

Music Education for a Changing Society

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In his book *Musical Life in a Changing Society* Kurt Blaukopf (1992) demonstrated that “the concept of music as a work of art” (3) does not account fully or properly for the wide and varied range of musical activities in a society at any particular stage of its history. Given this variety of musical activities, he pointed out, “there is a growing awareness that we cannot speak simply of ‘music’ but must speak instead about various types of ‘musics’ and about different historical structures of musical behavior” (3). Such musical behavior, furthermore, “can be regarded as social behavior” (3), the various types of which Blaukopf analyzes in terms of the concept of *musical practice* and the changes of musical practices in relation to changes in society:

Rather than starting from music as a work of art, a phenomenon that appeared later in history, [the concept of musical practice] takes as its point of departure *music as a social activity*, something older than notated music that eventually brought forth the ‘musical work of art’ at a given stage of socio-technological development. (Of course, the composition of such a work of art at this stage is, in its turn, also part of musical practice.) (Blaukopf 1992, 5; italics added)

He adds, “the word *practice* should not be taken in the narrow sense of referring only to ‘what is actually heard.’ It should be extended to include all musical acts and omissions, as well as observable behavior patterns” (5; italics original).

This concept of *music as social practice*, of which ‘works’ (notated or not¹) are only one part (and not even the largest part), has gained in authority with the rise of *practice theory* and theorists in sociology, philosophy, even curriculum theory (e.g., Hamilton et al., 2005; Schatzki 2002; Tuomela 2002; Schatzki et al. 2001; Bauman 1999; Small 1998; Grundy 1987; Bourdieu 1993, 1990, 1984). From the perspective of practice theory, music is not simply an adornment or a secondary by-product of society, something extra that is added to (or by) society that is to be “appreciated” in moments of leisure or at special times (although such moments and times do

represent one kind of musical practice). It is not just a ‘custom’, but an important building block of society² to begin with:

Music may influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, how they feel—in terms of energy and emotion—about themselves, about others, and about situations. In this respect, music may imply and, in some cases, elicit associated modes of conduct. (De Nora 2000, 17)

Thus conceived, music is a prime source of *social agency*:

[M]usic is in dynamic relation with social life, helping to invoke, stabilize and change the parameters of agency, collective and individual. By the term ‘agency’ here, I mean feeling, perception cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment.

If music can affect the shape of social agency, then control over music in social settings is a source of social power; it is an opportunity to structure the parameters of action. (DeNora 2000, 20)

This understanding of music as social practice, then, goes well beyond traditional aesthetic theories of what music ‘is’ and of its value to individuals and society—particularly aesthetic theories that postulate metaphysical, transcendental, and universal values, or that root musical meaning in the largely formal, intellectual terms of musicians. Instead, music is an absolutely central feature of society (and not just as so-called ‘high culture’). The various musics to which Blaukopf refers each reflects values and meanings that are closely connected to the situations that bring them forth to begin with and to the people who avail themselves of music in such situations. Furthermore, understood as social practice, music is not reserved only for special times and places (especially not only for concerts and concert halls), or for “making special” (Dissanayake 1990) certain events and occasions (e.g., rites and rituals, celebrations and ceremonies). Music does serve such functions, but much more: it is “a resource for producing the scenes, routines, assumptions and occasions that constitute ‘social life’” (DeNora 2000, xi), and thus it plays an active and central role in the everyday lives of everyone.

However, “too often, music is thought of as a stimulus capable of working independently of its circumstances of production, distribution, and consumption” (DeNora 2000, x). Of this assumption that ‘works’ of music are “autonomous structures of sound” (Ridley 2004, 9-11) and, therefore, that the meaning of music is ‘purely musical’ and is valued ‘for-its-own-sake’ (a three-part paradigm that is common among tradition-minded aestheticians, music theorists and historians—and many conservatory graduates), philosopher of music Aaron Ridley writes:

There is something very odd, after all, about the way in which so much philosophy of music has so often been done. To try to isolate music entirely, to try to leech or prise out

of its context-laden character, and indeed the very nature of one's own context-laden engagement with it, is rather like trying to pretend that music had come from Mars—that it has suddenly appeared on one's desk from nowhere. (Ridley 2004, 3).

Those who accept this “pretence that music is from Mars” (13) Ridley calls “automaniacs” and the advocacy of such “mystification” (13) concerning music's nature and value he calls “automania” (11-15).

“The automaniac begins by assuming that music is, essentially pure sound and then sets about investigating it in accordance with a method which reinforces that assumption” (11; punctuation as in original). This is, therefore, how most music theory and history have been done and taught—though recent trends in several disciplines are beginning to correct this paradigm (e.g., Korsyn 2003; Lockhead & Auner 2002; Kramer 2002; Krims 1998). The point, according to Ridley, “is not that it is wrong to think of music as sound-structure. Music no doubt is that, among other things. The mistake is to assume that music is *essentially* sound-structure; that its character as structured sound is its true, real, ultimate nature” (13; italics in original). Its “patterns of sound,” writes Ridley, “are (to some degree or other, but always to *some* degree) embedded in the rest of the world, shot through with history” (13; italics in original) and, thus, they are never ‘pure sound’ or ‘purely musical’: their meaning and significance is always connected to the social practices and situations for and in which they are manifest.

Given its intimate connection with social practices of all kinds, then, “it is probably impossible to speak of music's ‘powers’ abstracted from their contexts of use” (DeNora 2000, x)—the socio-musical functions and practices that, to begin with, (a) account for the very existence of music, (b) for the different musics brought into being, and (c) for the social, cultural, and personal effects of all forms of musicking.³ This, in turn, accounts for Blaukopf's emphasis on music in a *changing society*. With changes in society, music—its nature and social role—changes; and with changes in music, society changes (e.g., Martin 2006; Clayton, Herbert & Middleton 2003; Scott 2002; Stokes 1997; Attali 1985).

Appreciation (and its close synonym in English, understanding⁴) is, then, seen in *use*: we use (i.e., put into practice) what we appreciate (value) and we value these musical practices when we understand that (i.e., how and what) they contribute to our lives. What we do not appreciate, we do not understand as being relevant to our lives and thus do not put into practice. Thus, the music people regularly choose to enliven and invigorate their lives is music that is appreciated; and it *is appreciated in exactly the ways it is put into practice*.⁵

Teaching for “appreciation,” then, is teaching for use—*teaching for practice*. It does not involve simply teaching students ‘background’ information from theory and history ‘about’ music—information that ‘someday’ they may use, or that is purportedly necessary to ‘understand’ music properly.⁶ Instead, it involves actually involving students in and promoting their ability to take part in a musical practice—or, better, several practices. However, when what is (supposedly) taught in schools (or studios) does *not* get put into practice in life outside of or after graduation from school and later in adult life, we have evidence of a lack of appreciation (of the relevance, usefulness, meaningfulness, etc.) of that learning.⁷

Secondly, the concept of music as social practice gives music education (all forms, but particularly school-based music education—hereafter called *school music*) a central social responsibility. Music education, so viewed, is not some gilding added (when convenient, affordable, etc.) to so-called “basic” schooling; it has its own basic contribution to make to society and culture. Of course, this possibility has been understood all too well by esthetes who, under the rubric of “music appreciation,” regard school music as kind of social engineering by which the musical tastes and other musical practices of the public are supposedly elevated (Holland 2004). However, more in keeping with the concept of music as social practice is the potential of school music to directly promote the contribution of music to the life well-lived. In this role, school music seeks to have a direct and lasting impact on students—in particular on their willingness and ability to engage in musical practices that enrich not only their own lives through music, but that enrich the musical life of society as a whole.

Schools, schooling, and school music⁸

Sociologists of education often analyze schooling in terms of *intellectual* purposes (basic skills, functional knowledge), *political* purposes (promoting social order and patriotism), economic purposes (preparing workers), and *social* purposes (socialization, citizenship). In all this, the *personal* lives of individual students too often get overlooked. Thus, what—if anything—music education actually contributes at the personal level is not only too often ignored; worse, many music educators openly disclaim any responsibility for making a pragmatic difference in the actual musical choices and lives of students—either while they are students or later as adults. This is, as we shall see, a mistake and a failing that results in the pervasive sense of irrelevance that haunts school music.

The purposes of schools themselves are accounted for differently by various sociological theories. In the *functionalist* account, societies—on the analogy of an organism, such as the human body—evolve specialized structures (institutions, practices, etc.) that serve certain recognized and valued *functions* (i.e., societal needs). In particular, according to functionalist theory, schools exist for the *transmission* of ‘accepted culture’—an idea that implies significant social consensus and that, in consequence, typically ignores conflicts over what is accepted and thus acceptable (deMarrias and LeCompte 1998, 6-7). Functionalism’s approach to the transmission of knowledge also supports the *reproduction* of the social status quo—in particular, of the knowledge, ideologies, and practices of dominant social groups that have a vested interest in preventing or minimizing change and, thus, of maintaining their advantages over other groups. It is inherently conservative (a trait it shares with “conservatory”). Despite its detractors among contemporary sociologists, functionalism is the ‘common sense’ understanding of the public. Thus schools are criticized by activists, politicians, the business establishment (etc.) to the degree that they do not perform the functions for which they are assumed to exist, or do not do so ‘functionally’ enough, or when the ideology of certain vocal groups within society is challenged or contradicted.⁹

School music, understood in functionalist terms, exists to provide certain musical benefits to society; contributions that meet the musical ‘needs’ society deems to be important. To the degree it does not, or that what it produces is seen as irrelevant, not useful (i.e., is not functional; is not or cannot be put into practice by typical graduates), it is criticized or marginalized—even eliminated! School music also finds itself at the center of an ever-growing conflict concerning ‘accepted culture’. Traditionally at least, music educators have seen this as being the art music of the classical canon—the ‘uptown’ and ‘classy’ music of which they are trained practitioners. Recently, however, the pluralistic world of music that exists outside the schoolhouse doors—rock, popular forms, folk, ethnic, vernacular, and other ‘downtown’ musics—has challenged the hegemony that the conservatory has bequeathed to school music. In particular, the question of which or whose musics to teach in schools has become more and more problematic, particularly as previously monocultural societies and communities become ever-more pluralistic.¹⁰

Conflict theories in the sociology of education¹¹ acknowledge (rather than ignore or conceal) such social dynamics and differences and are keen to identify the inequalities perpetuated by the reproduction purposes (economic, cultural, socio-political) of functionalist

schooling. These theories stress the problems (conflicts) associated with schools that serve mainly (or only) the purposes of dominant groups that have vested interests in maintaining social, economic, gender, and ethnic inequities. However, conflict theorists implicitly accept the basic idea of transmission of knowledge: the main issue concerns what (or whose) knowledge is to be transmitted by schools, and to what ends.

In music education, curriculum decisions—concerning what, of all that could be taught, is most worth teaching—are invariably involved with just such questions. However, music teachers too often fail to reflect on their own cultural and musical roots (and thus the potential for bias and hegemony of the musics they favor), and too seldom recognize music as a social practice—or fail to take its social dimensions seriously enough to stress in their curriculum planning. Viewed as a social practice, it is not a question of whose music, which musics (etc.) to teach, but of stressing the personal and social agency of music—in general and across various groups (dominant or not, in conflict or not). While languages differ, their purposes and contributions remain very similar across language groups, and the same holds for musical practices. A practice-based (i.e., praxial) approach to music education, then, seeks to by-pass differences between social groups by stressing music’s social contributions and by promoting musicianship skills that enable students to avail themselves of many musics according to situated needs.

Various *interpretive social theories* and approaches¹² replace the emphasis of schools on transmission with a focus on *transformation*—of society, of culture, of the individual. Instead of the reproduction of existing structure and institutions, interpretive theories see schools as sites of cultural, social and personal *production*. Constructionist and constructivist theories of psychology, sociology, and philosophy, with their emphasis on the construction of knowledge and meaning, fall into this category—at least as long as they are not simply employed as pedagogical strategies intended to promote ‘accepted culture’ and the status quo.¹³

Critical Theory is a leading interpretive theory and its various proponents stress the importance of schools as places where students learn to identify inequalities and various kinds of oppression and thus are *empowered* to free themselves of such dominance by instead actualizing their own meanings, values, and practices. Postmodernist theories stress the need to “deconstruct” the assumptions and built-in inequalities of ‘accepted culture’—issues of class, race, gender, ethnicity, power, authority, artistic canons (etc.)—and, with such knowledge, to

construct and transform their own lives and society. According to these theories, a ‘critical pedagogy’ is required of teachers who, instead of imposing ‘accepted culture’ with all its conflicts and oppression, seek to educate active, questioning, challenge-minded students and, thus, to create a school culture that is liberating—one that, in turn, increasingly fosters such a climate in society at large.

In music education, several themes are relevant. One is the need for music pedagogy and curriculum to move from the autocratic models typical of the conservatory training of music professionals to one that more directly involves students in choices about their own music education, their own musical futures; one that fosters, in other words, democratic sensibilities that can carry over to life—musical and otherwise—outside of school (Bladh & Heimonen, 2005). Another theme is *empowerment*: helping students acquire those musical skills and understandings that enable them to be active practitioners of musical practices that are most likely to make important contributions to the quality of their lives, throughout life. Implied in both of these themes is the need for school music to increase students’ musical choices¹⁴ and to promote the musicianship skills needed to accomplish those choices.

Some implications for school music

*Classroom music*¹⁵ should be concerned to make a pragmatic difference in the present and future musical choices of students. Students deserve to be prepared to take part fruitfully in the musical practices of society, (a) at all, (b) in new ways, or (c) to a degree that would not have been the case without school music. For example, (a) basic skills such as reading music and vocal pitch-matching open doors to a variety of practices, such as singing in church or community ensembles, and beginning instruction on instruments such as keyboard, guitar, recorder, and teaching that features locally available ethnic instruments can be a first step to lifelong involvement; (b) existing skills can be expanded to include different musics and new or advanced techniques; and (c) a curricular focus on common musical practices in society can increase the likelihood that students, as adults, will choose to become active practitioners (see Regelski 2006a). The ‘value added’ approach of what I term “action learning” (Regelski 2004, 14-28) assumes that children come to school with certain musical knowledge, values, dispositions and tastes as influenced by the home, community, and the media; but that school music should build on this base, add to and enrich it, and send students into the adult world better

prepared than they would have been without classroom instruction to engage in (or to be more likely, therefore, to engage in) musical practices that are most typical, or at least most predictable in society (or the local community). Such an approach will also promote musical practices that are, as yet, not or under utilized but that could become more common if promoted by school music.

For example, schools represent a huge capital investment of the state and community, yet they often are not fully utilized outside the school calendar. School music can thus expand what is understood by “school” to include the community-at-large. In this vision, schools can become community music centers where citizens of all ages gather to learn and make music, and school music and community music education can become partners, even overlap or fuse. Another example is to capitalize on the possibilities offered by new music technologies and computer software. Today, students can be composing, performing, and listening in ways that were unthinkable only a short time ago. To ignore these possibilities overlooks the increasing role of the computer and related technologies in the everyday lives of ordinary people.¹⁶

Performance-based school music needs to look well beyond rote training and the literature for the next concert. Understood properly, *school music should not be its own musical practice*; one isolated in schools, restricted only to the school years, and limiting students to only the skills needed for reproducing that small sample of literature. Far too often, teacher-conductors simply ‘perform’ their ensembles, as though students are little more than organ pipes or the strings of a piano. First of all, the pleasures (social, musical, etc.) students may experience from these activities seldom inspire continuation after the school years, or have a direct bearing on students’ subsequent musical tastes. Thus, and secondly, the literature chosen should not be the curriculum! Literature should be chosen *according to a curriculum* conceived in terms of promoting skills, choices, attitudes, dispositions, and values that enable—indeed, that encourage—students to continue performing outside of school and after graduation. Finally, students deserve more than being trained by rote, or by “it-goes-this-way” didactics. Instead, they need to be helped in developing *independent* musicianship skills—those skills (technical *and* cognitive) that can be and are employed independently of the teacher or other authorities. Without such independence, they are unable and thus unlikely to continue as amateur practitioners and their lives and society will be worse off for this lack. With such independence, students are empowered to make and accomplish their own choices of musical practices, to

create their own musical histories, and thus to contribute to the vitality of the musical life in a community or society.

An important part of any performance-based curriculum ought to be listening. A certain percentage of rehearsal time given specifically to listening can accomplish several ends that are too often ignored and are thus typically missing among graduates.¹⁷ First of all, when segments of a rehearsal are recorded and then listened to with a view to having students identify needed improvements, students learn to listen ‘critically’: if they cannot hear such qualities in their own performances, they are unlikely to hear or respond to such criteria as future audience members.¹⁸ Secondly, listening to exemplars of the performance medium—chorus, band, orchestra, chamber ensembles, even solo literature in individual lessons—should be a regular part of any performance curriculum. By such means, students not only are given models of attainment and criteria of excellence toward which they can aspire; they can also be attracted to become audience listeners—at concerts, to their own CD collections, etc.—in addition to performing, or when the time demands of adult life make performing a less viable option. Furthermore, when the literature is chosen to represent a wide variety of musics for the performance medium at stake, students can become interested—as listeners, as performers (etc.)—in musics they might otherwise have overlooked or avoided.

Inconclusions

If musical practices in society are changing, it follows that music education needs to change if it is to maintain any semblance of relevance. Otherwise, school music will continue to be the musical dead-end that it too often is at present. Given the constant need for change, school music can take no single or conclusive form. Given the variety of musics and the rapid proliferation of new musics and ‘crossovers’ between them, what “music” is taken to be is similarly inconclusive and will continue to evolve.

Furthermore, none of the schools of sociology surveyed in relation to schooling and school music can provide final conclusions for music education. Nonetheless, something can be learned from each.

From functionalism music education can learn that society sees schools as providing certain valued societal functions. If school music is to thrive, the functions it provides need to be clear, notable, and valued by society. Otherwise, at best, school music will be given lip-service,

false respect in words only.¹⁹ It will fail to make the “value added” contribution (Regelski 2006b) that is claimed in the advocacy statements of the music education ‘establishment’, but too seldom seen in terms of actual, noteworthy, and lasting benefits to the lives of individuals and, through their musical practices, to the musical vitality of society.

From conflict theory, music teachers can learn to be acutely responsive to music as a highly diverse social practice and, thus, to the co-existence of an unlimited number of musics. Teachers will not, as a result, presume to impose the music of a dominant group, nor will they seek to reproduce society (or music in society) in status quo terms. Instead, they will function more as *cultural mediators*, building bridges between musics and the groups and social practices associated with them. Given the rapidly increasing number of ‘crossover’ musics, this is not as difficult as might at first be assumed. And given the fact that the social ‘goods’ for which music exists are shared, at least in large part, across various groups, focus on these needs, as exemplified (usually somewhat differently) by different musical practices, can advance musical skills and musical knowledge, and attitudes, dispositions and values.

Critical Theory and postmodernism can inspire music teachers to help students understand more fully the dynamics of music as social practice and its relation to questions of power, class, race, and the like and, thus, to empower students to nullify the oppressive effects that “false consciousness”—uncritical acceptance of ideologically motivated definitions of ‘accepted culture’ and “good music”—otherwise promotes. Most importantly, students’ musical choices, and the musicianship skills needed to bring their choices to fruition, will be increased. As a result, students will be enabled to become authors of their own musical lives and histories.

“Breaking 100”

One conclusion can be suggested as an action ideal for music educators. An *action ideal* is not some idealistic or utopian state; it is a positive vision that provides direction for on-going choices and actions. A “happy marriage” and “good health” are action ideals: they can never be reached in perfect or singular form at any point in time but are central in guiding everyday actions and choices in those positive directions.²⁰

“Breaking 100”²¹ is proposed as an overall action ideal for music education. The analogy comes from sports advertising. Take golf, for example: When beginners begin to “break 100” (i.e., score under 100) with some regularity they start to think of themselves as “golfers,” and (so

the theory goes) begin to buy their own equipment and special clothing. Perhaps most importantly, they become ‘serious’ enough to study how to improve and mindfully practice in order to improve.

“Breaking 100 *in music*” lacks the demarcation of a golf score; it is more the point at which students (of any age) decide or discover how much fun, how interesting, how rewarding musicking is. At that ‘tipping point’, they become more ‘serious’ about their musicking. Thus they take lessons, practice more, and actively seek ways in which they can improve their pleasures and rewards (e.g., studying literature from different styles), or ways in which their access to music can be increased (e.g., joining various groups). In other words, they are constantly alert to how their musicking can be improved and they are eager to make or find time for musicking in their lives.

“Breaking 100 in music” is an action ideal that, if promoted by all music teachers, would tangibly—even dramatically—enhance music’s role as social practice, simply because more people would be engaged mindfully and ‘seriously’ in various musical practices than is the case today. As an action ideal, too, it would guide teachers concerning the important changes that are relevant over time to the practice of teaching, just as the action ideal of a happy marriage guides couples over a lifetime of changing and challenging circumstances. The action ideal of “breaking 100 in music,” taken as a basic guiding premise of music education, would thus ensure that school music will be relevant to the health and vitality of music in a changing world.

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¹ Certain 'works', for example, can be learned 'by ear' and some of these may never have been notated: e.g., most rock music. In acknowledging the existence of different musics, the collective noun "music" is used and stands in relation to "musics" as "food" does to particular "foods." Thus reference herein to "music" should be understood in the plural, collective sense and "musics" to particular kinds (styles, genres, types) of music.

² "Society," as understood herein, should not be conceived in terms of a kind of holistic, bounded entity. In fact, "the social world as we know it and have known it is mostly illusion" (Collins & Makosky 1993, 1). Nonetheless, we are all social creatures and social creations. "Society is our immediate, everyday reality" (1) and *sociation* is the complex network of social interactions and institutions that constitute that ever-fluid reality. Music is a key means of such sociation (e.g., DeNora 2000; Stokes 1997) and, thus, a key means by which society is actualized at any given moment for a person.

³ Christopher Small (1998) replaces the noun "music" with the verb form "musicking" to stress that music is not a 'thing' or collection of 'works' but, rather, is an active process that extends to all kinds of musical involvements, interests, and actions in society beyond performing music. David Elliott (1995) proposes a similar idea as a basis for music education, spelling it "musicing"—though his concept focuses somewhat more on musicianship for a practice

and correspondingly less on the socialization that gives rise to different musical practices in the first place. I use the former spelling to stress music as social practice and to reinforce the idea that all who ‘use’ music mindfully, in whatever way, are *practitioners* regardless of their musical expertise.

⁴ Where “I understand your position” and “I appreciate your position” can mean the same thing. However, the claim that “appreciation” of something depends on a cognitive understanding of it is not borne out by the facts or analysis. We appreciate all kinds of things of which we have little understanding—at least of the intellectual kind taught in “appreciation” courses (e.g., facts and historical information ‘about’ the topic). “The downside of music education is not only that it confuses understanding with love, it threatens an arrogance that classical music can ill afford. If we put it in the wrong hands with the wrong motives, we end up with a superior class charged with remedying the illiteracy of the unwashed” (Holland 2004). For more in relation to music education, see Regelski 2006a, 2006b.

⁵ For example, the practice of listening via an iPod is a different musical practice (i.e., is ‘good for’ different ends) than listening to live music as a member of an audience (which is itself a social group, and audience listening is a distinctly social practice). Aside from listening while ‘out and about’ in society, iPod users typically have actively ‘programmed’ their personal listening choices. Likewise, listening at home to recorded music is its own practice: for example, most home listeners clearly do not sit and stare at the speakers as they listen to a Mahler symphony or a Wagner opera. And even listening with score in hand is a different practice and has its own benefits. More to the point, however, are the many ways in which music enters the lives of virtually all people and the many contributions music makes to everyday life. Such contributions are denied or denigrated by those whose ideology prefers to elevate music—viz., “good music”—above everyday life and ordinary people. “Good music” is “good” (valuable) depending how well it serves the functions that occasion its use. Symphonies and lullabies, hymns and jazz, then, are ‘good for’ different ends and are “good” depending on how well they serve those ends.

⁶ In the *music appreciation paradigm*, first of all, the claim is mistakenly made (see n. 4) that, to be appreciated, the music in question must first be understood. Moreover, in that paradigm, to be ‘properly’ appreciated means that music should be understood *as musicians understand it*. Aside from assuming that musicians’ are somehow uniform in how they understand music, which is decidedly not the case (see, e.g., the examples of totally contradictory analyses given of the same scores by the experts cited in Korsyn 2003), the ideological implications of imposing the musical practices of one group on all others as supposedly ‘good for them’ (or as supposedly ‘better’ than their present musical practices) is one of the problems identified both by conflict and interpretive theories of sociology, particularly as understood in the sociology of education. The school, thus, becomes the site for transmitting and reproducing ‘accepted culture’—in this case, that of the conservatory and of elite esthetes, and their vested interests. More on this follows below, but see Holland 2004.

⁷ Sometimes, however, it is the teaching that is not appreciated: students may be ‘turned off’ by poor teaching, yet *on their own*, still seek the kinds of music being taught. Music appreciation approaches to popular musics (e.g., teaching their histories) thus typically have little impact on students’ actual musical choices outside of school.

⁸ The present essay mainly addresses music education in schools; that is, the institution of common or comprehensive schooling that is intended in modern societies to provide a “general education” for all students. Many of the points, however, apply as well to private, community, municipal (etc.) music schools that provide a specialized, ‘voluntary’ music education to selected applicants (e.g., as in Finland) or to all interested in musical study (e.g., as in Sweden). Many points apply, as well, to individual lessons—whether in private or home studios, etc.

⁹ E.g., teaching uncomfortable facts about the country’s history; sex education that acknowledges homosexuality in neutral terms; teaching evolutionary theory in highly religious countries, regions, or communities.

¹⁰ The question of “whose” music to teach recognizes music as social practice from the very first. It can refer to the musics of different ethnic groups in a multicultural community, or to the music imposed by dominant groups on the rest of society. Dominance (power) is not simply an economic or ‘class’ issue (although whose musics get government subsidy does highlight economic and class inequalities): it can involve the dominance of an ethnic majority, or the power (authority) granted to music teachers over their students and, thus, the power to impose one music or a narrow range of musics on students to the exclusion of others. Such exclusions, however, are typically noted by students, and this “hidden curriculum” (see deMarrais and Le Compte 1998, 13-14) often has a greater impact than the more explicit curriculum (i.e., what is *not* taught is recognized by students as ‘unaccepted’—which, for many adolescents, only makes it all the more attractive!). For example, students reject the music that they are taught in school when it does not reflect the values of their segment of society, or when it doesn’t ‘touch’ their lives—usually for both reasons.

¹¹ Ranging from Karl Marx and Max Weber to Pierre Bourdieu and Henry Giroux

¹² For example, the Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, Antonio Gramsci, and Paulo Freire; phenomenological and ethnographic theories of schooling; postmodernist theory; feminist theory.

¹³ Where, that is, teaching “strategies” are used to get students to supposedly ‘construct’ their own understandings of knowledge, meanings, and values taken for granted and transmitted as ‘accepted culture’ (by teachers, authorities, etc.) and thus that are given hegemonic status in the curriculum. This misunderstanding of *constructionism* (often typical of teaching strategies based, instead, on the genetic *constructivism* of neo-Piagetian theory with its assumption that learning is a strictly intra-individual process based on ‘objective’ reality) contradicts its basic concept: constructionism does not simply refer to a student’s ‘personalized’ understanding; instead, it involves the *de novo* creation of meaning and value—which, for interpretive theorists can, and sometimes will (or often should) conflict with the hegemonic transmission and reproduction agenda that the state, the schools, the curriculum, and teachers have in mind. The social constructionism of Vygotsky and “activity theory” (Engeström et al., 1999) bridges the gap between the individual and social groups and structures, and stresses that one’s relation to the world—including the world of music—is essentially social.

¹⁴ Beyond, for example, influences of the home, ethnic group, media, etc.

¹⁵ In North America, called “general music,” meaning “music in the general education” of each student, and most decidedly *not* “music in general”—a superficial potpourri or sampling. This instruction engages by far the largest number of students. However, despite its typical “music appreciation” paradigm of teaching information ‘about’ music, such instruction has historically produced the least notable or lasting effects on graduates’ musicking. There simply is no room here to do justice to this topic. See Regelski 2004 for details.

¹⁶ For example, composing software that can be used to produce accompaniments for home videos—which are a growing interest among the public with the improvement of video technology and availability of software for home editing, etc.

¹⁷ At stake here are the differences between the *in-action* listening (to tempo, intonation, etc.) necessary to a good performance, and *audience* listening, where all of one’s faculties are focused aurally.

¹⁸ The pedagogy involves, first, listening to the excerpt and, without teacher input, letting sections (and individuals, in the case of solos or other key parts) briefly discuss and identify what can be improved and how to do it. This is followed by a discussion with the entire ensemble of over-all effects: matters of phrasing, dynamics, intonation, articulation, etc., where student input is respectfully accepted by the teacher, but where the teacher is free to explain (i.e., teach) why this or that option might be preferred. Then the passages in question are performed again with a focus on making the improvements discussed. Individual or class lessons (e.g., keyboard, recorder, guitar classes, etc.) also need to focus on *how to practice*: isolate a difficult passage and observe the students’ practicing strategies (or have students make suggestions about the example of a particular member of the class), then discuss and demonstrate more efficient and effective alternatives.

¹⁹ By politicians, education authorities, and by those whose verbal advocacy of arts education is more a matter showing their ‘class’ than of active support of school music.

²⁰ In contrast to the concept of an “ideal” as implying unreachable perfection, it has been said that “a perfect world wouldn’t be perfect” and, thus, a “perfect marriage” wouldn’t be perfect, either. This doesn’t stop us being motivated by such ideals and, of course, this is what motivates even the daily practicing of the world’s greatest virtuosos.

²¹ More details on this action ideal are given in Regelski 2004. For further action ideals for music education, see <http://www.maydaygroup.org/php/actionideals.php>.