

Some Notions, Stories, and Tales About Music and Education in Society: The Coin's Other Side

JERE T. HUMPHREYS
Arizona State University

I want to thank the MENC Society for Research in Music Education (SRME) for inviting me to speak this afternoon, especially the chair of the SRME Executive Committee, Wendy Sims. It is a pleasure to be here.¹

The first invitation I ever received to speak about something not based strictly on research data and findings came from Mark Fonder, who asked me to speak at the Ithaca College School of Music's centennial celebration in 1992. I said some things at that symposium that I knew in advance some people would not agree with or like. I stretched further in my "Key Focus" address at the 1996 MENC convention in Kansas City.² After that talk, I asked Charles Schmidt if he thought I had been too hard on our music education historians. Chuck said in that sweet way of his: "No, I think you took care of everyone today."

It is difficult to avoid offending people with data-based presentations. It is impossible to do so in an address like this, at least for me. Nevertheless, I am not going to apologize for offending people today because the SRME leaders invited me to say what I want to say.

I am going to talk about several things that relate to attitudes toward music and music education, attitudes held by society in general

¹This article is a slightly revised version of the author's "Invited Address" for the Society for Research in Music Education, presented at the biennial convention of the MENC: The National Association for Music Education in Washington, DC on 11 March 2000.

²Jere T. Humphreys, "Instrumental Music in American Education: In Service of Many Masters," in *The Ithaca Conference on American Music Education: Centennial Profiles*, ed. Mark Fonder (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca College, 1992), 25-51; reprinted in *Journal of Band Research* 30 (spring 1995): 39-79; and Jere T. Humphreys, "Expanding the Horizons of Music Education History and Sociology," *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* 7 (1996/97): 5-19.

and by music educators. Some of these attitudes have worked well for us and some have not. I will make a number of observations about a few aspects of music education and its relationships with the society it attempts to serve.

We American music educators have been trying to bend the American public's musical knowledge, tastes, and practices to our collective will since before our nation became a nation. Beginning in Colonial days and extending to the present day, music educators and others have been trying to tell Americans what kind of music they should perform, listen to, and even appreciate. Allen Britton and Wiley Hitchcock wrote about the Colonial singing school masters' failed and even counterproductive attempts to convert American citizens to watered-down versions of European parlor music, and to move them away from indigenous American music composed by the likes of William Billings.³ One famous singing master, Lowell Mason, despite his extraordinary effectiveness in many ways, did no one any favors when he introduced unappealing music in schools in the 1830s and thereby set the stage for the next almost century and a half, during which time music educators paid far too little attention to the musical content of their curricula.⁴

The singing masters' Euro-centric attitudes toward music were encouraged by university-based intellectuals at Harvard and elsewhere, a phenomenon that continues today as professors try to tell others what music they should teach and why they should teach it, not to mention what music they and others should like. University music departments

³Allen P. Britton, "The Singing School Movement in the United States," in *International Musicological Society, Report of the 8th Congress*, vol. I, 1966, 97-99; Allen P. Britton, "Music in Early American Public Education: A Historical Critique," in *Basic Concepts in Music Education, the Fifty-seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part I, ed. Nelson B. Henry (Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1958), 201-05; Allen P. Britton, "Music Education: An American Specialty," in *One Hundred Years of Music in America*, ed. Paul Henry Lang (New York: G. Schirmer, 1961), 214; and Wiley Hitchcock, "William Billings and the Yankee Tunesmiths," *HiFi/Stereo Review* 16 (February 1966): 59-65.

⁴Britton, "Music in Early American Public Education," 205-07; and Britton, "Music Education: An American Specialty," 214-15.

and schools provide non-music major courses in various types of musics, but for music majors only the best music will do, or so many music professors think. Actually, university professors have not been successful in convincing music teachers to teach European art music, any more than music teachers have been successful in converting the American public to any kind of music other than what they liked already.

In other words, musical dogma imposed from the top down—that is, by university professors and music teachers—did not play well with the American public during earlier periods and it still does not. The first popular music in the American colonies was European folk and church music of various kinds. It is difficult for us to relate to today, but in the nineteenth century the most popular music for a time was minstrel show music by Stephen Foster, Dan Emmett, and others. Band music by the likes of John Philip Sousa and Tin Pan Alley products then emerged, followed by ragtime and jazz, and finally country, rock, and country-rock, which is where we remain today. Here's the point: Western European art music never, I repeat, never, came anywhere close to being the music of choice in this country. Now, with a full century between us and the end of the common practice period, it is unlikely to ever become the music of choice in the United States. Ever since the first singing schools appeared in the early 1700s, we have seen Herculean efforts by singing masters and school music teachers to get the American public to do what the singing masters and music teachers wanted them to do. Those efforts have failed.

Today, virtually all certified public school music teachers hold bachelor's degrees. By virtue of formal education alone, music teachers are among the top twenty percent or so of American adults in amount of formal education they hold. Even without master's degrees and other advanced training held by a significant proportion of music teachers, we music educators are part of the educated elite, and we are really among the elite category in terms of formal musical training. Nevertheless, our being in the top quarter of so of the population in formal education and top one percent, say, in musical training does not give us the right to impose our will on others. Regardless, despite centuries of failure, we still think we can and should influence popular musical tastes and activities in significant ways.

We singing masters and music teachers have tried for almost three centuries now to get students and the general public to practice, listen to, and appreciate the music we want them to practice, listen to, and appreciate. It is time for us to try a different approach. Now, I realize that the music education professorate has probably changed more in this regard than our music professor colleagues in performance, conducting, and other areas, but we need to be more proactive in curricular decisions within our university music units. Just ask yourself and your colleagues in other music areas this question, and try to get some honest answers: "Just how much more Beethoven does the American public need, not to mention want?"

One problem is that we have failed to ask people what they want. There is a story that reminds me of MENC and every other person and group that tries to dictate to people what they should and should not do in music education; the story goes like this:

There was a proud, rich Italian father who was looking for just the right woman to marry his only son. He hired a marriage broker. The broker came in after three months and said, "I got you a beautiful match. She's twenty, great girl. She speaks French. Her father was ambassador to Great Britain, and her brother is an up-and-rising young congressman from Massachusetts. And her father is very rich." After thinking about it for a few moments, the old man said: "Not good enough." So the broker went away and came back in another three months. This time he said: "This woman is terrific. She's twenty-two, very rich family, also speaks perfect French. Wonderful connections. Her older sister is queen of England. And she's very beautiful." The father thought a bit and said: "Okay, we'll go with that one." Then the broker said, as he put on his coat and hat headed for the door, "Well now, that's half the battle!"³

In a similar way, we have not asked people what they want from their musical education. Because we are professionals we think we have all the answers, but all professions have their blind spots—things professionals fail to see that intelligent observers outside the field do

³Story adapted from William F. Buckley, Jr., *The Redhunter: A Novel Based on the Life of Senator Joe McCarthy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1999), 386.

see. Go to a physician with problems rooted in the emotions or in spirituality and what do you get? Prozac. Treating every problem as if it had a physiological cause and cure is a major blind spot for the medical profession, and the majority of the medical practitioners appear not see it.

We in education are having imposed on us a testing system that could be compared to the medical establishment's penchant for prescribing chemicals in its narrowness of scope. That is, we are testing students and in some cases teachers, but what are we testing them for? We are testing for test-taking ability; we are testing for the amount and effectiveness of teaching-for-the-tests that has occurred; and we are testing for highly specific types of intelligence, knowledge, and skills. But we must ask the question: "Toward what end?" Does anyone really believe that people's lives will be improved if mathematics achievement scores were to go up a few points? Would American and other societies in the world be significantly better off? What about reading? Sure, everyone would be slightly better off if everyone could read and do math at basic levels, and the affected individuals would be quite a bit better off. But the testing movement is not about that, it's about averages, and you all know about averages. Surely you have heard about the statistician who drowned in a river that averaged three feet deep.

Think about it: What if math or reading scores did go up a few points? Individually or collectively, would our lives be enriched? Fuller? More meaningful? Longer? Do most jobs today require more math skills that most people have? Does yours? No, the vast majority of jobs do not require more or better math skills. A few jobs do, but most never have and still do not. Do you know anyone whose life would be enhanced if he/she could learn to score a few points higher on a mathematics achievement test? Think of all the individuals you know and feel closest to, including yourself. Then think of your students. How many of them would be happier, better adjusted to life, and better able to adjust to changes in their lives if only their math scores were higher? We focus on test scores because they provide an illusion of objectivity—that they really mean something significant.

Then there are the issues of predictive validity and all the other things we learned about in graduate school. And what about the fact that the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* (SAT) and most other tests being used

in this way are norm-referenced tests and therefore were not designed or intended to be used as assessment tools for an entire nation or even a given state or school district? President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of Education William Bennett promoted the notion that the SAT should be used as a measure of national and state and district achievement, but there are several problems with that notion. In the first place, the test is supposed to be a measure of aptitude, not achievement. In the second place, the test is norm-referenced and therefore by definition only half the test takers will score above the mean and only about sixteen percent will score above average, which we usually define as one standard deviation above the mean. There is also the issue of larger percentages of the population taking the test, including more of the various minority peoples who tend to score lower than the Anglo majority on these tests. I can understand why President Reagan went along with this hoax, but I wonder about Secretary Bennett, who holds a doctorate in education and presumably understands these elementary principles of testing. Do we really expect all our children to achieve above average like those in Lake Woebegone?

The ancient Greeks stressed cognitive learning in their schools; not coincidentally, so do we. But when our students are hungry and without adequate shelter, when they suffer from abuse and discrimination ranging from the subtle to the extreme, when they lack adequate adult supervision and role models, when they are addicted to chemicals, when they have untreated but treatable natural chemical imbalances in their bodies and brains, when they have treatable personality disorders, and on and on, it is ludicrous to stress math scores and other types of cognition and to ignore these problems. Music and the other arts can provide sustenance to the spirit and soul.

The Greek educational model apparently worked for them, but only a small proportion of Greek children attended school. In Athens at the time of Plato, around 380 B.C., only about ten percent of the population went to school. Only the children of citizens went, and only the boys at that. All other people were aliens and slaves, who did not count for much of anything. Presumably the citizen boys who were privileged to go to school were not hungry or inadequately housed or chemically addicted. They needed what could be delivered efficiently in schools, which was material that was cognitive in nature, for the most part. Presumably they obtained most of the other things society thought they needed from other sources.

Today the system is very different, despite attempts by various scholars to equate our system with that of the ancient Greeks. The biggest single difference related to music education between the ancient Greeks system and ours, as I see it, is that we now try to educate everyone, the principle of universal education having been put forth in Europe during the early eighteenth century and attempted after that, but not implemented permanently until we Americans first did it in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶ In part because we educate everyone, the needs of our school students are very different from those of the ancient Greek students. But our curriculum has not changed much since then in that we still teach to the cognitive almost exclusively. We must take proactive stands on the university curriculum, on the folly of academics-only schools,⁷ and on social problems that continue to prevent us from doing a good job of educating students.⁸

Despite these shortcomings, the biggest problem with music education in the United States today is not the attitudes and practices of music educators, but virtually everyone's misguided notions about musical ability being a talent rather than a type of ability that is normally distributed in the population like nearly everything else. Late nineteenth-century psychologists were partly to blame. I have written about how Francis Galton's notions about various mental abilities being correlated led his mathematically gifted student, Karl Pearson, to work

⁶R. Freeman Butts, *A Cultural History of Western Education: Its Social and Intellectual Foundations*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955), 315. According to Butts, Prussia enacted compulsory school laws in the early eighteenth century and established full state control over education in the late eighteenth century (pp. 274-76). Similarly, France attempted to establish free universal education after the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century (p. 277). Neither of these attempts became permanent until, in the case of France, in the late nineteenth century.

⁷Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 261-87.

⁸Jere T. Humphreys, "The Content of Music Education History? It's a Philosophical Question, Really," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 6 (fall 1998): 94.

out his famous correlation formula. All that was well and good, and Galton collected large amounts of data on music perception as part of his research. However, when it came to anything other than sensory discrimination ability, he fell back to old ways and studied musical genius and how that phenomenon ran in families. In other words, when it came to musical ability per se, Galton saw it as an inherited talent, dichotomous in nature, and not as a normally distributed ability.⁹

Never mind that Galton was dead wrong about relationships between sensory acuity and intelligence, as was his American follower James McKeen Cattell. Both believed, with Aristotle, that all information is obtained through the five senses. But Galton and Cattell made a leap and concluded that the sharper the senses, the smarter the person. Cattell's own research eventually disproved his own theory and he went on to involvement in other things.¹⁰ He was later censured by Columbia University for activities deemed sympathetic to the Communist revolution that led to the formation of the Soviet Union. Galton also became interested in other things. Eventually he became world famous for developing the process of fingerprinting, for which he was knighted by the British Crown.

Galton and Cattell may have been the first to investigate mental abilities in ways that did not work, but at least they were far ahead of their contemporaries who still failed to see any merit in studying differences between individual people. Nevertheless, they soon had followers, some of whom never learned when to quit. One of those followers was Carl Emile Seashore, who went to his grave believing that the essence of musical ability is perceptual discrimination of various elements of music.¹¹

Professor Wilhelm Wundt of Leipzig held the first academic appointment in psychology, beginning in the 1870s. Psychology was

⁹Jere T. Humphreys, "Precursors of Musical Aptitude Testing: From the Greeks through the Work of Francis Galton," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 41 (winter 1993): 321-22.

¹⁰Jere T. Humphreys, "Musical Aptitude Testing: From James McKeen Cattell to Carl Emil Seashore," *Research Studies in Music Education* 10 (June 1998): 43-45.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 46-47.

practiced long before that, by Aristotle and many others, but Wundt held the world's first university-based position as a psychologist. Galton and Wundt's students, including Cattell, studied music perception, but always in relation to other things. Generally, that trend has continued in experimental psychology down to the present. But Galton and other psychologists who were interested in music per se reverted to studying "talent" in families, especially prodigies, and left aside their data collecting and correlations and such.¹² The point is that musical ability was labeled a talent, not an intelligence, and that has caused us all manner of problems, as Howard Gardner and others have tried to point out.¹³

Speaking of research, today we have several kinds going on in music education. Different people classify this research in different ways. I don't want to get into that, but I will tell a story that I've adapted just slightly for us today:

It is said that a qualitative researcher, an historian, and a quantitative researcher were holidaying in Scotland. From their train window they observed a black sheep in the middle of a field. "How interesting," observed the qualifier, "all Scottish sheep are black!" The historian responded, "No, no! Some Scottish sheep are black!" The quantifier gazed heavenward in supplication, and then intoned, "In Scotland there exists at least one field, containing at least one sheep, at least one side of which is black!"¹⁴

Speaking of rigorous thinking based on evidence, recently I examined some historical evidence—primary source material, if you will, in the form of portraits. Earlier I mentioned Beethoven. Well, this evidence suggests, to me at least, that Ludwig von Beethoven had a lot of "bad hair days." Now, I acknowledge that other "themes" could

¹²Humphreys, "Precursors of Musical Aptitude Testing," 321-22.

¹³Howard Gardner: *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

¹⁴Adapted from a story in Simon Singh, *Fermat's Enigma: The Epic Quest to Solve the World's Greatest Mathematical Problem* (New York: Anchor Books of Doubleday, 1997), 134.

"emerge" from these portrait artifacts, but I have concluded that this theory best fits the available evidence. In relation to this finding, consider the fact that many people hear anger in Beethoven's music. I suspect that his bad hair days may have contributed to the anger expressed in his music. I came to this conclusion after examining my own biases in regard to bad hair days. However, there are alternative explanations. For example, there is also strong evidence that Beethoven was one of the worst conductors in history. He usually insisted on conducting the premiers of his own works. Reportedly, he was such a terrible conductor and so stubborn in manner that he had difficulty assembling orchestras for the premiers of his fifth and sixth symphonies.¹⁵

Here is a first-hand account, from a primary source, of just how bad a conductor Beethoven was. The source is Louis Spohr's autobiography. Spohr was a famous conductor of the day who played in the orchestra for the premieres of Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory* and Seventh Symphony in 1814. According to a modern scholar, Spohr was "bewildered and pained by [Beethoven's] . . . idea of conducting."¹⁶ I quote from Spohr himself: "Whenever a sforzando occurred, he tore apart his arms, which he had previously crossed on his breast, with great vehemence asunder. At a soft passage he bent himself down, and the softer he wished to have it, the lower he bent." For louder passages, according to Spohr, "to increase the forte yet more he would sometimes, also, join in with a shout to the orchestra without being aware of it."¹⁷

The modern scholar also had this to say about Beethoven's conducting [I'm quoting with slight changes]: "As early as 1805, at the first performance of . . . [Beethoven's] fourth [piano] Concerto," the composer served as the soloist. He shared leadership responsibility with a conductor. Beethoven played from a score, "with two boys from

¹⁵Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Conductors* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 57.

¹⁶Henry Raynor, *The Orchestra: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 130.

¹⁷Quoted in Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 59.

the choir holding candles to give him light." Although "it was not his responsibility to" cue "in the orchestra," at the appropriate time he did it anyway "with a wide sweep of his right arm." In doing so he hit "the boy" in the mouth "who stood by the keyboard at that side of the piano," causing the boy "to drop his candle; all this delighted the audience and infuriated Beethoven. Obviously what Beethoven understood by the idea of conducting did not include maintaining a steady beat. . ."¹⁸ So, maybe the fact that Beethoven was such a terrible conductor led to the anger in his music, or was it his bad hair?

Regardless, let's talk more specifically about music education. Lowell Mason was so extraordinarily successful in selling music education to political officials and the public in part because he was able to demonstrate that most, if not all, children could learn to sing. What Mason and nearly all music and classroom teachers did in the nineteenth century was teach general music; that is, it was general music because it was for the general student. But what they taught was sight-singing, or music performance. So, while Galton and other psychologists continued to focus on musical prodigies, Mason and the music educators who followed him throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century were able to demonstrate that virtually all children had some musical ability.

Then several things happened that caused public perception to swing back toward the dichotomous paradigm of musical talent versus no musical talent. At about the turn of the twentieth century, technology intervened—first in the form of the player piano, then the phonograph, then radio, and so on—which made it feasible and desirable to teach music appreciation and not just performance. These technological inventions allowed people throughout society to have access to music without having to produce it themselves. This reduced the utilitarian need for people to be able to sing, say, in their own parlors.

At about the same time, the progressive education movement expanded the school curriculum greatly and allowed bands, choirs, and orchestras into the schools.¹⁹ Progressivism resulted mainly from

¹⁸Raynor, *The Orchestra*, 130-31. I am indebted to Joel Brown for pointing out these stories about Beethoven's conducting.

¹⁹Humphreys, "Instrumental Music in American Education," 50, 62. (page citations are to the reprint edition)

pressures emanating from the industrial revolution. The newly industrialized United States (together with the remainder of the Western world) needed more educated workers than did the former agrarian nation. Despite the long hours required of factory workers, there was still more leisure time and money for most people than had been the case under the agrarian system. The ensembles that came into the schools under progressivism have done enormous good for millions of participants, probably including the vast majority of us in this room today. But they have perpetuated the old notion that music is for the talented minority. Indeed, many of us have had the experience of parents approaching us after their child has been in our music program for a few weeks or months and asking: "Is Suzie talented or not: Yes or No?" I think most music teachers believe that musical ability in its various forms is very nearly normally distributed in the population, or do we? The general public certainly does not believe this. The question then remains, if we believe, as Mason apparently did, that musical ability is roughly normally distributed: How do we convince the public of this?

And what are we going to teach in music education? Like many of you, I hold three academic degrees in music. Not coincidentally, three times I "learned" and promptly forgot augmented sixth chords. Similarly, the national standards impose things that people cannot or do not want to do. Should I have been retained in school and thus prevented from entering the field because I did not (and still do not) remember augmented sixth chords? I was an advanced clarinetist at one time. I also played the flute, saxophone, and bassoon at reasonable levels of competence, but I could never play the oboe competently. Should I have spent all or most of my time trying to do something I was not cut out for? Or would it have been better for me to do what came relatively easily—like playing the clarinet and giving convention speeches?

Surely all of us would agree that Beethoven would have earned an "A" or "A+" in composition had he been a general music student trying to meet Standard 4. But what about his conducting grade? Should he have been discouraged from going into music because he could not conduct? Or should his teachers have averaged his grade out to a "C"? It seems to me that a portfolio approach to achievement and evaluation at least could have the advantage of letting students choose which areas

to focus on, if we would just give them some choices, that is, and not force them to do everything and neglect their interest and talent areas.

The Future

That brings me to my vision for the future of education and music and music education. Historians of education have traced influences of business and the general economy on education as far back as the seventeenth century,²⁰ but I think it was pretty obvious well before that. The current school setup evolved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to serve the needs of the new industrial economy and society. Now that the industrial revolution is over, schools continue to operate like factories; they even look like factories. Not only do schools operate and look like factories, they are designed to turn out products, much like factories do.²¹

Given all this, why are we still trying to make schools even more like factories by pressuring teachers on what and how to teach, and pressuring students into learning prescribed curricula, including the so-called standards? (By the way, the standards are not really standards, but curriculum guidelines.) The people who really believe in all this and are trying so valiantly to force a set of curriculum guides on the nation need to shift paradigms. Reading some history about the failure of top-down curricular initiatives, especially in this country, would be a good place to begin. But some are still trying to force the schools to conform to their will. They are trying to control, and control never works for very long. I see the standards movement as a last-gasp attempt to make schools as efficient and productive as possible within the old industrial revolution model. But just as the industrial paradigm for schools lagged behind the actual industrial revolution by several decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while the country clung to the agrarian-based one-room-school model, those who prescribe for our nation's schools have yet to figure out that the

²⁰Butts, *A Cultural History of Western Education*, 199.

²¹Jere T. Humphreys, "On Teaching Pigs to Sing," on MayDay Group web site: <http://members.aol.com/jtgates/maydaygroup>.

industrial paradigm is now inappropriate. Why is it inappropriate? Because today even businesses no longer want workers who simply conform and produce products along an assembly line. Those jobs have shifted to other countries, while American businesses now want people who can create and work effectively in small groups.

The American corporate world was pounded into submission and then forced to change its ways by Japanese competition during the 1970s. American businesses moved and are still moving away from assembly line approaches and top-down management styles in favor of team approaches, which lead to greater worker autonomy and thus productivity and creativity. Such approaches are being attempted in education, but they are still not the norm. Most trends in education, particularly the mania for testing, are still moving us in the opposite, old direction. Our schools, generally, still keep kids sitting in straight rows with a teacher in front, with rows of classrooms along a hallway, with the managers in offices at the end of the assembly line.²²

Those who see the standards, standardized testing, and other top-down curricular mandates and controls as the answer just don't get it. Our present-day school system is in rigor mortis and we don't know it yet. What people really want is variety, and hence the desire for charter schools and other alternative forms of education. Yes, people want quality, but they also want choices. Virtually every other aspect of our society now gives people more and more choices, from automobiles and telephones in colors other than black to commercial alternatives to the United States Postal Service.²³ The Postal Service is subsidized by tax dollars, but a customer can buy a stamp from a commercial mail store for less than a penny more than at the post office. Have you been in a post office lately? How long are you willing to wait in line to save a few cents on some stamps?

Unlike the U.S. Postal Service, which is paid for by a combination of tax dollars and user fees, our schools are paid for almost entirely by tax dollars, which makes alternatives to public education very

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

expensive for individuals. Today, only in the realm of K-12 education are the alternatives to government-sponsored services too expensive for the vast majority of people. Nevertheless, the strong desire of the general population for alternatives, as well as for quality assurances, is not going to go away. The standards movement has been "spun" as a grass-roots movement, but it is not. The clamor for change is grass-roots, but not for the standards per se. In fact, I dare say that the standards movement is the antithesis of what people really want. And that, I predict, will become apparent when the results come in.

People, including students, want to be able to choose what they learn and do. But a famous president of Harvard during the late nineteenth century advocated knowledge of the "eight-foot shelf," the amount of space required to hold all the books he deemed that every American should read. Entrepreneurs soon sold the designated eight feet worth of books to those eager to take the Harvard president's word for it. But the individuals and organizations who push such things, including the fifty songs that every American should know and the standards, are missing the point altogether. They need to use their heads.

They remind me of a story about a man who decided he needed a new brain:

The man went to a brain store. There he was shown a brain that had belonged to a lawyer. The store clerk told the man that the lawyer's brain would cost him \$25,000. Next the man looked at a doctor's brain, which he was told would cost \$50,000. Then the man saw a brain labeled as having belonged to a high-ranking government official. This brain was priced at \$100,000. The man asked, "Why does the government official's brain cost so much more than the lawyer's brain and the doctor's brain?" "Why it's simple," said the clerk, "That brain belonged to former Secretary of Education William Bennett, and it was never used."

Our school-based music ensembles have born the brunt of criticism within our profession for not meeting the needs of all students and for focusing on performance skills at the expense of the other eight standards. But like singing-based general music, which Mason and others introduced in the nineteenth century during a time of major changes in the nation's education system, the ensembles came into

being during the earliest years of the progressive education movement, and that was not a coincidence either.²⁴

I believe that instead of using general music as the jumping off point when we devise music curricula, we should use what we have learned from our offerings in the form of ensembles. Would that mean sticking to the ensembles as they are today? Absolutely not. But I do believe that we should be prepared to start from where we are, ensemble-wise, and offer not one-size-fits-all general music standards-based curricula, but rather elective courses in music of all types, including some types of instruction that we have not yet imagined. I can envision courses in everything from composition to conducting, from steel drum bands to courses in intelligent listening based on knowledge of music history and music structure (including form, key relationships, themes and thematic development, texture, and on and on). Yes, absolutely, music should be a basic, required subject, but students should be able to choose what they want to study.

We should be prepared this time around-when the next major education paradigm shift occurs. The last time, ensembles came into the schools through the efforts of others-not the efforts of music educators. Our predecessors finally jumped on the bandwagon, so to speak. The MENC did not even begin to formally acknowledge the curricular aspects of ensembles until the 1920s,²⁵ long after the ensembles had become an important reality in many school music programs, and universities were very slow in training ensemble teachers. Instead of trying to force all students into taking a standardized music curriculum with all the attendant compromises required, including watering down the students' experiences by feeding them superficially generalized multi-arts fare, we should get out in front and offer a huge array of specialized music and music-related courses. Students flocked to the ensembles before, and they will flock to music offerings even more if we will give them what they want and need.

²⁴Jere T. Humphreys, "Music Education in the U.S.A.: An Overview," *Music Education* (Special Edition: Proceedings of the 1st Panhellenic Conference of the Greek Society for Music Education) 1 (1998): 58.

²⁵Humphreys, "Instrumental Music in American Education," 55.

Please understand that the dialectic that I am setting up today is not between performance and listening, because clearly we need both, and more. Rather, this dialectic is about delivery systems: a standardized curriculum versus curricula that cater to students' needs, wants, and talents. The standards could allow for considerable flexibility, but I am wary that this movement will follow historical trends in education in which the curriculum and teaching-learning activities gradually line up behind evaluation procedures.

Among other things, we have not figured out that people learn as individuals, and that individual interests, abilities, and motivations must be paramount in our teaching. My biggest single tenant as a teacher is that most teaching-learning strategies must be tailored to the individual. I fail to see how anyone teaches or learns anything except at the individual level. We really can't make the horses drink the water.

Just as society's Achilles heel in music is the notion of dichotomously distributed musical talent, in the new education order our profession's Achilles heel may be our belief in absolutism and other such notions about music compositions as product and about the autonomy and isolation of music. I submit to you that only a very small percentage of actual music involvement in society consists of music for music's sake. Most people world-wide "use" music in combination with dance, with ritual (and not just concert-hall rituals), with religion, with social activities, as social catalysts, as an identifier and enhancer of social, class, ethnic, gender, political, religious, and a host of other so-called non-music-related phenomena. To continue to insist on music remaining a discrete island will place our school music programs at great risk. Intelligent observers from outside our field see this, but we are just beginning to get a glimpse of this reality. A related peril is the notion that only aesthetic benefits count—and that social, psychological, and intellectual benefits don't, or that somehow these qualities are not our business.

Our ensembles as they stand today are too limited, too culture-bound to serve all students. We have been damning school ensemble programs with faint praise for a long time now, some of our professional leadership, that is, MENC actually tried to kill off band contests at one point, just as it later tried to stamp out jazz education during the 1960s. Because ensembles do not serve all students and do not and maybe cannot do things the way some think they should, some

would be happy if they went away. At the same time, various standards advocates and others cite figures as low as ten percent when discussing how few students are served. Those figures underestimate the actual figures by more than a hundred percent, based on the best data available.²⁶ But the success of ensembles goes beyond the numbers. For example, I would be willing to bet that most of us in this room today would not be here or in this profession had it not been for our participation in school music ensembles. That alone, the production of school music teachers, provides an important justification for these programs, not to mention the training of some of the world's best classical and other types of professional musicians.

The ensembles just do not go away, at least not yet, and even if and when they do, we should be prepared to provide something similar to replace them. Okay, so ensemble directors don't always teach music musically or maybe even for the right reasons: "Didn't you see that key change? Put your finger on it." Clearly the ensembles accomplish some good things, though, and not just in the area of musical outcomes. The solution is not to make the ensembles to go away, or even to transform them completely to facilitate the teaching and learning of the nine standards, necessarily. The solution is to use what we have learned from the ensembles as delivery systems for music education and to offer a wider array of experiences that will cover more aspects of musical learning.

Those who would be just as happy to see these programs go away and their less than straightforward tactics remind me of a story about a farmer who owned a beautiful horse of which he was very proud:

One day the farmer rode the horse into town and tied it to a hitching post in front of the tavern. Two thieves hurrying through the town happened to see the horse and decided to steal it. Realizing that the horse was much too fine and valuable an animal to be stolen in the

²⁶Jeffrey E. Bush, Jere T. Humphreys, Douglas Allen, and Sharon Lohr, "National Levels of School Music Ensemble Participation and Relationships With Academic Achievement," in *Proceedings of the 3rd Asia-Pacific Symposium on Music Education Research & International Symposium on 'Uragoe' and Gender*, vol. 2, ed. Yoko Minami and Masakazu Shinzano, pp. 26-31 (Nagoya, Japan: Aichi University of Education [2001]).

ordinary manner, they decided on a plan, which they then carried out. The plan? One thief hurriedly untied the horse and rode swiftly away, while the other remained by the hitching post. The farmer finally emerged from the tavern. Seeing that his horse was not where he had left it he was just about to shout, when the remaining thief walked up to him and said, in a sad, low tone: "Sir, I am your horse. Years ago I sinned and for my sins I was punished by being changed into a horse. Today my sentence is over, and I can be released if you will be so kind." Well, the farmer was amazed, but because he was a kind man he was greatly touched by the story and sent the man away, wishing him luck in his new life. Several weeks later the farmer went to a fair in a neighboring town where, to his great surprise, he saw his horse for sale. After gazing long at the animal to be sure that his eyes were not deceiving him, he walked over and whispered into the horse's ear: "So—you've sinned again."²⁷

Our ensembles continue to sin, but model works, up to a point. The limitation lies not within the model itself. Rather, the model should be expanded.

Beethoven probably would not have tolerated our modern-day school music programs and their so-called standards, and neither would many of us. Ronald Reagan and William Bennett probably would have benefited, but it is too late for them. It is not too late for music educators, including the professorate, to become part of the future. Allen Britton spoke about music educators, researchers in this instance, living in a dream world, or words to that effect—in other words, engaging in wishful thinking.²⁸ We do much of that in music education; it is arrogant of us to think that we should decide absolutely on the musical content and activities for our school music programs—content that will serve every student. This business is not an exact science. We should give people choices in the curriculum.

Few subjects, or facts or skills related to those subjects, are absolute requirements for everyone. We should offer as much and as

²⁷Adapted from a story in Edmund Fuller, ed., *2500 Anecdotes for All Occasions* (Garden City, NY: Dolphin Books, 1961), 380-81.

²⁸Allen P. Britton, "Research in Music Education, with Particular Reference to the Historic and the Scientific," in *Music in American Schools, 1838-1988*, ed. Marie McCarthy and Bruce D. Wilson (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, 1991), 126-32.

wide a variety of musical content and activities as the market will bear. I predict that this will be imposed on us, and that the upcoming revolution in the schools will give us this opportunity. We will need to be prepared to capitalize on these opportunities and not hide behind our own training and limited visions about what is possible and, worse, what is morally or aesthetically correct or desirable.

We had general music in the nineteenth century. What we gained through progressivism in the twentieth century was diversity in elective offerings. We can go only so far with required courses. During the upcoming school revolution, further gains will accrue to music education as a result of additional curricular choices. We should not place all our eggs in the basket of curricular mandates.

In the meantime, the research community can help the cause. We need more research than we have, and we need to study unique and experimental music programs that now exist. And we need to implement additional ones and then study them. The ensemble paradigm is not a failure because it has failed to attract all students. On the contrary, it should serve as a model for more of the same, but in all areas of music and music-related activities, not just performance. We should study what works and what does not, why and how, and build on our successes. The research community and teacher educators in general could help by fostering new and different ideas, not by clinging to old theories that were never more than theories in the first place.

The twenty-first century will be an exciting time in which major changes will occur in education, music, and music education. I want to be part of that future and not live in the Western European art music concert-hall musical traditions of the past, and not in the industrial revolution-based school system of the past either, but in the post-industrial, highly aware, highly diverse future. Most historians agree on one thing: That history over the past two millennia or so has consisted of a relatively continuous path away from elitism and hierarchical stratification and toward more and more individual freedom and diversity. Our music, our schools, and our music education systems should try to ride the crest and help lead the way. We should probably support the standards during this period before we enter the period that likely will see the first really significant overhaul of the education system since the progressive era. But we must keep our powder dry in the meantime. Our historical research has already shown that the

public's desires and the structure of economic systems dictate musical tastes as well as our educational structures. In general, government policy and professional organization initiatives follow those ultimately, not the other way around, or so it seems to me.

People want diversity and choices in curriculum, together with assurances of quality control. In the K-12 schools, we need to provide that diversity—in the music itself and in our educational delivery modes. In higher education, we need to prepare teachers to do these things. We must not confuse the public's desire for higher standards with a desire for conformity in curriculum. Soon, our largest state, California, will become predominantly non-white. That will cause yet another significant psychological shift in the public's thinking about diversity.

We researchers need to use our influence to bring about changes in our outdated university music curricula, and we need to conduct and otherwise encourage research on the results of all these changes. For example, a Northwestern University education professor is engaged in what he calls "passion research"—how elementary students achieve when they do what they want to do. Although the term "passion research" might evoke some provocative images, his line of inquiry is one that musicians could investigate also.

This is an exciting time in music education, with even larger changes on the horizon. The future can be ours if we choose to make it so. Thanks for listening.

Book Reviews

Butt, John. *Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Xix + 192 pp. Index. Hardcover, ISBN 0-521-43327-4, \$74.95

Author John Butt sums up the fundamental purpose of this book in the second paragraph of his preface:

Many histories of music centre on the surviving works of a particular age, their interrelationships and influences. Some recent studies are more concerned with the social, cultural and political environments in which music was cultivated. Seldom though is a history created out of performance as a system of thought. (p. xi)

With this concept as a basis, Butt sets the stage for a journey through the labyrinth of ideas of music education thinkers within the Lutheran tradition of the German Baroque. By examining the varied, often conflicting ideas reflected and frequently promoted in the instructional materials of the day, Butt hopes to give his readers an inside look at the attitudes and belief structures that motivated the development of music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

"It is important to appreciate today that Luther's belief in the reality of the Devil was as strong as his belief in God, and that music was for him one of the principal antidotes to the Devil's work" (p. 1). Thus, Butt states the essential motivation that placed music at the heart of the early Lutheran Church. In his first chapter, "The Establishment of Lutheran Musical Practice in the Sixteenth Century," Butt sets the stage for arguments he makes throughout the book. He describes how the value that Lutherans assigned to music influenced the curriculum of Germany's sixteenth-century Latin schools. He also illustrates how the early music teachers, called cantors, were philosophically tied to the academic approach of the Medieval *trivium* and *quadrivium*. The status of music was already in conflict between the elitist academic emphasis on *musica theorica* and the newly instated use of music as a highly effective manner in which to communicate religious texts (*musica practica*). This inherent conflict greatly affected the development of music teaching during the Baroque period in Germany.