

Western University

Scholarship@Western

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

Music Education Department

12-2019

Ch. 17 - Traditions and the End of Music Education

William Perrine

Concordia University - Ann Arbor, william.perrine@cuaa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/jorgensen>



Part of the [Music Education Commons](#), and the [Music Pedagogy Commons](#)

Citation of this paper:

Perrine, W. (2019). Traditions and the end of music education. In R. E. Allsup & C. Benedict (Eds.), *The road goes ever on: Estelle Jorgensen's legacy in music education* (pp. 221-238). London, Ontario: Western University. <https://doi.org/10.5206/q1144262.jorgensen.2019.ch17>

Section IV – A Passage to Elsewhere

Chapter 17

Traditions and the End of Music Education

William Perrine

Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA
william.perrine@cuaa.edu

Abstract

This chapter considers the question of how music educators determine the musical ends towards which their teaching is directed. Musical traditions, both “great” and “little,” as Estelle Jorgensen describes them, are inseparable from the philosophical traditions through which music educators determine their pedagogical ends. This chapter presents a three-part framework to describe how music educators might approach understanding their work as a socially embodied enactment of contrasting traditions. The term *tradition* is first defined as a means of categorizing philosophical schools of thought from which various musical practices can be understood. The *liberal* philosophical tradition that grew out of the Enlightenment has emphasized rational aesthetic contemplation as a means towards personal growth. In contrast, the *critical* tradition, grounded in post-Nietzschean genealogy, has prioritized politicized musical action as a means towards personal liberation. The *classical* tradition is presented as an alternative to both liberal and critical approaches, emphasizing the cultivation of virtue and an openness to transcendence as a means towards human flourishing. This approach, while currently underdeveloped in the philosophy of music education, would prioritize the experience of beauty as a transcendent property of being through induction into pre-existing musical traditions.

Towards what ends should music education be directed? This question, quintessentially philosophical in its formulation, invites inquiry into a foundational question for music educators. For those of us fortunate enough to have

studied with Estelle Jorgensen, the structure of the philosophical question is immediately recognizable: broad enough to elicit a diversity of responses, yet specific enough to sustain a focused argument. Throughout her work as both a researcher

and an educator Jorgensen has modeled a rigorous approach to philosophical research, emphasizing that in addressing questions that are primarily philosophical, researchers should clarify terms, evaluate the assumptions undergirding actions through analytical thinking, and place ideas within a system of thought that functions as theory.¹ Her dialectic approach to understanding music education welcomes a wide diversity of perspectives into the discussion in order to present a fuller picture of the problem at hand.² This includes perspectives that are perhaps outside the periphery of professional consensus, as principled dissent has intrinsic philosophical value. It is in this spirit, indebted to Jorgensen for her influence on my own approach to inquiry, that I engage the question of purpose (or, more formally, teleology).

I begin from the premise that the purpose of any activity in music education is inextricably bound to the philosophical traditions in which the participants, both teacher and students, reside. On a practical level, it is possible that neither the teacher nor student may be consciously aware of the various assumptions undergirding their musical activity in the classroom. It is the role of philosophical research, however, not just to critically evaluate the various dynamics of the particular situation in question, particularly those that are not articulated, but also to understand the nature and place of the critique itself in relation to its own philosophical tradition. This is more problematic than it might first appear. As an example, Jorgensen suggests

that the purpose of music education should involve some degree of *transformation*, both individually and socially.³ As Jorgensen herself would note, the introduction of the concept of transformation immediately presents a “nest of philosophical problems,” not the least of which are the nature of such transformations and the purposes that transformation might serve. Any potential answers to these questions would, by nature, have to be grounded in the particulars of a more generalized approach to philosophical inquiry, and no approach to inquiry exists independently of some pre-existing philosophical tradition. The purpose to which music education should be directed cannot be considered apart from the philosophical or moral commitments which give possible ends their shape; we would thus expect a diversity of perspectives on both means and ends. I suspect that Jorgensen recognized as much in noting that a principal role of philosophy is to articulate and clarify distinctions between varying conceptions of reality.⁴

Given my thesis that potential ends of music education are socially embodied demonstrations of particular philosophical traditions, I will first discuss what we might mean when we use the term “tradition,” both in its common and philosophical uses. I next consider how contrasting philosophical traditions inform the purposes of music education. After providing a short overview of the *liberal* tradition as a basis for many assumptions in American culture, I will briefly examine first what I describe as the *critical* tradition,

followed by the *classical* tradition, in terms of basic assumptions that inform how education functions within society and how music education helps fulfill its social purposes. I conclude by arguing that various problems inherent within the liberal tradition and highlighted by the critical tradition might be fruitfully addressed from the classical tradition. While recognizing that any philosophical approach has its limitations, I suggest that many current discussions in music education are unintentionally myopic due to a lack of philosophical research grounded in the classical tradition.

The Nature of Traditions

What is the nature of “tradition,” both generally and in music education practice? In its most common usage, tradition would seem to be a matter of *activity undertaken in continuity with past activity*. Within music education, tradition points to present pedagogical action that is enacted with direct correspondence to past practice. This can take the form of localized traditions such as a marching band participating in a civic Memorial Day parade each May, or a children’s chorus singing Christmas carols each December. On a systemic level, we find traditions of assessment such as the rating systems for band evolved from the National Band Contests of the early 20th century or traditions of artistic standards such as the canon of acceptable repertoire utilized for university admissions. I believe that it is in this sense that Randall Allsup discusses the

possibility of traditions being open or closed; our various traditions can remain valuable insofar as they remain open to the world outside the enactment of the musical activity itself.⁵ Philosophers of music education have regularly and appropriately put various traditions in music education to the question in relation to the social values they embody, whether calling for a more reflective practice or wide-scale reform. One could indeed argue that inquiry along these lines has constituted a primary task of philosophical research within our discipline. Jorgensen has also recognized the importance of tradition in this sense, noting the complex interrelationship of localized “little” traditions of music with those “great” internationalized traditions of music making marked by deep complexity and professionalism.⁶

There is another more strictly philosophical sense of “tradition” that undergirds both the enactment of traditional musical practices, whether great or little, and the reasons for which individuals and communities engage in these activities. The concept of a philosophical tradition encompasses the localized actualization of particular traditional activities, the culture-wide expression of interrelated traditions, and the deep moral commitments that give these traditions meaning. Alasdair MacIntyre defines a tradition as a philosophical argument extended through time. Traditions are inclusive of a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, embodying communities of conflict.⁷ Traditions are *living* if the cultural institutions embracing

these conflicts exhibit the characteristic of an open dialectic regarding the good, in which the possibility always exists for further development, revision, or even refutation.⁸ In a dead or closed tradition, the answers to all conflicts are proscribed with no further room or necessity for debate. Similarly, living traditions are a cross-generational exercise; their socially embodied arguments are carried forward into the future. Growth in philosophical traditions often comes through contact with alien traditions, particularly when adherents are confronted with problems that one's own tradition is not immediately able to solve. This encounter entails the possibility for substantial change in one's own tradition when the intellectual resources this tradition embodies are not fully adequate to meet conceptual challenges.⁹ The mark of a mature tradition, then, is the ability to successfully grapple with the problems generated through encountering radically different traditions.

Key to MacIntyre's conceptual framework is the argument that neither reason nor morality can exist outside of a historically situated and socially embodied philosophical tradition. No argument can occur outside a particular human community; by its nature philosophical enquiry builds upon or argues against previous tradition and is thus historically contingent.¹⁰ Traditions of philosophical enquiry are grounded in sets of texts that serve an authoritative function in terms of defining the parameters of debate and setting a starting point for further enquiry. The formulation of any argument can only

occur in relationship to a specific tradition defined in this manner, either from the inside or from without; there are no neutral or tradition-independent standards to which philosophy may appeal when attempting to choose between rival or contrasting traditions.¹¹ However, the fact that differing traditions may have areas of both overlap and mutual exclusivity is not a justification for relativism, as relativism denies the possibility of informed debate and choice between traditions. Fallibility, the possibility that one's tradition is wrong, is thus essential in confronting the claims of other traditions. Whether this sort of theory of tradition follows a socially embodied worldview as an explanatory lens is a tool to influence and transform society, or is some combination of the two, is less relevant to the discussion at hand than the observation that philosophy and worldview are intertwined. A philosophical tradition is not an abstraction sitting apart from social experience but is interwoven with day-to-day social activity at both the individual and the cultural level.

The Liberal Tradition and Music Education

If contemporary American society has a "default" philosophical tradition through which it operates, it is that of liberalism. MacIntyre defines liberalism as a project of "founding a form of social order in which individuals could emancipate themselves from the contingency and particularity of tradition by appealing to genuinely universal, tradition-independent

norms.”¹² Central to this project was the idea that reason as a tool could be employed not only to understand the laws of science in an objective manner but could provide a means to discuss and social questions from a purportedly neutral standpoint. In taking this step, however, liberalism has been transformed into one philosophical tradition among many, a point which the liberal tradition itself is often at pains to deny.

The United States was founded as a distinctly liberal social order, with philosophical tenets of the Enlightenment enshrined in our founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Various liberal assumptions are foundational to our culture. Beyond the neutrality of reason, this includes a conception of freedom centered on individual choice and autonomy. The value of individual choice is reinforced by the importance of the free marketplace and the exchange of commodities. In terms of the ends of education, at least two strands of liberalism have competed to define the good: pragmatism and utilitarianism.¹³ The pragmatic stream of liberalism has focused on a child-centered approach to education, shaping educational experiences to conform to the natural development of the individual child in relation to everyday life. It can be traced from early figures such as Rousseau and Pestalozzi through the fully formed educational philosophy of Dewey to contemporary progressive approaches. The utilitarian stream focused on pedagogical efficiency and measurable outcomes in service of productive employment in

society. It can be traced back at least to Locke, finds full expression in mid-20th century efficiency approaches such as the Tyler Rationale, and continues in the corporate standards and assessment movement often viewed as conservative. It is striking that both sides of the argument are rooted in the methodology of the liberal tradition, namely a rational approach that purports to reveal objective scientific truths regarding human development and purpose.¹⁴ It is not incidental that the central liberal metaphor for both education and economics is *growth*.

Music education in the liberal tradition owes a tremendous debt to Kant, particularly in terms of aesthetic theory. For Kant, while our response to art held a subjective component it also, through the neutral objectivity of reason, could be approached in a disinterested manner. Kant’s distinctions between the beautiful and the sublime had a profound impact both on the development of music and the nature of music education. The construction of a canon of authoritative musical works that allow access to the sublime, a critical development in the Western art music tradition, followed Kant’s arguments. Experience of the sublime through art and music played an important social role post-Enlightenment, as it allowed individuals experiences of deep meaning in an increasingly materialistic era that emphasized the supremacy of reason over traditional religious belief. The conservatory, dedicated to the advancement of the growing canon, was an Enlightenment-era

invention. The founding of the Paris Conservatory in 1783 began the process of appropriating medieval guild pedagogies, systematizing and formalizing them in the practical service of a rational art. The opening of public concert houses throughout the 19th century demonstrated a democratization of liberal aesthetic theory, bringing formerly aristocratic musical works to a growing middle class for their edification.

The introduction of music education to the public schools proceeded on similar justifications. When pressed for reasons to include music in the public school curriculum, music educators utilized the language of liberal aesthetic theory, with its emphasis on the educative worth of the great works of the Western canon. The power of aesthetic experience to generate individual meaning within everyday life without a religious appeal to the transcendent was well-suited to a progressive emphasis on Deweyan growth, and the philosophical work of Bennett Reimer tied these threads together in a formal manner. The liberal aesthetic rationale for music education in the public schools, however, has generally failed to successfully provide a compelling account for its own claims in the face of utilitarian objections, leading to a sense that the precarious place of music in the curriculum is only as secure as the finances of the school district in question.

The Critical Tradition and Music Education

Various philosophical developments during the 20th century cast into doubt the universalizing claims of the liberal tradition to the neutrality of practical reasoning. The tools of rational skepticism developed in the Enlightenment turned inward to critique reason itself. Inevitably, this led to a rejection of aesthetic claims on the disinterested contemplation of the sublime as well, with significant repercussions for music education. These significant philosophical shifts signify the development of a new philosophical tradition that, while it shares some commitments with the liberal tradition, differs sharply with its predecessors on key issues. The work of thinkers such as Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche laid the groundwork for later theorists, who have demonstrated a concern over the ways in which human freedom is limited and repressed by the power of structural elements within the liberal order, particularly the pervasive impact of a capitalist economy. Various strands of philosophical enquiry have taken up the central questions of this tradition, including Critical Theorists such as Adorno and Habermas, or the philosophers of Post-Structuralism such as Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze.

MacIntyre describes this tradition as that of *genealogy*, acknowledging the importance of Nietzsche to the characteristic form philosophical enquiry takes in this tradition.¹⁵ For the purposes of this chapter I have chosen to describe this

broad area of thought as the *critical* tradition, as the primary characteristic of thought in this tradition is an unwavering commitment to critiquing all areas of human thought, life, and action, particularly in response to the liberal tradition's claims of objectivity. The critical tradition encompasses various perspectives commonly described as post-modern as a means of differentiating them from the liberal tradition. General characteristics include a rejection of universal truth claims and an embrace of subjectivity. Knowledge is viewed as socially contingent and relative. Deconstruction, an intensive questioning of all values and assumptions embodied in a text, idea, or social action, has been a primary tool of analysis. Master narratives are denied in favor of categories of desire, language, power, and representation.¹⁶

Charles Taylor argues that the various theses I am describing function within what he describes as an "immanent frame," a conceptual scheme that views the material world as closed to the transcendent or supernatural.¹⁷ Because the precepts of religious texts or Natural Law appeal to a transcendent order, they have no authority or ultimate meaning within a secular society. Individual meaning is instead found within the immanent order of society; traditional or religious beliefs can be readmitted into a personal identity insofar as they remain private and make no claims to objectivity or universality.¹⁸ The resulting moral order of contemporary society is thus characterized by an exclusive humanism, a vision of human flourishing entirely contained within the immanent

frame. The purpose of human life in the critical tradition points towards *autonomy* demonstrated through authenticity. Each individual must realize his or her identity through autonomous choice, resisting imposed pressures for conformity to external models.¹⁹ The self is thus "buffered" or insulated in important ways from the possibility of either transcendence or exterior demands that might impinge upon this autonomy.

If the critical tradition encourages the construction of an authentically autonomous individual identity, it is unsurprising that the central metaphor for education's purpose within this tradition is *liberation*. The individual regularly encounters various obstacles in the quest for autonomy; among these are the various traditions he or she is born into, as well as various social structures that may attempt to impose constraints on identity from without. The role of the teacher thus shifts dramatically to help the student achieve this goal. The teacher no longer works to merely to disseminate information to students; now he works to liberate the student from oppressive social forces. This is the basis of Critical Pedagogy, the primary theory of curriculum in the critical tradition. Freire provides a template for methodology: the teacher works to raise the consciousness of her students through a process of dialog in which they become aware of their oppression.²⁰ Once aware, the students embrace a new perspective on reality as a whole and are equipped to engage in revolutionary social action. Because an unjust distribution of wealth

within society precludes opportunities for the lower class to fully exercise their autonomy, criticism of capitalist economies is not peripheral to Critical Pedagogy. The liberation of individuals has a wider social impact as well. As oppressive social structures are broken down through a process of desocialization, space opens for democratic change.²¹ Critical Pedagogy is thus unabashedly political, rejecting what it deems the fictitious neutrality of rational education in the liberal tradition. This often takes the form of elevating the voices of previously marginalized groups who might have important divergent perspectives on pressing social issues.

It is not surprising that these philosophical shifts led to changes in the purposes of music education. Critiques of the neutrality of reason extended to Kant's propositions regarding aesthetics, leading to a rejection of the various theories derived from his philosophical approach. Music was not a neutral work of art to be assessed by objective criteria but rather was a historically contingent product of a specific culture that embodied a host of values and meanings. Further, sociologists of music such as Christopher Small suggested that perhaps music was best understood not as a *thing* at all but as a set of relationships between the individuals creating the music and the socio-cultural context in which the music was being created.²² The plausibility of experiencing the sublime came into question, as individual response to music could also be better understood as a socially contingent and immanent phenomenon. The critical

tradition in music found the idea of a "canon" of Western art music intrinsically superior to other musical traditions both problematic and philosophically unsupportable.

David Elliott brought these ideas into broader discussion within the music education community through his proposal of a "praxial" philosophy that viewed music primarily as a human activity, subordinating the particular musical tradition being studied to the process of music making itself.²³ With the founding of the MayDay Group, researchers brought the tools of Critical Theory to bear on the music education profession, with the purpose of examining and critiquing all aspects of music teaching and learning within specific cultural contexts.²⁴ The net result of this scholarly activity has been a great deal of thoughtful criticism of traditional approaches to music education within the public schools, particularly large ensembles such as the concert band.²⁵ The teacher-centered nature of these ensembles, coupled with their hierarchical structure and deference to authority, seem to inhibit possibilities for students to develop their own creative voices.²⁶ If the exercise of musical creativity points to both authenticity and autonomy, then the purpose of music education can be understood as a process of musical liberation in which students develop the tools to construct their own musical identities. The introduction of popular, commercial, or vernacular music into the curriculum thus takes on new importance, with the assumption that musicing in these

styles will allow students a more immediate and authentic medium of expression.²⁷ Rather than reproducing the musical ideas of selected “great” composers, composition and improvisation become an ethical imperative for demonstrating creativity. From a perspective in the critical tradition, none of this musical activity exists for its own sake. Individual liberation through music education has the ultimate purpose of transforming society. Whether everyone in society is on board with the direction of this transformation, or have justifiable reasons for doubt or concern, is generally secondary to the pedagogical task of liberation at hand.

The Classical Tradition and Music Education

Beyond the liberal and the critical traditions, there is another tradition that is frequently underrepresented or absent from academic discourse on music education. For the purposes of this paper, I will describe this as the *classical* position due to its relationship to the Western classical liberal arts tradition. Classical education can perhaps best be summarized by Aristotle’s statement that “The life that conforms with virtue is thought to be a happy life.”²⁸ The contemporary classical tradition prioritizes intellectual and social continuity with the past, or what Chesterton described as the “democracy of the dead,”²⁹ particularly insights that can be gleaned from pre-Enlightenment thinkers such as Aquinas or Augustine.³⁰ At the same time, the classical tradition is open to

assimilating the insights of other traditions. The classical tradition thus shares a love of liberty and aversion to tyranny with liberalism while rejecting the latter’s hostility towards tradition and authority. It also finds common ground with the critical tradition in questioning the liberal tradition’s insistence on its own neutrality while dissenting on issues of identity formation. While many leading thinkers in the classical tradition are openly theistic,³¹ the tradition embraces certain traditional forms of secular humanism as well.³² Two primary distinctives of the classical tradition are an openness to transcendence and the narrative unity of human identity.

The classical tradition recognizes the transcendent as an integral element of human existence, rejecting a fully immanent frame of reference as employed by both the liberal and critical traditions.³³ While materialism and its attendant immanence is the default philosophical position of contemporary society, Taylor notes that it is possible to live within an immanent social order in an *open* rather than closed manner, recognizing both the contestability of one’s own open claims regarding transcendence while critiquing the closed and overconfident spin of secular elites in smugly dismissing dissent.³⁴ Thus, proponents of a classical approach to education tend to both embrace a metaphysics of moderate realism and reject various forms of nominalism. Specifically, by rejecting Aristotelian *telos*, nominalism facilitates the elevation of instrumental reason by narrowing causation to that of efficient causes, leading to a mechanistic

view of the universe with no space for final causes.³⁵ In contrast, the transcendent involves real objects, experiences, and relationships with meanings that are not dependent on empirical study or human perception.³⁶ While many phenomena may be described in terms of efficient causes through scientific rationality, characteristically philosophical phenomena often cannot. Further, there is no philosophical necessity for an observable efficient cause to be exclusive of transcendence.

For music educators, openness to the transcendent does not necessitate a return to either Kant's value-neutral aesthetics, which was geared toward an immanent life, or the various theories that developed in response. The problems of such approaches in music education, starting with Elliott's *Music Matters*, have been well discussed. An alternative for music educators in the classical tradition is to return to various pre-Enlightenment concepts in constructing a rationally justifiable philosophy. Most important is the observation that Beauty is a transcendent property of Being. Beauty is not simply a matter of human perception but rather is part of the order of the cosmos that gives human experience meaning.³⁷ The encounter with Beauty through the performance or reception of music remains culturally situated and tradition-specific, with all the moral implications this implies. To abstract the experience of Beauty from its social embodiment is to fundamentally distort its meaning in a manner characteristic of the liberal tradition but

alien to the classical. Thus, criticisms offered by Woodford and others that the liberal approach to aesthetics masks the ability of beautiful music to serve unjust purposes³⁸ perhaps owes more to the classical tradition than the critical, as Beauty and the Good are both transcendent properties of being that immanently interact in surprising yet describable ways. The role of the music educator in relationship to transcendence, then, is to provide children the opportunity to experience beauty through their musical activities. The moral problems of justice that will inevitably arise in this pursuit should not be met by attempting to liberate students to a fictional point of tradition-independent critical remove but rather employing tradition-specific resources in responding to injustice that are already at hand.

The classical tradition further rejects both Lyotard's myth that there are no master narratives, as well as the Deleuzian metaphors of assembly and nomadology, instead insisting on the narrative unity of the individual human life embodied in a historically situated tradition.³⁹ Human flourishing can only be assessed when considering a life as a completed whole; thus, Solon informs Croesus "Call no man happy unless he is dead."⁴⁰ Human life is narrative in form; the denial of this form is essentially a philosophical anti-humanism. Taylor, for example, argues that narrative and story are fundamental tools that human beings utilize to cyclically organize time and meaning.⁴¹ Narrative form is not just a cultural construction but is grounded

in physical phenomena such as the changing of the seasons or the biological arc of birth, growth, maturity, and death.⁴² The temporal parameters of human life provide its unity, and the reality of emergent social structures precludes narratives from being individually autonomous. Instead, we find ourselves born into stories already in progress; even the act of radical renunciation of tradition places us in relationship to pre-existing narratives. Social reality itself has a narrative structure that provides the basis for any culture, and the unity of the self is a form of narrative quest.⁴³

This view of narrative generates a profoundly different set of priorities for music education. As Wilson argues, narrative is not only the basis for reason but is the foundation of all forms of art.⁴⁴ From this perspective, music can never fully be abstracted from a cultural narrative of some sort, yet the classical tradition views this as a strength rather than an invitation to radical subjectivity. A student who begins the process of learning to make music finds herself entering a pre-existing tradition; there are no tradition-independent starting points for musicing. Regardless of whether the musical tradition is great or little, it existed as part of or emerged in relation to a larger cultural tradition long before the student was born, and it is the hope of practitioners that it will be passed on to future generations. Further, all narrative traditions have boundaries of practice and purpose; even an emphasis on free musical exploration is part of a larger tradition with its own limits and social values. For the

music student, the embrace of the pre-existing musical tradition is necessary to achieve excellence within that tradition and the virtues that that excellence embodies. Within this process, there is certainly the possibility of abuse, as critics such as Allsup have noted.⁴⁵ As autonomy is not the purpose of education, however, the classical tradition suggests that a degree of self-renunciation is in fact necessary to achieve self-integration: whomever would find his or her life must first lose it.

It is not surprising, then, that the classical tradition posits that the ultimate end of education is the life well lived, understood in terms of virtue. In the Aristotelian view, human beings have a characteristic nature as humans that moves through the various activities of life towards the end goal of *eudemonia*, or happiness. Happiness, or the good life, is achieved through the exercise of virtues in the various activities that constitute life.⁴⁶ A principal virtue in this tradition is *arête*, or excellence. Virtues such as excellence are exercised within the context of a particular human practice. MacIntyre defines a human practice as an established cooperative human activity in which “goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity.”⁴⁷ Any human practice, of which music can be considered an exemplar, has internal goods which can only be understood through participation in the tradition in question. The standards of excellence intrinsic to a given practice

require initiates to accept authoritative standards of performance already in existence over personal preferences, not towards a closed or fixed point, but towards progress in the expansion of the tradition's goods. From this viewpoint, virtue is a quality which allows the individual to realize the internal goods of a practice, the cumulative effect of which is a life well lived.

Music educators in the critical tradition who appropriate Aristotle apart from concerns for transcendence and final ends make the philosophical error of elevating the external goods of music making, particularly those of identity construction and political engagement, over the internal goods of musicing as a human practice. Regelski, for example, critiques the internal goods of the practice of traditional school music for its isolation from contemporary trends in education as well as its failure to make a pragmatic impact on society.⁴⁸ While correct in his critique of the autonomy of music, this line of reasoning unnecessarily prioritizes various external goods. The deconstruction of the internal goods of traditional musical practices does not serve to generate virtue, inspire excellence, or expand the goods of the tradition; instead it serves the goods of an external practice towards external ends. As MacIntyre notes, this is not to suggest that any human practice is beyond criticism but rather that any student who wishes to learn within any musical tradition, whether great or little, by necessity does so within that practice's internal authority.⁴⁹ Learning to make music within a specific musical

tradition, whether large ensembles such as the wind band, concert choir, or orchestra, or within a vernacular or popular tradition that employs more informal pedagogy, is a deeply humanizing experience. Music as a human practice within the classical tradition thus has as a purpose placing students as whole persons within an existing musical tradition as a means to encounter Beauty and exercise the virtues intrinsic to musicing as a means towards excellence and the life well lived.

Musical Problems and Perspectives from the Classical Tradition

In contrasting the classical tradition to the critical and the liberal, an immediate rejoinder would likely be that these categories are overgeneralized to the point at which misrepresentations are likely. There is undoubtedly some merit in this critique, but I would suggest that this is secondary to the overall point of my argument. Neither the critical, the classical, nor the liberal tradition is univocal in its commitments, methods, or conclusions, as the nature of a philosophical tradition is an argument extended through time. My thesis that any purposes of music education embodying the values of particular philosophical traditions can likely withstand generalization. Similarly, I am not implying that these are the only living traditions in contemporary society. Other traditions, particularly non-Western ones, are likely not difficult to locate and would have valuable insights to add to the discussion. Some observers could further likely make a

convincing case that various strands of any of the traditions, as I have outlined them here, in themselves constitute distinct traditions of philosophical enquiry.

My argument, then, is not to provide an airtight definition for any particular tradition but rather to clarify features of each tradition essential in understanding the purposes to which music education might be directed. Specifically, there are particular aspects of each tradition that are philosophically incommensurable. On various points, individuals reasoning from any of these traditions will find themselves in irreconcilable conflict with individuals reasoning from another.⁵⁰ These disagreements are profound and fundamental. They often cannot be resolved by an appeal to synthesis, Hegelian or otherwise, as the act of synthesis assumes the ability to stake a neutral position of adjudication that neither the critical nor classical tradition can countenance without abstracting its commitments or abandoning the tradition itself. While the generation and application of criteria to thoroughly investigate the philosophy presented by various thinkers in either tradition rests outside the more limited scope of this essay, what I can do is attempt to clarify broad areas of conflict between traditions with an eye towards the various costs involved in particular problems. I thus argue from my own point of view within what I have described as the classical tradition and will conclude by considering two areas of concern. First, I will reconsider the problems of the critical

tradition, and finally I will argue for the importance of the classical tradition within music education philosophy.

From a perspective within the classical tradition, the critical tradition appears to hold a dominant position in the discourse of music education philosophy, with many of current arguments intermural to that tradition. Contemporary proponents of liberal aesthetic theory in the mold of Bennett Reimer are difficult if not impossible to find. This state of affairs may lead some to consider aesthetic theory discredited and wonder why so many conductors, performers, and educators insist on clinging to ideas such as “great” music or aesthetic experience. Similarly, it may be confounding when educators that take progressive social or political stances continue to perpetuate conservatory pedagogical approaches that embody traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Part of the answer is likely that, outside of philosophers, most modern people are not committed partisans of a particular philosophical tradition. Living in a free society, housing multiple contradictory traditions, we pick and choose freely from these traditions to suit our preferences at the moment without looking too closely at the assumptions that underlie these choices.⁵¹ In doing this, we reveal that we have absorbed a critical view of self, regardless of our moral commitments. Alternately, it may be that there are good reasons for maintaining various traditional approaches that are either not being articulated or are not logically translatable into the critical tradition. The critical

tradition suffers its own internal contradictions, most notably the appeal to objective logical standards when engaged in cultural critique, thus committing itself to a form of rational neutrality in critiquing neutrality. Perhaps there are grounds within the liberal tradition to defend aesthetic theory that have yet to be developed. It is always dangerous to suggest that a particular theory has been discredited, as such a thing rarely actually happens in philosophy.⁵² The fact that many of the assumptions of aesthetic theory continue to be held by many musicians, educators, and audiences might, as the critics imply, mean that these individuals are holding on to regressive values. It could also mean that these values are actually justifiable within the liberal tradition but simply haven't been adequately defended. Or, as I might suggest, various aspects of aesthetic theory that musicians find valuable might not be dependent on the premises of liberal aesthetic theory at all but rather can be better explained within an alternate philosophical tradition.

I thus conclude by arguing that philosophy in the classical tradition has an important role to play in the philosophy of music education. Discussions of the purposes of music instruction inevitably have direct impact on the real instruction that occurs in real classrooms. The experience of Beauty through the performance of music is a universal aspect of being human, even if the musicing itself must occur in a particular situation. To deny this either suggests that certain people or groups of people lack a vital

human capacity or reduces the experience of beauty to crude materialist perception. Engaging in music making cuts across ethnic, class, gender, and political lines, even if the music being made is grounded in a localized tradition. This function and purpose of music education is vital in our polarized society, as it provides a common ground in which individuals of all philosophical persuasions can recognize our shared humanity despite our real disagreements on what that humanity means. Liberating children from tradition in the name of autonomy, including liberation from musical traditions deemed critically problematic, can leave individuals rootless and adrift as traditional attachments are dissolved. The critical end of liberation is both ahistorical and sociologically untenable over the long term, as human beings cannot exist as human beings apart from a sociocultural tradition that includes tradition-dependent rationality. Intergenerational traditions, particularly musical traditions, can be destroyed if they are not nurtured through intentional educational processes. Estelle Jorgensen has noted that Western classical art music, the subject of a great deal of the criticism discussed in this essay, is a multicultural tradition of great complexity and depth that is worthy of preservation for its intrinsic value.⁵³ While I concur with this sentiment, I submit that conservation is not enough. The classical tradition perpetually carries within itself the seeds of reformation and renaissance, and it is my hope that a music education informed by this tradition of transcendence and beauty can cut through the divisiveness of our incessant cultural battles and remind us of those things of value we hold in common.

Notes

- 1 Estelle Jorgensen, "On Philosophical Method," in *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, ed., Richard Colwell (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 91.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 97. Also, see Estelle Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 70. In her chapter "A Dialectical View of Music Education," Jorgensen presents various conflicting concepts for music educators in dialectical pairings to better understand their relationship without reducing the conflict to an either/or choice.
- 3 For example, see the arguments in Estelle Jorgensen, *Transforming Music Education* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).
- 4 Estelle Jorgensen, "Reflections on Futures for Music Education Philosophy," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 18.
- 5 Randall Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom: Toward an Open Philosophy of Music Education* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), 32.
- 6 Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, 75. "Great" in this context should be read as "large" (in contrast to "little"), rather than as an assignment of value.
- 7 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Reasoning* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 3rd ed., 2007), 222.
- 8 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1989), 100.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 327.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 350.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 329.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 335.
- 13 The degree to which the pragmatic and utilitarian are truly in opposition is debatable. Consider quote from Woodrow Wilson at the height of the progressive era: "It is imperative that we distinguish between education and technical or industrial training. . . . We want one class of persons to have a liberal education, and we want another class of persons, a very much larger class, of necessity, in every society, to forego the privileges of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific difficult manual tasks." *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 18 (1909): 593-606.
- 14 MacIntyre correctly observes that the primary conflicts of liberalism are "exclusively between conservative liberals, liberal, liberals, and radical liberals. There is little place . . . for the criticism of the system itself." *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality*, 392. This theme (among others) has been further developed recently by Patrick Deenan, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

-
- 15 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 40. The classification scheme I have applied in this paper (Liberal, Critical, and Classical) is obviously derived from MacIntyre's analysis; I have chosen different terms in order to avoid confusion with "Tradition" in referring to the "classical" tradition, as MacIntyre himself is at pains to emphasize that the Encyclopaedia and Genealogy are traditions by definition.
- 16 William F. Pinar, William M. Reynolds, Patrick Slattery, and Peter M. Taubman, *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 452.
- 17 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 542.
- 18 This circumscribed tolerance towards religious belief typically manifests as a "freedom of worship" as opposed to a broader freedom of religion. See for example, Herbert Marcuse, *Repressive Tolerance* (Beacon, MA: Beacon Press, 1965), 88: "indiscriminate tolerance is justified . . . in private religion." As traditional religion makes non-subjective truth claims binding on the entirety of believers' lives, relegating religion to a private sphere invariably curtails freedom of religious practice. This is why adherents of traditional religion are apt to agree with the critical tradition in its criticism of the purported neutrality of secular liberalism.
- 19 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 441.
- 20 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1970), 168.
- 21 Ira Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 114.
- 22 Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).
- 23 David Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 24 The MayDay Group is an international think tank dedicated in part to the application of critical thinking to music education theory and practice. "Action Ideals." <http://www.maydaygroup.org/about-us/action-for-change-in-music-education> (Accessed May 25, 2018).
- 25 For example, John Kratus, "Music Education at the Tipping Point," *Music Educators Journal* 94, no. 2 (2007): 42-48; or David Williams, "The Elephant in the Room," *Music Educators Journal* 98, no. 1 (2011): 51-57.
- 26 For example, Randall Allsup and Cathy Benedict, "The Problems of Band: An Inquiry into the Future of Instrumental Music Education," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 156-173.
- 27 For example, Robert H. Woody, "Popular Music in the Schools: Remixing the Issues," *Music Educators Journal* 93, no. 4 (2007): 32-37; or Lucy Green, "Popular Music in and for Itself, and for 'Other' Music: Current Research in the Classroom," *International Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 2 (2006): 101-118.

28 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177a, trans. Rackham.

29 The quotation is from G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1908/1995), 53. He continues: "Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death."

30 While figures such as Augustine and Aquinas are pivotal in synthesizing the Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Plato with Christian thought, contemporary philosophers in the classical tradition also recognize the importance of thinkers such as Averroes and Maimonides in developing the tradition.

31 For example, see: John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1852/1959); Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning* (London: Methuen, 1948); C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947); Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer, *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education At Home* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

32 For example, see Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

33 While contemporary liberal theory tends to operate from a materialistic framework, it should be noted that early proponents of liberalism were not opposed to the possibility of the transcendent as such. This can be seen by frequent references to both Providence and Natural Law in early Enlightenment thought.

34 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 551.

35 *Ibid.*, 98.

36 This type of definition for transcendence can be found in an entirely secular context as well; see Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (New York: Routledge, 1974/2008). While Bhaskar is not a classicist, his use of the term "Critical Realism" suggests an attempt to generate a new philosophical tradition out of the contradictions inherent in both the liberal and critical traditions.

37 James Matthew Wilson, *The Vision of the Soul: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in the Western Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 86.

38 Paul Woodford, "The Eclipse of the Public: A response to David Elliott's 'Music as/for Artistic Citizenship,'" *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 22-37.

39 The rejection of master narratives has been frequently refuted as providing yet one more master narrative to explain human existence. See for example Wilson, *The Vision of the Soul*, 237.

40 Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.32.

41 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 717.

42 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 212.

43 Wilson, *The Vision of the Soul*, 219.

44 *Ibid.*, 242.

-
- 45 Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 26.
- 46 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 149.
- 47 Ibid., 187.
- 48 Thomas Regelski, "Curriculum Reform: Reclaiming 'Music' as Social Praxis," *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 8, no. 1 (2009): 66-84.
- 49 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.
- 50 MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 6.
- 51 MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 397. MacIntyre argues that this leads to fragmentation and compartmentalization of the self, which in turn is corrosive towards the common good of society.
- 52 Ibid., 335.
- 53 Estelle Jorgensen, "Western Classical Music and General Education," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11 no. 2 (Fall 2003): 130-140.

About the Author

William (Bill) Perrine is Associate Professor of Music and Director of Instrumental Studies at Concordia University in Ann Arbor Michigan, where he directs the band and orchestra and teaches courses in music education. He holds a PhD in Music Education from Indiana University and a MM in Wind Conducting from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Prior to his work at Concordia, Bill taught public school for ten years in Title I schools in Florida and Kentucky, and is a National Board Certified Teacher.

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/>