

Abstract

Step into a music education classroom today and you will see, comparatively speaking, some very similar things: Musical instruments, children singing, posters of musical instruments; we all have the vision of what a music classroom should look like. Music educators today have teaching philosophies and teaching styles overwhelmingly based on using traditional methodologies. Although methods are, in a way, appropriate in some fundamental aspects, is it our intention to define musical engagement as a method? Without a method to accurately guide musical engagement, most music educators cannot assess success. This paper explores the pitfalls of methodology as well as the dissection of dehumanization in the classroom. A new 21st century perspective is touched upon which reinvigorates learning by reinstating the human element back into the classroom. This new outlook shall be referred to as the human perspective. This perspective involves really getting down to the students' level, teaching them eye-to-eye, and engaging students in a way where they do not become musical automations. In other words, this perspective encourages educators to teach fellow humans, rather than students.

When Method become Madness

Thomas Regelski writes,

"Music Education is not the employment of a 'method'. No single method or strategy is necessarily the best for any teacher, child, or school system. No teaching approach can be transported intact from one place and one teacher and used with equal success in another situation by another teacher. Teaching methods must be in accord with the nature of the students, their readiness, the instructional format of the class or school, and the personality, inclinations, skills, and weaknesses of the teacher" (Regelski, 1981).

Who hasn't seen an elementary music program run as an Orff or Kodaly classroom, or a choir who has rehearsed in a Gordon style? These methodologies, along with Dalcroze and Suzuki, dominate the music education framework in the United States. While the intention is to set up an easy learning environment for the students, in reality, classrooms are set up to fail, and in certain circumstances teachers use methodologies as a crutch. What does that really say about our 21st century classrooms? As educators, we strive to create equality in the classroom and equal opportunities for learners, but yet we constrict

their creative processes and abstract potential by confining them to the process of a singular method's framework. With music educators relying so heavily on the methodologies in place today, it is hard to step back and realize that these methodologies work only in a Walt Disney world, and that there are times where these methods simply do not work.

In their pure form, methodologies are most often designed to address a specific problem; the goal is success in solving a problem effectively and as effortlessly as possible. That defines an apt method and distinguishes it from others less worthy. However, we use methods in ways that they were not intended for. Since we are not teaching dancers how to execute a complex rhythm, which was Orff's goal, or preserve a country's cultural heritage from the brink of destruction by an invading army, such as Kodaly did, we are using the wrong tool for the wrong job. In the contemporary music education classroom, more often than not, the method moves from being a potential tool in the educator's arsenal to becoming the necessity. No longer are teachers teaching their fellow human beings, but are instead teaching the framework of multiple methodologies, which students must follow, almost always blindly (Benedict, 2009). In his stinging retirement article in the Wall Street Journal, *I Quit, I Think*, John Gatto states,

"I just can't do it anymore. I can't train children to wait to be told what to do; I can't train people to drop what they are doing when a bell sounds; I can't persuade children to feel some justice in their class placement when there isn't any, and I can't persuade children to believe teachers have valuable secrets they can acquire by becoming our disciples. That isn't true" (Gatto, 1991).

Gatto's biting criticisms present a simple fact- methods are used in a way that is oppressive and inhibits creativity in the classroom (Benedict, 2009).

There are many situations in the classroom where, simply stated, methods will not offer the proper solution. Students may not grasp the rhythmic concept of two against three by singing a playing a bourdon on the bass xylophone while the upper mallets play the triplet pattern (Orff), or by figuring out the rhythm on 'do-da' (Gordon). You must get down to the student's level and, eye-to-eye, break down the concept and no longer teach the method, but teach your fellow human. To descend to a student's level does not mean to dumb down or abandon a concept. It implies that a teacher willing to discard the role of an omnipotent educator and instead approach a student (or in the case, a fellow human) with a mindset that uses the child's own strengths, weaknesses, and abilities to work together to solve the problem. By abandoning the role of all-powerful overlord and instead approaching the student with a student's perspective, powerful connections can be made and a greater understanding will be achieved because an authentic, intrapersonal relationship now exists between student and teacher.

Jake, I like very much the paper to this point. Good use of citations, there is a mix narrative between your own insight and that gathered from the readings – both in class and outside. Be careful with construction issues and your language. Keep reviewing and editing, and don't use one phrase paragraphs for example. We should have by now a

sense of where the article is going however. This is still missing and essential for the final.

Eye to Eye

H. Jones (personal communication, November 4, 2010), states that (in response to a partially negative review received from a performance of the Brahms Requiem): “without communication, without acknowledging that we are humans and not music machines, of COURSE we won't get a cut-off right”. Why is it, that throughout the spectrum of music education, from kindergarten to the collegiate level, music educators, conductors, and musicians have lost sight of the fact that students are human beings rather than music machines? We do indeed have music machines today. They take the form of music software programs found on computers. They have the auto-tuning, rhythmic precision down to thousandths of a second, ranges that far outstrip that of normal human musicians, and perfection engrained into their programming. Why wouldn't we want our students to strive and try to emulate how well these programs can function? After all, sit in on any choral rehearsal, and you will hear “That's out of tune, fix it”. “Fix that rhythm, it's sloppy”. “That note isn't right”. “Let's make it perfect this time”. It sounds like we are talking to computers rather than to human musicians. Music machines are all over our classroom. They are the students that barely get the concept, yet we skip over for times sake. The student then blindly replicates what is being done because no understanding, and no connection, is being made. We cannot expect students to willingly pursue music in schools when do not treat them as human music-makers but instead perfect musical automations. Students shun music in schools and flock instead to music within their community not because it is better, but because they can interact with music in a way that isn't perfect, isn't judgmental, and is not forced. We must stop treating our students like musical automations and instead as people engaged in music. Don't shove perfection, a emphasis of the western world, down student's throat. Perfection is simply a construct that does not exist, whether we want to admit it or not. Everything has a flaw, and downside, strengths and weaknesses. To strive for perfection in music making is to say “play (or sing) like the computer does”. What does the student get out of striving for perfection? Any perspectives or roads that do not correlate with the path for perfection are instantly thrown out, and the student is no longer interacting with music. They are instead replicating sound. When we treat our students like musical-automations, our students no longer make music in a pure sense. They instead are regulated to making music the same way in which musical software does: blindly and apathetically.

The concept is very interesting but you need to do a better job connecting it to the rest of the paper. Think of small introductions and small transitions. A paper cannot be a collection of sub-sections, even when the subsection is quite strong, as this is.

What is college taking away?

Why do we need to go to college to become a teacher? We are given tools of course to become effective educators and skills that help us manage the classroom and hardships that will arise, but throughout the four plus years in academia, we lose our instinctual

drive and instead replace it with practicum and theorems that make us view the student from an exterior perspective, rather than an interior perspective. Is basic human interaction not an inherent trait of humanity? Is it not one of our most valued and admirable attributes? What are we doing to the base value of being able to communicate with another human being at an equal level, despite age? In college, we are always encouraged to get to know our students, and to always relate to them. Getting to know a student does not just mean knowing their name. How can we solve problems with an individual, if we don't bother to know how the individual works, how they interact with others, and how we interact with each other. In the 21st century where technology is king, society is already losing the art of conversation "...basic human interaction is reduced to memorizing where letters are on a flat surface.....that's so weird.....conversations are immediate, and learning isn't something that people are used to doing anymore. It's either mastery or ignorance" (H. Jones, personal communication, November 4, 2010). Peoples' identities, their voices and worlds, are being reduced down to a screen. People define themselves through their FaceBook Page or their Twitter account. Their individuality and their voice are combinations of 0's and 1's on a computer screen. What charge does this leave the educator with? It is to connect with an individual and help to develop their own voice outside of the computer. If not, we are not only embrace treating our students like musical-automations, but we also neglect to effectively connect with the student by becoming ignorant of the student's world. Critical Pedagogy values honoring a child's world (Abrahams, 2007). How can we do this if the child doesn't know what his or her world is yet? It is our mission to help the child realize who they are, who they can become, and how they can get there using elements they already know from the outside world, coupled with instructional guidance provided within the classroom.

What music education needs is an abandonment of the ritualistic appraisal of methodology and instead embrace a return to the most important element in education- the human element. The Amish have a saying: "Live in the world, not of it" (Fisher, 2009). Living of the earth, being consumed by the elitist societal trends, complex pedagogical issues, oppressive and demoralizing methodologies/practices, and moral conundrums that plague our society, is where music education is today. Shouldn't our classroom instead live in the world? That classroom seeks a freedom from oppression, a freedom to express creatively without discrimination or belittlement, actual conversation between two humans rather than an all-knowing teacher and a blank slated child. Abrahams writes that the purpose of music education is to empower music-making and enact a change in perspective in both the world of the student and the teacher. There is no method that can do this, because music education is contextual (Abrahams, 2007). Trust music-making takes place within the students' world outside of the school room, where the student decides what is important to them and pursue their true own musical desires (Higgins & Campbell, 2010).

This is great! Very strong and critical. The subsection starts disconnected from the rest but the last paragraph brings it back together. So half way there!

Long live Musiking!

In Julian Agyeman's book, *Sustainable Communities and the Challenges of Environmental Justice*, he talks about just sustainability and how it is more than just the environment. Rather, the people, cultures, economies, and societies all need to be sustained as well (Agyeman, 2005). In a society where the 'human' is being replaced by the process, that is, where things like automated car functions, smart phones and smart homes, and robots reduce the necessity for humans to interact with their surroundings or each other, the obligation of every educator must be to sustain the humanity in education. This is not to say that we should shun away technology, but we must be sure that what we are instilling in our students is music, not method. Tim Ezzo once said, "Jake, I am not sure what the problem is. You've been working with Seth for over an hour on two notes. Stop teaching the notes. Teach the music. Let the kid play" (T. Ezzo, personal communication, August 2010). Let us stop teaching students to fit within the framework of a certain pedagogical construct, and let us instead join the student in building music for the lifespan (Myers, 2008). As music educators, we assume the role of music critic more often than we do music maker. We pass judgment on the music that the child is making: whether it is aesthetically pleasing, whether it fits the context of what the lesson or curriculum intended, and whether it even can be considered to be music, just to name a few. Music is unique in the fact that, as stated early, it is contextual. What is aesthetically displeasing to some may be quite pleasing to others. To have one individual assuming control over the capabilities of individualistic musical interpretation is not only wrong, but is a horrid crime. We pride ourselves as residing in the field where each individual makes a difference, and each voice matters. We must stop and reflect however, because more often than not, the voice which is *allowed* to be heard is not the voice that *wants* to be heard. Perhaps we can stop being music critics and constantly try to reformat what is acceptable for a students' musical experience and instead be music-makers who help students appreciate and engage in the act of musiking.

Conclusions

There is a sign that hangs in an elementary class I once visited. It read: "It takes a village to make music. It takes music to make a village". In the 21st century, we are facing a music education system that is reliant on methodologies whose frameworks are shackling the very convention of musical creativity and expressionism, programs that are dehumanizing future educators and ripping the tight social fabric of humanic interaction that childhood is so much based off of, and classrooms where the teacher is the ultimate judge as to what is musical and what is not musical. We must step back; we must stop living of the world and learn to live in the world. Teaching is a simple thing. It is the interaction between to human beings. It is two human beings working together, eye to eye, to create a new idea or to spark a change in perspective. Maybe we should step back and reflect- do I emulate WHO I am or WHAT I do? Currently, we emulate what we do; we emulate that I teach music, I perform music, I compose music, I criticize what is music, I conduct music. Should we not take the path of who we are; because we all are human. Take the method and framework out of the classroom. Instead, let it create its

own form and own shape which is a result of the reinstitution of the most important perspective in music education: the human perspective.

Content is A. The structure of the paper, connectors, fluidity, etc is a B-. Since the paper was delivered quite late the final grade is B.
Keep this up and see a great final paper coming up!! Really strong improvement in terms of the quality of the content!

Reference List

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