

Action for Change in Music Education: Possibilities and Perspectives

Deborah Bradley and Scott Goble, Co-Editors

Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education (ACT) was begun by founding editor Tom Regelski in 2001 as one of the first fully open-access online journals in music education. Since the release of its inaugural issue in April 2002, ACT has published critical, analytical, theoretical, and policy development articles of international interest that illuminate, extend, or challenge the [Action Ideals](#) of the MayDay Group.¹ The journal has continued to welcome “critically informed scholarship from a broad range of disciplinary perspectives including music, education, philosophy, sociology, history, psychology, curriculum theory, and others” (<http://act.maydaygroup.org/about-us/>) ever since.

Over its twenty-one years, ACT has been a leading voice in music education when new areas of scholarship have emerged. As ACT’s co-editors for the past five years, we are proud of what the journal represents and its continued growth. Despite suspicion and disparagement in the early 2000s from mainstream print journals and university tenure and promotion committees uncertain of its status or scholarly rigor, possibly stemming from the journal’s critical orientation, ACT has become a highly respected publication. Its articles and issues are now widely read and frequently cited, and it has even played a role in pioneering online access for other academic journals in music education. The MayDay Group can point to ACT as tangible evidence of its influence on the thinking of music educators worldwide.

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This issue, compiled from both regular submissions and those written in response to calls for ACT special issues, exemplifies the breadth of scholarship and the diversity of important issues that have found a place in the journal.

Articles in This Issue

Indeed, this issue of ACT contains articles representing all the disciplinary perspectives named in the About Us section of the ACT website. In the first article, which embraces both philosophy and action research, **Catharina Christophersen, José-Luis Aróstegui, Kari Holdhus, Ailbhe Kenny, Jan Sverre Knudsen, Monica Lindgren, Lauri Väkevä, and Tine Grieg Viig** take a critical look at the concept of change in music education. They draw upon results from the FUTURED research project, a scholarly exploration of various dimensions of change within music education programs in Norwegian generalist teacher education. The authors imagine new educational realities as possible triggers for change, and they advance a new vision for future music teacher education.

In the next article, also derived from the FUTURED project (2019–2022), **Hanne Rinholm, Bendik Frederiksen, and Silje Valde Onsrud** discuss what students in today's music teacher education programs in Norway conceptualize as *critical thinking*. Utilizing the results of a participatory action research project, the authors compare and contrast the various conceptions of *critical reflection* in educational literature, in Norwegian educational policy documents, and by students in education programs. Based on Freire's (2005, 1998) notion of *critical pedagogy*, the authors consider concepts such as *student-centredness*, *students as customers*, *student resistance*, and *student voice*, as well as the discomfort that often results for both teachers and students when they explore new approaches to music teacher education.

Two articles in this issue focus on the possibilities for anti-racism philosophy and pedagogy to change systemic and institutional racism and racist attitudes both in and through music education. **Erika Knapp and Whitney Mayo** employ anti-racism as a lens to critically examine the undergraduate admissions processes of many university music education programs in the United States. They incorporate Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theoretical conceptions of the state and the war machine as they consider ways to dismantle collegiate admissions processes for music education majors that continue to give advantage to White and affluent

students, and they advocate for changes to benefit marginalized students and the music education profession.

A different perspective on what it may mean to be an anti-racist music educator comes from **André de Quadros**, who shares his poignant personal autoethnographic narrative to trace colonization and the subtle forces of coercion that exist in the academy and (US) society. His story traverses the globe and enables readers to get a glimpse of the challenges faced by the millions of people in today's world who are displaced by war, political and other forms of violence, and climate disasters. De Quadros's special focus is on those who are oppressed, marginalized, and dehumanized as inmates in prison systems. He describes his role as a music teacher "who seeks a transgressive pathway in the fragile territory of ... diversity that continues to perpetuate subtle epistemic violence."

With a focus on one of the changes that has become widely adopted in music education in both North America and Europe, **Noah Karvelis** looks to the 1967 Tanglewood Symposium as a generative site of production from which popular music education emerged as a means to help young people become "desired citizens"—considered a necessary response to the civil unrest and anti-war protests of the 1960s. Karvelis draws from Popkewitz and Gustafson's (2002) analysis of music education as a mode of access to govern the interiority of "the child's" modes of thought, feeling, and behavior, questioning how "multiple historical trajectories ... have left significant impacts on the epistemologies and practices of contemporary popular music education."

In what might be considered a philosophical contribution to curriculum theory, **Aaron Lohmeyer** identifies commonalities between language and music as each evolves and is interpreted in human social discourse, noting that the two create and convey *syntactical*, *prosodic*, and *social* meaning in both print and oral culture in the current global media landscape. Conceptualizing notation as a form of externalized cognition, Lohmeyer proffers a new theory of music literacy, emphasizing that both orality and literacy are necessary for active participation in the various music discourses of contemporary society. In his conception, musical meaning emerges for students as they make decisions and formulate beliefs related to musical organization (syntax) and expression (prosody) in relation to a community; thus, music teachers must work to integrate students' agency through all three domains.

In the early 16th century, the Spanish colonial empire began its conquest of the Mesoamerican region now known as Mexico, and the Spanish and other

subsequent settlers have since worked to assimilate the Indigenous peoples there into the western culture of what has become the modern Mexican nation-state. Drawing upon research he conducted with the Huastec, one of those Indigenous peoples, **Hector Vazquez-Cordoba** describes current educational policy in Mexico and the corresponding absence of Indigenous perspectives in schools. His historically and sociologically informed account presents narratives of Huasteco culture bearers and argues for the importance of embedding their perspectives—and those of other Indigenous peoples—in Mexican education. Finally, he calls upon music educators to take responsibility for advancing Indigenous perspectives in Mexico’s national educational system by teaching music with Indigenous roots.

The discipline of psychology is also represented in this issue of ACT. **Anna Ramstedt** shares her findings of the emotional abuse experienced by some graduates of Finnish higher education institutions. As Ramstedt explains, the issue of emotional abuse surfaced repeatedly among her participants during interviews for another research project. With the participants’ expressed consent to share their comments and stories, Ramstedt explores “how beliefs, representations, images, symbols, and narratives specific to classical music culture allow for the prevalence of emotional abuse by impacting norms of behavior that may leave individuals prone to both participating in and accepting emotionally abusive behavior.” What Ramstedt’s participants have shared provides food for thought for all music teachers and studio instructors.

The article by **Tuulikki Laes** draws upon the sociology of aging to discuss how later-life courses in music education may perpetuate the discrimination and stereotyping of older adults. Laes connects “qualitative narrative inquiry with systems thinking to challenge the practices and research traditions that contribute to the sustainment of stereotypical mental models of aging in music education” and to move towards a framework of sustainable aging. As she posits, the transformative potential of her inquiry to benefit music education at large encourages readers to consider the music education of children as an investment in the musical agency of adults throughout their lives.

Closing Remarks

This issue of ACT represents the conclusion of the term as Co-Editors for us—Scott Goble and Deb Bradley. We are thrilled to welcome **Lauren Kapalka Richerme**

as ACT's new Editor; we know she will do a fantastic job and is already hard at work on her first issue. We wish her all the best as she shapes future issues.

Producing ACT is a labour of love for the many volunteers who contribute their time and energy in the myriad areas involved. We want to say Thank You to the members of the ACT Production Team—**Emmett O'Leary, Naomi Leadbeater, and Jennifer Mellizo**—and especially to **Vincent Bates**, Production Editor.

ACT often draws upon the skills of guest editors for issues devoted to special topics. We extend our gratitude to **Guillermo Rosabal-Coto** for guest editing [ACT 18\(3\)](#) on coloniality and decolonization, published in both English and Spanish; to **Sandra Stauffer and Margaret Barrett** for [ACT 20\(4\)](#), which offered a look at the many ways narrative research can inform readers' thinking about music education; to **Nasim Niknafs** for [ACT 21\(2\)](#) on anti-racism, anti-fascism, and anti-oppression; and to **Brent Talbot** for [ACT 22\(2\)](#), an issue emerging from MayDay Colloquium 32 held jointly with the 4th Symposium for LGBTQ Studies and Music Education (QMUE4) in 2021.

We also have deep appreciation for the many reviewers with whom we have had the pleasure to work over these past five years: You have graciously donated your time to read submissions (and sometimes multiple revisions of submissions) and provide thoughtful and constructive feedback to the many authors who have trusted their work to ACT and the MayDay Group for dissemination. Without you, ACT could not exist. It is easy to complain about the review and publishing process in academia, but ACT reviewers work hard to avoid being the dreaded "Reviewer 2."² Your work is too often under-appreciated by academia at large, but journals such as *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* could not function without your valuable contributions.

Finally, we thank all the past editors of ACT for your contributions to the journal's ongoing growth and development. ACT is the brainchild of Tom Regelski, whose thinking continues to influence music educators around the world. Wayne Bowman served as ACT's second editor and put the journal fully on academe's radar with his philosophically rich editorials. David Elliott brought his distinctive praxial perspective to the role of ACT editor. Vincent Bates, who has worn many hats for the journal over the years, guided ACT into new areas of inquiry and graciously mentored our transition into becoming co-editors. We now pass the torch to Lauren Kapalka Richerme; we hope we can be as helpful to her as Vince was to us as we learned to stand on our own feet as co-editors.

These past years have been stimulating and gratifying to a degree that words cannot fully express. We have learned so much from all the authors who have submitted articles to ACT, from the guest editors with whom we have worked, from the reviewers who donated their time and expertise, and from the past editors who forged the path and braved new areas of inquiry for *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*.

Sincerely yours,
Deb Bradley and Scott Goble

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Notes

¹ See: <http://www.maydaygroup.org/about-us/action-for-change-in-music-education/>

² “Reviewer 2” has become shorthand for academic journal reviews characterized by hostility and personal animus toward the author(s), or for any review that fails to provide the type of substantive feedback upon which authors rely to improve their work. A Facebook group, called Reviewer 2 Must Be Stopped, now has over 148,000 members world-wide. The group provides a place for authors to share their experiences with such reviewers/reviews and receive support from other scholars who offer both consolation and tips for responding. For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/reviewer2>.