

## Philosophy of Music Education

It is my every intent as an educator to display the importance of a well-rounded education in music. I commend the efforts to improve the arts in public schools, however I feel we can do better, and I am eager to do all that is possible to achieve a bigger “sound” from interest in music education.

We must ask ourselves “why music?” This question seems obvious to advocates of the arts at first glance, yet when trying to justly answer the question we find ourselves at a loss of satisfying words. There are many theories circulating within our society that ought to put music at the top of education, however it may be enlightening to ask ourselves, instead of “why music”, “why not music?”

Music ought to be valued, if not merely for its intrinsic worth, for its subjectivity. Anyone and everyone is capable of making music, in the broadest sense of the term. A simple example of music’s subjectivity is to compare what some might refer to as “noise” to others’ opinions of the same “noise” as being a beautiful representation of sound through time. Music is as diverse as we are, and as educators, we must strive to show our students how to respect and enjoy diversity.

Since American schools directly reflect a “melting pot” scene of different cultures and people, educators must take the lead in ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn in a positive and respectful environment. To take it a step further, educators must go so far as to say that it is every student’s *right* to have the opportunity to learn in a positive and respectful environment, regardless of what makes them diverse, and regardless of the subject area of the classroom.

Life is subjective. Often times there are no concrete, standard answers or rules to follow. From the expression aspect of music, as in life, there are also no concrete, standard answers. A feeling is a feeling, no matter where it comes from, and it is healthy to acknowledge our emotions. Music offers an outlet for such feelings and emotions, and if a student is taught from a young age to positively express their emotions using music as a resource, their quality of life will enhance as they get older.

From a biological standpoint, healthy brain development is crucial for the survival of healthy human beings. Wikipedia defines the human brain as "...the site of reason and intelligence, which include such components as cognition, perception, attention, memory, and emotion. The brain is also responsible for control of posture and movements. It makes possible cognitive, motor and other forms of learning" (Wikipedia, "Brain"). Music employs the same components that the brain regulates: cognition, perception, attention, memory, emotion, physical movements and support through good posture. This is true, so why wouldn't we want our children to develop strong brain activity from a young age through music? If a child employs both hemispheres of the brain at a young age, that child will be better equipped to handle a diverse set of situations later in life. Self-expression is not only rewarding and enjoyable, but also important for our well-being. Self-expression can alleviate stress and reduce pressure on oneself, especially in the fast-paced world we live in.

Since children spend much of their time at school, they need creative outlets during the school day. Funneling student interest into specific subject areas makes no room for diversity or creativity, and this may be counter-productive when trying to mold students into open-minded, well-rounded citizens.

To take the question of “why not music” even further, I will argue that music teaches students the relationship between and importance of unity and individualism. Sports are a large part of school extra-curricular activities, and music is very similar to sports. For example, on a team a young athlete learns about the importance of group effort, the successes of individual achievement, cooperation, self-discipline, leadership skills, positive encouragement, and confidence. Music teaches students these exact concepts through individual or ensemble performance, the importance of practice, and the role of confidence. Like sports, music teaches students the importance of unity through individualism; one must work to improve oneself in order to affect and improve the larger group. Many people argue that music and sports have nothing in common, however they actually have a lot in common.

Unlike sports, however, music has other benefits as well. Music is an equal-opportunity subject, and music educators should be excited and eager to take part in such a diverse society. It is imperative that music should be available for every student, of every ability. For example, music benefits young children and children with disabilities when developing motor skills, self-expression, working with others, patience, and an array of other skills essential to healthy growth. It is a common misconception that music does not benefit people who are deaf or hard of hearing, however Wikipedia offers insight into this issue:

“It is important to note that Deaf people can experience music by feeling the vibrations in their body, a process which can be enhanced if the individual holds a resonant, hollow object. A well-known deaf musician is the composer Ludwig van Beethoven, who composed many famous works even after he had completely lost his hearing. Recent examples of deaf musicians include Evelyn Glennie, a highly acclaimed percussionist who has been deaf since the age of twelve, and Chris Buck, a virtuoso violinist who has lost his hearing. This is relevant as it indicates that music is a deeper cognitive process than unexamined phrases such as, “pleasing to the ear” would suggest” (Wikipedia, “Music”).

It is important to acknowledge that every student is different from the next, and that one student's abilities are not better or worse than another's. A manifestation of opportunity, knowledge, awareness, common ground, and mutual respect is only the beginning of the sensational outcomes of multicultural classrooms. Embracing the diversity of the classroom, school and greater community can have lasting effects on the students that go beyond the subject area being taught, and every child ought to have the opportunity to experience this.

Since music is a global phenomenon that all cultures experience, it is only fair to integrate music from all over the world into the classroom. A diverse education is important for a well-rounded student, and one of my professional goals is to incorporate musical selections from around the world into classroom instruction. If I can prove to students that music is global and that all cultures have made music through history, not only will the students expand their minds to include a worldly viewpoint, but that outside point of view will spark interest. Sparking interest is key to an educator's success, and ultimately, the students' success-- interest leads to exploration, exploration leads to questioning, questioning leads to motivated learning, and motivation is the diamond of effective learning.

The type of educator plays an important role in successful teaching. Success in teaching is measured by how much learning is achieved, and the catchphrase, "successful teaching makes successful learning" could not be more true. Someone who enjoys what they do is more likely to succeed than someone who does not enjoy what they do. An educator of music must be well equipped with the fundamental knowledge of music and a confident background in performance, but he or she also must enjoy it. This may seem elementary, but it is a very important characteristic of a successful educator.

There is one other thing, however, that any educator with the hopes of being successful must own-- a spark. Such a spark makes all the difference between a successful educator and an unsuccessful educator. There are two types of educators: the educator that teaches like it is their job, and the educator that teaches like it is their life. Those educators who dedicate their lives to teaching and inspiring students have that spark, and are often the educators that are most successful in motivating their students. These are the people who should teach music in our schools.

In conclusion, it is important for educators to recognize that there is no such thing as a “normal, standard student,” and on the opposite end, we must strive to be more than “normal, standard educators.” As a future educator of music, it is my duty to embrace that diverse concept through teaching such a global, personal, and important subject. When someone asks “why music,” music educators must be equipped to respond politely, but firmly, “why not music?”

Works Cited

Wikipedia. "Brain". November 7, 2007. <<http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/brain>>.

Wikipedia. "Music". November 8, 2007. <<http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/music>>.