

Philosophy of music education in the indian context assignment

[Philosophy](#)



Transformed to Transform: An Outlook on the Philosophy of Music that Serves the Indian Community. “ The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives”. * Robert M. Hutchins *

“ The goal of education should be “ to widen one’s view of life, to deepen insight into relationships, and to counteract the provincialism of customary existence” * Philip Phoenix These goals must be the first and foremost reason why we teach music.

To instill an even greater understanding and love of the domain thus enabling our students evolve a genuine interest and continue a life long Journey that’s undertaken in varying degrees and through diverse roles. Phoenix (1986) stress on the fact that knowledge of methods makes it possible for a person to continue learning and undertake inquiries on his own (p. 1 1). Estelle Jorgensen in her book “ Transforming Music Education” eloquently describes the need for music education to be transformed for the very reason that children be able to continue developing their knowledge beyond the classroom.

Effective music education is built of a foundation that encompasses discussions, goals, materials and strategies, based on a teacher’s knowledge and experience of music and child development, educational guidelines and “ overarching, and developing philosophy of music education” (Fiske, 2012). Before I elucidate my philosophy about music, I recognize the need to clarify my stand as a music educator who is passionate and determined to elevate the status of music education within classrooms around India.

My Musical Experiences Music has always been a part of me for as long as I can remember. My earliest memories of music, especially the performance aspect, goes back to when I was three years old and sang a solo for a Christmas Concert that was organized by the radio station that my father worked at. I have memories of him kneeling on one knee and playing the guitar for me while I sang after which I was delighted to receive a big present from Santa. Ever since, I have enjoyed performing, and have so felt so comfortable on stage.

All along I grew up listening to Christian gospel music and many contemporary arrangements of hymns. Supplementary to that my father offered me a rich experience of Indian Hindustan devotional music. I learned songs by ear and didn't realize what I was missing at this point, imagining what I learned in Philosophy of Music Education in the Indian Context By sandblasters I enjoyed doing and it came naturally to me, partly because of my early initiation into leading worship at church.

My true test of endurance came about when I was introduced to Western Classical Music at the age of 14, through the study of two years of piano. My teacher, like many others around, displayed an extremely formalistic approach and didn't do much to expand my understanding of music beyond what was on the page and how I was supposed to read it. In response to this method I didn't enjoy learning from the pages of notated music books, as much as I did learning by ear, and I continued to develop as a musician who played by ear and improvised at will.

Studying opera during undergrad was a trying phase for me because of my inability to “connect the dots” as easily as I should have been able to. My aural skills remained excellent and I sometimes relied on that to carry me through certain phases. Hard work and determination became my motto, and I spent hours to understand and perfect music that was assigned to me, as I wanted to do my very best. Although I had composed songs earlier, without notating them, the study of music theory opened up a whole new world for me.

I could now add variety and richness to my music through the concepts I was learning. Music became a new language for me; I was captivated by the way it lent itself to diverse experiences through different musical roles (something that I wasn't aware of or didn't pay attention to earlier). As a Music Teacher Although I initially joined a conservatory to study vocal performance, I found myself deeply drawn towards music education, and during my second semester decided to learn more about devising meaningful and persuasive strategies to improve the standard of music education in India.

This thought emerged from an understanding that I had felt almost cheated for having lost out on so many years of studying music formally, yet effectively. I didn't have a choice because structured music instruction simply wasn't available at all the schools that I studied in, or the quality of instruction didn't serve the purpose of educating or informing students like me. What gave the impression of a music class/lesson at school was in

reality an enthusiastic way of keeping students occupied for forty minutes in simple singing, with a concert for parents every once a year.

We learned songs by rote to perform them, year after year. During those years though, I didn't realize the limitations that this system came with and continued to enjoy the fact that I was in choir and able to sing. This vacuum remains largely visible and unattended to in schools today, although some music educators in the recent past have taken huge steps towards improving the quality and effectiveness of their instruction in classrooms around India. Their efforts however remain predominantly an enthusiastic endeavor.

What is urgently required is certainly something much more than sincere teaching. It calls for a transformation of the present system, giving room for every child to receive superior music education that fits into the whole. The need of every student being met in a transformed educational framework that constantly reshapes itself to accommodate new ideas and strategies. After all, as Restless (2003) rightly points out that music (music education) is for everyone and not just for an elite few. The turning point in old daughter, Tiara, for after-school piano lessons.

I hoped to give her a head start, with the understanding that she needn't have to face the same challenges in learning music, like I had to. However, after a few classes, I realized to my complete dissatisfaction that there was no structure, no thought and imagination, and no clarity in what was being thought to her. Her fingering on the piano was all over the place for the two songs that her teacher worked on " Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. " And " Baa Baa Black Sheep" Her teacher (I later learned wasn't introduced to classical

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notation), taught her these songs by writing letters in a book and instructing her to commit it to heart.

Lesson after lesson they would follow the same outline with no emphasis on any other musical aspects whatsoever. I decided I wasn't going to take his lying down! I had to do all within my capacity to change the face of music education, as the vast majority of people understand it. I began studying about music education as well, to inform and equip myself for the task at hand. Around this period, my voice teacher encouraged me to coach students in voice, and I began shying away from it believing I was under qualified and needed many years of study to begin teaching.

However, with a newfound passion and vigor, I accepted to coaching some of his voice students and also began to teach small groups of students on the history of music (because I loved learning about it). Meanwhile, I started training both my young daughters at home constantly developing new ideas and strategies to introduce musical concepts to them. A friend noticed my teaching style and asked if I would teach her daughter too, and thus began my professional journey as a music educator.

Four years since then, I find myself accountable for the music instruction I offer to over 250 children across various age groups, who are part of my school. The need is so great within schools, and only a few educators are willing to take the extra effort of educating themselves and being channels of period music instruction-catalysts of sorts. I am blessed to have a team of often teachers who share in my vision and work alongside me in imparting music to the children who are part of our music school, "Harmony".

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My long-term vision is to enhance the music programs in India for the betterment of as many children as possible. Individuals don't realize what they're missing until they've been given a taste of it, a glimpse of the bigger picture (much like my case). Through our school performances I aim on providing a window for the change to take place. A transformation that not only affects my students, but others around them as well through their personal interactions with each other and the community as a whole.

My Personal Philosophy “ A field or discipline without philosophical guidance, without critically examined ideals and commitment to their revision in light of the diverse and changing needs of those it seeks to serve, is more akin to an occupation than a profession” (Bowman ; Freer, 2012, p. 23). For my vision to bear fruit and show evidence of becoming something concrete, I realize the need to develop my philosophy of music to an seek after. In the words of Jorgensen (2008), “ I want to excavate beneath the Percival and demonstrable skills to think about the ideas and principles of music teaching, the things that drive and shape”.

According to Kiwi (2002), “ A practice or discipline or body of knowledge, then, seems to become ‘ eligible’ (If that is the right word) for philosophy, properly so-called, when it becomes for us a way of life: when it cuts so deeply into our natures as human beings that we are impelled to explore and reveal its innermost workings” (p. 7). It is necessary for me to “ clarify the major dimensions of musical experience” so I can “ effectively offer them to, and nurture them within, ” my students (Reamer, 2003, p.), this despite the passion and conviction with which I teach and advocate the need for arts in

schools. I have begun to develop a synergistic mindset in my philosophy of music education after my reading and researching the literature, coupled with practical experiences over the last few years. Reamer (2003) points out " A synergistic mind-set is one open to cooperation as an alternative to contention, to searching for points of agreement or confluence as an alternative to fixating on discord, to recognizing nuances in which seemingly opposed views are capable of some level of contention" (p. 30).

I agree with Reamer's democratic view that musical meaning is meaning that " individuals choose to give to and take from music, based on their life experiences and their musical orientations. " He further adds that there is to be no " one right way', and calls for an adaptation of a synergistic blend in music teaching. Music must involve decision making through discernment and connections within a particular role (Reamer, 2003, p. 213). Eisner (1987) illuminates the need for a curriculum that " exploits the various forms of representation and that utilizes all of the senses to help students learn what a period of history feels like"(p.). Similarly, offering students a basis for understanding music in all contexts involves a thorough exploration of musical meaning within its definitive parameters, along with contemplation or reflection. Introducing students to the music and other art forms of various cultures is a wonderful way to broaden their understanding of the meaning of music. A student does not need to lose his own musical identity in order to study other music. On the contrary, in learning about other music, a student's life is enriched.

Reamer states, “ In the spirit of adding to the self rather than substituting other selves for one’s self, the duty of the music of foreign cultures enriches the souls of all who are engaged in it” (P. 191). Music and Meaning As advocates of music, music educators are often expected to express the meaning of music through words, yet words are incapable of truly describing the beauty and emotion felt through experience. “ The concern is not to arrive at a definition and to close the book, but to arrive at an experience” (Acrid, 1975, p. 2).

Acrid states that there “ still lingers belief that a dictionary definition is a satisfactory description of an idea or of an experience” (p. 1). Words may attempt to describe music, yet true the difference between meanings drawn from words or language and the meanings found through music. He writes, “ Language is created and shared through the processes of conceptualization and communication. Music is created and shared through the process of artistic/aesthetic perceptual structuring, yielding meanings language cannot represent” (p. 133). The real power of music lies in the fact that it can be “ true” to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot” (Longer, 1942, p. 197). Phoenix (1986) highlights the need to look for aesthetic meaning in music including that there has to be a delicate balance between descriptive proposition that serves the purpose of laying out a historical background and allowing for freedom to gain perceptual features. Though music may evoke emotions in my students as they compose or serve as an outlet for their feelings when they perform, the ultimate significance of music lies in its ability to symbolize/portray deeply felt emotions.

In the pages of his article, *How Does a Poem Mean*, John Acrid (1975) shares with the reader his view that language is not capable of completely conveying the meaning that is discovered through experience. Living through the poetry is more powerful than attempting to interpret it. I believe that language does, however, serve a purpose of enhancing and is required when teaching for musical meaning. Words such as diction, metaphor, rhythm, and counter rhythm describe elements that lead to the understanding of form.

Once a student can identify changes in the form through performance, “ he will have identified the poem in action” (p. 95). He will no longer ask what the poem means but will see “ how it means” (p. 95). Acrid suggests questions such as, “ Why does it build itself into a form out of images, ideas, rhythms? How do these elements become the meaning? ” and “ How are they inseparable from the meaning? ” (p. 100). These questions are helpful in leading a student to the ultimate meaningful experience.

Likewise, music students may use their knowledge of musical elements, such as rhythm and dynamics, to see “ how’ a piece of music means. Reamer (2003) says language has the essential function of disclosing and explaining the music. Music elements are inseparable from the performance of the music as they help to explain the musical experience. On their own, however, words and definitions remain dull and lifeless. I believe students should be immersed in the experience, while in a chorus, performing their instruments and listening to those around them.

Meaning can be discovered through active participation in music and through the emotion and beauty the music portrays, for “ Music means whatever a person experiences when involved with music” (Reamer, 2003, p. 133).

Cirri’s (1975) statement: “ It is the experience, not the final examination, that counts” (p. 3) is particularly striking. The Indian society places high emphasis on examinations in music as with other subjects, very often overlooking the need for students to value their experience through the process of learning. I sometimes feel pressured by the community to meet high concert performance expectations and good examination results.

Although I recognize that performance and the International music exams is a wonderful opportunity in which students can share their music with the community, or understand their level of competency, the true reflection of meaning in the music should be experienced in day-to-day music alone but to include other music as well giving them a chance to draw out meanings and experience the music. Acrid (1975) describes a poem as a “ dynamic and living thing” (p. 0). He continues stating, “ One experiences it as one experiences life.

One is never done with it: every time he looks he sees something new, and it changes even as he watches” (p. 10). Similarly, music is capable of revealing something new each time it is experienced. The meanings my students derive from an initial listening of a piece of music may be vastly different than the meanings understood months or years later. The meaning of music constantly changes with personal life experiences and new perspectives.

Reamer claims, " Music education exists to nurture people's potential to gain deeper, broader, more significant musical meanings" (p. 33).

I believe my students should derive their own meanings from the musical experience and without my influence. By explaining meanings to them, I face the fear of casting into oblivion the celebration of their own unique experience with the music, much the same way a language teacher might, in more ways than one, take away from the experience of a student's " feeling" experience of poetry as she explains the meaning in the verses of the poem. Instead of teaching " what" music means, I will instruct students on " how" music means, enabling them to derive meaning from experiences that occur beyond the classroom, and within their own oleos.

Feeling through Music " Music does for feeling what language does for thought" (Bowman, 1998, p. 200). As a musician, I understand the power of music to evoke feelings. Listening to or performing a great work of music in a concert hall may bring tears or chills to the musician in a way that only music is capable. Similarly, students' emotional lives may be heightened by experiences in the classroom. According to Reamer (2003), the " emotional dimension of music-its power to make us feel, and to " know' through feeling-is probably its most important defining characteristic" (p. 2). In Western history, emotion has often been regarded less valuable than intellect (Reamer, 2003). Some people do not consider the arts to be as important as other core subjects such as math and reading in education due to the belief that arts are based on emotions and not reasoning or intellect. Recently, however, scientific scholars have begun to recognize that human

intelligence, or cognition, is exhibited in a variety of forms, directly related to functions of the body, and tied to feeling.

Dimensions of the mind, once thought to be separate and unrelated, are now known to work together, contributing to the things we know and experience. Anthony Damasks, a research neurologist, believes “ feeling is likely to be the key factor in human consciousness itself and an essential ingredient in human cognition” (Reamer, 2003, p. 76). The capacity to feel “ pervades and directs all we undergo as living, aware creatures” (p. 78). “ Direct experiences of feeling are embodied in music and made available to the bodied experience of those engaged with it” (p. 80).

The use of descriptive and symbolic language in the classroom, in the teaching of a varied repertoire of expressive music, aids in drawing out these responses of feeling from n array of feelings. I believe students should be given an opportunity to articulate these feelings through Journaling and in-class discussion. Musical Roles and Intelligence Human cognition, or intelligence is demonstrated in various forms or roles. Music must involve decision making through discernment and connections within a particular role and across as well (Reamer, 2003, p. 213). I would like to highlight the intelligences within the different roles of music.

As a composer, one displays intelligence by “ linking of sounds into meaningful configurations through a process of session making, reflections about previously made decisions, and altering and adding to and deleting sounds previously decided on as new implications and possibilities arise” (Reamer, 2003, p. 221). Within performing Reamer (2003) talks about

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discriminating the peculiarities of each sound to be made and how these sounds connect to all others within the performance, a performer's ability to explicate the composer's thoughts with a "personal flair"(p. 222).

Improvising straddles performance and composition in the midst of performing as it relies largely on intuition in the spur of the moment (Regions, 2008, p. 67). Improvising requires one to "think-in-the-moment, which is difficult and comes with a unique excitement, a role that embraces risks and provides immense satisfaction (Reamer, 2003, p. 223). Listening does not necessarily require an individual to be a composer or a performer. Listening without assuming other roles, or being a part of any other role is the most widespread of all, within which musical interconnections and discriminations can be made (p. 224).

Jorgensen (2008) identifies about eight ways of being a listener—"intellectually, sensually, experientially, formatively, contextually, scenically, peripherally, and repetitively' (p. 114). It is then evident that individuals have different capacities/levels of intelligence and varied areas of interest, that is genetically determined, based on the cultural milieu and available opportunities to name a few. Gardner (2006) discusses the possibility of identifying "an individual's intellectual profile (or proclivities) at an early age and then draw upon this knowledge to enhance that person's educational opportunities and options. Introducing students to different roles in music and identifying areas that they may be interested in certainly beneficial and yields promising results with the passage of time. In my school, I have group lessons where I focus on introducing children to as many musical roles as

possible. We call this the “ Core Music Program”, and work with the group on composing, performing, improvising and listening. Although lessons are structured with the Western Classical system in mind, I have begun to think of ways to introduce an informal adaptation of these musical roles as well.

Over time, my teachers and I identify certain areas that some children show a keen interest in, and monomaniac with their parents to schedule private lessons so that these areas may be nurtured with an understanding that “ each role requires its own way to educate for the developing of the intelligence upon which it calls” (Reamer, 2003, p. 220). I realize the need to feed into each of these areas, guiding students to make connections and discriminations so that the students can show a steady growth in new knowledge; it’s a creative reorganization of thought” (Keith Sawyer, 2012).

I am conscious that each of these roles can be approached with an emphasis on creativity and have explained them below in that context. Music and Creativity Young children are constantly creating songs in their games, even unknowing focusing on the so, m’, la relationships in their singing. As they gradually develop physically, mentally and emotionally, they respond to the world around them in many interesting ways. There comes a time when they live in a world of “ make believe” and enjoy taking on different roles, pretending they are fairies, princesses, super heroes etc.

Very often they create songs that they feel fit into their new roles thus revealing a creative ability within themselves. Children create songs in their bedrooms and on the playground. Some are quiet songs lulling dolls and teddy bears to sleep. Others are declaratively triumphant works

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underpinning flying machines and wizard duels” (Chubb & Smith, 2009, p. 3). Although children have always created music, music education has placed a greater emphasis on the quality of performances than on opportunities for children to develop their creative abilities (Chubb & Smith, 2009).

My most vivid and treasured music experiences during childhood involved opportunities to be creative within the home environment and performances outside. Although the schools that I was enrolled in didn't offer a impressive view of music, I believe that students in India must receive consistent music education during their developing years, along with plentiful opportunities to develop creative decision-making skills. Classrooms today can provide opportunities for students to think in sound, and students can be led to realize how meaningful and pleasurable music creating can be.

Webster (2002) defines creativity in music as “ the engagement of the mind in the active, structured process of thinking in sound for the purpose of producing some product that is new for the creator” (p. 26). He lives creative thinking can be identified in all individuals and can occur at “ various levels, from the spontaneous songs of the very young child to the products of the greatest minds in music” (p. 27). Reamer (2003) echoes this sentiment, declaring “ all humans are capable of being creative to some degree” and “ are capable of improving that degree if they are helped to do so” (p. 09).

When I witness my youngest students explore the sounds of new or different classroom instruments, experimenting with rhythmic and melodic patterns, I am reminded of the truth in these statements. I believe creativity can be experienced through improvising, performing, composing, and listening at

any age. Performing and Improvising. “ Performers are artists-are creative in imagining and producing musically expressive sounds-precisely because they must make creative decisions with the materials (compositions) with which they are engaged” (Reamer, 2003, p. 113).

Since I encourage children in the act of performing, it is my duty to engage the them in making creative decisions about the music as they perform. Reamer discusses the reality that creativity of musical performance is often a “ shared act” (p. 14). “ Even in student individually and contributing that individuality to the conjoint musical expression emerging, can be experienced genuinely’ (p. 115). Although students must follow the demands of the conductor and music and blend with sections, Reamer believes creativity in the performance ensemble/chorus/band is achievable.

When conducting my chorus in the past, I tended to make most of the decisions for my students. I plan to engage the students more in class discussion on the individual creative decisions that must be made when performing a piece, emphasizing each student’s unique opportunity to contribute and giving them a voice within the choir. Improvisation, or creating in the moment, is also an important activity. In prior teaching, I have engaged students who are part of contemporary band, in simple Jazz improvisation that included various scales and chord changes.

I wish to incorporate more improvising into their performance setting, and to include all students. There is a certain thrill and beauty in knowing that each improvised performance will be unique. Composing. “ The act of composing is a process that allows the child to grow, discover, and create IM- or herself

through artistic and meaningful engagement with sounds” (Chubb ; Smith, 2009, p. 7). I consider the work of Michele Chubb and Janice Smith fundamental as I explore ways to engage students creatively through composition.

They believe compositional opportunities should be given to every child because the process of composing: “ challenges children to consider their understanding of the world in new ways, ... Allows children to exercise their generative potential in music, ... Develops a way of knowing that complements understandings gained through other direct experiences of music, and ... Invites the child to draw together the full breadth of his or her musical knowledge” (p. 4/5).

I have given opportunities in the past for students to compose warm-ups for rehearsals and write down more lengthy compositions at the end of a theory lesson but will be engaging students in more substantial creations of original works in the future. Chubb and Smith recommend the use of “ logs, reflective Journals, notebooks, sketchbooks, blobs, bedposts, or websites” to display students’ work and encourage reflection. The classroom must be a safe place in which students can explore, share, make mistakes, ND reflect as they create.

Composition can be a powerful tool, for “ The voices of young composers hold thousands of incredible explanations for the thinking and the actions that contribute to their musical knowledge and their music making” (p. 47).

Listening. I am impacted greatly by Reamer’s (2003) view on creative listening. “ All people, often willingly and enthusiastically choose to listen-to

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immerse themselves in listening to their chosen music for all the diverse pleasures musical meaning affords" (p. 118). This statement reminds me that many of my students may choose to stop playing their instruments outside of the classroom, but they will continue to listen.

Since listening is the most common music experience, this aspect of music must be improvisers make are saturated with potential musical meanings- potential significant undergoing of mind, body, and feelings. Listeners are called on to make sense of the music, to " put it together" with mind, body, and feelings. (p. 117) Instead of listening simply to absorb music, students must create meanings out of what is being heard. Activities involving analyzing music, describing music, and tooting music that is heard will be implemented into my curriculum.

Students may respond to listening through " reflection Journals" or " music critic" assignments that encourage students to evaluate and make sense of the music. " Whatever the level of one's capacity to be creative at something, that level can be better achieved by educational interventions designed to improve one's thinking and doing so as to make them ' more creative" (Reamer, 2003, p. 109). Creative opportunities must be present in the instrumental music classroom to further the abilities that all children possess. Creating in my classroom will be a chance for students to make sense of their feelings and experiences as they discover themselves.

Musical creativity is the skilled search, by mind, body and feelings, for musical meanings (Reamer 2003). Reamer beautifully brings out this point by saying, Meaning making, after all, in music as well as everything else

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people do, is a core need in human condition. The meaning making-the creative responsiveness-of musical listening is by far the most common way people involve themselves in musical creativity, and that includes those who, in addition, choose to be creative as Caucasians. World Music and Multiracial Approaches For students to remain motivated in class the music needs to be relevant and meaningful (Campbell, 2002).

She argues that music education that emphasizes music theory and musical skills without considering the role of music in its coloratura context is inadequate. I believe music from cultures around the world as well as music that surround our own culture and subcultures should be integrated into the instrumental music curriculum. There was a time when I associated “multicultural music” as being strictly oral music, but now recognize the music of my school and community culture, which includes popular music, Plywood music is also “multicultural” in nature and must be present in my classroom.

I have not explored the full capacity of Indian music in the classroom assuming that there are a lot of schools around that teach this style. However, I am now establishing ideas to incorporate this music in the present curriculum. World Music. John Blackings work with music in other cultures is an has impacted my philosophy on multicultural music (Campbell, 2000). He believed the inclusion of world music in