

Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education

The refereed scholarly journal of the



Volume 2, No. 1
September 2003

Thomas A. Regelski, Editor
Wayne Bowman, Associate Editor
Darryl A. Coan, Publishing Editor

Electronic Article

Reflections on the Reviews

Bennett Reimer

© Bennett Reimer, 2003 All rights reserved.

The content of this article is the sole responsibility of the author. The ACT Journal and the MayDay Group are not liable for any legal actions, which may arise involving the article's content, including but not limited to, copyright infringement.

ISSN 1545-4517

For contact information, please point your Web Browser to:

ACT Journal: <http://act.maydaygroup.org>

or

MayDay Site: <http://www.maydaygroup.org>

Reflections on the Reviews

Bennett Reimer

I: Introductory Comments

My first reaction to the reviews was surprise. Not about the fact that a number of critical commentaries and analyses were made: that is to be expected among scholars appraising a book as synoptic as mine attempts to be. What is surprising is their exceedingly disparate character. The first three address issues very particular to their own interest/expertise. None of them attends to an overview – a sense of the whole emerging from its parts, including my prescription for a radical reconceptualization of the school music program, that I had hoped would be grasped and discussed. The fourth, by Stublely, is a special case, focusing as it does, in a most charming and moving manner, on her personal history with the three editions of the book rather than on the specifics of the issues this one raises. So I'm left, at least by the first three, with a kind of unsatisfied appetite, in that I had hoped that while some of its trees would be examined for their weaknesses the forest would also be viewed and debated. The challenge my book presents to the profession, to rethink its goals and operations in the direction of a newly conceived comprehensiveness, is the payoff of my philosophical structure. I was hoping this challenge would be addressed as a major dimension of the reviews or at least mentioned. If my book has influence on the viability of the field of music education it should be on how or if it chooses to meet its challenge. I await the inception of that debate.

Nevertheless, I am pleased to address the specifics (well, some of them anyway) raised by the first three reviews (and to respond to Stublely's reflection) as an opportunity for me to deepen my understandings, thereby improving or altering my arguments. Would that we could possess all the wisdom we need as we are doing our work rather than gaining more of what we needed after the fact. Alas, that is unlikely. The exercise of grappling with critiques of our thinking can help us get closer to the perfection we seek but never entirely attain. And our grapplings can, as well, contribute to the reviewers' clarity of thought. Such interchanges are likely to benefit not only reviewers and reviewed but all who read their dialectical reflections.

II: Response to Juergen Vogt

Vogt's essay makes some very useful points, relevant not only to my positions but to those of any philosophy of music education. (I will henceforth adopt his PME acronym.) It was a bit difficult for me, however, to steer a straight path through his thinking because he

tends to veer back and forth between opposites in the points he raises. For example, in regard to international PME thinking he suggests there is no “lingua franca,” so that sharing of ideas would seem to be impossible. But apparently despite that, non-German writers improperly ignore German writers and Germans ignore Anglo-Americans. Linguistic problems may be the reason for this lack of intercommunication, he suggests, but perhaps it is because they are based on different paradigms. Or perhaps there is nothing to communicate about, basic concepts in various countries being fundamentally different. But if that were the case there could be no comparative music education. So different PME positions are not incommensurable, yet at the same time there are numerous and significant differences in paradigms, concepts, ideas, and words. “To discuss even the simplest of these differences would be a wearisome enterprise.” (Why? At this point I was yearning for an example or two.) He will therefore concentrate only on those parts of my book relevant to a *German* reader (his emphasis), but then, startlingly, will “focus on some basic assumptions that concern *any* PME [his emphasis] whether situated in North America or in Germany or anywhere else.” And so on, all in the first two pages.

I felt a bit of sea-sickness with all this. However, I will do my best to pinpoint interesting issues he raises, avoiding his vacillations except when they are substantive.

The first section of Vogt’s paper is devoted to definitions of philosophy, aesthetics, and education, and to their implications. He points out that I did not define “what philosophy *essentially* is” (his emphasis.) Correct. I briefly dealt in my book with the definition problem in regard to philosophy, not offering one but taking a very inclusive posture as to its many possible definitions. When I did assay a few definitions, or descriptions, in the book, I ringed them around with precautions, aware as I am about their many potential pitfalls. In regard to philosophy I discussed some of the disagreements existing about the relation of philosophy to aesthetics, pointing out the contradictory views of *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Wayne Bowman, Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard, and Monroe Beardsley, as to whether and how they are the same or different or one subsumes the other. Vogt states his position on the matter as if that settles it. Of course it does not. Nor can we expect an “essential” definition of philosophy: too much rides, in philosophy, on keeping its definition open. Definitions are tools, used in particular settings for particular purposes, and are usefully accepted as such. Mine help steer me through the rocky shoals of PME and perhaps can help others avoid some harsh bumps. That is as much as one can expect.

The point Vogt finally gets to in his discussions of definitions of philosophy, aesthetics, and education is that we have to choose which philosophy we prefer, and we must

do so, at bottom, on the basis of what education is or should be. Any PME “must confront the thorny, normative, pedagogical questions concerning the justification, the reasons for, and the ends of music education.” While this is one view among others, I have always found it compelling. But Vogt takes a puzzling turn with the idea. Aesthetics, he says, is not adequate to those thorny questions. (I agree.) And, he argues further, a rationale for education based on the nature of music itself is not convincing. Vogt says that Philip Alperson (who he labels a “praxialist,”) criticizes this “aesthetic rationale” (equated by Vogt with the argument from the nature of music). Yet, nevertheless, says Vogt, Alperson argues *for* an aesthetic rationale, just as I do. So Alperson (who, I suggest, while he discusses merits of praxialism, cannot be identified so simply as a “praxialist”) and I, and praxial philosophies, and all others which emphasize the centrality of music in a PME, are wrong to do so, Vogt avers, because no theory of music can prescribe what music *education* should be. Nevertheless, after dismissing the claim for musical values as the basis for a PME, he veers back to it as a necessary dimension. “The best we can hope for,” he concludes, “is a certain *convergence* [his emphasis] between pedagogical-normative aims and values and philosophy of music.”

This, it seems to me, is a reasonable and in fact inevitable conclusion, however convoluted his pathway to arriving at it. It is why I have relied, and continue to, on more than aesthetics or philosophy of music to explore the many values musical experience makes available. Many significant dimensions of that experience are dealt with in non-philosophical fields such as the cognitive sciences, anthropology, brain research, intelligence theory, and music theory, each of which, and various others, adds significant insights to our understanding of the values music affords and how we can be effective in sharing those values through education. Our role as music educators, I believe, is to shape our “pedagogical-normative aims and values” to the particular values music experience offers, while also shaping the musical experiences and learnings we offer to achieve the fullest possible musical growth of our students.

This applies as well to the ethical dimensions of musical experience, insights about which certainly do come from aesthetics proper, especially with present high interest in that topic, but also from a great variety of other domains, all of which affect our understandings of how to act properly as educators. I made my view clear (Chapter 4 and elsewhere) that there are particular ethical demands entailed in creating music and that music education has the same sorts of obligations as everything else taught in schools to reinforce, refine, and reconsider the culture’s shared ethical value system. But I also expressed my skepticism that the study of music necessarily has any more efficacy in regard to ethics than all the

other studies and ways through which our culture examines and propagates its ethical beliefs and practices. What we can and should do, I have argued, is offer to our culture the opportunities to deepen and broaden the life-enhancing values of music, along with its ethical implications, in the particular ways music adds to the good life. That is our expertise and our mission, I believe, rather than the narcissistic grandiosity of thinking that music education is the royal road—for some the only valid road or at least the paramount one—to achieving virtue.

Vogt faults me for not giving a precise definition of a “good life.” He’s right – I did not. I’m not that inflated. All of us can raise issues of the relation of music to the good, ethical life, but with the modesty that sees those issues as endlessly and appropriately controversial, even conflicted. I am dubious, to say the least, of claims that the primary obligation of music education is to reshape a culture’s beliefs and actions at the level of goodness, virtue, civility, justice, morals, love of wisdom, freedom, dignity, humanity, compassion, equality, and on and on with every possible term relating to value, as if each such term was not, in itself, deeply problematical, indeterminate, and contentious. Words then become slogans, empty of their complexities and their shadow sides, as if “we all know” what is good and only need propagate it in some unspecified way, sure to be effective because of the purity of our intentions. Well, sorry. If we music educators, or anyone else, knew how to teach effectively for such outcomes (in our case usually in less than an hour per week with students in the grades and a small minority of students involved at all after that) we surely would have, by now, the kingdom of heaven on earth (depending, of course, on one’s vision of what that means.)

I must be more modest. I want us to influence the depth and breadth of musical experience for all students in all the various ways our culture affords. I believe that is a major contribution to human welfare, major enough to require expertise, musically and pedagogically, that we have some reasonable hope of actually attaining. Vogt says that such a position entails a “formal theory of education,” which means that content is unimportant. I reject the “formal” designation, especially because content, I believe, is fundamentally important. That is why I insist that we need to expand our limited instruction in radical ways, both in the musics we include and the ways we engage ourselves with it.

But *which* musics? Vogt asks, and *which* feelings they afford? After all, he correctly points out, the power of music to influence what we undergo can be aimed toward totalitarian as well as democratic values. Does not my argument that we need to go beyond traditionally sanctioned “school music” open the door to bad as well as good effects?

Well, yes, it does. Opening ourselves to reality opens us as well to issues we've avoided by our conservatism. There is a high price to be paid when we limit content to conform with established morality. Getting real, as I believe we must if we are to be relevant to the actualities of our musical culture, requires us to face such matters squarely and to help our students face them as well, recognizing, nevertheless, that there are no sure answers to the problems they pose. That is part of the "real" of music, and needs to be part of our reality as teachers of music. Needless to say, that calls on us to rethink our traditional posture of avoiding issues of the relation of music to difficult societal controversies. That rethinking is an opportunity for us to grow.

But we cannot grow healthily if we abrogate out professional responsibilities for decision making to polls asking what the public wants from us, or what politicians want, as Vogt seems to think I might be suggesting. So what is the role of philosophy in decision making about content? he asks. I discuss this in regard to the "Expectational Phase" of the curriculum (248-49) and in other places, making the point that a better accommodation needs to be made between the views of professionals and those of the community. Both perspectives must be taken into account: that is the agony of education in a democracy. Who decides "the question of why, what, when, or how to teach in music education?" asks Vogt. "The philosophical masterminds? Practitioners who only *interpret* them? Practitioners who set up their *own* goals and aims?" Or "should there be a *discourse* among philosophers, policy makers, teachers, parents, pupils?"

My answers to his questions are yes, yes, yes, and yes. "If the answer is yes," says Vogt, "how can this discourse be organized?" That, of course, is our unfulfilled task, to seek a way to include all these perspectives in a synergistic rather than exclusive solution. My professional role as a philosopher of music education, one role among many others needing to be played in this regard, is to try to clarify the issues involved, the values that might defensibly be pursued, and to sketch out the ways my philosophical position would play out in practice.

Vogt ends with an enigmatic reflection. Wide-range theories like mine (and apparently his, although unfortunately I am unacquainted with his) cannot succeed and perhaps are not necessary. (Many are the times I would quite agree!) We should, instead, aim for a PME with a more modest "middle-range scope." That scope would "investigate philosophically topics like child development, or learning."

This puzzles me. I would have thought that such topics, while containing philosophical aspects as practically everything does, would depend largely on extra-philosophical considerations if they are to be useful for education. And to think that

focusing on such matters would be a simplification, that to do so would make our ambitions more modest, is to misunderstand their own endless complexities and controversies.

Well, Vogt concludes, we probably need more than one book if we are to deal adequately with musical experience and music education. And we need to reflect both on global issues and their local applications. Indeed. Wise comments. My book is one among many, each of them necessarily bounded and less than perfect, all of them together, over history, insufficient for definitive solutions. Which is why we continually get further efforts, thank goodness, and with them, always, further unresolved issues (also, I would add, thank goodness.) Each philosophy must be applied in particular contexts, each such context reflecting back on the philosophy, revealing both its strengths and weaknesses. That has been the history of philosophy in general, not just in music education. Perhaps there will arise a final, definitive philosophy, applicable to all situations and free of error. But I would not advise holding our breaths. Vogt's epigraph to his review, a quote from my Preface, seems apt here: "So beware, those of you who attempt to write philosophy for anyone else to read!"

III: Response to Vernon Howard

Unlike Juergen Vogt, who pleads for more, at least another book's worth, Vernon Howard would prefer less – a lot less. This is precisely the dilemma I identified in my Preface as the include-exclude problem (x). I know how much more is needed to do justice to the ideas I raise and I also know how easy it is to offer more material than some or many want or feel is needed. Most readers seem quite satisfied with the length, but at each end of the normal curve are the inevitably disaffected. I apologized to them in the Preface, and do so again.

Contra Howard, there are some good and substantial reasons for my determination to spell out in some detail the need for synergism in a time when conflicts among PMEs have arisen and are likely to increase, and to demonstrate, throughout the book, how it can guide us to avoidance of unfruitful extremes. We do need, now, to pay serious attention to feminist concerns – much more than I was able to do, as is the case with other social issues we have long neglected but which I simply could not include in any substantive way. And as to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, it cries out for critique, and that critique is central to my explanation of the alternative theory I offer. Given its widespread influence in education, multiple intelligence theory needs more than a chapter in a music education book to address its limitations adequately, a task I hope to take up if time and energy allow. Dealing with all these and many more matters in a hundred pages, as he suggests I should

have, would certainly have made my life easier (and my publisher happier) but, I'm afraid, would simply not have cut it. Not any more.

Howard has four objections to the philosophy I offer. Each deserves a response. First, he argues that it is not a "philosophy's job to justify music education or to create inner peace." Here he parts company with practically every music educator in our history, and practically all our counterparts in the other art education fields, who have attempted to think philosophically, which means, here, to think carefully about why our profession exists and how it can make a useful contribution. Such matters are, for us and for the other subjects at the fringes of the educational enterprise in our culture, central to our selfhood. We have always operated under the threats of second class citizenship. As in the sphere of politics, second hand citizens know how they are regarded and are greatly in need of succor therefore. Howard has not lived under this condition as we in music education have, along with our colleagues in the other arts in education, and cannot be as sensitive to our need for self respect and justification as all of us know we are.

Providing them is not the only task of a PME, but it surely is one. I have heard, literally hundreds of times over the years (as I am sure others have who have offered a thoughtful vision of the values of music education) the thanks of music educators, from novices to veterans, for the courage philosophy has given them, the solidifying of their self regard, and their clearer understandings of why music education deserves their ongoing allegiance. I discuss such matters in the very first pages of my book, pointing out that in addition to being a guide for practical action a philosophy has to grapple with the tough questions of the worth of music and of the teaching and learning of music, and that doing this requires serious thought. Professional music educators understand this deeply, and we appreciate, in very personal ways, all the help we can get to give us a better sense of our value.

Having said this, I quite agree with Howard that philosophical work by itself is unlikely to be persuasive to those citizens not already favorably disposed to music as a school subject. I have said very much the same thing in regard to our endless advocacy efforts, in which we tend to try to convince everyone, with claims glorious and grandiose, that music is the answer to all our society's ills, ranging from low math scores to deep-seated social injustice. I am desperately weary of all this grandiloquent pretentiousness, and I'm convinced it does us little if any good and in fact can be quite harmful. My book, as other serious philosophical efforts like it, is intended for professionals, who, I believe, cannot be effective without some well-grounded philosophical base. That is whom I address,

making clear that I am offering a “professional philosophy.” It has never occurred to me that it would be read by the general public. (Well, no need to worry.)

In regard to using a professional philosophy as an advocacy tool, I have advised several generations of students to be very cautious about doing so. Philosophy has its time and place in the advocacy arena but a little goes a long way. Howard pinpoints, quite effectively, what philosophy can actually do for advocacy, in revealing some of the unexamined values, confusions, and distortions that might lead people to be hostile to the arts in education. Having done that, he counsels, we must then hope for the best. Well, we professionals have to do a lot more than that, I’m afraid, and the final chapters of my book provide a vision of the task remaining if we are to be as valuable to our constituency as we are capable of being. Fulfilling that task of reconstituting our contribution, I argue, is the best possible way to strengthen our position in education.

The second issue Howard addresses is based, I’m afraid, on a misconception of what I intended by my analogy between feeling and reasoning, music being focused on feeling, reading and writing on reasoning (89-94.) Howard takes that material to imply that feeling is not cognitive, which, of course, is the opposite of the position I argue throughout the book. In fact, the cognitive nature of music (and the arts) is a key factor in my philosophy. I’m terribly sorry he took my explanation of how music actually can and does deepen, expand, clarify (etc.) feeling *in analogous ways* to how reading and writing do it for conceptual reasoning, to mean that music is not “reasonable” or “cognitive.” I was careful to use the term “conceptual reasoning” over and over in that section to delineate what language deals with, precisely to avoid the confusion Howard fell into. (I also opened myself to issues relating to the term “conceptual” by doing so, as will be discussed in my response to Määttänen following.)

In fact, the quote Howard provides, by Nelson Goodman, pointing out the unfortunate dichotomy often taken to exist between the cognitive and the emotive, is one I have used also to argue precisely what Howard (and Goodman, and Langer, and Dewey, etc.) have argued – that music is deeply cognitive but not in the same way language is (which is why we need music and art.) On page five of the book I make this explicit: “Put simply, [this argument] is that music and the other arts are basic ways that humans know themselves and their world; they are basic modes of cognition.” I have pursued that conviction in much of what I have written, such as in the first issue of the *Philosophy of Music Education Review* (devoted entirely to Susanne Langer), in my contribution titled “Langer On the Arts as Cognitive,” and in Chapter 5 of this book, as in its previous editions, and in many articles in which this conception is explained in various ways.

Over the years since the publication of the second edition (1989) I have had scores of requests that I not delete the reading-writing/music analogy in any new edition, because of its utility in clarifying how music is cognitive in its own characteristic way. So I was careful to keep it, along with only a few other portions of that edition, secure that the ending paragraph of that discussion (94) makes my point very clearly:

It sounds perfectly reasonable to argue that reasoning can be educated in quality and depth and breadth and that we have the means to do so in education by using the forms of cognition appropriate to conceptual thinking—languages and other symbolic systems. The parallel claim being made here, that feeling can be educated in quality and depth and breadth, and that we have the means to do so in education by using the form of cognition appropriate to the affective domain—music and the arts—sounds remarkable or even radical. But with work such as Damasio’s to add credence to the philosophical intuitions preceding it, we can now make that claim with substantial confidence. And we can organize our efforts as music educators to effectively achieve the education of feeling available through musical experience.

I also want to point out (I know, I’m going on with this, but I’m actually enjoying myself) that Howard’s discussion of Dewey’s position on the cognitive nature of the emotions implies that, since there can be an ‘aesthetic stamp’ in all our experiences, even in science, we should not perpetuate the dichotomy between art and science (and other subjects.) “In my opinion,” says Howard, “if *all* art education were brought in under the canopy of understanding, construed as having an “aesthetic stamp” wherever it occurs or is cultivated, at least one opening to neglect of the arts would be closed.” If I understand what he is claiming, it is that there is no real distinction, according to Dewey, between art and science in regard to “aesthetic and emotional tone,” so that the arts can be treated similarly to science in education and hence be less neglected.

Actually, Dewey does not at all conflate art and science (or other “intellectual,” i.e. “conceptual” domains) on the basis of aesthetic quality. In *Art and Experience* (all further Dewey quotes are from that book) he says:

Hence *an* experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality. It differs from those experiences that are acknowledged to be esthetic, but only in its materials. The material of the fine arts consists of qualities; that of experience having intellectual conclusion are signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own, but standing for things that may in another experience be qualitatively experienced. *The difference is enormous.* (38, my emphasis.)

He follows with the distinction that many things can have “esthetic quality” but that they are not “dominantly esthetic” as works of art must be. Along the way, it should be noted, Dewey decries the idea that scientific inquirers truly “think” but that artists do not. In a quote I include in my book, he says “Indeed, since words are easily manipulated in

mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being ‘intellectuals.’” (46. You gotta love Dewey!)

The main point, I think, is his comment, “To be truly artistic, a work must also be esthetic – that is, framed for enjoyed receptive perception” (48). Or, to put it differently, framed to be aesthetically experienced. Other things are not so framed, although they can have “esthetic qualities” as art does. A crystal, for example. A flower. A sunset. An equation. An experiment. All can be “artistic” – that is, resembling art – but that does not make them art, which is framed to offer a particular kind of experience in which the aesthetic quality is the meaning. Such meaning, of course, can incorporate all sorts of other meanings, social, political, religious, etc., but makes “something else” of them by the transformation inherently aesthetic qualities cause.

Dewey ends this discussion with the following:

The considerations that have been presented imply both the community and the unlikeness, because of specific emphasis, of *an* experience, in its pregnant sense, and esthetic experience. . . . The [intellectual] experiences in question are dominantly intellectual or practical, rather than *distinctively* [his emphasis] esthetic, because of the interest and purpose that initiate and control them. In an intellectual experience, the conclusion has value on its own account. It can be extracted as a formula or as a “truth,” and can be used in its independent entirety as a factor and guide in other inquiries. In a work of art there is no such single self-sufficient deposit. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself but as the integration of the parts. It has no other existence” (54-55).

I cite this material to emphasize that, while Dewey does indeed argue that “the arts are not alone in being emotionally motivated in form and content,” as Howard says, they also have a distinct nature, for Dewey, which must be recognized, honored, and most important for people like us, *cultivated through education*. I do not agree with Howard that, since art as well as the non-art subjects all deal with understanding, we can gain support for the arts in education by equating them with other subjects, as if understanding is all of a piece. The danger here is that if the arts contribute to the same kinds of understanding as the “basic” subjects they would need *less*, not *more*, attention in education, in that the basics are doing the job anyway. So we would lose little by de-emphasizing art and spending all that saved time strengthening what “really matters” – the basics. We have enough trouble as it is, I suggest, without arguing for our own superfluity.

The third fault Howard identifies is that I do not invoke the work of Friedrich Schiller, along with “almost none of the music/arts education literature.” While I have read the apposite sections of Schiller I have not relied on him for my thinking in that his ideas

did not register with me as being as powerful or as useful as the many others from whom I have learned. I would have appreciated from Howard a few words as to why Schiller should receive more attention rather than only the claim that he should. But perhaps I should reconsider, and I thank Howard for the suggestion.

In the final fault he finds, Howard makes the point that imagination, like the thinking of Schiller, is a much-neglected topic among writers on the arts in education, including me. I was a bit disconcerted by this remark because I thought I had made a great deal of the role of imagination in music and music education and in thinking in general. So I used my incredibly advanced skills in computer technology (!) to search for the word in my book. (The “find” command is among the great inventions in human history, I’m convinced, especially after I was finally taught how to use it.) Lo and behold, I found over fifty occurrences in various contexts and discussions. (Good Lord, did I overdo it?) Especially in Chapter 7, where I discuss imagination as a “key factor” in intelligence, and quote Mark Johnson from his *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* as to its foundational role in any meaningful human experience. Howard makes the same point very powerfully: “. . . one cannot even *think* [his emphasis] without imagination joining reflection and anticipation within the present (specious) moment.” His comment sounds a lot like mine in my discussion of imagination and its role in thinking: “I mean imagination to be understood as the foundational operation of the human mind in its function of making meaning, making sense – the fundamental requirement for sapience So while imagination in the ‘creative’ sense is one dimension of its functioning, as explained in Chapter 4, I mean it in this context as the basis and possibility for all meanings of which humans are capable” (205).

I appreciate Howard’s kind comments in his concluding paragraph, and hope there will be opportunity for us to debate the issues he raises some time in the future. All of them are worthy of our ongoing examination.

IV: Response to Pentti Määttänen

Pentti Määttänen’s review concentrates entirely on Chapter 5, “The Meaning Dimension of Musical Experience,” and gives it a close, thorough critique that I found useful and also frustrating. Useful because the topic of meaning has long puzzled thinkers about the arts in that it presents issues so complex yet so germane to our attempts to understand the arts as to constitute, probably, the thorniest of all matters relating to art and its nature. Close and careful examinations of various premises about meaning in art, and how it is created, can reveal their strengths and weaknesses, allowing us to clarify our understandings as we attempt to grapple with the many conundrums the topic entails. It was

useful for me to try to get my mind around Määttänen's points, so that I could discern his positions, compare them with my own, and discover what it was about mine that caused him concern.

I found this frustrating because I accept his main critical point about my explanation of communication. Unfortunately, I was not perspicacious enough to anticipate his critique and to do a better job of avoiding it by offering some of the same explanations he did, most of them being entirely compatible with my own understandings. I could easily have done this, and would have then presented a more accurate view of my positions than I did. That's frustrating for a writer who devotedly pursues clarity and consistency but sometimes (at least!) misses the mark.

Määttänen's primary criticism is that my diagram (137) of how language communicates does not conform to contemporary thought about this. The problem, he says, is that I do not recognize that language is not rigidly rule-bound in regard to how words mean but instead is steeped in contexts of use. What a word communicates – its meaning-referent – depends not on some sort of pre-established axiom or formula but on how its context influences, even determines, its referent and the surrounding “meaning-space” (my term) of the referent.

While each language does, in fact, include a necessary degree of rule stipulation in regard to both reference and syntax, Määttänen is generally correct about this contemporary understanding, and also correct that my diagram does not do it justice – even that it gives the impression that I do not accept it. In the early years of the twentieth century newly emerging ideas about logic and representation of thought came to be aimed toward developing a system in which signs and symbols could be matched to their referents with a high degree of accuracy: ideas encompassed within the position generally called “logical positivism.” As has been pointed out, “The original hope of philosophers at the time of Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore had been to develop something close to a logically perfect language with a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified.”¹ Well, never happened, of course, nor is it ever likely to happen with verbal language as it does with numerical signification, except in special, very tightly constrained signification contexts (such as codes) separate from the ordinary uses of language. (Such contexts are not under discussion here by either Määttänen or me.)

Because I thoroughly agree with the premise that language is inevitably embedded in context (far more deeply than he addresses, as I will mention further on) and in fact that it is difficult to imagine how it could not be so, I am dismayed that I gave the impression that I understood it to work according to some sort of one-to-one rule-following paradigm. Read

by itself, the diagram does seem to imply this, and while I presented it as “simplified,” I could have – no, should have – pointed out why it is simplified: that is, because it does not account for the contextual surround – the aspect of meaning as use – for each of its components. In the introductory material to the diagram I indicated its insufficiency to accomplish what it seems to propose, precisely because of the influence of context, that is, of the use we make of words, all of them embedded, as he points out, in practical (I would add social, psychological, emotional, corporeal, and attitudinal, for starters) contexts. I gave two examples of how the stereotypical diagram of communication can get waylaid by use, or context, one example by ambiguity of intent, the other by differing language settings. But I did not make clear that language communication is embedded in such contexts, the diagram seeming to explain communication as being more straightforward than it could possibly be.² Frustrating.



Nevertheless, conforming the way I explain the communication process to a more acceptable posture – to his and my own understandings – will not and cannot, I’m afraid, enable me to offer the “correct” explanation of how communication works. As with other profoundly complex aspects of human mental-emotional-corporeal functioning we are only beginning to get some handle on their workings and should not deceive ourselves that, despite impressive advances in recent years, we are getting ready to close the case.

As to language, it lies at the core of human mental functioning, much of its character only dimly accessible to our understandings. The layers of its complexity are only glimpsed at the obvious level of contexts. Contextual layers include the multiple meanings of single words, their appropriate meaning being determined not only by the other words with which it is associated in a locution but by the intentions surrounding, even enveloping, the choice of a particular word to use. Look up, for example, the word “transcendental,” as I recently had occasion to do (in the Random House Unabridged Dictionary.) In addition to its root words transcend, transcendence, and transcendent, there are over a dozen entries, each situating the term in a particular context of interlocking meanings. Or try “mean,” and “meaning.” Or “context.” This does not even get in to the interconnections a thesaurus makes (look up “make” in a thesaurus). Those of us whose work depends on word use cannot help but be aware, often painfully, of their multiplicities of association.

All this is made infinitely more difficult by the existence of a myriad of languages, each with comparable or at least similar complexities. And, of course, syntax raises another level of word-interaction complexities. As does inflection, either evident as in speech or implied as in writing-reading, and metaphor and all the other figures of speech that stretch the bounds of simple signification. As do the continually shifting uses of language

throughout history and the emergence of new contexts requiring existing terms to be used in new ways, and neologisms, syntaxes, locutions, and idioms never before encountered. Think “computerese.”

My own most compelling area of interest in such matters has to do with the archetypal-imaginal nature of language at the level of the collective unconscious. Language, at this level, reveals a fundamental aspect of the workings of the unconscious (and hence consciousness) in its very infrastructure, the forms of thought – the syntax – of mind and imagination. At this level one plumbs the groundings of the human condition beyond particular contexts, that is, transpersonally, to what might be called deepest universalism. As Edward Edinger explains, “As soon we open our mouths we speak in traditional verbal images, and even when we merely think we think in age-old psychic structures.”³ He is discussing “language-think” here, although the second part of his claim may very well hold for music.

Another way of putting this idea is Anthony Stevens’ comment: “At the deepest neuropsychic level, there exists a universal grammar on which all individual grammars are based . . . The acquisition of language, therefore, is dependent upon the archetypal predisposition to acquire it, and the existence, in the environment, of a language to acquire. To put it in the jargon of the present, if the language acquisition device is a computer, the culture provides the linguistic data the computer is programmed to process.”⁴

Unfortunately I am not ready to write this construct up in a tightly reasoned essay, let alone a book, although its implications for understanding music as an archetypal mind-potential are compelling. I mention it as a yet-to-be optimally explored dimension of music as well as language, although work in it is proceeding albeit at the edges of the scholarly and psychological enterprises. Sooner or later, I suggest, we will be ready to address the roles of language, myth, imagination, music, and so forth, at the level of unconsciousness studies as we have now begun to do at the level of consciousness studies.

Despite all this reflection on language issues and levels as yet only partially or even vaguely grasped, I am willing to claim that communication by words, including its embeddedness in complex dimensions of context, or use, does not explain how musical creation and response – musical experience – goes about doing what it does, making meanings available that are different in form and substance from language meanings. Music-think is not the same as language-think, even when the latter is deeply rather than superficially understood. That is not to say there are no possible similarities. Just about

anything we can think of or imagine can be seen as similar to anything else. But while similarities help define the physical and psychical worlds, differences equally (at least) do.

It is in the differences among what we experience and from which we construct meanings that we locate the plethora of knowings of which we as humans are capable; music, for example, understood as different from other phenomena in substantive ways. That, of course, is the foundational point of this chapter of my book, all its material focusing on that premise. That central point, I am convinced, of the individuality of music as a mode of meaning-making and sharing, different from language and its communicative function, is valid on its own terms and also serves as the glue for many other positions I argue. Perhaps the most central of those positions is that the cultivation of musical knowing within and knowing how (musical thinking/doing/meaning itself) requires the assistance of lingual knowing about and knowing why (verbal thinking/doing/knowing) but that the two are not synonymous or equivalent. That conviction, after all, has major implications for the cultivation of musical experience.

Also, my theory of intelligence argues that what we can know (our discernments and how we interconnect them to create meanings) is as various as the many roles our cultures provide, and goes beyond those that are language-based to include, for example, music. All this and much more requires that point to be made explicitly, I believe, and Chapter 5 attempts to do so.

On the issue of musical meanings being ineffable, Määttänen says that this quality “is not unique to music, nor is it even rare.” This is quite true but entirely beside the point. I never made, or would make, the claim that music is the only possible way to create and share meanings in ways language does not. In fact, I argue throughout the book (most pointedly on page 152) that music shares with all the other arts this characteristic of ineffability of meaning. All the arts, including those dependent on language-material (primarily poetry, fiction, theater, and film) achieve their “specialness” by creating what language in the conventional sense does not. Language aspects of the arts are propositional but their meanings are superpropositional. In the case of music, gaining its meanings requires genuine thinking, but within sounds and what they are doing, as contextualized in various culturally supplied expectation systems. That requirement of music-think (which can include words as in vocal music but always transcends word propositions, “musicalizing” them) is what defines this particular art, just as the materials and processes of each art define its particular meaning-space. Each is distinctive, as are various combinations. All share the characteristic of ineffable meanings, aiming for such meanings as their goal and purpose. Please read again, in my response to Vernon Howard, the Dewey

material for his treatment of this same matter. And, it should be mentioned, many other experiences outside the arts, such as love and the spiritual, are also inherently “extra-lingual,” as I point out on page 145.

I do not believe that Määttänen disagrees with any of this, as far as I can tell. What he is doing is playing with and playing out the crack he discerns in my edifice: that I conceive language to be limited to “exact coding, transmitting, and decoding” as he puts it. I’m afraid that, having stumbled on that crack in the instance of a too-simplified diagram and explanation, little I can do in the way of sealing it up will rescue me from his pressing the point. Frustrating, as I’ve mentioned, but understandable.

Nevertheless it does keep him from appreciating or attending to the many discussions in the book that go far beyond this instance. Naturally I find that regrettable, especially in regard to the next matter he tackles, having to do with concepts. Here Määttänen seems to get confused, or at least so it seems to me. He says, “Reimer maintains [that] perceptual structuring is conceptual; and if this can be admitted, then musical experience is conceptual.” Quite contrary to this, what I maintain is that musical perceptual structuring – the apprehension of and response to musical sounds and what they are doing – is fundamentally different from conceptualization as that term is most commonly used, as referring to “those thoughts, ideas, and conceptions that language-systems mediate” (142). While I explain that it is possible to interpret conceptualization as extending to mental functioning *not* mediated by words, I want to stick to the more widespread understanding of concepts precisely “to emphasize and clarify that *language need not be and typically is not applied to the sounds we are engaged with in musical experience*”(143, emphasis in original). Therefore, when I discuss the non-verbally perceived and internalized sound-structures we undergo in musical experiencing, and call that undergoing perceptual structuring rather than conceptualizing, I do so *specifically to avoid* the equating of knowing within and knowing how in music with the verbal processing that conceptualization is widely understood to require.

Määttänen misses all this, in fact inverts it. I understand that this material is complicated, despite my struggle to clarify it so that it might be accessible to a wide spectrum of readers. I am surprised that Määttänen seems confused to the point of misunderstanding the basic premise. While I cannot excuse myself from being less clear than I had hoped to be, I feel certain that he should have been able to get the pertinent point. His discussion of it, from “What else does Reimer say...” to “...Locke and Berkeley,” is, at least for me, too tangled to warrant the attempt to straighten it out. It ends with recourse

once again to the “communication as coding and decoding” issue previously discussed, except that here it is a *non sequitur* to his previous paragraphs. Discouraging material.

Further, I do not agree with him that the two definitions of a concept I quoted “are unfortunately at odds with each other.” Both identify exactly the same three components of a concept: (1) a “sign” in the first, a “marker” in the second; (2) a “commonality in events” in the first, “some common feature of a range of events” in the second; and (3) “relatively stable responses” by the concept user in the first, “stability in response on the part of the inquirer” in the second. They are remarkably consonant in describing the internal components of what we generally call concepts.

Of course the “commonality” or “common feature” aspect of concepts is not a fixed commodity: if it were, education would not be possible. The content of concepts changes and grows as understandings are led by education and experience to grow. Our concept of, say, tonality, uses (1) some sign or marker of what we are focusing our thoughts and attention upon, (2) that being a common feature of particular kinds of music, and (3) retains that focus (it does not get confused with, say, tone color, or dynamics, or lyrics) while expanding and deepening over time as dimensions and complexities of tonality become further integrated in understandings as to what the sign or marker includes as its features. Much of education, not just in music and not just in school, proceeds in that fashion, concepts gradually (or sometimes suddenly) becoming more inclusive and refined. That is why we in education use verbal concepts to help us focus on the countless dimensions of music. But we must be aware that our doing so is a means to heightening musical experience, not an end. Musical experience occurs in knowing within and how, both of which are nonconceptual; that is, consisting of perceptual structuring and its attendant musical affects.

Määttänen states his position on all this as follows: “My point is that linguistic competence changes the whole cognitive structure so that perceptual processing becomes possible. It is not opposed to, but enables perceptual structuring.” In the first sentence he implies that it would be impossible to make sense of music if we did not have a previous competence – linguistic competence. It is difficult for me to imagine that this is true. Certainly our capacity to know musically is not dependent on our capacity to know linguistically. The second sentence states that linguistic competence “is not opposed to, but enables perceptual structuring.” If “enable” means “is a prior requirement for” I would raise the same objection as to his first sentence. Let me take “enable” here to mean “is efficacious for.” Thus understood it is precisely what I claim. Please read the section of

Chapter 5 on “The Necessity of Knowing About and Knowing Why” (161-63), which includes this on knowing about:

For the contexts of music, the structure of music, information about music, language is an indispensable tool. Its primary function in all such matters is to *disclose*, “to cause to appear; allow to be seen, lay open to view.” Much of what we do when we teach music is to disclose by causing it to be clearer, allowing it to be more accurately created and heard, laying it open to the mind and ear and the feelings. Doing so . . . constitutes a major portion of what music educators do and how we use language (162).

And this on knowing why:

Matters such as this, consisting of language expressions about the nature of music, its values, its cultural roles, its relation, by similarity and difference, to other aspects of life, have powerful effects on how people understand and therefore experience music. The function of language in this dimension is to *explain*. This is the function of language I have called knowing why. Although knowing why is not itself perception-focused in the strict sense, it nevertheless differentiates what is perceived and how perception occurs. That is, *nonperceptual explanations have direct effects on perceptual structuring—on musical experiencing* (163, emphases in original).

The clearest way I have been able to elucidate the idea that concept use changes our musical cognitive structure and hence the quality of our musical experiences, while also that such experiences do not consist of conceptualization but of perceptual structuring (as explained above) is to point out the progression in learning from “thinking about” to “thinking with.” In everything we learn, whether as idea or action, we must in the learning process think about the ideas and actions as we practice using them, the thinking about guiding their progressive internalization. When we have sufficiently internalized them we no longer have to think *about* them but are able to think *with* them. The ideas or actions become tacit (a la Polanyi) so that we can make use of them as needed without having to reflect about them before or during our thinking/acting. (Whether Polanyi’s tacit knowing is the same as Freud’s notion of the personal subconscious as a storage place for life undergoings is an open question. Määttänen says “sub-consciousness was invented long ago.” I hope he was attempting some humor by “invented.” It certainly made me chuckle.)

In any event, he comments, “The fact that one does not think consciously of a word while immersed in an experience by no means establishes that linguistic abilities are not actually employed.” What does “linguistic abilities” mean other than our capacities to think within language? That ability, I argue, is not the same as musical ability nor is it employed when exercising musical ability, despite its influence on what we do when engaged musically. The transformation from one to the other is thorough. When we perform music, for example, it would be quite impossible, even preposterous, to attempt to employ our linguistic abilities in the way they are called upon as we “think about” what we

need to do to perform appropriately. We would be so immersed in word-think as we performed as to be completely disabled from doing what performers routinely do – think sounds as they make sounds. This applies as well to listening, composing, improvising, conducting – any direct engagement in musical experiencing. The polysemic density of music as it is occurring is so great that it leaves no room for the equally complex and dense mental functioning that verbal abilities require.

Ironically, as teachers we can and often do translate our thinking from within music to the verbal realm; that is, to think about what has transpired in our musical undergoings in sound so we can point out to our students whatever we need to bring to their attention. (Our ‘pointing out’ can occur in a variety of non-verbal ways, of course. Here we are dealing only with the issue of language-use.) So we switch from within, to about or why, and back to within, constantly. That is an important aspect of our expertise. But we could not verbalize anything meaningful about music being undergone without undergoing it musically. That is *also* our expertise, on which our verbal explanations depend. Our challenge is to help our students transform all our abouts and whys back into withins and hows. After we make a verbal point (I am thinking here of giving a lesson or conducting a rehearsal) we must then immediately put ourselves back into musical experiencing to judge whether our student(s) got it. “Getting it” is demonstrated when the words we used become transformed by our students into something else – music-think. If it happens we know we have accomplished what we aim to teach, the “beyond language” knowing/doing music exists to capture in the ways of which it alone is capable.

What do musical knowings/doings provide us with when we attain them? Määtänen faults me for not stating, in language of course, what music means, leaving it a mystery. Of course it is a mystery – *to language*, that is (134). Language represents to our mind what it can represent. It cannot present for our knowing what music represents and vice versa. Ditto for each of the other arts. As Elliot Eisner states, “During the past century such philosophers as John Dewey, Nelson Goodman, Susanne Langer, Richard Rorty, and Michael Polanyi have explored in-depth the nonlinguistic – indeed the ineffable – characteristics of particular modes of knowing. The limits of our cognitive life are not defined by the limits of our language. As Polanyi points out, we know more than we can tell.”⁵

I had hoped that Määtänen would tell us, finally, what music means, since I did not do so to his satisfaction. Hardly surprisingly, he also cannot. He says “to understand musical meaning is to be able to act and perceive musically.” That is entirely circular, as it must be, because he, and I, can not say what the meaning is when we are acting and

perceiving that way. He mentions cultural contexts, denotations, practices, traditions, continuity between musical and other meanings. All are implicated in what musical meaning is, of course, but none constitutes nor substitutes for it.

So he and I struggle around the edges, trying to get closer to the brink of the mystery that musical meaning exists beyond language but unable to get beyond the brink through the use of language. In my chapters on musical feeling, creating, and contexts I explore these important dimensions of musical experience, each chapter fleshing out the expansiveness of music's meaning-space as verbal disclosure and explanation can do. But none of this, none of what he says or I say or everyone else who has addressed the notion of musical meaning has said, has succeeded in stating in language what it consists of beyond our skirting around its edges.

Määttänen regards the musical meaning issue "in the sense that it presents a problem to be solved." "Solved," apparently, means to be expressed in language in a definitive, conclusive way. I must demur. First of all, that is not what philosophy does or ever has done. What philosophical problems, through the ages, have been "solved?" I am unaware of any claim made within philosophy that its objective is to do this – to reach conclusive, permanent resolutions of the issues it addresses, such as that of musical meaning. As with language, philosophy's medium, understandings in the contexts of use, and refinement of those understandings, is what can legitimately be sought. That is plenty.

However close philosophy might come to clarity about musical meaning, and however effectively we in music education bring our philosophical and pedagogical expertise to bear to help our students "act and perceive musically," their inner experience of music, their knowing within and how, will inevitably be theirs, not ours, as it has to be and should be, just as for each of us. Finally, music will mean "everything a person experiences when involved with it" (165), making of what music offers, and what we teachers attempt to enhance, what each student actually experiences. Those of us devoted to PME can dance around the issue of musical meaning with all the millions of words we set in motion, surrounding it with heat and sometimes light. Music goes its way, deeply meaningful to most humans despite our inability to say just what that consists of. We professionals play a necessary role in helping our students get closer to musical meanings. Then we can trust music to work its special powers and offer its special delights. Is this being kind of romantic about music? Well, sure. I love the stuff.

Notes ("Response to Määttänen")

¹ Jane Duran, "Aesthetics, Epistemics, and Feminist Theory," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 37:1 (Spring 2003) 33.

² A clear explanation of the inadequacies of an “Objectivist” (context-independent) view of language is given in Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) ix-xvi.

³ Edward Edinger, *The New God Image*, (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 1996) 132.

⁴ Anthony Stevens, *The Two Million-Year-Old Self*, (College Station, TX: Texas A.&M. University Press, 1993) 23-24.

⁵ Elliot Eisner, “Questionable Assumptions About Schooling,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2003, 652.

V: Response to Eleanor Stublely

Stublely’s paper was indeed a surprise, in two ways. First, I had no idea she had been so affected by the previous two editions, so that she was able to respond to this one as the most recent in an ongoing journey of growth, both in her own and my understandings. How moving this was for me, to see my developing and changing interests and insights, and the central thread that has held them together (the combination of new and old that drew me to us Wittgenstein’s comment as my epigraph) both reflected in and personally transformed by her individuality of development.

The second reason I was surprised was that, being well acquainted with her formidable intellect, I had anticipated a thorough “going-over” and was curious to see how that might play out. But I also knew of her centeredness in the inner life of the mind as inseparable from the workings of the body; of intellect not being incorporeal as construed by so many in the history of Western philosophy and psychology but of the body as the basis for and grounding reality of mind. It has taken me a while to get closer to her insights about this, starting as I did from the rationalistic posture with which I was surrounded in my novice years. I was open to her perspective (and that of others like her, articulated in recent years) especially through my early fascination with Carl G. Jung’s writings, but its flowering in my psyche had to push through a hard surface of skepticism in the world of intellect in which I was bred. Advancing toward her position, more quickly adopted in her journey than I was able to do in mine, has been, for me, both professionally and personally gratifying, evidence, I might say, of growing into a hard-won maturity. So my initial surprise that she did not choose to do a tight, analytical work-over was quickly put aside as unwarranted: she was responding at the level of who she has become as a human being, and once recognizing that, I was not at all surprised by the way she dealt with her assignment. My response, then, will be short and in the spirit of hers.

As a very young man I was given the responsibility to offer the music education profession “a philosophy.” I was able (apparently, given the wide-spread influence of the first edition around the world) to strike a chord of both recognition and challenge (the old and the new) for the profession’s self-image. By the time of the second edition my understandings arising from cognitive science had more strongly influenced my conceptions, adding strength in several new ways, I felt, to my philosophical position. I was becoming more aware of the need for an experiential grounding for the insights from emerging cognitive thinking, but neither cognitive science nor I were able to entirely break the chain of the Cartesian dichotomy.

I did feel we were headed in the right direction toward being able to do so and more recent work, such as Damasio’s, for example, has proven that correct, although a great deal more remains to be accomplished in that regard, much of cognitive science remaining firmly in the data-analysis, brain-function modality. That’s fine, but the human consequences of such work remain as yet not sufficiently explored or valued. In the present edition I tried to achieve a more equitable balance between some of the advances in scientific insights and the human meanings some work in both psychology and philosophy has had the courage to emphasize. I think I was able to make real progress but I do not deceive myself that I was completely successful.

The vision I offer now, philosophically and practically, is nevertheless an important advance for me and, I hope, for music education. The synergistic posture I recommend seems to me not only intellectually responsible but also humane, in its focus not only on our differences but on the ideas, beliefs, and values we share. The radically reconceived music program I envision aims for an inclusiveness we have never even conceived let alone tried to implement, making music instruction available to all instead of only a few, and in all the ways it actually exists in the world instead of only the ways preferred by the quite special people who gravitate toward becoming music educators. My devotion to musical experience is, I think, realistic as to our capacities to actually foster learning through our teaching. It also emphasizes the spiritual dimension of musical experience, its capacity to affect us as deeply in our inner selves, our souls if you will, as anything else in human undergoings—perhaps more so.

That aspect of musical experience remains for me, as it has been since I formulated that conception way back as a graduate student, a lodestar, guiding my development but still not as fully articulated as I’d like it to be. Perhaps, then, the next edition, a dozen or so years from now, or the next after that, or perhaps the one following, will advance my vision to the point that it entirely fulfills its potentials. In that unlikely event I would then have become

almost as wise as Solomon, but also, unfortunately, almost as old as Methuselah. I look forward to reading Stublely's overview of the journey.

About the Author

Bennett Reimer is the John W. Beattie Professor of Music Emeritus at Northwestern University, where he was Chair of the Music Education Department and Founder and Director of the Center for the Study of Education and the Musical Experience. He is author and editor of over a dozen books and some 125 articles, chapters, reviews, etc. Since retirement he has directed four Northwestern University Music Education Leadership Seminars, on a variety of topics, each of which has produced a book of essays by the dozen invited leaders on each topic from around the world, published by MENC: The National Association for Music Education.