Chapter 15
Conclusion: An End Is a Beginning

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For pragmatic philosophy, what seems like a conclusion is really only a new beginning: the consummation of what has preceded provides only a momentary platform for dealing with the ever-changing needs of the present. Thus, knowledge is always temporal, wed to the particular conditions under which it is gained and to which it is applied and, accordingly, is temporary, awaiting future use. Without use, knowledge is lost or meaningless.[1]

Through use, knowledge is transformed—paradoxically both broadened in its application and refined in its efficacy—and so is the user. The value of knowledge, then, is not simply a matter of "getting" or "having" it in the abstract but of *using* it; its use determines its meaning, and it has no meaning aside from the uses to which it may be or is put. And such use will always be governed by the unique needs at hand. These needs are also the criteria by which the "goodness" of the solutions is judged.

Accordingly, this "concluding" chapter aspires only to serve to help readers to *begin* the ongoing process of analyzing and diagnosing the many and changing problems and needs—in all their complexity—facing music educators. Such judgments and choices are the *scaffold*[2] of knowledge upon which teaching praxis[3] is built, but only for present conditions and thus always for the time being. Once put into action, such knowledge becomes enriched by its use, and the teacher becomes more satisfied as teaching satisfies students' musical needs better.

Ideals or Idealism?

The foregoing chapters have provided serious studies of many of the varied and complex challenges facing music educators. Authors have been "critical" of ill-considered or unconsidered "received traditions" and of fixed or inflexible methods and materials. They have also focused on *action* or *guiding ideals*. These provide

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the same kinds of direction, aspirations, goals, guidance, visions, and values that are at stake in the action ideals that guide our everyday lives—ideals ranging from a "happy marriage," to "good health," to "being kind," to "effective parenting," and so on. However ubiquitous such *visions of value* are, none is merely idealistic or utopian when acted upon; they are typically the "heart" of our "being" and guide our most important actions.

Virtually all of our ideals are handed down to us very early in life by our parents and society as recommended habits. And we naturally accept them, even when they don't actually serve us or others well. But they are capable of education and change; for example, "good health" has benefited from discoveries in science and medicine, and we are now taught to eat healthily and to exercise. Similarly, ideals of a "happy marriage" or "effective parenting" can be informed by a close consideration of evolving developments in today's world.

Our action ideals also change when we reflect on them—that is, when we reflect on our actions. Thus, we need to ask: What ideals do our actions reflect? How deeply have we considered these ideals? And do they really serve needs as intended or expected? For example, ideals of good parenting or health that consistently lead to actions that bring negative results are obviously not ideal. Sometimes we notice such results ourselves, but others can also help us notice when uncritically accepted traditions and habits work against us.

Ideals for music teaching that we inherit need "critical" reflection, naming, owning-up-to their too often ineffective (or counterproductive) results, and—with courage—change. This is what this book seeks to promote—not the prescription of particular changes. Instead, change is urged through considering action or guiding ideals that (a) alert us to weaknesses of received or fixed traditions and practices by (b) pointing to alternative visions of value, an improved vision of "good health" for music education.

How Healthy Is Music Education Today?

Imagine the doctor who complains about all the sick people in the waiting room. Well, too many music teachers reflect a similar confusion: instead of serving the musical needs of their "clients," the students, they prefer the rewards of working with the musically "healthy" few. However, school-based music education exists, in the broadest of assumptions and philosophies, to advance the musical "health"—the musical abilities, attitudes, values, habits and, most importantly, the likelihood of musicking[4]—of the "general student," not just the select few. Its presence in schools is predicated on its contribution to *general education*[5] in the context of *universal education*—the provision of schooling for everyone.

There is a tension, then, between the ideals of music education's *inclusive* claims as part of general/universal education and certain traditional ideals about musical quality that end up being *exclusive*. A long-standing problem in music education, then, is whether the proper action ideal is to teach (all) students music or is it to have (a few) students serve music? The latter, for example, often leads to teaching that

protects music from students by excluding those who don't measure up to its demands. Carelessness with the former ideal often leads to musicking that falls short of the very qualities that make music valuable—or musical. Neither is "healthy" for music education.

Problematizing or Standardizing Teaching?

Some music education students or teachers want to be just like their favorite music teacher from days past. Many, usually the most select of the select few, have thrived with their musical activities in school and want a career on the other side of the piano or podium. Others have come to value music per se (and as distinct from it as a social or extracurricular "activity" in school)[6] and want to share it. More than a few express a kind of evangelical zeal for "converting" students to "good music" or to the pleasures of band, chorus, and orchestra. A few even want to be better at teaching music than their school teachers were—especially those teachers who "turned off" or excluded students who deserved better.

What almost all students seem to assume, however, is that they only need to become better musicians and then be taught how to teach. Usually, the assumption is that learning to teach is more or less a simple matter of a given set of approved "how-to" and "what-works" methods, techniques, and materials that, once mastered, can be applied "across the board." However, teaching music—or teaching anything[7]—is simply not that simple!

As a helping profession (along with medicine, social work, counseling, religious leadership, etc.), *teaching is always problematic*! Dealing as it does with young people and their various needs and the requirement to be "care-full" to bring about right results, there simply is no smooth sailing. Aspiring to a simplified idealism of teaching music is as fool-hearty as a pilot who always expects good weather or a doctor who expects only healthy patients.

Instead, teaching music needs to be *problematized*. It needs to be recognized as an always-challenging situation that continually requires diagnosis as a basis for action and equally keen reflection on results. It cannot be standardized with regard to instruction, or "standards-ized" with regard to results, without harm.[8]

To problematize music teaching, its enabling and restricting conditions need to be identified, examined, and dealt with. This involves recognizing and analyzing the various contradictions involved (for example, the tension between musical "quality" and general/universal education) and detecting and naming the tacit and taken for granted assumptions that create certain problems while precluding, excluding, or being blind to other ideals. Failure to problematize music education creates difficulties and complications[9] beyond those that are expectable.

Does Music Education Always—Automatically—Benefit Students and Culture?

Clearly not! If it did, music educators would not be inclined to engage constantly in advocacy—noble sounding arguments for the benefits of music education. If it did, it

would not be threatened with losses of scheduling, funding, and students. Whatever inherited ideals guide most music teachers, it seems undeniable that music education is not convincing enough people that it is worthwhile.

Music teachers too easily forget that virtually all citizens have intimately experienced school music. The action ideals guiding their own musical lives and their lack of enthusiastic support for school music reveal the less than ideal visions of value they got from their own music educations!

What is overlooked in most music education advocacy, then, is the distinction between the value of *music* and the value of *music education*. One of the most under-recognized problems faced by music educators is the fact that, as several of the authors in this volume have pointed out, music is incredibly healthy in society! Unlike most school subjects, music is unique because it plays an enormous daily role in the lives of students outside of school.

An often unrecognized assumption of school music seems to be, however, that there is something unworthy about the "outside" musical world and that students need to be "converted" to "good music" or at least to add it to their otherwise "unhealthy" musical diets. However, like any attempts at conversion, but particularly among adolescents who have a "radar" for adult manipulation or rejection of *their* values, such conversion attempts are usually doomed to failure and typically leave lingering negative attitudes, particularly for students in required general music classes who "tune out" but can't "drop out."

But even students who have been in ensembles for eight years show little evidence of conversion in their musical choices. Most do not continue performing and there is little evidence that their listening tastes have been converted by eight years of performing "good music." Concert audience attendance regularly fails to sustain professional ensembles economically, and the sale of "classical" music CDs is a very small percentage of the total—presently something like 3%.[10]

Clearly, then, music *is* highly valued by society. So the value of *music* is not the issue—although critics prefer to deny musical value to whatever it is they consider "downtown" music. Most advocacy is based implicitly upon "classical" music, sometimes including jazz, and occasionally folk, ethnic, and world musics. But such rhetoric is meaningful only to those who already enjoy these musics. Noble sounding words alone about musical value are as unlikely to change minds as noble words alone will stop war.

No, it is *music education*—school music—that is the problem. School music has become its own institution, its own limited kind of musicking. However, since it is not widely seen as relevant to the music world outside of school, it comes under suspicion—all the more so as schooling in general is increasingly pressured to produce results that make noteworthy differences for individuals and society.

If music education *was* making such a notable difference, it still wouldn't be entirely out of the woods: there would still be the "nice if you can afford it" argument to overcome. But music teachers would be in a much stronger position to demonstrate that this "nice" is a lot more meaningful and valuable than naysayers assume. Music could be shown, then, to be "nice" in the same tangible ways that a "happy marriage" or "good health" is: Aside from being an action ideal of its own,[11]

music can be shown to be an inextricable ingredient of a vast number of the other major guiding ideals in our daily lives—for example, its contributions to marriage, family, religion, health, and the like.[12] Unfortunately, however, music education has steadfastly distanced itself from connection to these important everyday ideals.[13]

To What Conclusions (Beginnings) Might the Seven Action Ideals Point?

First, and perhaps foremost, the traditional view of "music" as a collection of "works" is challenged by a *praxial view* that instead sees it as a family of distinctive practices, with each family member existing to serve different "goods," and each instance of which is unique.[14] In this view, music is always a *doing*—some kind of musicking—and "it" simply does not otherwise exist. The values at stake are not exclusively "in" the sounds we have traditionally called "the music," but in the totality of the practice, including its social dimensions (past and present).

In this view, to teach music is to enable students to "do" music or to help them engage in musicking in ways that expand its potential value for their lives. School music, then, would be much more appreciative of the music world and to the ways music *does* contribute to life and society. What musical practices—especially in particular communities, regions, etc.—do "just plain folks" engage in and which of those are of the nature that could be included in and advanced by schooling? What musical practices do these folks *not* engage in that they could and would if school were to address them? What changes could be made in music education that, without requiring total restructuring, would maximize the ability and desire of students to "do" music throughout their lives? In sum, what can students do—at all, better, or more often—as a result of instruction?

Second, musicianship—the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values required for any musicking—is not fixed or singular. Teaching students to read notes, for example, does not amount to developing musicianship. Many musics are not notated and demand aural skills different than those of notated music. Other aural skills and other forms of musicianship are also required by listeners[15] and by people engaged in composition (for example, using computer software).

Among the most important aspects of musicianship is mindfulness of intended results, which includes awareness of musical choices, since only with a musical outcome in mind can an individual reflect on the adequacy of results. This, of course, is why so much practice time is wasted: When students don't have musical results in mind, they can't realize their mistakes and, at best, they dutifully fill time repeating errors.

Teaching musicianship, then, requires attention to the nature and requirements of the musics at stake—to how, when, where, and under what other conditions in "real life" these musics exist and, thus, to the progressive ability of the student to understand the musical needs and criteria at stake and to make effective choices *independently* of a teacher. Given school circumstances, all that needs to be learned can never be taught; thus learners must be *taught how to learn* on their own.

Such musical independence is more difficult to develop when large ensembles are the sole or major curricular vehicle. An education rich in solos, duets, and various chamber combinations—including the smaller ensembles characteristic of many musics—increases independence. Musicianship that is relevant to several musics[16]—albeit usually in different ways—provides students with more opportunities for different uses that fine tune their skills and abilities. Musical independence is also required for listening, composing, and other musical "doings."[17]

Third, regarding music as praxis points away from the idealism of "music for its own sake" (and the aesthetic theories that support such disconnection from daily life) and toward bringing about a greater appreciation of how important music really is in its social and cultural contexts. Every kind of music arises as a social praxis. Each is conditioned by social ingredients far too numerous to detail[18] and each is a living practice to the degree it continues to serve social meanings and values.

Social accounts of music and art (see Hauser 1951, Kingsbury 1988, Nattiez 1990, Shepherd 1991, Harrington 2004) demonstrate connections between music and society, that are overlooked by music educators more intent on building their so-called programs than bridges between school music and the musical and social worlds. The action guidelines for the Swedish national curriculum specify, for instance, "from life to school"; that is, in the case of music, from music in life to music in school. But that doesn't go far enough: "from music in life, to music in school, to music back in life, newly enhanced" is the ideal envisaged here. Music's use in life is tangible evidence of both its appreciation and of having effectively acquired the knowledge and skills that promote use (Regelski 2006).

Fourth, the view of music envisaged here recognizes a central role for musical and other social institutions. Musical institutions exist to advance their own musical agendas, however, so we must be careful when the ideology of one usurps the integrity and agendas of other institutions. For example, most professional music schools exist to produce professional musicians, and this purpose justifies their exclusivity. However, being predicated on general/universal education, the educational agenda of school music is altogether different and should be inclusive.

We should be alert, as well, to whether and to what degree the interests of other key musical and social institutions coincide with that of the needs of our students. Music teacher groups, musicians unions, local professional ensembles, and the like, all influence, for good or ill (sometimes both), music education in the schools. Thus, traditions get started that, even if once successful, can produce unwelcome results under changed circumstances. These traditions need to be recognized and, in their place, new visions realized. Institutionalizing new relations between "private" music teachers and taking music education out of the schools into—or, where lacking, starting—community music education institutions of various kinds are among the possibilities pointed to by the ideals envisaged here.

Fifth, unlike most teachers, music teachers are practitioners of the subject they teach; they are musicians. However, this status as musicians often narrows their perspectives and even teaching in unhealthy ways. This can be one reason why some put music ahead of their students.

Thus, a wealth of understanding from other disciplines should also inform and guide music teaching. For example, music teaching depends in important ways on one's understanding of what it means to be human, of what is meant by the "good life" to which music education is intended to contribute, and so on. All teachers regularly take the value of what they teach for granted, but their students don't always share this assessment. How music fits into and serves a particular student's life thus requires much more than musical insight. It entails considerable knowledge of how young people learn and a functional awareness of important findings from other disciplines—findings that may contradict traditional pedagogical approaches for music.

The ideals considered here suggest that music teachers must also be aware of what else is going on in school, and of advances being realized in other classrooms—for example, the "new phys ed" that emphasizes healthy individual physical activities rather than team sports; that is, activities that can be continued in life as *amateurs*. Such advances can promote new visions for similar changes in music education.

Sixth, even though such amateurism has been given a bad name in higher musical circles,[19] its root idea is "love" (the Latin *amat*). And fostering the kind of love for music that leads to *making time for it* in life is comparable to the ideals of "good health" that more health and physical education teachers now try to inspire. Among the benefits of such an ideal for music education is producing a greater number of serious amateurs in the community who serve as models for students, who come into the schools, and with whom students study outside of school.

When music is regarded as praxis, the "doing" of music—musicking—in some regular and rewarding capacity is stressed: whether it is singing in a church choir, playing in garage bands of various kinds, accompanying sing-alongs, becoming an audiophile, performing at retirement homes, singing carols, giving or attending concerts or recitals, or any of an endless list of other amateur pursuits. As is the case with other activities, *amateuring*[20] often leads to study, focused practice, and improvement—for example, leading the golfer to the putting green or the driving range. It also often leads to changes in musical choices: the euphonium player in the local Deutchmeister Band, for instance, who attends all the local university band concerts; the church choir member who goes to local choral concerts; the rock guitarist who builds an extensive jazz guitar CD collection; or the country fiddler who studies with a violin teacher.

Such an enlarged amount of local musical amateurs would collectively enhance the musical life of a community, while increasing the richness of their own lives and filling the audiences of amateurs and professionals alike. Such is an action ideal of music conceived as a social praxis, the good of which is seen in its use for human life and society. As is often rightly said, "Music is too important to be left to musicians."

Finally, all of the above "pointings" entail making *curriculum* a central concern. Too many music teachers refer to their programs but rarely think in terms of curriculum. Their curriculum amounts to little more than the series of materials used,

the repertoire "covered" for the next concert, the "method" adopted, or a dusty document written to pacify administration—or all of the above. This is not surprising since it is rare for curriculum theory to be taught to music educators, despite the availability of a wide range of important scholarship about it.

Curriculum can refer to (a) a written document, (b) the actual content of instruction, or (c) what is effectively learned. It is each of these but, in the end, only the last counts. The written document is useful in coordinating what multiple teachers actually address, and in predeciding "What of all that can be taught is most worth teaching?". However, any curriculum is at best a hypothetical and temporary answer to that question. Thus, teachers need to ask themselves constantly what, of all they include in instruction, is being taught to pragmatic levels that make the kinds of personal and social contributions discussed earlier. Attempt too much, and nothing lasting is accomplished. Attempt teaching things that can't be taught *as they are used in life*, and students encounter only abstractions that are quickly forgotten through lack of use.

There is another level of curricular theorizing, namely one's choices of instructional methods and materials. Because what is addressed by instruction[21] may be well conceived but not implemented well, pedagogical strategies and related routines need to be "practiced," updated, revised, and replaced. The old axiom "less is more" really suggests that "less is best, if done well!" Sometimes curriculum attempts too much, and less would allow more teacher and student time to be devoted to effective results. Then, as such results become more efficiently achieved over time, more can be added to the curriculum.

This final ideal vision is of a music teacher who conducts *action research* informally. Action research is undertaken to improve certain needs of the researcher. In teaching, the prominent need is improving students' learning. Action research examines all relevant research then develops hypotheses that are "tested" in action in the classroom. Successful results are never firm or fixed; teaching and curriculum ideals change, students change, and each group is different.[22] And since the ends sought, like those associated with "good health" or a "happy marriage," have no single or final state of perfection, the conclusion of any stage of curricular and teaching progress is the beginning of the next cycle.

On the other hand, this continual problematizing of music teaching is also the major source—aside from the musicking involved—of the teacher's sense of personal and professional accomplishment. Holding in mind valued action ideals that problematize teaching leads, in fact, to many of the most important rewards of teaching and discourages burnout.

We hope that what has been presented in these pages has stimulated the critical capacities needed to make your own informed choices. We hope the ideals presented and analyzed here have also stimulated visions of value that start your trip in beneficial directions. And we especially hope that you keep them, and others you encounter along the way, in mind as you create your own ever-new beginnings. Both music and students deserve such continuing devotion to right results.

Notes

1. This follows from the philosopher Wittgenstein who demonstrated that, for example, the meaning of a word is seen in its use.
2. Unlike "foundations," scaffolds are adjustable for changing needs.
3. Teaching "practice," as with medical "practice," is not simply a matter of "practicing" or "rehearsing" something until you get it right. Technically, it is a matter of what, since the time of Aristotle, has been called *praxis*—knowledge and action that serves human needs. Thus, professional praxis carries an *ethical* obligation for right results where "rightness" involves meeting the needs of those served. It is not, therefore, a one-size-fits-all kind of tradition (as, for example, in certain crafts). Praxis is "care-full" to diagnose and act in terms of present needs, and its success is judged by the degree it meets those needs.
4. As a reminder, this neologism coined by Christopher Small (1998) replaces "music" as a noun—as a thing—with a verb form (gerund) that reflects the processual and social nature of all forms of "doing" and "making" music. In Small's words: "There is no such thing as music. Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do" (Small 1998, 2).
5. Thus the idea of "general music": It is not "music in general" (that is, a *survey* of general information) but *music in the general education of all students*. Thus understood, general music classes would improve students' musicianship for life purposes, and performance ensembles would promote carryover into students' lives outside school and as adults.
6. Despite claims made by orthodox aesthetic theory for music's "purely musical" values, the earlier chapters instead demonstrate music's inherent praxial and thus social dimension. However, this sociality fits well—often too well—with the developmental social needs of adolescents. Thus, the danger exists that musical activities—usually ensembles—meet students' transitory *social* needs (self-concept, socializing, need for recognition, etc.) more than they inspire or facilitate the "good life" of musicking. As adults, then, when adolescent growth needs no longer exist, most no longer continue their musicking, and the *music* education supposedly provided is thrown into doubt. Fond social memories may live on to recommend similar activities for their children, but the pattern continues.
7. For example, parenting, preaching, etc.
8. Actually there are two problems (challenges): The musical needs of typical students are learning "problems," and meeting those needs typically represents the teacher's instructional/curricular "problems." Standardizing instruction fails to take into account differences between the learning needs and abilities of individual students. "Standards-izing" curriculum (that is, according to prescribed, published "standards") similarly assumes a one-size-fits-all result. Either way, new and unwanted problems are created, such as students who are "turned off" to music (class), who experience failure (for example, seating challenges), or who think "I'll never be any good at music, so why bother!".
9. For example, discipline problems and not practicing.
10. And that includes the dedicated audiophiles who, as collectors and connoisseurs, purchase multiple copies of favorite works and artists.
11. That is, any performance, for example, seeks to serve the needs that occasion it in the first place, yet no performance will ever be "ideal" in the sense of "perfect."
12. Be careful though! Health risks are associated with musicking and are an example of heretofore taken-for-granted assumptions about music education and its automatic benefits. See the "Health and Music" e-column at www.maydaygroup.org, maintained by Leon Thurman.
13. Instead of a "happy marriage," these received traditions have "divorced" school music and music education from the music world outside school and from society in general.
14. Just as "food" collectively refers to all the foods of the world, so "music" stands in relation to the musics of the world. Pizza has a considerable history; but this one, on this occasion, is unique—in part, because of the occasion. In the same way, music (of any kind) has historical

conditions but, as situated in the present, is always "new." This is also true for concert music (of any kind).

15. And while performing can influence audience listening, the latter is its own practice with its own needs and requirements. Thus, performers can benefit from far more experiences as audience listeners, especially since listening is a much more likely lifelong musical option for busy adults than performing in ensembles is.
16. For example, playing in tune is a condition of "bending" notes in certain styles; knowing basic tonal harmony serves the harmonic needs of many musics; and aural acuity for patterns (repetition) serves performing of all kinds, and listening.
17. For example, choosing music for particular occasions, arranging music, music therapy, making aerobics tapes, etc.
18. For instance, "different types of music tend to appeal to different social groups" and, thus, each "taste culture" can be "defined in terms of musical values and choices, and its taste public described in terms of such sociodemographic variables as sex, age, social class, and ethnic group" (Russell 1997, 141, 143). It is not surprising, then, that the "classics" of any musical practice are those designated by people who consider themselves to be "classy" regarding that practice.
19. Mainly as a result of the need of the new class of virtuosi to distance itself socially from the many "dilettantes" who used to make music in the home. The rise of the virtuoso in the nineteenth century spelled the death of serious amateurism and contributed to the demise both of personal performing in the home and of the rich musical social life it provided. Instead, the public became listeners.
20. Like "musicking," "amateuring" as a gerund stresses loving, committed "doing." (See Booth 1999, Regelski 2007).
21. In this discussion, a distinction is made between "instruction" and "teaching." The old excuse, "I taught it to them but they didn't learn it" is a cop-out. Teaching should not be conflated with instruction; it should be reserved for instruction where students actually learn.
22. Results of action research can't be generalized to other teachers or other situations, only to the near future in the same situation. This calls into question the well-meaning attempts of "show and tell" teacher conferences where one teacher's hypothesis is offered, often either to be dismissed on the grounds of "it won't work in my situation" or to be blindly adopted without being adapted to the new teaching situation on the false theory that successful teaching is achieved by accumulating a "what-works" repertoire of imitable techniques (see Regelski 1994–1995).

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