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

Music Education Department

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## Ch. 21 - When I Grow Up, Or Just Another Love Song

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## Section V – An Epilogue for the Unfinished

### Chapter 21

# When I Grow Up, Or Just Another Love Song

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### Abstract

One's journey is never made alone. Relationships with the other begins with the desire to live mutually and responsively. Jorgensen's lives work has been to both broker and live these relationships with others; modeling scholarly and intellectual companionship that will reach beyond time now as it has been experienced. In this essay I frame Jorgensen's influence through the lens of Martin Buber, the caring relationship and the creation of spaces that embrace plurality.

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This is a love story. Or maybe, a love song. Perhaps the typology is neither here nor there. Perhaps all that is important is that in this love also resides the turn of a story; unexpected joy, surprise, fulfillment. And as such, it should very much begin with, *once upon a time...*

Calling someone a teacher is therefore ultimately not a matter of referring to a job title or a profession, but is a kind of compliment we pay when we acknowledge—and when we are able to acknowledge—that someone has indeed taught us something, that someone has indeed revealed

something to us and that we thus have been taught.<sup>1</sup>

I did not start out with the intent of thinking and writing theory. I had been teaching elementary music over twelve years and quite content in my Kodály teaching bubble. In fact, I was teaching Kodály so well I decided I needed a doctorate in curriculum and teaching in order to teach others to do exactly what I was doing. There is no irony in that statement. I was a true believer in every sense of Eric Hoffer's<sup>2</sup> definition; I was on a straight and narrow path without "wonder and hesitation."<sup>3</sup> I am not sure I was ready

to die for Kodály, but I certainly had “a proclivity for united action” that led toward “blind faith and singlehearted allegiance.”<sup>4</sup> I clung to this way of being because what else was there to embrace? I needed an identity, a way forward; I needed a way to teach, and Kodály provided that. It was never a matter of losing faith in myself but rather never having faith *in* myself. And as I embrace the literary device of the *bildungsroman* I wonder of the hero and who that might be in this reflection. Not so simple, I realize.

Clearly, I had no conception of what it would mean to read for a doctorate in Curriculum and Teaching. I entered thinking I would simply take the courses I needed and then produce something that opened the doors for more Kodály accolades/acolytes. While this inability to recognize the possibilities of scholarship and intellectual diversification was proof of my then “life in monologue,”<sup>5</sup> more powerful was the way I handled my shame in discovering how my general discipline colleagues conceived music education. Those meaningless integrated units my colleagues embraced that used songs about dinosaurs or apples and songs as mnemonic devices had nothing to do with the real skills kids learned in a Kodály class. This interior doubt about what others thought about my discipline was disquieting, but Kodály supplied all the answers to deflect that shame; Kodály and its focus on “literacy” was the curative.

## Reading Critical Theory

At some point in time I must have been required to read Michael Apple and Henry Giroux. I never remember the exact sequence of events that collapsed the refuge of Kodály, but I do remember that Delpit, hooks, and Freire all pushed me toward interrogating the integrated curriculum units people were creating centered on Gardner’s Intelligences.<sup>6</sup> The focus of the subsequent article I wrote and presented (at a conference in Ithaca at which Howard Gardner was present) was still grounded in the context of teaching music through a Kodály lens, but the realization that a critical read of something seemingly sacrosanct would be welcomed by my colleagues both in and out of music turned out to be foundational. Until that article, I had no idea I was desperate for thinking, for dialogue, for new ways of being; no idea how lonely I was.

A series of events began to unfold, only realized now in retrospect, that helped me learn and find comfort in the uncertainty of a way forward. Paul Woodford convened a conference in London, Ontario in 1997 that focused on critical thinking. I have no idea how I discovered the call for papers for that conference – on a bulletin board most likely – but a paper I wrote that critiqued the ways in which music educators had leaped onto that late 90s bandwagon was accepted.<sup>7</sup> Feeling my thinking welcomed, I was indeed further intrigued and flattered when Tom Regelski (in the guise of MayDay<sup>8</sup>) appeared at my side. At that

time, it was still the practice of MayDay to *invite* scholars into the organization, thus, this moment of being tapped on the shoulder and summoned into what seemed to be an exclusive club of thinkers was beyond my reckoning. Of course, my critical theorists had taught me to ask, at what price, who benefits, who does not, but clarity was swept aside as I was beckoned into something elite; for scholars and intellectuals, no less! Where else could I find this world?

### *The Coaxing of Imagination*

Place based education has made us aware of the need for and belief in connecting lived experience, community engagements, and environmental responsiveness to the pedagogical and epistemological implications therein intertwined. Place can be as open as the community, found within pages, bound by walls; always, however, with the other and facilitated by, I would suggest, a moral imagination.<sup>9</sup> Spaces (even/particularly conferences), as Gruenewald reminds us, “are pedagogical,”<sup>10</sup> which of course begs the question, what is pedagogical, for whom and what purpose. Patti Lather is helpful in this context as she believes pedagogy is “the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies—the teacher, the learner, and the knowledge they together produce.”<sup>11</sup> A moral imagination calls for this transformation of consciousness, but also the need to

reimagine the notion of teacher and learner.

As Lederach writes the creative act of “the building and coaxing of imagination itself”<sup>12</sup> is a less than precise process and certainly not a process that is recognized by everyone as pedagogical, or even necessary. Estelle Jorgensen, like Lederach, understands the power of the provision of a place where “deep caring for people and the meaning of their experience”<sup>13</sup> nurtures new ways of being. Estelle understood and understands choosing to take a chance on both others and this profession.

*What possibilities for the young scholar standing before time, not realizing quite yet, that a voice recently found needs a home to be crafted and nurtured? Slowly recognizing, almost aching, that the spaces one had encountered did not welcome thinking that was at odds with comforting and familiar narratives.*

### *ISPME*

In 2005 I attended my first International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music (ISPME) Education in Hamburg. I wasn’t sure of that timeline, so I went looking for the power point Estelle had put together: “A Short History of ISPME.”<sup>14</sup> The history is indeed thought-provoking, but it is the images rather than the text that moved me to reflection: how young we all were in 2005 and how we have all grown

together! I scrutinized every photo and realized that the most important gifts ISPME had given me—not fully understood till now—was something much more vital than a tap on the shoulder.

Space for scholarship  
Space for intellectual camaraderie  
Time and the endurance of friendship  
Joy, laughter, love

The extraordinary vision/imagination of a woman who understood the power and possibility of operating from within the margins led to the cultivation of spaces that began as physical and morphed into the metaphorical and spiritual. Seeking to confront the “dominance of positivism in North American music education research.”<sup>15</sup> Estelle sought to move forward an agenda that established a space for the presentation of multiple and challenging views. Before any scholarship that addressed the power of margins, Estelle somehow recognized marginality as “a standpoint, a perspective, or a place from which an oppositional worldview is constructed”<sup>16</sup> and “simply” pushed through a universe dominated by men to create a much-needed space for others to think alone, and more importantly, together. Of course, “simply” wasn’t simple and Estelle reflects on this period as one of “protracted struggle” where “competing interests and aspirations sometimes threatened to impose a master philosophy in music education and fragment the philosophical community.”<sup>17</sup> Focusing these past years to carefully attend to the use of

language, I am drawn to the phrase “competing interests and aspirations” and I am reminded again of the fine balance between one’s own desire (need?) to be seen and heard and, as Hoffer writes, the “fundamental difference between the appeal of a mass movement and the appeal of a practical organization.”<sup>18</sup> Rather than Master Philosophy (most definitely with a capital M), Estelle offered imagination and intervention through practical organization.

Forging spaces that challenge the status quo, however, are more apt to be “perceived by institutional gatekeepers as disruptive and destructive.”<sup>19</sup> Teachers College Columbia University was the first disruptive space I had encountered as a scholar. Among like-minded and committed pedagogues I came to understand the need for such spaces as what could be, what should be. I also came to understand that gatekeeping is often disguised in small, and what might seem inconsequential, moments. It is not surprising gatekeeping found its way into the early days of the philosophy research symposia. Nor is it surprising that Estelle embraced the struggle to cultivate a space that encompassed both/and philosophical stances and welcomed multiple views. So many others might have seen this as burdensome, but one only needs spend a few hours with Estelle to picture her rocking back and forth, imagination spinning, with a smile of glee that can only be described as a bit wicked, relishing this challenge of a vision she knew to be true.

The ISPME conference spaces have always been about relationship building and grappling with presumed “otherness.” What it means to know and how we come to know takes a certain amount of epistemological humility and imagination. One cannot attend an ISPME conference and not come away understanding the problematics of assuming terms. *Bildung*, for instance, entered my lexicon at the 2007 ISPME conference in London, Ontario. I was responding to a paper Frederik Pio had written and I had no idea what he was referring to. What the hell is *Bildung*!? Since then, I have spent a fair bit of time grappling with that concept, which doesn’t mean I know everything there is to know, but I suspect many of my European colleagues would feel the same. Having the space to ask openly about constructs and ideas without fear of disapproval or disdain took my imagination, and my scholarship, to places I would never have known. There is no greater euphoria than that which comes from reading your own words in front of those whose thinking you respect and honor. The joy that comes from the gift of time to think out loud as others attend to your thoughts, as well as the anticipation found awaiting the carefully crafted response of another, is visceral. You come to understand that these moments with others, where you think differently—better—stay with you through the years that separate the companionship that comes from biennial friendships; knowing we are not, as Buber would ask of us, “bound by the aims of the hour.”<sup>20</sup> So often I am able to imagine the other there, on the opposite side of the world, living and

thinking just as I am living and thinking, and know that this memory of the easy laughter that was shared will be shared again in months and years to come.

### *Coaxing the Imagination is Nothing New to Estelle.*

*What does it mean to nurture young scholars? Does anyone talk about the price that comes with such nurturance? Who cares for the one caring?*

The capacity and wherewithal to build and nurture such spaces must have an emotional curve to them. The singular focus of bringing scholars together from all over the world and the immense stimulation that comes from knowing it can be done surely must ebb and flow, as sustaining such spaces takes as much as gives. Estelle cares deeply for the profession of music education and for all those this profession and discipline touches.

Estelle’s way of being in relationship to her discipline and others is one of an ethic of care. Noddings reminds us that we can’t set up care as an objective goal, but rather that “[W]e approach our goal [of caring] by living with those whom we teach in a caring community, through modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.”<sup>21</sup> For Estelle, modelling manifests itself in multiple guises. First and foremost, Estelle is interested in dialogue: dialogue as we seek new understandings, dialogue as we think together transnationally, dialogue to consider what is important in and out of our

discipline, dialogue so that we may come to know the other. Watch Estelle in these moments: she is clever, almost sly in her listening; she nurtures as she listens and responds.

Noddings suggests that teachers have the responsibility to “help their students develop the capacity to care.”<sup>22</sup> While not everyone may see or might have not seen themselves as a “pupil to Estelle’s teacher” (paraphrasing *SpongeBob Square Pants*, Artist Unknown), I know that I did, and that many others did and do as well. Quite honestly, who doesn’t want and desire a teacher to appear in one’s life? It’s almost as if that most bandwagon of all bandwagon slogans—constructivism—has convinced us one shouldn’t want to be taught. And yet, Estelle’s laughter and joy (definitely a manifestation of both intellectual caring and interpersonal care) reminds me I have so much to learn, so much I want to learn, that I want to be held in that caring relation of being taught, no matter how much I am sure I already know.

Biesta explores the difference between “learning from” and “being taught by” by asking us to consider that what one is “being taught” is the “truth that matters for one’s life.”<sup>23</sup> This kind of knowing and knowledge is based on “being in relation”<sup>24</sup> with others. It is not accidental, Estelle’s way of being in relation with others. This truth matters for my life had and has everything to do with recognizing my own potential, and this has everything to do with being seen by her, by her belief in my “working toward a better self.”<sup>25</sup>

## *And yet, Who Cares for the One Caring?*

I am unable to write this chapter without speaking of one whose presence was slowly made known to me; which does not indicate importance, but rather perhaps my own, oblivious, emergence. My first memory of Iris Yob was seeing her standing next to Estelle in front of one of the conference hotels. So long ago this must have been that I was taken, not so much by surprise, but by wonderment, by this woman who so clearly cared for and was cared by Estelle.

I know few others with whom I can just be. I realize this coming to know Iris as “becoming aware,”<sup>26</sup> where the genuine dialogue of which Buber writes happens each time she and I meet:

the response of one’s whole being to the otherness of the other, that otherness that is comprehended only when I open myself to him in the present and in the concrete situation and respond to his need even when he himself is not aware that he is addressing me.<sup>27</sup>

As I sit near and with Iris, I often have to fight off my first inclination to succumb to a meta-wondering of why she is listening to me. Yet, this constancy is her natural response, a state of care and fidelity to the other. The stillness of Iris allows me to settle and “become aware,” as Buber would suggest. I have come to know and trust intent in these moments; the desire to “[establish] a living mutual relation”<sup>28</sup> as we

both recognize ourselves and the other. While I can't speak for Iris, it seems we are always able to meet without distrust, I do not listen for an "unconscious motive,"<sup>29</sup> nor do I seek confirmation from our conversations. I simply know that when we meet our heads will tilt toward the other, perhaps giggling over something seemingly inconsequential, but more likely of great consequence. We will simply be in common.

### *Once Upon a Time*

How rarely we experience genuine acts of care. So rare that we often don't know how to respond and settle into fidelity. Being called to care for the "life of dialogue"<sup>30</sup> with others means, however, fidelity to both people and to our discipline through the recognition of something beyond oneself. This is the story Estelle has lived and continues to live for and with us. It is not so much that Estelle is teaching us how to live happily ever after, if what is meant by "ever after" is a story with no disruptions. If, however we come to recognize that ever after, even happily, is to live contentedly with disruptions, to seek and desire them, then this is authority of Estelle's gift.

At the most recent International Society for Music Education conference held in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2018, I attended

a panel which included Estelle and was moderated by Iris. During the discussion I attempted to think out loud about two of the presentations which were grounded in care and deep integrity (Kính T. Vũ and Kevin Shorner-Johnson).<sup>31</sup> I use the word attempt deliberately, as I often do not think out loud very concisely. Estelle came up to me afterward. Our dialogue began with her mentioning my thinking during the session. In that moment I was the student to Estelle's teacher; not so much dependent on her affirmation but rather the reciprocity made manifest in the meeting of "intelligence to intelligence"<sup>32</sup> in and through genuine dialogue.<sup>33</sup>

I'm never quite sure of SpongeBob's motivation with Squidward, but I choose not to question his sincerity and deep affection when his eyes fill with tears of joy and incredulity as he discovers he is in class with Squidward: "You are the teacher? To my pupil? This isn't art class, it's Heaven!"<sup>34</sup> The discovery for many when we entered for the first time and continue to enter (whether in time, essence, or dialogue) the space that had been envisioned by this intrepid and resolute woman, is perhaps not Heaven. But surely, if we accept the terms of SpongeBob's constancy and hope in the impossible, Squidward's response, "Yeah. Well, grab a little piece of heaven and sit down" is an invitation for all of us to sit down and be the pupils to Estelle's teacher.



## Notes

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- 17 Jorgensen, "Roots and Development," 28.
- 18 Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 12.
- 19 Antonia Darder, *Freire and Education* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 43.

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- 20 Martin Buber, "Hope for the Hour," in *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1957), 227.
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- 23 Biesta, "Receiving the Gift of Teaching," 1.
- 24 Noddings, *The Challenge to Care*.
- 25 Ibid., 25.
- 26 Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 12
- 27 Maurice Friedman, "Introduction," in Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1947/2003), xvi.
- 28 Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 23.
- 29 Buber, "Hope for the Hour," 223.
- 30 Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 23.
- 31 Iris Yob, moderator, "Music Education and the Common Good," Panel Discussion with Ebru Tuncer Boon, Kevin Shorner Johnson, Andre De Quadros, Kinh T. Vu, Emily Good Perkins, Alexandra Kertz Welzel, Leonard Tan, Martin Berger, Betty Anne Younker, and Estelle R. Jorgensen at the 33rd International Society for Music Education World Conference, Baku, Azerbaijan, July 2018.
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- 33 Buber, *Between Man and Man*.
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## About the Author

**Cathy Benedict** is an associate professor of music education at University of Western Ontario. She has presented multiple workshops to national/international audiences on topics such as elementary pedagogy, discourse analysis, philosophical interrogations of pedagogy and curriculum, ethics of functional literacy, socially just engagements and the representation of reality. She has written numerous chapters and published in journals such as *Canadian Music Educator*, *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, *Music Education Research*, and *Research Studies in Music Education*, co-edited the journal *Theory Into Practice*, and most recently co-edited *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice and Music Education* (Oxford University Press).

## 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/>