience, and this needs to be recognized and regarded positively. If we disassemble the connection between a professional ensemble and a music class that exists in our minds and instead focus on the unique experiences that might comprise a comprehensive grade school music education, the occupation seems immediately more attractive.

Change Must Be Forced

If teacher preparation programs are to be agents of, students must be challenged, and not merely in the interest of friendly debate. Alternative viewpoints need to be sought and discussed, accepted as potentially valid, but ultimately judged for their worth. The maxim, “any answer is a right answer,” when followed, will not produce critically-thinking teachers. Yet the sentiment is being given more credence in today’s era of relativistic thinking. If any approach to teaching is considered a satisfactory approach, the need to explore new trends in music education is dulled.

Manny Brand elucidates this state of affairs well by applying the work of psychologist William G. Perry, Jr. to undergraduate students majoring in music education.²⁴ Over the course of a decade, Perry extensively interviewed male undergraduate students attending Harvard University each spring as they progressed towards graduation and drew a model describing the changes in students’ understanding of the nature of truth and knowledge during their undergraduate education. His scheme suggests nine distinct stages in intellectual growth that the student passes through in a predictable order. Brand then groups these nine stages into four broader categories which he terms “world views”: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment with relativism. A condensed description of each of the terms will suffice for the purpose of this argument.

²⁴Manny Brand, “Towards a Better Understanding of Undergraduate Music Education Majors: Perry’s Perspective,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 98 (1988), 22-31.

Dualism	The student acknowledges that there are differences in perspective, but categorizes those differences into one of two groups: right-good-we vs. wrong-bad-them. Learning for the student in this stage is a matter of finding the right answers, the one truth.
Multiplicity	The student believes that any opinion is as good as any other and the professor's opinion is no more valid than the student's own. The student argues both sides of any issue with equal conviction, but only pretends to truly hold an opinion.
Relativism	The student realizes that what is "true," "good," or "effective" depends on the context in which it is being considered. This student views his professor as having greater depth and breadth of knowledge about music education.
Relativism with Commitment	The student begins to have a greater consistency in his values, thoughts, and behaviors, and becomes committed to his chosen field. Professors cease to be considered as authority, and instead are perceived as experienced fellow workers or mentors.

Brand cites studies that suggest that most undergraduates graduate as multiplists,²⁵ which he characterizes as, "not...the quality of intellectual functioning expected of the graduates of our

²⁵K.T. Allen, "An application of the concept of structural range to the Perry scheme: The cognitive perspective of college students with respect to math, humanities, and science," Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Maryland (1982).

music education programs.”²⁶

Clearly, simply allowing a forum for students to express their viewpoints will not necessarily produce educators who think critically. The undergraduate may accept conflicting approaches to the music educator role as inevitable and, even worse, irreconcilable. And perhaps there is little incentive for compromise or the exploration of new ideas; after all, once a teacher, the student will have a remarkable amount of freedom and will likely be most satisfied teaching in the way that is comfortable, the way which he knows and which he experienced, the way in which he was taught. Which is to say that change will not happen unless we are *challenged* to change and give serious care to the judgments we ultimately make about what is good music education.

If we apply the sequence of intellectual maturation that Brand outlines, it may be easier to conceive the role that teacher-training institutions play in effecting the holistic change for which I argued above. The change is, at its heart, a mental change across an entire profession that will only occur if we push educators past the first stages of intellectual development; i.e., dualism and multiplicity. Furthermore, this cultivation of critically-minded, intellectually-savvy educators must happen early before the teacher role becomes something habitual and less changeable. I will explore ways in which preparation programs might be changed later in this section.

Changing Minds Is Not Easy

The future evolution of music education depends primarily on whether or not music educators are willing to reconceive their role. Meaningful change will not come from outside of

²⁶Brand, 26.

the profession; it will require that educators themselves make a commitment to change. I have shown that changes made at the top of the system can have little effect when they are interpreted by educators who already have a strong notion of what they do and are satisfied with this concept; that which does not fit is, in essence, mentioned, but not included.

Renate Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine consider mental constructions of the teacher role in the context of their radical education reform project outlined in their book, Education on the Edge of Possibility.²⁷ They argue that those in education today seem to ignore recent research concerning the brain and learning and attribute this to the rigidity of educators' mental constructions about what it means to teach; therefore, they reach a conclusion similar to mine and posit that a paradigm shift must occur in the minds of educators if meaningful progress is to occur.

Changing our thinking is the first thing that we have to do both individually and collectively, because without that change we cannot possibly change what we really do on a day-to-day basis. Regardless of what new "method" or latest technique is attempted, the mind/brain will always choose to reduce such practices to fit entrenched assumptions and beliefs. To really restructure anything means to restructure our thinking and shift deep connections in our psyche. We cannot just rearrange the pieces in the box; we need—collectively—to conceive of what we do in fundamentally different ways.²⁸

Caine and Caine believe that their new theory has very definite practical applications and is not simply a meaningless formal explanation. Yet it is this practical dimension in the implementation of the theory that made change so difficult for them. Teachers' vast procedural knowledge that existed before the introduction of the new theory was a formidable obstacle to

²⁷Renate Nemmela and Geoffrey Caine, Education on the Edge of Possibility, (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), 1997.

²⁸Ibid., pg. iv.

change. The authors write: "...we faced (and still face) the constant threat of exhaustion and frustration that accompanies any change process. We found human beings whose routines and relaxed interaction with family and friends have been severely strained."²⁹

Focusing On the Undergraduate Pre-Service Teacher

Caine and Caine provide one example of how difficult it is to change the practice of experienced teachers, and I think that anecdotally we know how difficult it is to change the beliefs and values of anyone who is older and riper with experience. I suggest that the profession direct its attention to the training of pre-service teachers by encouraging a new liberating attitude that places value on providing a larger set of musical experiences, a new attitude that will prevent the growth of the restrictive boundaries that seep into teacher's minds before they have time to solidify. Just as the mind of a child is more malleable than that of an adult, so the mind of the pre-service teacher is more mutable than that of a veteran educator.

Yet it is not a single truth that I advocate impressing on the minds of pre-service teachers. We must embrace multiple truths, but we cannot, however, accept any approach to teaching as equally appropriate in a given context. I have argued the essentialness of a reform-oriented approach to education, and, in such a spirit, a creative, forward-looking approach to teaching must be valued over a traditional approach marked by complacency. It is important to accept that there are certain things which the training institution is obliged to impress on its students and certain attitudes that it must reject as invalid, for if this system I have described is to correct itself and progress, the training institution must play a vital role in the change process.

²⁹Ibid., pg. 23.

The new attitude that I suggest we impress on the minds of pre-service teachers is one of persistent innovation and thoughtful reflection. In the education system, as I argued in Section I, a state of constant change is ideal. In this state, old ideas are potentially valid, but new ones, with their potential for positive change, are valued greatly. Creativity and diverse learner objectives are valued over technical teaching prowess and the perfection of old modes of teaching. The creative teacher is the most adaptive teacher and the most likely to be successful and reactive to a system that seeks to reform itself. The road to good teaching is always moving somewhere, but never to one ideal place. It is the ability to stay on the road that is the mark of a good teacher, not the arrival at some place of perfection; it is the process of adaptive teaching that we should seek to perfect, not some universal concept of “good” teaching.

Perhaps, then, in the spirit of this vision, the greatest lesson that pre-service teachers have to learn is that their ideas are neither right nor wrong; instead, they are useful for one state of the system and not useful for another state. They must develop a great deal of approaches to teaching and develop the thinking skills to quickly devise new objectives and strategies in real-world situations that may be extremely different from their own experiences. No single approach will be universally successful because a successful music program can only be judged in the context of the situation of the people it involves. In Section I, I posited that any educational system, large or small, while a necessary structure in the interest of efficiency, marginalizes the interests of the individual, and I suggested that a looser systemic concept, adaptive in nature, would give the individual more opportunities to make meaning out of his education. Such a position, applied to teacher preparation programs, suggests that less time should be devoted to discussions concerned with strategies for the teacher (which are often presented anecdotally as

“tricks of the trade” or as part of restrictive methods) and content areas and more time should be spent considering the needs of the learner, the differences in educational context that might exist, and identifying how curriculum needs to be changed in diverse environments.

I want to re-emphasize the importance that both teaching strategies and *the definition of appropriate learner objectives* are included when we speak of teaching approaches. What we choose to teach students, as with our strategy for teaching it, must be constructed in the context of the needs and desires of the student. When we do wander into the territory of contextualized teaching, often our focus is on how the way we teach needs to be altered – but the content we believe is important for the students remains unexamined. These alterations constitute peripheral change, simply another route to the same destination. The change that I sense the profession wants (take the National Content Standards as evidence) and that society expects only comes by looking at the objectives we set, the very inception of our journey to educate, in the context of the learner.

Teacher preparation programs, then, must go beyond simple training (recall Jorgensen’s concept of training) and develop a larger set of thinking skills that will enable new teachers to cope with atypical situations, since “typical” bears a strong resemblance to their own experiences. This translates into an enlarged interest in the philosophical underpinnings of music education and social studies that enable the pre-service teacher to conceive of music education in the context of the total school program.

Bennett Reimer, in his model of the comprehensive music curriculum, starts by asking the question, “Why?”, setting a philosophical foundation for the rest of the process of conceiving curriculum. Reimer insists that philosophical questions

...are the starting point for all conceptualizations of education, whether in music, other subjects, or education as a whole. Answers to these questions—questions of value—provide the purposes of education, purposes dependent on what people in a culture regard to be so important that education must focus on them.”³⁰

Reimer promotes a “philosophy-before-action” approach to music education with which I agree; good teaching towards unimportant goals is *not* good teaching!

Teachers who, from the beginning of their preparation, always question why they are teaching what they are teaching and consider the methods they are employing in the context of the learner’s situation will thrive in any educational setting. Conversely, a teacher who has mastered the skills needed for only one concept of music education will be effective only for students who fit the mold of his concept of music education.

A philosophically grounded approach demands that the modes of teaching are subordinate to the purposes of teaching; for this reason, it may be harder to impress the new attitude towards education that I have proposed in this section on more experienced teachers who have become grounded in their procedural teaching “know-how.” By contrast, students preparing to be music teachers that are nestled in the exploratory atmosphere of a university or college are being constantly challenged in all of their studies to take new knowledge and synthesize a new world-view that is freed from ignorance. This process of synthesis is one in which the veteran teacher, reliant on sturdy experience, rarely engages, yet it is a process essential for the adaptive teacher. The training institution should encourage the undergraduate to take advantage of the wide-reaching education available to him by relaxing the requirements for specialized, procedure-based learning in music education and encouraging a more comprehensive exploration of

³⁰Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education*, 3rd ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), 2003, 242.

knowledge. This will, in turn, foster a sensitivity in pre-service teacher to his place in the order of things and the ways in which he can adapt his curriculum to his learner. The very process of disassembling one's understanding of the world and reconstructing it is a vital activity with which to be familiar. Applied to the practice of music education, this process ensures that education starts with an assessment of the learner's context and establishment of philosophical values and then grows to meet the learner's needs. Training institutions need to insist that new teachers always connect this procedure to their practice before their practice is firmly established.

More often than not, the fundamentals of education are not treated seriously until graduate level training. The philosophical groundwork of education is treated as something beyond the grasp of the undergraduate student and more suited for advanced graduate courses. Clifford Madsen and Carol Prickett expose the fallacy of this assumption in a comparison of graduate and undergraduate scholarship.³¹

It is assumed that graduate students can conduct research, analyze music, explore pedagogical theories, and write treatises of a caliber unattainable by undergraduates. Except for seniors involved in honors programs, undergraduates are rarely challenged to attempt consequential scholarly thought and writing. . . The generally younger and less professionally experienced undergraduates were able to generalize and propose applications of principles to themselves with the same facility as the generally older, more experienced graduate students. . . the results of this study indicate that, while undergraduates' writing may not be as polished in style as graduates', their ability to engage in scholarly work that requires a high level of transfer concerning sensitive and complex issues and relating these issues to their own lives and work is similar to that of graduates.

Madsen and Prickett admit that more research needs to be completed, but I see little danger in *challenging* undergraduates to engage in higher-level thinking as soon as possible. Of greater

³¹Clifford Madsen and Carol Prickett, "Graduate versus Undergraduate Scholarship: A Comparison of Essay Responses Concerning Professional Responsibilities of Music Teachers," *Journal of Research in Music Education*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1987), 191-197.

importance, however, is that we do not break the logical chain of conceiving music education by delaying a devotion to philosophically sound teaching until graduate studies. Graduate students have already developed a system of procedures to which they have become accustomed and in some cases may be teaching simultaneous to their studies. While it is certainly not impossible for these teachers to revise their fundamental assumptions, the effort is hindered by the restrictions that their procedural habits set.

It is of great importance that new ideas in music education can be tested in a safe environment where they can be very well thought out. If a teacher is concerned with getting through the day, survival will take precedence, and old habits will prove more valuable than experimental ideas with which the teacher is uncomfortable; moments that call for improvisation – with which the music teacher is very familiar – are rarely going to be met with a teaching strategy based off of a new theory just learned in a graduate course on philosophy.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I have criticized systemic flaws in the institution of music education, eventually suggesting that the education of music educators is a critical factor in transforming the institution. It is important for those at the academy, both mentors and students, to realize how rigid our practices are and to approach change with the intention of changing holistically.

Western art music rules the public school classroom, and this is something we should call to question. The “right way” will not become immediately obvious, but the profession needs to devote itself to asking the question, as well as other fundamental questions that guide our

practice. Many of the problems in music education in the public schools today, including the overemphasis on Western art music, are problems that are deeply entrenched in the larger system of music education in America. Change must happen on many fronts and we should begin by taking a much closer look at the student. Should we enslave the student in a musical culture that *we* value, or empower him to be musical in ways that are personally meaningful?

The change we want calls for a new concept of music education that does not fit within the parameters of our current system. Achieving meaningful change means constructing new models of music education that start with the context and needs of the student. This type of change will not occur unless the profession devotes itself to thinking critically about its function. Music educators, especially preservice teachers, must be encouraged to reflect deeply on what they consider their purpose to be. Then, as much effort must be spent considering the practical implications of the philosophy they adopt. Such a devotion to change will surely renew and energize the profession.

I would like to return to a belief about which I was so passionate in the preface to this essay, namely that there is a *responsibility* to seek knowledge and new ways of doing that the pre-service teacher must take. We cannot expect our training to give us everything we need to know to teach in the form of procedural knowledge; rather, we must take that to which we are exposed, view it critically, and test the ways it might be integrated into the classroom. We must strive towards adopting an attitude of innovation and review our base of teaching knowledge with a healthy skepticism. That we may become accustomed to seeking new solutions and constantly altering our approach in the face of an educational climate in flux: this is the essence of great teaching.

Postscript

This essay is something that will be of value to some I hope, but I feel satisfied enough already writing these final words, having the feeling that I at last have a rudimentary understanding of the discourse in the field of music education. I carry a refined understanding of the issues that face music education, can articulate them concisely, and have already taken the first steps in addressing them in terms of my own practice. Most significantly, I have set the foundation needed to start constructing a new holistically-conceived vision of music education that will provide purpose to guide my practice. Big steps are needed to revive music education and music-making in the U.S.

This will not be my last attempt at scholarship in music education. Even if my writing fails to change any minds, it is the most effective way for me to understand and apply the knowledge I seek from others about music education. Future projects will be more specific in nature, but I never want to go so deep that I lose sight of the larger structure of music education.

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