

Philosophy of Music Education

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March 28, 2007

“Whenever and wherever humans have existed music has existed also. Since music occurs only when people choose to create and share it, and since they always have done so and no doubt always will, music clearly must have important value for people.”—Bennett Reimer

As a transmitter of culture and history, as a way to express feelings, as a means to glorify God, or simply as entertainment, music has many valuable functions. Music can be found daily in a number of settings. There is music for weddings, birthdays, and funerals; there is music for learning, playing, and dancing; there is music for exercising, relaxing, and road trips. There are highly formal performances when one is expected to bow or applaud at the correct time, informal open mic sessions, and the soothing singing of a mother’s lullaby. With all of these purposes and situations, who can argue that music is not important?

“Music education opens doors that help children pass from school into the world around them - a world of work, culture, intellectual activity, and human involvement. The future of our nation depends on providing our children with a complete education that includes music.”—Gerald Ford

Since it is undoubtedly true that every person will be exposed to music throughout his or her life (even deaf people can feel a bass vibrating or enjoy the image of bows moving in unison), music should be taught in schools. People must be able to communicate intelligibly about music when it plays such an important part in their lives. Learning about music will allow people to also appreciate music more fully. Attending school without becoming educated in music creates an enormous gap in students’ knowledge and well-roundedness, and one cannot truly feel complete without music.

“Music for every child, every child for music.”—Karl Gehrrens

It is not enough to say that music should be taught in schools. One must also specify that all students are to be given the opportunity to study music. All different types of students have something to be gained by learning music. Students who may feel out of place at school because of language or cultural barriers belong in music classes as do exceptional learners. Exceptional learners by law are required to be taught in the least restrictive environment; if an exceptional learner can be taught in the regular music classroom by all means, that is where the student belongs. Music teachers should make every effort to stay informed

and educated about students' special needs and should be prepared to make adaptations to ensure successful participation by all students. It has been said that music is the universal language, and it could be the ultimate tool to connect people of all backgrounds.

“Study after study has proven that music education dramatically increases early brain development and improves students' overall academic performance. But music does so much more! It makes your mood more pleasant, your child a happier person, the car ride more fun and enjoyable, and your life more fulfilling.”—Lynn Kleiner

Music has a tremendous amount of benefits, so it is imperative that children of all age levels and backgrounds have some connection with music. Music allows students to develop and express themselves in a way no other subject or class can. Learning about history and cultures from all over the world through music are lessons that students will remember and take with them all through their lives. Tolerance, acceptance, and diversity are other ideas that can take hold on students through music education. Gaining confidence by performing for others and developing self-discipline by practicing regularly are valuable qualities also found by participating in music classes. Two of the most beneficial things that can be gained from participating in a musical organization are a sense of belonging and high self-esteem. There is no end to what one can accomplish when one feels important, needed, capable of doing great things, safe, and comfortable for being exactly who one is.

“The truest expression of a people is in its dance and music.”—Agnes de Mile

There should be no end to the types of music taught in schools. The music must encompass numerous time periods, genres, composers, cultures, and styles. Different children will relate to different pieces. There should be enough of a variety available so that everyone can identify with something and consequently enjoy it and take away a personal element from the experience. Music, for the most part, is easily accessible, so there is no excuse for concentrating on only one or two periods and ignoring everything else. It is impossible to be familiar with every single piece ever written or every culture that ever existed, but classes should at least have a large sampling of major works and specific cultures. Cultures represented by students in music classes would be an ideal place to begin when teaching about music from world cultures. It is important to note that music should not be chosen purely because of its genre, time period, or cultural background represented; it must be authentic, valuable literature and hold other qualities from which the students can learn and by which be inspired. Besides playing music for just string and full orchestra, students in orchestra programs should be given the chance to grow musically

through studying and performing solos and chamber music. Music education should also not be limited to only playing and performing music. Listening, critiquing, analyzing, composing, improvising, using technology, and learning about theory, history, and composers are also vital parts of any successful music program.

“Conductors must give unmistakable and suggestive signals to the orchestra, not choreography to the audience.”—George Szell

It takes a special person to be a music teacher. Foremost, one must have a strong understanding of music and a strong background and education in music. One cannot teach without the deep knowledge of the subject area. A music teacher must also have a strong passion for teaching children. A student will learn much more than music from a talented music teacher, and a teacher should be aware of that. Teachers should love learning and always be continuing their own education. Music teachers must give a lot of thought to their profession and constantly evaluate what they are doing, their effectiveness, and ways to improve. Everything that is being done during a music class must be done for a reason—time is too precious to waste on unimportant activities. Music teachers should use assessment as a tool to show students, parents, administrators, and themselves what students are learning and how students are meeting goals and objectives. Using portfolios is one effective means of providing tangible documentation of learning, and other forms of formal and informal assessment should be ongoing in the music classroom. A music teacher is a transmitter of culture, a department manager, a conductor, an assessor, an evaluator, an artist, a respected community member, a music advocate, a role model for students, and so much more.

“Music is the vernacular of the human soul.”—Geoffrey Latham

In conclusion, music is a special gift to be shared with everyone. It is exciting to take part in passing along a tradition that has lasted for thousands of years and inspired so many.

Quotes found from the following websites:

<http://home.att.net/~quotations/music.html>

<http://www.coalitionformusiced.ca/musicquotes.htm>

<http://www.heartquotes.net/music-quotes.html>

<http://www.menc.org/publication/vision2020.reimer.html>

http://www.oberlin.edu/con/bkstage/200207/music_ed.html