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THE PROBLEMS OF BAND

AN INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article examines the educational function of the North American wind band program. Issues such as band education's methodological control, perceived lack of self-reflection or inquiry, its insecurity concerning program legitimacy, and the systemic fear that seems to permeate its history provide the framework for this exploration. With a philosophical eye toward the future of school-based instrumental music education each author brings perspective to the task of critiquing an institution that has taken on the seemingly sacrosanct and inviolable trappings of tradition and ritual.

INTRODUCTION¹

The North American university music program reflects a gamut of interests that intersect in ways that often defy articulation. As educational and musical traditions of various kinds are kept alive, maintained, and passed on, few programs in our Schools of Music are more mythologized than the college wind band. The

problems of the American wind band, we argue, stem from an inheritance that is overwhelmed by tradition, an *episteme* that represents its success in terms that are very familiar to the spirit of American competitiveness, efficiency, exceptionalism, and means-ends pragmatism. Persons who come to and from replicas of these historic programs are individuals submerged by the rules of its practice and are thus likely to embody class situations that are bound by its discourses: belief in strong leadership, belief in commitment to a larger collective, belief in meritocracy. Internal critique, consequently, appears inviolable. In an effort to interrupt the historical frames that prevent growth and change, we submit an analysis of this culture, undertaken from inside and out. Employing equal parts empathy, introspection, and objectivity—dispositions that Margaret Mead cites as critical to the efforts of description and interpretation²—we begin from the perspective of tradition and its relationship to educational practice.

Randall Everett Allsup

One way of conceiving teaching is to consider it a type of participant action, the transformation of a problem or problematic situation into some form of temporary resolution. In the case of school-based instrumental music instruction, this participant action starts the first time a clarinetist attaches a reed to a ligature and with the help of his teacher plays an open G. It may take the shape of a large group rehearsal where as in H. Owen Reed's *La Fiesta Mexicana* difficult rhythms are worked out (and then worked out again and again). Or it might take the form of the director herself, studying the score, memorizing page turns, and planning rehearsal objectives; she may talk about whether or how much Reed's *La Fiesta Mexicana* reflects Mexican culture or Mexican music. At each arrival point, there is satisfaction in a goal achieved and something new is known. Additional problems are revealed and the process of inquiry begins all over again.

There is another view of instrumental music teaching, also based in action that looks quite similar to what I have just imagined. There is the same busy activity of rehearsals, practice, and self-study, but approaches to problem solving are conceptualized differently. In this example, a rehearsal of *La Fiesta Mexicana* with its myriad rhythmic challenges, is expected to proceed at a measured clip. Surprises are an indication of poor planning and time spent entertaining questions or exploring alternatives is made at the expense of learning more repertoire. Leadership, or in this tradition "directorship," is a highly prized commodity, favoring decisive action informed by extant intelligence, "best practice" professionalism, and custom. Disagreements between teacher and learner are rarely allowed to surface, and they must never come about publicly. Problems are seen as frustrating obstacles, impediments that get in the way of learning, and knowing

something new is evaluated by the satisfactory conclusion of a completed work that is performed according to institutional standards.

THE PROBLEM OF TRADITION

I have been both kind of band director. In the latter scenario, conceiving my role as conductor more than music educator, I brought years of musical knowledge to a Bronx neighborhood where I directed a high school band. My first few years of work there (some of it teaching, most of it training) made any number of my students miserable. I taught the way I was taught and I certainly did *not* see my expertise as a problem. Although unaware of John Dewey at the time, I believed as he did that “the function of a historical subject matter is to enrich and liberate the more direct and personal contacts of life by furnishing their context, their background, and outlook.”³ I believed in the value of what I was teaching and wanted to induct my students into a tradition that had enriched and liberated *my* life. The problem, as I see it now, was less a question of musical content or what Dewey called “historical subject matter,” but more an issue of educative means. I was confusing our tradition with the traditional way our tradition is taught.

I realize at the offset that instrumental music instruction must include some form of repetitive skill-building. The term training in its best light can be analogous to what Dewey calls “habits of mind” and anyone who has conducted a band, painted a watercolor, or played the drums knows the importance of the Greek word *tekhné* or craft.⁴ Yet band culture has a teaching tradition that goes beyond the normative concept of training or *tekhné* to what behavioral psychologists call “conditioning.” This is a philosophy or approach to general education that has a long and enduring history in North America from the early experiments of E. L. Thorndike and B. F. Skinner to today’s prescriptive curricula such as “Success for All.” Early and mid-twentieth century theories of behavior-based learning, bearing the ecclesiastical mantle of science, were ready-made for band programs. Learning was seen as not only controllable but predictable. We needed control. Did we or did we not have large numbers of students seated together with loud instruments in their hands? We *needed* conditioned behaviors. Did not the physical skills necessary to attach a reed to a ligature, blow an open G, and ultimately to play as an ensemble make *control* our foremost priority? To insure stability and thus productivity norm-governed roles hardened around the physical engineering of instrumental performance and rational, controllable methods of instruction. Let us not forget furthermore, that the governing philosophy of today’s wind ensembles and concert bands sprung more from a military ethos than the aesthetic divertissements of Mozart’s *Gran Partita* or Gounod’s *Petite Symphonie*.⁵

THE PROBLEM OF METHOD

In 1939, band director and music educator Theodore Normann promoted ten basic principles of instrumental music instruction. These included “a generous amount of rote teaching and imitative drill, keeping every child busy, and remembering that the attention span of the average child is rather small.”⁶ The nature of children, in this view, meant that any form of goal attainment necessitates external control through techniques of manipulated environmental stimulation. Prompt feedback informs the organism to adapt and repetition conditions subsequent responses. Sixty years later, in an interview published by *The Instrumentalist*, a California band director boasts, “I follow the 10-second rule, meaning I rarely stop for more than 10 seconds. I have had colleagues time me to be sure I quickly diagnose a problem, give instruction, and start the ensemble playing again. I don’t dwell on anything for long because students grow restless. If you lose their mental concentration, the rehearsal is over.”⁷ John Manfredi is more generous, arguing that “a general rule for maximizing student attentiveness and time on-task is to limit the director’s comments to ten- to twenty-second intervals.” By contrast, “student performance episodes must be significantly longer—twenty seconds to two minutes—so that students become more active participants and learners.”⁸

Again, this philosophy echoes back to the early twentieth century, perhaps to the arrival of Fordism, which boldly conflated economic theory and behavioral science. The assembly line as fact and metaphor spoke to our American belief in progress and prosperity—so much so that today, the triumphant logic of conveyor belt efficiency goes barely remarked upon. Take for example a text from college band director Eugene Corporon whose peculiar title “The Quantum Conductor,” recommends severe almost motorized efficiency in the band room. He writes, “Keep the tempo of the rehearsal moving. Use instructions that are simple and doubt free. Avoid confusion.”⁹ Concerning problem-solving, Corporon suggests: “1. Identify the problem; 2. Recommend a solution; 3. Experience the solution; 4. Catalogue the feeling that caused the change so that muscle memory can help you duplicate the solution; 5. Acknowledge the accomplishment or change.”¹⁰ From this example, you cannot help but visualize a conveyor belt of highly effective instructional content and a measured and rational process of learning that is safe, predictable, and above all confusion free.

Was it the application of hard science to instructional method that produced our perfectly rational “Fordist Method” of instrumental music teaching? Our tradition operates a practice that is not just characterized but is *defined* by its systematic or orderly arrangement. Above all, our rehearsal methods are fundamentally concerned with techniques that lead to an ending. Just as rationalism celebrates the conclusive, who would argue that the value of a music program

is determined by the quality of its concerts and not the work that preceded it? It could be said, furthermore, that a detached or disinterested director best facilitates these clinical experiences or processes. You may think that I am being needlessly provocative, but the term “clinical experience” is the term of choice when referring to student teaching *practica*.¹¹ In any case, a kind of clinical aggregate seems to shape how we see and educate our students.

I do not dispute that methodologies—viewed through the scientific imagination or the band tradition—can be highly creative or passionate for that matter. What I would like you to consider nonetheless, is that our band tradition is one piece of a larger music education antinomy—a dialectic, perhaps, that regards teaching and learning as a knowable and predictable science while simultaneously cultivating an orientation toward performance and interpretation that is passionate, inventive, and imaginative. We are faced with hard questions. How do we nurture artistry despite the predictability of its historical means and methods? Where does objectivity and control end and aesthetic inquiry begin? Must teaching and performing exist in tension? Where is the student located in this equation? Who are we serving? For whom is the band experience a highly passionate, inventive, and imaginative effort?

Cathy Benedict

Music education has never been considered a basic discipline, nor has mucking been considered a legitimate way of knowing. Each of us has internalized this construction and more likely than not at one point in time reacted in anger and frustration to these perceived messages and assumptions. Rather than interrogating the societal implications and problematics embedded in the unexamined internalization of second-class citizen, we often choose to bear resentment and anger. Hence, amongst our own musical communities—and consequently more powerful than what society thinks of us—we stratify and position ourselves in ways that further delimit what musical experiences are most worth having. This is made manifest in many ways: space allocation, programming opportunities, department funding, scholarships, advertising visibility, and so on. As evident as these inequalities may be, however, more problematic than these tangible issues of legitimacy are the ways in which certain ensembles and certain repertoire are perceived by music educators as more legitimate than others.

THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY

What is at the heart of these issues of legitimacy and worth and in what ways are we complicit? Obviously, there are the institutional pressures as to what programs receive funds, as well as demands from outside communities that consequently privilege certain groups over others. Yet, at a systemic level, our need to

be respected and perceived as legitimate reveals a certain lack of agency. Our own culpability and seeming willingness to engage in a discourse of rigor and directorship (to which Randall referred) divides musical communities and obscures issues of power and control, effectively reproducing oppressed/oppressor relationships.

Engaging in critical reflection that challenges our actions reveals embedded issues of power and control that speak of this oppressed/oppressor relationship. Paulo Freire suggests that through the lived and enculturated experiences by which thoughts and behaviors are shaped, the oppressed internalize beliefs of not being worthy, good enough, smart enough, or capable enough and as such never have a sense of who they are or who they can be.¹² And consequently, as the oppressed have no sense of the transformative possibilities of who they are and what they could be, they behave in the only way they know to behave, the only way that has been modeled for them to behave, and that is the way of the oppressor.

But what does this have to do with the wind band program and the wind band conductor, and who is the oppressor? In this case, the oppressor refers to what counts as legitimate ways of knowing in society and therefore universities and schools, and consequently, amongst ourselves. In the case of wind band directors, one way hegemony is often made manifest is through the careful maintenance of the orchestral classical repertoire celebrated and revered by a cultured audience, the careful maintenance of the venerated wind band conductor, and the accompanying normative practices for transmitting this repertoire. Clearly, we are not oppressed on a level comparable to many peoples and cultures. Yet, we not only engage in behaviors that speak of an oppressed relationship, but behaviors that suggest a willingness to relinquish control of our destiny by so often allowing it to be defined by others.

Whether we think of ourselves as such or not, conductors are educators. As educators who are, even at the most basic level, ostensibly interested in exposing students to multicultural musics as well as the traditional wind band repertoire and even teaching our students how to move into the world as independent musicians with the skills to make music, we need to consider more mindfully the roles and practices we are modeling. As we give up the right to control and determine our own destiny in favor of transmission of skills and representation of expertise, we may want to contemplate that in our quest to be considered a basic or a legitimate course of study, we reproduce systems in which responsibility is not just dissuaded, but abdicated.

In the quest to become part of the greater narrative of legitimate course of study, little has been done to create the space necessary for critical examination and reflection. The perceived success of the wind band paradigm makes it particularly difficult to pose and frame questions that would challenge assumed (normative) practices and goals. However, defending a particular paradigm by

perpetuating models created by others or complaining that the wind band is the step-child serves to demonstrate that the paradigm is dying and perhaps even dead, a theme Randall will take up later. As such, we do well to remind ourselves that legitimacy is a construct defined and wielded by those who perceive themselves as legitimate.

We would also do well to remind ourselves of our culpability in that legitimating process. Our efforts to live up to a label named by others deflects attention away from the systemic issues and actually serves to keep us in our place. So while we think we have control of a musical destiny by reproducing great works of culture and brandishing a methodology grounded in transmission we are as much in control as those subjugated students are in the wind band who serve this particular end. This method (read discourse) is dictated by the need to remain in control and cover and reproduce the content or the repertoire. Hence, both conductors and students are oppressed in this search for perfection; conductors as the tool of the repertoire and students as the handmaiden for the sound, becoming, as Lamb writes, “. . . no less than the master’s tool; not more than the usual vessel for the sound.”¹³ By teaching to this content and wielding what is perceived as normative practices, we model a role to our students that replicates the behaviors of the oppressed/oppressor relationship, effectively silencing alternative discourse. And if in a desire to engage in broader educative possibilities or an alternative discourse we choose not to teach to this repertoire or take on differing pedagogical practices, we risk conflict, “both subtle and the directly destructive,” in being thought of as abnormal and deviant, even weak and ineffectual by both students and colleagues.¹⁴ Hardly qualities of an effective wind band conductor.

THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL HISTORY

It is possible to consider wind band programs or any instrumental/choral program as a social institution. One of the inherent givens of social institutions is that control depends on the maintenance of the status quo. Take for example, Randall’s citation of the 10- and 20-second teachers, the get-in-there, fix-it-for-them, and move-on instructors. This particular methodology allows the conductor control over the environment and the educative process. Framing a rehearsal goal (and hence the curricular and long term goals of the ensemble) around how quickly the conductor can fix something the student musician has done limits and defines intentionality with the music or rehearsal. The reasons (and use) of the students in the rehearsal are limited and in a sense guaranteed, safe, and predictable. Thus the educative goal of this particular kind of rehearsal functions as control. Legitimacy, for the conductor, is conferred and reified in this ability to (with the minimal amount of rehearsal) serve the desired ends of producing the most legitimate interpretation of the music. Yet what are the results? If you

were to observe this rehearsal (or be involved in the rehearsal) there may seem little to question in this transmission process in which it appears that students are engaged, involved, and learning. Yet again, what are the long-term results embedded in an educative process bereft of critical, mindful, and even individual engagement? And how has, as O'Toole points out, the "normalizing discourse . . . masked the power relations that serve specific interests and intentionally create silences and gaps" in the rehearsal setting?¹⁵

If we were to take the model of the wind band conductor as wielder of a particular method of teaching that is grounded in objective ends-means goals and examine this through the framework of the construction of a social institution we may better problematize this seemingly straight-forward process. Thomas Regelski raises several points that allow us to unmask these issues when addressing the particular practices embedded in such institutions.¹⁶ And while I have used this framework elsewhere to situate a similar argument for music education in general, these points bear repeating in the context of a wind band program.¹⁷ Regelski points out that this normative and normalizing discourse "generate(s) equally taken-for-granted practices and values."¹⁸ As such, wind band programs could be thought of as "proselytizing machinery for attracting, then initiating new conscripts (in this case, band members)" that generates a "historicity of approved practices that are passed on as 'good' and accepted unthinkingly by conscripts (band members) as received wisdom."¹⁹ Finally, social institutions have "experts (wind band conductors) who function as 'managers' of the institutional knowledge base, guardians and defenders of the status quo, and gatekeepers for controlling admission."²⁰

Students enter teacher education programs certain there is very little to think about, discuss, or challenge throughout their pre-service education because, "Really," they will tell me, "my band consistently won highest rankings at the state competitions, so why should I change my thinking about my own band program and my wind band conductor?" This unwillingness (inability) to confront their subjected role and to recognize their role in this community and to consider alternatives, including imagining or accepting a conductor who engages in practices that may be construed as not in control/abnormal, serves to reproduce the hegemony of the wind band program as social institution.²¹ bell hooks writes that, "To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination."²² In order to do this, we must first examine our own complicity in perpetuating and replicating particular role models and social institutions that do not lead toward a citizenry that takes on the tools of challenge, interrogation, and examining who we are, how we came to be, and who we could be. But perhaps asking wind band conductors to consider this as a significant and imperative goal may seem to be stretching the job a bit too far.

Randall is right, we do not ask our students to think, let alone be vigilant. Of course, music teachers are not alone in this endeavor, but that is what makes it crucial to make problematic the particular systems of reproduction that occur through our methodologies and practices. If we desire to be viewed as legitimate in the greater scheme of general studies we might consider that not only must we challenge the construct of legitimacy but that the educational paradigm of rote and recitation and teacher as transmitter has shifted. General studies disciplines are more concerned with emphasis on “inquiry as a way of achieving knowledge and understanding about the world,” as well as incorporating “current research and theory about how students learn.”²³ Even mathematicians have moved toward the “recognition of mathematics as more than a collection of concepts and skills to be mastered,”²⁴ and view this language as one filled with “power and beauty.”²⁵

Of course, we can continue to believe that transmitting content and repertoire affords legitimacy. There is comfort to be found there. Inquiry and problem posing, however, suggests discomfort, uncertainty, and disorder. In addition, while many may be content with the status quo I am convinced that there are as many if not more who would like to challenge this existing paradigm.

Randall Everett Allsup

Issues of control are always connected with fear, and *fear* I contend is unexamined and out of balance within the band tradition. Fear permeates our college wind ensembles and high school auditions; it frames the private studio, the juries we require, and those high-stakes, end-of-year recitals. First chair winners and last chair losers, numerical ratings, good years and bad years, statewide rankings: where is *education* in this compendium? What educational function—beyond winning and losing—do these hierarchies and categories serve? As leaders in this field, we need to accept that fear is our responsibility and something we can change. As Cathy pointed out, fear does not exist *a priori*; it is constructed and maintained through systems of control.

Most directors would argue that an intrinsically motivated student produces the most reliable performance results, yet fear is often seen as an inevitable though reluctant consequence of the business. So argues band expert and motivational speaker Tim Lautzenheiser in “The Essential Element to a Successful Band: The Teacher, The Conductor, The Director, The Leader,” a text whose title indicates that education is just a fraction (25%) of what we do.²⁶ Concerning our role as teachers, Lautzenheiser states, “[I]t is important to provide an environment where [band] students will choose to move forward of their own volition rather than await some outside force to manipulate their behavior to accommodate the desired results.”²⁷ While this is an optimal condition for growth, we should not rule out the judicial use of fear, he suggests. “Fear has long been an effective

stimulant to alter behavior . . . however a judicious use of this powerful tool is advised. It should be used sparingly and only in extreme circumstances.”²⁸ Adds Lautzenheiser, “Rest assured, there will be a needed time for healing for both director and students once fear is purposely injected into the environment.”²⁹ Would that praise provide a counter-weight, but even this is cautioned against. Writes Manfredo, “an occasional expression of general satisfaction (‘Band, that was excellent’) is acceptable but should rarely be used.”³⁰ Why? . . . Why?

Now, I do not mean to make sinners out of you and anyone within our profession. I stand before you with no small amount of fear. As I speak, I am afraid that I will be misunderstood. I am afraid that my thinking might be specious or needlessly hurtful. Nor can I claim that I have been the perfect teacher-director, always able to find the right balance in matters of education and performance. Yet I strongly believe that reforming band and band education must require articulating our vulnerabilities and examining our fears. I believe that an open and honest inquiry will lead not only to healthier learning environments and better teaching, but possible insights into the longevity—the future—of instrumental music instruction.

THE PROBLEM OF FEAR

Let us return to the problem of fear. While fear may be an effective stimulant to alter the behavior of others, what would change if we were a little less conclusive—a little more fearful—about what we do and why we do it? We know that teaching is a daily exercise in vulnerability, yet we are expected to act as if it were not. I am reminded of Parker Palmer who suggests that every active encounter—that is, every encounter between teacher and student with which there is an *active* desire for connection—contains within it a dialectic of vulnerability: part hope and fear, part promise and peril.³¹ I contend that to examine fear in an educational setting is to begin a process of self-critique. Fear shines a mirror on ourselves and if the reflection is not hopeful or full of concern, we may not be engaged in an active teaching encounter. Take for example the fear that we will be judged by the performance of our students. If this fear leads a band director to take short cuts, if it leads her to cut students from her ensemble or take an authoritarian approach to rehearsals, if this fear disregards the role of student as the focus of learning, it is inherently *mis*-educative. Likewise, to be overly confident in one’s role as director and to teach *without* vulnerability is to foreclose possible connections to one’s students and their world.

The role of director requires us to act without fear, to be invulnerable and resolute. This is the first lesson we learn as young conductors. Yet we pay an existential price for this kind of make-believe. I would like to call attention to a particular kind of band fear that is doing our profession harm—a fear that is anal-

ogous to dread. Recall Kierkegaard's definition of dread, the feeling we get when we stand at the edge of a mountain and dare to look down. Dread is the moment we examine our mortality but choose to look away. Band culture shares this fear of death; we may look away but the knowledge of what we have seen haunts us.

Does what I love matter to my students? Asking this question is analogous to looking over the cliff. It is more than fear; it is a consideration of death. *Does what I love matter to my students?* Will my art, my music, live on? This is our greatest fear as the very lives of our programs depend upon its answer. Yet, rather than entering an inquiry of hope, rather than taking a "leap of faith" as Kierkegaard would say and engaging in this topic as our "fundamental project," we become what existentialists Kierkegaard and Sartre call "inauthentic" to our potential selves.³² We make the challenge someone's other than our own. We blame "society," yet we accede to "the crowd."³³ We engineer programs that appeal to one kind of student; we offer one kind of music; we prescribe one method of teaching. We become complacent, too comfortable.³⁴ The students who do not fit our model are not our problem—we are satisfied with ten percent of the school population we enroll without considering that one hundred percent of our students enjoy music. Mostly, I think, we are afraid to open the bandroom doors to more than what tradition tells us band should be. Recalling Dewey's notion of a living tradition, that "the function of a historical subject matter is to enrich and liberate the more direct and personal contacts of life by furnishing their context, their background, and outlook," I see it as our task to connect a tradition to lived life, even as our students lives may be strikingly different from our own. I have often heard directors talk about not wanting to spoil their students with the music of John Williams. The students on the other hand just want a little bit of fun.

For Kierkegaard, as for Sartre and other existentialists, it is looking at death that makes life more meaningful. Life when lived fully is like riding a wild stallion, wrote Kierkegaard while the unengaged life, the life of quiet fear and conformity, is like falling asleep in a hay wagon.³⁵ "I conceive it my task to create difficulties everywhere," wrote Kierkegaard.³⁶ This is to say, I choose to engage in the most difficult questions. I will "undertake to make something harder" and transcend the limitations of historicity.³⁷ "The crowd," a metaphor for participating in an unreflective tradition, "is the untruth."³⁸ The charge is to see ourselves as individuals within a history or tradition and meanwhile declare our freedom and face our fear.

A truly active encounter, one in which there is concern and care between parties, often finds teacher and learner in a horizontal space. Away from podiums and seating charts—away from "the crowd"—I have tried to envision a less symphonic bandroom where in addition to large ensemble performances, students rehearse, practice, and compose collectively, like a garage band. In such a scenario where band students are writing and performing their own music in small

groups, I asked Luke a student I worked with what it meant when students and teacher collaborate. He replied:

If you made a suggestion to us about doing something in the piece, I would consider whatever you said, think about what was going on in the song, and if I could see merit in it, incorporate it. I think I speak for most of us in my group when I say that we wouldn't do something just because you said it. If there's something we don't like, it won't happen, but if your suggestion shows us a new thing that we've never thought of yet, I'm all for it, and I'll be glad to have learned something new.³⁹

Notice that there is nothing automatic in this setting; there are no conditioned responses, no conclusions, and legitimacy, or as Luke calls it *merit* as something earned not inherited. It is both thrilling and unsettling to hear a student speak frankly like this. I cannot say that Luke's response does not frighten me. This is an example, I think, of what Palmer means when he describes teaching as a daily exercise in vulnerability. Perhaps this is a habit of mind, a form of training, that an evolving tradition—a *living tradition*—might acquire.

THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE

We have been asking some very difficult questions, questions that deal with fear, survival, and change. We are talking about the future of instrumental music and while I would like to offer the garage band and the type of student that participates in a garage band as a possible model for meaningful and relevant music making, I realize that this solution may not work for everyone. I do believe, however, we are charged to expand our conception of instrumental music. We are charged to individualize our tradition.

I wish to close with the following quotation, one that reveals a band student's honesty and vulnerability. I asked Colin, another research participant, if he would ever give up wind ensemble for his garage band.

Well, I really like the [electric] guitar a lot. It's more fun to me than the trumpet. The trumpet is a good instrument—I'm not dissing the trumpet, or anything. I love the trumpet. If it were possible for me to play guitar in band, I'd do it. You can't do that obviously. So I play trumpet as a secondary thing, so I can be involved in band. I like it a lot, it's fun and everything, but I like the guitar a lot more. I practice trumpet because I have to for my grade. I practice guitar because I really want to—you know, to get better. The music is very similar, but to me there's more possibilities with guitar.⁴⁰

I find this statement uncomfortable, but somewhat reassuring. Colin does not conceptualize instrumental music the same way we do. He does not see the band

experience as an either-or, as survival or death. Rather, he sees flexibility where we see fear. Colin would open the bandroom doors where we might want them shut. Nor is he abandoning Holst for Jimmy Hendricks. He is demonstrating an elasticity of taste that is, I think, far more complex and nuanced than that of the average band director. Perhaps he is a better model for music educators than John Paynter or William Revelli.

Cathy Benedict

Colin is a teacher/learner who has resisted the socialization process inherent in many wind bands. Colin's ease at remaining resistant to an indoctrination process bears witness to the possibilities of the fluidity of music education and as such what it means to see the educative process as reciprocal.

If I were to ask wind band conductors what they want for their students after they leave the confines of rehearsals and performances and move out into the world, those answers might range from the cultivation of independent musicianship to a heightened sense of becoming more musical. Out of all of the answers one might offer I cannot imagine that anyone would suggest obedience. And yet, obedience is what is cultivated if we are unable or unwilling to facilitate a rehearsal space in which students as well as conductors negotiate the meanings and understandings of both the ways in which dominant discourse frames subjective positions of musician, teacher, and learner, and also what music and music making is as well.

THE PROBLEM OF RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity lies in our ability to negotiate and to engage in give-and-take rather than imitation. Jerome Bruner reminds us that you cannot have reciprocity and "the demand that everybody learn the same thing or be 'completely' well rounded in the same way all the time."⁴¹ Seeing the need for give-and-take would perhaps contextualize the possibility of opening oneself up to self-critique. I am not suggesting that we admit to our students we are not prepared to teach the music or that we fear our conducting skills are weak. This is not engaging in self-critique; this is being unprepared. I am suggesting that we bring our students into our own pursuit of larger questions that are located in the choices we make. For example, why not include students in our struggles to consider one interpretation over another? Imagine where this thinking-out-loud process might lead? How could students not benefit from discussing the musical, historical, and sociological issues embedded in these decisions? They would come to realize that these decisions are part of the process of engaging in musical experiences and as such our ways of engaging in and with music (and thus the world) would be constituted not by a prevailing discourse of obedience and subjugation, but rather one

of re-creation, or as Freire would frame this, “The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own.”⁴²

It is precisely that we are human beings who engage in communicative acts with other human beings that we are not just teachers, but teachers/learners who are “jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.”⁴³ It is not that we are either conductors or music teachers. In fact, this is exactly the kind of binary thinking that both prevents ambiguity and fluidity and is “crucial to the maintenance of group oppression.”⁴⁴ Rather than either/or thinking, hooks suggests the need to engage in both/and thinking which would allow us to imagine those spaces and opportunities for Randall’s “appropriated garage band hybrid.” Both/and thinking would frame a discourse that would encourage freedom to model self-critique and all the struggles and challenges embedded in that endeavor.

Paul Woodford points out that “Performance is obviously important to society, but in the absence of intellectualizing and public conversation about the nature and role of music and music education therein, performance and skills-based approaches can lead to the continued isolation and marginalization of music education from the educational and social mainstreams.”⁴⁵ Methods of teaching that govern control and time management and prevent discourse that challenges normative practices are at odds with stated goals even such as good musicianship and musicality. They are particularly at odds with creating and facilitating community as “an understanding of how to go on in music as opposed to knowing about it.”⁴⁶ These methods preclude a pedagogy of engagement and transformation and thus musical expression of one’s own understanding.

If we buy into the “10- or 20-second rule” method of teaching or any other “method” that is predominantly teacher-centered, teacher transmitted, and content/repertoire driven, then we are deluding ourselves if we think our students are actually taking on the responsibility of independent musicianship or becoming more musical. With these methods of teaching students internalize obedience to the director, alienated from the process of musicking, and are essentially “filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system.”⁴⁷

THE PROBLEM OF PEDAGOGY

Estelle Jorgensen stresses the need for students to have the “opportunity to grapple with timeless philosophical and spiritual questions.”⁴⁸ In light of this, we might consider the wind band paradigm through a lens that would encourage pedagogical and curricular engagements that address the questions, Who and how will our students be in this world? How can I encourage all of us to question, examine, and interrogate who we are, how we are, and who we can be? What am

I doing to “open spaces in which teachers and students can engage in dialogue together in order to name [our] worlds and better understand [our] realities?”⁴⁹ Perhaps it seems there is not enough time to address or even create the space to welcome these questions. Yet the construct of time is complex; with or without our facilitation questions are being asked, answered, and internalized by default. The issue is whether we choose to afford the space for those that move us toward something other than reproducing normative practices.

Students in our wind band programs will leave. Many of them will become private studio teachers, even more of them high school band directors, and some even college professors. Like it or not, we are role models for our students. We need to ask ourselves, “What is wrong with a particular educative model that perpetuates systems of domination and that serve less than transformative endpoints? Who does this model serve? And more importantly, who is not served?” These band members are unconsciously learning to think in the manner of either/or, teacher pleasing, non-transformative ways. They are learning that they are not good enough, smart enough, or capable enough.

The oppression suffered by us because of an internalization of inadequacy cannot be laid on our students. We need to be cognizant of the hegemony or the power structure that is (as hooks writes), “perpetuated by institutional and social structures; by the individuals who dominate, exploit, or oppress; and by the victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo.”⁵⁰ Alienating our students from the creative process sets up a duality between how they have known music to be constructed and created—whether through a garage band model, or jazz band, or even a chamber ensemble experience (in which subjugated behaviors would not just be unwelcome, but not tolerated) and how they experience wind band programs in which they have no voice.

This process of alienation also tends to solidify the image of conductors as narcissistic and even “pathologically narcissistic”⁵¹ or as “experts who function as ‘managers’ of the institutional knowledge base, guardians and defenders of the status quo, and gatekeepers for controlling admission.”⁵² I do not think we want to behave this way, but as hooks warns us, “In a culture of domination almost everyone engages in behaviors that contradict their beliefs and values.”⁵³ Randall wrote earlier of a culture of fear as well as educative environments that would lead toward democratic communities. He helped us see those ways in which our perceived powerlessness might prevent us from seeing, creating, and becoming in new possibilities. Telling the trumpets to stop playing so loud is not facilitating an environment in which students are able to take responsibility for their own musicianship; this is an environment of learned helplessness, of oppressor and oppressed, and of the eradication of what it might mean to be a musician in the broadest sense.

I would like to honor my band director in Denver, Colorado, Jack Fredrickson. Over the years, as I have reflected on the processes of teaching and learning, I have often looked back on his teaching and his engagements with his students. Through this most recent and particular lens of what it means to reconceptualize pedagogy and music curriculum, I am consistently reminded of the ways in which he was able to balance honoring the music, honoring who he was always trying to become, and honoring the students who came through his program. I came from a quality program, but what I remember most is that his first priority was who we were as adolescents in the process of becoming. And as a female trombone player, desperately trying to maintain equilibrium in a sometimes overwhelmingly oppressive world, he essentially and unconsciously helped me take on the habits of mind to embrace ambiguity and challenge. I do not think he was particularly mindful of all of this. In fact, I once tried to tell him how much he had influenced the direction I took in life and I found him to be surprised. Music just happened to be his way of life and as such his medium for conveying his engagement and joy with life. The purpose of music in our students' lives is not to "reinforce patterns of domination or patterns of cultural reproduction."⁵⁴ Rather I would like us to consider that our actions to end oppression in rehearsals and in classrooms affirms the importance of a vision crafted in reciprocity that allows all of us to engage meaningfully not only with music but our lives as well.

NOTES

¹This paper is developed from a joint presentation by the authors at the College Band Directors National Conference (CBDNA) in February 2005 in New York City.

²Margaret Mead, "Towards a Human Science," *Science*, 191, no. 4230 (1976): 903–909.

³John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1916), 247.

⁴Thomas Regelski, "The Aristotelian Bases of Praxis for Music and Music Education as Praxis," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 6, no.1 (Spring 1998): 22–59.

⁵Richard Hansen, *The American Wind Band: A Cultural History* (Chicago: GIA Publishers, 2004).

⁶Theodore F. Normann, *Instrumental Music in Public Schools* (Philadelphia: Oliver Ditson Company, 1939), 149–152.

⁷Catherine. S. Lenzini, "With Energy and Discipline: An Interview with Michael Stone," *The Instrumentalist* 53, no. 6 (1999): 13–14.

⁸Joseph Manfredo, "Effective Time Management in Ensemble Rehearsals," *Music Educators Journal* 93 (2) (2006): 44

⁹Eugene Corporon, "The Quantum Conductor," *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, ed., Richard Miles (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1997): 22.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Of course, the traditional term for student teaching, "fieldwork," has its own scientific ring.

¹²Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Continuum, (1970/1993).

¹³Roberta Lamb, "Discords: Feminist Pedagogy in Music Education," *Theory into Practice* 35, no. 2 (1996): 129.

¹⁴Patricia O'Toole, "I Sing in a Choir, but I Have No Voice!" *Visions of Research in Music Education* 6 (2005): 7–8.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Regelski, "Critical Theory and Praxis: Professionalizing Music Education," *Music Education Critical Analysis Series* (April, 1998). See MayDay website: <http://www.nyu.edu/education/music/mayday/maydaygroup/papers/papers1.htm>

¹⁷Cathy Benedict, "Chasing Legitimacy: The U.S. National Music Standards Viewed Through a Critical Theorist Framework," *Music Education Research* 8, (2006): 17–32.

¹⁸*Music Education Critical Analysis Series* (April, 1998). See MayDay website: <http://www.nyu.edu/education/music/mayday/maydaygroup/papers/papers1.htm>

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹See Michael Apple, *Education and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

²²bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2000), 36.

²³"National Science Education Standards," *National Research Council* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1996), ix.

²⁴"Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics," *The National Council for Teachers of Mathematics* (Reston, VA: The National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, Inc, 1989), 5.

²⁵National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, "Standards 2000 Project, Introduction," <http://standards.nctm.org/document/chapter1/index.htm>.

²⁶Tim Lautzenheiser, "The Essential Element to a Successful Band: The Teacher, the Conductor, the Director, the Leader" *Teaching Music Though Performance in Band*, ed., Richard Miles (Chicago: Gia Publication, 1997), 63.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Manfredo, "Effective Time Management in Ensemble Rehearsals," 46

³¹Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2007).

³²The metaphor of a "leap" or "leap of faith" is a common trope that existential writers use to explain a knowing venture into the unknown. "To be ready to learn is to be ready for a leap," writes Maxine Greene in *Existential Encounters for Teachers* (New York: Random House, 1967), 29. Søren Kierkegaard writes about the unknowableness of Christianity and the angst of existential belief. The "fundamental project" is likewise seen throughout existential writing. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956).

³³Kierkegaard also uses the metaphor of the “Public” for the “Crowd.” He writes in *The Present Age*, “a public is everything and nothing, the most dangerous of all powers and the most insignificant . . .,” p. 123. Likewise is the term “neighbor” in *Works of Love*, pp. 287–290 in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed., Robert Bretall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951).

³⁴I am reminded of Alcibiades, who in Plato’s *Symposium* admits, “the moment I leave [Socrates’] side, I go back to my old ways: I cave in to my desire to please the crowd.” See Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 67 [216b].

³⁵Søren Kierkegaard, “Subjectivity,” *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans., David Swensen (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), 276.

³⁶Kierkegaard, “Becoming Subjective,” *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans., David Swensen (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), 166.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸See also Maxine Greene, *Existential Encounters for Teachers* (New York: Random House, 1967), 159–160.

³⁹Randall Everett Allsup, *Crossing Over: Mutual Learning and Democratic Action in Instrumental Music Education* (doctoral diss.: Teachers College Columbia University, 2002), 363.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 354.

⁴¹Jerome Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966).

⁴²Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 62

⁴³*Ibid.*, 61

⁴⁴bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2000), 37.

⁴⁵Paul Woodford, *Democracy and Music Education: Liberalism, Ethics, and the Politics of Practice* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 25.

⁴⁶Estelle Jorgensen, “Music Education as Community,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 82.

⁴⁷Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 53

⁴⁸Jorgensen, “Music Education as Community,” 81.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁰hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. 43.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 127.

⁵²Regelski, *Music Education Critical Analysis Series* (April, 1998). See MayDay website: <http://www.nyu.edu/education/music/mayday/maydaygroup/papers/papers1.htm>.

⁵³hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 29.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 39.