

Tyler Cesario

Professor Nick McBride

Critical Pedagogy I

13 March 2014

### Philosophy of Music Education

Music is commonly referred to as a universal language, and is used all throughout the world. Because music is so universal, and is also viewed as a pleasurable and “fun” activity for most people to do, it should never be approached like another school subject that could simply be ruled as “not every persons thing.” Learning about music should make a person inspired, and want to change the world, not take a nap.

The best way someone can truly be inspired by music is to be both experiencing it, and practicing it. David Elliot has this idea about music education, “Recordings and information about music should be included in music teaching situations in such a way that they weave continuously in and out of a teacher’s ongoing efforts to teach students how to listen intelligently and make music well (to perform and improvise music and, whenever possible, to compose, arrange and conduct music).” (Elliot, 1995). The use of recordings and examples of different music is very important, but the use of practicing is equally if not slightly more important. When music making is involved in the learning of music, it makes things much more energizing for the student, this is why the majority of children who take choir, even if the aren’t the best singers, enjoy the subject more

than a student who took general music who was taught without any music making. By actually performing and practicing the art form, you learn much more about it than by just talking about it. In an English class when the subject is literary device and its use in poetry, a good teacher would use examples of poetry to teach the different examples and have the class write poems with literary devices in them to show a full mastery of the concept. The same idea should be applied to music education.

Of course for students to be able to relate to practicing, and examples, and make them actually want to learn, music education should never be limited so as to only use examples from one culture or time period of music. Estelle Jorgenson and Randall Allsup both have a modern approach to music education in using modern music and diverse music to teach with. Allsup makes the following statement about music educators in his book, "...they too often confuse the activities of the school with what it means to teach. When music teachers step back and critically examine their world, they soon discover a host of philosophical problems to contend with. The challenge that Philosophy poses is to engage actively in meaningful problem solving, to construct what may only amount to temporary responses in ever-changing texts." (Allsup, 2009). What Professor Allsup is really saying is that music educators must let go of what they think are certain expectations of their profession, and just teach what is most beneficial to the student. By being conventional in music educators are hindering what they are trying to preserve. Music is transcendental and ever-changing and must be approached as such.

Modern and diverse music are wonderful tools to use for music education to get kids inspired and connected to music as a whole, however all other forms of music can be equally as inspiring and “fun” to different students. Music teachers should use all different types of music to teach with and by doing this connect with all of their students. Teaching only one style is to music, as teaching only World War I in history class. Will there be some kids who absolutely love learning about the First World War? Yes! But there are also going to be students who are completely bored with it. On the same coin, teaching a student to only sing classical music is detrimental to music as an art form in general. If a student only knows that from public education they will only be taught classical music and they don’t like it, or don’t want to be performing it, they could very well be writing off music in general, and take nothing important from their music classes.

It is not enough in any school setting to simply prepare the students for the concert. For then they are only getting two different aspects of music: practice and repetition to improve a certain piece which is to be learned and polished by a certain deadline, and performance practice (which, maybe if the students is in a decent school district, they may have a fall and a spring concert). It isn’t enough that in choir students are only taught how to sing one way, with a classical choral sound. In some districts vocal technique isn’t even expanded upon very much., the student is just told “drop your jaw and sing from the belly!” Many teachers would argue that there just simply isn’t enough time in the year to teach expansive repertoire and go over advanced vocal technique, and that they don’t want their concert to suffer. If both are incorporated equally, they should balance

and compliment each other. While practicing and repetition is at the core of becoming a better musician, there are more things to practice for besides the winter concert. There should be time taken to practice technique, and theory and also time to concentrate on the meaning of the music rather than just drilling it over and over again.

Vocal technique should also be applied to many different types of music, that is after all what it is used for. One author on Music teacher's helper by the name of Bella Payne had this to say about technique, "As a young student, I was trained in the classical style in my vocal education, and I loved it. Today, I am really more of a contemporary singer, swaying more towards folk and rock music." A teacher brought up using a classical technique, and applying it to a modern style. Who Knew?

In order to make students inspired, they have to be presented with all of the information that potentially could inspire them. Not all of them will end up being music majors, but the world wouldn't survive if everyone were a music major. The important thing is that students leave the classroom wanting to do something because of the music they were being taught about. Whether it be to become a versatile and well-rounded musician or a person who contributes such as being a medical doctor is not for a teacher to decide. The student should be able to take inspiration, facts, or knowledge from the class and use it to further themselves in anything. One, as a teacher, should be equally proud of the student who goes into voice performance as the student who becomes a lawyer, but took

compassion and kindness with him on his journey because of a music class. The importance of music education is not only just to have fun, not only to create beauty, and not only to make music for its own sake, but to change lives and make people want to change the world.

Works Cited

Allsup, R. E. (2009). Philosophical perspectives in music education. In H. Abeles & L. Custodero (Ed.s), *Critical Issues in Music Education: Contemporary Theory and Practice*. New York & London: Oxford University Press.

Bell Payne, "Teaching Contemporary Singing Lessons," *www.musicteachershelper.com, 2008*.

Elliot, David, "Music Matters", *Music Matters, www.davidelliottmusic.com, 1995*, Oxford University Press Inc.