

Regelski, Th. A. (2023). A short introduction to a Praxical Theory of Music and Music Education. In Th. Raptis & E. Perakaki (Eds), *Music Education in a Changing World: Identities, Values, Experiences. 9th Conference of the Greek Society for Music Education* (pp. 10-34). GSME.



A short introduction to a Praxical Theory of Music and Music Education

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Music is What it Does: Praxis Redux

There are many reasons to be concerned about the future of school-based music education. Music education in many countries is facing a *legitimation crisis* for continued public support. It is fair to say that the average school graduate shows little carryover of school music studies into adult life or to worry that society has not been *directly* enriched musically by school music. I think that it is time to return to music *as praxis*—*a doing*—and thus to a philosophy of music education for praxis: *praxis redux*.

Over the years, at conferences and research seminars, many of the same problems have been addressed to no practical effect in the typical work of music educators. Typically, many in our field seem to think their efforts to remedy these problems are *philosophical*; but this leaves us still confused about significant issues of direct importance to music education praxis that remain insufficiently answered. My interest is in the History of Ideas, so I hope to address critical questions in nontechnical language, fortified with ample evidence from philosophy, sociology, and anthropology concerning the origin and functioning of the *social mind* and the relation of that social mind to music in and out of school. I depend heavily on some of Aristotle's primary teaching.

If followed pragmatically, that teaching would represent a significant turn—*redux*—of music education back to music's social roots and functions and away from the dead ends of the "aesthetic theory of Fine Art."

ONE

The critical attitude, the tradition of free discussion of theories with the aim of discovering their weak spots so that they may be improved upon, is the attitude of reasonableness, of rationality. . . . We thus obtain the fittest theory within our reach by the elimination of those which are less fit.

(Karl Popper,
Science Conjectures and Refutations, 2008, 90, 98.)

Music Philosophy: *Aesthetic vs. Praxical*

Of continuing relevance to some philosophers has been what music *is*. This question has been addressed repeatedly but in ways that have *side-tracked* inquiry from the more critical question of *why* music exists. To put it pragmatically, *what are its*

benefits to individuals and society? What is music *pragmatically* ‘good for’? The critical evidence answering these questions will help resolve confusion in the planning and implementing of instruction. The answers are ultimately findings of science.

At heart, curriculum is always a matter of values; *what of all that is teachable is most worth teaching and learning?* In other words, there is always more to teach than time and resources permit; not all of what can be taught or learned is equally valuable to all students or society. The study and clarification of value have always been a significant enterprise of philosophy. Curricular philosophy is a matter of the logical *criteria for guiding judgments* concerning evidence about what is most worth teaching and learning. Thus, *curriculum planning and choices concerning day-to-day instruction are unavoidably philosophical!* It probably comes as news to teachers that their curricular choices are full of philosophical assumptions and implications—too often false!

Lack of awareness of the wide range of philosophical *criteria* for decision-making—that is, inattention to evidence that can guide curricular decisions—is, in fact, the heart of the problem. Most teachers are *unmindful* of the practical implications of their philosophically uninformed curricular choices. It is, therefore, entirely unappreciated by most teachers (including many professors) that the very question of “What is music?” (e.g., Alperson 1994; Erskine 1944) is philosophical from the first! Consequently, the teacher who presumes to teach “music” but is philosophically uninformed about its *conditions of being*—its ontology—is open to creating and thus suffering all sorts of difficulties. For example, thinking that teaching “music” involves teaching only an aural history of ‘great’ works, or only notation, or just preparing another concert

Among these criteria is the decision of (a) whether music’s meaning is autonomous, inherent, and ‘in’ the sounds (or scores) of musical ‘works’. Or, (b) whether musical meaning is *not* ‘in’ the sounds of the moment (or ‘in’ a score) but rather arises in connection with the *situated personal and social uses of music and social status functions at stake*. (I will address status functions below). Philosophy (a) sees musical meaning and value as *aesthetic*, while philosophy (b) regards music as *praxis, an action of ‘doing’ according to socially relevant criteria*. Importantly, praxis thus involves actions subject to more than strictly musical criteria. The practical consequences for a curriculum of these non-musical conditions are, I submit, decisive!

In emphasizing the practical side of praxis, I now refer to *praxical* as *the integration of praxis with practical* criteria. In this, the collective noun “music” gives way to *a verb-form—a doing—in* observing its functional conditions and results; and to *musics* as the different kinds of music constituting the noun (e.g., as foods are to food).

“Music” – Social Artification of Sound

As to how and why music comes into being, evidence from the leading social sciences is that, in reality, music comes into being *in the first place* under conditions of praxis and in *praxical* terms. This contradicts the “*aesthetic theory of Fine Art*,” which claims that art exists to evoke aesthetic experience. But societies continuously evolve various social institutions, and music is directly responsive to these institutions in ‘down-to-earth’ ways, not to abstract theories of beauty or ‘good taste’.

Central to many social institutions are sounds generated to give these institutions *social recognition* and homogeneity by which members can recognize each other and help distinguish themselves from other groups. These sounds, in conjunction with an institution’s other workings, create a *social status* in which the *social mind*—a mind created from birth by its sociocultural conditioning—sets an institution aside from everyday comings and goings and gives it special *social* meaning: for example, religion,

weddings, funerals, patriotic and political events, celebrations of all kinds, and various other socially created and socially meaningful institutions generate their distinctive musics.

Through the process of what archaeology calls “*artification*,” a socio-institutional cohort awards sounds the social status of “music” rather than “noise.” *Artification* entails ‘making special’ and assigning a special *status function* of art to images (wall paintings) and sounds as “music” (drumming rituals) that serve social praxies or doings. These social praxies and artification of their special status are the important ‘how’ and ‘why’ music (and art) exists.

Sound given the status of “music” by any social cohort is a *socially constructed reality* that depends on *observer relative* and *culturally situated* values and practices. In this vital respect, musical value and meaning are *status functions*. They do not reside ‘in’ the physical features of constellations of sound; they are *attached (sic; as baby is to mother) to such configurations* according to specific potentials such sounds are understood to be ‘good for’. The sounds themselves “make special” and therefore contribute *special meaning* to a socially instituted praxis. At the same time, the sounds, in turn, are made special (i.e., given the status function of “music”) by the praxis. No distinction between internal/external, intrinsic/extrinsic, inherent/delineated meanings and values can ever be warranted. Thus *the sounds* (given the social status of “music”) and *the sociality* (social mind that recognizes and uses those sounds as “music”) *are together “the praxis”*—in precisely the way songs unite text and sound in new holism that is greater than either taken separately.

Consequently, anthropology, ethnology, ethnomusicology, culturology, history, and sociology, consider “*music*” as a *social institution*. *It arises from its beginnings to serve the particular interests and needs of social groups and their related institutions*—from the so-called “lowbrow” music of teens and ethnic groups to the “classy” or “highbrow” music of connoisseurs and cognoscenti. In societies worldwide, music praxies exist for weddings, funerals, worshiping, and socializing (dancing, party music, BGM). Moreover, solitary listening. “occasional” musics, etc., are common in most societies—though the music of different cultures and their languages are different, precisely according to their social and cultural institutions and needs. We only need to survey the vast array of institutional needs served by music in today’s society to conclude what it is ‘good for’ and that *it is a vital social institution from the first!* Like language, music is a social institution defining humanity and humanity’s central role for music. Unlike language, however, it doesn’t ‘communicate’ emotion or ideas—although it does distinguish social groups from each other, as even teens know.

TWO

Eighteenth Century:

Aesthetic Challenge to Music Praxis

All musics, from their origins, have served unlimited social goods, needs, and purposes. Thus, in the early years of our Western history, music served the organization, sociality, and functions of diverse societies and groups within them. Strong subcultures often have both distinct language dialects and musical identities. Christianity was one such social force with a powerful institutionalizing influence in people's lives that depended significantly on the praxical role of music. Along with other creeds and their social impact, each religion developed its music (and some banned it, though they snuck it in as “prayer” and for limited social purposes, such as wedding celebrations). *Banning* some musics by religion, dictators, and some parents *demonstrates the social power of*

music, and that power can be as unsettling as it is socially homogenizing. Consider how a dictator like Hitler used music to shape his nation for war; or parents' reactions to Elvis or rap.

Social, secular, religious music, and music of the court and aristocracy were uniformly *praxical* until the mid-18th century. Then, Enlightenment philosopher Alexander Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (of 1750) attempted to supplement the theory of knowledge (epistemology) developed by "Age of Reason" (17th century) philosophers Leibniz and Wolfe. Their theory considered "true knowledge" to arise only from science, mathematics, and logic.

Challenging these criteria of "knowledge," Baumgarten attempted to validate *knowledge from the senses* as capable of discriminating *beauty from everyday experience* and thus as the foundation of 'good taste'. He gave the name "aesthetics" to this *sentient knowledge* which newly credited the *body*—not just the mind, intellect, and reason—as a valid source of knowledge. He took the term from the Greek *aisthesis* (that meant approximately the same thing). This eventually led to the study of beauty and good taste being called *aesthetics*. For Baumgarten, beauty was the *perfection of sensory knowledge*, and *good taste was an intellectual judgment devoid of feeling*. To him, as with Kant, nature was the epitome of beauty, and thus art fulfills its full potential as a source of beauty by strictly imitating nature. Kant found flowered wallpaper to be beautiful, but music only to be agreeable or pleasant compared to poetry which he most valued among the arts.

Kant used Baumgarten's Leibnizian text on logic in his classes. However, he declared that Baumgarten's aesthetics could never offer Leibnizian rules, laws, or logical principles for recognizing natural or artistic beauty.

The Germans are the only people who presently (1781) have come to use the word *aesthetic[s]* to designate what others call the critique of taste. They are doing so on the basis of a false hope conceived by that superb analyst Baumgarten. He hoped to bring our critical judging of the beautiful under rational principles, and to raise the rules for such judging to the level of a lawful science. Yet that endeavor is futile. For, as far as their principal sources are concerned, those supposed rules or criteria are merely empirical. Hence they can never serve as determinate *a priori* laws to which our judgment of taste must conform. It is, rather, our judgment of taste which constitutes the proper test for the correctness of those rules or criteria. Because of this it is advisable to follow either of two alternatives. One of these is to stop using this new name *aesthetic[s]* in this sense of critique of taste, and to reserve the name *aesthetic[s]* for the doctrine of sensibility that is true science. In doing so we would also come closer to the language of the ancients and its meaning, (e.g., Aristotle's *aisthesis*].

Obviously, cognoscenti, upper-class dilettantes, and 'classically' trained music teachers have ignored him ever since! However, in his later thinking, Kant distinguished between *free* and *dependent* (or adherent) beauty. We think we call an object beautiful, he concluded, because its *form* engages our cognitive powers and enables the pleasurable "free play" of imagination.

The judgment that something is beautiful grants that it *seems* to have a purpose—that of being beautiful art—but *otherwise has no practical use*. *Judgments of free beauty* have no *referent concept* of the object under judgment (e.g., it may just bet an appealing melody or harmonic combination). A judgment of beauty is *dependent* if we do *have such a guiding concept in mind* (e.g., *a still life of flowers* or a portrait). For free beauty, any purpose or use is inconsequential. In contrast, judgments of dependent beauty can prevail only when the work is suited for its purpose (e.g., consider the public criticism that the memorial statue of President Eisenhower didn't resemble him). Orthodox aesthetics thus

denigrate the *usefulness* of dependent beauty (e.g., hymns, marches) while extolling the *uselessness* of free beauty. Thus, to this day has come the widespread conviction (fiction?) that *Fine Art*, approached as free beauty, must be *useless*; or that rock, other popular styles. Jazz, hymns, and ethnic musics (etc.) lack free beauty due to their usefulness and unstudied accessibility.

Rarely mentioned by aestheticians is that the development and rise of aesthetic theory is itself a *consequence of the social aspirations of the bourgeois middle class* and its ambition for higher social status. In other words, a social elite *instituted* aesthetics (and with it, the public concert and concert demeanor). Because art and music were *useless*, their possession by the wealthy middle class showed good or refined taste by owning and displaying this dependent (useless) beauty. The *social* function of Fine Art, then, was a demonstration of its uselessness and its possession simply ostentation—a social badge of having good taste.

The concept of ‘taste’ was thus of great social interest at the time. One consequence was the evolution of “Fine Art” as superior to decorative, applied, or craft arts. By the middle of the 19th century, the “War of the Romantics” between defenders of *program music* (dependent upon pictures and stories; e.g., Liszt) and proponents of free beauty (*absolute music* devoid of worldly reference; e.g., Brahms) saw the dying breath of the influence of aesthetics on music. Any relevance of aesthetics today is for audiences of the “standard repertory” of absolute and formalist music of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, the heyday of aesthetics theorizing. Aesthetics *per se* declined as an interest of the cognoscenti, and today is the scholarly preoccupation of a few aestheticians arguing among themselves. Composers today avoid any connection with aesthetics, owing their allegiance to a host of new premises, each striving to move evermore from 18th century aesthetics.

THREE

Summary: the Aesthetic Corruption (Dixon, 1995)

From 1750, philosopher after philosopher speculated and reasoned about this hypothesized aesthetic beauty; thus, the discipline of aesthetics became institutionalized into a learned discipline, turning Aristotle’s *epistemology of aesthesis*—the bodily faculty of gaining knowledge through sensory experience—into *the* “Aesthetic Theory of Fine Art.” This orthodoxy is still with us today. Philosophers of various dispositions, usually overcome by the social mind and intellectuals of their time (e.g., 19th century Romanticism’s fondness for the past and the ethnic homeland), fell into three broad schools: Idealism, Realism, and Neo-scholasticism.

For Idealists, reality and truth are *a priori*—meaning they *don’t depend on experience*—and therefore are disembodied, abstract ideas with rational and inherent meaning. *Knowledge for Idealists, then, is not gained through experience.* Consequently, importantly, values advanced by Idealism involve ideas of goodness and beauty claimed to be absolute and eternal, existing prior to experience (i.e., *a priori*). Art and music objectify or instantiate such ideal, universal, and timeless truth and beauty for ‘pure’ contemplation.

An aesthetic ideology or orthodoxy dominated by Idealist philosophy has since arisen. According to this orthodoxy, ‘good music’ is the ‘art music’ of ‘high culture’. Aesthetic meaning is said to be contained *within* music’s sounds as governed by a notated score intended to promote contemplation as its only goal. An *aesthetic (psychological) distance* is supposed to separate the ‘free’ aesthetic experience of musical contemplation

from other so-called ‘extrinsic’ functions (such as music in worship) or personal uses (such as mood regulation). Instead, the expected “disinterest” of aesthetic meaning (i.e., Kant’s well-known “purposiveness without purpose”) confined art’s purpose to evoking aesthetic experience, not for use) is supposed to transcend any particular time, place, or person.

Instead, at stake is a rational universality of a transcendental or symbolic kind. This purity leaves responses unbothered by considerations of usefulness or differences in subjective preference. However, Kant held that art engages logical and rational “categories of understanding” among them concepts of time and space governing all cognition. Correspondingly, responding to art and music engaged cognitive rationality that, despite differences between schooled aesthetes, promoted “subjective rationality.” Guided by reason and schooled cognition (the goal of all committed devotees, even today), subjective rationality accounted for (or rationalized) agreement between aesthetes on matters of *beauty* and *taste*. Even for Idealists today, these ideal concepts are universal, unchanging, and irrespective of time and place. Fine Art exists primarily to experience these mind-focused qualities not otherwise available in mundane life and typically regarded by devotees as above life or the highest life experiences.

Thus, in the Idealist view, the collective noun “music” reflects a *single essence* or *shared nature* (musics are to music as laws are to law);. Reference to musics, instead, appreciates the significant social difference between each kind of music. But their differences violate the *idealist aesthetic assumption of rational universality*. This infringement marginalizes such musics in education, while ‘world musics’ nonetheless dominate across the world. Idealist aesthetic philosophy maintains a strict hierarchy with the Eurocentric ‘Art Music’ canon at the very top and other music arrayed on a descending continuum beneath. Aesthetic responses thus are cerebral and intellectual, need to be contemplated, and rely on connoisseurship, study, and experience.

Music education dependent on aesthetic premises finds its primary support in Idealism. It has historically been the prevailing philosophy, unfortunately now used as the rationale for or premise of music education. This has been the case, although orthodox aesthetic theory—including the realist and neo-scholastic variants soon discussed below—typically does not explain or correspond to *how most people experience music*—whether in concert halls or everyday life (Martin 1995; DeNora 2000). Traditionally, instead of aesthetics, performance-oriented music teachers have focused on technical excellence and repertory (difficult to do with upwards of 40-60 students in an ensemble) and altogether overlooking teaching *audience listening*.

On the one hand, the small percentage of students who participate in school ensembles find the social activity of making music the main attraction (resulting in the problems of talking, passing notes, etc.) On the other hand, their musical lives outside of and after graduation from school typically remain musically unchanged. Unfortunately, too few continue to perform after graduation from school despite this previous attraction to performance ensembles as a social activity. *School music* of this kind—whether in comprehensive or private music schools—is restricted to the school years and has a negligible impact on their musical lives in the ensuing years (Ståhlhammar 2000).

Unlike the Idealist’s denial of experience, for Realists, the natural laws of the physical world, as revealed by the senses, are the source of truth and knowledge instead of the mind. For Realists, values are thus based on so-called ‘natural law’ and are absolute and eternal. Good art, then, is expected to reflect or represent (i.e., ‘present’) the orderliness and rationality of the natural world. Realist aesthetics are, therefore, sometimes called “naturalistic aesthetics.” Schooling is concerned with transmitting ‘objective’ facts and information confirmed by experts. *Knowledge and truth*, not unlike

Idealism, are said to arise *outside* the learner's experience (*are a priori*), and teachers and texts merely 'pass them on'. *Knowledge* is a matter of given truth and facts rather than *personally constructed meanings, action patterns, dispositions, functional competencies, or the like*.

Realist aesthetics of music present several practical problems. First, musical sounds do have physical properties. However, hearing sound as "*music*" is not a simple matter of programming the auditory mechanisms of the brain. *Sound comprehended as "music"* is a judgment of the socially situated and embodied mind existing in a socio-cultural context of musical praxies and the different institutions they serve. *This sociality is "triggered" by uniquely situated social circumstances and intentions, both personal and social* (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 135). Secondly, with the arguable exception of clichéd imitation, *music does not refer directly to the things of the world*. Even compositions *inspired* by stories and visual images (i.e., "program music") depend on titles and interpretive hints (e.g., *Pictures at an Exhibition*); *Carnival of the Animals*).

Realism moved from the purities of aesthetic *formalism*—music as pure form, balance, proportion, and symmetry or as an architecture of sound—to *expressionist* aesthetic theories. However, the feelings, ideas, and emotions supposedly contained 'in' and supposedly 'expressed' by music are *not*, for Realist esthetes, '*real*' emotions. Such 'expression' is neither of the composer nor the listener. It is "aestheticized" (Osborne 2000, 80-85)—aesthetically *universalized* and therefore intellectually 'purified' of personal feeling—and abstractly encoded by the score. As Harry Broudy, a proponent of aesthetic realism, writes: "That is why, the emotion felt in listening to music has been called aesthetic emotion, intellectual emotion, . . . It is not the real thing somehow" (Broudy 1991, 81).

In the Realist's view, musical experience does not call attention to or take the sentient form of bodily experiences, such as the frissons or chills up the spine feelings many identify with 'having an aesthetic response'. As with Idealism, Realism strongly emphasizes *connoisseurship*. Music deemed to be 'good' by what Broudy describes as the "experts of successive ages" is therefore imposed on students in the belief that it will "enhance the pupil's enjoyment of music and life" (Broudy 1991, 91,92). According to Broudy's realist aesthetic, music other than the Eurocentric canon is not to be confused with the *aesthetic value* of music as a 'Fine Art' that should be the sole focus of formal music education (Broudy 1991, 77).

Again, the emphasis, like Idealism, is mainly on contemplative listening, with performance granted a *secondary realm*. Broudy barely mentions performance in his disembodied account of musical meaning (Broudy 1991). Meaning resides objectively 'in' the score, the 'work', and is only apprehended in a 'disinterested' and, therefore, basically intellectual, cerebral form. The comprehension and discrimination needed to develop 'good taste' and appreciation are (supposedly) developed best through listening because young performers lack the technical skills to properly realize the aesthetic properties of 'good music' through their performances. Learning such values can only be acquired through the "Great Works" of the 'classics.'

Correspondingly, *amateur recreational, lay, amateur, and everyday music and music-making are disregarded or denigrated*. Instead, according to Broudy, "musical training affords the learner a basis for objective and informed judgments about certain aspects of musical quality" (Broudy 1991, 86). This idea of music education as "training" for 'disciplined' judgments of connoisseurship (i.e., good taste) bears similarity to *neo-scholastic philosophy* (discussed below), not surprisingly since both realism and neo-scholasticism are related to traditions stemming from Aristotle.

FOUR

Neo-Scholasticism and Perennialism

Under the supervision of the Catholic Church Fathers (e.g., the Inquisition), Greek philosophy was denounced, stifled, and lost during the early Medieval Ages. However, Ancient Greek manuscripts were preserved in the nearby Mid-Eastern Muslim world and studied by Muslim scholars. Thanks to them, Aristotle's works were "discovered" and avidly studied by Christian Medieval Scholars who turned Aristotle's emphasis on logic to their purposes of rationalizing the existence of God and institutionalizing the Catholic Church Hierarchy.

At first, wandering religious scholars offered their theses concerning the existence of God, Virgin Birth (etc.) at the main urban crossroads of Europe, especially at Catholic Cathedrals in those cities. Thus, Christian "cathedral" and "monastic" schools eventually took institutional form, and from their models, the organization and practices of the modern university took form. This scholarship (especially by Thomas Aquinas, by then a "doctor" of the Church) was pivotal in the process of institutionalizing the university.

Medieval Latin "*scholars*" originally referred to those wandering scholars of the medieval age who served as the derivation for "*school*," "*scholarship*," and "*scholasticism*." As his manuscripts were discovered and translated by Muslim intellectuals and acquired by European "schoolmen," the scholars of the time inherited and immersed themselves in Aristotle's legacy, especially his principles of logic, the 6-volume *Organon*.

Neo-scholasticism is a contemporary philosophy rooted in renewing the emphasis on rational knowledge and disciplined approaches to learning. It has so much in common with Realism that it is sometimes called "scholastic" or "classical" Realism. The Aristotelian conception of humankind as rational underlies Scholasticism. In this view, *the ability to reason is the noblest and most valued capacity of humans*. The tension between *rationalism (logical reason)* and *empiricism (aisthesis)*, usually antithetical, results in considerable overlap of neo-scholasticism with Idealist and Realism. However, of the two, *rational knowledge is seen by neo-scholastics as being of a higher order* than empirical knowledge. Values ultimately depend on rationality, and living in agreement with reason leads to the "good life."

For scholastic pedagogues, schooling was to develop disciplined thinking habits from studying the leading disciplines of knowledge and their internal structure. The watchword for Neo-Scholasticism is the *discipline* that results from enforced training. Teachers expect students to study and master the subject and the academic subjects become "disciplines." But today's students often have no personal interest because they have no practical or personal relevance in such "content," and teaching has become a matter of passing on information from the teacher or text. Tests of recall are the measure of student discipline.

The curriculum accordingly focuses on teaching the logical *structure* of each discipline *for its own sake*. Music theory, general music teaching, music history, and appreciation courses usually fit this description. Contemporary schooling still exhibits most traits of Neo-Scholasticism, including those that give rise to the contemporary sense of discipline resulting from neo-scholastic pedagogy. *Discipline*: "A state of order based on submission to rules and authority." (Wordnik. May 17, 2020).

Given its heritage in the Middle Ages when art and music were entirely praxical, *Neo-Scholasticism escaped having an aesthetic philosophy*. Fortunately, Medieval artists not burdened by the Aesthetic Theory of Art took the theology of their works seriously, and Biblical themes, texts, and personal expressions of religiosity guided them. However,

Neo-Scholasticism is a strongly conservative movement that finds continued expression today in the educational theory of *Perennialism*.

Perennialists agree with Aristotle in arguing that since human nature (i.e., rationality, logic) is uniform, schooling should be the same for everyone. Perennialist instruction, then, is not just teacher-*directed*; it is teacher-*dominated*! Most importantly, it is committed to the “*great ideas*” of Intellectual History (literature, philosophy’s big names, politics, poetry, world history, etc.) and the “*great works*” of the past in music and the other arts. Perennialists believe that these perennial greats contain values and truths, absolute and unchanging, which have therefore survived the test of time. Accordingly, despite the passage of time and changes in cultural understanding, curriculum amounts to a diet of the “classics” as eternally relevant and valuable. Such focus on classics is typical in music appreciation courses, general music, and “music” history, which deliberately ignores most of the music in human existence.

The ‘curriculum’ for music performance instruction is the repertory chosen for concerts. The typical, uncritically assumed theory is that concert preparation automatically educates students to perceive and appreciate “aesthetic properties” they will someday ‘appreciate’ as listeners—a “someday” that, for most, never comes. Instead, large ensembles drill young musicians to perform music, and school concerts demonstrate this technical training. But there are no dedicated curriculum particulars—tacit or explicit—for developing *independent musicianship* for lifelong use. Nor is there any direct *modeling of adult modes of musicking* in which they might engage as adults after positive school experiences, especially the variety of chamber opportunities that can fit into busy adult lives. But, as we have seen, because young musicians cannot reach appropriate standards of *aesthetic excellence*, performance instruction is largely ignored or downplayed by aesthetics-based philosophies and rationales—except as a rationale.

Consequently, a typical ‘curriculum’ of performance literature is ‘digested’ in simplified arrangements, music composed especially for age-calculated abilities and appeal, ‘popular’, folk, and other musics readily accessible to youth. School choirs and orchestras sometimes are exposed to ‘real’ music but still are hampered by their limited abilities to derive total (aesthetic or musical) value from such music. So, typically they are given lesser fare that is appealing and within the judged technical demands for the age group.

School band and wind ensembles dominate in the US, and some almost reach the technical and musical levels of university groups. But to what benefit for the future of school grads? Few community ensembles exist for adults, and scheduling rehearsals for busy adults is challenging, as is achieving a balance of instrumentation when relying on volunteers who can find the time. Especially problematic is the lack of recorded music by professional groups that could serve the listening pleasures of students and adults. And concerts of such groups are usually found only in university or urban settings. Contrary to claims that such experiences produce educated listeners, the fact is that there is little such recorded music available for listening. And where issues of musicianship are concerned, unfortunately directors make all the decisions, perhaps benefitting the musical results but not the independent musicianship of students as graduates.

One primary concern of a praxical curriculum is to offer instruction explicitly dedicated to promoting adult *amateurism*. A praxical curriculum samples a regular diet of solos, duets, trios, quartets, and various other chamber combinations that involve students one-on-a-part. What can the tuba, euphonium, and trombone players take away from the typical wind ensemble to motivate them to seek a lifetime of musicing? Why don’t senior group programs (e.g., “New Horizons”) facilitate the formation of chamber groups, especially in small communities? A *Bach Choral* arranged for brass instruments

gives young and older musicians a model of the experience and challenge of one-player-per-part (no place to hide), the pleasures of success, and musical satisfaction. This praxical approach avoids all the problems of the aesthetic education paradigm and the resulting paranoia of the outspoken doubts about the value and expense of school music—outspoken by taxpayers, school administrators, and ministries. (More about the resulting *legitimation crisis* follows).

FIVE **Aesthetic Theory in retreat**

Music education's practical problems pursued according to aesthetic theory's premises are not the only challenge. There is also a realization in respected philosophical circles that aesthetic theory is “doomed either to pretentious vagueness or to an extreme poverty which makes it a poor step-sister to other main fields of philosophical enquiry” (Urmson & Rée 1989, 3). Philosopher Michael Proudfoot goes further in his critique of the problems of aesthetic theory:

It would be hard to think of a subject more neurotically self-doubting than aesthetics. Claims that the subject is dreary, irrelevant, muddled and misunderstood have been a persistent theme, not only of recent, that is to say, post-war writers, but from the very start of the subject. Alas, these claims have all too frequently been justified (Proudfoot 1988, 831).

Such a muddled and befuddling aesthetic theory hardly can serve the practical choices and actions called for by the needs of music educators.

Proudfoot (1988) goes on to clarify that “aesthetics has so often lagged behind other areas in philosophy” (852), in part because it has ignored the influence of Wittgenstein. His *Lectures on Aesthetics* begin, “The subject (Aesthetics) is very big and entirely misunderstood as far as I can see” (Wittgenstein 1966, 1). In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein taught that words have no single, fixed meaning. *Instead*, meaning takes the endless ‘play’ of “language games” that involve word meaning used in practice, constantly shifting and evolving according to a situation. Thus, as he points out in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, “it is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in but impossible. To describe what it consists in, we would have to describe the whole environment” (1966, 7). the environments of use in which music and the arts are appreciated are, Wittgenstein points out, so “enormously complicated” and varied that words referring to aesthetic ideas and criteria have negligible importance in typical circumstances (2; see also n.10). Thus, “*we don’t start from certain words*” describing aesthetic qualities or criteria, he cautions: *we start “from certain occasions or activities”* (3; italics added)—in other words, *from music as activities of praxis*.

This redux to the unique requirements of active music making as they exist in particular conditions of situatedness is, in fact, a defining trait of a praxical philosophy of music and, therefore, of a praxical orientation to music. Again, as Proudfoot puts it:

The familiar and the obvious are the first casualties in philosophical discussion: thus, *aesthetic theory often seems false to our experience of art* (and sometimes the uneasy suspicion can arise that the philosopher has not *forgotten* the familiar, for he doesn’t know what responding first-hand to art is like). . . . Recently, such inadequacy to our experience of art has been evident; . . . a result, I believe, partly of aestheticians’ preoccupation with what it is to treat something ‘aesthetically’, and partly from a *concentration on works of art in isolation from the circumstances in which they are actually created or appreciated*. (Proudfoot 1988, 850; italics added)

This isolation of music from its social roots and thus from its originating practical circumstances is usually the result of lingering assumptions—dispositions—that many music teachers inherit from their professors. Music education university students continue to hold these assumptions as teachers of school-age students in a losing competition with the commercial pop-music world. The result in most countries is *nations of listeners who have only passive contact with music*. Any musical exposure, be it concerts or general music class singing and listening lessons, is *assumed to be aesthetically beneficial in some unspecified way*. However, any such alleged benefits are *intangible*; they are not lasting or observable and thus *can't be evaluated*, as is the case with other school subjects.

Legitimation Crisis: *Music as Aesthetic Education*

The result is increasingly a *legitimation crisis* that produces more and more advocacy rhetoric advertising that “music is basic” to the “good life” to convince those who control budgets. Just as “play more aesthetically” is meaningless, so are claims and assumptions of the unseen aesthetic benefits of school music. Oddly this futile advertising often *still resorts to the same ‘ole’ claims of promoting the “aesthetic” education missing in the home*. This claim may sound good to some parents responsive to such noble-sounding claims or who don't provide so-called “cultural experiences” by taking their children to concerts, libraries, and museums. But eventually, budgets must be faced, and music programs supported based on benefits *seen and appreciated enough* to avoid higher taxes or lack of support from Education Ministries and Boards of Education. After all, in most countries, those controlling the budget have experienced the supposed benefits of ‘aesthetic education’ in their schooling and think they are in a good position, based on those experiences, to doubt the merits of budgetary support in difficult economic times. The solution is the return to *music education* where *musical* benefits of instruction are *practically* evident to students, parents, the community, Administrators, and Education Ministries. In other words, to music as praxis redux.

SIX Praxis Redux: *Aristotelian Revival of Music As and For Praxis*

My account of music as a praxis that I now call *praxicalism* should be cited with that spelling in distinguishing it from other theories of allegiance to “praxialism.” Philosophically speaking, there is no “*the* praxial theory,” only different accounts. Other scholars whose references to Aristotle are often inaccurate or incomplete do not incorporate adequate accounts of the role of *musical sociality*. Too often, when they lean toward an axis of ‘music as a social praxis’, these self-identified praxialists lose track of both the pragmatic, social, and ethical criteria of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (*Ἠθικὰ Νικομάχεια, Ἐθικά Νικομάχεια*)

Without those qualifications, so-called *praxialism* (rather than *praxicalism*) can quickly become a rationale and advocacy for just more concerts, endless listening lessons based on “program music”, and the dominance in schools of the soundtrack of the latest Disney film. All these practices inherited from aesthetic premises *are not praxis!* All usually fail to promote *musical personhood* that will seek musicking throughout life as a critical ingredient of living the Good Life. As aesthetic education slips into history, *praxicalism* is ready to build on most music teachers' usually strong musical training, adding understanding and criteria from contemporary sources. However, realizing that

music (in one or more forms) is key to the good life *needs to be validated* while students are still of school age and responsive to teaching that promotes that lasting value.

Praxialism, despite its ancient heritage, is enhanced for implementation in our modern world by drawing upon the 19th and 20th-century philosophies consonant with Aristotle's *ethical account of praxis*: religious and humanistic *existentialism* and their close relatives' *phenomenology* and *pragmatism*. The former two emphasize the *primacy of the individual* and the vital role provided by each person's *consciousness of inner life and experience*. In practice, existentialism and phenomenology are more concerned with the subjectivity of lived experience than with the rational intellect or detached, speculative aesthetics.

Knowledge and meaning in these accounts are not received readymade; instead, they are constructs by each individual. Contrary to traditional aesthetic doctrine, the body is fully implicated in praxis because the 'mind' and the 'lived body' are not separated and jointly serve as the locus of all experience (see, e.g., Dillon 1988; Blondel 1991). *Self-actualization* is a matter of self-creative agency (i.e., an ever-evolving Self)—the Self that emerges over time from challenges and choices of the complexities of life faced at birth; family, language, gender attitudes, nationality, etc.). These choices shape personhood, the Self, and a fund of values—all of which continue to evolve with choices made throughout life (e.g., marriage, profession, gender traditions, education, etc.). Typically, we are faced with *choices* that both *develop* and publically *reveal* our values (even to ourselves) and *model them* for others to consider. Learning, valuing, and meaning are all unique products of personal agency.

Educational progressivism is a direct reflection of pragmatic theories of education. Yet teaching influenced by *humanistic existentialism*—i.e., *humanistic psychology*, a correlate of existential psychotherapy and philosophy—is similar to and overlaps progressivism. Teachers, therefore, *facilitate* rather than dominate, and they help students *explore* problems rather than only memorize and recall force-fed information because of its *inertness*—i.e., its inability to 'move' students' interests. And a philosophy that focuses on the central importance of self-creation and recreation (*re-creation*) fits well with the agency and self-actualization involved in making and listening to music (Regelski 1973).

Pragmatism shares or resonates with many but not all existential traits, with each point of similarity having a down-to-earth character and adding some qualities of its own. Both, for example, share an emphasis on action, experience, and Self. But existentialism understands these in terms of the free (even isolated) individual. Pragmatism, in contrast, sees them in a socially conditioned paradigm of creation, use, and reference. Pragmatism also shares respect for concrete experience with Realism but has little in common with Classical Realism.

Pragmatic Criterion: *Pragmatic (Internal) Realism*

Pragmatists argue that there is simply no way of confirming the various metaphysical claims of Realism (Metaphysical Realism, Immanent Realism, Scientific Realism, etc.) or the metaphysical claims of Idealism and Neo-scholasticism) concerning 'ultimate' reality, truth, and beauty. *According to pragmatism, all we can and do know and value is our experience*. Thus, pragmatism entails "experiential realism" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), where knowledge is embodied and arises from the total interaction of mind-body with the diversity of situations in life that we learn to deal with—formally or informally, explicitly or tacitly—and from which we evolve the flexible knowledge serving our lives. Being thus actively constituted through 'minding the body', such

knowledge is also *personalized* (Polanyi 1962) rather than passively received as inert, generic ‘factoids’ at one time or place in life, such as in school.

Values, including those in music, are therefore relative to and personalized by individuals—that is, in terms of the range and specific conditions of the particular situations they experience—situations that unavoidably imbued with the ‘common sense’ of their cultural situatedness. Because life experience is not uniform, values are pluralistic (e.g., Bowman 1991). They are *culturally relative* (even reflective) in essential ways while involving the uniqueness of the moment contributed by individuals’ situatedness, needs, intentions, etc. (e.g., Bauman 2000). On the other hand, such values are not ‘anything goes’ subjectivity. They are confirmed, demonstrated, or warranted by the empirical consequences of experience. The success of such results, “what works,” is governed by the ‘objective,’ practical and social conditions and criteria occasioning experience in the first place (Bourdieu 1980)

The *pragmatic criterion* holds that the worth of any ‘thing’—a method, philosophy, event, action, object, praxis, etc.—is seen in the tangible and practical (praxical) consequences that result from its *use*. Thus, ‘good results’ are a matter of how the criteria determined by the concrete needs or other uses in question are served—including the “instrumental function exercised by a work of art,” the instrumental *use* of which is “enjoyed receptive perception” (Dewey 1980, 139, 48).ē

Criteria of value in art and music are also subject to the pragmatic criterion, rather than taking the form of metaphysical pronouncements by aestheticians or revelations by teachers and other supposed experts. Questions concerning goodness, worth, or value take two (usually interacting) dimensions. First, as cultural critic Robert Dixon puts it, “art is good which is good of its kind” (Dixon 1995, 53). Therefore, music is *good* relative to the type of socio-musical praxis at stake; for example, jazz, rap, rock, reggae, ‘classical,’ or religious music all demand different musical “goodness.” Questions of quality, therefore, are not judged along a single hierarchy of musical quality according to the standards of the autonomous Art Music “classics” at the top. Instead, as Dixon also points out (57), the classical Eurocentric canon “is not a quality of, but a kind of art” and thus represents only one “highly peculiar ‘taste’ ” in the world, a relatively esoteric ‘taste’ —among an infinite diversity of musics and musical qualities. (Dixon 1995, 6; see also 44).

Secondly, as I have repeatedly argued elsewhere, *music is suitable for* what it is ‘good for’ (Regelski 1998c, 1998a, 1996a). Consequently, the goodness or value (i.e., ‘appreciation’) of any music is in part—but vitally—determined by the particular *social use* at stake, which is to say, *the social praxis that occasions its creation in the first place and its continued use!* The root meaning of the word pragmatism in the Greek idea of *praxis* (for full details, see Regelski 1998c) is instructive.

Aristotle: *Ethics of Praxis*

In his writings on ethics and politics, Aristotle distinguished between three types of knowledge: *theoria*, *techne*, and *praxis*. *Theoria* involved knowledge that was developed and rationally contemplated as the “good life” of the mind or intellect for its own sake. Today, this knowledge is involved in so-called ‘pure’ or ‘fundamental research’ in various sciences and humanistic disciplines.

Technē, for Aristotle, referred to the skills used to produce *taken-for-granted results in predictable ways* (e.g., making a wine chalice). It was governed by what the Greeks called *poēsis*, the “*excellent making*” of products or ‘things’. Today, it involves *technical competence* learned mainly through apprenticeship and ‘hands-on’ doing.

Pragmatists refer to knowledge used to produce intended results as *instrumental knowledge*, functioning as a ‘tool’ for achieving one or more goals.

But *technē* has two further qualifications that distinguish it from *praxis*. First, for *technē*, the nature of the technique and craft in question is mainly *impersonal*;—for example, the technical know-how of two competent carpenters or plumbers. Secondly, any mistakes, poor work, or negative results are readily discarded; one begins again with no harm done except for the time wasted. Thus, the carpenter, for example, discards a mistake and starts over *without acquiring any new knowledge* (except maybe to “measure twice, cut once”).

However, *Praxis*, Aristotle’s third form of knowledge, is a much more complex and consequential act of ‘doing’ (*action; acting*) rather than ‘making’. First, it involves *phronēsis*, an *ethical criterion* that focuses on the prudence—the *care-fullness* [*sic*] of action (*praxis*)—needed to bring about ‘right’ or ‘good’ results for particular *human needs*—in our case, the musical and personal needs of one or more students. The ethical dimension of *praxis* is a commitment to serving people’s always different and unique needs, not simply to produce ‘things’ or invariant or taken-for-granted results. ‘Things’ may well be involved, for example, the house designed by an architect, but *praxis* requires that results—including non-‘things’ such as musical results or avoiding a student’s embarrassment—clearly serve the needs of the personal or social situations involved.

Secondly, both the ‘doing’ of *praxis* and the knowledge that results for the practitioner is exceptionally personal and amount to a *personal style*—or “feel” for the *praxis* (Bourdieu 1990, 66-67)—that is defining of Self in important ways unlike most skills of *technē*. In music, this personal meaning goes beyond the mere expertise of technique (*technē*) to the heights of artistry and is also the basis of the “love” that is at the root of *amateurism* (i.e., the Latin root *amat*, love). Furthermore, the satisfactions involved in such ‘doings’, such as making music, are not just personal; in *praxis*, they are *self-actualizing* as understood by existentialism as well as with the idea of “flow” experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; see, too, Elliott’s 1994 educational application of this concept). Thus, the Self is rewarded and defined in essential and unique ways by the nature and fullness of the engagement with or in *praxis*.

The ‘doings’ of poor *praxis* cannot simply be thrown away, ignored, or undone the way the failed efforts of *technē* can. Because mistakes of *praxis* involve people, *failures become part of a new problem to be solved*, the new problem faced by the practitioner that includes any previous failures (even someone else’s). Therefore, medical misdiagnosis or the teacher’s failed lesson become factors that have inevitable, inescapable human consequences that must be contended with anew if the corrected ‘doing’(praxis) is to reach the intended ‘right results’. As a result of the inevitable differences between always heterogeneous past experiences, such *adaptively corrective actions* result over time in ever-new *Praxical Knowledge* for a practitioner. *Future use* will contend with the equally heterogeneous needs of individuals and particular situations in the present and future. *Praxical Knowledge* is a developed “know-how” that can be compared to the skilled ‘feel’ for a game that develops over time as the result of application to ever-changing conditions (Bourdieu 1990, 66-68; 80-82; 104-05).

Praxis usually relies on certain ‘applied’ forms of theoretical knowledge where knowledge is no longer contemplated for its own sake but guides practical purposes—such as the biosciences serving medical professionals. *Praxis* typically involves a *functional synthesis* of all three types of knowledge. The emphasis, however, is always on the unique demands of the human needs at stake that provide the criteria of ‘rightness’. *Theoria* and *techne* are thus not applied for their own sake but according to the situated needs for ‘right results’ that bring about the need for *praxis* in the first place,

SEVEN
Music Praxis:
Perspectives From Sociology

In line with pragmatism generally, music rejects metaphysical accounts of aesthetic ‘essences’ and similar metaphysical claims treating questions of beauty, meaning, and value in music in absolute terms as eternal and universal. In particular, praxical theory vigorously denies the idea that musical ‘works’ are *autonomous*. Aesthetic philosophers distinguish between supposedly autonomous and stable ‘intrinsic’ qualities and meaning. And these ‘aesthetic values’ contradict the ‘extrinsic’ qualities, meanings, values, uses, and conditions of most musicing in the world. Praxical philosophy and theory actively reject these arbitrary and abstract meanings and values and energetically dispute their existence and conditions in musical experience.

In the praxical view (and the view, generally, of ethnomusicology and sociological theories of music—see, e.g., Martin 1995, Shepherd and Wicke 1997; DeNora 2000;), musical meaning does not inhere ‘in’ the sounds of music, nor can it be analyzed ‘in’ or from a score. What music *is* and *means* always entails significant synthesis with the socio-cultural conditions guiding the sociality that governed its initial creation—the *sociality* in which it subsequently is embedded and continuously helps shape (e.g., see Small 1998). Music, then, *is* what it *does* in facilitating human sociality and society.

Human sociality is a matter of relatedness and interaction through institutions, paradigms, and social ‘constructions’ and practices of various kinds. Music, too, is inherently social because it invokes, evokes, and fully engages such human relationships (Shepherd 1991, and Shepherd and Wicke 1997). “Culture,” however, is not simply a monolithic blob ‘out there’ that influences music in a single direction; culture itself results from interpersonal praxies (Bauman 1999). Therefore, *music creates and conditions sociality, at the same time that it is a product of sociality*. Thus viewed, music is a consequence of the interaction between people and sounds that they give the social status of (i.e., label or signify as) “music”.

Musical meaning, then, is not ‘in’ the sounds or their relationships but is realized through the interaction of such sounds within socio-cultural contexts (e.g., jazz clubs), uses (weddings), and other governing particulars of different social situations (DiNora 2000). *The social dimension of music—its various uses and status functions—is essential to determining music’s meaning and music is essential to shaping sociality*. In this reciprocal relationship, music’s semiotic function is somewhat parallel to spoken language.

Firstly, sounds inherently signify immanent or fixed meanings in *neither* music nor language. There is nothing about the sound of the word “pain” that is homologous to the experience of pain. Similarly, the psychological language of emotion, feelings, affects, and moods are not homologous to the music in connection with which it is often used (Hanfling 1991). Meanings associated with the sounds of music, like the sounds of words, depend on various social and cultural ‘structures’ and evolve according to the ways and the situations they interact with over time.

Following Wittgenstein’s philosophy, musical meaning, like the meanings of words, also arises from situated conditions of use—where “situated” involves not just the physical context but the intentions (needs, purposes, or goals) generating the praxis. For instance, a Bach chorale in the *worship* service affords significantly different meaning and value than that same score performed for *secular* concert audiences of his *St. Mathew Passion*. In fact, in the same manner, a secular love song used in a wedding ceremony

offers a religious and ceremonial meaning, and ‘gospel songs’ quickly became ‘soul music’ when their sacred texts became secularized. So, too, in 1999, the Vatican sanctioned the use of *hula* music and dance for the Catholic liturgy in Hawaii.

Just as the meanings of words and expressions evolve and change according to usage chronicled in good etymological dictionaries, so too do the meanings ‘afforded’ (DeNora 2000, 38-41) by music respond to ever-new ‘sensibilities’ and interpretations, new and highly personal life situations and experiences, new uses, even new technology. And this is even (or especially) true in conjunction with the standard repertory; for example, performing Bach on the modern grand piano or marimba or in choral jazz arrangements (e.g., Swingle Singers). And, of course, the existence of recordings has entirely changed how and why people listen.

As musicologists know, audiences in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wanted to hear new music. The “form” (e.g., sonata, rondo, variation) organizing a composition thus played an essential role in guiding the aural perception of listeners hearing the music for the first time. Now that recordings allow listeners to be familiar with the ‘notes’ (and perception of “form” ingrained with familiar repertory), they go to concerts (or collect recordings) to savor the differences between *performances*—an intention that did not occur to audiences hearing such works until the center of musical life had moved to Paris.

There, virtuoso performances gave new meaning to older works. Not satisfied with the technical pyrotechnics offered by that music, Paganini and Liszt composed music suitable for fully displaying their technical mastery. Ever since, a *cult of virtuosity* has satisfied the musical expectations of concert audiences, a striking example of sociality and culture directly influencing music praxis. And with the advent of quality audio feedback, recordings have seen the world engage in mainly one musical praxis: listening. And many critics worry about the influence of the recording industry on listening choices and habits, as recording engineers sometimes determine the final musical result as much as do performing artists. And recordings of leading artists progressively influence up-and-coming artists and the criteria of an “artistic performance”, live or recorded.

One thing is sure: *the professionalization of performance* as spread by recordings has dampened interest in amateur in the home and local venues—a former widespread praxis of musical sociality in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. This decline of amateur, community, and *Haus Musik* has been an unfortunate loss to the social benefits of music. Society has become increasingly *uninvolved* with *personal* musical praxis, especially at home. As any social history of music shows, a century ago, it was common to have a piano in the middle-class home, and musicing shared with family and friends.

Musical sociality in general and the situatedness of present praxis jointly condition a range of possible meanings without providing the kind of uniform or ‘built-in’ meaning implied by the aesthetic orthodoxy. However, listeners or critics cannot assign just any meaning to musical sounds. The range of meanings that can arise from the *sociality* of music mitigates any ‘silly relativism’ where anything or everything is possible (Bowman 1996). The range of possible states of human awareness and thus of meanings afforded by music is flexible, then, but not infinite (Shepherd 2002).

Institutionalizing Sound into “Music”

“Raw” sound intended, evoked, or invoked as a particular or general kind of social praxis gains *the social status of “musical” sound (i.e., “music”)* in terms of the governing conditions, status, criteria, and *artification* of the praxis and its social conditions—its *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990), *lifeworld* (Habermas), and its *Background* (Searle 1998,1995)). The difference between sound and “music” is thus *ontologically subjective*; it is “observer-dependent,” a *social reality*, not an “observer-independent” or physical reality (Searle 1998, 116-117). *Sound becomes “music” in terms of essential observer relative features or qualities afforded by or accorded to it in terms of the personal or social praxies that such sound serves; praxies it is ‘good for’.*

Praxical theories stress all kinds of musical ‘doings’ that bring about ‘right results’ in connection with situated use functions. Unlike aesthetic theories, praxical theory avoids what Dewey called the “antifunctionalist prejudice” that “refuses to take account of the practical function that symbolic systems perform“ (Bourdieu 1990, 295) and thus accounts pragmatically for all music, however rare or ubiquitous.

First, following the two-fold account of pragmatic value explained earlier, the existence of an unlimited variety of kinds, types, styles, and genres of music is irrefutable evidence that music is unavoidably as varied as humans and human sociality (Martin 1955, 25-74). It is helpful to recall in this connection that the so-called ‘Fine Art’ music’ of the “classical” Eurocentric canon is but one in this vast array of types that arise in such multiplicity precisely because of the diversity of conditions that bring forth different musics. Eurocentric ‘art music’ is not *the* pinnacle of quality to which *all* music in the world is judged or compared: it exhibits only particular *qualia* that meet the interests of the one sociality that occasions it. Secondly, traditional aesthetic theory, being so thoroughly conditioned by historical circumstances in the 18th-19th century, lacks relevance to modern musical life. It was, even in the 18th century, a flawed philosophy that at most served (and still serves) the ideological interests of cognoscenti and upper-middle class and its attempts to be ‘classy’ in its conspicuous demonstration of ‘good’ or ‘refined’ taste (e.g., Regelski 1996b; Martin 1995; Bourdieu 1984).

One direct and unfortunate consequence of the influence of the aesthetic orthodoxy has been the *‘professionalizing’ of performance and, hence, the dramatic decline in amateur and recreational music-making of all kinds that it occasioned* (Regelski 1998a). One action ideal; of praxicalism redux, then, is to foster more amateurism in society—*demonstrating tangible evidence of the contribution of school music and private study*. Unfortunately, social research shows that most who engage in lifelong-musicking are *self-taught*. Secondly, a praxical account of music points to the fact *all the various kinds, types, and genres of music, are ‘good for’ an unimaginable diversity of ‘good results’ according to the praxies served.*

EIGHT

The Ubiquity of Music Praxis – *Musically Institutionalizing Sociality*

All kinds of practical uses of music fall under the umbrella of praxical criteria: What singer Ani DiFranco describes as “the indigenous, unhomogenized, uncalculated sound of a culture becoming itself in the streets, bars, gyms, churches and back porches of the real world” (DiFranco, quoted in Farley 1999)—in other words, the overwhelming preponderance of music in the world—is music made for a bewildering variety of life uses (DeNora 2000). *But the autonomy claimed by aesthetic theory and the psychological*

'distance' required of aesthetic experience denies or deprecates the value of such musicking; or it attempts to tear such music from its natural and necessary social context to exhibit it for contemplation alone—as though it was or could become, by such evisceration, purely or essentially aesthetic, despite its origins in situated sociality. Such attempts by aesthetic theorists to apply aesthetic criteria to indigenous and ethnic musics of various kinds result, then, in *colonialism* and exploitation by Eurocentric aesthetic theory (and its ethnocentric 'high culture') that misappropriates and misrepresents the music in question and devalues the kinds of authentic musical meanings engaged *in situ* by its creators.

In sum, praxical theory accounts for literally all kinds and uses of music; it finds musical value not in disembodied, metaphysical hypotheses concerning aesthetic meaning but in the constitutive sociality of music and the functional importance of music for the social 'structures' (or processes) that govern social and thus individual consciousness. It addresses 'concert music' (of all kinds) presented for 'just listening' as equally imbued with sociality (e.g., see Small 1998) and as a discrete praxis that is no more or less important than other kinds of musical 'doing'. But praxical theory seeks to redress the imbalance the aesthetic orthodoxy has promulgated on behalf of listening and reasserts the importance of musical agency through various kinds of performance. *It especially encourages lifelong amateuring and the chamber musics such as duets, trios, and quartets that require commitments suitable to the time constraints of adult life.*

Furthermore, regarding 'just listening' in concert situations or at home, praxical theory accounts for and points to the value of listening to all kinds of music in terms of the "good time" thus created. *Whether via listening or performing, music "makes special" time in a way that creates "good time"—time that is experienced as "worthwhile" concerning both its sociality and its individuating benefits and other meanings, benefits, and uses (Regelski 1996a).* Therefore, as opposed to time we 'kill', simply 'pass', 'waste', or 'spend' at other pursuits (such as work), the "good time" resulting from musical praxis engages a variety of socially constituted meanings in which the individual participates in a way that is self-actualizing and self-enhancing, and that goes well beyond clichés of "good time" as merely "fun" or "amusing" (concerning metaphors of time as a 'resource', see Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 161-66).

In particular, then, such a praxical account of music and musical value provides *support for all kinds of amateur and recreational uses of music (Regelski 1998a)*—uses that in no stretch of the imagination are accounted for as aesthetically valid or valuable by the orthodoxy at the root of aesthetic theory. Whether such amateurism entails playing jazz at competent (but non-professional) levels of expertise in local clubs, the skill of country fiddlers and banjo pickers, garage bands of aspiring rock musicians, or folk guitarists and lay or naïve music making of all kinds, such as community ensembles, church choirs, Christmas caroling and the like, each praxis has a place and personal, social and thus musical value in the praxical account.

Furthermore, listening praxis embraces not only 'concert music'; it expands to include listening where such social practices as religion, weddings, parties, ceremonies, and the like, fully integrate music as a central praxis of institutional membership. In these cases, *music does not just 'accompany' the occasion; it is intrinsic and defining of the very nature and value-structure of the praxis for those taking part (DeNora 2000; Dissanayake 1992, 1990).* The social praxis changes according to music—a wedding without music, a beer party with string quartet BGM, etc.

In the praxical view, music is of and for the down-to-earth conditions and values of everyday life, a life well lived in terms of the "good time" thus created. It is not above life in some intellectually or cerebrally abstract, disembodied, otherworldly aesthetic

realm of metaphysical ideals, profound expressions, or high-minded understandings that exist for their own sake and are available only to ‘cultivated’ connoisseurs. Nor is it a matter of the ‘high culture’ by which the elite few define themselves as ‘cultivated’ compared to the ‘uncultivated’ masses. Instead, in the praxical account, music’s meaning and value—*the meaning of all music—is for and as personal agency and sociality*.

Consequently, music is more engaged with everyday people and everyday personal and social life (DeNora 2000) than is approved or sanctified by the ‘music appreciation’ assumptions of aesthetic orthodoxy and, thus, by music education pursued as aesthetic education. As such, praxical theory is also more down-to-earth as a foundation for the pragmatic decisions guiding curriculum for music education.

Curriculum and Pedagogy: *for and as Praxis.*

Aside from the philosophical problems already pointed out, *aesthetic-premised music education has distinct practical liabilities in connection with schooling*. First, aesthetic meanings and values are so intangibly metaphysical that they present considerable practical problems for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction. Secondly, because aesthetic experience is not directly observable, whether students are ‘having’ such experiences -or whether such experiences are ‘appreciated’, improved, or heightened- as a result of instruction, they *resist direct observation and thus evaluation*. The misassumption is false that simply performing or hearing ‘good music’ directly and automatically produces aesthetic experience and *that this experience is self-sufficiently an aesthetic education!*

Among other problems, *the ineffability of aesthetic experience* and, thus, *the intangibility of the results of aesthetic education* puts music teachers constantly in the position of undergoing the *legitimation crisis* of having to defend, advertise, or ‘advocate’ the value of music education for life and society. Why is it that, if all taxpayers, administrators, and budget officials have experienced school music in their educational histories, so many doubt its value for being *generally well-educated* (whatever that means) and thus doubt it in formulating a fair budget? Have they lost their memories or revisited them?

Finally, it is abundantly clear to most teachers that the ‘doing’ of music together is the prime attraction of musical study for most learners involved in school ensembles. But for those in general classroom music, *music listening serves a range of significant use-functions in personal and social life that at least parallel and often go well beyond typical adult uses of music*. For example, DeNora (2000, 47) cites and comments on recent psychological research concerning everyday uses of music listening by 500 subjects in Britain:

In a preliminary analysis of the replies (Sloboda forthcoming), respondents reported using music in relation to six thematic categories: memory, spiritual matters, sensorial matters (for pleasure, for example), mood change, mood enhancement and activities (including things such as exercise, bathing, working, eating, socializing, engaging in intimate activity, reading, sleeping).

This research points out how individuals appropriate music as a resource for their ongoing constitution and social, psychological, and emotional states. It points to a more overtly sociological focus on individuals’ *self-regulatory strategies* and *socio-cultural practices for constructing and maintaining mood, memory, and identity*.

Music is thus not just an ‘accompaniment’ to personal and social practices understood as otherwise autonomous without it. Instead, *self-consciousness and sociality*

are determined critically by the role and use of music. Attempts by well-meaning teachers to ‘convert’ students to the criteria and conditions of aesthetic experience thus typically fall on ‘deaf ears’, whether in classes or ensembles. In the former, the closer students are to adolescence and thus to using music as a resource in everyday socio-personal life and achieving self-identity, the more they resist such imposed values. Attempts at *aesthetic conversion* fail in comparison to the sociality of music-making. Because the ability or desire to be *musically active on their own* has not been a strong focus of school ensembles and not modeled as part of the curriculum, interest in or desire to engage in musicking seldom extends beyond the school years. Instead, the praxis of “school music” has become a notably *isolated* musical praxis.

To what ends? In the case of instrumental music, we have already noted that most musicking is listening. Despite the hegemony of school bands in the US, at least, there is grave *unavailability* of band/wind ensemble recordings. One reason may be that directors of these ensembles do not include listening in their curriculums. It is almost entirely invisible except for a few parades and fall football halftime shows. The 1950s (and later), popular fireman’s parades and competitions are also victims of becoming a nation of listeners. At the same time, the listening fare has become worryingly commercial, aimed at adolescents. And quickly changing with the arrival or departure of teen idols!

This music is almost entirely in denial of aesthetic education, so students must organize such groups independently outside school. These groups would be targeted favorably by praxical pedagogy, and students with any interest invited: they’re most likely to continue musicking after graduation. “Popular music” has overwhelmed aesthetic education at every level, and now music education professors are devoting their scholarly efforts and journals to it. And it is the new focus of curriculum throughout much of Europe. This focus would not be a problem if popular music followed a praxical pedagogy. But most of what I’ve seen in person follows a music appreciation model of the history of “popular music” and major stars. Performance, if any, may amount to “covering” 3-chord blues bands of the past or “rap.”

Praxical approaches to music education are rooted in the ‘doing’ of music—including composition and listening as actions that constitute “the music.” Hence, planning, instructing, and evaluating are all benefited by abundantly *observable results*. A curriculum rooted in and for praxis (for details, see Regelski 2021) most profitably begins with a *written curriculum guide*. This formal document serves music teachers as a blueprint serves carpenters. In the case of teaching, however, the teacher (or cooperating group) is both an architect and the builder at once. The curriculum guide describes the general kind(s) of ‘real life’ musical praxies that instruction intends to initiate or improve.

Action Ideals: *Curriculum for Real-Life Praxis*

In praxical theory, *action ideals* are ‘real-life’ kinds and uses of music; praxis. Action ideals are ideal because there is no *single instance nor an ultimate state of final perfection*: a “good marriage” being a “best friend” are action ideals. Praxical ideals for teaching are also directly comparable to the *regulative ideals* of professions: they guide the praxis in question toward certain desirable but un-detailed praxical ends that, given the diversity of persons served, can take no single or ultimate form and can always take improved or other forms—e.g., the ideal of “good health” serving medical professions.

In a *formal curriculum*, each ideal describes the basic musicianship knowledge and skills necessary for students to participate competently in the praxis in question

independently of the teacher. Such descriptions are conceived and expressed holistically and rely on the teacher's personal, praxically developed musicianship. Hence, ideals are not so detailed as to become atomistic or detached, thereby losing sight of the final functionality and holism of the envisaged praxis. They are, however, stipulated in *action terms* as 'doings', not as abstract 'knowings' or 'understandings'. Finally, a praxis-based curriculum recognizes the potential for harm of teaching musicianship and skill by means that 'turn off' students and the importance of inspiring students with the benefits and joys of the 'play' of music. Thus, each praxical ideal also states the affective and "good time" conditions and values instruction needs to model and nurture if students *want to and eventually choose to* continue to be involved in the musical praxis in question outside of and after graduation from school.

In essence, a praxis-based curriculum organizes and delivers instruction according to an *apprenticeship model*; that is, the praxical ideals in question function as a *practicum* (for more on this, see Elliott 1995)—the holistic immersion of students in the types of 'doing' central to the musical praxies in question. Instead of a "spiral curriculum" that revisits supposedly autonomous concepts at ever-higher levels of abstraction, the spiral of a praxis-based curriculum constantly engages ever-more realistic examples and practical challenges of the ultimate praxical functions intended. *In other words, skills develop according to the progression of technical and musical demands as instruction gradually becomes ever more 'real life'* in the kinds and conditions of musical praxis addressed. In this manner, the teacher can assess musicianship knowledge and skills addressed by instruction as *effectively praxical*—easily observed feedback that validates the efficiency of instruction and the effectiveness of learning. And a considerable consequence of this praxical approach is that, at each level, the joys, interests, and benefits of the praxis in question are experienced *holistically*—regardless of present skills—and *thus modeled for the future*. At the same time, different kinds or ever-new levels or alternatives for praxis typically arise and tempt students in new directions or to new types or degrees of skill.

Furthermore, despite failing to reach "professional" expertise, the praxically gained insights of dedicated and competent amateurs lead to greater interest and critical intelligence as listeners. Amateurs favor listening to the music in which they are engaged (or at least to music for that instrument) and thus listen with critical insight informed by their praxical experience. However, recordings of wind ensemble music are rare: this is a weakness because graduates have little to listen to, and music education is not motivating a substantial role for such ensembles outside the university context. This kind of listening connoisseurship arises from *praxical knowledge* that results only from being a practitioner critically informed by praxis; it does not, as is the case with aesthetic theories, develop dilettantism in place of such engagement.

On the other hand, what I call '*just listening*'—i.e., 'audience listening', or listening with full attention to recordings, *is a praxis of its own!* It has its own cognitive, perceptual conditions, criteria, and 'good-fors'—though *not* the 'contemplation' or 'appreciation' of 'aesthetic meanings'—and therefore profits from its apprenticeship, one that stresses, in particular, "music's interpretive flexibility" (DeNora 2000, 43) and its sociality. This range of listening possibilities means, on the one hand, that 'just listening' should be one of the central praxical action ideals in curriculums for *performance* instruction and therefore deserves a dedicated and direct apprenticeship of its own—i.e., 'practice' in the praxis of 'just listening on the part of students studying performance.

Classroom music instruction likewise profits from a dedicated practicum in 'just listening. But this practicum *also needs to include performing and compositional praxies of various kinds and levels that actively inform listening* in the same way that performance

experience influences the critical listening of amateurs. And instead of having ‘just listening’ as the *only* intended consequence of the general music curriculum (as is typically the case with the focus of aesthetic theory on learning to ‘appreciate’ aesthetic meanings), a praxical approach to general music class also focuses on developing an interest in and on nurturing beginning-level skills of performing and creating music as potential recreational practices for later life.

The *sine qua non* in general music class, as elsewhere in this praxical approach to curriculum, is a pragmatic concern with a curriculum of the kinds of holistic, ‘real-life’ musical praxis students can do *at all* or *better* as a result of instruction. Music education, then, becomes *a value added to a value*. The original value in question is the socially created reality called “music” and the forms and nature of musical praxis already extant in society when a student enters school; the “value-added” is the new or improved musical agency instruction builds on this base for the individual and, hence, that it contributes to the enhanced musical vitality of the society. Singing is a notable example: teachers can help improve singing (range, quality, diction, pitch matching, tone, intonation) while adding the skill of music reading that facilitates access to notated music (hymns, community and church choirs, music theater) and the like.)

CONCLUSIONS:

Curriculum and Pedagogy for Amateurism

Given the importance in every society of the “social ‘power’ of music and its role “as a resource in daily life” (DeNora 2000, 151), *a praxical account of music most fully reflects the dynamic and socially creative role of music in human life*. Similarly, a praxically-based curriculum provides the pragmatic benefits of music for everyday life sought by praxical philosophy. All kinds and degrees of musical praxis are thus validated. And with a praxical curriculum guiding instruction and evaluation, music teaching becomes a true and valid *professional praxis* (Regelski 2002) that is ethically and professionally committed to inclusiveness of musical meanings and values, not to the kinds of exclusivity promoted by aesthetic orthodoxy. Music education predicated on the value and importance of music as praxis, then has the effect of *including* rather than *excluding* students so that music studied in school is understood as music for us, for the “good times” of a life well lived.

For example, dropouts from instrumental ensembles can satisfy their unfulfilled musical interests by offering them a guitar class or a steel drum ensemble (both created for that purpose; both are music, after all), or chamber combinations such as duets and trios with literature especially selected for their interests and abilities. These options depend on the *traditional allure of big ensembles being replaced by a praxical conception that offers everyone a music education in a medium that suits their interests*. Praxical choices have much more to contribute than has been realized by the traditional ‘music appreciation,’ structure-of-the-discipline curriculum, or large ensembles. Choices of a praxical nature hold forth the promise of being recognized as far more central to life and schooling than previously. For example, schools too small to offer an orchestra can offer small string chamber groups to students attracted more to strings than winds or singing. In one school lacking students for an orchestra, the choir director made time to offer violin lessons to a student devastated at learning that, lacking an orchestra problem, she couldn’t study the *violin* willed to her by her beloved grandad, a well-known local country fiddler.

For praxical philosophy, the central philosophical questions and their importance are easily conveyed to teachers and through their instructional praxis to students. Addressing the fundamental question of **what** music “is” investigates the

origins of music. It addresses “**why** music comes into being? In other words, what are *the purposes of music* in society and its contributions to personal lives. What “**music is good for,**” then, can only be identified in “**what music does**”: recognizing the endless effects by which **music promotes a good life and energizes culture**. *Culture, in turn, reinforces the importance of music to the fabric of society through its continued use of existing music and its creation of new music to serve evolving forms of sociality*. Every music educator needs to answer these questions in planning curriculum and developing instruction. Moreover, these questions *and their answers must be clear to students* through the positive effects of a praxical curriculum and a pedagogy for **amateurism**—the loving of music as a central value in life.

What music ‘is’ and is ‘good for’ is seen in the sociality that music has always promoted and served. **Appreciation is use**. What we appreciate in life, we use! A praxical curriculum promotes lifelong musicking, overcoming the all too evident weaknesses of claims that music exists to promote aesthetic doings., thus ignoring music’s ever-present praxical role and returning to music as the sociocultural praxis it is and has been since the dawn of civilization. In doing so, the praxical approach to musicking in society and life will enhance respect for music—all types!—and graduates will have more criteria for their musical judgment than subjective taste fueled by commercialized music. *Music education as praxis redux* will promote the notable musicianship skills that students, taxpayers, and educational administrators will admire and support,

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