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### Putting Matters in Perspective: Reflections on A New Philosophy

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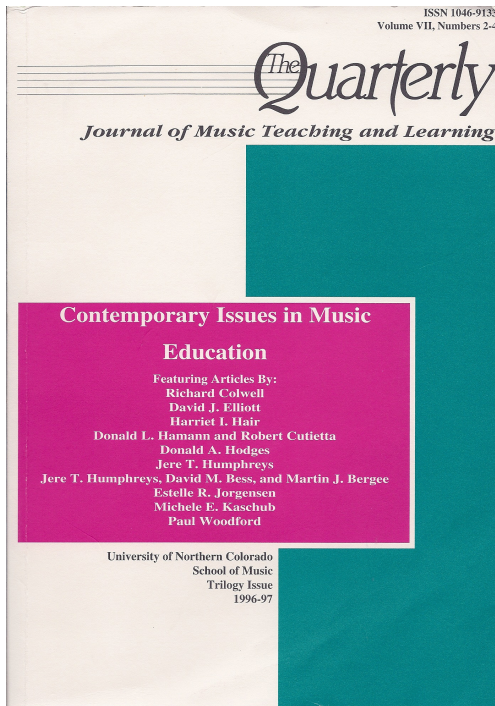
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# Putting Matters In Perspective: Reflections On A New Philosophy

By David J. Elliott

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Change, growth, renewal — these qualities characterize music education philosophy during the last decade. In this discussion, I outline some of the main ideas and initiatives responsible for recent developments in the philosophy of music education. This outline, in turn, provides the context for summaries, clarifications and reflections on one philosophical effort and several of its central themes (Elliott, 1995).<sup>1</sup>

## Context

Since the late 1980s, the field of music education philosophy has broadened and deepened in significant ways. These developments have been fueled in large part by the research efforts of several contemporary music philosophers, sociologists and ethnomusicologists, whose publications during the 1980s and early 1990s challenged the foundations of “absolute expressionism” and the aesthetic concept of music, arguing for more comprehensive ways of conceiving the nature of music (e.g., Alpers, 1980, 1987; Attali, 1985; Berleant, 1986; Bowman, 1991; Budd, 1985; Danto, 1986; Dipert, 1983; Eagleton, 1990; Goehr, 1992; Howard, 1982; Kaemmer, 1993; Kivy, 1980, 1984, 1991; Levinson, 1990; McClary, 1987; Nattiez, 1990; Regelski, 1992; Shepherd, 1991; Small, 1987; Sparshott, 1982, 1987; Wolterstorff, 1980; Zolberg, 1991).

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Due (in part) to her understanding of this literature and her discontent with the isolation of music education philosophers, Estelle Jorgensen organized the first international symposium on music education philosophy at Indiana University in 1990. As Jorgensen (1993) states: “This landmark symposium attracted an international group of participants and represented the first time that music educators interested in philosophy had met with each other” and with scholars from related fields (p.1).

But the Indiana symposium was a landmark in other ways. It not only facilitated the emergence of a thriving community of philosophically-minded scholars, it produced an important set of research papers: *Philosopher, Teacher, Musician: Perspectives on Music Education* (Jorgensen, 1993).<sup>2</sup> This diverse collection of ideas marked the end of a long period of philosophical monism during which the view of music education as aesthetic education (MEAE) had dominated and “philosophical teaching and research in music education had languished” (p. 1). These essays also explain why several thinkers at the time were calling for “a reconsideration of the ideas that had guided the music education profession during the past few decades and the development of alternative paradigms for music education” (p. 1).

Philip Alpers’s contribution to this collection is especially notable because it offers a substantial argument for replacing the aesthetic paradigm with a more comprehensive approach to music and music education

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(Alpers, 1993). Alpers introduces the "praxial" viewpoint this way:

The praxial view of art resists the suggestion that art can best be understood on the basis of some universal or absolute feature or set of features such as...aesthetic formalism, whether of the strict or enhanced [expressionist] variety. The attempt is made rather to understand art in terms of the variety of meaning and values evidenced in actual practice in particular cultures (p. 233)

...on the praxial view, a music education program which aims to educate students about musical practice in its fullest sense must take into account, not only the history and kind of appreciation appropriate to the musical work of art, but also the nature and significance of the skills and productive human activity that bring musical works into being, if for no other reason than the fact that the results of human action cannot be adequately understood apart from the motives, intentions, and productive considerations of the agents who bring them into being. (pp. 235-236)

Alpers's themes trace their roots to what is fairly described as a new wave of thinking in the philosophy of music that had been developing during the 1980s. These research efforts are well represented in an important collection of essays titled *What is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music* (Alpers, 1987/1994).

Following the Indiana symposium, Jorgensen organized the first MENC philosophy Special Research Interest Group (SRIG) and founded the *Philosophy of Music Education Review*. These achievements have strengthened the identity and rigor of philosophical research in music education and spurred a new tradition of critical thinking in the discipline.

Coincident with these efforts and events, Richard Colwell fueled philosophical research in two particular ways. In 1991, he dedicated an issue of *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* (2:3) to a collection of point-counterpoint discussions between advocates and critics of the MEAE

philosophy. In 1992, he produced the *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, which makes a prominent place for philosophical issues.

In line with these efforts, the second international symposium on music education philosophy was held at the University of Toronto in 1994. The proceedings, *Critical Reflections on Music Education* (Bartel and Elliott, 1996), document the field's sustained interest in alternative philosophical paradigms, the continuing marginalization of aesthetic views, and an outward-looking trend toward studies involving music education and ethics, gender, play theory, critical sociology, and community. (The third international symposium on music education philosophy convened at the University of California, Los Angeles, in May, 1997).

On the informal level, the formation of the "MayDay Group" is one of several reform initiatives that has developed in parallel to and in support of the above developments. In the spring of 1993, J. Terry Gates and Thomas Regelski organized the first meeting of an eclectic "think-tank" of music educators (the MayDay Group) to investigate and act upon several shared concerns, including the following:

the status of practice in music education, ...about taken-for-granted patterns of professional activity, polemical approaches to method, and the public pressure, social philosophy and educational politics that have weakened effective practice and stifled critical and open communication among music educators. (Gates and Regelski, 1996)

During the last three years, the MayDay Group has articulated a set of working principles to guide its research and practice. Associates of the MayDay group recently presented their research as part of the third "Charles Fowler Colloquium" at the University of Maryland (April 18-19, 1997). The grounding principles of the MayDay Group echo several themes mentioned above:

Musical action that is fully mindful of musical



“Multidimensional” is another word that captures the essence of this philosophy. The praxial approach advocates a multidimensional concept of musical practices and musical works, ...of musical understanding,...of music’s significance in human life, and a multiple approach to achieving the value of music.

results is the necessary condition of music making and, therefore, of an effective music education. Expert musicians develop critical and reflective abilities that mindfully employ knowledge and skill in the service of musical results, ...any formal education of musical skill, knowledge and insight must similarly involve critically reflective, rather than unthinking or superficial, music making... The social and cultural contexts of musical actions are integral to musical meaning and cannot be ignored or minimized in music education. Aesthetic theories, with their claims that musical meaning and value transcend time, place, context, and human purpose and usefulness, fail to account for the fullest range of meanings inherent in individual and collective musical actions. Such theories fall short of providing an adequate rationale for music making or music teaching. (Gates and Regelski, 1996)

My effort to develop an alternative philosophy of music education ran parallel to and received energy from all the above, spanning the years 1989 to 1993 and culminating in the publication of *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* in 1995. This “praxial” proposal depends in part on several philosophical sources and ideas already mentioned. But it also draws from the music teaching expertise of a wide range of “reflective practitioners” I have observed over many years in various contexts and cultures and at many levels of instruction.<sup>3</sup>

As Alperson’s previously-quoted remarks suggest, the word “praxial” connotes action (overt *and* covert) that is purposeful, contextual and critically reflective. By calling this effort a praxial philosophy I intend to highlight the nature of music as process-and-product (action and outcome) intertwined: music as goal-directed action (including music making and music listening of all kinds)

that is responsive to and situated in specific contexts of musical achievement and, therefore, revealing of one’s selfhood and one’s relationship with others in a community.

“Multidimensional” is another word that captures the essence of this philosophy. The praxial approach advocates a multidimensional concept of musical practices and musical works, a multidimensional concept of musical understanding, a multidimensional concept of music’s significance in human life, and a multiple approach to achieving the values of music.

How? In essence, by engaging all music students (general students and otherwise) in the development of musicianship (which always includes listenership) through the critically reflective and codependent actions of performing-and-listening, improvising-and-listening, composing-and-listening, arranging-and-listening, and conducting-and-listening. Developing students’ musical creativity in all forms of music making overlaps and extends the process of developing students’ musicianship (cf., Elliott, 1995, pp. 224-230). Recordings and verbal concepts weave through the active curriculum-as-practicum to support and supplement authentic music making. The praxial philosophy urges a comprehensive, reflective approach to music teaching and learning, in which the aural and interpretive nature of music as a performing and improvising art is maintained while composing, arranging, and conducting (all of which demand keen listening) are taught codependently.

As Aspin (1996) confirms: “What Elliott is after here is conduct in music education that is of a critically reflective kind that is instantiated in teachers’ and learners’ behavior patterns in the teaching/learning interaction” (p. 53). Custodero (1996) puts it this way:

Elliott argues that the musical experience is context-dependent and multidimensional ... Music education is significant not, as Bennett Reimer purports, because it educates the feelings, but because it generates self-knowledge, self-growth and enjoyment in a manner unattainable in any other domain, artistic or otherwise. These are achieved through active music making. Students are perceived by the author as apprentice performers, composers, improvisers, arrangers, conductors and dancers. (p. 63)

Regelski (1996) sums the concept elegantly: A praxial rationale for music education... emphasizes “making music” — composing and performing it, and treating listening as a “praxis”... It approaches music from the ‘inside’ but in terms of particular situated praxis... Such stress on music in and through human action — on the enhancing of meaning and value in life through music — entails getting people ‘into action’ musically with the specific intention of actively savoring fully the values music is good for in their lives... This, of course, requires challenging the cultural hegemony of the current aesthetic rationale for music education, and the corresponding legitimization of alternative paradigms that acknowledge the praxial nature of music. (pp. 45-46)

Following are several (but not all) important principles that underpin the praxial philosophy in relation to five key questions. (Unless indicated otherwise, page numbers below refer to Elliott, 1995).

### 1. How does the praxial philosophy conceive the nature of music?

The praxial philosophy begins from a broad orienting map of music that combines processes (actions), products, and contexts (cf., pp. 36-45; Figures 2.5 and 2.6, p. 44).<sup>4</sup> I summarize this multidimensional concept by combining three related senses of the word itself: (i) MUSIC, (ii) Music, and (iii) music.

MUSIC (uppercase) is a diverse human practice consisting in many different musical practices, music-cultures, or *Musics* (uppercase M). By “musical practice” or “Music” I mean what musicians, lay people and scholars routinely mean when they talk about, for example, Jazz, Rock, “Classical music,” Irish traditional music, Indian music, and the many subdivisions that experts and lay people commonly make within and between such Musics (e.g., Dixieland and Bebop; Acid

Rock and Heavy Metal; Medieval chant, Baroque chamber music, Romantic Lied; Donegal fiddling and Connemara sean-nós singing; North Indian drumming and South Indian carnatic song).

Each and every musical practice or *Music* is conceived as an artistic-social community, or music-culture. Each musical practice engages music makers and listeners in the corresponding and mutually-reinforcing actions of music making (in all its practice-specific forms) and music listening. These contextualized, practice-specific actions eventuate in *music* (lowercase) in the product sense of musical works that embody the values, standards and traditions of the given practice or music-culture. (In this view, MUSIC is multi-cultural in essence).

Because musical works result from the efforts of musical practitioners (amateur or professional) who compose, arrange, improvise, perform and/or conduct at particular historical times and places, and in relation to practice-specific musical knowings, values and traditions, musical works always involve listening *for* several dimensions of musical meaning simultaneously. Making and listening to musical works require us to cognize more than purely auditory information or sound patterns alone. Works of music are multidimensional “thought generators” (p. 92).

One of the fundamental missions of the praxial view is to develop students’ abilities to listen-*for* and comprehend the full range of meanings that musical works present to our powers of consciousness (cf., pp. 198-206; and “The Values of Music Listening,” p. 123ff). What this requires, in turn (as Regelski says above), is that we replace the nineteenth-century aesthetic concept of esteemed works (i.e., compositions esteemed for their “aesthetic qualities” alone) with a more realistic and comprehensive sense of musical works and musical values. We need to supplant the absolutist claim (at the core of the MEAE philosophy) that all music everywhere should be understood in the restricted aesthetic sense of “works” and listened to, valued, and taught aesthetically.<sup>5</sup> Instead, musical achievements (compositions, improvisations, renditions, arrangements — all types of “pieces” across all music-cultures)

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ought to be listened to and esteemed contextually for their *full* range of attributes, meanings, expressions, references, and cultural-ideological aspects. As I explain in *Music Matters* (following Goehr 1992):

the most accurate use of the term *musical work* is in relation to so-called serious or classical instrumental music of nineteenth-century Europe. The work concept is one component of the aesthetic concept of music as a product-centered art. It posits a fictional object that exists in an ideal world apart from any physical score and any single performance of that score. Thus, to think of musical achievements as works of music is to import a cluster of specific theoretic assumptions, including the idea that music is a matter of fixed, fully formed, and enduring objects that require exact notation, perfect performance, and aesthetic perception.

Since the late 1700s, the aesthetic concept of music as a work- or object-centered art has become so familiar that many people (including many philosophers) fail to recognize its historicity, let alone its force. They assume that it is natural to think of all music everywhere as works of music [in the restricted aesthetic sense]. They then proceed to analyze and evaluate the outcomes of all music making (including Jazz, African drumming, and Baroque choral singing) as musical works in the Romantic aesthetic sense. (pp. 25-26)

The praxial view argues that listening intelligently for musical works involves the knowledgeable, covert construction of at least four and often as many as six interrelated dimensions of musical meaning: (i) the interpretive-expressive performance of (ii) structural patterns (e.g., melodic patterns and rhythmic patterns) which, in turn, manifest (iii) traditions and standards of musical practice, (iv) cultural meanings, and often (but not always) (v) musical expressions of specific emotions and/or (vi) musical representations of people, places and things (pp. 198-203).

And what about the "sensuous" nature of musical works? The uniqueness of musical experiences and musical values is codependent with the sensuous nature of auditory information and auditory cognition. As I detail (pp. 126-127), "we must not overlook the centrality of artistically and culturally produced sound to everything musical; historied sound is the *sine qua non* of MUSIC" (p. 126).

In support of this view of musical works and music listening, I discuss many examples of distinguished musical works from different musical practices that exemplify these dimensions of musical meaning (cf., Chapter 4: "Listening"; Chapter 6: "Musical Works"; Chapter 8: "Listening in Context" and Chapter 9: "Musical Creativity in Context"). I also suggest several examples of works from various practices that students can interpret and perform and listen-for on recordings (e.g., Fauré's *Pie Jesu*, the Zulu song *Siyahamba*, Nestico's *Basie—Straight Ahead*, R. Murray Schafer's *Epitaph for Moonlight*, Ellington's *Daybreak Express*).

However, as I emphasize in my discussions of the nature and teaching of listening,

I shall be the first to admit that there may be musical works past, present and future that involve additional dimensions not accounted for here. In other words, this philosophy's multidimensional concept of musical works is an open concept. Its six categories are heuristic devices.... I contend that if music teachers and music students keep in mind that there is no one way to listen for all music everywhere, and if this "map" of musical works is used as an adaptable guide, then students are more likely than not to experience a fuller measure of the human values that musicing and listening involve. (p. 201)

What I also suggest we keep in mind is that in the performing art of music, the intended outcome, product, or "work" (in the broader praxial sense) is not a self-sufficient object (like a painting, novel, or sculpture). It

is a performance of some kind: either a performance of a composition or an arrangement, or a remembered work, or an improvisation in which performing and composing occur simultaneously and “in the moment,” as I detail in discussions of the relationships among and between listening, performing, composing, improvising, and arranging (cf., Ch. 7: “Musicing in Context”).

Music listening is invariably a matter of listening-for performances which are, in turn, *interpretations*. Musical performances involve actions, gestures and multidimensional sound patterns that are intentionally generated through the musical thinking (overt and covert) of interrelated people (composers, arrangers, performers, improvisers, or conductors, all of whom listen to what they do) to be intentionally conceived as such by other knowledgeable people (other music makers and/or listeners). Heard musical works involve interpreters (singers, instrumentalists and conductors who must be knowledgeable listeners if they wish to perform well) who contribute substantively and artistically to the events that audiences (of whatever kind) cognize as musical performances. Performers actualize musical “works” (taken in the *comprehensive* sense) to express their personal understandings about the works involved.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of truly musical listening is listening *for* a specific artist’s (and/or a specific ensemble’s) interpretation of a particular work. The quality of a musical interpretation conveys the level of musical understanding — the musicianship-listenership — possessed by the performer(s) involved. Each performance embodies, communicates and projects a performer’s understanding of the several dimensions of a given work into a specific context of music listening traditions and understandings, such that the performance itself is open to the consideration and criticism of knowledgeable listeners.

This is why we say that it is only in an artistic performance of a musical work that everything a composer (arranger, improviser) conceives and intends is decided. Only in an unfolding musical performance do all the dimensions of a work come together. And this is why Kivy (1990) and Goldman (1990) sug-

gest that a musical performance is the most complete nonverbal “description” of (i) a musical work and (ii) a performer’s understanding of that work. The same holds doubly for improvisations, which combine performing and composing “in the moment.”

Clearly, a musical performance (done well) is not simply an audible reproduction of what a score indicates. And music performing (properly carried out, understood, and taught) is never a simple matter of sounds-as-produced. Performing music expressively through singing or playing instruments requires *interpreting* music creatively and listening keenly for *all* the dimensions of the musical work one is attempting to communicate.

This is precisely what the praxial philosophy advocates: developing students’ listenership (a) in direct relation to the music that students are learning to perform, improvise, compose, arrange and conduct and (b) in relation to recordings. Moreover, to learn composing/arranging effectively and joyfully, students need continuous opportunities to hear their works interpreted and performed musically (not merely “produced”). Students must also learn actively about the music-culture contexts (including the performing, listening, and evaluating traditions) which surround and inform the two main processes that lie at the heart of composing, arranging and improvising: generating and selecting original and promising musical ideas (pp. 161-172).

All this is impossible to do well without the careful integration of performing, composing/arranging, conducting, and listening. This is why the praxial philosophy puts performing and improvising “first among equals”:

making music through performing and improvising takes learners to the heart of musical practices, and improvising links students to performing and composing in practical and musical-social ways. The same holds for conducting when this form of musicing is pertinent to a practice. Composing is also an important way of developing musicianship and immersing students in musical practices. But unless or until students come to know the essential nature of musical works as performances, composing should not be the primary way of developing musicianship. Instead (and time permitting), I suggest that composing is a reasonable and important

supplement to the development of students' musicianship through performing and improvising (both of which demand keen listenership). (p. 173)

More broadly, none of this is possible to do well without a position on WHAT should be taught and learned in the sense of "musical understanding."

## 2. What is the nature of musical knowledge or musical understanding? WHAT should we teach?

All forms of music making (performing, improvising, composing, arranging and conducting) depend upon and express themselves as a multidimensional form of knowing called musicianship (pp. 55-76). Music listening ability (listenership) involves the covert construction of intermusical and intramusical relationships, information and meanings by means of the same *kinds* of knowing that make up musicianship: procedural, formal (or verbal), informal, impressionistic and supervisory musical knowledge (pp. 94-107). Musicianship and listenership are two sides of the same coin; the knowings required to listen effectively to the musical works of a given musical practice are the same *kinds* of knowing required to make the music of that practice. In this view, musicianship (which always includes listenership) equals "musical understanding" (p. 68).

As noted in the previous section of this discussion, learning to listen deeply and intelligently to all relevant dimensions of musical works from a variety of musical practices is at the very heart of the praxial philosophy. Listenership is developed in *direct* relation to performing, improvising, composing, arranging and conducting, with recorded music in a supportive role and with verbal concepts taught parenthetically (in relation to and in the context of active music making).

Why? Because music making and music listening involve several kinds of "situated" or context-dependent forms of knowing that will not develop through music curricula centered on record-listening, or *ersatz* "activities," or verbal information separated from the contexts of active and progressive musical problem solving.

Situated forms of knowing accrue in teaching-learning contexts that approximate viable music-cultures. They grow in the actions of artis-

tic musical problem solving. General music programs geared to recorded music do not provide the proper conditions for developing the several kinds of knowledge required for intelligent listening because recordings place the student-as-listener outside the artistic decision-making process. A music curriculum based on recordings encourages passive listening-to. In contrast, music making places the student-as-listener inside the musical works and practices he or she is endeavoring to learn. The kind of music listening one engages in while performing, improvising, arranging, composing, and conducting is a matter of *artistic listening-for*. It is directed toward musical problem finding and problem solving. In sum, educating competent, proficient and expert listeners for the future depends on the progressive education of competent, proficient and artistic music-makers [of *all* kinds] in the present. (p. 99)

Who supports this view? (One criterion of a philosophy's veracity is the diversity and quality of the sources that support its central tenets.) A variety of scholars support the praxial emphasis on teaching music listening primarily in relation to actual music making, including Aristotle, Ryle, Dewey, Scheffler (cf., pp. 173-175) and Gardner (1991), who says:

If the notion of understanding is introduced in too literal a fashion in the arts, it may be taken as cognate to the mastery of certain concepts like "style" or "rhythm" or "the Renaissance."

...however, any notion of understanding ought to center on the capacities exhibited and the operations carried out by masters of a domain, and each domain features its own characteristic constraints and opportunities. Such a perspective reveals that, in the arts, production ought to lie at the center of any artistic experience. (pp. 238-239)

Aristotle established the groundwork for this view centuries ago in his *Politics*:

Clearly there is a considerable difference made in the character by the actual practice of the art. It is difficult, if not impossible, for those who do not perform to be good judges of the performance of others. . . . We conclude then that they [children] should be taught music in such a way as to become not only critics but performers. (1340b20-33)

For these reasons (and more: pp. 259-293), the praxial philosophy suggests that preparing and planning a music curriculum begin by deciding the kinds of artistic music mak-



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ing that students will pursue during short-term and long-term time periods.

There are five possible choices: performing, improvising, composing, arranging and conducting. Since we cannot teach all five forms of music making at each moment to all students, teachers must decide which forms of musicing to select. This philosophy has argued that the music curriculum-as-practicum ought to focus primarily (but not exclusively) on music making through musical performing and improvising. Composing, arranging and conducting ought to be taken up with reasonable frequency . . . and in judicious relation to the musical practices and works that students are pursuing through performing.

In addition, since all forms of music making depend on artistic music listening, and since artistic listening develops in relation to the five component knowings of musicianship, listening ought to be taught and learned in direct relation to the musical practices and works students are learning in and through their own active making. (p. 274)

In short, musicianship, which *always* includes listenership, is WHAT we should teach. Why? Because musicianship is the key to achieving the values of music both during school years and after.

### 3. What are the values of music and music education?

Music making and music listening offer several values that should also be taken as the aims of music education. First, and because of the characteristic tendencies of human consciousness (that are simultaneously biological and cultural), a variety of thinkers maintain that a central goal of each self is to strengthen the self (pp. 113-124). As human beings we have an innate desire to deploy our conscious powers to bring order to consciousness and achieve self-knowledge. One of the major keys to understanding the human significance and affective power of music listening and music making is this: when there is a balance between a person's musi-

cianship and the challenges inherent in listening to and/or making musical works (as a composer, arranger, conductor, improviser, or performer) music makers and listeners achieve the fundamental values or "life values" of self-knowledge (or constructive knowledge), musical enjoyment (or flow) and self-esteem (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1993).

In this view, musicianship (which *always* includes listenership) is not only an exquisite, multidimensional form of thinking and knowing, it is a unique source of one of the most important kinds of knowledge that humans can achieve: self-knowledge.

In the praxial view, then, musical experiences are a subset of that larger class of experiences that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) variously calls flow experiences, optimal experiences, or autotelic experiences. Musical experiences share certain basic characteristics in common with the flow experiences that arise in other fields of endeavor, including sports, games and other artistic pursuits (painting, dancing and so on). But, as I also state,

musical experiences are unique because musicing and music listening involve challenges and thought processes that are entirely different from those required for any other endeavor. Indeed, we must not overlook the centrality of artistically and culturally produced sound to everything musical; historied sound is the *sine qua non* of MUSIC.

In other words, the *conditions* of musical flow experiences are specific to musicing and music listening. Accordingly, the conscious contents of musical experiences — their cognitive and affective qualities, the way they feel while they last, their short- and long-term effects — differ significantly from other forms of experience, including other kinds of artistic experience. (p. 126)

In addition to these values, the praxial philosophy suggests that musicing (of all kinds) and musical works extend the range of our expressive and impressive powers by provid-



ing unique artistic opportunities to formulate creative expressions of emotions, representations of people, places and things, and expressions of cultural-ideological meanings. When this range of opportunities for musical expression and creativity is combined with the opportunities presented by texts in vocal and choral works, students who engage musical works reflectively as music makers (of all kinds) gain numerous ways of giving artistic-cultural form to their powers of thinking, knowing, valuing, evaluating, feeling and believing.

Music making, listening, and musical works also play an important role in establishing, defining, delineating, and preserving a sense of community and self-identity within social groups (pp. 207-212). Students who engage music reflectively by making and listening for music in relation to the values (artistic, social, communal, religious) that inform musicing and listening in different practices also learn why and how music constitutes and is constituted by its cultural contexts.

Students who learn to listen for and make music according to the standards and traditions of a reasonable diversity of musical practices and who thereby participate in the maintenance and progress of these practices, gain yet another fundamental life value (pp. 180-181). They achieve what MacIntyre (1984) calls “a certain kind of life.” By entering into and learning musical practices — by living a part of one’s life as a music maker and listener — a student (child through adult) gains a unique and valued way of being in the world: he or she gains the unique value of living out a greater or lesser part of her life as a listener or music maker within the rich contexts of the artistic-social communities we call musical practices or music-cultures.

When teachers induct students into musical practices as active, reflective practitioners they enable their students to achieve the necessary condition for the sustained development of self-esteem: musicianship. Higher overall levels of self-esteem do not result from the simple addition of isolated flow experiences (pp. 118-119). Instead, self-esteem is intimately related to involving one’s *self* more and more deeply and continuously in the challenges and complexities of a particu-

lar domain of practice, or in a certain way of life: in “a system of meanings that gives purpose to one’s being” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. xv). Involving oneself more and more deeply in each unique “system of meanings” we call a musical practice (e.g., Jazz-Rock Fusion, Kete drumming, South Indian carnatic song, Urban Blues, Romantic Lied, Cape Breton fiddling) requires a unique, multidimensional, and practice-specific form of thinking and knowing called musicianship.

In this view, knowing that one is gradually entering into, or building, or participating in a musical kind of life as a music listener or maker is an intangible but important part of a person’s “life themes” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 230). People (including many politicians and school principals) who do not possess the musicianship to participate in musical practices as knowledgeable listeners or music makers cannot fully understand or pass judgment on the unique values that arise in musical involvements. The “internal goods” of musical practices are only available to those who develop the situational knowledge formed around and for artistic music making and listening.

Additionally, teaching and learning a variety of Musics *comprehensively* as music-cultures (through a praxial approach) amount to an important form of multicultural education. (Indeed, if MUSIC is a diverse human practice — if MUSIC is multicultural in essence — then music education ought to involve students in a reasonable variety of musical practices over the span of their school music careers). Entering into unfamiliar music-cultures activates self-examination and the personal reconstruction of one’s relationships, assumptions and preferences. Students are obliged to confront their prejudices (musical and personal) and face the possibility that what they may believe to be universal is *not*. In the process of inducting learners into different musical practices, music educators link the primary values of music education to the broader goals of *humanistic* education.

#### **4. How does the praxial philosophy summarize its concepts of music and music education?**

The following concepts of music and music education are *not* put forth as fixed and final

The core knowledge of music education is action-based: it is knowledge-how to think musically in the actions of musicing and listening.

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definitions. Instead, they are “open” or working concepts which (I suggest) can be modified to accommodate future possibilities without losing their identity. These concepts attempt to clarify the ideas of MUSIC and MUSIC education to the degree that they allow and, in so doing, to show their relationships to such associated matters as musical values, actions, works, and sounds (pp. 128-131).

MUSIC is the diverse human practice of overtly and covertly constructing aural-temporal patterns for the primary (but not necessarily the exclusive) values of enjoyment, self-growth, and self-knowledge. These values arise when musicianship is sufficient to balance or match the cognitive challenges involved in making and/or listening for aural patterns regarded significantly, but never exclusively, as audible designs. (p. 128)

The aims of music education, and the primary goals of every music teaching-learning situation, are to enable students to achieve self-growth, self-knowledge and musical enjoyment by educating their musicianship in balanced relation to musical challenges within selected musical practices. It follows from this that musicianship is also a unique and major source of self-esteem. (p. 129)

##### **5. How (more specifically) can music education be organized and carried out to achieve the values of music?**

I have already discussed several points about the “how” of music education. Let me elaborate in slightly more detail here.

Musicianship is a form of thinking and knowing that is educable and applicable to all. Accordingly, all music students ought to be taught in the same essential way: as reflective musical practitioners or musical apprentices engaged in rich and challenging music-making projects in classroom situations that are deliberately organized as close approximations of real musical practices (pp. 269-272; 285-288). In this kind of authentic, action-based learning environment, the knowings that make up musicianship-listenership can be developed most naturally

in the reflective actions of performing and improvising linked to composing, arranging and conducting. And in the many cases where moving is an integral part of musicing or listening, movement ought to receive an appropriate emphasis.

Although composing has received considerable curricular attention during the last twenty years (and rightly so), student projects in arranging and conducting have been largely overlooked. All three forms of musicing deserve more attention from researchers and teachers alike. For one thing, while arranging involves many of the same kinds of thinking and knowing as composing, the positive constraints of working within the pre-established boundaries of given works make arranging more realistic than composing for many students and teachers. Arranging also offers a natural and logical bridge to the considerable challenges involved in generating and selecting the musical ideas required to produce original compositions (pp. 161-172; 260-262). Gardner (1990) reinforces these principles from a developmental perspective:

students learn effectively when they are engaged by rich and meaningful projects; when their artistic learning is anchored in artistic production; when there is an easy commerce among the various forms of knowing...; and when students have ample opportunity to reflect on their progress. (Gardner, p. 49)

Again, what is the proper balance between (a) artistic listening and (b) listening to recorded music?

Recordings and listening charts of various kinds deserve an important place in the education of all students, providing that they serve to supplement students' active, goal-directed music making and guide students toward the multidimensional nature of musical works. (p. 176)

[However]... to educate music listening beyond a novice level requires that music students be inducted into and immersed in mu-

## The praxial curriculum centers on achieving self-growth and musical enjoyment in the thoughtful actions of artistic music making (of all kinds).

sical practices through artistic music making. Listening artistically for the music one is making oneself (and with others) enables a student to understand how different aspects of musicing and listening relate to one another in terms of cause-effect, whole-part, form-function, comparison-contrast and production-interpretation relations. Learning to listen deeply and intelligently for the music of a particular practice requires that students learn music from inside musical practices: from the perspective of *reflective musical practitioners*...

...the name for this kind of teaching-learning situation is curriculum-as-practicum. A music curriculum based on authentic music-making serves to contextualize and situate listenership and its component knowings. In this view, artistic listening — listening for what one is attempting to achieve musically — is the primary form of listening in music education. (pp. 101-102)

In addition, I suggest that some age-appropriate version of the “listening log” ought to be a basic ingredient of the music curriculum-as-practicum and a basic means of assessment. The listening log takes the journal concept one more step. Each student organizes a personal listening diary using some variation on the six-dimensional model of musical works I have already outlined above. Students note comments in relation to these dimensions as they listen for recordings during or after school, or at live concerts. The listening log encourages students to practice listening for and reflecting critically on musical works as multidimensional constructions. The log also provides another means of assessing and evaluating the growth of musicianship-listenership.

What is the role of verbal concepts (or formal knowledge) in music education? Formal knowledge is a basic knowledge dimension of musicianship and listenership (pp. 60-62; 96-97). Music makers and listeners benefit from theoretical knowledge about the syntactic and nonsyntactic parameters of music. The technical languages used by music theorists and historians can be extremely useful in helping listeners identify, construct, orga-

nize and analyze successive and simultaneous musical patterns. In addition, verbal information about practice-specific rules of interpretation, performance, composition and improvisation contributes significantly to the depth and accuracy of a listener's covert thinking-in-action and a music-maker's overt and covert thinking-in-action. (Of course, “formal musical knowledge” may also take the form of analytical “maps” of musical structure, or traditional musical scores).

But from an educational standpoint, verbal knowledge is problematic in two ways. First, verbal concepts are not the core knowledge of musicianship. Musicing and listening are procedural in essence. The “basics” of music are not structural elements such as melody, harmony, and rhythm; but rather the practice-specific thinking processes that music makers and listeners use to construct musical patterns in their auditory, artistic and contextual fullness.

It follows from this that the core knowledge of music education is not verbal concepts about melody, harmony, or anything else. The core knowledge of music education is action-based: it is knowledge-how to think musically in the actions of musicing and listening. This emphasis on listening as thinking-in-action may help teachers to keep verbal concepts about music and musicing in their proper place: as a supplement to, but not a goal or an organizer of, music teaching and learning. To be of musical value (as opposed to purely scholastic value), and to be transformed into procedural knowledge, verbal musical knowledge ought to be employed parenthetically — as an adjunct to music making (of all kinds), to artistic listening, and to record-listening.

Also, it is important for teachers to consider that “talk” about music can also be practice-specific. Different musical practices use different ways of describing the musical works they make and listen-for. Overall, it is

not a question of whether to use multiple or alternative ways of describing musical patterns; it is a question of when. For example, there are several ways to talk about musical works, depending on the traditions of the musical practices and the pieces concerned. We can discuss musical works (i) *systematically* in terms of dominant, first subject, fugue, and so on, and/or (ii) *relatively*, by making comparisons among musical qualities (short-long; high-low; single line-multiple lines; consonant-dissonant; repeated-varied). In addition, we can talk (iii) *phenomenologically*, in terms of thick and thin sounds, dark and bright sounds and so on. Moreover, it is sometimes (but not always) legitimate to discuss musical works (iv) *descriptively*, as sounds of celebration, mourning, marching, “sounds-like-a-train,” and so on. Lastly, it is often (but not always) appropriate to talk about the artistic qualities of specific works (v) *emotionally*, as being expressive of happiness, sadness, melancholy, and so on.

Overall, what does the praxial curriculum “look like” in action? The praxial curriculum centers on achieving self-growth and musical enjoyment in the thoughtful actions of artistic music making (of all kinds). Teachers and students work together to meet the musical challenges involved in authentic musical projects through reflective musical performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting. Music listening is directed, first, to the music being made by students themselves. Each musical work that students are learning to interpret and perform (improvise, arrange and so on) is approached as a “full course meal” — as a *multidimensional* challenge to be made artistically and listened-for intelligently in all its relevant dimensions (interpretive, structural, stylistic, expressional, descriptive, cultural). In support of artistic listening-in-context, carefully selected recordings are introduced parenthetically. Similarly, formal knowledge is filtered into the continuous stream of authentic music making and listening as needed.

The music curriculum is deliberately organized to engage learners in musical actions, transactions, and interactions with close approximations of real music-cultures. The

praxial curriculum immerses students in music making projects that require them to draw upon the standards, traditions, lore, landmark achievements, “languages,” and creative strategies of the musical practices of which their projects are a part.

From this perspective, the music teaching-learning environment is, itself, a key element in the music education enterprise. The musical actions of learners are enabled and promoted by the interactive, goal-directed “swirl” of questions, issues and knowings that develop around students’ efforts as reflective musical practitioners. The praxial curriculum is, itself, informative.

When small and large performing ensembles (e.g., a class choir, guitar ensemble, African drumming ensemble, string ensemble, Jazz ensemble, wind ensemble and so on) are developed and carried out in relation to the above principles, and when performing, improvising, and conducting are carefully linked to composing and arranging projects, then the music classroom becomes a reflective musical practicum: a close approximation of authentic music-culture situations. The practicum context feeds back to students by revealing what counts artistically in their developing musicianship and their musical achievements.

By treating all music students (including “general” music students) as apprentice musical practitioners, and by teaching all students how to find and solve musical problems in “conversation” with works (in the comprehensive sense) of a reasonable diversity of musical practices, music educators situate students’ musical thinking and knowing. In doing so, the different kinds of knowing involved in musicianship develop and cohere.

Gardner’s perspective (1990) provides further support for this philosophy’s emphasis on providing an artistic curriculum-as-practicum for all music students.

When students encounter the various forms of knowing operating together in a natural situation; when they see accomplished adult masters moving back and forth spontaneously among these forms; when they are themselves engaged in rich and engaging projects, which call upon a variety of modes of representation; when they have the opportunity to

The music curriculum is deliberately organized to engage learners in musical actions, transactions, and interactions with close approximations of real music-cultures.

interact and communicate with individuals who evidence complementary forms of learning — these are the situations that facilitate a proper alignment among the various forms of knowledge. (pp. 31-32)

### Recent Developments

Since 1995, discussions of the praxial philosophy have been underway in university “foundation” courses and at in-service conferences in North America (e.g., the Fifty-Fifth MENC National Conference, 1996) and abroad (e.g., Finland, Australia, Ireland, South Africa). Written discussions of the praxial philosophy are just beginning to appear in the form of book reviews (Aspin, 1996; Humphreys, 1996; Custedero, 1996; LeBlanc, 1996; Reimer, 1996; Roberts, 1996; Stublely, 1996; Swanwick, 1995), dissertations (Dolloff, 1994; Eshelman, 1995) and conference papers (Regelski, 1996). (I offer a detailed response to book reviews elsewhere<sup>6</sup>). To this extent the praxial effort has begun to function in several intended ways:

as a catalyst for critical thinking and individual philosophy building... as a tool — as a means of initiating, stimulating, guiding, and supporting the efforts of music teachers . . . and others as they tackle the many theoretical and practical issues in music education.

Moreover, the reviews by Humphreys, Stublely, and Custedero are especially helpful toward refining the praxial view because these authors make the extra effort to include constructive arguments and pertinent references. Indeed, and overall, the large majority of these first discussions are dominantly positive and constructive.

For example, while Humphreys (1996) suggests rightly that aspects of informal music teaching may deserve more attention, he avers that the praxial view “represents a significant step forward in music education philosophy” (p. 154) and that it is “far more comprehensive and, yes, probably superior to MEAE as a general guiding philosophy for

the music education profession” (p. 153). Roberts (1996) agrees: “among practicing teachers it will replace virtually overnight the flawed and outdated approach that is exemplified in Reimer’s 1989 reincarnation of *A Philosophy of Music Education*” because, says Roberts, the praxial philosophy “has encapsulated current thinking into a thoroughly worked out and comprehensive philosophy which attempts, largely successfully, to account for the entire enterprise of music education” (p. 24). Swanwick (1995) suggests that the praxial view is “well researched and documented” (p. 287) and that it has “many positive qualities, not the least an attempt at an explicit statement of the value of music” (p. 288). He adds that it also performs “a useful service in bringing to the centre of the stage a view of music education as aesthetic education that seems indeed to have had its day” (p. 288). Aspin (1996) allows that the praxial argument “about the social and cultural implications of the need to get inside diverse musical practices is a very powerful argument for real multiculturalism” (p. 53).

Of course, not everyone in the establishment is positive about recent changes in music education philosophy, or accurate in reporting the themes of the praxial view. For example, Reimer (1996) wants his readers to believe that the praxial philosophy is “for performers only” (p. 59), that it “condescends to and denigrates the musicianship of people outside the West” (p. 67), that “no mention is made of the teaching of composition” (p. 73), that any discussion or example of excellent works to be performed “is notable by its absence” (p. 70), that “it is not possible for Elliott — it is even contemptible — to believe that listening abilities can be improved for all people simply by helping them to listen better” (p. 76), that “Elliott’s agenda forces him to separate process and product” (p. 63), that “Elliott makes clear his aversion



to the use of language to clarify musical structure" (p. 80 ) and so on and on.

Reimer's claims are entirely false.<sup>7</sup> As Roberts (1996) predicts, some members of the academic community "will have a much harder time embracing this evolving new wave" because they have "tremendous career investments made in the aesthetic education model" (p. 24).

Change is difficult; but change is also the necessary requirement for growth in knowledge and professional practice. Professional growth and renewal are, in turn, the best hopes we have for enabling more students of all ages to achieve the fullest understanding and enjoyment of music making and music listening now and in the future.

### Notes

1. Other themes I lack the space to summarize here include multicultural music education, musical creativity, curriculum development, and evaluation.

2. The proceedings of the Indiana Symposium were originally published as a special issue ("Philosophy of Music and Music Education") of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25(3) (1991).

3. I have in mind these excellent "reflective musical practitioners" and the many students they have prepared as reflective music educators: Eugene Corporon, Craig Kirkoff, Paul Read, Jim Croft, Steven Paul, Doreen Rao, Janet Galvin, Barbara Tagg, Lori-Anne Dolloff, Tim Sharp, Kathy Armstrong, Sandra Murphy, Joan Gregoryk, Ann Small, Barbara Baker, John Feierabend, Jane Frazee, Jean Sinor, Mary Goetze, Timothy Rice, James Kippen and many, many others.

4. Note that the orienting diagrams of "music" in the praxial philosophy (Elliott, 1995, Fig. 2.5 and Fig. 2.6, pp. 44-45) combine musical processes (musicing in all its forms and music listening), musical products (music as an achievement of making and music as an achievement of listening, which I call a "listenable") and the social and cultural contexts of musicing and listening.

In contrast, the MEAE diagram of music is restricted to music-as-commodity: music as a product or "art work," which "may" involve

"artistic/cultural influences" and "extra-artistic meanings and values" (Reimer, 1989, p. 27-28). Indeed, the "absolute expressionist" philosophy of MEAE begins and ends with the nineteenth-century, Western "work-concept" of music that it applies to all musical products everywhere: music as a collection of aesthetic objects or "works" in the sense of "art works" that consist of aesthetic qualities alone.

5. Reimer (1989) says: "For an experience to be musical the perception must be of the artistic [i.e., aesthetic] qualities of sound . . ." (p. 121). Reimer's chart (p. 120) of two "Categories of Experiences of Music" clearly shows that MEAE categorizes "nonmusical (nonaesthetic) experiences" as listening in relation to "practical, religious, therapeutic, moral, political, commercial, etc." meanings while "musical (aesthetic) experiences" involve an exclusive concentration on structural elements: melody, harmony, and so on (p. 120-121; 128). Accordingly, says Reimer: "The most important role of music education is to help students become progressively more sensitive to the elements of music [i.e., the aesthetic qualities of aesthetic works] which contain the conditions which can yield experiences of feeling. These elements — the musical qualities of melody, harmony, rhythm, tone color, texture, form — are objective;" (p. 54).

6. See the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, forthcoming.

7. I respond to Reimer's errors and accusations in a forthcoming issue of the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*.

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