

From Philosophical Concurrence to Diversity

Problems and Opportunities

Main Themes

- A philosophy of music education provides grounding for our professional lives, both in explaining our value as a field and in giving direction to our actions.
- In the second half of the twentieth century, the profession tended to be unified by the philosophy of “aesthetic education.”
- The National Content Standards for Music Education were an important outgrowth of the aesthetic education movement.
- Recent arguments of postmodernism as an alternative to modernism have eroded previous philosophical, educational, and musical certainties. There are important implications for music education, needing to be understood by professionals.
- In the current period of conflicting philosophical positions, a synergistic (cooperative) approach to ideas can serve to maintain philosophical balance and professional cohesion.

Why Do We Need a Philosophy?

Why should we music educators bother to deal with philosophy—to read it, discuss it, write it, try to develop our own professional version of it? After all, philosophy requires “language-think.” Music requires “sound-think.” Philosophy creates word-meanings. Music creates sound-meanings. Both philosophical thinking and musical thinking are hard work. Both call for great care to be taken with their materials (words or sounds). Both require effort and skill to be brought to bear in shaping the words or sounds to make them as convincing, as powerful, as “right” as they can be made to be. Both also require care and close attention to gain their meanings. Isn’t it sufficient for music educators to be concerned with music, to be proficient in thinking musically?

The answer is unequivocally no. Music educators must, of course, be proficient in all the aspects of music they are responsible for teaching, a daunting task in itself. They must also be well versed in many aspects of education: curriculum, evaluation, methods of teaching, human development, and so forth. They must possess a variety of interpersonal skills and attitudes conducive to being effective, trusted, admired teachers and leaders. And they also require a set of guiding beliefs about the nature and value of their subject—that is, a philosophy.

The purpose of the philosophy I will propose in this book is to provide a system of principles for guidance in creating and implementing useful and meaningful music education programs. Our profession needs such guidance at both the collective and the individual levels. The profession as a whole needs a set of beliefs that can serve to guide the efforts of the group. The impact the profession can make on society depends in large degree on the quality of the profession’s understanding of what it has to offer that might be of value to society. There is a continuing need for a better understanding of the value of music and of the teaching and learning of it. An uncomfortable amount of defensiveness, of self-doubt, of grasping at straws that seem to offer bits and pieces of self-justification, has always seemed to exist in music education. It would be difficult to find another field so active, so apparently healthy, so venerable in age and widespread in practice, and at the same time so worried about its inherent value.

The tremendous expression of concern about how to justify itself—both to itself and to others—that has been traditional in this field reflects a lack of philosophical “inner peace.” What a shame this is. For, as will be made clear in this book, justification for teaching and learning music exists

at the very deepest levels of human value. Until we in music education understand what we genuinely have to offer, until we are convinced that we are a necessary rather than a peripheral part of human culture, until we “feel in our bones” that our value is a fundamental one, we will not have attained the peace of mind that is the mark of maturity. Until then we cannot reach the level of operational effectiveness that is an outgrowth of self-acceptance, of security, of purposes understood and efforts channeled.

A philosophy is necessary for overall effectiveness and serves as a sort of “collective conscience” for music education as a whole. But the strength of the field ultimately depends on the convictions of its members. The individuals who constitute the group must have an understanding of the nature and the value of their individual endeavors.

Individuals who have a clear notion of their aims as professionals and of the importance of those aims are a strong link in the chain of people who collectively make a profession. Music education has been fortunate in having leaders who have held strong convictions, who have helped enormously in forging a sense of group identity. But too many of our convictions have been based on platitudes, on attractive but empty arguments, on vague intimations that music education is important with little in the way of solid reasoning to give backbone to beliefs. Many individuals have enormous dedication to this field but little more to base it on than fond hopes. That is why the profession gives the appearance—a very accurate appearance—of tremendous vitality and purposefulness and goodness of intentions while at the same time harboring the nagging doubt as to whether it all makes much difference. Individuals who *do* have convincing justifications for music education, who exhibit in their own lives the inner sense of worth that comes from doing important work in the world, become some of the profession’s most prized possessions. To the degree that individual music educators are helped to formulate a compelling philosophy, the profession will become more solid and secure.

Another reason for the importance of strengthening individual beliefs about music education is that the understanding we have about the value of our profession inevitably affects our perception of the value of our personal lives. To a large extent, we are what we do in life. If our occupation seems to us an important one, one that we respect and through which we can enrich both ourselves and society, we cannot help but feel that a large part of our lives is important and respectable and enriching. If, on the other hand, we have the feeling that our work is of doubtful value, that it lacks the respect of others in related fields, that the

contribution we make through our work is inconsequential, we can only feel that much of our life is of equally dubious value.

Undergraduates preparing to enter the profession of music education need to develop an understanding of the importance of their chosen field. Perhaps at no other time in life is the desire for self-justification as pressing as when you are preparing to take your place as a contributing member of society. There is an urgent need for a philosophy that provides a mission and a meaning for this new professional life, even more so when, as in music education, the value of the field is not fully understood by its members and is perhaps even less understood by professionals in related music and education fields. Given the lack of convincing arguments about the importance of music education and attendant philosophical insecurity manifesting itself in superficial bases of self-justification, it is all too clear why so many music education undergraduates are insecure about their choice of profession.

Students deserve to be introduced to a philosophy that is more than wishful thinking. College students are far too sophisticated to be satisfied with superficial reasoning and far too involved with life to be able to accept a philosophy that does not grasp their imaginations and tap their zeal. The need to feel that life is significant, that actions do matter, that good causes can be served and good influences felt, can be met more effectively and immediately by a sound philosophy than by any other aspect of their education. Developing a sense of self-identity and self-respect requires that college students be given the opportunity to think seriously about their reasons for professional being. The return on the investment made in developing a professional philosophy is extremely high, not only in providing a basis for self-respect, but also in channeling the natural dedication and commitment of students into a dedication and commitment to music education.

All that has been said about the purposes a philosophy serves for the music educator in training applies as well to the music educator in service. No matter how long one has been a professional, the need for self-understanding and self-esteem exists. In some ways these needs become more complex with time, as professional duties, responsibilities, and problems become more complex. For the veteran music educator (and some would argue that surviving the first year of teaching qualifies the music educator as “veteran”), a goal is needed that focuses efforts toward something more satisfying than another concert, more meaningful than another contest, more important than another class, broader than another

lesson or meeting or budget or report. All these obligations and pleasures need to head somewhere. They need to be viewed as the necessary carrying out in practice of an end that transcends each of them, adding to each of our duties a purpose deep enough and large enough to make all of them worthwhile. It becomes progressively more difficult, very often, for music educators to see beyond the increasing number of trees to the forest that includes all of them. Without the larger view, without a sense of the inherent value of our work, it is very easy to begin to operate at the level of daily problems with little regard for their larger context. Inevitably, an erosion of confidence takes place, in which immediate concerns never seem to mean very much. Having lost a sense of purpose, perhaps not very strong to begin with, music teachers can begin to doubt their value as professionals and as individuals.

One of the major benefits of being a music educator is the inspiring, rejuvenating, joyful nature of music itself, a strong barrier to loss of concern among us who deal with it professionally. Yet, if we music educators are to function as more than technicians, a set of beliefs clearly explaining the reasons for the power of music remains necessary. Too often beliefs about music and arguments for its importance have been at the level of the obvious, with the secret hope that if one justified music education by appeals to easily understood, facile arguments, its “deeper” values would somehow prevail. Just what these deeper values are usually remains a mystery, but they are sensed. So one plugs along, using whatever arguments turn up to bolster oneself in one’s own and others’ eyes, trusting that all will turn out well in the end. But as time goes along, for us as individuals and for the profession as a whole, it becomes less and less possible to be sustained by hazy hopes. A time for candor presents itself, when the question can no longer be avoided: “Just what is it about my work that really matters?”

The function of a professional philosophy is to answer that question. A good answer should be developed while a person is preparing to enter the profession. If not, any time is better than no time. If the answer is a convincing one, it will serve to pull together our thoughts about the nature and value of our professional efforts in a way that allows for those thoughts to grow and change with time and experience. A superficial philosophy cannot serve such a purpose—a philosophy is needed that illuminates the deepest level of values in our field. At that level we can find not only professional fulfillment but also the personal fulfillment that is an outgrowth of being a secure professional.

Everything we music educators do in our jobs carries out in practice our beliefs about our subject. Every time a choice is made, a belief is applied. Every music teacher, as every other professional, makes hundreds of small and large choices every day, each one based on a decision that one thing rather than another should be done. The quality of those decisions depends in large measure on the quality of our understanding of the nature of our subject. The deeper this understanding, the more consistent, the more focused, the more effective our choices become. Those who lack a clear understanding of their subject can make choices only by hunch and by hope, these being a reflection of the state of their beliefs. Those who have forged a philosophy based on a probing analysis of the nature of music can act with confidence, knowing that whatever they choose to do will be in consonance with the values of the domain they represent.

These values must be sought in a concept about the primary value of music and the teaching of music. As it happens, such a concept has been formulated over a period of several decades and has been given added impetus in recent years by a variety of contributions from psychology and philosophy and educational theory. Put simply, it is that music and the other arts are basic ways that humans know themselves and their world; they are basic modes of cognition. The older idea, prevalent since the Renaissance, that knowing consists only of conceptual reasoning is giving way to the conviction that there are many ways humans conceive reality, each of them a genuine realm of cognition with its own validity and unique characteristics. We know the world through the mode of conceptual rationality, indeed, but we also know it through the musical mode.

Further, the older notion that human intelligence is unitary, being exclusively a manifestation of the level of ability to reason conceptually as measured by IQ tests, is also undergoing a profound revolution. The idea now gaining currency is that intelligence exists in many manifestations. The argument is being advanced that an education system focused exclusively or predominantly on one mode of cognition—the conceptual—which recognizes only conceptual forms of intelligence as being valid, is a system so narrow in focus, so limited in scope, so unrealistic about what humans can know and the ways humans function intelligently, as to be injurious to students and even dehumanizing in its effects on them and on the larger society it is supposed to serve.

These burgeoning ideas allow music educators to affirm, with great courage, with great hope, and with great relief, that music must be conceived as all the great disciplines of the human mind are conceived—as

a basic subject with its unique characteristics of ways to know and ways to be intelligent, that must be offered to all children if they are not to be deprived of its values. This affirmation has the power to strengthen the teaching and learning of music in the schools. At one stroke it establishes music as among the essential subjects in education, prescribes the direction music education must take if it is to fulfill its unique educational mission, gives the profession a solid philosophical grounding, and provides the prospect that music education will play a far more important role for society in the future than it has in the past.

The philosophy offered in this book will explain the foundational dimensions of music on which these claims can be built. It will also attempt to bridge the gap between philosophy and practice by suggesting, at the level of general principles, how music education can be effective in bringing the unique values of music to all students. Throughout the book the methods of philosophical work will be employed—critical analysis, synthesis, and speculative projection of ideas—and the purpose of philosophical work will be pursued, to create meanings by which we can live better lives.

A Word about Some Words

What is “philosophy”? The word itself comes from the Greek (*philo* = loving, *sophy* = science of, and wisdom). Philosophy is a way of loving wisdom by thinking carefully and exactly about it. It is not science as we have come to understand that word in the modern world but science in the sense of systematic, precise reflection about ideas, beliefs, values, and meanings. Over the centuries a number of branches of philosophy have evolved, each focusing on a particular subset of human interests, such as epistemology, dealing with issues of knowledge; ontology, focusing on ideas of being; axiology studying ideas of value; and logic, which investigates systems and principles of reasoning.

The branches of philosophy of most direct relevance for music education are aesthetics, or philosophy of art, and education. This book will draw many (but not all) of its positions and arguments from the systematic study of ideas about the arts, music in particular, and from such study of education. A bit of clarification about “aesthetics” and its relation to “philosophy of art” will help explain how I understand and use those terms.

Aesthetics as a separate field within philosophy emerged during the eighteenth century in Europe, at a time when the arts of music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and dance were being conceived as related—as the “fine arts.” Distinctions between the particular interests that arose in aesthetics—esthetic attitude and experience, the esthetic object, esthetic value—and the broader and much older interests of philosophy of art—the nature of beauty, how to define art, how art is to be understood and appreciated, how it is created, and so forth—are blurred, and to a large degree are no longer useful. In *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*,¹ the comments are made that questions of aesthetics overlap with those in philosophy of art, and that “aesthetics also encompasses the philosophy of art.” Wayne D. Bowman, in his *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*,² contrarily says that “philosophy of music is broader than aesthetics, and subsumes it.” Other writers, such as Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard, editors of *Aesthetics*,³ equate the two, using them as synonyms. Monroe C. Beardsley, in his book *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present*,⁴ says, “I have no quarrel with those who wish to preserve a distinction between ‘aesthetics’ and ‘philosophy of art.’ But I find the shorter term very convenient, and so I use it to include matters some would place under the second. I claim sufficient warrant in prevailing competent usage—e.g., the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and the *British Journal of Aesthetics*.”

I want to make clear that when I use the term “aesthetics,” I do so in the broadest possible sense, encompassing all past and present philosophical discourse on the entire range of issues related to aesthetics and philosophy of art, whether conceived as separate or concurrent domains. I particularly want to clarify that my use of the term aesthetics in no way commits me to positions taken by thinkers associated with aesthetics in the narrow sense of a historical movement during which particular

1. Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

2. Wayne D. Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

3. Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard, eds., *Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6–8.

4. Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 14.

conceptions of music and the arts were developed. I find some positions from aesthetics in that narrow sense useful, some not useful, some persuasive, some untenable. The term aesthetics will be used in this book as shorthand for philosophical (as distinct from, say, experimental, or historical, or anthropological) treatments of issues connected to music (primarily) and to other arts and related aspects of human experience. Though materials from outside aesthetics will be incorporated, they will serve primarily to add complementary insights to those dealing with the nature and value of music, and to clarify their educational implications.

Clarification of the terms “artistic” and “aesthetic” is also needed at the start. As John Dewey explained,

We have no word in the English language that unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words “artistic” and “esthetic.” [The “ae” spelling tends to be more accepted in recent writings.] Since “artistic” refers primarily to the act of production and “esthetic” to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate. Sometimes, the effect is to separate the two from each other, to regard art as something superimposed upon esthetic material, or, upon the other side, to an assumption that, since art is a process of creation, perception and enjoyment of it have nothing in common with the creative act. In any case, there is a certain verbal awkwardness in that we are compelled sometimes to use the term “esthetic” to cover the entire field and sometimes to limit it to the receiving perceptual aspect of the whole operation.⁵

Discussions of music often use the word “aesthetic” to include both the artistic/creative aspects (composing, performing, improvising, conducting, and so forth) and the responding aspects (primarily listening.) But these two aspects are also often separated out into the artistic as distinguished from the aesthetic. To further complicate the matter, the term “aesthetic education” was usually used to encompass all aspects of teaching the arts, including their artistic, responsive, historical, critical (and so forth)

5. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934), 46.

dimensions. That is the way I have always used the term. However, the word aesthetic in aesthetic education seemed to be taken by some to refer to only the responsive/appreciative aspects.

I will try to avoid confusion about the artistic/aesthetic terminology, usually referring to the music-making roles as being artistic, and to the listening/responding/critiquing roles as being aesthetic. But having to repeatedly use both terms when the term aesthetic is clearly referring to all aspects would be labored and so will be avoided. I hope the reader will be patient with this inevitable clumsiness our language imposes on us.

The word “performing” also suffers from ambiguity, often being used for what I consider two distinctive ways in which this musical role is carried out: the performance of composed music, and improvisation. (There is more on this in Chapter 4.) Usually I will use the word performance, or performing, to refer to the composed music setting, reserving improvisation for those musics in which the composer function is not present or primary. Again, given the overlaps of the two situations in some music, and the common use of the single term “performing” to cover both roles, some ambiguity will no doubt creep in. I hope the confusion will be kept to a minimum.

A Time of Concurrence in Music Education Philosophy

In both previous editions, I mentioned that, given that beliefs change over time, and that at any single time there will be differences in belief, it still remains possible to characterize the general state of beliefs at particular times. There existed in the decades from the 1960s through the 1980s a strikingly high level of agreement about the nature and value of music and music education among those who had given serious thought to such matters. What music education seemed to need, I felt, was not persuasion about this or that alternative philosophy, but continuing refinement and careful application of ideas commonly held at that time throughout the profession.

Those common ideas had been accumulating since the late 1950s, especially after the publication of two very influential books—*Basic Concepts in Music Education*, in 1958, and Leonhard and House’s *Foundations and Principles of Music Education*, in 1959, both of which contained chapters

with serious philosophical content.⁶ These books had revelatory effects on me as a (very) young music educator with growing interests in matters philosophical, magnified by my graduate study with Charles Leonhard at the University of Illinois. His powerful influence helped propel me into a career of reflective scholarship.

Those books were followed by a number of important and complementary national initiatives, such as the Contemporary Music Project begun in 1963, the Comprehensive Musicianship Program dating from 1965, the Yale Seminar of 1963, the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967, and the Goals and Objectives project begun in 1969.⁷ All these and many other events during those years, including the publication of the first edition of this book, helped forge a widely shared sense of why music was important, why music education was therefore important, and what music programs in schools should look like if they were to be in consonance with those beliefs. This movement, both theoretical and practical, and central to thought and action in all the arts in education fields, became known as “aesthetic education.”⁸

Needless to say, not every music educator embraced the emerging and developing ideas of aesthetic education in those years, or even was aware of them. Some, even many, music educators went about their jobs with no knowledge of the philosophical work being done and little interest in professional events reflecting that work, or unconvinced by or even negative about the premises of aesthetic education. Music education, after all, is a broad and heterogeneous field, both in its beliefs and in its practices. It is unlikely that all music teachers will involve themselves in issues and initiatives in the broader profession beyond their own daily

6. Nelson B. Henry, ed., *Basic Concepts in Music Education, Fifty-Seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, part 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). Charles Leonhard and Robert W. House, *Foundations and Principles of Music Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

7. For descriptions of these initiatives, see Michael L. Mark, *Contemporary Music Education*, 3rd ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1996), 28–48.

8. *Ibid.* Chapter 33, “Intellectual Currents in the Contemporary Era,” 54–61, gives a brief but cogent overview of the aesthetic education movement in music education. An ongoing record of thinking related to the broader field of aesthetic education is most directly to be found in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, which began publication in 1966.

obligations. It is equally unlikely that those who do will be unanimously approving of any particular philosophical position, especially in a democratic culture where diversity of belief is encouraged rather than deterred or even forbidden as in some societies. Nevertheless the aesthetic education movement did become an important, perhaps a dominant, factor in the profession's self-image during those decades.⁹

Pinpointing the defining characteristics of aesthetic education is difficult, given various interpretations of it, its aversion to being dogmatized as consisting of a particular set of doctrines to be rigidly followed, and its avoidance of anything smacking of a "method." As I explained in a paper on aesthetic education given at a conference on "The Philosopher Teacher in Music," at Indiana University in 1990, a year after my revised edition was published,

Aesthetic education is sometimes viewed as a set of dogmas incapable of being breached and doctrines incapable of being changed. I want to argue that there are no such dogmas, or doctrines, although I will suggest my own candidates for what, in my opinion, are typical characteristics of aesthetic education. I will propose that aesthetic education is not a body of immutable laws but instead provides some guidelines for a process that, by its very nature, must be both ongoing and open-ended. . . . [We] require a philosophy amenable to and dependent on change as an essential characteristic, because it is a given that the philosophical problems considered to be fundamental to music education will change over time, the availability of viable solutions to them will also continually change, and the social-cultural nature of music education will also continue to change. It must be an essential characteristic of aesthetic education as a professional philosophy, then,

9. For a discussion of ideas and influences leading to the rise of the aesthetic education movement, and a bibliography of its early important writings, see the two chapters by Ralph A. Smith, "The Philosophical Literature of Aesthetic Education" and "Bibliography," in Bennett Reimer, Organizing Chairman, *Toward an Aesthetic Education* (Washington, DC: Music Educators National Conference, 1971), 137–90. Two essays on aesthetic education, dealing with its history (by Ronald Moore), and its contemporary manifestations (by Ralph A. Smith), are contained in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 89–96.

that it not consist of one particular set of problems or issues, resolved in one particular fashion, relevant to one particular institutional Zeitgeist as it exists at any one particular period in history.¹⁰

Aesthetic education as I conceive it, therefore, is changeable and flexible, attempting to capture the best thinking about music and to apply it to practices of music education. Nevertheless, several characteristic beliefs of aesthetic education in music may be identified:

1. Aesthetic education strives to be both convincing philosophically and useful across the entire spectrum of applications to the teaching and learning of music. It attempts to wed theory with practice.
2. Aesthetic education is applicable to all children in schools—not just to the small percentage who demonstrate unusually high competencies in music.
3. A useful and valid music curriculum, K–12, is comprehensive, including all possible ways people interact with music—listening, performing, composing, improvising, and so forth—and also embraces all the ways people think about and know about music, including its history, its cultural contexts, relevant criticism of it, its many functions in people’s lives, and the many issues related to its nature.
4. Any single aspect of the music program—a performing group, a general music class, a composition lab, a listening-focused course, and so on—can be, in and of itself, a valid instance of aesthetic education. Aesthetic education attempts to nurture characteristic interactions with music, and those interactions can be achieved in any and all aspects of a total music curriculum.
5. Interactions with music of any sort, at any age or competence level, should be dominated by, or at least inclusive of, an aspect of experiencing called “musical,” in which the

10. Bennett Reimer, “Essential and Nonessential Characteristics of Aesthetic Education,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 25, no. 3 (Fall 1991), 193–214.

particular characteristics that set music apart as a recognizable domain are an important dimension of the learning and of the interaction.

6. Central to music as a domain is its capacity to create structures of sounds that are capable of incorporating all manner of materials (conventional symbols, cultural beliefs, political statements, moral views, stories, emotions of everyday life) and to add something to them that is “musical”—that is, charged with meanings uniquely available from music.
7. The “beyond-the-commonplace” experience, or the “transformation” of experience that music makes available in its unique way, and that should be an important dimension of teaching and learning, has been achieved in all cultures throughout history. Whatever the culture, music shapes individual and communal experience into unique meanings able to be created and shared by those who participate in that culture.
8. The music used in school, therefore, should be far more comprehensive than the narrow spectrum of “school music” traditionally assumed to be appropriate, and should openly reflect the realities of our multimusical culture. All the world’s musics provide valuable sources for musical learning and experiencing.

A definition of aesthetic education as applied to music would reflect the preceding beliefs along with others this book will elucidate. Definitions, however, tend to delimit by stipulating a definitive, exclusionary set of conditions. In the case of aesthetic education, the word “description” is likely to be more useful than “definition” in that it calls attention to salient features without requiring that they be fixed or exhaustive. (In Chapter 5 I will apply these comments to a description of music and of art.) I offer the following description of aesthetic education, or summary of propositions about it, as a tool for thought, mapping out the terrain for an ongoing agenda amenable to change as new insights continue to arise and be found persuasive:

Aesthetic education in music attempts to enhance learnings related to the following propositions:

1. *Musical sounds (as various cultures construe what these are) create and share meanings available only from such sounds.*
2. *Creating musical meanings, and partaking of them, require an amalgam of mind, body, and feeling.*
3. *Musical meanings incorporate within them a great variety of universal/cultural/individual meanings (ideas, beliefs, values, associations, etc.) transformed by musical sounds.*
4. *Gaining its special meanings requires direct experience with musical sounds, deepened and expanded by skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes, and sensitivities education can cultivate.*

Clearly such a description requires “untangling.” This book will consist largely of my attempts to do so.

Ideas such as this, beginning to be developed in the late 1950s, were generally and widely (although certainly not unanimously) accepted in American music education as being both theoretically persuasive and practically useful. That concordance of belief led, in due course, to an important practical consequence of an educational philosophy—generation of a clear picture of what the knowledge base consists of for the domain with which it deals. If, in the case of music education, a philosophical position is able to yield a grounded specification of those knowings and doings related to a comprehensive and satisfying incorporation of music into people’s lives, it will have served an important purpose for its profession, providing powerful guidance as to the teachings and learnings on which the profession needs to focus. The relationship of a philosophy of music to a philosophy of music education becomes clear in this conception. The former provides a cohesive picture of the complex nature and diverse values of music. The latter, based on that set of understandings, provides a cohesive picture of those learnings most relevant to the nature of music and to the values it offers.

Fortunately, an opportunity to translate philosophy into educational action embracing the arts education profession at its broadest, most inclusive level was presented as part of a congressional bill titled “Goals 2000: Educate America Act,” passed in 1994. Stipulated in that bill as required learning for all students, along with English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, history, and geography, was “arts.” Representing a triumph of the advocacy expertise of the Music Edu-

cators National Conference (MENC) (the arts were not included among the core subjects in the original version of the bill but were added largely as a result of MENC efforts), the arts were now, finally, recognized at the federal level as being basic subjects in American schooling.

An enormous opportunity, as well as an equally enormous challenge, presented itself. Each subject matter field in education quickly began to define the central learnings relevant to its nature and value, using as a model the materials developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.¹¹ The arts education fields—dance, music, theater, and visual arts—galvanized into action by MENC, organized themselves for the task of creating documents stipulating what students needed to know and be able to do if they were to be empowered to incorporate each art into their lives in effective ways. There was a palpable sense of urgency for the arts to get the job done as quickly as possible, to demonstrate that, having for the first time in history been given “official” recognition as basic subjects, they were as capable as any other subject of defining the learnings and doings appropriate to them, and that they could do so without endless debate and argument such as has characterized aesthetics since the ancient Greeks. We did not have twenty or so centuries to spend on resolving all our philosophical dilemmas (which are unlikely to be resolved even if we did). We had to do what everyone else in education was busily doing for their subject—to describe with reasonable specificity what needed to be learned if students were to engage themselves meaningfully with each art, as that is understood in the world and times in which we are now living. We had to put up or, if not shut up, at least be muted in one of the great educational events of recent history.

A task force was appointed in 1992 to write the music document—Paul Lehman (chair), June Hinckley, Charles Hoffer,Carolynn Lindeman, Scott Shuler, Dorothy Straub, and myself. All these people had well-established backgrounds as thinkers/activists in music education, and all were known to have firm beliefs and commitments as to what music education was all about. Yet within a period of a year, this group of strong-minded individualists was able to forge a document charting nine content areas as constituting the fundamental knowledge base of music—the learnings and doings essential for valuable musical engagements as we are best

11. *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics*, 1989, and *Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics*, 1991 (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics).

able to understand what that means in our times.¹² (Interestingly, the arts content documents, called “standards”—the common terminology at that time—were the second to appear, after mathematics, later followed by a dozen or so others.) With no time for philosophical debate, let alone solving age-old quandaries, these people were able to translate deeply shared values, beliefs, and commitments about music into a set of contents that are teachable, learnable, and foundational for musical experiencing. A shared philosophy of music (implicit in this case) had served to forge a shared philosophy of music education (also implicit) capable of focusing the profession’s efforts on fundamental learnings in music education. Truly, philosophy had served its purpose well in this case.

Notably, reservations about and criticisms of the standards movement in education (generally and in the arts) have focused on related political and social issues, such as providing equal opportunity to learn, standardization as a possible undesirable consequence, allocation of time to teach all that is required, preparing teachers for raised expectations, and on and on with all the difficult, complex issues surrounding such a large, unwieldy educational movement. I fully share in these reservations and concerns. (In Chapter 8 I will return to these matters in my treatment of the standards as a basis for curriculum content.) In music education, however, despite the subsequent rise of diverse philosophical views (to be discussed below and more fully in Chapter 2), few if any criticisms of or alternatives to the nine content areas delineated in the standards have been offered. There seems to be widespread agreement, approaching unanimity, that a comprehensive concept of a music curriculum would have to include knowings and doings related to (1) singing, (2) playing, (3) improvising, (4) composing and arranging, (5) notation skills and understandings, (6) listening, (7) evaluating, (8) understanding relationships of music to other arts and other disciplines, and (9) understanding music in its historical and cultural dimensions. These nine have been acknowledged by music educators in a great variety of cultures as being an ideal for comprehensive music learnings. I will attempt in Chapters 8 and 9 to explain how the national content standards represent a radical, far-reaching

12. Dance, theater, and visual arts followed the same pattern as music in establishing their standards, and were similarly able to do so quickly because of the high level of shared values they had achieved. The collected standards were published as *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts* (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1994).

transformation of the profession's traditional conception of what music education is and does, a transformation now able to be understood as an inevitable consequence of the rise and influence of the aesthetic education movement. The standards (in a reconstructed form I will offer) give specific, programmatic guidance for achieving the aspirations of aesthetic education, including, in the skills, knowledge, and understandings they foster, the bases for mind, body, and feeling to be fully and interactively engaged in satisfying musical experiences.

Does the aesthetic education movement, in and of itself, remain viable after so many years of influence? I wondered about that in my concluding remarks in the paper to which I referred previously. Is it important or helpful to retain the term "aesthetic education"? Or has it done its work, so that now it would be well to move on to other conceptualizations?

I confess to a good deal of ambivalence in this matter. On the one hand, one grows accustomed to a much-used phrase as to a comfortable pair of old shoes, its tears and scuffs and loose threads and worn spots being perceived not so much as imperfections but as signs of its adaptability to the rough-and-tumble to which it has been subjected and the durability of a wise initial investment. On the other hand, one is tempted by some of the snappy new styles. Conceived this way, one vacillates.

Conceived differently, however, and in a more rigorous intellectual manner, aesthetic education can be taken to symbolize a process rather than an entity. In that sense I suspect it might serve a useful or even essential function, reminding us as scholars and practitioners to keep our eye on what matters and helping us define what it is that matters. For me, the most essential value of aesthetic education is not its name but its agenda. It is as a reminder and symbol of that agenda that the term "aesthetic education" may continue to prove useful.¹³

The aesthetic education agenda was given tangible and specific formulation in the national content standards, and I suspect that the influence of the standards will continue for quite a long time, especially since their potential for broadening and deepening the content of instruction

13. Reimer, "Essential and Nonessential," note 10, 213.

in music education has barely begun to be realized. But in the fullness of time, alternative philosophical views have begun to be articulated in music education and need to be examined as to what their promises and problems might be. In the final section of this chapter I will explain the perspective I will take in that examination (in Chapter 2), proposing a philosophical stance that can serve our profession well in a time of diversity of philosophical views such as has begun to occur. But before I present that discussion and those proposals, it is important to recognize an important historical shift in philosophical beliefs far larger and more encompassing than the events in the small corner of the philosophical enterprise that music education philosophy occupies.

The Challenges of Postmodernism

A sea change in philosophical perspective has occurred across Western cultures, one that is influential in the world beyond their boundaries. Confusing, messy, unclear, but not to be denied or ignored, that change is generally referred to as a movement from modernism to postmodernism. Music educators have not generally paid a great deal of attention to this shift in philosophy, but it is important to do so for several very significant reasons.

First, our tendency to let the larger world of philosophy outside music education go its own way, largely unnoticed, keeps us at the sidelines of the culture of which we are a part. That is unhealthy both for us and for our culture. For us, we tend to suffer from being parochial in our interests, in a narrowness of thought and action we display in our single-minded concentration on the techniques and methods of music making. We lose sight of broader issues, and people engaged in those issues lose sight of us as possible contributors. It is not good for us, individually or as a profession, to be as isolated from the intellectual life of our times as we sometimes tend to be.

It is also not good for our culture, which misses out on the valuable perspectives we can offer from the vantage point of our expertise in music and education. Our views need to be heard in the marketplace of ideas, because we have a great deal to offer. For this to occur we must be knowledgeable about the currents of thought swirling around us.

Second, music itself—our subject—is being influenced in a variety of ways by postmodernism, ways we are obligated to be aware of so we

can reflect our awareness in what and how we teach. If we are to be up to date about our subject we must be up to date on how it is changing as a result of recent philosophical tendencies. We are being inundated with musics from popular and multicultural sources, often strange and even threatening to music educators steeped in the Western classical tradition. Arguments are being made that these musics deserve and require as much respect and as much representation in music education as the standard literature to which we are accustomed. Traditional notions of musical value, musical purpose, musical “truths” are being challenged by postmodern thinkers. It is being claimed that many of our comfortable beliefs are no longer supportable and should even be abandoned because of their exclusionary and self-serving nature, hidden from view until postmodernism swept the cobwebs from our eyes. Music is politics, it is argued by some, and teaching music is a political act as much as or more than an artistic one.

On and on go the challenges to long-held assumptions. We as a profession cannot afford to ignore these challenges or dismiss them without giving them an educated hearing so that we can make informed decisions about them. We cannot adopt ideas we might find valuable, or argue against ideas we might find harmful, if we are unacquainted with the serious debates going on about the strengths and weaknesses of postmodern ideas. Knowledge, as the saying goes, is power—to judge, accept, deny, as our informed insights lead us to do. Being uninformed leaves us powerless to cope with the many effects on music, the arts, education, and society that postmodernism is having. The following discussion will, I hope, provide the beginnings of understanding for those not acquainted with this significant contemporary way of thinking, and serve as a useful review for those who are.

THE POSTMODERN MIND-SET

I use the term “mind-set” because postmodernism is a diverse collection of reactions to ideas and positions that developed in the period generally referred to as “modern.” I specifically do not call it “a philosophy” because it does not fulfill the usual expectations of what that term might mean. For example, one generally accepted notion of what is required to be considered a philosophy is a reasoned, structured set of propositions about an important aspect of the human condition and human practices. In the postmodern view, reason is seriously and severely questioned as to