Music Education for Changing Times

Landscapes: the Arts, Aesthetics, and Education

VOLUME 7

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Music Education for Changing Times

Guiding Visions for Practice

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Preface

Welcome to a book about the practice of teaching music and the collective range of practices—methods, routines, processes, procedures, habits, customs, paradigms, traditions, models, etc.—that music education practice in general typically accepts uncritically as valid and valuable.

Individual teachers are too often unaware that their own teaching practice is strongly rooted in that collective practice. Their formative experiences as music students, for example, often lead to uncritical acceptance of the practices of their music teachers. As music education students, they are subject to the strong socializing influences of their music and music education professors and, later, by their cooperating teachers, and by formal and informal mentors and models during their beginning years of teaching. Of course, all these figures were themselves influenced by their experiences with music education as a social practice and institution. Thus, while society, music, and schools are undergoing rapid and often major changes, music education in schools continues largely in the well-worn paths inherited from the past.

The book is predicated on a short document called *Action for Change in Music Education* (see pp. xxxi–xxxvii) that "critically" challenges taken-for-granted, personal, collective, or institutionally accepted practice in music education. Thus, it accepts the premise that there are good and sufficient reasons to believe that serious problems exist in the taken-for-granted practices of music education today—problems that prevent it from fulfilling its promised contributions to the musical lives of all students and to the "music world" outside of schools that is central to society and culture. This failure of music education practice to tangibly fulfill its lofty claims is in large part a source of progressive challenges to the very existence of "school music."

The "critique" of Action for Change is best compared to the evaluation given in the best of music lessons; the intention is constructive not negative. Without a clear recognition that present "practicing" falls short of more appropriate musical results, music students just continue with the same (or ever-new) weaknesses—indeed, they're usually even satisfied with their current results. And the same holds for a music teacher whose teaching is uninformed by awareness of more appropriate educational possibilities and practices, and thus who exhibits various weaknesses—despite being self-satisfied with results. Action for Change, then, critiques current

practice by promoting alternatives for guiding music teaching practice in more effective directions and ways.

Action for Change does this by stating seven brief propositions and related questions that are intended to begin the ongoing process of identifying major issues music teachers need to analyze and consider mindfully. However, unlike the typical music lesson where the student usually gets only one "critical" perspective, Action for Change encourages—actually anticipates and welcomes—a variety of points of view, even critiques of its perspective. The present book aims in effect, then, to present a colloquium of "critical" views of current music education practice that demonstrates the richness of analysis and diagnosis that careful consideration of each issue can promote.

The practices that characterize a particular teacher's everyday teaching and those that collectively characterize music education in general, being habits typically inherited uncritically from others, are employed more or less mindlessly. Many of our daily habits are performed more mindlessly than others, and teaching is no exception. In part, then, this book is intended to promote, even provoke, a greater degree and depth of reflection about the field of music education and the musical and sociocultural and educational needs of students than uncritical, "accepted practice" typically involves or allows.

Social Practices

In social theory, a social practice (as opposed to a personal habit) is a collection of customs shared by a particular group that, through that group, makes a contribution to society and culture. "Practice," in this collective sense, then, describes social customs and social institutions that have come into being precisely because of the societal needs or "goods" they serve. Schooling, religion, government, science, sports, language, art, just to mention a few, are all social practices. However, each instance of a social practice takes unique form (for example, the practices of this school, this religion, this sport, this science, this art form, etc.) while still sharing some identity with the larger, shared community of practice.

Music is a social practice and its contribution to society and culture is unquestionable. However, the word "music" only identifies the social practice as an abstract noun. "In practice" (or "as practiced"), then, music is not a thing-in-itself, not even a single or uniform practice: It is actually a collection of "musics," and each is a distinct practice, however closely it may be linked with other musics within the community of practices grouped under the abstract heading of "music."

Typically, then, any practice consists of a network of practices that have some relation to others in the community of practice, the network; for example, musics that nonetheless share certain similarities of purpose, process, and so on—though experts may argue about these. Similarly, music education is a practice within the "music world" and within the larger practice of schooling (and schooling itself is but one subcomponent of education, a larger social practice that involves the family, community, religion, culture, society, ethnicity, etc.). And, like music, music

education is actually a collection of specialized practices. Unfortunately, some of these take on lives of their own, like band, chorus, and orchestra do when the practice is undertaken for its own sake (that is, as “school music”) rather than as part of the larger practices of schooling and music education and their promised contributions to society and culture.

Practice, Theory, and Research

Practice, too, is inherently connected with theory—although the connection is not always explicit or even recognized (or appreciated) by some practitioners. That some practices come into existence at all depends in part on certain theorized values that the practice is needed, makes a social contribution (for example, schooling, formal music education).

Other practices arise in connection with problems or needs that are clearly practical to begin with, for example, farming. Most practices evolve on the basis of research and theoretical advances or changes. Thus farming, as with the practice of medicine, is regularly informed by new developments in our rapidly changing world. And ever-new needs in turn fuel new research and theorizing for a practice. Practices change, then, and become living traditions as a result of their continued vitality and usefulness; or they die, and disappear altogether (for example, dueling), or become only ritualistically or minimally observed but not honored or advanced. That music education may be at such a crossroad is a concern of each author in this book!

Any social practice gains vitality and becomes more influential in society (or for practitioners if they participate for their own sake, as with certain hobbies) as it is participated in by or successfully serves others. Just being involved in a practice, however, does not entail being well served by its present theories and supposed values. In particular, the current practices and theories of schooling and music education do not always or unequivocally serve students’ educational and musical needs or the needs of a democratic society. For example, the ability to think for oneself, central to a democracy, is not well served by any kind or degree of autocratic teaching; and, without question, much traditional music education practice is autocratic, even dictatorial. The criterion of “serving others,” thus, is not always simple or clear.

Praxis as Action

This raises the idea of praxis, as understood in philosophy and social theory. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, praxis has referred to action(s) undertaken to serve the needs of others. However, praxis involves people (not, for example, things) and because people and their needs are unique, no single or “common practice” (common praxis) is possible. In fact, though “praxis” is sometimes used interchangeably with “practice” (for example, “medical practice”), a distinction should be observed when human needs are at stake and where, therefore, ethical criteria of care (that is, the carefulness of actions) are required. In such situations, praxis is at stake, by whatever name.

Good actions (that is, good results), in the ethical, praxial sense, can be judged only in terms of those served. The "goodness" of the practitioner's actions, thus, is not predecided, predetermined, a matter of tradition, habit, or of taken-for-granted, hand-me-down assumptions or methods. "Goodness" (that is, success) depends, first, on the diagnosis of individual needs and variables and, then, of reflecting on how satisfactory results are for those served. When results are not "good" (that is, "good for" those affected), re-diagnosis, adaptive action (praxis), and further reflection on the subsequent results are required.

One implication of this praxial interpretation of social practices such as teaching and music education is that the ethic of careful action (that is, diagnosis and reflection) leads to professionalizing the practice rather than equating it with craft-like, prescriptive, or recipe-like formulae that presume to treat everyone with one-size-fits-all methods; that assume all teaching situations are more alike than different; and that are too easily satisfied with the supposed "good delivery" of lessons, and not with appropriate attention to the quality of results for individual students. Where "good delivery" is equated simply with a smoothly running lesson plan (explicit or tacit), it is all too easy to overlook whether anything was learned, or whether what was learned was worthwhile (pragmatic) and lasting.

In modern philosophy and social theory, praxis also is understood as creative action (even sometimes as "corrective action")—not as merely re-creative, as in executing a recipe, or following a formula or "method." In this sense, praxis—action undertaken by and for individuals and groups—is creative in the sense that every instance of action (praxis) is seen as a new and unique situation (or solution), no matter how similar it might only seem to past occasions. Thus, an instance of praxis always creates new results that are uniquely satisfactory because present needs are unique and can never be properly served simply by replicating habits of the past. Such effectiveness, however, is not an all-or-nothing matter: effectiveness or goodness in human affairs is always complicated, equivocal, and relative to the tangible needs, criteria, and constraints of the moment.

Among other virtues of conceiving teaching in praxial and thus creative terms, then, is that, like an artist, present actions always motivate more "practice" in search of ever-more satisfactory—that is, creatively successful—results. Conceived praxially, teaching practice and the practice of music education in general are viewed creatively—as literally involving a never-ending, never-repeated (in the exact particulars) series of problems, situations, or needs that, as a result, always require new and thus creative solutions—solutions that are never final because they can never be fully satisfactory.

Praxis and Praxial Knowledge

Past solutions at most become among the potential bases (that is, theoretical premises) called upon to serve future, creative actions.

However, they are not sufficient. Even over the short term, "things change"—in the present case, notably our schools, our students, society, and the "music

world" outside of school. And, especially over the longer term, changes occur in the research and theory available to support, in our case, the practice of teaching music. Unfortunately, however, teachers often complain about theory! Nonetheless, practice is impossible without some theoretical supports. Hence, all teachers, and music teachers among them, have personal but usually tacit theories of, for example, human nature, society, culture, schooling, learning, and so on. These theories too often remain unexamined. If challenged, then, teachers can feel attacked, in part because they can validate their theory only with "I believe" or by claims that "it works"—where "works" remains unanalyzed or without defensible criteria.

One of the advantages, then, of the praxial approach taken in general by authors in this collection of essays is that when the ethical and creative criteria of praxis, informed by relevant theory, are kept in mind as premises of teaching practice, praxial knowledge (practical knowledge) is created by teaching actions that progressively inform and thus change each teacher's teaching theory and practice. This praxial knowledge is in the spirit of action research because of the tangibility and pragmatism of consequences that are at stake for students in a particular teaching situation. Over time, then, students are actually more musically capable, enriched, and involved than when they entered school, and carry their music education with them into life, society, and culture.

Default Settings and Action Ideals

Although, as was acknowledged earlier, "practice" is sometimes used as a synonym for "praxis," (and, especially "practices" instead of "praxes"), the ordinary meaning of "practice" does not capture the good action and creative action senses of "praxis." In its ordinary use, then, the term can be used to refer approvingly to what might be called mindless habits, rather than mindful ones. The authors included in this book may use various terms but are unified in seeking to inspire music teachers to replace mindless teaching with a more fully mindful teaching practice (that is, as praxis).

Viewed pragmatically, habits can be compared to the default settings of computer software. Users who can customize those settings, instead of relying blindly or solely on factory-installed or inherited settings, can maximize results. Otherwise, they are at the mercy of default settings—built-in habits—that can interfere with intended results. Those altogether unaware that default settings exist are even worse off.

They can be compared to practitioners, in our case music teachers, who don't even realize that their teaching is affected by unknown and uncritically accepted default settings—outdated or dysfunctional "software"—and the negative effect those settings can have on the teaching and learning process and results.

One way toward a greater awareness of the dysfunctional default settings of much teaching practice is through the corrective guidance and creative inspiration provided by action ideals. No reasonable person expects default settings in regard to

such ideals as a good marriage, a good life, a good musical performance, good parenting, being a good friend, and the like. These "goods," in contrast, all represent examples of action ideals. Abstract concepts, such as democracy, freedom, and human rights, are also typically expressed as action ideals.

Action ideals are generally intended to motivate and guide thinking and thus to regulate action in the direction of certain values and practices—for example, practices of good parenting or good health, or freedom and democracy —and away from others (thus, they are sometimes also called "guiding" or "regulative" ideals). No reasonable person thinks that the kinds of "goods" pointed to by action ideals—good health, democracy, good marriage (etc.)—are states of definable perfection incapable of further improvement and refinement, or that seeking such ideals is futile, idealistic, or utopian.

However, action ideals are stated in emphatic terms, as a doctor does, for example, in expressing changes needed for a patient's improved health ("you should get more exercise and avoid cholesterol in your diet") or as a music teacher would in the critique that will guide next weeks' practicing ("this passage is marked legato not staccato, and works better musically as one phrase, not two"). Thus, action ideals point to (or point out) more creative and satisfactory ends-in-view and, in so doing, identify and critique taken-for-granted and problematic practices that stand in the way of more creative and valuable "goods," for example, lax parenting, poor health habits, mistaken musical performance decisions, and (in this book) problems with current music education practice.

Action ideals promote no final state or single example of perfection; rather, in consideration of individual circumstances and particulars, action ideals unavoidably change things. They also lead to different results, different kinds and degrees of creative benefits or improvements or values. Thus, the action ideal of good health means one thing if you're 80 and another if you're 8; and democracy takes different forms in different democracies. The inevitability of changing conditions and needs makes action ideals dynamic not dogmatic, tangibly pragmatic not preachy, creative not craft-like copying. Thus, good marriage and good parenting take constant and creative practice and are infinitely variable.

Good health for music education practice, too, is infinitely variable. Like good parenting or good marriage, it demands constant and creative practice according to changing needs, circumstances, conditions, and theories.

The position taken in this book, then, is that music teachers need to become aware of dysfunctional practices and be motivated in new, creative directions—to start with, by considering the action ideals discussed here. Each scholar addresses aspects of, even interrogates, the ideal in question from a unique perspective, thereby demonstrating the wide-ranging nature of analysis that each ideal offers or provokes. These are offered for the reader's consideration, particularly in regard to becoming aware of the problems of the unrecognized, tacit, or taken-for-granted default settings that complicate contemporary music teaching practice in a changing world, and with a view to getting the reader started on gaining control over the teaching habits (default settings) that need to be mindfully adopted and always under the teacher's vigilant control.

The unifying concern of this agenda of action ideals is the need for creative change if school music is to survive—if it is, in other words, to fulfill its promised contribution to advancing the musical choices and capabilities of students and, thus, of directly influencing the music world at large in democratic society in effective and thus notable ways. Taken together, the seven ideals also form a cohesive whole, a logical progression that begins with a consideration of the nature of music and musicianship and culminates in the implications of each of the ideals for curriculum.

This sequence is not, however, a step-by-step plan for teaching that one follows like the "seven ways to beat stress." The authors intend to discourage such recipe-like teaching or thinking and to replace it by more mindful and reflective practice that is as adjusted to the particular teaching situation as a doctor's diagnosis is to the unique needs of each patient. Thus, the ideals of Action for Change are intended to help the reader recognize and be concerned with the existence and problems of uncritically accepting default settings in music education practice, and to use the action ideals, and their elaboration by leading scholars, as bases for "customizing" their own default settings.

The editors wish to thank Estelle Jorgensen whose prompting led to the idea of this project to begin with, and who later provided feedback and suggestions about the form it might best take. Obviously, without the efforts of the authors and their cooperation at various stages of the project, we would have no project to offer. In particular, thanks are due to Richard Colwell and Graham Welch for their guidance at the latter stages of the project.

Helsinki, Finland Thomas A. Regelski

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Introduction: Grounding Music Education in Changing Times

J. Terry Gates

The purpose of this book is to present and explore seven ideals for practice in music education. Following this introductory chapter, you'll find two essays related to each of the seven ideals that extend, clarify, challenge, embellish, or otherwise treat each one critically.[1] Making these seven ideals come alive in practice will empower music teachers and students, and as a result, music education can be better. However, taking concrete action—even action that could make things better—without thinking about the roots and the consequences of alternative actions is antithetical to the point of view illustrated in this book.

Some question the need for change in practice. In some places, there are some disturbing indicators of a need for change, however. In the United States, for example, enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools rose 22% between 1985 and 2004, but the number of teachers rose 27% in that same period. In contrast with these upward trends, music staffing percentages dropped. In 1996, 4.2% of teachers were in music education; by 2001, that percentage shrank to 2.9% (NCES 2003: Table 69). Other countries, notably the United Kingdom, report improvements in staffing support for music teachers and a growing together of music teachers and community music leaders (Swanwick 2008).

In addition, music teachers have been reluctant to confront the issue of what we can learn from valid and reliable assessments of musical knowledge and skills. We need to lead the creation of good measures of musical skills and knowledge, and embrace them. We must, however, continue both to challenge weak assessments and also to be challenged by weak results from good assessments, as teachers in other fields do.[2]

We need a change. As the business adage goes: "If you do what you always did, you'll get what you always got." Shrinking percentages of music teachers in some countries and poorly assessed musical expertise are what we're getting, and no one wants that to continue.

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The first step toward change is to critically review our own practices, and accept current instruction as problematic. In that way, we can begin to identify alternatives to our own accepted but unexamined habits, including the habits we have collectively accepted as "standard" professional practice. This is the work of this book.

In these pages, you'll hear the voices of people who think and care deeply enough about music teaching and learning to criticize it. They are trying to improve it. By problematizing music education practice, guided by considerations such as the seven action ideals we take up here, music educators can reflect more clearly on their teaching and the results that they can verify in their students' musical knowledge and skills. This book means to spark thought and initiate dialogue, not to present some unified view about what should be done. Its chapters present examples of theorizing around the seven issues raised in *Action for Change* (MayDay Group 1997), reprinted in the next section (pp. xxxi–xxxvii), and we invite and expect critical exchanges about such matters.

How These Action Ideals Came About

If we get the topics right, a fruitful dialogue can follow. Too many discussions of music education purposes have been sacrificed on the twin altars of localized professional politics and wasteful flights of quasi-philosophical fashion. *Action for Change* was conceived as a set of orientations for *thinking about* music teaching practice—an attempt to get the topics right. Although the action ideals in *Action for Change* are stated emphatically and authoritatively, they are *not* foundations in the usual sense—as "truths" to be accepted as fact—but are frameworks for building rationales for sound practice.

The action ideals are stated in strong language in order to provoke discussion. The people who drafted the action ideals wanted to force openings in the wall between instruction in music and the influences that shape it, both from without and within the profession. We wanted to find a logical and sufficient set of topics for the purpose of integrating music education with its context—to view music education ecologically both as an integral contributor to and as a beneficiary of broad settings for music teaching and learning, rather than to look at music teaching technically, methodologically, or through any other single lens.

Early drafts of *Action for Change* emerged from The MayDay Group's wide-ranging talks in Buffalo and Toronto in 1993 and 1994. The document was refined by e-mail with members and finalized in Boston in May 1996. After further refinement, members from five countries endorsed the Boston draft reprinted here on pp. xxxi–xxxvii as a multifaceted orientation for subsequently thinking about key issues facing music education and for discussing its theoretical implications. The seven ideals formed the colloquium topics of The MayDay Group from 1998 to 2004. See the MayDay Group web site for more (www.maydaygroup.org).

These ideals frankly are designed to challenge the status quo. They address values from which issues can be defined, discussed, and analyzed, and then converted to

appropriate action in each teacher's program. In our colloquiums, we have engaged nearly 50 prepared presentations of views related to the seven ideals, many of which challenged the assumptions reflected in the ideal itself. You will see such challenges in this book, illustrating in print the kind of critique-dominated engagement with ideas and with each other that characterized MayDay Group discussions throughout the past dozen years, and that continue to characterize our work today.

Why Things Got This Way: Entropy and Three Faces of Time

From physics, we can borrow the notion of entropy as a suitable metaphor for one aspect of how a once-good practice changes. Consider ice in a glass of cola. At the beginning, the contrast between the warm cola and the cold ice is worthy of attention—the cola fizzes and foams, the ice crackles. Quickly, the cola becomes "drinkable." It isn't long, however, before the ice melts, the cola becomes watered down, and the result is not the refreshing beverage it was when it was first poured.

Something like that happens over time in any once-laudable practice. The motivations and the energizing forces that created the practice dissipate. The purposes that gave direction to the practice are lost because the problem for which the practice was a solution disappears. If the practice continues in some form, it takes on the watered-down quality that social entropy can produce in any tradition that does not change with its times.

Entropy in music teaching happens over time—again, like ice melting in a cola. And time provides some other explanatory metaphors: (1) *Changing times*: New collective experience in society explains why our teaching must change—grow and "morph"—throughout our careers. (2) *Science and practice*: There is a time-related tension between science and practice that explains why we must construct flexible rather than rigid foundations for teaching so that we can intelligently accommodate change. (3) *Preservation and progress*: The ever-present conflict between preservationists and progressives is played out in professional relationships—one preferring past practice, the other focused on the present and future. This explains why we must understand each other's attitudes about change and search for common, flexible, and grounding ideals for action.

1. *Changing times*: Music teaching changes with the times—an opportunity-filled truism. Today, however, music teachers have changed much more slowly than have the settings in which their students live and in which teachers teach—the ecology of teaching. Item: Electricity finally comes to an isolated region for the first time; the music of the local culture changes in that place. Item: Our students "discover" the Internet; their musical resources are no longer limited to what is nearby. Item: New musically important devices come on the market where we are—iPods, MP3, and media-rich cell phones; our classrooms change. Item: A new "super-store" arrives in the region and brings new access to music media; the people's musical world expands. Armed conflicts, natural disasters, deaths of important societal leaders, and changing influences in and on governments from a variety of sources such as

religion, economics, social values, and more make life suddenly different because faraway events influence local life more now than ever before. Musical life responds to these changes, and life-transforming events such as these will occur in every generation of our students.

Even if none of these ecological changes was present, musical traditions advance and recede in importance to students. Ten or fifteen years ago, nine-year-olds had different musical and social lives than the nine-year-olds we are teaching today. Our practices are buffeted by big and small changes in the life of the community that both supports and benefits from our work. If students' musical lives are different, our instructional practices must change as well.

However, in the face of rapid change, too many music teachers' practices become rigid, "controlling" change by ignoring how music in the world both creates change and is shaped by changes in society and culture. This worked well enough when the lives of individuals changed slowly—when the experiences of parents and their children were essentially the same. In those times, the school could provide a haven against social and cultural change. Those times are over!

The ideas that seemed solid at one time as foundations for practice need to be challenged and changed in rapidly changing times; we need more flexible bases for rationalizing creative, inspired practice than we currently have. Just as buildings in earthquake zones are now built to flex or even move when they are under strain, we can build music education foundations that stand strongly in the shifting ground of ever-changing conditions. We can and must build resilient, flexible rationales for practice because the times will change our students by altering the musical resources by means of which they will live their musical lives.

2. *Science and practice*: Time enters these considerations from a second direction, and this explains the tension between science (as a theoretical model, for example, of music teaching and learning) and practice. Practice is time intensive in ways that science is not. Pierre Bourdieu (1990) puts time at the center of the conflict between theories derived from science, on the one hand, and practice on the other: Scientists, he explains, aspire to generate theories and findings that are timeless ("intemporal time"), while practice is always on the clock ("temporal time").

> Practice unfolds in time and it has all the correlative properties, such as irreversibility, that synchronization destroys. Its temporal structure, that is, its rhythm, its tempo, and above all its directionality, is constitutive of its meaning. . . . In short, because it is entirely immersed in the current of time, practice is inseparable from temporality, not only because it is played out in time, but also because it plays strategically with time and especially with tempo (p. 81).

Practice for practitioners thus derives its meaning from its temporality, and not—surprisingly—from the underlying principles that illuminate it, regardless how skillfully science and philosophy are directed toward the conduct of enterprises such as music teaching and learning. Analysis (theorizing) follows practice. As Bourdieu goes on, "Scientific practice is so detemporalized that it tends to exclude even the idea of what it excludes" (p. 81). This tends to make theoretical principles based on analysis seem rigid and decontextualized when those principles are reviewed later. We concretize practice when we uncritically accept someone else's *post hoc*

explanation about how music is taught and learned. Such explanations are always *post hoc*. In Bourdieu's way of thinking, science provides good answers today for yesterday's questions. A resilient, critical approach to setting practice on firm but flexible ground attempts to illuminate the questions arising from today's musical resources and today's students, not the past. The search for illumination about practice, therefore, can never end.

3. *Preservation and progress*: There is a third issue of time: its effects on professional politics. This is a condition that will also always be with us—the conflict between preservationists and progressives, between "transmitting" the past to our students and using the present to shape the future. Living traditions—including teaching praxis[3]—have a quality that I call "dynamic permanence" (Gates 1994). A tradition is, by definition, a relatively unchanging set of practices that is represented by experts, exemplars, and tradition-keepers, all of whom share a body of specialized knowledge. Living traditions, however, allow people's creativity in changing times to transform the tradition, to let it grow with conditions and new ideas—to make permanence dynamic.

The particulars[4] of a living tradition change more slowly than time and conditions warrant because the tradition's practices and materials ("the particulars") are subject to the political tension between preservationists and progressives. Preservationists insist that what has worked in prior times should continue to work in the future. Progressives insist on transformation to meet changing conditions. Rigid foundations and mere precedent—the refuge of the preservationists—create political walls ("wedge issues") between preservationists and progressives and, thus, fail to unify practice through productive dialogue in the face of the situational constant of how practice should respond to changing conditions.

Here is an example of political tension between preservationists and progressives in a musical tradition: In 1988, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America (SPEBSQSA, now called Barbershop Harmony Society) held its 50th anniversary conference in Tucson, Arizona. Preservationists were fearful that the old practice was dying out, and progressives wanted practice to change with the times. The leaders sought a dialogue informed by views from knowledgeable outsiders. I was part of a team of social scientists and educators that was invited to examine SPEBSQSA's practices and policies and make recommendations about how its practice could continue. We attended meetings and performances and made a wide range of recommendations (Kaplan 1993).

The SPEBSQSA conference itself included expert performances that resulted in the crowning of an international champion quartet and an international champion chorus. This was governed by preservationist values. In the competition guidelines, there were strict rules that governed music selection, even defining "approved" chords to be used in the arrangements (Snyder 1993, 31–32).[5]

But there was also an open category of events that featured quartet singing without the contest rules. In these events, the only requirement was that four male voices sing four-part arrangements *a cappella*. In contrast with the narrow repertoire of the contest categories, the open category was filled with a wide variety of contemporary selections—standard ballads, folk and patriotic songs, show tunes, originals,

and novelty selections. The harmonic language was broad, usually "contemporary," sometimes edgy, with musical arrangements that were much more complex than the contest rules allowed. Preservationists, who valued the "old ways," were concerned that SPEBSQSA would lose its focus if these progressive practices became dominant in the organization, eventually changing the harmonic rules and replacing the old repertoire.

A basic issue therefore emerged as a concern for SPEBSQSA's musical future: Preservationists wanted to restrict the practice, progressives wanted to open it up. Both wanted SPEBSQSA to continue and all actively recruited new members for the practice.

What the preservationists overlooked was the original broad, grounding action ideal of the organization. In 1938, O. C. Cash, SPEBSQSA's founder, "proposed to revive . . . a pastime that required no equipment except the human voice and the love of four-part harmony" (Snyder 1993, 14). This simple action ideal does not hold one repertoire above others or restrict its harmonic language; rather, it describes in relatively observable terms the kind of music making that the practice valued. It is an action ideal—four human voices expressing a love of four-part harmony—and it supports both the contest repertoire *and* the music making presented in the exhibition events. As it stood then, the "new" exhibition practices were more clearly expressive of the grounding action ideal of SPEBSQSA than was a practice based solely on the "given" rules of harmonic language and repertoire.

Somewhere along the way Cash's action ideal got lost in inertia, nostalgia[6], habits, repertoire lists, and contest rules. Entropy occurred. As I advised in my report (Gates 1993), re-capturing Cash's action ideal and making this value—not the contest rules—the guiding ideal for practice would preserve SPEBSQSA's core values *and* allow the practice to change with the times. The repertoire list and harmonization limitations are not the core of SPEBSQSA's tradition, I claimed; they are not expressions of its grounding action ideal. Cash's action ideal was merely and powerfully to make music with four voice parts without instruments.

In our field, our profession's leaders, especially at the state level, spend too much time on similar minutiae—contest rules, festival participation policies, repertoire lists, membership requirements, and the like. Rather than spending their precious time on these business issues, couldn't these knowledgeable and experienced people find ways to bring to life some compelling and simple action ideals that re-capture the love of teaching music, of helping others to learn to know how to harness music's power to create musical lives for themselves, today and in their futures? *Action for Change* is a start along the way back to this grounding human ideal.

"When the Way Is Lost . . . Then Come the Rites."

What, then, provides the grounds for practice?[7] Music teachers need a flexible but strong approach to thinking about music teaching practice rather than to accept a set of fixed "foundations" that purport to be timeless orientations for music teachers' actions. Although teaching practice itself is timeless—teachers in all eras find ways

to help students learn—the ecology of a career teacher's practice changes throughout one's teaching life.

Making rules out of ideals is an ancient human trait, as the SPEBSQSA story illustrates. When ritual replaces thought, that is, when settled practices, governing policies, and participation rules replace human musical values, then we must speak out. The rules and participation policies that form the basis of many music teachers' concerns today were created during the rise of the school music contest movement in the 1930s. James Mursell spoke out. In the late 1950s, a resurgence of interest in pedagogical science (spurred by Sputnik and its effects) created an appetite for so-called "foundations studies" in music education—principles based on the psychology, sociology, and musicology of the time, shaped philosophically as rationales for music education practice and distracted many leading music teachers from musical teaching. Charles Leonhard spoke out.

Human musical values lie at the core of music education practice, as we are reminded by thinkers such as James Mursell in the 1930s; Charles Leonhard, Max Kaplan, and Harry Broudy in the 1950s; Wolfgang Kuhn, Bennett Reimer, John Paynter, Murray Schafer, and Abraham Schwadron in the 1970s; and the large group of music education theorists of today, some of whom are represented in the list of this book's authors.

The current wave of interest in music education "foundations" began in about 1985. Analysts of this period include thinkers such as Eunice Boardman, Wayne Bowman, David Elliott, Charles Fowler, Siegmund Helms, Estelle Jorgensen, Wolfgang Kuhn, Thomas Regelski, Christopher Small, Keith Swanwick, and Robert Walker. Others, writing in multiauthored books, include Harold Abeles, Charles Hoffer, and Paul Klotman; Richard Colwell, Lizabeth Wing, and Thomas Goolsby; Malcolm Tait and Paul Haack; two collections of essays published in 1958 and 1991 titled *Basic Concepts in Music Education*; and one in 1988 titled *Music Education in the United States: Contemporary Issues*. Authors sought to develop grounding ideas about music education that grew out of their research and their analyses of various issues related to music education policy. The results, in most cases, were sets of resolutions of the issues they raised—guidelines for their curricular recommendations and applications for teachers. Jorgensen's approach (2003) is closer to ours here, where several important topics were identified and explored as problems without shaping them into concrete recommendations.

The ritualization of practice has occurred in music education practice for hundreds of years; it is a professional constant. However, and yet again, *The Way* of music as human discourse has been lost in contest rules, "what-works" methods, and repertoire lists. Entropy has occurred. We must speak out.

Where Is the Solid Ground?

Where do music teachers, then, plant their feet? If change is the way of things over a long career, how can music teachers feel confident that their practice has a sound rationale? Here are 11 candidates for grounding professional practice.

(a) Pedagogical traditions and “standard” methodologies.
(b) Musical practices within the teacher’s “comfort zone.”
(c) The community’s musical life.
(d) Students’ musical goals and needs.
(e) Local, state, province, and/or national educational goals and standards.
(f) Ideological or religious precepts and teachings.
(g) Practical musicianship and career building.
(h) “Best-practice” teaching procedures.
(i) “What-works” teaching systems.
(j) Methods based on psychological research in music learning and/or teaching.
(k) Applications of a philosophical position in music and/or education.

Planting one’s feet in grounds such as these feels solid enough. There are people in the school, community, and profession, who will support programs based on one of the categories of policy making in the list above. Acting on one of these options seems to clarify things for people in a music teacher’s life, including students. Most of these sources of rationales are commented on by at least one author in this book.

The rub comes when the ecology of teaching changes and the pedagogy doesn’t keep up—when the student’s life world and the teacher’s practice begin to take different paths. Friction results, draining energy from the interaction between teacher and student.

The resolution is not an easy or clear one, and it certainly is not a relativist abandonment of a teacher’s role as the adult in the interaction. Rather, it is an ongoing critical dialogue, led by the teacher, between the changing resources and needs of students and the life of the local and world-wide communities that nurture both the students and the school.

Well-grounded practice includes features of all 11 categories of foundation in the list above, orchestrated by musical leaders who are always thinking about their work and reflecting on its effectiveness.

Dialogue Is Key: How This Book Is Different

It is the stance of this book that the premises and principles that support teaching should be more a result of changing realities than “given” as a set of fixed foundations. It is grounded in the belief that dialogues about actual conditions can be guided fruitfully by attention to certain key issues that can be framed in order to transcend time, issues that are themselves open to challenge and change. Through this approach we can always learn from each other’s insights as times change, as the tension between science and practice produces better insights, and as we find ways to accommodate the politics of preservation and progress. And we can take advantage of good knowledge in any field that illuminates the questions at hand.

Informed dialogue around some central themes results in the kind of resilient, flexible foundation for practice that can guide and inform practice in changing times.