
Introduction

Wayne Bowman, Editor

I am pleased to introduce the first ‘regular’ issue of *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education* it has been my responsibility to edit. I have been extensively involved as Associate Editor since the journal’s inception in 2002, and have had the privilege of working closely with Thomas Regelski as he undertook “from scratch” the immense task of creating a successful new open-access journal for music education. I remember well discussing the *ACT* idea over breakfast with Tom and with Terry Gates in Helsinki, Finland in Summer of 2000. Darryl Coan had generously indicated both interest and willingness to take on the publication end of things—the design considerations and the numerous challenges associated with web-based publication. And the need for a journal with the editorial orientation being proposed was clear to us. Should we proceed? Obviously, we decided take the leap.

To say “the rest is history,” while true, is equally misleading: as is usually the case when this cliché is invoked, considerably more has been involved than the mere passage of time. Thomas Regelski and Darryl Coan worked long and tirelessly to assure the successful launch of *ACT*, for which, I am sure, readers are grateful. Their (our) efforts would not have been nearly so daunting had there been an infrastructure in place—institutional supports, finances, technical or secretarial support, and the like. But a pivotal concern since *ACT*’s inception has been its autonomy and independence—its ability to publish critical scholarly work utterly free from institutional constraints or commercial obligations. If *ACT* was to become and was to remain a viable open-access journal, it would have to rely on the efforts of a team of dedicated volunteers. I am gratified to be able to say that such a team is in place, and that our commitment to principles of open-access remains secure.

I want to acknowledge Vince Bates (Missouri), PJ Heckman (New Jersey), and Kristen Myers (Manitoba) for their assistance with final copy-editing and formatting; Chris Trinidad (British Columbia) for his conscientious and expert work as web master; Darryl Coan (Illinois),

for his continuing advice on matters of design, layout, and technical matters; Frank Abrahams (New Jersey) for his willingness to assume some of my former responsibilities as Associate Editor; David Lines (New Zealand) for his oversight of our “book review” issues; a stellar Editorial Advisory Board that is second to none and is always keen to help; and Thomas Regelski (Finland) whose determination and commitment are, more than any other single consideration, responsible for the success of this launch, and to whom we will continue to turn for insightful advice and assistance in the years ahead. This group of people—this team of volunteers who give their time so generously—is *ACT*. Were it not for the efforts of committed volunteers, either *ACT* would not exist or it would be a very different kind of journal.

Although the list of *ACT*'s distinctive features is extensive and impressive (as documented in Regelski's editorial introduction to issue 6.1 (http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski6_1.pdf; see also <http://act.maydaygroup.org/pdf/ACTAboutUs.pdf>), one of its more distinctive and noteworthy features from my perspective—alongside its scholarly integrity and its international readership—is its commitment to principles of open-access (OA). OA involves a commitment to making scholarly work available to all who may benefit from it—without the price barriers (subscription, licensing, or pay-per-view fees) and other restrictions that are often characteristic of scholarly journals. Although breadth and ease of access can take many degrees and forms, in *ACT*'s case they mean that any internet user, anywhere in the world, may read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles, and may use them *without cost* for any lawful purpose. The sole constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, is to give authors (a) control over the integrity of their work and (b) the right to be properly acknowledged and cited. Thus, OA is entirely compatible with copyright, with processes of rigorous peer review, and indeed with all the other features and benefits of conventional scholarly literature. The primary difference is that expenses, which often constitute substantial barriers to access, are not borne by readers and users.

As a direct consequence, *ACT*'s daily readership comes from (and *ACT*'s authors are read in) every corner of the globe—including remote corners that might seem exceedingly unlikely. We take our responsibility to that diverse international readership and to our authors very

seriously, and cut no corners when it comes to assuring the integrity of the work published in *ACT*. *ACT*'s peer review and editorial processes are as rigorous as any, anywhere; and our publications team devotes countless hours to assuring the quality and consistency of our “product.”

I am grateful for the opportunity to oversee the editorial direction of a journal that dedicates itself first and foremost to serving without barriers the world-wide community of music educators. And it is gratifying to know that there are people who believe deeply enough in the work we are doing to donate so much of their valuable time to keeping the ship afloat.

In the weeks ahead, *ACT* will be publishing

- a special issue devoted to theorizing social justice within the context of music education;
- an issue exploring and critiquing the concept of democracy as it pertains to music education; and
- an issue devoted to the special concerns and problems associated with urban music education.

The orientations of most of our published issues are, however—like this one—functions of the manuscripts submitted for publication. *ACT* welcomes submissions that undertake critical study and critical analysis of issues related to the field of music education, regardless of ideological or methodological orientation (see <http://act.maydaygroup.org/php/policies.php>). Your submissions are both invited and welcome.

ACT 6/3

This issue of *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education* features the work of five distinguished scholars from Australia, England, Finland, Greece, and the USA. Their topics range widely, but coalesce quite nicely around curriculum issues and the nature of professional practice in music education.

Hildegard Froehlich writes on what she calls the paradox of routinization within professions generally, and within the field of music education in particular. Writing from— as those familiar with her work might well expect—a sociological perspective grounded in symbolic interactionism, Froehlich argues, among other things, that what constitutes professional action in music education is the ability to choose the best from among a broad

range of potential options when identifying problems, inferring causes, and selecting appropriate instructional strategies. Where actions or decisions are not drawn chosen from a *range* of potentially viable options, the action or decision is not professional in nature. The professional necessity of recourse to a range of viable choices means that professional decisions and actions are always taken amidst what Froehlich calls “unavoidable uncertainty.” There is, then, an ineliminable inferential element in every truly professional action. Among Froehlich’s primary concerns is the challenge of achieving balance between needed routines and the professional necessity of going out on limbs—a balance complicated significantly by the additional demand that music educators negotiate the identity claims and performance demands of two separate communities of practice with two distinct universes of discourse: music and education.

Thomas Regelski’s essay is a spirited, even passionate defense of amateurism—or has he prefers, following Wayne Booth, “amateuring.” On its face this sounds as if it might be advocating a stance precisely opposite the professionalism of concern to Froehlich’s investigation. However, Regelski’s amateur is emphatically not one who does something sloppily or carelessly: since the root of amateur means “to love,” an amateur is one who does what she does (in this case, musicking) *for the love of it*. And people never do what they most love sloppily or carelessly. Passionate amateur musical engagements are deeply committed to standards of certain kinds, he argues—though, notably, not the ones that commonly characterize formal music curricula and instruction. Regelski urges that we re-think music education (and by extension, I submit, professionalism in music education) as a process dedicated to the development of the passions and deep commitments to ‘time well spent’ that characterize amateur engagements. This would mean, among other things, assessing the success of our instructional efforts by the extent to which they manifest themselves in continuing musical engagement beyond schooling, and by the extent to which they actually create more musically vibrant societies. In a sense, then, the range of options that Froehlich argues is so important for music education professionals must be, on Regelski’s view, extended dramatically to embrace criteria, strategies, and actions tailored to amateur-specific values and outcomes, as distinct from the ones music educators appear to have expropriated uncritically from their own musical studies.

Michael Webb invites us look at musical studies through lenses whose extensive association with “amateur” musical engagements is in no small part a function of their profound neglect by music educators and music education: the field of rock. Webb’s strategic approach to these “non-learned,” mediated musics draws on still another kind of medium—film. Taking two recent films whose titles both feature provocatively the words “rock” and “school”—the comedy *School of Rock*, and the documentary *Rock School*—Webb probes their respective, albeit implicit, instructional and philosophical assumptions. More specifically, he offers “a critique of the two films from the perspective of a teacher-practitioner,” one that highlights the tension between approaching music as process or as praxis, on the one hand, and as revered cultural artefact on the other. The result is a model for teaching rock music Webb suggests has potentially broad significance for teaching performance in school settings.

Lee Higgins frames his essay on the “impossible future” with the distinctive literature and orientation of poststructuralism. Writing from his experience in the (for many North Americans, at any rate) unconventional movement known as Community Music, Higgins argues against the button-down, curriculum-and-sequence-driven approach to musical instruction that typifies many well-intended efforts in music education. Taking the *workshop event*—“a spatial-temporal domain devoted to active and collaborative music-making”—as his point of departure, Higgins advocates the pursuit of what he calls “safety without safety,” and a conception of “community” as open, creative, accessible, and always provisional; or, more vividly still, “community without unity.” *The impossible future* to which Higgins urges we aspire is, though unforeseeable, one that will “will surprise and shatter our comfortable horizons.”

Our final essay, by **Panagiotis Kanellopoulos**, is intriguingly congruent with these aspirations to exploring unforeseeable futures and transcending comfortable horizons. Kanellopoulos offers us a nuanced and insightful account of the processes of free improvisation—its experiential, pedagogical, philosophical, and political potentials—drawing fascinating parallels between improvisation and Hannah Arendt’s philosophical accounts of action. Kanellopoulos is particularly concerned to show “the political character and the political role of improvisation as a vehicle for constructing particular modes of human agency, of human relationship, and of relationships among children, music, and knowledge”: considerations with

the potential to transform music classrooms “from places where knowledge is transmitted to open contexts for acting and thinking,” and into arrangements with the potential to redirect instructional concern to “doing music *with* children, instead of doing music *to* children.” Foundational to his project is a desire to theorize the roles improvisation might play within “music education practices actively concerned with the advancement of the democratic imperative: practices committed to the pursuit of freedom, equity, and plurality.” To these ends, Kanellopoulos urges that we learn to become “comfortable functioning as co-musicians rather than as instructors, learning how to follow the students’ intentions and preserving openness, both in musical actions and discussions.” This entails, following Arendt, “trusting each and every human being’s potential for action.” We must not think of musical action as an exclusive possibility, open only to “specially creative people.” Indeed, musical action must embrace “singularities that are not determinable in advance,” possibilities for the appearance of the “irregular,” and must “preserve or make room for the emergence of otherness.”

With Higgins’ endorsement of the “impossible” and the unforeseen, and Kanellopoulos’ concern that we trust the irregular and the Other, it seems we may have arrived rather close to the point at which we began this issue: the importance and unavoidability to what we music educators do, as Froehlich put it, of ‘uncertainty’. If uncertainty is unavoidable, whether pedagogically or musically, perhaps one of the ideas we can take away from this issue of *ACT* is that music education’s integrity does not rest on our ability to purge uncertainty and ambiguity from our efforts, but rather to recognize them as allies and as potential assets. For a professional endeavour devoted to nurturing processes like action, discovery, growth, and creativity, that hardly seems unreasonable.

I hope you will find this issue of *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education* both challenging and useful. As always, ACT welcomes critical responses to, and extensions of, these themes.

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