

Jason Cable

MUS145

11/4/08

### Philosophy of Music Education

To go a day without experiencing music in our culture today is seemingly impossible. One would nearly have to go to the extent of completely secluding themselves from the world around them to drown out music. We can find music at celebratory events. We can find music in entertainment and media. We can find music at scheduled recitals and concerts. Right now, listening to what is around me, I hear music in the background of a commercial on a television, I hear the stereo of a car passing on the street, and I can hear my neighbor practicing his drums. These are just a few occurrences of music that occurs in our day to day lives. I feel the easiest way to answer the question of why music is important in our lives, is to recognize the music around us. Then, the next step is to imagine a world without it. Music is such an integral part of our culture that to even ponder life without music may be extremely challenging.

This is also one of the reasons why music education is necessary in our public schools, to gain awareness in culture. But beyond the music-related aspects of music education, there are multiple non-musical benefits of music education. Music and the arts can teach how to express emotions, leadership, discipline, commitment, and confidence. Discipline and leadership can be learned through small ensemble and personal practice where an instructor is not always present. Commitment can be learned through practice and the eventual success of hard work on a piece. Confidence in public can be learned through many performance opportunities, both in ensemble and as a soloist. These aspects, along with many more, will help develop a child or teenager to be a better all around student, and a more successful adult, in more than just music.

In Paul Lehman's essay for the Vision 2020 symposium, he calls for comprehensiveness and diversity in music education. Comprehensiveness draws on the need to expand the opportunities for music. Lehman calls for additional opportunities through middle and high school in the form of small ensembles to better round musicians. He assesses the need for every student to be able to express themselves through singing, playing an instrument, improvising, and composing to allow them to be able to learn and understand music independently in their adult lives. Diversity refers to the need to broaden our repertoires to match our ever broadening diversity in students. This sums up what needs to be taught throughout all public schools. We need to focus on giving students bountiful opportunities to experience music. Also, having more diverse repertoires will educate not only in our own culture, but in many other cultures around the world, further enforcing the argument of why we need music in our schools.

In 1923, Karl Gehrkens pronounced his goal of having "music for every child, every child for music." Every child deserves an opportunity to learn music at all levels of education. At young ages, it is imperative to implement music education as much as possible. Current science leads us to believe that before roughly the age of seven, the mind learns in a much different way than the rest of our lives. It doesn't question the nature of ideas, but rather just accepts them as fact. After, our mind begins to think more logically and we ponder other possibilities. This is not saying it is impossible to learn music past the age of seven, but to have the basic ideas of a steady beat and melody ingrained in a child's brain allows us to use those as building blocks to further education faster and with more ease. Therefore, music education should be in our curricula as early as possible. Later in education, students have many options with paths to take in their musical education. But yet, many shy away or are frightened by performance aspects that are commonly accompanied with music. We need ways to educate these students in a lower

pressure environment. Performance is an important part of a being a musician, but not every music student aspires to consider them self a musician. Some just seek the broadened ideas of culture, or some may want to explore how music “works”. We need classes offered to support these aspirations in the fields of music history, literature, and theory. Also, with our technologically moving society, we need to educate how we can use technology in music. With the broadened course offerings we can help educate every child in music.

Music teachers must have a few very specific traits. First, they must have a strong knowledge and understanding of music. They must obviously understand the material to be able to teach it effectively. Second, they must have a passion for teaching music. Keeping interest requires enthusiasm and children are not easily fooled by hypocrites. A good music educator must also be aware of how the field is changing constantly. Once again, we are a technologically advanced and advancing society and we need to use this to our advantage. We can learn of other educators’ philosophies or practices, we can learn of new music, and we can access materials beyond comprehension (with funding). Paul Lehman also recommends more standardized assessment in music education. This would be beneficial to music educators as it would give a concrete goal for achievement and a means to show what is being learned to other teachers, administrators, and parents.

To be an effective music educator, we must understand that music is part of our culture and most every culture around us. There are many different ways we can communicate it, but yet it has been referred to as the “universal language.” To have the knowledge and ability to teach this language, one must recognize what music represents, and the similarities and differences that holds with what music education is.