



# TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a down-to-earth and understandable approach to developing a philosophy of music education. The subject of “philosophy” has been approached with a great deal of apprehension through the years by undergraduate college and university students. However, exploring philosophical foundations can be made enjoyable as well as rewarding. The information included here can only serve as introductory material to a somewhat more complex, yet not overwhelming, effort to accommodate the need for a philosophy of music education. The author hopes that this chapter will whet the appetite of prospective teachers to examine in greater depth their involvement in music education: what they do, how they do it, and, perhaps more important, why they do it.

The chapter begins by discussing how a new music educator can develop a philosophy. Then, the need for a philosophy of music education is explored. Common schools of philosophy—including idealism, realism, pragmatism, and experimentalism/instrumentalism—are described, as well as their strengths and weaknesses and relation to music education. Aesthetic education is addressed separately as an important contributor to music education philosophy. Finally, the chapter returns to the concept of building a philosophy of music education to show how a justification for the inclusion of music in the school curriculum can be developed.

If educators are to administer successfully complex music programs, the development of an individual music education philosophy is not an option, but a mandate. Through investigation of the traditional schools of educational philosophy, as well as an examination of current philosophical visions and aesthetic theories, educators can satisfy that mandate. Philosophy can then become both a collection of ideas and a way of thinking as music educators approach their important work.

## DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY

The most common approach toward the development of a philosophy of music education has been to relate music education to one of the more traditional educational philosophies, such as idealism, realism, or pragmatism. This practice, while offensive to some music educators and philosophers, is perhaps one of the most effective procedures presently available to music educators.

Bennett Reimer, Charles Leonhard, and Abraham Schwadron are some of the most active and vocal exponents of a comprehensive philosophy of music education. All three are prolific writers and lecturers on the topic of the philosophy of music education and are highly respected for their views on the subject. Reimer, Leonhard, and Schwadron argue that a comprehensive philosophy should be based on aesthetic theories. They feel that only through a serious study of aesthetics are music educators able to develop the background necessary to enter into a productive partnership with educational philosophers, one in which the philosophers could assist the music educators in examining their beliefs and principles. The music educators, in turn, could provide new data and concepts for the philosophers. Reimer, in his book *A Philosophy of Music Education* (1989), has provided music educators with a model for associating music education with several aesthetic theories. Reimer’s book is the most recent in-depth effort to relate aesthetic theories to music education and should be on the “must read” list of all serious students of music education philosophy.

Leonhard defines a philosophy of music education as a “system of . . . beliefs which underlies and provides a basis for the operation of the musical enterprise in an educational setting. A philosophy should serve as the source of insight into the total music program and should assist music teachers in determining what the musical enterprise is all about, what it is trying to accomplish and how it should operate” (1965, p. 59). Developing a philosophy of music education must involve building a theory that relates to the meaning and value of music and the role of music in life.

In medieval times, philosophy was referred to as the total of all knowledge represented by the arts and sciences. Educational philosophy today can be both speculative and prescriptive, and, as previously mentioned, music teaching in general is aligned with prevailing educational philosophies. The two main streams of philosophical thought in American education are pragmatism and realism. Most educational beliefs appear to be associated with one or the other, or a philosophy somewhere in between. Pragmatism has profoundly affected music education texts and methods in the last fifty years. The idea of “learning by doing” dominates current music education thought as it relates to music methods. A more detailed presentation of the effects of traditional educational philosophies on music education appears later in this chapter.

## THE NEED FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Successful music education programs have always attempted to achieve a balance between student concerns and what music educators deem to be important subject matter concerns. Unfortunately, there are also many examples where the balance was never reached, or for that matter even sought. Some programs present the knowledge of music without an actual musical experience, while others provide extensive opportunities for students to make music without allowing them the opportunity to develop an understanding of why they are doing it. A solid philosophical approach to music education should not permit such unbalanced teaching.

The development of a solid philosophical approach must begin at the undergraduate level. This is a demonstrated weakness in the training of music education teachers. Generally speaking, colleges and universities have been woefully negligent in exposing undergraduate students to material relating to the evolution of a philosophy of music education. Only a few music departments currently offer an undergraduate class in music education philosophy. Many of those same schools offer a unit on the subject as part of a broader music education class. The prevailing thought in higher education appears to be that any serious study related to the philosophy of music education should be reserved for the graduate level. The education of undergraduate music students, then, must necessarily revolve around the development of skills, methods, and techniques, at the expense of encouraging critical thinking on the part of those students. This approach to the training of teachers in the music education profession is indeed unfortunate and serves as the prime motivating factor for the inclusion of this chapter in a book dealing with the administration of school music programs.

It is essential that college students preparing to enter the music education profession develop an understanding of the importance of their career field. This is the time in an individual's life when the need for self-justification is the highest, as he or she is preparing to become a contributing member of society. Students need to develop meaning for their professional lives. They need a mission! This is especially true in music education, because the value of the career field is often not fully understood by its own members and is generally even less understood by professionals in related fields. In Bennett Reimer's words, "The individual who has a clear notion of what his aims are as a professional, and who is convinced of the importance of these aims, is a strong link in the chain of people who collectively make a profession" (1989, p. 4). The profession will become more solid, more secure, to the degree that music educators are able to formulate a persuasive, forceful, and compatible philosophy.

Individuals need to feel that their chosen profession is important and that they can enrich society. If music educators cannot develop these feelings, their resulting contributions will be of questionable value: "The understanding a person has

about the value and nature of his profession inevitably affects his understanding of the value and nature of his life" (Reimer 1989, p. 4).

In addition, music educators can turn to their philosophical foundations for appropriate solutions to problems when they arise. A responsible, well-tested philosophy enables teachers to react rationally and confidently to a situation rather than spontaneously and perhaps recklessly.

A philosophy supplies the most important and specific objectives of music education. As Reimer points out:

It is the function of a philosophy to provide broad objectives under which specific behaviors and behavior clusters can be chosen intelligently and influenced effectively. Without the synthesizing, directing force of a philosophy, education can only be indiscriminate and diffuse. Every aspect of the teaching and learning of music is similarly influenced by a philosophy. If problems of method, of program, of organization and administration, of evaluation, even of research are to be dealt with in ways which are relevant to the nature and value of music education, that nature and value must clearly be understood. A philosophy, then, provides the foundation on which the entire structure of music education rests. (1989, p. 11)

Problems in the organization and administration of a music program can be facilitated, accommodated, and guided by an individual's philosophy of music education. This philosophy is of the utmost benefit in decision-making. Decisions based on a philosophical foundation are made quickly, with ease and confidence.

A philosophy of music education should evolve from a variety of experiences and be in keeping with contemporary social philosophies. It should also be dedicated to the developmental growth of students and teachers alike. This philosophy must have survived the test of practice and time and be able to withstand current debate and examination. If a philosophical approach to music education is sound, it will stand up to close scrutiny.

A strong philosophy of music education is not totally acquired from academic investigation. It is also developed through classroom experience and administrative opportunities. It must be flexible to adjust to changing times; as situations change, certain characteristics of one's philosophical position will mature and adjust to the change. Music education philosophy is founded on mistakes as well as successes (Klotman 1973, p. 5).

The academic preparation for developing a philosophy of music education is of great importance, and as mentioned earlier, it is in somewhat of a state of neglect in institutions of higher learning. Work at the undergraduate level should build a foundation for philosophical principles and serve as the framework for the future "on-the-job" developmental processes.

## SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

Present-day philosophies relating to music education stem from traditional philosophies of education. Rightly or wrongly, this relationship has resulted from the lack

of any other basic source that can serve as a philosophical foundation for music education. Reimer, Schwadron, and Leonhard have all voiced a need to base music education philosophy on the study of aesthetics and aesthetic theories, and Reimer's book (1989) is a brilliant effort in that direction. Others voice the opinion, however, that music education philosophy is not just about the aesthetics of music and how people respond to it, but rather represents a series of tightly reasoned arguments for the need for teaching music (Jorgenson 1990, p. 18).

Most music education philosophies, therefore, are closely tied to traditional education philosophy. For that reason, a general presentation of traditional philosophy is included here. It is important for music educators to have some understanding of the philosophical evolution of their profession. In the following section, several educational philosophies are described, along with their application to education in general, and more specifically to music education.

## Idealism

An idealist believes that reality is governed by a permanent, uniform, and absolute spiritual mind. Physical objects are simply imperfect reflections of the ideas they represent. For example, the pencil an individual may have in hand is only an imperfect representation of the "ideal" pencil. Idealism does not greatly concentrate on ideals for living, but rather on ideas as the necessary elements of reality. Idealists feel that objects of the so-called external world exist only as ideas. For example, it is not so much that a tree or painting has reality, but it is an idea of a tree or painting that is conceived within the mind (Brown 1966, p.78).

**Strengths of idealism.** The greatest strength of idealism is its conscious, intellectual approach to reality, along with the stability of the philosophy. What is true is true, always was true, and always will be true. Idealism is more systematic and specific than other philosophies (Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman 1995, pp. 43-44).

**Weaknesses of idealism.** Although "what is true is true" according to idealism, it is difficult to arrive at what is "the" truth. Logic has proven to be a less precise philosophical tool than idealists like to admit. For example, people tend to make judgments according to personal values rather than on the basis of logical reasoning. Furthermore, idealists have difficulty accounting for new developments and changes.

**Idealism and education.** The process of education is very serious and very purposeful for the idealist. The idealist music teacher poses as both an inspiration and a model for student imitation. Thus the teacher's personality is very important, and a good teacher makes a conscious effort to develop himself or herself as a proper model for students. The idealist tends to teach aspects of music that are considered to be of

great and lasting worth. The *Messiah*, Beethoven's symphonies, Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, and the piano music of Brahms are all examples of music that would qualify for inclusion in a music curriculum based on idealism.

In Abraham Schwadron's (1967) words, "The idealist holds to the mutual companionship of mind and feelings, for true taste and aesthetic enjoyment require exposure, objective mastery, and finally understanding" (p. 19). The objective of an idealist education is to arouse an emotional response by means of exposure, followed by careful study of the characteristics of the music and the background of the composer. Exposure (hearing music) followed by study (learning about music) leads finally to understanding, which an idealist equates with aesthetic pleasure. Music's expression of meaning beyond itself is explained in the writings of idealist philosophers such as Susanne Langer and John Dewey, who argued that music aroused or expressed feelings without the need for words. One person may listen to a piece of music and find it sad; another may find the same piece pensive. This is not important. What is important, however, is that the music has expressed something to each.

The idealist teacher primarily uses the discussion method in the classroom setting and presents worthy models of creative work for student imitation, as well as stimulation of student interest and initiative. The idealist teacher has a strong interest in evaluating the level of student learning and is concerned that students gain a comprehensive understanding of classroom work and the ability to apply that knowledge. The capacity of the student to grasp the "big picture" of the material studied is also of great importance.

The idealist teacher sees discipline as a part of teaching, not as an end in itself but rather as a pattern of behavior that will eventually benefit the student. The idealist attempts to show students the effect of misconduct on the rest of the class. The teacher asks the misbehaving student what would happen if everyone behaved in a similar manner. Infractions of discipline are therefore seen as demonstrations of selfishness in ignoring the obligations to fellow class members and members of the community (Kneller 1964, p. 38).

## Realism

Realism is a belief in the reality of matter, independent of opinions and desires. When compared with idealism, the realist's position is more material and less spiritual. Realists feel that all physical things or objects are real in themselves and exist independently of the perceiver. For example, if there were no human perceivers, the objects would still exist and still be real. Plato felt that to understand an object or concept is to comprehend its form and structure. This is the basis for the theory that education should have a central core of subject matter that will help students experience the physical and cultural structure of the world in which they live. Realists

consider liberal education to be the focal point of all education. Liberal education refers to education that pertains to a wide range of subjects and activities, such as mathematics, science, literature, and the arts. The realist is interested in knowledge as it relates to all humanity (Glenn, McBride, and Wilson 1970, p. 30).

**Strengths of realism.** The principal strength of realism is practicality. Realists take what they have and work with it. They don't spend time wondering if a wall in front of them is "real," but they know if they bump into it, the result will be real. Realism deals with reality as it can best be known (Abeles, Hoffer, Klotman, 1995, p. 49).

**Weaknesses of realism.** The practicality that is the primary strength of realism is also one of its weaknesses. Knowledge of reality as perceived through the senses is subject to error. Realism relies on the opinion of experts, and this creates the problem of who should decide, and what will happen if the experts disagree. A case in point is that there is much disagreement in music education. Determining the correct embouchure, the best way to teach rhythm, the value of music contests, the problems surrounding the inclusion of jazz or multicultural studies in college curriculums, and the content of music theory courses are all widely debated by educators.

**Realism and education.** To the realist, ordered and organized forms are similar to mathematical relationships; thus musical works of profound structure and design qualify as artistic products. Pedagogically the study of construction precedes the emotional dimension of a musical work. The realist feels that playing an instrument is important for the development of mature appreciation and cultural taste.

Realists believe in teaching what the authorities in an academic discipline feel is worth knowing, and they place a great deal of emphasis on direct experience, such as actually singing a song rather than talking or reading about it. The realist teacher likes the objectivity of the scientific method and uses an objective approach to learning. Realists tend to see students objectively or impersonally, and they are not concerned with personality or character development. They are primarily interested in the acquisition of specific information and skills considered necessary to function in society. For example, a piano teacher might have a student learn all the Beethoven concertos because they are seen as essential repertoire for successful concert pianists.

Realists have no respect for the "inspirational value" of history because history is something to be viewed objectively. They favor the "whatever works" policy as an objective means of transmitting knowledge to students. Realists see lecturing and reading as part of the learning process and are quick to include computers and individualized instruction methods in the classroom approach. These teachers see themselves as central to the educational process. If they cannot provide a given piece of information, they will tell the students where to find it.

Realists tend to be impatient with distracting behavior. They feel that "life is too short for fooling around." The realist teacher feels that children should be taught to live by absolute moral standards. Acquiring good habits is essential because virtue does not come automatically; it must be learned (Abeles et al. 1995, p. 49). The idea of accepting what can be known and working with that knowledge as best one can seems defensible, practical, and reasonable.

## Pragmatism

Dating back to the sixth century BC, pragmatism did not come into its own until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and then it flourished primarily in the United States. It is, therefore, a philosophy generally regarded as being indigenous to the United States, although it is deeply rooted in the British tradition of "we know what we experience." Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey were leading exponents of the pragmatic point of view. Pragmatism is concerned with questions of practical usefulness. Pragmatists feel, for example, that ideas, beliefs, and attitudes are important, particularly for their formation and functioning in social interaction. Thus pragmatism assumes that the principal function of knowledge is to guide action.

Pragmatists uphold the value of examining particulars in order to see how those particulars might work in practice. They feel that all things are in a state of flux, creating a need for experimentation. Dewey proposed five steps of thinking: activity, awareness of the problem, observation of the data, formulation of a hypothesis, and testing of the hypothesis. This scientific method of gaining knowledge is the basis of pragmatic philosophical thought. Pragmatists believe that the only knowledge that really matters results from successful testing of hypotheses.

Pragmatists greatly emphasize education and feel that the function of the school is not merely to prepare students for life, but also to provide a suitable environment for actual experiences.

**Strengths of pragmatism.** One of the great strengths of pragmatism is the dedication to the process of uncovering the truth and determining reality through the application of the scientific method. Pragmatism is not burdened with the problem of "who is the expert." The scientific method satisfies that question. The process, not persons, determines the truth, and the meaning of an idea resulting from that process lies in its consequences after it has been put into operation.

**Weaknesses of pragmatism.** Perhaps the greatest weakness of pragmatic thought is its devotion to a relatively simple means of determining truth. Pragmatism tends to work well in small, controlled situations, but many questions in life are too large and unwieldy to withstand experimental examination. Unfortunately, the scientific

method cannot answer questions of value any better than can logical thinking. Pragmatism provides information that can be useful in making decisions, but pragmatism cannot distinguish which is the right decision. Without lasting values and goals, teachers have little guidance as to what should be taught (Abeles et al. 1995, p. 50).

**Pragmatism and education.** Pragmatists tend to place a great deal of importance on learning how to acquire skills and gather information. Because what needs to be learned is always changing, the pragmatic educational emphasis is on the process rather than the product. A music educator following this philosophy would teach students how to sing or play an instrument but not emphasize a specific repertoire; if students know how to do something, they can adapt to the specific, individual needs (i.e., perform specific pieces) that they might encounter as musicians. “Pragmatism views teachers as agents who impart to the young techniques for living, and acquiring knowledge” (Abeles et al. 1995, p. 58).

The pragmatic teacher is interested in the nonmusical result of music study. He or she feels, for example, that it’s acceptable if music study contributes to improved student citizenship and health, even if that’s not a part of the subject matter. The pragmatist provides classroom opportunities for social interaction and believes that group work is an important ingredient in the teaching approach. That same teacher wants the facts presented in class to be useful to the student. Pragmatist teachers want their students to be active in the classroom rather than merely passive listeners. Those same teachers are constantly alert to the need for change and are ready to adapt to new situations as they arise.

The pragmatist teacher is less interested in evaluation than is the idealist or realist. This teacher is not so much concerned with the content that has been learned, but rather how the material was learned. The strict conventional idea of discipline is not of great importance to pragmatist teachers, but unusual disruptive behavior is not tolerated. To the pragmatist, the results of the learning experience assume the greatest importance. For this reason, pragmatists have at times been accused of being too lenient in structuring music classroom activities. Pragmatist music teachers feel that music education is not a product taken home after leaving school, but rather a process that goes on partly in school and partly in all informed social communications and liaisons occurring throughout a lifetime.

### Experimentalism/Instrumentalism

Experimentalism, formerly known as instrumentalism, stems from the writing and work of John Dewey and is characteristically twentieth-century American in origin. The experimental philosophy is closely related to pragmatism in that experimentalists believe in learning by doing and in the importance of direct experience.

The experimentalist wants an active school with active learners. Experimentalist teachers have the responsibility to organize, select, and direct learning activities

toward meaningful goals, but they also feel that they must arouse student interest, so that students are led to knowledge that will help them deal with the problems of life. These teachers stress thinking through problems rather than memorizing meaningless answers and feel that human relationships are developed in a democratic classroom atmosphere. A variation of this philosophy has been used for many years in an attempt to justify music programs in public schools; music education, it has been argued, benefits students in ways that are essentially unrelated to music. Phrases such as music education “contributes to better health,” “develops wholesome conduct and good citizenship,” and “promotes good work habits” are examples of statements often offered in support of music education. Such declarations “may convince some reluctant administrator to more fully support the music education program, but those values can’t stand close scrutiny because they are not directly related to music and not unique to music. In fact, many other areas of the curriculum are in a position to make a more powerful contribution to these values than is music” (Leonhard 1965, p. 59). Bennett Reimer cited the writings of Susanne Langer and John Dewey when he challenged educators to put aside their nonmusical objectives and look to aesthetic qualities for a foundation on which to build a philosophy of music education (Reimer 1959, pp. 29–32).

## AESTHETICS AND MUSIC EDUCATION

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that there are those who feel that a new and comprehensive philosophy of music education must relate to the study of aesthetics and to aesthetic theories. The purpose of this section is to clarify the meaning of “aesthetics,” what is meant by “aesthetic experience,” and what constitutes “aesthetic education.”

### Aesthetics

The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines *musical aesthetics* as the study of the relationship of music to the human senses and intellect. Schwadron (1966) interpreted aesthetics as the “philosophy or study of the beautiful, resulting in the establishment of criteria which help one to determine whether or why one particular composition is beautiful while another is not” (p. 187).

### Aesthetic experience

According to Reimer, an aesthetic experience includes some level of involvement with expressive qualities rather than simply with symbolic designations. He believed that an example of how this “aesthetic attitude” is cultivated are the elaborate steps taken to create an encouraging atmosphere in concert halls, theaters, and

museums: in other words, providing a setting that makes people receptive to an aesthetic experience (Reimer 1989, p. 103).

Charles Leonhard and Robert W. House felt that the aesthetic experience can be any that has qualities of both undergoing and doing, and involves a balance between struggle and fulfillment. They pointed out that ordinary experiences have two components: the practical and the intellectual. The authors used the following example to make their point. A farmer who transforms uncultivated land into a field undergoes a practical experience. At the same time, the experience involves an intellectual process. The farmer determines the need for a crop and reflects on how to best clear and plow the field, then uses his knowledge, based on years of farming experience, concerning climate, soil, and the market to determine which crop to plant and when to plant it. Leonhard and House (1972) concluded: "He is conscious of the results of his efforts, can conceive of the finished product and anticipates the consummation of his experience. These constitute the aesthetic element of his experience. . . . An experience is aesthetic when resistance, tension, excitement and emotion are transformed into a movement toward fulfillment and completion" (p. 93).

In the simplest terms, an aesthetic experience can also be expressed as "an individual's response to something beautiful." The key word here is *individual's*. What could be an aesthetic experience for one person may be something entirely different for another. Reimer (1989) used the analogy of four people viewing the same scene from a lookout point along a mountain road. All look at the same scene, but each one perceives something different and reacts accordingly. The first viewer, a geologist from a nearby university, notes the interesting examples of glacial movement and wonders if she should bring her graduate seminar class to the location to view the scene. The second person, a farmer (undoubtedly the one who just cultivated the previously unbroken land), looks at the field below, worries about the lack of moisture, and decides to raise chickens instead of farming. The third viewer, a clergyman, is awed by the grandeur of the scene, and because he sees this as an instance of divine creation, begins to recite a prayer. The fourth person to view the scene is a music educator. Reimer, with tongue somewhat in cheek, describes the probable reaction:

The music educator (aesthetic to the core) perceives the interplay of colors, of shapes, of the texture of the clear sky against the roughness of forest and sparkle of water, of the mass of mountains against the horizon, framing the entire valley. The perceived aesthetic qualities of the scene are enjoyed for their intrinsic loveliness. The scene is felt to be beautiful—to give a sense of pleasure, of significance, of immediately present import. "How lovely," he thinks. And in wordless absorption he "loses himself" in the qualities presented to his vision. His experience is aesthetic. (p. 105)

Individuals bring different backgrounds and points of reference to the same experience and will most naturally react in varied and somewhat unpredictable man-

ners. How boring it would be to exist in a world where everyone reacted in a similar manner to parallel experiences or sets of circumstances.

### Aesthetic education

An aesthetic experience is not founded on universal material responses, but rather is developed in abstract fashion through education. In music, if the aesthetic experience occurs as an interaction between the listener and the musical work, the resulting experience depends largely on the preparation of the listener to perceive the aesthetic, as well as the capability of the object (or piece of music) to produce the aesthetic. It is in the cultivation of attitudes and the application to the learning process of the experiences that occur through contact with aesthetic objects that education makes its contribution. "The purpose of aesthetic education is to develop the ability of people to perceive the embodied, expressive quality of things and to react to the intrinsic significance of those qualities" (Reimer 1989, p. 106).

## BUILDING A PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Four traditional philosophies of education have been explored in this chapter, along with their respective implications for music education. It is tempting to consider taking the best points of each view and combining them into the "perfect" philosophy: an eclectic one. Some philosophers caution against this practice and suggest rather that music educators explore in-depth each philosophy to find the one that comes closest to their actual beliefs and classroom practices. Teachers are then encouraged to build from that accepted philosophic viewpoint and adopt the entire doctrine as theirs, thus creating teaching techniques and a classroom environment based on that philosophy. These philosophers urge this course of action, because in times of trouble or program justification it is difficult, if not impossible, to fall back on a philosophy developed eclectically. They believe that a single, educationally sound philosophy is a far more practical and defensible approach for teachers to follow in developing an individual philosophy of music education.

Undergraduate courses can provide students with only a basic foundation on which to build a philosophy of music education. The first few years of new music educators' professional lives are spent experimenting with and sorting out the multitude of methods and teaching procedures presented to them as college or university undergraduate music students. They will retain the practices that work for them and discard those that don't; thus each will formulate a personal philosophy of music education. Perhaps the least desirable course of action a music educator could take would be to select a particular philosophical approach to teaching in advance of classroom involvement and then attempt to become that type of teacher

without the benefit of the actual teaching experience. If the foundation is properly and carefully laid at the undergraduate level, the prospective music educator will find many options available to build a philosophy of music education based on experience as well as theory.

There are some educational philosophers who believe it is perfectly legitimate and logical to build a single philosophy based on the exploration of several. As Kneller (1964) stated, "This is the way of the eclectic, and it is a reasonable first step toward the building of a systematic philosophy of education" (p. 127). Some music educators and prospective music educators will be attracted in different ways by all forms of the traditional philosophies presented in this chapter. If one is to develop an eclectic philosophy, however, caution must be exercised to ensure that each element selected is related logically to the rest. Kneller feels that all philosophies start eclectically. Each reader will have to begin by selecting from the philosophies he or she has read and, based on life's experiences, draw upon those ideals that best represent the reader's own thoughts and feelings.

Whichever method is used to build a philosophy of music education, it is necessary as well to consider building from the aesthetic theory approach discussed earlier in this chapter. Music educators need to examine their philosophical lives to determine (1) what purpose they have in life, (2) what it is they value most highly, (3) what they consider to be worthwhile knowledge, and (4) whether or not they really "love" children. Whatever the outcome, this self-analysis cannot help but be beneficial. In any walk of life, individuals must have philosophies of their own to understand where they are going. If music teachers or their administrators cannot develop philosophies of education, students will have no alternative but to follow aimlessly or put youth's important questions to someone else (Kneller 1964, p. 128).

## MUSIC IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Through the development of a personal philosophy of music education, music educators are in an authoritative position to examine the place of music in the curriculum of today's schools. When asked as part of a job application process to articulate, either verbally or in writing, their philosophy of music education, music educators must necessarily respond with what they believe is the place of music in the school curriculum. This response can be carefully shaped by one's personal philosophy, regardless of that philosophy's stage of development. School administrators are not so much concerned with whether a prospective teacher relates to the realistic or pragmatic schools of philosophical thought, for example, but rather how the teacher views the role of music education in that particular school system. From a historic standpoint, as early as 1959, at a joint meeting with the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the American Association of School Administrators passed a resolution that stated:

We believe in a well-balanced school curriculum in which music . . . and the like are included side by side with other important subjects such as mathematics, history and science. It is important that pupils, as a part of general education, learn to appreciate, to understand, to create, and to criticize with discrimination those products of the mind, the voice, the hand, and the body which give dignity to the person and exalt the spirit of man. (Korvall 1966, p. 195)

Three decades later, both houses of Congress passed the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act." For the first time in the history of this country, the arts have been included among the various educational disciplines in which every young American should be able to demonstrate competence. MENC established a task force to develop criteria through which competency could be assessed in music education. The resulting work of that task force was published in the form of the National Standards for Arts Education. The national standards that relate directly to music education appear in the MENC publication *The School Music Program: A New Vision*. This publication presents nine national voluntary standards in music for grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. They are

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

These standards are designed to reflect a national consensus concerning the highest-priority skills and knowledge young people should have acquired on exiting grades four, eight, and twelve. They apply to every student through grade eight and to every student enrolled in music beyond grade eight. Although music instruction in school is important in the development of those students who are talented in music, its primary purpose is to improve the quality of life for all students by developing their capacities to participate fully in their musical culture (MENC 1994, p. 2).

The national standards for music must necessarily influence the vision of music educators as to what their students should be learning in the classes and rehearsals under their supervision. Will this vision affect one's philosophy of music education?

Undoubtedly and justifiably so. Figure 14.1 is an example of a response that could be presented to school administrators concerning the role of music education in the school's curriculum, based on the National Standards for Music Education.

Figure 14.1. *Statement of the role of music education in the curriculum*

The music education program in the curriculum of today's schools should provide every student with the opportunity to develop intellectual, technical, aesthetic, and social goals. These goals represent a basic minimum for performers and nonperformers alike. The school should attempt to achieve as much depth and understanding in these skills as the resources of the school and community will permit.

**Intellectual.** Students should possess an awareness of the logical organization of musical works and develop the ability to listen attentively and follow with understanding their performance. The ability should be developed to appreciate good standards of musical performance and to value such artistic principles as unity and coherence, variety and contrast, and structural balance and architecture.

**Technical.** Students should be able to use the singing voice as a means of self-expression and develop the ability to make music on instruments, either in exploration or as part of in-depth study. Students should be able to read musical notation and use that ability to participate in group and community singing. Children of all ages should be given many opportunities to explore music through composition.

**Aesthetic.** Students should develop a sharpened sense of beauty in sound through the development of musical listening abilities, so that musical listening experiences can be meaningful, creative, aesthetically significant, and satisfying. Students should be provided the opportunity to develop an awareness of their musical heritage relating directly to human aesthetic history and theories. Student consciousness should be encouraged concerning the level of aesthetic and cultural values present in their own communities.

**Social.** A sense of belonging should be achieved by student participants, as well as a feeling of identification through association with successful performance groups. The social qualities of music need to be recognized. Both listening to and making music lead to enjoyable associations with people of like interests. Students also need to become aware of the contributions that artists have made to their own cultural enjoyment.

The statement of the place of music education in today's schools given in Figure 14.1 results from the process of philosophy of music education development and is offered as a model approach to music education curriculum.

Developing a philosophy is a demanding, yet necessary, process that frees the teacher's imagination and allows the mind to be applied systematically to issues of importance. Kneller summed up the process this way: "An educator who does not use philosophy is inevitably superficial. A superficial educator may be good or bad—but, if good, less good than he could be, and if bad, worse than he need be" (Kneller 1964, p. 128).

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Carefully examine the suggested program in the curriculum of today's schools given in Figure 14.1. Briefly list the suggested requirements that support each goal and determine which traditional philosophy is compatible with each particular requirement and why.
2. How can you justify including music in a high school curriculum? Draft a statement that would convince a school principal and parents.
3. Select two secondary school or college music teachers you remember well and sketch their philosophic orientation according to classroom techniques and attitudes toward music and music students.
4. Think about music education as you know it in the last ten years. How do you feel it has improved? How has it failed? Make a comprehensive list of improvements and failings.
5. List the ways in which your education has been most successful to this point and why. In what respect has it been less than successful and perhaps even frustrating?
6. Recall and describe in writing a learning experience that involved an aesthetic experience.
7. Discuss in writing the differences and resulting causes and effects of musical athletics and music aesthetics.
8. In 200 words or less, respond in writing to the question "What is aesthetic education?"
9. Write a five-minute speech to be presented to a general meeting of parents and staff regarding what you do as a music educator, why you do it, and why the program is important to the school, and more specifically, to the student participants.