**Philosophy of Music Education**

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The idea of music education as “aesthetic” education has been one that has encountered significant and sometimes controversial criticism in recent years. Among the most significant advocates of “aesthetic” education and the write who we owe the familiarity with this idea is Bennett Reimer (Bowman, 2003). While Reimer believes in music education as aesthetic education, David Elliot identifies what to him are four ill-conceived assumptions: “The first assumption is that music is a collections of objects or works. The second assumption is that musical works exist to be listened to in one and only one way: aesthetically. The third assumption is that the value of music works is always intrinsic or internal. The fourth is that listening to pieces of music aesthetically will achieve and aesthetic experience.” Music education can be seen serving several different purposes in the education world. While music education can be aesthetic education, I will take a look at what is music and why we teach music to explain my biases of the two philosophical ideas. Music education is aesthetic education, but aesthetics can be achieved through a variety of different outlets. These outlets can lead a student to express the feelings and emotions of music through the act of doing or what Elliot calls “musicing.” As a music educator I see my job as several different things. I see myself as a teacher whose responsibility is to teach a skill, build community, relationships, respect, as well as achieve, perform and experience beauty through music. It is through many different outlets that these different qualities can be taught, and through many different experiences that students can discover what music truly is.

There has been a dramatic shift in my personal philosophy of music education and that has been swayed by my job description. Each individual music educator holds a responsibility toward the ultimate goal of student achievement. A music educators it is our goal to foster a love and appreciation for music in a way that creates livelong learners and lovers of music no matter what field of music education we are in. Music educators in todays educational system have shifted from just teaching general music, or just teaching chorus, to teaching the entire school music program, or multiple programs. The shift of responsibilities has thus changed the purpose of music educators. Even though holding several responsibilities, it is the job of the music educators to create an environment, which fosters this love and passion for music.

Music educators in the school systems have different goals and responsibilities. General music teachers have an immensely different perspective on music education than the high school band directors. General music teachers are not teaching a skill that students must perform whereas band directors’ responsibility is to foster as students musical talent. Music educators today are shifting from holding one responsibility in the school systems, to holding many different responsibilities, if not running an entire music program. The ultimate objective as educators in the music community should be to assure that all students are given the opportunity to be involved in music. Each student, whether they are gifted, or not gifted in music, are exposed to a music classroom. It is here that students can be exposed to a variety of musics. The goal of music educators is to instill a love for music.

What is music? Once we establish what music really is, at that point, we can then describe why we teach music in schools and what our purpose should be. Music, according to Bennett Reimer, is a “basic mode of cognition,” a “complex function of the mind” (Reimer, 1989). Music is distinguished from other cognitive processes by it nonconceptual, nondiscursive qualities. Moreover, music, accessible as knowledge, a subjective experience of feeling. That is, in music "we receive an 'experience of' feeling rather than 'information about' feeling" (Reimer, 1989). The expressive form embodied in a musical work, says Reimer, occasions such experience. This mental sensation of feeling via expressive form constitutes the meaning of music.

In Reimer's most detailed statement of these dynamics, he says a musical work is sound organized to be expressive. That is, a musical work is “(1) an expressive form, (2) that is capable of yielding an experience of subjectivity, (3) embodied in its intrinsic, immanent qualities, (4) that will be open to a variety of possible ways of feeling, (5) but will always be caused by the particular, concrete events in the work, (6) that are apprehended directly and immediately from those events as a sharing of their expressiveness, (7) through the presentational form, (8) that is the bearer of meaning as 'knowledge of' the inner feelings of human life as lived and experienced” (Reimer 1989). Many have challenged Reimer and his philosophy of music education.

David Elliot’s “new” philosophy of music education states that “music making lies at the heart of what music is and that music making is a matter of musical knowledge-in-action, or musicianship. Music education ought to be centrally concerned with teaching and learning musicianship.” (Elliot, 1995) Elliot’s focus of music education philosophy and music instruction should be on “musicing” which can take several different forms: singing or performing on an instrument, improvising, composing, arranging, or conducting. Properly rendered, musicing in all its forms is active, involved, and ongoing rather than passive, objective, or simply observational. In his paraxial philosophy, the content of the music curriculum is musicianship. Musicianship is what we teach and musicianship is the subject matter knowledge that professional music teachers require to teach effectively (Elliot, 1995).

High schools that support competitive programs have also shifted from a very utilitarian perspective, to a more paraxial or aesthetic approach. I will use marching band as an example. The first marching bands purpose was to keep military troops in step on the march and to motivate and inspire the soldiers. Today, the culture of marching bands has shifted from this utilitarian purpose to imitate the modern drum corps experience, or some have made the shift. Some marching bands today still serve the purpose of “entertainment.” For the sake of this example, we will assume that marching bands are moving beyond this state.

Marching bands should be seen as the act of doing, with the purpose of creating an experience that is emotional. The purpose should be to connect with someone on a personal level in which they can be engaged in the performance. Dr. Mark Lusk from Pennsylvania State University trombone studio once restated at a Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) festival “music must first mean something to you, before it can mean something to someone else.” This is a philosophy that I teach my students each day. During each rehearsal we create connections between musical phrases and personal life experiences. Music must mean something to you. It is more and more possible today with modern technology to instill this idea in our performances. For example, what better way to “set the scene” of a thunderstorm, than to incorporate sound effects of a storm itself. Yes, there are ways that we, as musicians, can create the effect of storms, but as musicians, we can now integrate real sounds into our performances by using technology. Does this though make us better musicians, or teach students how to music, as Elliot would say? No, but this does give us a personal connection to use to integrate personal experiences. It gives us an opportunity to have a personal and emotional connection with the audience and as performers. It gives students a scenario where they can express the true meaning of the performance content.

Why do we teach music in the school system today? As advocates of music in the schools, our perspective is constantly changing to please administrators, and politicians. Our perspective on advocacy changes daily. The ultimate advocacy stand is “what can we do?” As music educators we know that music has positive benefits to students in todays culture.

Music should be taught, says Reimer, because it systematically develops a form of intelligence that affords "meaningful, cognitive experiences unavailable in any other way..." (Reimer, 1989). While Reimer acknowledges that all arts have a common larger realm of meaning and aesthetic structuring, he also says that "each art requires a distinctive mode of thought peculiar to the cognitive sub realm it embodies" (Reimer, 1989). Music, distinguished by the sonic, dynamic character embodied in its expressive or symbolic form, presents, educates, deepens and refines the mental sensation of feeling. Music should be taught, then, because it is a form of nonconceptual cognition that affords a humanising self-knowledge of feeling as a pervasive quality of mental life. This self- knowledge or intelligence, Reimer argues, is educable and can be developed only through music. As music advocates, it is difficult to use Reimer’s aesthetic philosophy as a basis for educating our students. Administrators and school board members, and even members of the community who’s students are not directly involved in music programs want hard, concrete evidence to prove music’s value. Traditionally the education system in America is confused with what they want to teach and what the basis. We work backwards as an education system. What is the end goal that we want to see our students have? What should they be graduating high school with? Should they have an acquired skill to prepare them for the workforce, or should they be ready for higher education? Today’s society pushes students toward higher education. But were does music education fit into the curriculum? Does music education prepare students for higher ed.? Does music education prepare someone for the workforce? These questions leave us as music educators in a difficult position when an administrator asks us what our purpose in the school system is? With the new National Core Art’s Standards of 2014, we will have an easier way to advocate for our positions. These core arts standards integrate things such as community and aesthetics. But what is there real reason that we teach music in the schools? Hodges states “the purpose of an education is systematic development of the mind and capabilities of every child” (Hodges 1996)

Music belongs to basic education because musical experiences "are necessary for all people if their essential humanness is to be realized.” The cognitive ability to function musically is an important mode of intelligence developed and refined through education as people are led both to experience and share "the meanings which come from expressive forms" According to Reimer, "Developing this mode of mentality ... is essential if education is to help children become what their human condition enables them to become" (Reimer 1989).

From Plato down the to most recent discussions of aesthetics and the meaning of music, philosophers and critics have, with few exceptions affirmed their belief in the ability of music to evoke emotional responses in listeners. Composers have demonstrated in their writings and by the expression marks used in their musical scores their faith in the affective power of music. But music ultimately does so much more to the community than actually has to do with music itself.

Music education professor Donald Hodges explains ten understandings/experiences that are unit to music. Hodges relates Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences. He states, “Cognitive neuroscience is identifying neural networks in the brain that support multiple ways of knowing.” On list (Gardner, 1999) includes linguistic, music, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist intelligences. In this conception, each provides a unique and equally valuable way of knowing. Hodges goes on to say that “these human knowledge systems provide a means for sharing, expressing, understanding, knowing, and gaining insights into one’s inner and outer worlds” (Hodges, 1996). Hodges states that there are ten things that we can use to represent or express through music: feelings, aesthetic experiences, the ineffable (nonverbal form of expression, a powerful means to express or to know which is difficult to put into words, love and spiritual awareness, thoughts, structure, time an space, self knowledge, self identity, group identity, healing and wholeness.

Traditional music programs follow a predictable pattern, performing ensembles. These ensembles serve between 15 and 20 percent of the total population of the school. “Most schools offer general music programs to all students and these are the places that the focus should be shifted to. Aesthetic education in music is a program of student for all students in which their ability for musical expression is cultivated. It should, therefore, be possible for all students to have some opportunity for composition, performance, and appreciation. Just as thise are courses available in creative writing and acting for those who do not plan careers as writers or actors, with new teaching approaches and equipment, the experience of composing and performing music can also be available to all students” (Knieter, 1979). Our job as music educators is to reach as many students as possible because we innately know what the befits of music education. Very few of the most important benefits of music education are musical, such as teamwork, relationships, responsibility, hard work ethic, dedication, respect. These items are items that we, as music educators, have the largest affect on. Our jobs as music educators though is to make sure students are leaving the educational system with a real appreciation for the arts, that students will have an understanding for beauty and be able to recognize it and that students would appreciate the arts and find an outlet for expression.

It is for sure that music education has shifted philosophical strands over many centuries. Music educators each have different opinions of music education that are contradictory to each other. I would like to view music as “making music for music’s sake.” Let’s make music because we love music. Because it is something the brings people together to enjoy their company. Music brings us humanity and makes us sensual humans begins.

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