Personal Values and Professional Rationales Revisited

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I fell in love with music at an early age and have always dreamt of being a musician. As a student, my musical training was rigorous and fully immersed in Western European classical traditions. Though I always enjoyed accompanying the school choirs, experimenting with chords, and playing in the church worship bands, I kept this part of my musical life a secret from my music instructor, because I felt like she disapproved of performing any style other than classical music. Many years later, I have the same privilege to teach music to students, but many questions arise as to how music education should be accomplished. Are Western European classical traditions the best way to prepare a student for a life of fulfilling musicianship? To what degree must a student understand music in order to enjoy creating it? This paper will examine my current teaching contexts, my personal instruction methodologies, and the short and long-term benefits of music education within these contexts.

The field of music education in America has had a long and versatile history over the past century. In the mid 19th century, music education was introduced into American public schools as an approach to introduce singing (Jorgensen, 1983, p. 68). By the early 1900s, music teachers hoped that these singing schools would positively influence their communities, thereby providing a powerful testimony of the necessity of music education (McCarthy, 2014, p. 30). World War I and II created unique opportunities to unite as a nation and music teachers believed that their national responsibility was to create cohesion by returning to American heritage through folk and national music (McCarthy, 2014, p. 31). Music education became increasingly performance oriented during this time because professional musicians were the primary teachers, due to a shortage of qualified

music instructors (Abeles, 2010, p. 3). With the threat of the Cold War in the mid 20th century, educational reform returned "back to basics" (Abeles, 2010, p. 4) and music education turned its attention to the "further enrichment of American cultural life" (McCarthy, 2014, p. 32). During the 1980s and 1990s, the federal and state governments focused on teacher certifications and establishing national standards (Abeles, 2010, p. 7), while at the local level, public schools were attempting to revive community music making, for America had once again became a "nation of nonsingers" (McCarthy, 2014, p. 34). America was attacked on September 11th, 2001 and the nation responded with unity and a return to national music, but then life returned to normal and music educators found themselves back to where they were a century ago, though thankfully now with much greater understanding and social assumptions (McCarthy, 2014, p. 35).

I am a music educator. Though I was trained classically, I enjoyed playing with bands on the side, because I found the different styles and collaboration very invigorating. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree, a degree steeped in almost nothing but Western European classical traditions, I began working as a music pastor in the large church sector and taught rigorous classical private piano lessons on the side. During my 10-year tenure as a music pastor, I learned much about leadership, people, music directing bands, composing and arranging pop music, music production, and music technology, but my favorite memories were working with student musicians, either through the church or my private music studio, several of whom have become music pastors, music teachers, or music producers.

It was not easy being a female musician in the large church environment; though women "have always been present on the musical scene as [we] performed, taught,

encouraged students, and served as patrons," (Howe, 1998, p. 101) we have historically struggled "succeeding in band and leadership positions" (Howe, 1998, p. 103). This may possibly be due to the wide variety of life choices a woman is forced to make and "doing the very best with whatever circumstances come [her] way" (Richardson, 1992, p. 38). One of these life choices was my decision to change my career and become a music educator full-time, in the hopes of having more time to be with my family. In addition to my private music studio, I teach elementary and middle school music, contemporary band, music technology, and group and private music lessons at Camas Christian Academy (CCA), a small private Christian school in Camas, Washington, a quiet suburb of Portland, Oregon.

Camas is listed among Family Circle's top ten American towns in which to raise a family, with almost half (48%) of families having children and a public schools rating of 9 out of 10 (Nayyar, 2014). Camas residents are 87% white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), very family-focused, and, with a median family income of $80k, many families have the disposable income to make sure their children's education is their top priority (Nayyar, 2014). Because the Camas public school system is so effective, CCA has to do better than simply provide excellent preschool, elementary, and middle school education. Since we are a private school, we do not benefit from the Camas school levies, so the music and dance departments work together to facilitate "musicking," that is to "take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance" (Small, 1995, p. 3), including any and all experiences that are enjoyable and sustainable (Koza, 2006, p. 35).

The music and dance departments strategically create environments conducive to "musicking" with carefully selected curriculum. It is important to remember that

"methods" are often wonderful tools to teaching and learning, but not to be considered effective unless broader ideas are realized (Benedict, 2010, p. 195). Music teachers must also be reminded to not blindly follow the "method" and make assumptions about what music is and how to go about learning it (Benedict, 2010, p. 212). "Methods" are teaching tools, meant to create consistency, fun, and thoroughness in teaching the five "most fundamental principles of music: dynamics, timbre, form, rhythm, and pitch" (Moon, 2006, p. 76) and should be paired with a variety of supplemental repertoire and interesting information to be most effective. It should also be noted that music teachers are often segregated into their area of specialty and teach what they personally know or have experienced, thus allowing their personal teaching paradigms to become even more isolated, so much intentionality is needed to maintain a critical perspective of educational curriculum and theory (Regelski, 2002, p. 110). All that being said, the music department at CCA utilizes the GamePlan method by Jeff Kriske and Randy DeLelles as the base to our elementary curriculum (WestMusic, 2006). The GamePlan method is based upon Orff-Shulwerk theories: students learn music when "music, speech, and movement are inextricably linked through the engagement with language and the textual connection to nursery rhyme and folk song" (Benedict, 2010, p. 202). Orff processes first begin with unstructured speech, which evolves into singing speech, then utilizes bodily percussion sounds, which moves into nonpitched percussion instruments, and finally playing Orff ensemble instruments themselves, such as glockenspiels and xylophones (Benedict, 2010, p. 202). Through this hands-on approach, the students begin "musicking" on the first day of class, including performing, listening, composing, rehearsing, and dancing, instead of waiting until basic fundamentals have been mastered (Small, 1995, p. 3). This praxial

philosophy is "rooted in practice rather than in theory" (McGarthy & Goble, 2002, p. 22), allowing students to engage in this natural human activity of making music, for "fundamentally, music is something that people do" (Elliot, 1995, p. 39).

Someday my elementary and middle school students will graduate high school. What happens when my students move on to higher education and then into their adult lives? What are the short and long term goals and benefits of my students' music education? Is rigorous classical music an integral part of this training? It would take much more space than allowed to thoroughly answer that question, though I will suffice it to say that my initial thinking towards this topic has been very challenged. Short-term goals include instilling a genuine appreciation and basic understanding of all styles of music, for although I believe fundamental performance techniques are equally important, I also believe that student retention into adulthood will occur in much higher rates due to enjoyment rather than rigor (Conway, 2010, p. 262). When asking a private adult student why they would like to study music, most express aspirations like "wanting to share simple songs with family members, knowing how to read music, and being able to play for their own satisfaction" (Myers, 2007, p. 16). Perhaps amateurism is not so bad, for adults love to *do*, and they must learn to *do*; however, if learning is valued more highly than doing, "we devalue the joy of participation" (Mantie, 2012, p. 25).

While this paper is far from an exhaustive description of the entirety of my personal instruction methodologies, it does begin to depict and describe my aspirations for my students, both short and long term. Regardless of whether my students become professional musicians, which leads us to a discussion about what "professional" entails, or learn how to play in the church band, or sing in the community choir, or simply enjoy

playing the recorder in 4th grade, I ultimately desire for them to enjoy the musical process, from student through adulthood. For some students, this process may include traditional Western European classical training; for others, the training may be rooted in contemporary popular music. Research suggests that music students often credit a previous music teacher as their inspiration (Conway, 2010, p. 262). I aim to be that teacher.

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