

Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education

The refereed journal of the



Volume 11, No. 1
March 2012

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Electronic Article

Striking Up the Band: Music Education Through a Foucaultian Lens

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ISSN 1545-4517

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Striking Up the Band: Music Education Through a Foucaultian Lens



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Large ensembles (e.g., choirs-orchestras-bands) have become prominent fixtures in most secondary schools and university schools/faculties of music in Canada and the United States. At the secondary school level, large ensembles have become, in effect, practically synonymous with the words “music education.” This paper derives from my own experience with and interest in wind bands as a means of enacting music education. Specifically, I interrogate, through a Foucaultian discourse lens, the kind of relationship with music fostered in and through what I term the *pedagogical band world*—the world comprising school and college/university wind bands that has developed from around the middle of the twentieth century. Based on an intensive examination of pedagogical band world discourse and a consideration of the historical appearance and evolution of bands, I argue that as bands became entrenched as the primary medium for music instruction in secondary schools (and concurrently became a major component of university schools/faculties of music), and as education increasingly became the target of state concerns over “progress,” the discourse of band performance changed from one of supplying music in order to create a sense of community and personal enjoyment to one of edification through exposure to Art (i.e., great repertoire).

Theoretical/Methodological Framework

My concerns in this paper lie with the ways in which people constitute their relationship with and to music in and through large ensemble music participation, primarily as this is manifested in sites of formal education. That is, I am ultimately concerned with what I consider as musical subjectivity—the ways in which we *are* as musical beings. To aid my method and analysis I have drawn on the ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault, whose body of work is commonly divided into three axes of investigation, corresponding generally to his archaeology (knowledge), genealogy (power), and care of the self (ethics) periods.¹ In observing these three axes, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze summarized

Foucaultian subjectivity in terms of knowledge-being, power-being, and self-being (Deleuze 1988, 114). To clarify, instead of beginning with a universal conception of the subject and tracing its historical antecedents, Foucault asks how we might better understand our modern form of subjectivity by studying “isolable historical practices” (Paras 2006, 121). As David Owen explains:

This task is carried out by way of historical analyses of the emergence and development of the ‘practical systems’ in and through which we are constituted by others (practices of government) and constitute ourselves (practices of freedom) as beings characterised by particular ‘forms of subjectivity,’ that is, particular ways of reflecting and acting on ourselves and others. Practical systems are analysed in terms of three axes: knowledge, power, ethics. These axes are interwoven in that it makes no sense to think of relations of ethics or of power without reference to some or other system of description and some or other form of reasoning directed to some or other ideal, because these are necessary conditions of agency; while it also makes no sense to think of relations of knowledge without reference to human purposes. (Owen 1999, 33)

The concept circumventing the impasse of extreme determinism and linking these three forms of being together Foucault called government. Eric Paras writes, “‘Government’ was not necessarily anonymous and third-person: unlike ‘power’ and ‘knowledge,’ the word ‘government’ pointed toward an activity that could be exercised by an individual upon himself [*sic*]. One governed others, but one also governed oneself. As a concept, government was far better suited to discern the role that the individual plays in the formation of his own subjectivity” (Paras 2006, 114). There are many parallels here with band participation. The band student is a governed individual (by the conductor), but at the same time governs herself or himself in attempts to conform to the group’s efforts. At the same time, the band director governs the ensemble but is also governed by discourse.

To frame my analysis and presentation, I have adapted the concept of *rappor a soi* as used by Foucault (1997) in his essay, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress.”² *Rappor a soi* Foucault describes as one’s relationship with oneself—what he calls ethics. That is, for Foucault, ethics does not refer only to matters of right and wrong action, but rather, the process through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. Foucault articulates four aspects of *rappor a soi*: ethical substance, subjectivation, asceticism, and telos. Briefly, these may be described as the actions people perform (*asceticism*) on ‘X’ (*ethical substance*), according to or as determined by ‘Y’ (*subjectivation*) in order to attain or achieve ‘Z’ (*telos*). Note here that Foucault’s terminology and

conceptualization was driven by his historical examination of ancient Greek texts. Hence, asceticism is derived from the Greek, *áskēsis*, meaning exercise or training. That is, asceticism for Foucault refers to any sort of work one might perform on oneself. According to Foucault, in the ancient Greek (Hellenic) period, *rapport a soi* was characterized by a self-examination of pleasure (i.e., asceticism), according to the precept of *epimeleia heautou* ('care of the self') in order to achieve mastery of oneself (which allowed for the mastery of others). *Subjectivation* was an aesthetic mode that involved a personal choice about how to live a beautiful life. One did not avoid doing certain things because they were forbidden, but because they would prevent the attainment of the ultimate goal of building a beautiful life. With the advent of Christianity the relationship to oneself changed, claims Foucault. Ethical existence became the deciphering of one's thoughts according to divine law (which was one's obligation as a rational being) in order to attain immortality and purity (Foucault 1997, 268).

The primary data source for my investigation was the journal of the Canadian Band Association, known as the *Canadian Band Journal* (1977–2001; hereafter abbreviated as CBJ) and *Canadian Winds* (2002–present; hereafter abbreviated as CW).³ My analysis is based on an examination of 3000 pages of text from the journal, 1978–2008, in combination with intertextual sources. My approach borrows from Foucaultian genealogy, a primarily goal of which is to expose the workings of power that masquerade as objective, ahistorical knowledge. Toward this end I provide a reading of the discourse that seeks to provoke and challenge received "regimes of truth" that currently operate in the pedagogical band world—ones that, as I attempt to show, construct musicality in specific ways to the exclusion of alternatives.

Key to my reading of the discourse is Foucault's conceptualization of the *statement* as a constituent element in discourse.⁴ Although I am ultimately interested in things both said and done (language and practices as considered in genealogy), my analysis is based on Foucault's argument, articulated most fully in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, that the appearance of a statement is *prima facie* evidence of its validity. This does not mean that a given statement is *true*, but rather, that its existence in an authorized (i.e., expert) forum, such as a practitioner journal, is proof that it is recognizable.⁵ Following Foucault, the specific author of such a statement is considered irrelevant. As a result, journal citations in this paper provide only source location, not author attribution. When considered significant to the context, subject positions (e.g., composer, conductor, band director) are included, but in

general statements are considered disembodied text.

In a Foucaultian sense, discourse is not necessarily restricted to talk and text, but rather, describes all social phenomena. Thus, my examination of written texts is not just a matter of studying words, but an exercise in the consideration of practice. In my reading of the Canadian Band Association's journal and associated, intertextual discourses I perceive a change in the nature of the ethical relationship with and to music (i.e., musicality) one is to have. To summarize, in wind bands operating prior to about the middle of the twentieth century, one's ethical relationship to music as viewed through *rappor a soi* might be described as self-improvement, making a contribution to the community, and participation (*ascetic work*) in order to achieve a sense of purpose, a sense of spirit, and a sense of membership of belonging to a community (*telos*). One's musicality (i.e., one's musical subjectivity or *ethical substance*) was based on a desire to make music for the purpose of enjoyment, something that was ultimately determined by such things as the nature of the performance itself, a sense of community spirit and competition, and a belief in the Platonic goodness of music (*subjectivation*). In other words, as ethical matters, musicality and one's relationship with and to music were defined according to personal and interpersonal enjoyment. Notably, while the activity was undertaken for the enjoyment it provided, there was an acknowledged obligation to and relationship with one's residential community; "banders" played in order to contribute to the culture of the community by providing free music for events that contributed to a sense of time, space, and place. Due to the disciplinary rise of the pedagogical band world, changes are evident in the ethical relationship one is to have with music via band participation. As I demonstrate with examples from the discourse, musicality (as *ethical substance*) today is redefined in terms of edification. This is to say that the rightness or wrongness of musical participation is no longer to be determined by the interpersonal enjoyment afforded the performer and audience, as it had been prior to the rise of the pedagogical band world, but is instead evaluated *vis-à-vis* the extent to which an individual can be considered improved by the music. The goal (*telos*) of the musical relationship in the pedagogical band world is to gain insights into beauty and the human condition; one is to become a well-rounded knower and a lifelong supporter of the arts. This is purportedly achieved by contributing to *the work* (by executing one's part and capitulating to the composer/conductor), acceding to the group's needs, and learning to appreciate "the arts" (*ascetic work*). Whereas in early Christian times *subjectivation* was determined by

divine law (the Word of God), in the pedagogical band world one's ethical (or moral) code is determined by the repertoire—specifically the “composer's intent.”

It would be a mistake to think that the current paradigm of musicality has completely superseded the former; the paradigms coexist. Aspects of *ethical substance*, *subjectivation*, *asceticism*, and *telos* should instead be considered as in a dynamic state of flux, with individuals in various spheres holding personalized beliefs about the ethical aspects of musical engagement. Indeed, what I have described based on the discourse I examined can only be considered a reading, although it is, I submit, a reading that is difficult to ignore. Although linear in presentation due to the conventions of essay narrative, the four facets (telos, ethical substance, subjectivation, and asceticism) could be read in any order; they function holistically. In the Telos section I discuss how the ultimate purpose of band participation changed over the course of the twentieth century from one that emphasized the utility of bands as an egalitarian medium for musical involvement, i.e., bands as an end unto themselves, to one in which bands were/are conceptualized as a means to a greater end. I extend the discussion by demonstrating how production-consumption discourse further removes band participation from being viewed as an intrinsic end in itself. In the Substance section I provide examples of how education and entertainment are falsely dichotomized in order to privilege certain musical values at the expense of others. This dichotomizing tactic ironically positions bands in conflict with their historical functions, ultimately altering the nature of musicality, or musical substance, for the participants. Finally, the Subjectivation and Asceticism sections document how, in current pedagogical discourse, music learners are subject to the musical desires of score, conductor, and composer, something that deprives music learners of any substantial agency over musical decision making. Wind band musicians are no longer accountable to their communities, but to the timeless principles of Art as interpreted by the conductor. My claim, then, is that musical subjectivity is a fundamentally ethical matter. Current practices in the pedagogical band world privilege and sustain one kind of musicality, or relationship with/to music, over alternative musical subjectivities. To the extent that this is the result of unquestioningly reproductive rather than mindful practice, music educators involved with pedagogical wind bands risk operating unethically, without full appreciation of the consequences of their actions.

Telos

Schools do not need bands for public relations. Telling administrators that the band is good public relations detracts from the intrinsic value of music. The focus is shifted from education to the performance of the band. Good music programs are more than just performance. (CBJ 24:2, 5)

The subject is music and the medium which we use as the instructional vehicle is “band.” The aim should not be a performance, though that too is important, but rather to teach the love of music through the building of insights, values, and attitudes. (CBJ 8:1, 2)

In Foucault’s formulation of *rappor a soi*, telos refers to that towards which one aspires in order to live an ethical life. Foucault suggests that for the ancient Greeks, mastery constituted the goal of ethical living;⁶ for early Christians it was (and may still be for some) achieving purity and immortality. Adapting this idea to musical engagement, I argue in this section that telos in and through wind band participation has changed from a primarily social sense of membership and involvement, albeit with an acknowledged aspect of self-improvement, to a primarily individualistic sense of edification. Importantly, in early wind band activity the individual was not assumed to be lacking or deficient. That is, the discourse suggests that in early bands the emphasis was on the activity for the sake of the activity; in the contemporary wind band world the emphasis is on what Foucault might call, following Nietzsche, *the will to knowledge*. Today one plays in the pedagogical wind band as the pedagogical object in order to purportedly gain insights into beauty and the human condition; one is thought to *need* to become a well-rounded knower—something made possible through experiencing music in and through bands. In the passages cited above, for example, participation is ancillary, if not tangential, to the true goals of music instruction. The band and its performance are but a medium for the edification that is to occur via *the music*.

Although the history of wind bands in Canada and the United States is not identical, in both cases there has been a strong military influence. In the nineteenth century, for example, military bands with British and British-trained musicians provided professional, state-sponsored music for many Canadian cities and towns, fostering a sense of community.

For a whole century, from the British conquest until Confederation, regimental bands were the backbone of instrumental music in Canada. In addition to performing at military functions, they became a true communal force, reaching a wide and warmly appreciative public. Almost daily a band could be heard: at a gathering of high society, at a garden party, on a public square, or, more rarely, between the acts of a theatrical performance. (Kallmann 1955, 14; see also: McGee 1985, 31–33; Kallmann 1960, 45–46)

Eventually, town or civic bands arose to augment or supplant military bands in both countries, supplying music for a variety of purposes such as roller and ice skating, promoting amusement parks, selling land, publicizing commodities, promoting religious, social and political organizations, and civic ceremonies (Hazen and Hazen 1987, 2–11). Bands became such an important part of the fabric of public life, in fact, that when Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, visited the prairie town of Yorkton, Saskatchewan in 1910, the absence of a local band “necessitated importing one” from a nearby town (CW 4:1, 6). Not only were bands viewed as appropriate ensembles for accompanying civic functions and public social activities, they provided a source of free, public entertainment. As late as 1948, a public band competition held in Waterloo, Ontario, attracted fifty-five bands and over twenty thousand people (Mellor 1988, 100). The wind band, then, emerged in response to a desire for public entertainment and was, as a result, very different from the orchestra, which, as Goldman argues, “developed because of the demands of art—that is to say, of serious composed music” (Goldman 1961, 7). Wind band repertoire, suggests Keene, “was and is more accessible to the average public more enchanted with the popular art forms than with the masterworks of geniuses” (1982, 293). In Green and Vogan’s (1991) appraisal:

Orchestras appealed to the elitist ambitions of the cities, bands to the general population. People from a wide range of national backgrounds in both urban and rural settings looked to the band to provide opportunities for musical participation as well as entertainment. In the instrumental realm band music was the music of the common folk, for even with the rise of the ‘big name’ bands on radio, the concert in the park and on parade retained their popularity. (146)

Unlike the symphony orchestra or opera which were elitist due to their physical and psychological segregation from lower and middle class society and their historical associations with the aristocracy, the band was a truly public, free, and open musical medium in which participation was often viewed as a form of civic duty: “with ability to play in the band there comes to each bandsman [*sic*] a sense of citizenship, of belonging to an organization which is considered necessary to the success of public enterprises, of pride and importance in having a part in civic affairs” (Graham 1952, 179). Moreover, bands were associated with material success and progress. A publication by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company pronounced, “by the very interest and enthusiasm which it arouses, the band is a tremendous influence for promoting the welfare and prosperity of a community” (Hazen and Hazen 1987, 146). Thus, an interesting paradox presented itself as bands were considered

both an egalitarian, democratic form of music making *and* a source of cultural uplift.⁷ Participation in bands involved the making of a music that, prior to the Second World War at least, was viewed as promoting culture in the community, irrespective of its inherent entertainment nature. *McCosh's Guide*, a band handbook produced as part of a Lyon and Healy catalogue in 1891, announced: “the most practical way of indulging a taste for the arts, is in the organization of a Brass Band” (Hazen and Hazen 1987, 146). Band music was thus capitalized on as a form of cultural capital—albeit in a way that was cast, somewhat paradoxically, in egalitarian, anti-elitist terms. That is, bands were promoted as being *common* (of the people), but at the same time were intended to *elevate* cultural tastes.⁸

Contemporary wind band discourse is striking in its difference from early band discourse. Notably, rationalization of practice has changed from emphasizing participation and performance to the value of *music* and *the arts*. Following the popularity of the movie, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, actor Richard Dreyfus made a public statement emphasizing this point:

Perhaps we've all misunderstood the reason we learn music, and all the arts, in the first place. It is not only so a student can learn the clarinet, or another student can take acting lessons. It is that for hundreds of years it has been known that teaching the arts, along with history math, and biology, helps create The Well Rounded Mind that western civilization has been grounded on. Our greatest achievements in science, in business, in popular culture, would simply not be attainable without an education that encourages achievement in all fields. It is from that creativity and imagination that the solutions to our political and social problems will come. (CBJ 20:3, 19)

Engagement in music is therefore undertaken for the sake of “progress” in the form of societal achievements—something made possible by the “Well Rounded [Western] Mind.” It behooves those involved with education, therefore, to pay heed to music and the arts if the Western mind and Western lifestyle are to be sustained: “No education is complete without awareness of music; music is an essential expression of the character of a society” (CBJ 15:4, 32). The “mission of music education” is described as bringing students “an art which will afford a new level of understanding in every facet of their future” (CBJ 20:3, 9).

This concern for well-roundedness, however, is often transformed into a concern about lack, deficiency, or incompleteness. “We should teach music,” it is asserted, “so students will develop awareness and sensitivity; so students will have the capacity for more love, more compassion, and more gentleness” (CBJ 21:1, 14). This is apparently because “students are human beings that need to recognize beauty” (CBJ 21:1, 14). A band director's teaching philosophy is described as “helping students become more aware of their humanness

by fostering in them a knowledge of, and a love for, music through performance” (CBJ 24:1, 31). Music (and the “arts” when it adds weight to the message) is thus viewed as something connected with human nature and the need for beauty; an education without music risks leaving students as incomplete beings. Music, suggests one writer, provides “perhaps the best chance a student will have of meeting grace and beauty in schools” (CBJ 21:1, 25). In emphasizing the centrality of the arts to being human, the arts presumptively enhance other areas of learning: “Not only do the arts contain an important part of what it means to be human, the arts also give coherence, depth and resonance to other academic subjects” (CBJ 15:4, 32). To be fully human, then, is to be well-rounded, something involving knowledge of such things as beauty, emotions, creativity, discipline, and cooperation—all of which are central to the relationship to music one is to have.

One of the ways this musical or artistic knowledge is made special is by casting it as ineffable, unknowable, and unattainable to those outside of musical practice. As one statement suggests, “music education introduces us to compelling perceptions and understandings we could not acquire any other way. The arts are fundamental systems of meaning that probe the intuitive, emotional and irrational aspects of life that science is hard-pressed to explain” (CBJ 21:1, 14). In another passage this special knowledge is connected with being well-rounded or *fully educated*.

The arts deal with knowledge which one philosopher has labeled as “untalkables.” The knowledge that is accessible through the study of music cannot be gained in any other way and the musician knows some things that the non-musician can never know. A fully educated person must have the ability to gain access to this knowledge. (CBJ 17:3, 26)

The Foucaultian thesis of power-knowledge is intriguing here, as this passage clearly points to the ways in which the validation of knowledge is inseparable from issues of power. The argument in favour of the arts, then, should be understood as a tactic used to justify the arts based on premises about what constitutes a complete human being, not as a debate over the merits of whether the arts do or do not introduce compelling perceptions or “untalkable” knowledge. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find the National Commission on Music Education urging the “arts be re-established as basic to education...because they are fundamental to what it means to be an educated person” (CBJ 15:2, 42).

Viewed in light of Foucault’s *rappor a soi*, this shift in telos as it appears in the discourse is significant for what it suggests about music teaching and learning practices. In

early banding, musical subjectivity was oriented towards self and community. The orientation towards the self, however, was not premised on lack, deficiency, or incompleteness. People made music for enjoyment because bands were a part of life. In contrast, by adopting the premise of human incompleteness, contemporary music teaching in and through bands becomes ethically oriented towards correction.⁹ The individual is in a way pathologized, and music and/or the arts become the cure.

In what might be viewed as a very clever tactic of power-knowledge, this pathologizing of lack or incompleteness is not restricted to the students-as-performers, but to the audience as well. Failing to support professional performers by becoming an audience member consuming the products of professionals is considered a failing of the music education endeavour. That is, evidence of successful music teaching as it might be found in students as performers is insufficient; students must be supportive of the professionals—especially those associated with the “right” kind of music.

One of the real tests of the success or failure of our music education in the public schools is concert attendance. (CBJ 13:2, 30)

[Teachers need to be sensitive to the] effect of the choice of music...on both performers and audiences alike...with special reference to the student performers who are not merely learning to play an instrument or sing a vocal line, but also to grow in their musical development and become, ultimately, music “consumers,” members of that very same audience on whom all of us: writers, players, singers, conductors and teachers, rely for our continued support and success. (CBJ 10:2, 5)

Educating—or *creating*—the audience is a popular theme appearing in the discourse. The development of *taste*, or what might be termed a higher-order desire for particular forms of consumption, is something that must be carefully nurtured: “As conductor educators, if we carefully plant the seeds now art can flourish because we’re cultivating good consumers, lovers and supporters of the arts” (CBJ 21:1, 16). Note the concern here is not for the students, but for *art* and *the arts* (not just music). Note also how the discourse dichotomizes consumers and producers. Above it is suggested that “all of us” (the producers) are ultimately reliant on *them* (the consumers), and that teachers need to ensure *they* are educated in a way that guarantees they continue to support *us*. A composer states this emphatically: “the greater goal of all music education is, hopefully, to produce more and larger educated audiences, not just more players” (CBJ 22:4, 5). Consistent with the tactic positioning supporters as people who *know* and *understand* and non-supporters as *uneducated*, good and educated audiences are those that support the general practices of Western concert performance through their

attendance. Persuading people to support the practice of Western concert performance is cast in the discourse as an educational and professional obligation: “The responsibility of training future audiences falls to today’s music educators” (CBJ 24:2, 13).

This production-consumption shift in the discourse represents a radical departure in the telos of band participation. Early bands were not viewed as a medium of audience preparation in order to support the aspirations of professional composers and performers. Moreover, while the musical products industry of the late nineteenth century may have attempted to take advantage of cultural capital discourse by suggesting that brass band participation represented an opportunity to develop a taste for the arts, there can be little doubt that early bands were *not* conceptualized on the basis of the “compelling perceptions and understandings” they offered. Although early band participants may have shared the belief that music was somehow good for them, it is extremely doubtful that they believed they were becoming more human, more loving, or more sensitive thanks to their banding. Conceptualizing the teaching of music (and the arts) as the cure to what students lack (e.g., well-roundedness, special insights into beauty, support for professional art music performances) entails, I submit, a very different orientation to curriculum and instruction than conceptualizing the teaching of music as facilitating personal and interpersonal enjoyment.

Substance

John Philip Sousa was approached by a high school band director who stated he wished that his band could entertain folks back home just like the Sousa Band had done that day. When Sousa asked him what kind of band he had, the admirer replied that he was the director of a high school band. Whereupon Sousa remarked, “then your job is not to entertain, but to educate.” (CBJ 8:3, 12)

How many musical souls have been lost on our watch?... Was it because we placed too much emphasis on entertainment rather than education outcomes for our students? (CW 3:1, 46)

It must be emphasized that [the early band movement] was a popular movement with little educational methodology and modest aspirations toward artistic quality. (Maloney 1986, 43)

“Does the band contribute anything of real value in the educational sense?” asks Goldman (1961, 15). Indeed, this vexing question appears to underlie uncertainty about the presence of wind bands in schools. Articulating the educational benefits of the band program is described as “the truly fundamental question” (CBJ 7:4, 10) in the discourse I examined. As one writer

puts it, “[A] rethinking of just what a ‘band’ is, does, and produces might help us to understand and cope with the realities of contemporary musical life and, also hopefully, become more productive in our efforts to achieve the twin goals of artistic and educational validity” (CBJ 6:4, 5). The ethical substance—one’s sense of *musicality*—in contemporary wind band participation, in other words, centers on the purported educative value of the musical relationship.

The Goldman Band is often acknowledged as the first band aspiring toward the goal of *artistic* performance. This is not to suggest famous bands such as those of Sousa or Gilmore did not play well. It is only to observe the activity was pursued under aims indicative of differing ethical centers. Whitwell argues that Sousa saw himself as an entertainer whose primary goal was to keep people happy, not an artistic director whose primary goal was to present music aspiring towards Art. Commenting about the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Sousa allegedly remarked, “He gave Wagner, Liszt, and Tchaikowsky, in the belief that he was educating his public; I gave Wagner, Liszt, and Tchaikowsky in the hope that I was entertaining my public” (quoted in Whitwell 1972, 78). For the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *art* provides the ethical substance of musicality; for Sousa, the contingencies of time, space, and place provide the ethical substance. That is, for Sousa the choice of Wagner, Liszt, and Tchaikowsky was based on his best estimation of the repertoire that might best connect with a given audience at the time. Were Sousa still performing today, for example, one imagines his repertoire would likely look considerably different as he attempted to connect with the audience, whereas the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, operating under the belief that art transcends time, space, and place, continues to perform Wagner, Liszt, and Tchaikowsky. This is not to suggest that professional orchestras do not seek to entertain, but rather that the rightness and wrongness of musicality is situated in the music itself, not in the performers or the audience.

The suspect status of entertainment has been an ongoing source of tension for wind bands in schools and universities owing to both their historical roles as entertainment ensembles, and their continued, albeit more limited engagement as such. One passage describes a situation in which a high school teacher’s working conditions make it difficult to get the students to play beyond their current level. “The bands might make great sounds that entertain the community, and students might have a feeling of ‘fun’ from their playing experience, but such a program is clearly an educational disaster because of the lack of

learning taking place” (CW 2:2, 86). Apparently it is insufficient to make great sounds, enjoy making music, and provide enjoyment for others; all three of these aspects are not sufficiently educative. Another passage emphasizes this point:

When all is said and done, we cannot escape the fact that entertainment values do not necessarily coincide with educational ones... This, of course, raises at once the disturbing and irritating question as to whether... the use of school monies, time and effort can be justified in activities of doubtful or little educational value, however entertaining they may be. (CBJ 7:1, 6)

The author of the passage above further asserts that music education must involve intellectual, if not metaphysical aspects, and these are not to be confused with “extra-musical” aspects of visibility:

Marching bands and show bands exist because there is a legitimate need for the “products” and services... Only let us make certain that we call those products and services by their proper “name” entertainment, and not music education... [T]here is comparatively little [in marching/show bands] that will result in the broadening of soul and spirit, intellectual growth and enriched experience in the one art where sight, movement and display are of little, if any, use. (CBJ 12:4, 10)

Entertainment music, in other words, does not broaden the soul or provide intellectual growth, two aspects that provide the ethical substance for musical involvement. Moreover, by casting aspersions on the visual—what might be considered a social or functional aspect of the performance—the autonomy of the music itself is asserted (conveniently overlooking, of course, the importance of such social/functional aspects of art music performance as the concert hall, the arrangement of the musicians and audience, and proper concert attire). Another passage further underscores that the value of participation lies in the music as object: “the deeper we can connect our students to music as art can edify, not just entertain, the human soul, the greater the possibility that they will regard art as an important aspect of life” (CBJ 21:1, 16). Ergo, art is educational because it is an edifying aspect of life; correct musicality derives from art (or Art) music, a truth in the discourse that disparages forms of musicality based on non-art principles (e.g., folk, popular, vernacular), which are therefore positioned as non-educational.

It is not surprising, then, to find that the characteristics of Western European art music performance are the very definition of being musically well-educated. Musicality is defined in the discourse as possessing notational fluency and the ability to generate the right kind of sound on one’s wind instrument. The primary step to, as one writer put it, “true musicianship or musicality” is the ability “to reproduce with voice and or instrument any rhythmic pattern

heard by the ear...and then [write] it down in proper musical notation” (CBJ 21:1, 5). Instrumental music programs are claimed by another as needing to develop two basic skills: “(1) musical literacy, and (2) characteristic tone quality coupled with some degree of facility on their instruments” (CW 4:1, 15). This, points out the writer, is not to say loving music, being “musically creative,” or making music throughout one’s life are not important goals for students. It is just that “without the ability to read music fluently and to sound pleasing on their chosen instruments...these other attributes may be moot” (CW 4:1, 15). Musicality, in other words, is determined by one’s ability to aid the ensemble in the re-creation of musical *works*, something necessary in order to benefit from the music’s educative potential.

One’s ethical musical center in early bands, then, may well have resided within the realm of entertainment. Popular appeal and enjoyment, the very definition of *rightness* in early band performance, became, due to the rise of the pedagogical band world, irrelevant if not antithetical to the ethical musical center. One’s ethical center in music is clearly advanced in the discourse as cerebral, not outwardly demonstrative or visible. Musical participation in the pedagogical band world is thus legitimate only to the degree it can be ascertained as *educative*—the precise definition of which is never forthcoming, but is always associated *with* art and positioned *against* all music considered to be solely for entertainment purposes, thereby validating musicality as it is embodied in Western classical music practices.

Subjectivation

The score represents, in black and white symbols, the composer’s creation... Successful musical growth occurs when the conductor and, subsequently, the students make important connections with the score and composer. (CBJ 21:1, 16)

The conductor’s task has always been, and must always be, to realize the intentions first and foremost, trust in the composer’s inspiration and feeling allied with his [*sic*] technique, to bring the work forth in living sound... but in accord with the composer’s stated intentions. (CBJ 23:2, 5)

After all, the performing group exists to play the music written for it by the composer. (CBJ 9:1, 3)

For Foucault, *subjectivation* refers to the moral force to which one is subjected or submits. In early Christian times, suggests Foucault, *subjectivation* was determined by divine law (the Word of God). In this section I argue that the subjectivating force—that to which wind band musicians submit when making musical decisions—has changed from the connection

between audience and performers to the repertoire, or more specifically, the composer's intent. For example, Hazen and Hazen (1987) suggest that prior to the standardization of band instrumentation and readily available sheet music in the 1930s and 1940s, most wind bands were reliant on their bandmaster or band members for compositions and arrangements: "[A] lot of bands had to write their own parts...[with much] arranging of piano scores (126).¹⁰ As many musicians could not read music notation, and most "non-readers learned by rote or just made up ad-lib harmonies" (Hazen and Hazen 1987, 127), it seems clear that the *truth* of music making did not reside in the score. That is, the emphasis in the music making experience was not on the composition, but on the participatory nature of the event. The goal was not to honour the intentions of the composer, but, rather, play along *with* the group. As suggested in this recent review of two pieces of early Canadian band music, there was also often a close connection between repertoire and community in early wind bands:

Both *Canadian Patrol* and *Characteristique Overture* are historically accurate reflections of the era and musical milieu from which they emerged. They were products of a band tradition where composers, performers, and audiences were closely connected. Bandmasters wrote music to be performed by the ensembles they themselves conducted, which came from the communities that formed their primary audiences. The integration was complete. (CW 5:2, 77)

Considered as how musicians are invited or incited to recognize their moral or ethical obligations in and through music, *subjectivation* in early bands can be viewed as stemming from a participatory ethic related to the performance event.

Contemporary discourses suggest a very different source of subjectivation. "We must understand the score," implores one author (CW 1:1, 23). The matter is unequivocal. The musical, hence educational value is very clearly found within the score's hidden meanings. The contemporary wind band conductor's responsibility is to decipher the composer's intent and bring the *work* to fruition in performance. One article, for example, is entitled, "Preparing to Communicate a Work's Message" (CW 5:2, 106). So incontrovertible is the score's truth (or Truth), the score is described as containing "true musical knowledge...The finest adjudicator would never comment with authority without having the score as a reference, the ability to read that score, and the knowledge and experience to interpret the context of the performance in relation to the score" (CBJ 17:4, 15). The point of performing music is thus to know *the music itself*, or more precisely, the meanings embedded in *the work*. As one conductor states: "To be truly effective and to be the composer's advocate, we have to know the score, and know it well. It is our responsibility as conductors" (CW 4:2, 68). Note here

that the primary responsibility is not to the musicians, who, in the context of schooling, are students, the supposed object of care and concern. Instead, care is cast as a responsibility toward honouring the score, thus rendering student needs and interests irrelevant, unimportant, or presumptively served by fulfilling the composer's intent. As another conductor writes, "Throughout the process [of score study] we must continually reflect on our findings so that we deepen our understanding of the piece and are better able to share these findings with the musicians we work with" (CW 1:1, 23). Teachers are "effective" for students only to the degree they can divine the correct meanings (the "findings") intended for them. The findings are not co-constructed meanings (as student needs and interests are of no concern to music teaching in the pedagogical band world) but teacher-determined truths about music and about music making.

Whereas in early wind bands the bandmaster was accountable to the ensemble and the community, contemporary conductors are accountable to composers and their musical intentions. The conductor must be "the composer's advocate." Note, for example, the following statement: "[By] permitting the clearest possible perception by the audience of what the composer is trying to say, [the conductor] is truly serving the composer's best interests, as well as those of his [*sic*] audience" (CBJ 15:4, 25). The conductor must "be certain that what the audience is actually hearing at any moment is what the composer and the music want them to hear" (CBJ 17:1, 19). One's chances for successfully fulfilling the composer's intent are thought to be improved by becoming closer to the composer. It is

important [to make a connection] with the composer. As we study a score, we want to know information about the composer's life; why he [*sic*] wrote the piece; and obtain statements he made concerning the work. These are valuable pieces of information that can help ourselves, and our students, connect with the artist, interpret the work, and value more highly the experience. (CBJ 21:1, 13)

Look for interviews or letters from the composer where s/he talks about the piece. These can give you insights into what is important to him/her, and what s/he may want emphasized. When you are conducting, you are the advocate for the music and the composer's intent. (CW 4:2, 70)

Observe how the participants and the audience are portrayed as being best served when they hear the composer's message. They are, in effect, in the subservient position; they are in *need* of the composer's message; they will benefit from it.

Discussing a school band context, a composer writes, "And if the audience does not hear what the composer wants them to hear in his [*sic*] music...then the total effect of the

artistic experience offered by the performance of that work will be compromised, and the expenditure of time, effort and money in producing that performance at that concert can certainly be called into question” (CBJ 19:1, 17). The attitude towards the composer is almost one of reverence for a deity—so completely deferential to the composer is the conductor, and by extension, the ensemble members, concerning how the music is to be performed. While statements made by composers might be attributed to vested interests, consider this remark from a university conductor: “Every day I ponder how I can best work with the colours represented by the instruments in front of me and what I must do to provide definition of colour, and ultimately texture, as I work through a piece to better understand the composer’s intention” (CW 1:1, 23). Although the discourse is concerned with music-as-object, particularly the score, the ultimate truth clearly lies with the composer. If it were otherwise, why would intent matter? Simply translating the notation into a performance satisfying to the conductor and performers (let alone the audience) is presumed to be insufficient. An unmistakable aspect of the discourse is that the subjectivating force lies with the composer. The hegemony is never challenged. Whereas in early bands, the musical satisfaction of the community was the subjectivating force, it is quite clear that in the contemporary wind band world, composer’s intent serves as the yardstick against which musicality is to be gauged successful.

Asceticism

Use the rehearsal to connect them to the finer details of the music; beauty, tone, shape, and nuance. The essence of an artistic experience is the commitment to detail in order to achieve a higher performance level of work. (CBJ 21:1, 19)

“The orchestra under a paramilitary regime...is difficult to bear. It has become a conductor and repertoire business. The musician is only a tool.”

-Thomas Stevens, principal trumpet, Los Angeles Philharmonic (CW 4:1, 11)

At workshop sessions entitled “The Secret of Success” and “Conducting and Rehearsal Techniques,” a venerable university conductor states, “no matter what else a great conductor does they [*sic*] all have two elements in common. They all know the score and have a definite aural picture of what the work is and they persevere until the group performance matches the aural picture” (CBJ 15:1, 36). The musical experience is thus thought to be most successful when the music and the musicians conform to the conductor’s ideal: “The music-making experience is heightened and more enjoyable when conductors can rely on musicians to

respond to their gestures confidently and the musicians, in turn, look for musical ideas in their conductor's movement. Never under-estimate the influence your gestures have in molding the music and advancing the artistic pursuit" (CW 1:1, 15). The discourse of contemporary wind band conducting makes clear that music making is about ensuring that the players do what the conductor wants them to do. One university conductor implores, "Train your students to respond to smaller gestures. Don't accommodate them by over-conducting. Make them come to you. Insist they watch you" (CW 4:1, 9; also CW 6:2, 63). Another writes, "The aim of these rehearsal techniques is to achieve the ultimate goal of complete musical control by the communication of the conducting gestures combined with the rapid and correct musical response by the instrumentalists in the ensemble" (CBJ 22:3, 19).

On the one hand, the authoritarian nature of large ensemble performance practices is not a recent phenomenon (and obviously applies equally to orchestras as well as wind bands). The oft-cited, "Rules for Band Practice," from a brass band circa 1853, for example, makes clear that large ensembles require strong leadership akin to the military general: "Obey the leader or director, in every particular, in relation to the performance of the music; a Band to play well must be governed by one mind" (Hazen and Hazen 1987, 61). On the other hand, although this rule for band practice appears similar to that of recent wind band discourses, I suggest that there is in fact a difference between the kind of *ascetic* work (understood as training or exercise) that occurred in early bands and that which occurs today. The kind of work musicians must *do* to their musicality, or ethical musical substance, is of a different order. One obeyed the leader/director (not "conductor") in early bands because one desired to have the ensemble sound as good as possible, and the leader was charged with ensuring this outcome. In contemporary bands one obeys conductors because of their expert knowledge of *the work*, something assumed to be synonymous with music and musicality. In the former the musicians were accountable to their audience, in the latter they are accountable to the composer's intent.

Stated another way, the ascetic work is different because the nature of the ethical substance and the telos are different. Viewed in light of the importance of historic inter-town band rivalries, where bands apparently went to extraordinary measures to outdo one another,¹¹ it would be a mistake to think that early bands did not desire to sound good. They obviously did, and the participants undoubtedly worked very hard at besting neighboring

towns. The difference between early and contemporary wind band practices, I submit, is that sounding good for early bands was something determined by the audience, not the truth/Truth as appraised by the conductor. When one encounters claims such as, “The meaning and value of music are embodied in its sound, and good music demands good tone quality for its expression” (CBJ 11:3, 23), it seems that contemporary wind bands aspire to a particular normative ideal of repertoire and sound production far removed from the celebratory sounds of the marching band or outdoor concert. This, I suggest, can be traced to aesthetic discourses that emphasize the musical object at the expense of the performance event. One finds statements, for example, such as, “The contemplative attitude may be the most salient characteristic required in discerning the important qualities of music” (CBJ 11:1, 25), suggesting that there are inherent meanings in sound. Discerning these meanings or qualities entails a very different kind of ascetic work than that undertaken by early band musicians. Moreover, correctly discerning musical meanings in the pedagogical band world is taken as synonymous with, if not the very definition of, musical learning.

Although my claims in this paper are based primarily on statements, they are supported by practices. For instance, study guides for wind band repertoire have become commonplace in the wind band world. The popular series, *Teaching Music through Performance*,¹² makes abundantly clear that in the pedagogical band world, musicality is driven entirely by the music itself; one teaches *music*—or perhaps more accurately, musical meaning—through performance, not performance through music. One does not practice one’s instrument for the sake of the band or the community (let alone one’s own sense of enjoyment), but for the sake of *the music* itself. The student performer is, as such, “only a tool” whose utility lies in the production of a specific kind of repertoire (the kind listed in the *Teaching Music through Performance* series or other canonic lists of wind band repertoire) by responding faithfully and attentively to the gestures of the conductor, who, in the context of performance, acts as proxy for the composer. In the context of schooling, the school concert or contest/festival performance is a test or exam intended to ascertain the students’ internal grasp of *successful* musicality through external or explicit display—a spectacle inextricably linked to the ascetic work of the pedagogical band world.¹³ That is, whereas ascetic work in early bands may be considered a volitional act of participation in service of the band and the community, the ascetic work of the wind band student today consists of submission—both physical/kinesthetic and psychological—to musical wisdom as it is

embodied in the conductor both physically and symbolically (as composer surrogate) in gesture and rehearsal practices. Successful performance, in which students execute their individual part accurately in the manner dictated to them, is taken as evidence of successful learning and successful musicality. That apparently so few in the pedagogical wind band question or challenge this instructional paradigm suggests that wind band conductors do not perceive any ethical tensions with practices that start with an *a priori* belief that student musicality is *tabula rasa* and that ‘training students to respond appropriately’ in order to ‘mold the music and advance the artistic pursuit’ fails to acknowledge or respect any musical thinking that students might bring to the collective endeavour; it is simply what conductors do.

Conclusion

The themes present in the journal discourse likely contain few surprises. As Robert Reynolds has emphatically stated, for example, “The repertoire is the curriculum.”¹⁴ That so many people in the pedagogical band world so uncritically adopt this mantra, as though alternatives do not, cannot, or should not exist, speaks to how totalizing the discourse really is. Lydia Goehr’s (1989) interrogation of the “work” concept in “Being True to the Work” makes clear that the idea of knowing the score and “honouring” the composer’s so-called intentions is endemic to the institution of concert performance. I am in no way suggesting that this discourse is unique to the pedagogical band world. What I am suggesting is that the larger band world adopted this discourse from the “high art” world (circa the 1930s and 1940s, coterminous with the rise of bands in schools and universities), supplanting the former entertainment ethic. Being true to music and being true to the work are not necessarily synonymous, Goehr points out (1989, 64). And this is precisely my point. The emergence of the pedagogical band world altered the ethical relationship one was to have with music. Whereas in early bands one had a relationship *with* music in the context of functional events, in contemporary wind bands one is to have an acontextual relationship with *the musical work*. And so while the themes (the normative “regimes of truth,” as Foucault might say) in the journal discourse may seem commonplace if not self-evident to many, a genealogy of band participation suggests that banding has given way to “music education.”

To rearticulate Foucault’s formulation of *rapport a soi*, asceticism refers to the kind of work one does on one’s ethical substance to achieve the goal(s) of living. In my reading of

the journal discourse, players in pedagogical wind bands dutifully submit to the commands of the conductor (*asceticism*) with the understanding that they are engaged in an educational, or “edifying” endeavour (*telos*). However, one is responding not to the *authority* of the conductor, but to the conductor’s purported musical *knowledge*; it is that the conductor knows the *truth*, and in responding appropriately (with unconditional deference) one can also come to know the composer’s truth through the conductor and the work. This differs from banding, where participation was oriented towards a functional, entertainment ethos. Even though musicians in early bands may have been expected to obey the leader, they did so not to be connected with the finer details of the music, but to perform the music more effectively, something that would hopefully lead to greater self and community satisfaction. One obeyed the bandmaster’s experience and wisdom as a leader of bands, not as the possessor of a higher truth; one obeyed because one desired a harmonious ensemble through the collective practice of *banding*, not because one hoped to glean insights into special meanings embodied in the sounds themselves.

What I am suggesting, then, is that, in its efforts to emphasize the purportedly educative over the entertaining, the pedagogical band world has altered the nature of the ethical relationship one should have *vis-à-vis* music. By placing the ethical center on edification through Art rather than on personal and interpersonal enjoyment as it had been in early bands, musical engagement in pedagogical wind bands places the subjectivating force in the hands of the composer’s intentions rather than in the musicking event, rendering the musicians largely irrelevant as situated individuals operating in a specific time and place. The supposed universality of *the music itself* results in a kind of musicality in which the rightness of the activity no longer depends on the participants, but on timeless principles of Art; knowing has replaced doing, and individual growth or “improvement” has superseded community satisfaction. At the risk of romanticizing the past, I am hopeful that some of this analysis might raise questions in the minds of those who contribute to the perpetuation of a kind of musicality that erodes the specificity of the event, the contingency of the participants, and the multiplicity of purposes to which music making can be put. One of Foucault’s self-stated purposes was to demonstrate that people are freer than they think.¹⁵ My documentation of the change in relationship to music (musicality) in and through wind band participation is not intended to suggest a nostalgic return, but rather, that the present is not inevitable, self-evident, or unassailable. What *is* could be different. Resisting normative regimes of practice

is not easy, but I submit that by reconceptualizing musical relationships as, to cite one example, Foucault's notion of *government*, both music teachers and their students might benefit by interrogating the crucial interconnections between such things as habits, tradition, transformation, agency, freedom, accommodation, and resistance. Perhaps in this way, wind band participation can lean more in the direction of *education* as ethical enterprise rather than *training* based on presumed lack and necessary acquiescence.¹⁶

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Notes

¹ Foucault (1997, 262) writes, “Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.”

² This essay resulted from oral interviews with Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, and was originally published in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

³ Readers might question the suitability of this particular journal. Suffice it to say that in the first instance the majority of authors (especially in the *Canadian Band Journal*, less so in *Canadian Winds*) were American; the discourse is hence not country-specific. In the second instance, there are relatively few differences in wind band practices between Canada and the United States; instrumentation, repertoire, approaches to conducting and score study, rehearsal practices, concert and festival performances, and norms of adjudication are so similar as to be largely indistinguishable. The one salient difference is the general lack of a marching or “pep” band tradition in Canada.

⁴ I should acknowledge that my conceptualization of “the statement” has affinities with Foucault’s archaeological approach. For a discussion of Foucault’s various uses of the word discourse, see Keith Sawyer (2002) “A Discourse On Discourse: An Archeological History Of An Intellectual Concept,” *Cultural Studies* 16:3, 433–456.

⁵ Foucault (1998, 308) writes, “However banal it is, however unimportant its consequences may seem, however quickly it is forgotten after its appearance, however little understood or badly deciphered one would think it, however quickly it may be devoured by the night, a statement is always an event that neither language nor meaning can completely exhaust. A strange event, certainly: first, because, on the one hand, it is linked to an act of writing or to the articulation of a speech but, on the other hand, opens for itself a residual existence in the field of a memory or in the materiality of manuscripts, books, and any other form of record; then because it is unique like every other event, but is open to repetition, transformation, and reactivation; finally, because it is linked both to the situations that give rise to it, and to the

consequences it gives rise to, but also at the same time in quite another modality, to the statements that precede it and follow it.”

⁶ Foucault documents a change in the nature of mastery from ancient Greek to Greco-Roman times, where mastery changes from a decidedly hegemonic form to a “less non-reciprocal” relationship (1997, 267).

⁷ The idea of cultural “uplift” in the discourse serves as a reminder of particular pejorative views in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about culture, progress, and democracy—ones consistent with the “music appreciation” movement of the early twentieth century. This positioning of so-called uncultured people as lacking and in need of culture (defined by those with cultural capital) is similar to the way I am suggesting the band world shifted participation from individual-as-subject to individual-as-object. Perhaps, then, the seeds of the transformation I have strived to document here were sown in the very inception of bands.

⁸ I suggest this is paradoxical based in part on Bourdieu’s argument, following Nietzsche, that by definition those “with culture” must be in the minority. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 252.

⁹ My argument likely extends to music teaching in general, but I will restrict my claims relative to the specific discourses I examined.

¹⁰ As early as 1875, one finds publications for bandmasters such as *Practical Guide to the Arrangement of Band Music* (Hazen and Hazen 1987, 126).

¹¹ See Hazen and Hazen (1987).

¹² Initially appearing in 1996, the series, originally aimed at wind bands, has expanded to include books on choir, orchestra, and jazz.

¹³ The theme of the exam in its relation to “the means of correct training” is notably taken up by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

¹⁴ See, for example, Robert Reynolds (2000), “Repertoire is the Curriculum,” *Music Educators Journal* 87:1, 31–33.

¹⁵ Foucault states this explicitly in an interview with Rux Martin, “Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, 9–15 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 10.

¹⁶ Although tempted, I will forego interrogating the obvious implications of this point regarding “discipline” as advanced by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

About the Author

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