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Ch. 04 - The Pursuit of Happiness: Music Access in 21st Century America

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Chapter 4

The Pursuit of Happiness:
Music Access in 21st Century America

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Abstract

This chapter describes policy mechanisms that can be revised to support "music making by all." Aguilar starts with the normative claim that engagement in music education in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions should encompass opportunities for a range of music-making experiences, especially those experiences that may be ignored or marginalized because of the traditional structure of post-secondary institutions. Broadening choices for musical engagement may provide greater relevance, as well as increased access and participation in learning music by all and for all.

In a multicultural society in which various spheres of musical validity coexist, the question of whose music is to be taught in state-supported schools has political and musical ramifications and important policy implications: Should school music be characterized by musical pluralism or monism? Will the views of the cultural establishment be taught exclusively, or will other musical perspectives be included? and Which particular musics shall be incorporated within the curriculum?
(Jorgensen, 1997)[1]

Introduction

The National Association for Music Education espouses the mission, "To advance music education by promoting the understanding and making of music by all."[2] Yet, to have opportunities for "making music by all," the definition of what counts as music and music education needs to broaden to include additional opportunities for engaging in music beyond band, orchestra, and choir. Kratus notes that American music programs in elementary,

secondary, and post-secondary institutions have not changed much in the last half century.[3] Calls to update music education in schools date back to the Tanglewood Symposium in 1967, where the then Music Educators National Conference (currently the National Association for Music Education or NAfME), along with other professionals related to music education,[4] brought together a variety of participants to discuss music education in contemporary American society and to make recommendations for the field. One important artifact from this meeting was the Tanglewood Declaration in which eight statements were outlined as basis for future work in music education. Of those eight statements, one is of importance to this chapter: "Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety, including currently popular teenage music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures."[5] This statement indicates that these professionals and practitioners believed that all music practices were important enough to be included as a part of the curriculum of music education. Since that time there have been expansions in music making opportunities, but on the whole little has changed.

Thesis

The purpose of this chapter is to describe mechanisms, thorough policy or other means, that could be revised and updated to support access to music education through a variety of experiences, especially in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions, in order to provide support for "music making by all." Choices for engagement in music education should encompass opportunities for a range of music-making experiences, especially those music-making experiences that may be ignored or marginalized due to not being part of the traditional manner in which music is learned in post-secondary institutions.[6] Broadening choices for musical engagement may provide greater relevance, as well as increased access and participation in learning music by all.

The policies that both support and discourage teaching music in a variety of means across all levels are both hard and soft policies.[7] Hard policies are those "compulsory requirements such as accreditation standards and government mandates"[8] by which public teaching institutions abide. Soft policies, on the other hand, are those policies that "influence music teachers' perceptions, values, and personal goals"[9] and may include curricula, scheduling, text and music choices, and ensemble offerings. Because ". . . the public has entrusted the work of teaching the young to educational policymakers, administrators, and teachers"[10] it is critical that educational policies and policies that impact teacher education are considered. Understanding the typical means of musical engagement in elementary and secondary schools, as well as the typical means of learning music by pre-service educators in post-secondary institutions provides the groundwork for what policies need to

change to meet the needs of the 21st century student engaged with music.

Music Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Many elementary and secondary students depend on their public school experience to provide access to learning music, and the privileging of a particular kind of music may inadvertently exclude some individuals from participating in learning and performing music.[11] Where the Tanglewood Declaration[12] espoused support for a variety of music making experiences, public schools have been slow to respond. In 2008, Abril and Gault found that of the secondary music programs they surveyed in the United States (*n*=540), 93% offered band, 88% offered choir, and 42% offered orchestra.[13] While 55% of these secondary schools reported offering a jazz/rock ensemble, it is unclear how these genres of music were defined by those who participated in the survey. Principals reported additional music making opportunities (e.g. general music, theory, guitar, piano/keyboard, music technology, composition, and mariachi ensemble), but less than 50% of the schools surveyed offered such courses. While Abril and Gault found that most schools offer band and choir, Elpus and Abril found that only 21% of American high school seniors participated in these ensembles.[14] This finding suggests that nearly 80% of high school seniors are not participating in music ensembles. While the reasons that individuals do not participate in ensemble could be numerous, one reason could be that the ensemble offerings do not meet the interests of those secondary students who choose not participate because of a "tendency to exclude or deemphasize music of ethnic minorities and some forms of popular music."[15] In discussing in-school and out-of-school, Jorgensen notes that "youth may pick up musical knowledge informally . . . and without access to quality . . . instruction . . . may be limited to a narrow range of musical expression."[16] Greater diversity in learning music and ensemble offerings may invite an opportunity for greater participation and access to learn and study music.

The origination of teaching music was an outgrowth of preservation of musical traditions[17] and Humphreys argues that, "popular music should be taught for a host of historical, social, and humanitarian reasons, the most important being 'because it is the music of our time,' not to mention place."[18] Jorgensen further supports this stating, "Each generation needs to renew education and culture for its particular time and place. . . ."[19] With reference back to the Tanglewood Declaration,[20] the idea was to expand the opportunities for access and engagement with music. Teaching students to perform in non-traditional musical styles becomes a way to understand the music of the present day and to preserve it as an important part of our time and place, as we have to those pieces of music that are still performed as part of the canon.

Soft policies, such as curricular course offerings, play a role in sustaining the

status quo of ensemble offerings in elementary and secondary schools. However, the soft policy of choices of ensembles may be marginalizing and excluding groups of individuals who might choose to participate in music.[21] While traditional ensembles make up the majority of the music teaching that occurs at the secondary level,[22] Hebert and Campbell argue that "Popular music . . . may be among the most powerful discourses available to students."[23] Randles acknowledges that "teachers and students must work within systems that are sometimes predetermined . . . trying to do what is best for their students."[24] In their study, Davis and Blair indicated that K-12 students "demonstrated sophisticated musical understanding" when engaging with popular music in school settings.[25] This increased sophistication may be due to the familiarity that K-12 students have with popular music. "Popular music has a pervasive and undeniable influence on the daily life of young people . . . . Curricular policy that provides little or no exposure to the study of rock music within schools may serve to alienate students."[26]

Mantie argues that "To 'teach' popular music is not synonymous with 'using' popular music" and "The failure to recognize this distinction contributes to inequalities of voice."[27] Mantie is suggesting that popular music in music education deserves to be taught for the sake of understanding and performing popular music. Using popular music in a traditional ensemble is a way to bring some experience with the genre, but this is not the same as learning to perform popular music. Davis and Blair argue that "The use of popular music may provide a unique opportunity to develop pedagogic relationships by honoring students' musical values. . . ."[28] While research outlines that some students are engaged with performing in traditional ensembles, these do not meet the interests of all students.[29] Jorgensen suggests that musical practice should reflect the society.[30] Opportunities to engage with popular music or music in other non-traditional ways may provide an entry point to fostering musical understanding.

Standards are another soft policy that governs some of the aspects of the teaching of music education.[31] Where the previous National Standards[32] related to music outlined a list of nine skills that musicians were expected to know and be able to do,[33] the current National Core Arts Standards narrows the list to a common set of ideas relating to all arts disciplines: creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding, and connecting.[34] The authors of the Core Arts Standards also attempt to make room for a variety of music making experiences by specifically including these expectations in a variety of means: harmonizing instruments, composition and theory, traditional and emerging ensembles, and technology. There is no research, however, on how enumerating these means for making music has expanded music making opportunities in elementary or secondary music or suggested to the field of music education that the traditional means of music making need to be broadened. While the National Standards have been

viewed as a political boon for music education, standardization in this way may limit a teacher's ability to diversify the curriculum because any imagination or innovation may not neatly fit into the specifics outlined by the National Standards and therefore may not be considered or included in instructional practice.[35]

Pre-Service Music Education

Most secondary music opportunities are in traditional ensembles, such as band, orchestra, and choir; therefore the individuals who choose to study music education at the post-secondary level are often products of these traditional music performance opportunities.[36] Because those students who choose to study music at the post-secondary level typically come from these traditional ensemble experiences to institutions that elevate and support these same kinds of ensemble experiences, music education students often have a difficult time imagining and developing other music-making experiences for students to consider.

The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) is the arbiter of the majority of hard policies that are influencing the training of pre-service teachers in music units across the United States. Their *Handbook*, updated annually, provides music units with the expectations of training pre-service teachers, including the percent of time spend on learning music (at least 50%), professional skills (15-20%), and general studies (30-35%).[37] Currently, in the typical formal study of music at the post-secondary level, individuals usually choose an instrument in which to specialize. Using this instrument, individuals audition and once accepted into a program, they typically enroll in private lessons. Private lessons facilitate greater proficiency on the chosen instrument by providing the opportunity for the individual to learn specific techniques and skills associated with performing on this instrument.

The *NASM Handbook* outlines the expectation of private lessons. Institutions are responsible for providing sufficient lessons, classes, ensembles, requirements and opportunities to experience repertory . . . to develop the common body of knowledge and skills listed below and to ensure that students meet graduation requirements associated with their specializations.[38]

Wang and Humphreys acknowledge that students studying music in post-secondary institutions spend a "generous share of . . . music study . . . devoted to learning a principal instrument."[39] Traditional ensemble experiences associated with their specific instrument are also part of the typical performance experience. Alongside private lessons, these individuals are typically enrolled in classes of music theory and musicology that inform and support the broad understanding of the field of music. Both music theory and musicology provide some conceptual context for those individuals studying music. Once an individual completes the typical undergraduate degree, they have gained a

level of proficiency on the instrument of their choosing and have a general understanding of conceptual information related to the field of music.

While post-secondary institutions are often thought of as places of innovation and creativity, within specific content areas there can be differences in the level of progressiveness and conservatism, especially related to the curriculum. Music, and music education specifically, may be considered one of the most conservative disciplines, with curriculum that has looked basically the same for the past fifty years.[40] Hebert suggests that teacher education programs are among the slowest domains in higher education to respond to new developments.[41] Powell, Kriken, and Pingato point out the concerns with music teacher training programs being too restrictive with the number of credits, along with required music history, music theory, and performance courses that revolve around European music traditions, including concert and marching bands, orchestras, and choirs.[42] One reason for this slowness to change or implement innovation may be policies from accrediting organizations like National Association for Schools of Music (NASM). While not explicitly prescriptive to specific courses, the *NASM Handbook* codifies competencies that are most closely aligned with European art music and the competencies do not explicitly make room for contemporary practices in music.[43] This means that music education degrees look basically the same across the United States.

While not overly specific, the NASM Handbook outlines the kinds of courses that pre-service teachers should take, including participation in vocal and instrumental ensembles. The language in the Handbook is purposefully vague: "Ensembles should be varied both in size and nature,"[44] which allows particular institutions to determine the number and type of ensembles in which students may perform. However, the tradition of band, choir, and orchestra ensembles seems to be the experience most prevalent in pre-service education. Jorgensen notes, "Individuals within a particular sphere of musical validity may tend to adopt musical mores that change more slowly than [contemporary] musical fashion, believing that their particular beliefs and actions are superior to others not within their sphere."[45] This statement suggests that changing the paradigm of ensembles in post-secondary institutions may be slow or challenged by those whose spheres of musical validity are currently being implemented. Kruse argues that current undergraduate musicians engage with contemporary music practices, but that these practices have not been included in collegiate level curricula.[46] The musical concepts and skills that are taught in traditional ensembles could be taught in different ensemble experiences. Wang and Humphreys suggest that including non-western or popular music performance ensembles as part of the undergraduate curriculum would provide "more . . . balance."[47] In addition, they suggest that expanded ensemble offerings might be more effective in increasing student participation in music than altering the repertoire of traditional ensembles.

In their study of students in a secondary general music methods class, Davis and Blair found that these future teachers were unlikely to approach using popular music because they felt unprepared and because they lacked resources to incorporate popular music into their curricula.[48] Private lessons study have a natural connection to performing in an ensemble setting. Performing in an ensemble is one place where students learn to engage with other musicians, conductors, and learn to perform cohesively. Yet, traditional ensemble settings, including chamber ensembles, are not the only places where students can learn such skills. These skills can be learned and applied in non-traditional and popular music ensembles, even on their primary instruments. Some of the numerous hours devoted to studies in music could be diverted to non-traditional ensembles in an effort to diversify the musical experiences of the students. If most of the music performing experiences that undergraduate students have are in traditional ensembles, why would they consider other means for teaching music? How can we foster "making music by all" when pre-service teachers are only taught the means for making music that appeal to 20% of high school seniors?

Multi-musicality

I believe that one way to manifest an array of music-making experiences at the elementary and secondary level is through more diverse ensemble experiences for those who are learning to be music teachers. While pre-service teacher education students who choose to study music typically learn to perform one style of music very well, they are not often afforded opportunities to learn to perform music in a variety of settings. Using their musical skills on a primary instrument (or possibly a secondary instrument) in alternative performing situations may contribute to greater ability and versatility in performing on their primary instrument, thereby increasing the multi-musicality of the student. This increased multi-musicality may be an impetus to developing additional music making experiences at the elementary and secondary level where a greater level of access to music-making can be achieved. This may be a means of transforming music education where there is opportunity for change in "beliefs, values, and attitudes."[49]

The term "multi-musical" was used by Randles which he defines as "being able to function as a reader of notation and as a vernacular music maker."[50] I would extend this definition further: being multi-musical means that a person can function as a performer, listener, composer/arranger, and/or historian in many different musical contexts. Jorgensen supports the idea of multi-musicality through her writing on spheres of musical validity where she states that "Individuals may be members of several

spheres of musical validity simultaneously and in different relationship to each sphere."[51] Further, as it relates to music teacher education, being multi-musical means that individuals who have the opportunity to perform in different ensembles can imagine mechanisms to initiate and support music experience from a variety of performance settings. Most post-secondary institutions have numerous traditional music ensembles (defined as band, orchestra, and choir) in which students may participate, but access to other types of ensemble opportunities (i.e. popular music, jazz ensembles, non-Western music ensembles) may be limited. Some undergraduate music education students personally engage in music-making that falls outside of these traditional experiences on their own time, but they often have limited outlets within post-secondary institutions in which to learn about or perform in a popular or non-traditional experience.

Developing pre-service educators who have multi-musicality uses the typical structure of the undergraduate music program but expands the performance and learning opportunities to include experiences beyond traditional instruments and traditional ensemble experiences. If an institution were to take on a multi-musical framework in teaching and learning music, individual students would still likely specialize in one particular instrument but would also have an opportunity to learn additional instruments through private or small group instruction.[52] Students would gain technical skills and knowledge on these additional instruments to have a modest level of proficiency to perform and teach these instruments. In addition, students would have the chance to participate in ensembles associated with these additional instruments, so as to gain experience in how ensembles beyond their specialized instrument function and to have a framework for supporting and implementing such ensembles in a secondary setting. While some may suggest that these kinds of experiences are happening in typical undergraduate music education degrees, I would suggest that we need to extend the instrument learning opportunities further to include vernacular instruments, such as guitar, bass, drum set, keyboard, computer, popular music vocals, and technology. The ensemble performance experiences associated with learning these instruments would be more closely associated with popular music styles. These experiences, would give pre-service teachers opportunities to learn how to perform with popular music ensembles. In addition, pre-service teachers could learn to use their primary instrument in popular music ensemble settings. These performing and ensemble experiences could be the way in which pre-service teachers consider providing additional access to music learning.

Conclusion

In order to better serve students with interest in music beyond traditional ensembles, pre-service educators need experiences that will help them expand musical offerings in secondary schools.

Given the opportunity, it seems that K-12 students can successfully engage with music making beyond the traditional ensemble setting learning skills such as improvisation, composition, and arrangement.[53] But interest in additional musical opportunities from the teacher or the student is only a part of the equation; music educators will be more effective in implementing a variety of music making opportunities if they themselves have had experience in ensembles that they are interested in facilitating.[54] This means that pre-service educators need formal opportunities to participate, consider, and engage in non-traditional ensembles to learn ways to conceive of and facilitate such experiences when they are in the field teaching. While traditional ensembles may make up a majority of the current teaching opportunities, expanded pre-service ensemble experiences can lead to greater musical engagement from the K-12 student population.

The Tangelwood Symposium paved the way some fifty years ago for the field of music and music education to provide more expanded opportunities for engaging in music that included non-traditional ensemble experiences. However, updates to the post-secondary ensemble offerings have been slow to change. A few reasons for this may be related to concerns suggesting that performing in ensemble is an extension of the private lesson experience and that most current secondary teaching positions focus on teaching traditional ensembles; therefore pre-service teaching candidates should be prepared for these positions. In addition, organizations such as NASM have not made specific mention of non-traditional ensembles or popular music styles in their accreditation materials. However, a variety of musical practices, with their own validities and values, reflect a multiplicity of musical perspectives.[55] Updating the understanding of musical validity may provide institutions with the needed supports to expand offerings to include non-traditional ensembles.

Changes to curriculum alone, however, will not be enough to change the landscape of developing multi-musicality among 21st-century musicians. Faculty in-post secondary institutions need to understand the value of non-traditional music ensemble experiences. Musical skills that may be learned in non-traditional ensembles, such as composing and improvising, need to be valued and practiced as a part of being a musician in any field, especially those who are pre-service music educators. Supporting experience on a secondary or tertiary instrument also needs to be valued. Additional opportunities to engage with tools in these ensembles, including technology, may provide ways for pre-service teachers to learn to offer access to secondary students who have interests that differ from traditional ensemble experiences.

In this chapter, I have stated that I believe that music ensemble offerings at the post-secondary level should be expanded to provide opportunities for pre-service music educators to learn to be multi-musical.

More diverse ensemble experiences will foster openings for these music teachers to develop and implement additional opportunities for engaging in music once they are out in the field. Learning multi-musicality means that music teachers are better equipped to develop a variety of musical ensembles at the elementary and secondary level. These teachers can offer traditional ensembles and non-traditional ensembles because they have learned pedagogies, strategies, and resources to facilitate teaching such groups. With greater access to music learning, teachers provide a positive path for any student to engage with and learn music that is meaningful and relevant. This is the essence of "making music by all."

Notes

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2 National Association for Music Education, "Mission Statement," *National Association for Music Education*, accessed October 23, 2017. https://nafme.org/about/mission-and-goals/.

3 John Kratus, "Music Education at the Tipping Point," *Music Educators Journal* 94, no. 2 (November, 2007): 42.

4 The other organizations involved with the Tanglewood Symposium included the Berkshire Music Center, the Theodore Presser Foundation, and the School of Fine and Applied Arts of Boston University.

5 Robert A. Chote, *Document Report of the Tanglewood Symposium* (Washington, D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1968), 139.

6 Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Concerning Justice and Music Education," *Music Education Research* 9, no. 2 (2007): 182.

7 Patrick M. Jones, "Hard and Soft Policies in Music Education: Building the Capacity of Teachers to Understand, Study, and Influence Them," *Arts Education Policy Review* 110, no. 4 (Summer, 2009): 27.

8 Ibid., 28.

9 Ibid., 28.

10 Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Intersecting Social Justice and Music Education," *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice and Music Education*, eds. Cathy Benedict, Patrick Schmidt, Gary Spruce, and Paul Woodford (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 13.

11 Jorgensen, "Concerning Justice and Music Education," 172.

12 Chote, *Document Report of the Tanglewood Symposium*, 139.

13 Carlos R. Abril and Brent M. Gault, "The State of Music in Secondary Schools: The Principal's Perspective," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56, no.1 (Spring, 2008): 72.

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15 Estelle R. Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 41.

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19 Estelle R. Jorgensen, *Transforming Music Education* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 8.

20 Chote, *Document Report of the Tanglewood Symposium*, 139.

21 Jorgensen, "Concerning Justice and Music Education," 172.

22 Abril and Gault, "The State of Music in Secondary Schools: The Principal's Perspective," 72.

23. David G. Hebert and Patricia S. Campbell, "Rock Music in American Schools: Positions and Practices Since the 1960s," *International Journal of Music Education* 36 (2000): 20.

24 Clint Randles, "A Theory of Change in Music Education," *Music Education Research* 15, no. 4 (2011): 487.

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26 Hebert and Campbell, "Rock Music in American Schools: Positions and Practices Since the 1960s," 20.

27 Roger Mantie, "A Comparison of "Popular Music Pedagogy' Discourses," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 3 (2013): 347.

28 Davis and Blair, "Popular Music in American Teacher Education: A Glimpse into a Secondary Methods Course," 135.

29 Elpus and Abril, "High School Music Ensemble Students in the United States: A Demographic Profile," 134.

30 Jorgensen, *Transforming Music Education*, 30.

31 State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, "National Core Arts Standards," accessed March 13, 2018. http://nationalartsstandards.org/.

32 National Association for Music Education, "Archived 1994 National Standards," accessed March 13, 2018. https://nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/06/Archived-1994-Music-Standards.pdf.

33 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music. 2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music. 3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments. 4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines. 5. Reading and notating music. 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music. 7. Evaluating music and music

performances. 8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts. 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

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44 Ibid., 117-118.

45 Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, 40.

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47 Wang and Humphreys, "Multicultural and Popular Music Content in an American Music Teacher Education Program," 28.

48 Davis and Blair, "Popular Music in American Teacher Education: A Glimpse into a Secondary Methods Course," 128.

49 Jorgensen, "Concerning Justice and Music Education," 181.

50 Randles, "A Theory of Change in Music Education," 487.

51 Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, 40.

52 Wang and Humphreys, "Multicultural and Popular Music Content in an American Music Teacher Education Program," 28.

53 Hebert and Campbell, "Rock Music in American Schools: Positions and Practices Since the 1960s," 20.

54 Davis and Blair, "Popular Music in American Teacher Education: A Glimpse into a Secondary Methods Course," 128.

55 Jorgensen, *Transforming Music Education*, 43.

About the Author

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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/