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**Democracy and Dissensus:
Constructing Conflict in Music Education**

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Democracy and Dissensus:
Constructing Conflict in Music Education

Patrick K. Schmidt
Westminster Choir College of Rider University

In *Democracy and Music Education*, Paul Woodford offers not a philosophy of practice, or a conception of music education in strict educational terms, but rather the development of an interesting political philosophy of, and perhaps for, music education. Using a framework that departs from the work of Dewey, Woodford considers the value of a liberal education and the need for the encroachment of abstract reason, while urging the significance of a political life in the process of rethinking music education practices. In fact, one could say that, for Woodford, the political life is in many ways at the center of the educational life. Democracy and democratic practices are the lifelines that provide possibilities for education and the thread to be followed, changed and re-considered.

Dewey (1920/1957) spoke of the need for reconstruction in and of philosophy, and frameworks that are nascent of his conception are again momentous for a reconstruction in music education today. He suggests that, "there is… nothing more radical than insistence upon democratic methods as the means by which radical changes be effected…" (Dewey, 1985, p. 299). Woodford proposes that democratic ideals and engagements are not only timely but powerfully connected to a needed shift in our educational practices. As such, it would be interesting to note clearly and in greater detail whether and in what ways Woodford's proposition is a radical one, as Dewey submits above, or one that still refrains from change while speaking of change.

Similar to Dewey, Woodford conveys and supports 'public intelligence' as an ideal pregnant with possibilities. While the voicing of political needs in and of educational practices is a welcome discourse in music education—albeit one that has been present historically, if marginalized—the challenge perhaps not taken in *Democracy and Music Education* is one of engaging with the particularities of politics as well as the specificity of political manifestations and discourses of race, gender, class, ethnicity, privilege, systems, etc. While Woodford proposes an articulate and forceful vision for the needed interrelation

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between political thinking and educational thinking, he seems to propose that issues in music education are the result of ignorance,[1] or perhaps misguidance; dismissing or dissociating the hold and insidiousness of ideology, endemic in much of our educational discourse and norms.

Giroux (1981) proposes, "I think it is accurate to argue that every rationality has within it another problematic struggling to get out" (p. 11). In this sense I would like to propose not a 'critique' of *Democracy and Music Education*, but rather a dialogue with the struggling problematics that are raised or absent in Woodford's text. I am reminded of Lipman (1991) as he proposes that conversation seeks equilibrium, while dialogue instead aims at disequilibrium where, "each argument evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself" (p. 232). Such is the nature of the interaction I hope to develop here. I start with the work Woodford has developed and subsequently take a few of these elements in a different direction.

Democracy and Music Education, in my view, invites conflict and sees the constructive and constitutive potential of such conflict. It incites dialogue inside a profession more comfortable with either diatribe or consensus. Considering, acknowledging, and engaging with the idea that, as Freire (1998) submits, "all educational acts are political acts" is, fortunately, a broadening path in music education; a path to which Woodford's voice contributes.

Democracy and the Politics of Education

Rogers and Oakes (2005) suggest that "Dewey's greatest contribution is helping us understand the need for public engagement and social inquiry." "However", they continue, "his worries about teachers enacting and imposing class privilege lead Dewey to say little about the role of leadership or organizing within social movements" (p. 219). Speaking of the need for an enactment of discourses that speak of democracy, justice, and equality, Rogers and Oakes (2005) bring forth what Dewey has called 'economic literacy', that is, a "knowledge that provides insight on inequality" and is essentially practical as well as "bound up with problems of everyday life."

Woodford seems also concerned with such boundness of everyday life, its politics, and the realities, constrictions and possibilities of educational practices. Thus, he spends time setting up a call for education fostering freedom of mind*;* a socialized intelligence "where the Aristotelian virtues of neighborliness, tolerance, and mutuality" are essential for cooperative

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inquiry (p. 4); an engagement and apology of Liberalism understood through a 'thoughtful valuation' of all experience (pp. 17–18); a call of attention to the intellectual passivity of teachers as well as the importance of the role of the intellectual (p. 97); a proposal for abstract reason as a "kind of social contract" (p. 43); and finally, a cautionary tale about the retreat of music education from politics and the public sphere, followed by the challenge to "attract and develop idealistic and visionary music teachers who see themselves as public intellectuals and democratic leaders of children and not as heroic leaders" (p. 99).

In all, the possibilities offered by Woodford are many and complex, and his intent to seek "some middle way between laissez-faire and elitist or autocratic concepts of music education" (p. 103) seems attuned to Dewey's concern with practice that is not merely practical, but also conceptual. Those of us in the field of music education, need discourses to be concerned with and thoughtful of the theoretical, without necessarily heeding to the siren call of the applicable. Music educators have here another possibility to engage with, as Giroux (1983) proposes, the difficult but fecund work of *immanent critique*. However, the articulation of the elements I identified above as Woodford's concerns, while constructing macrologically an argument that follows a particular vision and a contiguous line, is often disrupted at its micro level.

Thus, while considering the importance of fostering a freedom of mind, we must also problematize the "confusion and disorder" that Woodford states might ensue without "the freedom of intelligence necessary to foresee and weight possible consequences of actions" (p. 1). I would suggest we consider as a profession that disorder is also constitutive, and is in fact elemental in and for agency—perhaps integral in breaking ideological notions that see rationality (or lack thereof) as essential in and for an equitable world. As Apple (1990) submits, we should be reminded that "conflict and disorder are important to prevent the reification of institutional patterns of interaction" (p. 34).

Our attention can be turned, further, to the ideal of socialized intelligence, asking in what ways and to what extent the Aristotelian virtues that Woodford proposes, are and can be significant to conversations in the field. We can ask at the same time, however, how Woodford's proposed virtues might frame consensus as the desired parameter, while skirting in the process not only plurality, but perhaps most significantly, multiplicity. I would suggest that socialized intelligence can be easily considered in terms of a controlled intelligence, as a guided (or misguided) interaction between individuals and an established perception of

society. When proposing the political to be a formative part of the educational experience, dissensus[2] as much as consensus, must be part of our discourses.

Ewen and Ewen (1982) propose that "the constant rapidity with which we are encouraged to tire of consumable objects, of our elusive pleasures, is generalized as an axiom for existence" (p. 59). If indeed we become[3] outside ourselves, then despite our best efforts, becoming 'mature' thinkers as Woodford proposes, or engaging in and through a socialized intelligence might be insufficient, or at least limited and limiting. We need to attend also to the problematics of a priori determinations and delineations of a 'democratic ideal.' Such concerns might lead not only to educational possibilities that are less functionalist, but also alter how we see teachers and the passivity with which Woodford, as many others in education, are concerned. It seems here that the abnegation of 'thoughtful valuation', while important as a source of critique to education and music education, is also incomplete: it may falsely conflate incapacity and/or unwillingness and moral inadequacy or absence.

As I see it, *Democracy and Music Education* traces a line that develops from the assumption that only the intellectual is capable of change; of traversing the veil laid by one's inabilities or the ills of educational or societal parameters. This leads to a call for a re-engagement with abstract reason, which has implicit in itself "consensus building and a sense of democratic community…but also a sense of continuity with tradition and the past" (p. 39). Such proposals are dichotomized through the presentation of postmodern notions as "utopian social agendas inevitably lead[ing] to the creation of dystopias, or the creation of small gulags" (p. 45). I propose that we should attend both to the utopian and the serious and committed call for the multiple, messy and disjunct[4] – considering construction as well as deconstruction, while abnegating demolition. What seems clear is the need for the conflictual, without the immediate response and draw to the oppositional, and thus the dualistic: that is, the conflictual that invites, disputes, even disrupts; one that creates without having to create in reaction to something to which it stands opposed.

It seems too easy to mystify postmodernist thinking as mere Dadaism, and in the process abnegate the seriousness of seeing impossibilities as part of our realities—for they are as pragmatic and experiential as any occurrence. In fact, conflict, impossibility and multiplicity are often constitutive or definitive of contemporary political realities. Consequently, I see the call for abstract reason (even if as a form of social contract) as incomplete, and perhaps dangerous. While this interpretation certainly moves us beyond the

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merely Cartesian—and that is no small feat—it still sees the world as an ordered, teleological, and rational environment. Thus, it suggests that solutions are always possible, while continuing to foster a world-view based upon either/or perceptions, instead of both/and engagements.

Attending to the contradictions and problematizing the dualist manner in which critiques and arguments are sometimes articulated is not merely to raise questions about *Democracy and Music Education*; it is also a way to push these propositions into a different direction. This is what I propose to do in the following pages.

Considering Democracy

Woodford uses Rorty (1996) to propose that one of the aims of democracy is "to extend the reference of 'us' as far as we can." While this is significant, we should add to it Rorty's (1979) own call to extend our sense of "'we' to people whom we have previously thought as 'they'" (p. 192). The differentiation between an inclusive 'us' and a 'we' that acknowledges the segregation of and from 'they'—the severing in and of Othering—might seem as one of nuance, but is in fact one that creates a different conceptualization of democratic engagement.

Considering democracy thus—not only as conflation, as consensus, but also as consciousness of negation, segregation, or inequality—seems to be an essential part of any sociological, political or educational practice. In his book, Woodford presents us with an important and clear critique of the problematics of music, and of its destructive, corruptive and even terrorizing elements. It is important, however, that we also extend such consideration to democracy, particularly to the rationalization of democracy and its presentation as *deus ex machina.*

In 1928, Edward Bernays wrote *Propaganda*, arguing that "the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society." Supporting 'manipulation' as a necessary element, for the common good, Bernays announces that "those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country" (p. 45). One should keep in mind that this is not written as a caution but as advice—as proven practice, which is not only effective, but also necessary and intrinsic to the needs and inner workings of democracy and its practices. The contention of rationality and intelligent participation, even through socialized practices that attend to the comprehensive benefit of

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all, are always dependent upon political, economic and cultural power. Appeals to constructions of democratic ethos and of common good need also to allow space for constant interaction with the unsavory omnipresence of their degradation, their corruption.

Such 'distortions' are part and parcel of realities of both democratic engagements and democratic states. Whether we attend to democracy as a microcosm or as a macrocosm, we must address how formative examples of such practices, are and can be appropriated, as well as how they may be in and of themselves extremely problematic. One such practice is communication through reason. In this respect Woodford uses Gadamer and Habermas, as framing elements. While he elegantly submits a Habermasian engagement with reason, cautioning "a certain skepticism with respect to the way it [reason] has been instituted in the world" (p. 46), his reading can be expanded through a different understanding of Habermas. While Habermas is certainly concerned with a vision of reason being in the world, and, indeed, uses an ideal communicative speech as a way to enact changes in our colonized lifeworlds through political deliberation, his primary concern is to establish a process "though which *distortions* to communication can be identified and criticized" (Burbules, 1993, p. 75). While Woodford's caution with the concept of 'decentering' is important, it cannot and should not be equated to "disinterestedness," as he proposes. In fact, decentering attempts to address the bracketing of perspective, needs or prejudices, and the impossibility of such practice. We need not and should not equate the realization of impossibility with paralysis. Woodford eloquently addresses the dualisms embedded in Habermas, and the proposal and critique articulated in Gadamer's hermeneutics. He fails to note, however, the fact that language, on Gadamer's view, is constitutive: that "reality happens *within* language" (p. 48).

Critical, feminist, and postmodern thinking have not usually regarded the boundedness of engagements—such as the assertion that "reality happens *within* language"—in deterministic terms. While Gadamerian hermeneutics contextualizes truth, pointing toward the Kuhnian conceptualization of paradigms, its postmodern development— and I acknowledge the disparaging and nihilistic in this continuum—is not merely a matter of relativism, nor of finding the conflating or coexisting through 'competing truth claims': it is, rather, a matter of seeing multiplicity in every possibility. Felman (1987) poses such multiplicity when speaking of ignorance as a passion. She states,

> Teaching has to deal not so much with the lack of knowledge as with the resistance to knowledge. Ignorance, suggests Lacan, is a passion. Inasmuch as

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> traditional pedagogy postulated a desire for knowledge an analytically informed pedagogy has to reckon with 'the passion for ignorance.' Ignorance, in other words, is nothing other than a desire to ignore: its nature is less cognitive than performative… [I]t is not a simple lack of information but the incapacity—or the refusal—to acknowledge one's own implication in the information (p.79).

Here, ignorance is seen both/and, acknowledging the role of alienation, but also of the capacity of agency to deconstruct, to bring us out of processes and build them back up. Our realities within language can be also formative, as Butler (1988, 1997a, 1997b) and others have proposed. Seeing ourselves 'implicated' in democracy demands not this or that, but rather this and that and the other.

If we are to engage music education through the lenses of political philosophy—if we are, as Woodford suggests, to bring democracy into our constructs, concepts and practices—then we would do well to acknowledge that the realm of the constructive is not limited to that which is conciliatory. Democratic practices that proclaim "mutuality of understanding and respect" often enact colonialism where the discourse of mutuality is enacted as coercion. Irrationality, absurdity and aimlessness are as much constitutive elements of who we are as their opposites. Discarding them in the hope of a constructive (or as Rorty proposes, 'edifying') vision may create teleological hope, but it also negates the need for hermeneutic engagement and reconstruction. The constant reconstruction of democratic practices, upon which Dewey rightly insists, cannot embrace only the unitary, the consensual, the affirmative, and the constructive: it must also contend with the multiple, the conflictual, and the destructive.

The Ethics of Becoming: Complexity and Contradiction

In education and music education we resist unpredictability—not because it exceeds our capabilities, but because it has not regarded as part of the legitimate learning enterprise. Thus, to learn is not so much to engage "radical possibilities" (hooks 1994) as it is to discern the proper sequential needs for affirming already determined actions, realities and parameters.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) suggest a vision of identity where subjects are asked to occupy multiple positions and positionings at once. Despite our divergent and contradictory selves, however, we are also shouldered to the unitary: we find comfort in it, and even understand ourselves as such. Thus, our needs for relative stability in our environment play a strong role in what we consider possible in our practices. We also know, for example, that

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(as Hunter 1995 proposes) the ethics of the private and public were created to pacify communities through the "imposition of a politically binding conception of the public good" (cited in Popkewitz, 1998, p. 541).

Harris (1989) promotes the idea of "tense plurality" as a strategy for avoiding the dichotomous assumptions with which conflict is often met—or for dissolving institutionalized notions as illustrated by Hunter (1995). Pre-service teachers, and in turn their future students, learn through the structures of schooling to see conflict as antagonistic: not as a desired space, but as one to be avoided. However, the space and place of conflict may also be seen as democratic ones, where critical pedagogies find—in and through friction (Bohm, 1996) and tension—the movement necessary for personal, responsive, responsible and committed engagement.

Without conflict —both internal and in/through interaction—and without an understanding of conflict as potentially constructive, it is not surprising that teaching is seen as a procedural process related more closely to the application of method than the negotiation of pedagogy. Foucault (1979, 1980) was concerned with how people come to be seen as a category and consequently as a commodity.[5] Perhaps this derives not just from structural and social influences, but from of our fear of the disturbing: from what we desire but know not how to discover, participate in, or create.

These engagements with identity, practice, fear, and commodification are essential to a complex vision of music education as a democratic practice. Molnar (2005), for example, proposes that trade agreements are changing the idea of education: The 1994 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has "created a framework that views education as a 'commodity, rather than a consciousness raising activity'" (p. 130). When we start seeing and describing the 'education business' as a new 'industry' with a 'global market', how can we entertain its claims to rationality and intelligence without being jolted by its (arguably) appalling ethical failings? Popkewitz (1998) advances an interesting critique of Dewey, suggesting that "for Dewey, the capacities and dispositions of the citizen were bound to a particular universalism of Protestant, bourgeois society," all wrapped uneasily in "ideological notions about human perfectibility and science as the motor of social progress" (p. 538).

If the abstract reasoning of markets and the public intelligence of educational businesses are also part of our discourses and reality, calls for "the common good" may mean the good of those commonly in power—the democratic process becoming nothing but a call

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for public administration.[6] Complexity and contradiction are thus essential conceptual tools for educational theorizing/practicing: not simply to address more fully the issues we face, but to provide us with more meaningful propositions. Ellsworth (1997), for instance, speaks of teaching as an impossible task—not in the practical sense, but in the sense that the act of teaching is riddled with contradiction—a process constantly engaged with incompleteness, ineffectiveness, and uncertainty.

We (as a society, as teachers) seldom acknowledge such reality, even to ourselves. We pursue perfection, not only in the sense of *Gradus ad Parnassum*, but as an engagement devoted to "solutions" purged of all issues, problems, and idiosyncrasies. The burden of teaching is thus immense, for the price of 'failing' is unbearable. Nevertheless, the politics of schooling continue to portray teachers' problems (attrition for example) in terms of monetary issues, discipline, or lack of support. We rarely address the ethics of failure, the ethics in and of complexity. We leave unquestioned our own coping mechanisms, their nature, the reasons they are called into play. Our doubts as to how and what we ought to think and do constrict both who and how we can be. As Rorty puts it, "the attempt to gain an objective knowledge of the world, and thus of oneself" is tantamount to "an attempt to avoid the responsibility for choosing one's project" (p. 361).

It seems to me that democracy is often the denied self in educational practice: that which we fear, and thus must scorn and mystify. Democracy is seen at the same time as commonsensical, indelible, while only attainable as a bi-product—always intended but never intentionally pursued. In music education the 'I' that doubts the prescribed, predetermined, or the certain has become part of this denied self. The denied self is the 'I' that re-thinks tradition, questions technicism, and pursues pedagogy beyond the didactic.

Democracy in music education thus requires new visions, the rethinking of our concept of intelligence, the disassembling of our own self deceptions. Considered in their full range, democratic practices entail the kind of complexity that recognizes conscientization going beyond mere awareness, or even beyond Deweyan re-construction: complexity that reconstructs constantly and conflictually, attempting to problematize the 'not-I' (or the need served by creation of the Other).

Griffin (1982) sees reliance on the abstract and the rational, and our consequent embrace of technical knowledge, as fear of the body, fear of ourselves—what we are, what we can be, and what we refuse to become. She writes,

> It is not inventiveness which is feared. The new machine, the gadget is worshipped. What is really feared is an open door into a consciousness which leads us back to the old, ancient, infant and mother knowledge of the body, in whose depths lies another form of culture not opposed to nature but instead expressing the full power of nature and of our natures (p. 645).

An engagement with a political philosophy of the kind Woodford advocates must be aware of and attentive to its own rhetoric, acknowledging, as Popkewitz (1998) proposes, that certain rights and obligations remain beyond the reach of formal governmental power—while at the same time problematizing the divisions embodied in the distinctions that "separate society from the individual, ontology from epistemology, mind from body, the state from civil society, and economy and culture from politics" (p. 541).

Acknowledging the Unrealized

How do we propose democratic and educational engagements that problematize the quest for certainty? How can education for democratic practices become not just dialogical, but a search for the vaguely unsettling, the constantly doubtful, and the confrontational?

Rorty (1977) proposes, "Dewey thought that if he could break down this notion, if scientific inquiry could be seen as adapting and coping rather than copying [reality], the continuity between science, morals and art would become apparent…" (p.70). Dewey's vision of the philosopher is not only one engaged with liberal rationalism, but with the complexity required to move away from the specificity of technical knowledge and narrow understandings. Dewey's philosophical inquiry could be said to mirror democratic engagements in the sense that it requires that we see sociological, economic, cultural, ethical and psychological elements as constantly and simultaneously interacting. Thus might philosophy serve the pragmatic goal of living the contradictory logic of everyday encounters, or as Jorgensen (2003) puts it, living in the eye of the paradox.

These ideals and ideas are mirrored in Freire's conception of conscientization, and in the processes that create meta-narratives and meta-cognition. Like Dewey, Freire (1970, 1985) sees the process of "realizing meaning" as essential not just to learning, but more specifically to learning predicated on and as an extension of the world. Freire would say that where learning does not involve personal commitment or ethical engagement what is being learned is false agency: discursive knowings divorced from enactment, or even the conceptualization

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of enactment, and, consequently, divorced from the realization of ourselves. If realization comes from envisioning ourselves as we envision possibilities in the world and for the world, ethical education must consider that the formation of self in technical terms, away from the conceptualization of self and world as interdependent, precludes the possibility of democracy becoming a formative element, either for individuals or for society.

While we may maintain that internalized social and public dialogue creates and shapes reflective thinking, as do Vygotsky (1978) and others, we must also problematize the nature of such public dialogue. If it is narrow, alienated, and reproductive, there is a significant chance that the reflective thinking to which it leads will be pedantic, contrived, and uncreative. Further, if as Geertz (1971) says, "human thought is consummately social: social in its origins, social in its function, social in its form, social in its applications" (p. 77), we must be cautious about conceptualizing the social from the "outside in." That is, we ourselves are social, even if isolated or detached: we are social individually, and individuals socially. Where we relegate confrontation and embrace conformity, then, while only appearing to interact and engage, we perpetuate existing borders and margins. Or, as contemporary critiques of race relations based upon post-racial paradigms propose, when we speak of racism as a vanquished, conquered, and banished practice, we disengage from practice and action by engaging in discourse.

Rorty (2006) writes that what he calls "neo-Kantian consensus"—foundationalism that seeks to escape contingency and historicity by resort to absolute truth claims—is "the end-product of an original wish to substitute *confrontation* for *conversation* as the determinant of our belief" (p.163). The neo-Kantian claim to objective truth is a strategy for the evasion of conversation—debate, disagreement, persuasion. But these (latter) are essential in considering democracy and education today. In postmodernity, conversations replace absolute truths, and such conversations must engage the multiplicity, disjunction, and contradiction that attend efforts to construct, explain, and extend.[7]

Rorty (1979) speaks of normal discourse as an engagement within a community of knowing and knowledgeable peers. Such discourse functions because of shared or conventional codes of values and assumptions. Normal discourse, then, consists of "the sort of statement that can be agreed to be true by all participants whom the other participants count as 'rational'" (p. 320). The problem is that here, just as in the music education profession, the "agreement" that enables discourse is often not so much a function of

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consensus as of the power held and wielded by those considered worthy: those whose voices count. If we are to embrace democracy in music education, we need to become more fully aware of the complex and contradictory realities that lie behind appeals to uniformity, standards, agreement, and so forth. The ways that 'rational' or 'trusted agreement' become codified and reified must not be glossed over.

We might say that, for Rorty, knowledge-generating discourse—discourse that presumes to articulate "official" knowledge— is wrongly presumed to operate differently from normal discourse. At issue are why and how particular visions, actions, and perspectives become preferable to others. The certainty and assurance of knowledgeable discourse needs to be tempered with awareness of its potential fallibility (recognizing its fundamental reliance on "upon the knowledge we have gained" (Rorty, 1979, p. 386).   This is the reconstructive project that Dewey suggests belongs at the center of democratic practices. The engagement required, however, must go beyond the intellectual: it must implicate one's entire self.

Dewey shares Hume's skepticism of the idea of an unchanging human essence, and thus the discovery of true 'good life for man.' Welchman (1995) proposes that the communitarian social philosophy of Hume might give us a different and more pertinent vision of Dewey's pragmatist ethics than Aristotle's ethics does. She points out that in education, while the Aristotelian agent "can in principle complete his or her education," knowing definitively, "the Deweyan agent cannot." The Deweyan agent requires constant interaction, addressing the constancy of change, as well as being addressed by it (p. 217).

In short, the search for the democratic in music education must go beyond consensus and the abnormal discourses that seek to coerce it. It must accept conflict and confrontation as inevitable and as potentially constructive. It must also consider the ethical defined broadly, but articulated always in the specificity of cultural, racial, gendered and economic realities.

Un-Ethical Absences: The Discussions We Continue to Avoid

Gibson-Graham (2006) proposes—in an attempt to re-think Marx—that we consider division and re-integration of Labor as a form of cooptation, in a world where information is abundant and educational levels are continuously improved. In other words, stultifying oppressive work is not only taken as a reality that becomes invisible, (in the Marxian notion of abstract labor), but is presented under the pretense of meaningful, moral work: work for the common-

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good. Here democracy and education can 'resolve' the problem of unresponsive, repressive work. Teaching, for example, can indeed become employment of first necessity, where engagement with unions and such civic rights as the right to strike are granted, even if its exercise is often 'morally' condemned. This logic of ordering and hierarchization creates the possibility for "conflict to be subordinated to a teleology of common interests" (p. 109). This has in many cases juridical and political implications, but also, and more significantly, implications that are psychological, ethical and educational.

The coadunation of discussions and the problematizing of issues connected particularly to gender, race and economics, still have a long and resistant road to be traveled in music education. In fact, the limited extent to which these issues have been present in music education discourses presents not only an epistemological or sociological problem, but, a serious ethical one. Discussions of such elements must become more prominent, must be attended in greater depth, and must provide for inclusive dialogue. If we do not create the fissures necessary, the insurrectionary in the discussions of democratic practices, if we do not find the "lived materiality of space", which Lefebvre (1991) proposes is essential in propositions that attend genuine change—change that is not merely conceptual but enacted— the proposition of democracy in music education will remain tentative and rhetorical. We must create wider and more densely inhabited spaces for critical engagements in music education that go beyond the dualistic, the arbitrary, or the merely antagonistic.

Lukács (1923/1967) speaks of individuals being considered and thus considering themselves incapable of change and transgression: that is, individuals as commodities, as dependent on (market) forces over which they are powerless. How then do we provoke discussion, not mere conversation, about the atomization of process and the engagement of teachers in their work— not just the alienation attending to instructional practices that have changed relatively little over the course of the last 50 years, but also the transformation of labor power into a commodity? How can we provoke discussion, not mere conversation, about national conventions where the technique, procedure, and method du-jour (never quite du-jour, for its differences are largely superficial) are presented for unquestioned consumption?   How democratic are such practices? Can education create subservience and fatalism, even if veiled by continuing learning?

Is democracy (not just its political manifestation but as a social construct) creating, in its irrevocability, in its un-discussed parameters, a trap? In what ways can democracy be

equated to marketeering? Neo-liberal visions of globalization are a perfect example where broadening borders and free exchange ('necessary and beneficial' expansion of democratic exchanges), became antithetical to equality and equitable distribution. This Lukács (1923/1967) would call reification: the "freezing of an institution or ideology created by human beings into a force that controls human beings" (p. 53). He proposes that through feelings of powerlessness, a deference to structure and hierarchy is created—the conception of democracy as a *fait accomplis* rather than a construct, requiring or allowing little or no participation, commitment, or reconstruction.

In his introduction to the second edition of *Reconstruction in Philosophy,* Dewey speaks of the weight of past experiences and 'knowing' one's realities, tendencies, reproductive and reifying practices as "the heavy arm of custom" (1957, p. xvi). He argues that science is a pursuit, rather than "a coming into possession of the immutable" (p. *xvii*). One could argue analogously that democracy and democratic practices are not to be rendered, explained, demonstrated, and modeled alone, but also understood to be a *pursuit.*

In a contemporary speech, Dewey (1920/1957) cites C. D. Darlington noting the role and significance of disturbance: "We need a Ministry of Disruption, a regulated source of annoyance; a destroyer of routine; an underminer of complacency" (p. *xvii*). Even Bloom (1975), in *A Map of Misreading*, proposes "all continuities possess the paradox of being absolutely arbitrary in their origins and absolutely inescapable in their teleologies" (p.33). We tend to forget that in education, as in history, our beginnings are often arbitrary, and that the certainty we assign to interpretations, theories, and practices, while seemingly inescapable, are in fact chosen.

Returning to Democracy

Music Education viewed as and through democratic practices should attend not only to deconstruction, but also focus on the possibilities of spaces for small insurrections. Young members in the profession are often surprised by even a brief examination of the historical stasis that characterizes music education. Change has taken place, but piecemeal, and often in reactionary ways. While our discourses have become more varied and divergent, we have not attended to the ways in which dialectical transcendence of allegiances creates spaces for communal, local, and micrological ways of enacting change. We need to recognize the power of the dialogical which conflicts instead of compromises.

The reading of conflict as a verb above, is not then mere postmodern license; rather, it is an attempt to bring forth the notion of fluidity. It attempts to see the larger political realm while recognizing that insurrectionary engagements are not only possibilities but necessities. Rogers and Oakes (2005) propose that Dewey's vision of democracy, while providing a framework, lacks the specificity of the practical. The political praxis of organized communal groups provides a direction and adds to the macro vision proposed by Dewey, they submit. Katsiaficas (2006) speaks, as does Woodford, of the need for the political in our lives, proposing attention to how "vibrant movements challenged patterns of authority in everyday life, seeking to overturn patriarchy and organizing spontaneously into squatter houses, insurrectionary groups, and communes, through an 'eros effect' of mutually amplified uprisings" (p. 47). We have alternatives to conceiving of democracy as 'complexity in search of a solution.' We can and should problematize the inscriptive notions embedded in calls for reason, amelioration, and common good. Democracy, I propose, requires that we embrace what Cornel West (2004) describes as the essence of the blues: "To stare painful truths in the face, and persevere without cynicism or pessimism" (p. 21).

Democracy and Music Education is a welcome contribution to the various discourses in music education today. It is an eloquent, troubling, inquisitive, contradictory and illuminating book. Most importantly, it brings political thinking and politics into discussions about education and music education. According to Tocqueville, "the regime is … benign power transmuted into solicitude, popular sovereignty into consumerism, mutuality into mutual funds, and the democracy of citizens into shareholder democracy" (Wolin, cited in West, 2004, p. 27). In such circumstances, music education needs multiple visions of the political, multiple ways to question and engage in the world and multiple possibilities for dialogue.

Notes

[1] As I propose here, ignorance is to be seen not simply as absence, but also as a desire to ignore. One could see the work of Lacan and the concept of ignorance as a constitutive element.

[2] See here the work of Thomas West (1996) as well as that of John Trimbur (1989) and Susan Jarrat (1991).

[3] Becoming here is meant as a continuum; as a process of being. See writings of Groz.

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[4] Gould (2007) develops a very interesting argument speaking of desire, that is connected to the work of Deleuze and Guattari, as well as that of Braidotti.

[5] One can also look at the various Marxian and Neo-Marxian critiques made upon this same issue. See for instance, the works of writers as divergent as Apple, Althusser, Attali, Ollman and Gibson-Graham.

[6] See here Wagner (1994) and his discussion of modernity through a sociological lens.

[7] I offer "extend" here as an alternative to universalizing: to think about the macro-logical conceptions of education and society without the modernist *raison d'être* of universals.

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About the Author

Dr. Patrick Schmidt is Associate Professor of Music Education at the Westminster Choir College of Rider University. His main research interests are connected to philosophy of music education, urban education as well as social theory and critical pedagogies. pschmidt@rider.edu.