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**Editorial Introduction: A Symposium on
Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education,
Second Edition (2015)**

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Editorial Introduction: A Symposium on *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education*, Second Edition (2015)

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It is a distinct honor to serve in the role of Guest Editor for this issue of *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*. The essays presented here are inspired by the second edition of a book that most would agree has been one of the most transformative works of scholarship in recent music education history, David J. Elliott's landmark publication, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995) (hereafter *MM1*). Twenty years later, David J. Elliott and his co-author Marissa Silverman launch a second edition of the book, titled *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education* (2015) (hereafter *MM2*). In this Symposium, Elliott and Silverman enter into colloquy with the five authors in a substantial response to their essays.

The Symposium: A Tradition of the ACT Journal

I provide some context to orient the reader who is unfamiliar with the Symposium forum in ACT. The first Symposium was published in Volume 1, Issue 2 in 2002 and it focused on Tia DeNora's book, *Music in Everyday Life*. Introducing the inaugural Symposium, Guest Editor Wayne Bowman pitched the series of symposia as "involving multiple essay reviews of books" with "critical analysis and commentary from a broad range of perspectives."¹ The essays are intended to be "more or less free-standing" rather than traditional reviews that "undertake comprehensive, point-to-point critiques."² Beginning with DeNora's book in 2002, the books chosen for review originated in diverse disciplinary perspectives, they enhanced

interdisciplinary exchange and dialogue, and raised issues that were of significance to music educators and relevant to the ideals of the MayDay Group.³ The topics that centered the essay reviews⁴ were philosophy of music education (2003), musical identities (2004), pragmatism (2005), race (2005), gender and aesthetics (2006), democracy (2008), informal learning (2009), body consciousness and embodied knowledge (2010), and most recently in 2012 a Symposium around Chris Higgins' book, *The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice*.⁵

This issue continues the Symposium forum in the spirit of fostering dialogue between scholars using the intellectual landscape of a single critical text as a point of departure, an inspiration for dialogue, and an advancement of the ideas set forth in the source. The essays of five authors—three from North America (Deborah Bradley, J. Scott Goble and Dylan van der Schyff), one from South Africa (Diane Thram) and one from the United Kingdom (Joel Krueger)—are presented in alphabetical order by author name. Elliott and Silverman provide “A Response to Commentaries on *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education*, Second Edition (2015).”

Prior to introducing each of the essays, I offer some general observations about the essay authors' extended commentaries on *MM2*. Elliott and Silverman provide a text of great scope and magnitude, evident in the sheer length of the book (467 pages of exposition followed by 59 pages of notes), the extraordinary range of sources they draw on, from ancient Greece to recent scholarship, and in the diverse interdisciplinary perspectives they weave together—from philosophy to psychology, ethics to ethnomusicology, cognitive science to educational theory, among other fields of inquiry. Essay authors note the scope of the book. For example, Diane Thram says that Elliott and Silverman “address every conceivable question about music” (64) while Krueger writes that the book “touches on nearly every important dimension of philosophy of music” (43). Since Elliott and Silverman offer such a rich philosophical landscape, it is not surprising that the essay authors chose different entry points for their deliberations, reflecting the political, economic, social, cultural and ethical implications of and extensions to ideas advanced in the book.

Some authors, particularly Bradley and Goble, return to the first edition of *Music Matters* and conduct a comparative study of specific perspectives. This surely will be of immense value to readers as it serves to review the content of the first edition, to

highlight the significant bodies of recent literature that Elliott and Silverman have incorporated into the second edition, and to show how the authors have refined some of Elliott's original perspectives to accommodate their now expanded views on and beliefs about music, education and music education. Essay authors remind the reader of the impact of *MM1*. Goble writes that "insights that Elliott articulated in *MM1* took hold in the thinking of music educators in North America and beyond" (30) while Thram applauds Elliott's philosophy of praxial music education (along with Freire's philosophy of critical pedagogy) for "the positive transformation each has already brought about" (66).

One of the qualities of *Music Matters* (2015) that distinguishes the second edition is the authors' statement at the outset that "we have *not* written this book to give you *the* answers. Instead, we've written this book with the hope that it will assist you as you evaluate critically" beliefs about music, education, music education and community music and their implications for praxis (12). This disposition of openness and the implied empowerment and responsibility of the reader can be interpreted from the tone and import of the essays. While some authors choose to revisit assumptions underlying the meaning of particular terms and perspectives in the book (Bradley and Goble), others delve into their disciplinary expertise to extend the book's ideas, bringing state-of-the-art thinking from ethnomusicology, psychology and philosophy (Thram, Krueger, van der Schyff, respectively). It is as though Elliott and Silverman provide the intellectual scaffolding around phenomena and values at the core of human musical praxis, and in response, scholars respond by clarifying elements of their structure, teasing out ideas, and using the conceptual frameworks provided as a springboard for critiquing the status quo in music education and for testing innovative ideas at the intersections of disciplines.

The Essays

Deborah Bradley leads into her essay by revisiting the publication of *MM1*, relating how the book has been "a frequent companion" to inform her thinking for the past twenty years, (a comment that resonates deeply with the role of *MM1* in the development of my own thinking about the nature and meanings of music and music education). Locating music education in the largest societal context, Bradley offers

an impassioned plea to music educators to address issues of racism, oppression, equality and human rights.⁶ Focusing on the political implications of “dynamic multiculturalism” advanced in *MM1* and “dynamic interculturalism” which replaced it in *MM2*, she questions how these ideologies can serve music educators to confront and engage with the complexities of race and racism. In the process, Bradley exposes some of the core issues at the heart of living and teaching in multicultural communities and nations. How best can we interpret cultural differences and foster cultural autonomy without creating cultural stereotypes and practicing “musical essentialism” by approaching tradition as static? (16) What can national identity mean in a school or community for individuals who have transnational identities? What is it that “all children must acquire in order to be well educated?” (15).

MM2 inspires a deep-felt response from Bradley. It prompts revisiting an important underpinning of music education philosophy during the last two decades and more, manifest in frameworks of multiculturalism and interculturalism. By questioning the authors’ use and expansion of Pratte’s typology in *MM2*, she builds a case for “a critical multicultural (antiracist) approach to education” (20) that honors all aspects of individuals’ identities. Although Bradley presents race as a subset of multiculturalism, the challenges inherent in racism, particularly in the United States, and multiculturalism resulting from transition into a new homeland culture, need to be evaluated and acted upon separately. The underlying human condition is mirrored in both, as are the ideals of building and maintaining intercultural civic schools and communities. What differs are the historical, political, socioeconomic and cultural contexts in which an individual or a group came to be perceived and treated as “Other” in a particular place and time. The unique legacies of racism and multiculturalism shape how individuals navigate their present worlds and integrate past histories into present action and imagined futures.

J. Scott Goble returns to the roots of *MM1* to provide philosophical context for ideas advanced in *MM2*. Just as Bradley revisits the origin of Elliott’s (1995) concept of dynamic multiculturalism in Pratte’s typology, Goble revisits a source of Elliott’s (1995) concept of music and music as praxis in the writings of Philip Alperson (1991). He argues that the anthropological approach advanced by Alperson was not integrated as it might have been in the development of ideas in *MM1*. He

acknowledges that the scope of the conception of music in *MM2* is broader, accentuating the functions people assign to sounds in specific social and cultural contexts (35). He focuses specifically on the authors' use of the word 'music' in singular and plural forms to argue an important distinction between "MUSIC (which suggests a cultural universalist perspective) and MUSICS (which suggests a cultural relativist perspective)" (37). Herein lies the kernel of the argument, that conceiving of music in plural form is more ethically appropriate for the practices of music education "in the schools of culturally pluralistic democracies" (40) than a singular, universalizing approach. He recommends expanding Elliott and Silverman's praxial philosophy to include the study of people's worldviews as part of students' learning of musical practices (38). While at one level, the distinction may be seen as a play with words, Goble builds a case for using 'musics' in plural form taking into account social and political contexts. In a sense, Goble's point resonates with Bradley's questioning the limitations of multiculturalism and interculturalism to inform race and racism in music education. Although Goble advocates for a plural, relativizing approach to music and wants to integrate that view into the conception of music in *MM2*, it is important to highlight (and Goble acknowledges so) that the core tenets of Elliott and Silverman's philosophy clearly affirm that "musics" matter to individuals for their potential to develop personhood and individual and collective identities (39–40). Goble frames his argument concerning the need for a plural, relativizing view of music around a critique of neoliberalism, sharing Elliott and Silverman's concern for the "so-called neo-liberalization of education" (31). Applied to musics as phenomena of culturally democratic societies, he criticizes the universalizing effects of market forces, a hallmark of neoliberalism, on the ways musics are valued and transmitted (39-40).

Joel Krueger focuses on the emotional efficacy of music as presented in the book. After locating the foundation of his essay in Elliott and Silverman's "rich embodied and situated approach to musicing" (55), he proceeds to introduce additional themes "to help bring aspects of these 'invisible' dimensions of musicing into sharper relief" (44). Drawing on a wealth of scholarship from philosophy, psychology and sociology, Krueger affirms Elliott and Silverman's approach to music listening as "an act of embodied and enactive musical agency" (*MM2*, 259). He

expands this fundamental idea to show that we encounter music as “a spatially-structured soundworld” (45). Music is material in that it “shows up for us, experientially” (44) and “draws us toward and *into* itself” (46). We use music to manipulate social space and, in the process, our emotions. Krueger views acts of musicing as examples of “emotional niche construction” (44), once again affirming Elliott and Silverman’s enactive approach to musicing: “people actively *construct* their emotional lives by making and listening to specific kinds of music, at specific times, and specific places in their lives” (*MM2*, 308). He explores three dimensions of constructing a musically-scaffolded emotional niche—musical engineering, musical feedback and musically-driven functional gain. Overall, he provides a convincing argument to show that music functions as “a real-time emotion regulator, coaxing emotions out of us and shaping their dynamics as they unfold in real time” (50). He extends the argument beyond embodied, enactive, embedded music listening to show that music can scaffold access to “new forms of experience and expression” (54) and “otherwise-inaccessible forms of cognition and intelligent behavior” (55). Not only does he validate Elliott and Silverman’s approach to cognition from an interdisciplinary perspective, he also encourages them to consider adding the dimension of “extended mind” to their view of cognition.

As Krueger explores the emotional efficacy of music through the lens of Elliott and Silverman’s praxial philosophy, **Diane Thram** focuses on music’s therapeutic efficacy. She highlights music and its value in social life, seeking to bring insights from her work with indigenous cultures, cultures that she does not find represented in *MM2* where she claims emphasis is on “the authors’ own context as music educators in North America” (65). At the same time, the praxial approach developed by Elliott and Silverman resonates with much of who she is as a musician and educator. Rather than critiquing praxial philosophy as espoused in *MM2*, Thram applies it to music in various cultural contexts and in the process shows that the principles of praxial philosophy are embedded in musical practices across time and culture. Using pre-modern and indigenous African conceptions and uses of music, she goes on to illustrate how the power of music is located in “human sensory and neurological capabilities” regardless of culture or historical era (72). The case of Hildegard of Bingen exposes the use of music as a therapeutic agent for creating

harmony and “directing a person’s inner life” (68). From transformation at the individual level, Thram provides culture-specific cases from her field research to show the importance and therapeutic power of group musical participation in sub-Saharan Africa. She argues that the therapeutic efficacy of music making can effect change in how human beings feel which can be transferred to communities and can “positively transform the world” (66). From the strength of evidence she presents, she advocates passionately for the provision of “group music making activities for all students” (72) because of the way such experience can positively transform how people feel. Her conclusion comes full circle back to the heart of praxial philosophy presented in *MM2*.

Dylan van der Schyff’s essay in many ways echoes elements of the preceding essays and draws together some key philosophical underpinnings of *MM2*. To situate his thinking about the shortcomings of music education today, he offers a critique of the objectivist philosophical tradition with its depersonalizing ‘technicist’ focus and neo-liberal agenda, thus supporting and reinforcing “core ethical arguments” of *MM2* (77). He then leads the reader on an interesting journey where he revisits the ‘Neo-Aristotelian’ perspective discussed in *MM2*, using a Heideggerian reading of Aristotle’s conception of *praxis* with a deep concern for ontological issues that reveal “what it means to be and become musical (and music educator)” (77). He notes that the ontological view of *praxis* he presents resonates with the enactive approaches to cognition that permeate *MM2*. Connecting enactivism with an ontological perspective, van der Schyff enlightens some of the fundamental groundings of *MM2* and in the process he highlights the deep significances of Elliott and Silverman’s conception of musicing as active, ethical engagement with the world, as formation of personhood, and as movement toward full human flourishing.

The expansive view that van der Schyff assumes in his essay incorporates elements of other essays. Bradley’s call for a critical antiracist approach to education can be viewed as integral to the “movement toward flourishing (*eudaimonia*)” (87) that van der Schyff imagines for all human beings; the “new kind of music educator” van der Schyff describes on the final pages of his essay (93–94) (and which he argues is at the heart of *MM2*) is resonant with the teacher Bradley calls for—one who is fully aware of the pedagogies and power structures in and for different musical

praxes. Both Goble and van der Schyff associate the commodification of music and education with the dehumanizing and technicist hallmarks of neoliberalism. Thram emphasizes the need for group music making for all students, a point that is validated in van der Schyff's notion of praxis as a form of *orexis*, "a basic way humans (and perhaps other animals) actively reach out to the world, form environments for each other, and thereby reveal or enact shared worlds of meaning" (92). Finally, the partnering of Krueger's focus on the materiality of music and how it "shows up for us" (44) and "draws us toward and *into* itself" (46), finds resonance in van der Schyff's image of "the striving or conative nature of all living beings, the way all living organisms 'reach out' to the world in order to develop their potential as fully as possible" (87). Collectively, the authors of the essays chose diverse topics for their explorations. They address political, social, cultural, and ethical contexts of musical praxes using frameworks from philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, ethnomusicology and anthropology, among others.

Authors' Response to Commentaries

In an extensive response to each of the five essays, David J. Elliott and Marissa Silverman express gratitude to the contributors for "the diverse and constructive perspectives they offer" (96). Acknowledging the importance of dialogue, they write: "Learning and improving from dialogues like the ones in this issue of *ACT* are the lifeblood of doing philosophy" (104). The authors respond to the various observations, explorations and criticisms presented in the essays, after first summarizing "the basic premises and themes in the praxial philosophy of music education" (97) that they propose in *MM2*. In the responses to the essays, they clarify terms, review philosophical perspectives, expand on arguments, and agree and in some cases disagree with the concerns shared in the essays. In the spirit and intention of the *ACT* Symposium, I encourage readers to enter into their own dialogue with the authors and essay reviewers of *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education*.

Notes

¹ Bowman, Wayne. 2002. Introduction to Symposium: Music's significance in everyday life. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 1(2). http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman1_2.pdf

² Bowman, Wayne. 2003. The song is you: Symposium on musical identity. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 3(1). http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman3_1.pdf

³ Bowman, Wayne. 2005. After the silence of aesthetic enchantment: Race, music, and music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 4(3). http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman4_3.pdf.

⁴ Following is a list of the books that provided a focal point for ACT Symposia since 2002: Tia De Nora, *Music in Everyday Life*; Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision*; Raymond MacDonald, David Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell (Eds.), *Musical Identities*; Erkki Kilpinen, *The Enormous Fly-wheel of Society: Pragmatism's Habitual Conception of Action and Social Theory*; Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination*; Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction*; Paul Woodford, *Democracy and Music Education*; Lucy Green, *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*; Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*; and, Chris Higgins' *The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice*. In one issue of *ACT* (6:2), the Symposium was devoted to responses to an article published previously in the journal: Rhoda Bernard's article, "Making music, making selves: A Call for Reframing Music Teacher Education." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 4(2). http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bernard4_2.pdf.

⁵ Bowman, Wayne. 2012. Practices, virtue ethics, and music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 11(2): 1–19. http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman11_2.pdf

⁶ For earlier discussions of race, racism and music education in *ACT*, see Deborah Bradley (2006) "Music education, multiculturalism, and anti-racism: 'Can we talk?'" *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 5(2). http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bradley5_2.pdf; the five essay reviews of *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, eds.) in 4(3); and, Juliet Hess, (2015) "Upping the 'anti-': The value of an anti-racist theoretical framework in music education," *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 14(1): 66–92. act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Hess14_1.pdf