

CONCLUSION

On Making Music Education Humane and Good: Gathering Threads

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IN HER LATEST BOOK, *SCHOOL WAS OUR LIFE*,¹ Jane Roland Martin reflects on the musical experience led by Beatrice Landeck, known to music educators as compiler and author of folk song collections and editor of the *Making Music Our Own* series, published by Silver-Burdett. Landeck taught music in a New York City elementary school where music and the other arts played a central role in a progressive educational approach. This experience was so valued by her students that seven or eight decades later, they still treasure and sing her collection of school songs, recite poems they memorized as children, and reminisce about their teachers. Connected by bonds of friendship and shared experience, they feel fortunate to have attended this school. How I long to be a teacher who might have such a long-term impact.

In this book, our writers have reflected critically on what it might mean to make music education humane and good, and on various means whereby these objectives might be undertaken. In drawing some of the important threads, I ask the following: What can be learned collectively from our authors about humane music education and the common good? What shall all those involved in the work of music education do to make it humane and good? How might the approaches of our authors make a difference to the practice of music education?

Notice that I bring the value of the “common good” into music education itself rather than think of it as outside music education *for* the common good. I do this because music education is something that lies within the power of music teachers to influence. Randall Allsup refers to this reality

using Montaigne's notion of looking "under our feet." Beginning with what we (individually and collectively) think and do is a starting point for the practice of humanity and goodness in music education. Still, as Iris Yob suggests, this close-up view of our immediate situation is transcended by a broader view of the predicament in which all the members of the human family dwell in respect of our common humanity, mortality, physicality, and mentality. In this radically inclusive view, and notwithstanding our diversity, Yob suggests, there is no Other. We are all together in the reality of the preciousness of our humanity and the multiplicity of our beliefs and practices.

What Does It Mean to Make Music Education Humane and Good?

The choice of published UNESCO texts as a touchstone for our authors' reflections is particularly ironic in the present political moment. International perspectives are arguably even more important when nation-states withdraw from international organizations and treaties and espouse nativist and extremist policies that undermine attempts to foster international understanding and world peace. These realities open the possibilities for wars and conflagrations, slavery, tyranny by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, and ecological destruction of the planet. Although Hanne Rinholm and Øivind Varkøy urge values of humility, sobriety, and temperance in making utilitarian claims for music, they argue that music is good for being human and that music education needs to engage the "big issues of life" in ways that manifest ethical values of hope, identity, and authenticity. Their reminder of the limits of music education is reinforced by Allsup's worry that it may be easier to embrace the mantra of diversity than to accept diversity when it does not align with a set of values that one has internalized. The import of an international conversation such as this opens the prospect of differing value sets and the possibility of disjunctions, tensions, and conflicts regarding matters of what is good, what is common, and what is humane. Collectively, our writers present a radical view of diversity that encompasses the entirety of humanity in all its plurality and difference and the implication of self in this difference. Paradoxically, to take a radical view of diversity does not necessitate that each person takes a radically relativist ethical position. All human beings are important and precious and need to be free to make their own ethical and aesthetic decisions grounded in

faith and moral traditions. Our judgments are based on values that we have internalized and seek to express. Practically speaking, as teachers, we prioritize both the music to be studied and the instructional means whereby people come to know that music according to values to which we are committed. Rather than supposing a monolithic hegemony of specific educational means and ends, *Rethinking Education* invites readers to contemplate general values of humanity and commonly held conceptions of goodness as inimitably humane educational values that ought to be shared by all human beings, irrespective of the diverse goods to which we may be directed or the specific ways in which these values are expressed.

A crucial problem, discussed by Kevin Shorner-Johnson, is the short-sightedly Western linear view of educational progress in the UNESCO report—and the privileging of this view and failure to acknowledge cyclical views of time as commonly understood by African, Native American, and Eastern societies, among others. Shorner-Johnson reminds us of the violence wrought by so-called technological progress in recent centuries and the sense of “disconnection” and “disruption” in human relationships as a result. In his view, music educators in the West need to learn from other world views that privilege the present moment, the cyclicity of the natural world, the possibility of renewal, and the spirituality of experience. Ambiguity feeds imagination and fosters diversity, and this temporal and social diversity needs to better balance individual ways of being. This more holistic and even ecological view of music education benefits from international insights from West and East, North and South, and when they are accounted for, the musical and educational changes are likely to be profound. As Ebru Tuncer Boon’s case study of the Gezi Park resistance in Turkey illustrates, music potentially disrupts society and the physicality of its vibrations constitutes a potent social and societal force. In analyzing the mutuality of music and protest, Boon shows the impact of music on an ecological and political resistance movement and the effect of the resistance movement on the emergence of diverse artistic and musical expressions. She envisages nothing less than a metamorphosis of music, education, and society.

Central questions of what is meant by the “common good” and “humane” music education are broached by Yob in her introduction and chapter, “There Is No Other.” The central paradox of this book consists in the claims of global thinking about music education that presupposes the welfare of everyone on the one hand and the value of difference and diversity on the other. Yob offers a solution to this dilemma in the metaphor

of perspective in her “close-up” and “wide-angle” views. This very useful metaphor illustrates the tensions that emerge from differences between thinking in generalities and thinking in specificities. For Yob, it is necessary to think of a nested perspective in which the wide-angle perspective on humanity and music education also includes the close-up view of differing thoughts and practices. (This proposition reminds me of some of my earliest writing about music education, in which I emphasize the importance of differing levels of generality in our thought about music education and the principle that resolving dilemmas in social events such as music and education is often a matter of differing perspectives on them.) As for what is meant by “humane” music education, Yob draws on the humanistic and humane approach echoed in the various incarnations of the UNESCO document. She points to notions of the value of all human life, the claims of respect, dignity, equal rights, justice, diversity, and a sense of community and solidarity for the common good (wide-angle view) while also fostering and sustaining the social and cultural diversity of all dwellers on planet earth (close-up view). In pointing to the inextricability of the common good (understood as common goods) and humane education, Yob notes that while both notions have a social justice “edge,” the common good serves as an ideal and humane education serves as an important means of reaching toward it. Notwithstanding the problematical character of these ideas, it is difficult to imagine the common good without a humane education. Each reinforces the other.

What Shall All Those Involved in the Work of Music Education Do to Make It Humane and Good?

Music educators are practically minded. Writers in the two middle sections of this book, “Pedagogy and Teacher Preparation” and “Educating Others for the Common Good,” provide specific examples of practical ways to make music education humane and good. The focus shifts from teaching approaches and preparing teachers to undertake a humane music education in part II to broader considerations of how to educate others for the common good in part III. Writers in both parts illustrate beautifully Yob’s “close-up” and “wide-angle” views by simultaneously considering specific ideas or situations and thinking more generally about them. In pedagogical situations such as piano studios, music teacher preparation programs, prisons, special education situations, and multicultural music classrooms, we see humane teaching at work. Christine Brown’s reflection

on humane principles of studio teaching, Betty Anne Younker's use of an inquiry-based approach in music teaching, Joseph Shively's principles of humane music teacher preparation, and Emily Howe, André de Quadros, Andrew Clark, and Kinh T. Vu's cases of teaching music in prisons, special education situations, and multicultural music classrooms provide an array of ways, means, and principles for teaching humanely. Our writers are not content simply to describe their cases; they also provide critical and analytical perspectives on them and on the UNESCO documents to which they respond. Although they would go about teaching in multiple ways and espouse differing principles that guide their work, their perspectives are unified by a pervasive concern for the people at the heart of music education and an effort to make the music education that they offer emblematic and expressive of the ends of fostering humanity and goodness. This paradoxical multiplicity in unity is evident in their expressed hope to practice this humanity and goodness in a myriad different ways and situations. Their examples illustrate how music teachers from antiquity onward have sought to cultivate humanity and goodness in their teaching and through their teaching and thereby cultivate dispositions toward these values in their students. Focusing on principles and practices, these cases offer windows into what may be done practically by teachers to make music education humane and good.

Focusing on learners and their needs and the contexts in which music education is undertaken provides other lenses on a humane pedagogical situation. The community music learning described by Luca Tiszai, opportunities for cultural diversity in vocal education portrayed by Emily Good-Perkins, parallels in the Suzuki method and humane education described in the UNESCO documents observed by Blakely Menghini, the ecological approach to sacred music proposed by Mary Thomason-Smith, and hospitality to transgendered students advanced by Jacob Axel Berglin and Thomas Murphy O'Hara all suggest myriad possibilities for humane education to be taught by and taught to students. They see educational possibilities in contexts well beyond music education traditionally construed as school music in communities, music studios, and places of worship. They illustrate the importance of reaching learners wherever and whenever they may be found and of devising multiple formal and informal ways to reach them.

Thinking about these examples drawn from around the world and advocated by people who are passionate about creating a humane world of

music education and, through music education, contributing to the common good, I am struck by the fact that wherever we teach and learn music, in whatever contexts we undergo music education, and whatever our specific musical and educational objectives, wherever people are central to our work and life, humane music education may thrive. Since these writers have offered evidence of an array of differing ways to approach music and to do this humanely, it is imperative to genuinely embrace and welcome the differences in specific objectives and methods. Each one of these writers brings an important perspective to bear. A reader may resonate more with one than another. Yet it is undeniable that encouraging every music teacher to pursue his or her passion opens possibilities for transformative music teaching and learning. Fostering diversity rather than uniformity in music education aims and methods frees music teachers and learners to come to know and do music in ways that best fit specific settings and individual and communal aspirations. In fostering this diversity of practice, paradoxically, our authors illustrate how it is also possible, at least generally speaking, to approach humane music education that a plethora of ways that seek common goods.

How Might the Approaches of Our Authors Make a Difference to the Practice of Music Education?

In responding to this important question, our writers make several theoretical and practical suggestions. Among these, Johnnie-Margaret McConnell and Susan Laird build on Laird's earlier philosophical writing on musical hunger to posit a human need for musicking and the imperative to satisfy it. Many students are not in school music classes, and those who are too often find the experience dissatisfying. Humane music education requires satisfying musical hunger. It is imperative to regard music education as an essential aspect of a well-rounded education rather than a "frill" that is available at the margins of general education or only to the few who can afford it. It is imperative to open the doors of music education and welcome everyone with a musical desire (whether it be latent or already known) to participate in making and taking music. Rather than one monolithic and grand house, it may be helpful to envision homes of music of various sorts, with a myriad teachers and students with different aptitudes, desires, and needs, and the possibilities of visiting one home or another or moving from one to another. Hospitality to difference, as Berglin and

O'Hara urge us to consider, needs to be paramount in our musical villages. Rather than thinking exclusively of human-made objects, as dwellers on planet earth, we might also take an ecological view of the sort advanced by Thomason-Smith. The musical homes we construct need to be in harmony with the wider environment, as other sentient creatures such as animals and even plants are also responsive to musical sounds.

Deanne Bogdan opens the prospect of a holistic education through music as feeling and thought are bound together inextricably in literature and music. Her ideas, resonant with Shorner-Johnson's, bring the Other into a space and time in which otherness disappears—what a wonderful metaphor for music education! Musicians and educators have long realized that the artificial although useful distinctions between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains need to be made whole again. Music constitutes, for Bogdan, a powerful opportunity to make people whole again. Moreover, coming into the presence of another's music, becoming acquainted with it, and being able to do it, like the other arts, myths, and rituals that humans have created, reveals the other's humanity. Greater understanding, emotional and physical connectedness to another's music ultimately, for Bogdan, dissolves otherness and opens to greater musical and artistic community and solidarity.

Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, Leonard Tan, Martin Berger, and David Lines suggest that music educators can study models of music education already in existence. Drawing on the perspectives of Germany, Singapore, South Africa, and New Zealand, respectively, they illustrate ways that music educators are seeking to create humane music education for the common good. I have called the study of models of music education the "demonstration effect" because of the potency of models and demonstrations of music education for music teachers, their musical and educational colleagues, and members of society at large. Models are especially effective because of the ways that they illustrate more abstract theoretical or philosophical principles and prompt others to want what they do not presently have. Throughout this book, our writers have provided examples of ways to undertake humane music education for the common good, at least as it is perceived by nation-states, communities, schools, churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues, and music teacher associations. That models or examples are drawn from around the world is important in regarding different societies (as the human beings who comprise them) as having value. Doing this dignifies the societies in which models or examples are found, and instances

the importance of thinking through the ways that humane music education can be conducted divergently. One society may learn from another while also considering the specific ways in which what is done elsewhere might be done differently here.

It is also important to consider the gaps and errors in the UNESCO document that need to be addressed and that have been alluded to by contributors to Part I of this book. In the concluding part IV of this book, Eleni Lapidaki considers values of intimacy and trust that she finds to be absent from *Rethinking Education*. Her feminine perspective is important in documents that may be read by some to constitute a quite masculine view of education. With an expansive vision that moves ever outward to encompass the world, music educators can miss the importance of feminine values that focus inward and that highlight the intimacy and trust of familial bonds. Lapidaki's views resonate particularly with the subjectivity and vulnerability of Bogdan's notion of the musical dissolution of the Other, with Shorner-Johnson's ecological view of humane music education, McConnell and Laird's concern about the need to satisfy human hunger for music, and Allsup's admission of the vulnerability of openness to difference and the imperative of openness to others. Indeed, the personal writing by all the chapter authors highlights the importance of human subjectivity in musical making and taking and in a humane musical education.

In sum, our writers espouse a musical education for human flourishing, about and for people. Such a person-centric view of musical education in its myriad forms and manifestations is radical and paradoxical in that it is also about the music and the rest of life. How shall music education and the people involved with it flourish? If we posit the radical idea that there is no Other, our writers suggest that it is possible to see the many and the one through "close-up" and "wide-angle" lenses. We may begin at the ground at our feet, seek to express humanness in our teaching, and open our hearts to the needs, interests, and desires of our students. Collectively, we may foster the host of means whereby students can come to know music. We may aspire to love our students and live in ways that evoke goodness. And we may hope that our influence ripples out to infuse the wider society of which we are a part.

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Note

1. Jane Roland Martin, *School Was Our Life: Remembering Progressive Education* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).