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# Creativity in Music Education

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To read and write about a philosophy of music education is nothing new, but to encourage the music teacher to think about it is a fairly new innovation in music education.

Recently I was given the task of discussing the philosophy of music education at four consecutive sessions organised for music teachers in Natal.

Before I began my lecture I asked the teachers to answer in one sentence the question: Why am I teaching music? The majority of answers read as follows: I love music and want to pass on that love to others. This outlook could be dangerous because we put first and foremost our particular interests, our likes and dislikes, even our prejudices and this is of little interest or value to children. Very few made any mention of creativity.

Over the past 15-20 years the following events occurred in England and the U.S.A. which have influenced the thoughts of music educators throughout the world.

1959 — The *Young Composer's Project* was established. As a result of this project it was discovered that very little is known about contemporary music in the schools; music seminars and workshops in contemporary music in education were set up and the outgrowth of this was:

1963 — *The Contemporary Music Project for Creativity in Music Education.* One of the studies which proved highly successful in this project was the students' study of contemporary music as well as their creative experiences in improvisation and composition. This not only helped them develop an understanding of how music works, but also made them eager to develop the skills they needed in order to perform their compositions.

1964 — *The Yale Report* was issued. It recommended a wholesale renewal of the repertory of school music, both for performing and listening.

Among other ideas — they advised that there should be courses in musics of the world's peoples.

I point this out because it is so relevant to South African music education.

1965 — *The Manhattenville Music Curriculum Program was established.* This project approached music instruction by ways of composition, improvisation, the use of contemporary materials, and contemporary sounds. Unfortunately, the total programme is such a departure from the traditional methods of skill development that it has not gained wide support.

1967 — *The Tanglewood Symposium* took place. This is one of the most exciting meetings I know of in the history of music education. In attendance were not only music educators but musicologists, composers, philosophers, and psychologists. I wish I had time to refer to you some of the papers which resulted from this conference, but I have time only to pass on to you their declaration which was: "We believe that education must have as major goals the art of living, the building of personal identity, and nurturing creativity. Since the study of music can contribute much to these ends, we now call for music to be placed in the core of the school curriculum".

1967 — At that same time in England the *Plowden Report* was issued stating that "the child is the agent of his own learning". There is little place for the type of scheme which sets down exactly what ground should be covered and what skills should be acquired by each class in the school. The report also stated that they found the planning of music as a creative subject lagging behind work in language and the visual arts and crafts.

1973 — *The Teacher Education Commission Report* was published which said that a new type of teacher education in music is needed in order to provide music educators who are competent, flexible, creative, curious . . . They must develop a comprehensive musicanship that, coupled with an open-mindedness towards the use of any sounds combined in a musical context, will enable them to address themselves to any music they encounter. In this report the musical qualities and competencies for classroom teachers included:

1. Skills in making sounds and playing and conducting.
2. Skills in organising sounds — for example a teacher should be able to guide a child as they invent rhythmic themes on simple instruments.
3. Utilise simple procedures in composing music.
4. Skills in hearing sounds.
5. Skills in creating a climate in which creative experience and musical exploration are possible.

While doing some research of materials which are being used in music education today, I came across two types of books which are presently in use. The first is the traditional and the second is the more progressive or open-ended book.

Let's take a look at the philosophies of the writers of these books: Those I have chosen to look at I have chosen because I know they are used by teachers in the Natal area, and because they were either published or revised within the last 15 years. I shall discuss first a traditional approach, then a more progressive approach.

THE CLASS MUSIC TEACHER — Charles Proctor (1965).

1. He says that all music is essentially vocal. He supports this by reminding us that conductors often tell their players to make the instrument 'sing' in order to give maximum effect to the music.
2. The greatest music of the church has always been its vocal music.
3. The meat and fibre of national music can be said to be found in its folk songs.

On page 14 he says "There is no need to go into the question in great detail, but we must insist

that the essentials of music are in the vocal manifestations *rather* than in instrumental; that the vocal aspect is more natural and more real than any other".

He then goes on to discuss the cultured person of Elizabethan times and says they could be expected to take their part in song and instrumental music as a matter of course. He adds that the cultured persons of today are the least articulate and it is left to the teenagers and the teddy boys and girls to express themselves . . . "But when we see and hear the material in which they express themselves . . . largely of decadent taste and limited poetic aspiration, we have only ourselves to blame".

Again, "It is of some significance that the great composers — Bach, Mozart, etc., have written largely though not exclusively for the voice". The remainder of the book is a discussion of ways the voice must be used to express emotion.

In contrast to Proctor's ideas, let us look at the *Manhattenville Music Curriculum Program* 1965 — a curriculum which was established for primary and high school students. I want only to point out the three fundamental characteristics which they said transcend the differences of specific styles, sound and sources or other idiomatic factors and give a meaning and coherence to the total art of music.

1. Music is an agent for the projection and clarification of thought. It is a medium of expression . . . which serves a need that is not met by other communication processes. Through a distinctly unique and foreful language of sound, music conveys ideas and feelings in a way that is not matched by words or pictures. In this sense music becomes a way of knowing and experiencing. Thoughts are expressed, transmitted, received and clarified on an extremely personal and intimate level. This effects both the mind and the emotions. But it is through the indefinable ability of music to address the spirit of man that its greatest value as a communication process lies . . . Knowing has assumed a proportion that goes beyond just rational consideration.

2. The second characteristic of music is found in its continuing nature . . . which means that music is always sensitive to and interpreting the present. It is neither a static medium nor a completed monument of the past.

3. The third characteristic of music is suggested by the first two, but relates music more explicitly to the intrinsic need of man. Music is a vehicle for man in his constant search for individual creative fulfillment . . .

These three are the most basic characteristics of music and they must be the most immediate responsibility of the study underlying every classroom experience. Without this depth of perspective the learning of data, skills, and techniques has limited purpose and the full potential value of music to man is obscured. (Page 75.)

> Children must become involved in the total process — that is composing, performing, conducting, listening and evaluating, and this participation in these activities must always be in the spirit of a musician, not an imitator.

*The Oxford School Music Books* — 1967

They feel that song teaching is not enough but that it is of utmost importance that children should learn to play an instrument, preferably the recorder, violin or pitched percussion instrument.

Also important is music for listening and music for movement.

Concerning the question "Why teach music?" they write: "Music . . . has no other purpose than to give pleasure. It is not 'useful' and it is not even good training for the intellect. Young children are prepared to enjoy music in a number of ways . . .

All these ways of enjoying music are ends in themselves and should not be regarded as a means to some vague unspecified greater end".

In contrast to the Oxford Philosophy, John Paynter from York University says the first duty of both the music specialist and class teacher is the education of the whole person. He goes on to concern himself with the question of what contribution music can make besides giving immense pleasure to the performer and to the listener alike,

He says it is as a creative art that music is beginning to play an increasingly important role in education. The materials of music are as available for creative exploration as the materials of the other arts; however, this seems to be an area of activity where music has not kept pace with other school subjects. Why?

Teachers of drama, English and art have found the change of emphasis from children being instructed, to children being placed in situations where they can learn themselves, very stimulating.

Music on the other hand has tended to go its own way and been unaffected by recent moves in education.

Too often we are encouraged to regard music as a leisure activity. This may have lead us to emphasize the re•creative rather than creative activities in school music and although creative activities in school music and although creative work in drama, etc., has been readily accepted the same is not true for music.

What is creative music? First of all, it is a way of saying things which are personal to the individual.

It also implies freedom to explore chosen materials. The role of the teacher is to help the student develop his own critical powers and perception. The processes of composition in any art are selection and rejection, evaluating and confirming the material at each stage. It is essentially an experimental situational Sound and Silence.

*The Teaching of Music in Primary Schools* — Ulrich (no publishing dates; however written after 1952).

He says that Standard I marks the beginning of formal introduction of music in all its aspects. . . . Teachers should endeavour to awaken not only a keener appreciation for the art, but also a desire for the rudimentary knowledge of the subject. From now on we are to read and write music. And this is in fact the sole object of our work in Standard I.

Further on one reads, when dealing with Standard III, "Here is the beginning of music proper. Here we start with the real nomenclature and the use of authentic technical names."

When he discusses music appreciation with Standard V he says "I feel that no one can fail to appreciate 'The Hebrides Overture' by Mendelssohn once the background story has been told. Similarly I fail to be convinced that a composition such as Beethoven's Pathetique Pianoforte Sonata, if analysed properly, will leave anyone unmoved . . .

My last word on this matter — join the thousands of others who have discovered joy at the hands of the great masters such as Bach, etc."

The book by Percy Buck, *Psychology for Musicians,* (10th imp in 1967) will support Ulrich's last statement because he says that the highest aim that he can put before musicians as music teachers is that you should further the cause of good music.

My question: "What is good music?"

In contrast to Ulrich's philosophy, *Murray Schafer* — a composer who is working in music education—says the music education is an expressive subject rather than a knowledge-gaining subject. Could not music be taught as a subject which simultaneously releases creative energy and trains the mind in the perception and analysis of its own creation?

"To perform, to interpret music is to engage in a reconstruction of the past, which may certainly be a desirable and useful experience. But should we not spend some of our energies in teaching to make things happen. The only way we can turn the past tense subject of music into a present tense activity is by creating."

. . . . "To me music is nothing but a collection of the most fascinating and beautiful sounds made by men with good ears and affectionately remembered by humanity."

We hear the word creative being used over and over and we see it on the jacket of many books which are not truly creative. The scientific study of creativity is a very recent development. Psychology began to take an interest in creativity or creativeness about 1950. One indication of this rising interest may be found in the numbers of articles appearing under the heading "creativity" in Psychological Abstracts. In allfi 240 articles are listed between 1927 - 1957. Of these the first 20 percent appeared during the first 13 years and the most recent 20 percent in only the last two years.

The word creative needs to be looked at. Firtly to define it is very difficult. David Asubel (1968) wrote that creativity

> "is one of the vaguest, most ambigious and most confused terms in psychology and education." He feels that it is important that the criterion of originality be reserved for definition of creativity. Other writers are less restrictive and suggest that creative potential is present in almost everyone.

Trevor Wishart — an English composer — goes one step further and not only says that creativity is present in everyone, but that Western society has established an artistic elite who wants to retain their privileged position and therefore they do not wish to recognize the creativity present in all peoples.

At the ISME convention in 1976 they said that the creative process in music education defines creativity as the discovery of relationships which are new to the individual and the development of such relationships into some form that is individually satisfying.

From the *Journal of Creative Behaviour*—William Ward says that we should give up using the word "creativity" in the name of any instrument used in research with young children . . . rather call the instrument a measure of playfulness, of openness to experience, of educational fluency or whatever else it looks like.

For our purpose it is not vital to come to terms with one definition of the word creativity. It is, however, important for us to consider it in relation to music education and to realize that finally psychology is beginning to study creativity in a scientific way and that programmes are being organized such as "Project for Creativity in Music Education" in the USA.

A disturbing finding in Benjamin Fine's book *Stretching Their Minds* says: Studies have shown that our schools have rewarded children for being neat, clean, polite, co-operative, honest and punctual; for conforming to cultural norms. We do not reward creativity and frequently do not allow it in our schools.

There are creative techniques of education which will encourage at least eight different abilities which, according to Dr Torrance — the foremost researcher in the field of creativity — are involved in creative thinking:

1. Sensitivity to problems — the ability to see defects, needs, deficiencies.
2. Fluency of ideas — the ability to think of different ideas, new concepts, new combinations of data.
3. Flexibility in handling data — the ability to use varied approaches, strategies and kinds of solutions.
4. Originality of interpretation — the ability to get away from the beaten track.
5. The ability to redefine — the ability to reconstruct a scientific theorem; to see uses and applications other than the intended ones.
6. The ability to analyze, to synthesize and to organize.

Do we encourage these abilities in education, or is what George Prince writes in the *Journal of Creative Behaviour* true?

> "The vast majority of us human beings are born with very powerful engines of thought. The precise nature of the thinking operation has not been widely understood. Without meaning to, we cause children to repress in themselves certain important thinking operations — such as those above."

Before I list for you a few findings which have resulted from studies regarding creativity over these last few years, I want us to think a little about the world we are going to be sending our

children into. It is important to consider this because one of the ideals which education should aim towards is to help a person get the most out of living while giving as much of himself or herself to help his or her neighbour as much as possible.

In order to do this we must be aware of the world around us — the world of today and tomorrow.

We should be far more aware in education of the future sense — instead we are too aware of education as it has been in the past — particularly music education, as you may have noticed in the philosophies of the traditional music books.

We should have institutions which study the future as we already have many which preserve the past. We should search for our objectives and methods in the future as well as in the past. Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock* suggests that all schools create a 'Council of the Future' — a team of men and women devoted to probing the future in the interest of the present.

To give you some idea of the acceleration of accumulated knowledge consider the following:

1. Of the 92 basic elements of Earth such as phosphorus, uranium, etc, only 12 were discovered up to 1670. By 1932 discovery of the 92 atomic elements was completed. From 1932-1970 we have been discovering super atomic elements.

2. Using the metaphor of a clock face we easily see the KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION. Imagine a clock face with 60 minutes on it. Le the clock stand for the time men have had access to writing systems. Our clock would represent 3 000 years with each minute representing 50 years. Thus there were no significant changes until nine minutes ago with the printing press in Western culture. About three minutes ago, the telegraph, photograph and locomotive arrived. One minute ago the talking picture came. Television appeared in the last 10 seconds, and computers in the last five, with communication satellites in the last second. (From *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Postman & Weingartner). It would be possible to place almost any area of life on our clock face and get the same answer.

   Change isn't new, but the degree of change is. As Alfred North Whitehead pointed out in *The Adventure of Ideas*, our sociological theories, our political philosophy, our practical maxims of business, our political economy, and our doctrines of education are derived from an unbroken tradition of great thinkers and of practical examples from the age of Plato . . . to the end of the last century. The whole of this tradition is warped by the vicious assumption that each generation will substantially live amid the conditions governing the lives of its fathers, and will transmit these conditions to mould with equal force the lives of its children. *We are living in the first period of human history for which this assumption is false.*

What kind of person with what characteristics and skills will best cope with this world? I believe a person who has had the opportunity to develop the techniques involved in creative thinking has the better chance, and music is a means of developing these techniques.

Dr Torrance said in 1962 that "as our research evidence continued to accumulate, it became clear that creative thinking is important in mental health, educational achievement, vocational success and many other important areas of life. As we studied creative behaviour among both children and adults, it became increasingly clear that perhaps nothing could contribute more to the general welfare of our nation and to the satisfaction and mental growth of its people than a general development of creative behaviour. There is little doubt but that the prolonged and severe stifling of creative thinking cuts at the very roots of satisfaction in living."

Having said this, let us look at three pieces of scientific research in connection with creativity:

1. *Educational and Environmental Influences on Creativity*—Hadden and Lytton (1968) They administered a battery of tests of divergent thinking to two pairs of contrasting primary schools. Two were selected as representing traditional schools with emphasis upon convergent thinking and authorative learning, and two further schools represented the informal school, where the emphasis was on self-initiated learning and creative activities. 211 children were used and their social economic background and verbal reasoning quotients were controlled.

   *Result*: The emphasis laid on self-initiated learning is the more important school factor in the development of creative talent, supported by a relaxed atmosphere in which children are free to pursue their own path of learning and discovery.

2. *Barker,* Lunn (1970) in her study of streaming in the primary school also examined whether the schools and teachers favouring a more informal progressive approach to curriculum and method would do more to foster divergent thinking than those prefering to adhere to more formal methods associated with the achievement of accepted standards of academic attainment.

   The value of her findings identify the most important features in the development of creativity: it would seem it is not the degree of permissiveness, but rather the attitude of the teacher, the emphasis on self-initiated learning, the freedom of access to school libraries, relatively less use of class teaching, and a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

3. Creativity and Intelligence: Getzels and Jackson's study *Highly Intelligent and Highly Creative Adolescents — Exploration in Cognitive Giftedness.*

   Two groups were used. One high in intelligence but not concomitantly high in creativity; the other high in creativity but not concomitantly high in intelligence. Both creativity and intelligence tests were used. The high Creativity Group — the

subjects were in the top 20 percent of the creative measures when compared to students of same age and sex, but below top 20 percent in IQ.

The high intelligence group was the opposite. A few of the findings were:

that the children with high IQs were rated by the teacher as more desirable, better understood, more ambitious and hard working. Further to this problem the two most common criteria applied to a prospective college student are:

i) Scholastic aptitude measures of IQ.

(ii) School recommendations based upon teachers' evaluations of the student.

You can see the problem this poses for the creative child. From these few studies we see that creativity is often not rewarded and that certain environmental conditions need to exist in order to encourage creativity. Torrance found that creactivity needs to be energized and guided almost from birth. If it is stifled early, it will only become inmitative if it survives at all. The vigorous creative imagination which survives early stifling and opposition may even become dangerous to society and civilization.

Torrance defines the ways for rewarding creative behaviour as:

1. Being respectful of unusual questions.
2. Being respectful of imaginative or unusual ideas.
3. Showing your pupils that their ideas have value.
4. Occasionally having pupils do something 'for practice.'
5. Linking in evaluation with cause and consequences.

It was found in a report that as a group the teachers who could *not* accept the principles which were advocated, placed a high value on the following concepts:

a. Time (but not timelessness).
b. Orderliness (but not logical thinking).
c. Respect for authority.
d. The child's responsibility to the group but not the teacher's responsibility to the child).
e. The preservation of the self-image.
f. The importance of information (but not importance of information-getting skills).

The writings of Maslow have influenced me a great deal in formulating my philosophy of education. He says that every individual has both defensive and growth motivational forces within him. One set clings to safety and defensiveness out of fear, tending to regress, hanging on to the past . . . afraid to take chances, afraid of freedom. I say that our present educational system encourages this particular side of a person's growth. The other set of forces impels him forward towards wholeness of self and uniqueness of self, toward full functioning of all his capacities. The process of growth is a never ending choice between these two forces.

Maslow elaborates a few concepts which are compatible with traditional research in creativity and creative teaching:

1. A teacher should be open to experience . . . Because of a positive self-concept, the self-actualized creative teacher suspends judgements and habitual interpretations in order to be freely tolerant of ambiguities and new experiences as they arise.
2. A teacher should view the student in all his potentialities . . . He is capable of perceiving not only what they are, but more important, what they can become.
3. The teacher should become affectively as well as cognitively involved in the teaching process . . . The dichotomy between superior-inferior must be removed and interaction established whereby goals, processes and evaluation of learning can be student-teacher orientated, not teacher-dominated.
4. Teachers in South Africa should influence creative learning. The development of end-potential must serve as a foundation for all creative teaching. Uniform plans for all students are not educationally sound. The educational process must involve a learning environment conducive to full development of end-potential, not collective potential. Teachers must involve not only flexibility in planning and carrying out plans, but must also utilize original thinking to develop appropriate experience.
5. The focus of evaluation should be internal in the student. Creative teaching implies that the student's perception of his success or failure is under his control, not the teacher's.
6. Psychological freedom should exist in the teaching process. The teacher and student must be free to think, to feel, to be and to become.

Before I give you my one line answer to "Why I am teaching music?" I would like to submit three questions to you for your consideration.

a) A recent thesis titled "A Study of Values in Music Education from 1950-1970" by W Jones stated that out of the 19 values which music educators thought to be important the most important were creativity and aesthetics. What we are as music educators doing to foster these values?

b) UNESCO said that liberating the energies of the people, unleashing their creative powers heads the list of future prospects for the development of education. Art education has, for years, been giving children the opportunities to unleash their creative powers. Are we doing the same in music education?

c) Is a music educator a creator himself or a preserver of the past, or even a destroyer of the initial love of music? David P McAllester in an article "The Substance of

Things Hoped For" says that the music educator has come to take the role of preserver of a certain section of his music.

A corollary observation is that in most of the other cultures of the world, if they are outside the influences of Western Europe, there are no music educators as such. And yet, music thrives. I, myself, fear for the Africans' music when they begin to train music educators, because up to now the Africans all create music and movement.

Our dilemma here underscores the fact that, like it or not, our society has assigned to music education a role of built-in conservatism. Except in the sciences, where the new is unquestionably considered to be the good, the school is generally regarded as the preserver of our great traditions of the past. Very rarely is there room for a predisposition for new ideas in music. How do we meet these difficulties or do we even recognize the problem?

Now for my answer to the question "Why am I teaching music?" I hope that through the language of music, which is sound, to enable people to explore and discover sounds in an atmosphere which is conducive to openness and free enquiry which will, in turn, enable the learner to grow in the knowledge of what he or she is and thinks and feels.

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