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The Road Goes Ever On: Estelle Jorgensen's
Legacy in Music Education

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Ch. 01 - Of Dialectics, Juxtapositions, and Flexible Thinking: A Tribute to Estelle Jorgensen

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Section I - The Past is Our Future / The Past is Not Our Future

Chapter 1

Of Dialectics, Juxtapositions, and Flexible Thinking: A Tribute to Estelle Jorgensen

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Abstract

Numerous scholars have provided philosophical perspectives to justify the inclusion of music education in public schools. The philosophical work of Jorgensen offers a framework that allows educators to move beyond singular agendas and apply eclectic approaches to meet the needs of unique teaching environments. This chapter offers commentary on her concept of dialectics and how Jorgensen's philosophy nurtured innovative curricular approaches to music teacher preparation in a university teacher certification program.

Music educators who began their careers in the 1970's received a different kind of professional preparation from the comprehensive approaches many of us provide contemporary pre-service students. Throughout much of the 20th century, university music teacher education programs treated the discipline as a vocation into which new members were duly indoctrinated. The skills necessary to train young people to perform in bands, orchestras, and choirs were imparted with trade-school efficiency. The primary mission of elementary and secondary school music instruction in the United States was tacitly

understood to be the creation of large ensembles which the general population regarded as synonymous with music education. This approach was not without criticism. In mid-century James Mursell suggested that by focusing on large performing ensembles, school programs were ignoring the basic tenets of music education and preventing students from developing understandings that could serve them beyond the immediate school environment.¹

Concerns of this nature served as a catalyst for conferences in the 1960's at

Yale and Tanglewood regarding the future of music education in American society. Funding provided by the Ford Foundation allowed visionaries to create the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project which was designed to provide ensemble teachers with curricular approaches that might result in a more sophisticated artistic and intellectual vision for school programs.² In spite of multiple concerns expressed regarding focusing curriculum exclusively on large ensemble performance, undergraduate teacher training emphasized the skills essential for leading bands, choirs, and orchestras. Although critics maintain that teacher training has not really changed,³ many 21st century preparation programs now expose students to alternative music learning approaches.^{4, 5}

Scholars have deliberately attempted to provide a philosophical basis that might move school music beyond the large ensemble paradigm and justify inclusion of the disciplines in schools. Abraham Schwadron⁶ and Bennett Reimer⁷ published books emphasizing aesthetic approaches to instruction. By employing an “aesthetic ideal,” the field of music education became connected to the world of philosophy and a range of thought that might provide a more intellectual basis upon which to justify the work of school practitioners. It was assumed that when viewed as “aesthetic education,” learning music might no longer be considered a peripheral area of study and the expenditure of funds for instruction could be justified. Although this philosophy seemed particularly suited to general music classes in elementary settings, secondary

ensemble directors often experienced difficulties applying aesthetic principles. Many found it difficult to justify “music education as aesthetic education” when engaging in mundane but necessary tasks of drilling for correct pitches or perfecting marching band maneuvers. In the early 1990’s a praxial philosophy of music education emerged that researchers including David Elliot⁸ and Tom Regelski⁹ hoped might provide teachers, working in performance, with a solid means of justifying their work. With thoughtful scholarship supporting each of these rationales, the last decade of the 20th century saw considerable debate as to which approach, aesthetic or praxial, was the “best” philosophy for music education. However, for teachers confronting the many real world difficulties and challenges facing practitioners in a rapidly changing multicultural society, the adoption of any singular philosophy could seem limiting. An approach that might allow the blending of multiple philosophic and pragmatic understandings was needed. The work of Estelle Jorgensen emerged and offers a framework allowing educators to move beyond singular agendas and develop eclectic approaches to meet the needs of unique teaching environments.

I first met Estelle in 1997 when UCLA hosted the Third International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music Education. In the months before the conference, I remember her calling to ask about the availability of camping places within reasonable proximity of the campus. She and Iris intended to drag some kind of sleeping contraption to California and then

use it to visit the West Coast following the gathering. I let her know that camping with minimal facilities might be possible on the beach thirty miles to the north in Malibu, in the mountains about twenty-five miles above Pasadena, or in a noisy setting complete with mouse ears and princess costumes at the Disneyland resort in Anaheim. I think I heard her jaw drop when I informed her that the physical distance would not be problematic. Rather in Los Angeles, the issue is drive time in traffic, which in the case of the available campsites would be at least two hours each way. Estelle wisely chose to set-up her tent in the conference hotel.

The UCLA gathering included music education luminaries Bennett Reimer and Edwin Gordon. Both had very particular and firm ideas about the underlying nature of music education and their presence attracted devoted followers. Other participants supporting a “particular point of view” included May Day group members Thomas Regelski and Terry Gates. Both argued for a “strong” approach to philosophy and were in the process of refining and promoting praxialism as an appropriate philosophy for the field. Estelle Jorgensen brought an emerging and more comprehensive approach to thinking about music education. Instead of expressing the view that there might be a singular preeminent philosophy that could meet all the needs of teachers functioning in constantly evolving school settings, her work offered principles for engaging in the process of music education philosophy. Essentially she rejects the idea that there might be a “single universal philosophy or

method”¹⁰ and suggests that the work of music education philosophy is to continuously ask significant questions about the theory and practice of the discipline while expecting to receive only “incomplete answers.”¹¹ As she stated in 2001 “the search for the one eternal high road to music education is illusory and eventually futile.”¹² In the ideas put forth in her 1997 book, *In Search of Music Education*,¹³ Estelle expanded previous scholarship regarding the arts as product and the thinking that the purpose of philosophy should be a means of providing support for music education in elementary and secondary schools. Instead, she encouraged on-going critical examination of the assumptions underlying all aspects of theory and practice in the field. This stance of continuous critique seems particularly important in a discipline that often makes huge assumptions about the ways music learning might transfer to other disciplines, that merely participating in music making results in meaningful music learning, or there are immediate and universal connections between music learning and emotional development.¹⁴

Central to Jorgensen’s philosophical approach is the idea that music, music-making, and music learning are social in nature and that a functional philosophy demands interdisciplinary perspectives so that instructional practices might embrace a varied array of beliefs, teaching styles, and practices. The many conflicts that arise when making curricular and teaching decisions in music education might be resolved by viewing some of the problems that emerge as dialectical pairs. Thus concerns such as whether to teach canonic

or emerging musical traditions, transmit established practices or engage learners in transformational experiences, focus instruction on music making or perceptive listening, and philosophy versus practice are perspectives that can be examined from opposing points of view. With critique, the discontinuities between what seem like dichotomous polarities become apparent and tensions reduced. In some of these dialectics, momentary resolution might be possible. For others, examination will lead to further questions. Although any resolution might be temporary, Estelle encourages music educators to “love the questions themselves”¹⁵ and consider unresolved tensions as a call to continue critical reflection. Her thinking presages a contemporary view of music education philosophy articulated by Wayne Bowman and Ana Lucía Frega suggesting that “philosophy is an attitude and a process: one that probes and explores whatever it encounters, seeking to reveal more useful meanings, more imaginative possibilities, more novel alternatives for action.”¹⁶

Those of us seeking more imaginative approaches to pre-service music teacher education than the vocational methodologies of earlier years can find support for our efforts through Estelle’s work. Understanding that music learning is dependent not on a strictly delineated set of universal standards but is instead contingent on social settings and experiences permits a variety of approaches to resolving curricular issues. University based music teacher preparation programs tend to be organized around an epistemology of reproduction with the

purpose of enculturating future educators into specific ways of knowing and acting. Additionally, university level faculty members who attempt to modernize teacher preparation processes must meet guidelines that are determined by governmental licensing agencies rather than being able to respond to issues of contemporary cultural relevance.¹⁷ Often the curricula demanded by these bureaucracies support what has been rather than what educators of the future might need. One of the great challenges of teacher training is preparing young professionals for changes in music education while working within the context of university settings that employ curricular practices developed to maintain twentieth century traditions.

In attempting to redesign our music education program at UCLA, we had to resolve the very real problem of finding ways to nurture alternative modes of thinking about music instruction while simultaneously meeting state requirements and the demands of public school districts that continue to define music teachers as ensemble directors. Long-established instructional practices can be an impediment to imaginative teaching practices when left unexamined and unchallenged. However, when creatively positioned, traditional curricular structures can serve as a foundation for exploring new ways of understanding what it means to learn and teach music. Inspired by Estelle’s model of dialectics, we explored the possibility by juxtaposing diverse musical styles and learning practices within traditionally designed courses: a

conventional class might become a laboratory through which students could explore creative instructional endeavors. We hoped that this approach would allow creativity within the framework provided by established curricular structures.

Our resulting juxtapositional pedagogy¹⁸ places contrasting pairs of musical learning experiences, ones usually taught in separate courses, together in a single class. The pairings are not intended as a dialectic of opposing ideas that demand resolution. Instead, concurrent learning in contrasting traditions, such as notation/aural learning or formal/informal practices, creates challenging instructional settings in which the cognitive underpinnings of established methodologies can be examined, questioned, and discussed. These couplings create spaces where the nature of musical thinking and learning can be critically examined and understood from multiple perspectives. Such juxtapositions allow traditional and innovative methodologies to be creatively combined for the expressed purpose of reconceptualizing and revitalizing music teacher preparation. This approach provides future educators with skills necessary to teach the typical courses currently expected in American schools while simultaneously developing the dispositions necessary to function in popular music, multicultural music education, and other emerging approaches to music learning. Although somewhat different from Estelle's dialectic approach, the creation of juxtapositional pedagogy was dependent on the progressive thinking she established and that encourages

constant critique of the discipline at the most fundamental level. It reflects Estelle's conceptualization of philosophy as process rather than as dogma. A philosophical approach of this nature nurtures critical inquiry about music learning processes and the dispositions essential to explore alternative pedagogies.

Estelle's influence extends well beyond her writing. As the founder of the International Society for the Philosophy of Music Education and editor of the *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, she encouraged scholars to explore divergent ways of thinking about music and music learning.¹⁹ As a visionary, Estelle promoted international discourse about the philosophy of music through the Society and what began without formal organization in 1985 will be holding its twelfth gathering in 2019. By moving meeting locations between Europe and North America, scholars from different educational traditions have interacted and learned from each other. Music education has been enhanced by Estelle's efforts to broaden the possibilities for "doing" philosophy.

The importance of Estelle's work does not lie in her being right about everything. Instead her contribution lies in her ability to analyze big ideas from a wide variety of fields, conceptualize these ideas in ways that enable music educators to debate about them, and encourage diverse thinking in our discipline. Her work challenges conventional music teacher preparation programs to move beyond simply adding diverse practices to the

curriculum. Estelle's thinking encourages an epistemology of emergence which moves pedagogical thinking away from that of just acquiring the skills necessary to reproduce established practices. Instead, it encourages generative engagements with questions about responding to evolving musical cultures and student interests. It suggests that a primary responsibility of educators is to respond to and nurture the diverse musical and learning needs of students

within their unique communities rather than to promote a particular way of knowing and being. This reflects a cosmopolitan philosophical orientation which, as David Hansen suggests, balances "reflective openness to the new with reflective loyalty to the known."²⁰ Estelle's contributions are allowing music education to imagine new and creative possibilities in the future.

Notes

- 1 James Lockhart Mursell, *Music Education, Principles and Programs* (Silver Burdett Co., Morristown, N.J.: 1956).
- 2 Ronald B. Thomas, "Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program. Final Report" (ERIC Number: ED045865: 1970).
- 3 Roger Mantie, "Bands and/as Music Education: Antinomies and the Struggle for Legitimacy," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 63-81.
- 4 Michele Kaschub and Janice Smith, eds., *Composing Our Future: Preparing Music Educators to Teach Composition* (Oxford University Press, New York: 2013).
- 5 Frank Abrahams, Joseph Abramo, Carlos Abril, Sarah Bartolome, Nancy Beitler, Ruth Boshkoff, Brenda Brenner, et al., *Alternative Approaches in Music Education: Case Studies from the Field* (R&L Education, Lanham, MD: 2010).
- 6 Abraham A. Schwadron, "Aesthetics: Dimensions for Music Education" (Music Educators National Conference, Washington, D.C.: 1967).
- 7 Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision*, (Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: 2002).
- 8 David James Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (Oxford University Press, New York: 1995).
- 9 Thomas A. Regelski, *A Brief Introduction to a Philosophy of Music and Music Education as Social Praxis* (Routledge, New York: 2015).
- 10 Estelle R. Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education* (University of Illinois Press, Champaign, IL: 1997), 92.
- 11 W. Ann Stokes, "In Search of Music Education by Estelle R. Jorgensen," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 32, no. 1 (1998): 106-08. doi:10.2307/3333220.
- 12 Estelle R. Jorgensen, "A Dialectical View of Theory and Practice," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 49, no. 4 (2001): 343-359.

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- 13 Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*.
- 14 Jennie Henley, "A Challenge to Assumptions of the Transformative Power of Music" (2018). <https://learn.rcm.ac.uk/courses/1240/pages/a-challenge-to-assumptions-of-the-transformative-power-of-music> (accessed January 5, 2019).
- 15 Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, x.
- 16 Wayne Bowman, and Ana Lucía Frega, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education* (Oxford University Press, New York: 2012), 18.
- 17 <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/stds-subject-matter> provides an example of standards maintained by a state agency.
- 18 Frank Heuser, "Juxtapositional Pedagogy as an Organizing Principle in University Music Education Programs," in *Promising Practices in 21st century Music Teacher Education*, (edited by Michele Kaschub and Janice Smith, Oxford University Press, New York; 2014), 103-125.
- 19 Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Roots and Development of the International Society for the Philosophy of Music Education (1985–2015)," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 39, no.1 (2017): 25-50.
- 20 David T. Hansen, *The Teacher and the World: A Study of Cosmopolitanism as Education* (Routledge, New York: 2017).

About the Author

Frank Heuser is Professor of Music Education at UCLA where he teaches courses in music education and supervises student teachers. His research focuses on developing ways to improve music pedagogy. He has presented at conferences in Europe, Asia, Australia and South Africa, served on evaluation panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, and published articles in *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, *Southeastern Journal of Music Education*, *Studies in Music* from the University of Western Ontario, *Psychology of Music*, *Music Education Research* and the *Philosophy of Music Education Review*.

Project Links

This chapter comes from a book titled *The Road Goes Ever On: Estelle Jorgensen's Legacy in Music Education*. The philosophical essays contained within focus on themes that have intrigued Estelle Jorgensen whose forty years of scholarship have strongly influenced music education research and practice: the transformation of music education in public schools; feminist and LGBTQ voices; mentoring; the unfinished search for new ways of seeing, hearing, and doing; multiple and intersecting musical identities; the tension between tradition and change; and activist practice in music education.

The complete book can be found at the following link: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/jorgensen/>