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Ode to Reviewer Two: What Could Philosophizing Be?

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Richerme was right, and I worry for our profession should anyone disagree with her" declared hypothetical reviewer two. As many ACT readers know, reviewer two has become a meme. AcadmicsSay defines reviewer two as "an angry and bitter scholar exacting revenge on their peers through overly critical anonymous rejections of papers they secretly wish they would have written" (Sjoberg 2016). Reviewer two also does not like puppies.

I recently encountered such a reviewer two when submitting to another journal. Reviewer two advised that I should: "Form/participate in a philosophy reading/writing study group(s) with students and faculty who share your interests; Listen, talk with people who are interesting, challenging, and kind. Form philosophical/intellectual friendships; … Attend music education conferences outside the US, and perhaps most importantly, attend conferences (and read) outside of music education." To assume that any author does not talk with interesting people, have intelligent friends, and read is condescending and a clear instance of bullying that should not be tolerated in our profession. In response to the reviews, the journal editor provided no guidance on how to improve my work. Instead, they wrote: "Sometimes it is hard to bear the negative reviews, and they may stick like burrs."

While ACT reviewers are not immune from making problematic comments, as editor I promise that I will never share a review that critiques an author rather than

their ideas, and I will never seemingly wish that an author has a traumatic response after reading reviewers' comments. Rather than telling authors to form a reading group, ACT reviewers often provide key functions of a reading group. Rather than requesting that authors form philosophical/intellectual friendships, ACT reviewers typically function as their—sometimes overly demanding but usually well-intentioned—philosophical/intellectual friend. If reviewer two would have been keeping updated on recent ACT scholarship (e.g., Bates 2019; bell, Dasent, and Tshuma 2022; Shevock 2020) they may have recognized that asking someone to attend multiple distant conferences requires financial privilege, the physical ability to travel, and the questionable ethics of contributing additional globally warming emissions. Furthermore, certain individuals cannot travel because of their nationality or immigration status, or they may choose to avoid traveling because, as Nassim Niknafs (2017) details, they have experienced racial profiling while passing through airport security. Rather than telling authors to attend conferences, ACT reviewers bring the conference to authors through their extended feedback.

For those privileged scholars who choose to attend an international conference, intellectual friendships and earnest challenges were on full display at the recent MayDay Group Colloquium 35 in Victoria, Canada. The event demonstrated that the mission of the MayDay Group "to identify, critique, and change taken-for-granted patterns of professional activity" is alive and well. While no presenter left without support and compliments, neither was any presenter or quoted scholar beyond critique.

In contrast, reviewer three—and note that this journal typically only uses two reviewers—of my aforementioned submission wrote, "[Journal editor] was being true to the nature of philosophical inquiry, to make philosophical arguments in a dispassionate way. On the contrary, I worry for our profession if we were to ride on emotional waves." This reviewer also asked me to cite one additional piece of literature: a 1997 article authored by the journal editor's spouse. Certainly, the limits of appealing to emotions within philosophical writing should be considered, but a key aim of ACT, and of the MayDay Group more broadly, is resisting any one way of being philosophical. The nature of philosophy should be determined through ongoing critical conversation among scholars. It is not a truth that any one reviewer or editor can claim.

I hope these anecdotes bring some solace to readers dealing with a reviewer two. I also hope that more authors will publicly call out instances of viciousness,

bullying, and unjust gatekeeping within our profession. Furthermore, the authors in this issue demonstrate that emotion-laden arguments can exist alongside moments of dispassion, and that philosophical inquiry need not take a single form. In my reading, these authors demonstrate how contrasting uses of one's voice and intersecting voices contribute to reimaginings of both music education practices and the authoring of philosophy. In order to honor these authors' voices, I quote heavily from their pieces.

Seeking and Giving Voice

Offering the concept of "musicking-as-play," **Tim Palmer**, **Pamela Burnard**, and **David Burke** explain how its material, relational, and transgressional qualities manifest in three genres: heavy metal, Western art music, and jazz. Giving voice to heavy metal and jazz practices and juxtaposing them with Western art music making provides opportunities to play (pun intended) across genres, illuminating their unique qualities and interconnections. The authors exemplify materiality in Western art music through the example of a performer "who strips the virtuosic sections of their showmanship, downplaying their presence in order to bring other, more structural and simpler melodic elements to the fore, revealing a counter-cultural interpretation that seems to play with the materiality of 'the soloist' role." Providing an example of relationality, the authors describe: "In heavy metal, playfulness is ambiguously paired with a grim seriousness that keeps the majority of play-acts known to fans only."

In terms of transgressionality, the authors describe how recordings of Miles Davis's 1967 demonstrate significant differences across performances. They explain these "inventive provocations" as disrupting "what it means to be a musician (or an ensemble) in collaboration with audiences, with memories moving together and played out 'in' space and 'through' time." Given that such playful collaborative disruption gives voice to a historically marginalized genre, what might it mean for music education practices more broadly?

In another co-authored piece, **Lorenzo Lazaro Sánchez-Gatt**, **Saleel Adarkar Menon**, and **Juliet Hess** use anti-colonial theory to problematize transcultural music education practices. I found myself moved by the transformation between the authors' initial vignettes and the reimagined scenarios presented at the end of the piece. **Menon** writes: "We continued to engage with sacred

music, but I was intentional about contextualizing the music and representing other sacred music traditions, with consent from and consultation with those communities." **Hess** also notes the role of local stakeholders, describing: "Adults in the community were actively involved in the music program and regularly shared music with me to include in the curriculum. The administration provided money to compensate these community members for their contributions." Alternatively, **Sánchez-Gatt** imagines a scenario in which "The students were additionally tasked with explaining and, to a degree, defending their interpretive decisions and how they were mindful about uplifting the various subaltern cultures and traditions that contributed to the music they were creating." Similar to **Palmer**, **Burnard**, and **Burke**, this inquiry demonstrates the richness of understandings when philosophical colleagues think across and give voice to their emotion-laden lived experiences in integration with rich theoretical discourse.

In a moving piece on trans+ experiences of gender euphoria, which involves what one singer termed a "coming home to my body," **Ren Challacombe** links and extends transgender theory with the voices of five choir participants. I was struck by the complex meanings that voice takes on in this context. Quoting a nonbinary singer, **Challacombe** writes: "So as I've learned more about myself and I've become more comfortable with myself and my voice and my singing, I've actually gotten better as a singer, and that is very euphoric for me because I'm healing and I'm growing and it is a physical and auditory reminder that I'm healing and that I'm becoming the person that I was supposed to be and not the person that I have to be because of social pressure."

Distinguishing transgender theory from queer theory, **Challacombe** notes that the former emphasizes how "trans+ people act as self-narrating subjects." Music educators attentive to the need for such self-narration, including through the practices described by **Sánchez-Gatt**, **Menon**, and **Hess,** have the potential to provide voice to individuals and communities long marginalized by societies. Such action necessitates sustained effort. Challacombe writes, "All participants acknowledged a learning curve for trans+ people and allies, just as there was a learning curve for the ensemble to learn a song with French lyrics."

Like **Palmer**, **Burnard**, and **Burke**, **Brendan Keller-Tuberg** gives voice to the genre of jazz. He critiques that present pervasive standardized jazz practices, including how they undermine the development of individuals' voices and omit the Black history and culture that funded the genre. Similar to **Sánchez-Gatt**,

Menon, and **Hess's** observation about colonialism within transcultural music making, **Keller-Tuberg** argues that responsibility towards the Black origins of jazz "works in tension with jazz educational institutions' status as a capitalist venture, and as a result, they often deprioritize such practices because it may encroach upon their fiscal interests." Rather than replicating the work of jazz greats like Duke Ellington **Keller-Tuberg** advocates that musicians form their own "diverse, individual creative voices." He ultimately calls for "honoring and upholding the Blackness of this art form, whilst acknowledging the radical openness and creative thinking that allowed it to flourish."

One's philosophical voice exists inseparably from their embodied-emotional experiences. As the authors in this issue demonstrate, scholars can acknowledge and draw from those experiences while not being confined by them. Reasoned argument exists not against emotion, but as a complement to it. Reviewers and editors play a crucial role in enhancing authors' communication of refined logical ideas in integration with feelingful examples that honor the rich complexity of music making and education.

Reviewing Generously

While these authors deserve primary credit for their scholarship, their final products would not be possible without the hard work of ACT reviewers. A good reviewer is someone who reads an article generously, trying to understand the arguments from the author's perspective while remaining critical. Unfortunately, reviewers sometimes become stuck in their own favored arguments and areas of scholarship, providing feedback that restricts the author to a single vision. As a reviewer and editor, I strive to keep developing my ability to take on the writer's viewpoint, offer possibilities and observations rather than prescriptions, and trust that an author knows best how to address revealed limitations.

Being a good reviewer does not mean going easy on an author. ACT editors have long requested that reviews "consist of 2–3 pages of constructive, written feedback for the author," and ACT reviewers consistently deliver such feedback, and sometimes more. Helpful reviewers respectfully and constructively challenge authors; they look for moments that could be refined and developed, rather than accepting "good enough." They hold high standards but avoid standardized ways of thinking about philosophy and about music education more broadly.

Concurrently, ACT authors better their work by engaging in rigorous scholarly discussion with reviewers, including respectful disagreement as appropriate. Since Richerme is not always right, I am extremely grateful for the ACT authors and reviewers for continuing to explore, critique, and imagine what both music education and philosophizing is and might be.

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