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It Is That Simple And Complex

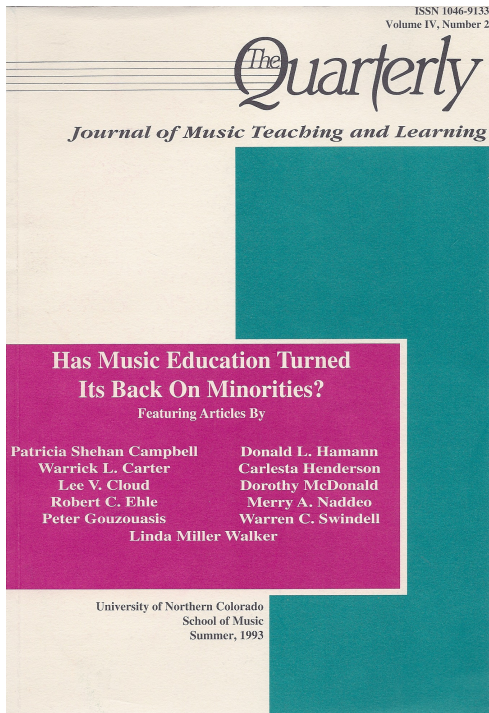
Manny Brand
Southwest Texas State University

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Author(s): Manny Brand

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It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

It Is That Simple And Complex

Editorial By Manny Brand

Southwest Texas State University

Budget cuts are normally considered a serious threat to music education, but I see an even greater threat: everydayness. Resisting the routine, rigidity, and boredom is essential for effective music teaching and learning, as it is for a successful life. I am afraid, though, that our music curricular and teaching practices have acquired this everydayness that at one time was just a problem, but today—when placed in the context of a dramatically changing student population—is now a crisis.

Census projections tell us that in the next 25 years the minority population of the United States will grow from a present one-fifth of the total U. S. population to over one-third. We will change from a nation of 14.6 million Hispanics and 26.5 million African-Americans to a nation of 47 million Hispanics and 44 million African-Americans in just 25 years. American society has and will become even more pluralistic. Surely this tells us that music education cannot continue to be taught as if it were a subject most appealing and relevant to a white, middle-class population.

But “white, middle class, and suburban” are the stuff that make up our profession’s dreams. The sources of these dreams are all quite familiar:

- a desire to re-live a personal adolescent school music experience, replete with the same music literature and teaching techniques we experienced as talented high school musicians; and
- cultural insensitivities of our music education curricula—a refusal to infuse a broad cultural awareness into the curriculum and music we teach.

Because music is so pan-cultural, it is shocking that our profession is not really in-

terested in multicultural matters. How is it that despite our profession’s rhetoric and subtle interest, music education has side-stepped teaching toward a greater awareness, appreciation, and acknowledgment of the achievements of the many, and instead has favored music of the few? Topics such as ethnicity, race, pluralism, social class, gender, and so forth are deeply hidden under our traditional concerns with methods, materials, and performance. Sure, we throw in a gospel number to close a choir concert of centuries-old European sacred music, and maybe we spend a few hours in a general music unit on “music around the world,” but all of that is so superficial.

Music educators have an obligation to help students not only deepen their musical perceptions, but also their human perceptions—become more accepting and act more humanely toward one another in the name of equity and justice. School music teachers are powerful figures in schools, and many music educators are even cultural leaders in their communities. Because they teach, direct, and socialize children, music teachers can dispel myths or perpetuate them. If you have been constantly taught that your ancestors’ music was special, creative, and a gift to be treasured, how would you feel? If you have been taught that your ancestors’ music was unworthy of notice and inferior, how would you feel about yourself?

School music has a profound effect on the musical confidence and personal self-esteem of children, and music teachers can play a powerful role in challenging stereotypical beliefs and misinformed attitudes. It is that simple and complex. 