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David J. Elliott  
Editor

Vincent C. Bates  
Associate Editor

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**Introduction**

David J. Elliott

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## Introduction

David J. Elliott  
Editor

What is the purpose of an editor's editorial? I've asked myself this question frequently during the last few years. On one hand, I could write nothing. This approach has the advantage of clearing the way for authors to speak for themselves and for readers to interact with authors' ideas with fresh minds, free of any reflective "contaminants" that might be implicit or explicit in my prefatory remarks (which, of course, I'm creating once again, here and now). For these reasons, I've considered this possibility on several occasions. But there's a force that always pulls me to do the opposite. This force lies in the nature of our authors' carefully crafted arguments, which always pull me into debates with myself, thereby refining, clarifying, or overturning my own thoughts and assumptions.

Linguists have often pointed out that the very act of writing can transform and restructure our thinking. Writing is thinking-in-action. How so? Look no further than Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein. These great thinkers understood clearly that thoughtful writing is more than so-called cognitive processes; writing involves embodied, emotional, and, frequently, transformative experiences of engagement and interaction with oneself and imagined others. Vernon Howard professed that the first goal of writing involves understanding oneself more deeply. Elie Wiesel offers that "I write to understand as much as to be understood." These thoughts may be commonplace to readers of this journal, but sometimes it's worthwhile reminding ourselves why and how writing is not simply a matter of crafting verbal arguments, but also a matter of "performing" oneself for oneself and others. And so ends my brief and self-refuting introduction.

While no obvious themes serve to organize this issue of ACT, an important commonality weaves its way through these four seemingly disparate articles by authors from Finland, Canada,

and the United States. That is, while these discussions span numerous topics—e.g., musical nationalism, the corporatization of schooling, problematic claims about teaching so-called music elements, and the problematics of language-based metaphors in critiquing music—the common ground is an issue the MayDay Group has highlighted in its new Action Ideals: the centrality of the culturally, politically, and socially embedded nature of music and music teaching and learning. The authors in this issue invite us to consider the local and global situatedness of musical engagements and interactions and, pragmatically, they suggest ways for music educators to tap into the potentials that musical praxes afford.

**Alexis Anja Kallio** and **Heidi Partti** examine the patriotic and national sentiments and identities found in music and music education practices. In investigating enactments of constructive patriotism, they consider two dissimilar countries: Finland and Cambodia. While the authors probe local perspectives on/of Finnish and Cambodian music educators, they emphasize that we can't assume that individuals within their local nations are disconnected from the rest of the world. Kallio and Partti argue that “[w]ithin the contexts of globalized Finland and Cambodia, patriotic sentiments reflect changing notions of national identity that require music educators to think locally and act globally; the authors suggest that we must condition ourselves to simultaneously engage in micro and macro elements of local, national, and global musical and educational contexts. Doing so may allow for more continuity, mutual dependency, self-other relatedness, and a deeper sense of self and national distinctiveness.

Extending further the political dimensions of music education, **Anita Prest** utilizes a critical pragmatist lens to examine the multiple ways corporate interests influence schooling and music education today. Prest investigates the ramifications of the corporatization of education in public school and higher educational systems. Her interdisciplinary approach takes us through the reflections of legal scholars, political scientists, sociologists, educators, and economists. On these bases, she suggests ways to secure the future of the arts and humanities in educational institutions. In addition, she offers examples from urban Canadian grassroots activists in the arts who draw from existing and new frameworks and institutions to promote opportunities for citizens to develop pride and civic engagement in cultural practices as part of their everyday lives.

**Leslie Stewart Rose** and **June Countryman** “re-position” the elements of music. For them, to do so is to understand better “whose” elements of music and music education some teachers seek to promote and the foundations of their “ownership.” In doing so, the authors investigate curricular documents, including those of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), the Ontario Curriculum, and textbooks published by Prentice Hall. Rose and Countryman conclude that musical elements, as defined traditionally within the “profession,” function as “an oppressive pedagogy, which devalues diversity, limits access, and denies individuality.” Additionally, focusing narrowly on musical elements obliges teachers to accept the assumption that music is simply an “object-centered” art. This approach does further damage because it oppresses the embodied, social, and emotionally contingent potentialities across musical experiences.

To help music educators identify and work past hierarchies of dominance in relation to traditional elements-speak, Rose and Countryman propose that music teacher educators empower candidates to create alternative pedagogies and open dialogues with and for the students they will teach. While some music education students may be uncomfortable with challenging prescribed ways of thinking about music, the authors argue that “[by] examining bias and dominance in *the pedagogy of the elements* we see that traditional *elements* curricula regulate what to listen to, how to listen to it, how to respond to it and how to share it. By developing and using alternate frameworks for listening we feel we are making one small, yet significant move that more equitably serves all students in our schools.” Further, Rose and Countryman suggest that we (i.e., teacher educators and teacher candidates) listen to the ways in which P-12 students speak about their musics, consider P-12 students’ relationships with music, and re-collect en masse the musical stories and narratives of P-12 students by opening up spaces where they can share the roles that musics have in their lives.

While Rose and Countryman suggest the use of student-driven narratives and metaphors, **Paul Louth** asks us to question the language of metaphors. Why? Because the language(s) we use to speak about musics are not necessarily weighed in relation to the contexts of those musics. Louth uses the example of the music teacher who invariably asks students to play with a “good tone quality.” Rarely do music educators consider the veracity of such a blanket statement as it

relates to specific musical practices and contexts. What does, say, “tone quality” mean absent from sean-nós singing, cool jazz saxophone improvisation, Inuit throat singing, Dixieland banjo playing, ad infinitum? Do each of these social-musical practices consider “tone quality” in the same way? Of course not. Additionally, approaches to instrument (and voice) appropriation and stylization change depending upon the musical practice under consideration. Yet, the metaphors some teachers use do not change. Hence, Louth suggests our metaphors are “frozen,” so much so that they do little to propel us toward more appropriate means of speaking about and for music: “Rather than search for some mythical neutral language with which to describe music and give classroom directions, music teachers would do well to consider interrogating their language for frozen metaphors and sharing the results of those interrogations with their students.”

As a final word—in a double sense—this issue marks my final contribution as editor of *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education*. I am proud and grateful to have served in this regard during the past few years. I have learned much from the contributions of the many authors who have written under my editorship. Moreover, I have benefited enormously from the numerous contributions of ACT reviewers, who tirelessly and meticulously examined the huge number of articles that have come across my desk throughout my tenure.

Finally, as editor of this prestigious journal, I wish to acknowledge my deep debt to my Associate Editor, Vincent Bates, who has labored tirelessly and brilliantly for many years on behalf of the Mayday Group in general and this journal in particular. Additionally, Vince and I wish to express our profound gratitude to ACT’s production team, who have labored continuously and diligently to bring each issue to fruition: Kristen Myers, Chris Trinidad, and Frank Martignetti.