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TOWARDS A POSTMODERN CURRICULUM FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

by

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A.R.T.C., L. Music., B. Music, M. A. Music Ed., M. Ed.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts (Education) at  
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May, 1995



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## ABSTRACT

Music education in the public schools of Canada and the United States has been and still is concerned with the perpetuation of the aesthetic beliefs and pedagogy of one of the last bastions of modernist practice and thought, the Euro-centric canon of 'Classical' music. Studying to be a music educator is currently a process which involves prospective teachers in learning 'how to' perpetuate these canonic aesthetic beliefs and pedagogy. As such, the modernist definition and approach to music education is elitist and utilizes a 'transmission', 'imposition' and 'banking' approach which is not conducive to meaningful student participation in the learning experience. With the subject matter being elitist and the pedagogy being less than successful, it is unsurprising that music in the public schools is struggling for survival.

The purpose of this thesis is to question this canon and present an alternative, more 'postmodern' position which is more inclusive in its acceptance and definition of music, in addition to suggesting a pedagogy which will bring students into a more meaningfully learning process. Specifically, the thesis will: 1) examine critically our current music education practices and their underlying philosophical and aesthetic assumptions by using the concepts and principles of 'modernism' and 'postmodernism';

2) suggest a workable 'aesthetic' and 'critical' position within postmodernism which can be utilized by music educators to develop a more inclusive view and pedagogical approach to the teaching of all musics; 3) provide a critical analysis and comparison of our current modernist practices with a suggested postmodern approach; and, 4) provide suggestions regarding the content for the development of a postmodern music education program at the universities.

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I would also like to thank Dr. Harold Pearse and Dr. Nick Webb from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design for broadening my view and perspective of Arts Education. I am envious that music educators do not have a similar academically inquisitive and questioning environment dedicated to Music Education such as that which exists in the Education Department of this fantastic Arts institution.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Beverley, our three children, and my father, who have had the patience to see me complete this project at this particular stage of our busy lives: thanks to everyone.

## CHAPTER 1

### FRAMING THE ISSUES

*It is astonishing that so few critics challenge the system . . . When one considers the energy, commitment and quality of so many of the people working in the schools, one must place the blame elsewhere. The people are better than the structure. Therefore the structure must be at fault. (Sizer, 1984 in Shor, 1987, p. 7)*

Within the music profession there are many excellent rationales and philosophies regarding the importance of music in society (Dewey, 1934; Langer, 1942, 1953; Reimer, 1970). As far back as one can trace, educational journals and research seemingly provides absolutely profound and cogent reasons for including music in the curriculum (Stubley, 1992). In addition, music educators over the years have been continuously provided with 'teacher proof' methodologies for the classroom (Eisner, 1985). However, the reality is that all of these rationales for inclusion and teacher proof methodologies do not appear to be working. Music education classes in the schools, both in Canada and the United States, have been and continue to be reduced and cut from the curriculum (Steinel, 1984) as a result of the perception of not being as important (Ewens, 1988) as other subjects that remain in the curriculum. Haack (1992) reaffirmed this belief when he stated that educators are

". . . at a time when music education again seems less than secure in its curricular standing" (p. 463).

In the meantime, music educators accuse and condemn everybody and everything for their limited success at making and/or keeping music as a vibrant and essential subject in their schools. Many music educators blame the economy for decisions which call for the down-sizing of teaching staff and the number of courses which schools can offer to their students. With music being viewed as one of the less important subjects, it therefore becomes one of the expendables. Music educators also blame our materialistic and job-orientated society for pressuring students and schools into becoming overly concerned with taking subjects which might lead to good jobs and university acceptance with, once again, music and the arts being excluded and left out as a result of being considered a 'frill' subject. Some music educators blame school board members and senior administrators, who have to make many 'exclusion' decisions for having limited insight, even after receiving many convincing and forceful explanations of the many benefits of including music and the arts in the curriculum. Music educators also blame students for their often apathetic outlook and lack of interest towards music courses and methodologies. In addition, there are some music educators who blame the mass media for surrounding their students with an inferior type of music which keeps many students from

really appreciating and getting involved in the quality music being taught in the music classroom. As believable as some or all of these rationales and defenses may appear to every music educator, the reality is that music education continues to lose ground as a subject in today's curriculum.

I am going to suggest, that instead of continually searching outside the music profession for rationalizations for the increasing exclusion of music from the curriculum, it is now time to look critically inward at the profession for more fundamental causes of the limited and faltering success of music education in the public school system.

A critical review of current practices and related philosophical and aesthetic assumptions in music education will demonstrate how our current pedagogy and narrow view of the arts and culture are very much 'modernist' in nature and it is these characteristics that will be found to be the underlying cause for the diminishing role of music education in the public school curriculum. The modernist stance of music educators is elitist and tends to limit and restrict itself to the high art of the museums and concert halls rather than including the ongoing aesthetic and cultural experiences of everyday life. Music educators need a larger and more inclusive vision of what qualifies as music. Moreover, they need to develop a teaching pedagogy which will bring the students more completely into and enable them to be a part of the artistic experiencing/learning process.

A postmodernist position regarding both an aesthetic viewpoint and teaching pedagogy can provide the framework for developing a new educational paradigm for music education. The postmodern position being suggested will allow for acceptance of multiplicity and difference and would view art experiences as an active contextually aesthetic experience arising out of everyday life.

I am convinced that our current modernist music education philosophies and pedagogies are at the root of the problem of increasing exclusion of music programs in the public schools, and that it is not the financial or other reasons that many music educators tend to espouse. Music education, as currently taught, both in our schools and universities, is similar to many other academic subjects in that the students do not have any real personal connection or involvement with the subject. Modernist music classes in many schools today consist of teacher-dominated 'musical concept' learning, memorization of the musical facts and dates, and regurgitation of the right notes in performance with very little or no actual intimate personal student involvement with the art form. Our current modernist pedagogy is inadequate to the task of bringing the student meaningfully into this process in order to make the school music experience a vital part of their lives. I contend that if music in the schools can become a truly meaningful artistic experiencing/learning activity for the students,

music education will establish a solid and vital place for itself in the school curriculum. The best strategy for keeping music in the school curriculum is to have our students honestly experience that which the art has to offer. Those who have had meaningful experiences with music will want their children and their children's children to have the same meaningful and significant artistic experiences and will insist that the arts remain in the curriculum and in their children's daily lives.

However, if the status quo remains in place, I maintain that music education in our schools will continue to lose ground as a result of the perpetuation of the modernist limited musical view, narrow aesthetic perspective and irrelevant pedagogical practices. In short, I believe that modernist educational philosophies and their attendant methodologies are the real cause of music's diminishing role in the curriculum.

The purpose of this study will be: 1) to examine critically our current music education practices and their related philosophical and aesthetic assumptions by using the concepts and principles of 'modernism' and 'postmodernism'; 2) to suggest a workable 'aesthetic' and 'critical' position within postmodernism which can be utilized by music educators to develop a more inclusive view and pedagogical approach to the teaching of all musics; 3) to provide a critical analysis and comparison of our current modernist

practices with a suggested postmodern approach; and, 4) to provide suggestions regarding the content for the development of a postmodern music education program at the universities.

It should be pointed out that the following is not intended to be an exhaustive critique of modernism and postmodernism but rather an attempt at challenging some of the specific dominant modernist characteristics of music education practices while suggesting some postmodern characteristics which pose the possibility of invigorating future music education practices. In addition, I fully realize the immensity of such a project as a result of the synthesis required of cross disciplinary information. I would like to make an initial apology to all disciplines involved, for what each could perceive as light treatment of their respective areas. However, my overall purpose is less in developing each area in depth than to present an alternative perspective so as to begin to formulate, present, and suggest a move 'towards' a better way of being both an 'educator' and 'musics educator' in todays public schools.

## CHAPTER 2

### MODERNIST\POSTMODERNIST PERSPECTIVES

In the following chapter, modernism and postmodernism will be discussed to establish relevant principles which delineate each perspective in relation to the art of music. This discussion will be followed by a questioning of the existing Euro-centric music canon and attendant educational practices.

#### Modernism

Modernist aesthetic theories have a long and distinguished history and support a particular view of the arts in society. Modernist philosophies and educational materials embody the position that good art is essentially 'autonomous' and 'universal' thereby transcending social connections and scrutiny for all time in all places. Modernist artistic ideals are based on a belief in hierarchical autonomous knowledge and the universal truths of the canons of Western works and thoughts.

Modernists tend to view music as somehow coming from above or from Nature and that ordinary mortals have little connection with its real construction. Artists simply have a 'gift' to express these universal truths. Susan McClary (1987) points out,

. . . from very early times [Pythagoras] up to and including the present, there has been a strain of Western culture that accounts for music in non-social, implicitly metaphysical terms. (p. 15)

In other words, advocates of the dominant Euro-centric culture take the position that ". . . we didn't make this up: this is simply the order of things" (p. 17).

Modernists of this persuasion view the purpose of the arts to be

. . . its capacity at its best to energize experience in special, worthwhile ways. This animating of experience has both affective and cognitive strands; feelings intensify at the same time as insights accrue. (Smith, 1986, p. 16)

The 'special, worthwhile ways' are a very specific type of experience defined by the term 'aesthetic', or as Smith has defined it, "this animating of experience . . ." where ". . . feelings intensify at the same time as insights accrue" (p. 16). The modernist view of what qualifies as an aesthetic experience and art is quite specific. Any artful experiences that fall outside this modernist definition (eg. rock, or rap) are not considered to be aesthetic or possibly to even qualify as art. Music outside the modernist definition is either considered 'entertainment' or 'non-music' and a good deal of what is heard on the radio today would, to the modernist, fall into these categories. It is the dissemination of the 'right knowledge' and exposure to

the approved 'masterworks' that is of paramount importance to the modernist music educator.

This tradition continues today and is backed by such respected aesthetic theorists and eminent scholars as Clive Bell, Leo Tolstoy, George Santayana, R. G. Collingwood and Susanne Langer.

Most modernists view the purpose of education in the arts ". . . to cultivate in students an educated capacity for the appreciation of aesthetic excellence [masterworks]" (Smith, p. 16). 'Aesthetic excellence' defines what is good, bad, inferior or non-art to the modernist, and to be educated in the arts means to be able to discern that which qualifies as being aesthetically excellent. Most of our current theories and practices of music education fall very much into this modernist category,

. . . which emphasizes that pupils are inheritors of a set of [approved] cultural values and practices, needing to master (sic) relevant skills and information in order to take part in musical affairs. (Swanwick, 1988, p.10)

Within the modernist tradition, schools and colleges are viewed as agents of transmission for the initiation into and guardianship of Western Civilization (Giroux & Simon, 1989). Traditional modernist educators have an allegiance to the canons of Western society and ascribe to a type of excellence which views popular culture ". . . as tasteless and dangerous threat to the notions of civility and order"

(p. 220). As Henry Giroux and Roger Simon state, modernists view schools as

. . . a particular way of life organized to produce and legitimate either the economic and political interests of business elites or the privileged cultural capital of ruling-class groups. Similarly, [the approach] . . . legitimate[s] forms of pedagogy that deny the voices, experiences, and histories through which students give meaning to the world and in doing so often reduce learning to the dynamics of transmission and imposition. (p. 220)

Examples of this modernist 'transmission and imposition' type of pedagogy in music education can be found in the very specific teacher-directed ways in which the students are taught the 'appropriate' cultural materials of the past: 1) 'classical' music theory, history, ear training and dictation; 2) how to perform and sound vocally and instrumentally in an appropriate 'classical' manner; 3) the learning to read and write music and to be able to perceive musical concepts, which are deemed to be appropriate and of substantial quality; and, 4) the gaining of familiarity with the 'masterworks'.

Swanwick (1988) argues that today's music education curriculum has been determined and developed by people whose philosophy and practice contain concepts which were closer to those who regarded themselves primarily as performing musicians than educators. His research suggests that the prevailing view of our modernist music curriculum has been

driven by the standards and practices of the professional performing musician of the Western 'serious' classical tradition (Swanwick, 1988, p. 9). Tait agrees and states that

the general model for teaching music has often been derived from the conservatory master (sic) teacher where the focus is on the musical score and the teacher analyzes the performance, identifies problems, and suggests remedies. (Tait, 1992, p. 532)

The notion that the teacher 'analyzes the performance', 'identifies the problems', and 'suggests the remedies' is consistent with the modernist view of education in that the teacher is the transmitter and dispenser of knowledge and the student absorbs and assimilates the privileged information. Music, like many other subjects, is pervaded with these type of expert\neophyte relationships, maestro (sic) conductor - musicians, virtuoso music teacher - dilettante music student, music critic - uninformed public, choir and ensemble conductors - amateur performers. None of this will seem particularly out of the ordinary to music students who have graduated from any public school music program or music conservatory system. However, the point is that it should be recognized as supporting a very definite modernist philosophy in regards to transmission and imposition approaches to music education where the teacher transmits and the students receive.

The actual method in which music is taught in the schools is to have students 'discover' and 'make conscious' (Kodaly, 1977) musical concepts by experiencing music through 'performing', 'creating/composing', and 'listening' (Taite, 1992). The discovering, to the modernist, is one which see the teacher providing leading questions in order to help the student discover the 'right' answers. Making conscious musical concepts involves the teacher in helping the students understand and internalize aspects of melody, e.g. going up - down - staying the same, harmony, e.g. consonance - dissonance - resolution, rhythm, tempo, texture, et cetera. In short, the process of involving the students in experiencing various musical concepts through performing, listening, and creating\composing actually becomes the modernists music educators primary method of music instruction. The modernist music educator would consider their students musically literate if they can read, write, and are able to perform music of quality in a manner which shows they have internalized and made conscious that which is musical in music, i.e. the musical concepts.

Another aspect of this tradition, which also makes it compatible with and appealing to the values and views of the modernist-orientated public education system today, is the practice of examinations and competitions which developed out of the conservatory tradition. This practice can be traced to a time before the life of Mozart's father, and it

has changed very little over time. These practical performance examinations, along with graduated testing regarding the rudiments of music, have been and are still part of the infrastructure of our current modernist music education programs in that they provide a convenient method of assessment (Eisner, 1985). There are very few individuals studying music today who have not either taken or been compared to the levels as laid out by various conservatory examination boards such as the Toronto Conservatory of Music.

Theoretical backing, in terms of laying out what is believed to be a 'natural' and 'universal' sequences of teaching and learning for the modernist traditional performance approach, has come from developmental psychologists such as James Mursell (1948) and Jean Piaget (1951), and continues today through the writings of Donald J. Hargraves (1986, 1992) and cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner (1993). One prime example of this child developmental - learning-through-performance-oriented program in our schools today is the Kodaly Method. This method is a highly structured sequencing of 'musical concepts' based on a child's psychological learning development. Zoltan Kodaly developed a method to teach the children of Hungary music reading, writing and singing skills. His methodology has been adapted to varying degrees and incorporated into many elementary methods developed and

used in North America such as Threshold to Music by M. Richards (1966); Making Music Your Own by Silver Burdett (1968); and Music and You ( MacMillan\McGraw-Hill, 1988).

Zoltan Kodaly

. . . was convinced that every child should learn to read music and articulate it vocally, otherwise: 'Millions are condemned to illiteracy, falling prey to the poorest of music'. (Kodaly, 1974, p. 119)

Kodaly believed that students should learn 'musical concepts' by being initiated and exposed to music of 'unquestioned quality', which generally meant beginning with the music of the folk tradition to be followed by exposure to the best music of the European classical tradition.

Another modernist music trend in North America came as a result of the 'aesthetic music education movement', mainly through the influential work of Bennett Reimer in the 1970's. Reimer's view was that the nature and value of music was aesthetic and, therefore, the nature and value of music education should also be aesthetic (Reimer, 1970). The 'aesthetic' approach involves using the well-established performance tradition as the means or method through which the true nature and value of music be taught. Simply put, the aesthetic movement is based on the belief that through *aesthetic perception* of the music (i.e. musical concepts/musical syntax), it allows music educators to reach their ultimate goal of having students access a 'superior' way of knowing the world. To achieve these goals, today's

modernist pedagogy is based on the strategy that only music of the highest quality be used, and that 'aesthetic perception' should be taught by having the students become active participants through actual involvement with the music. This aesthetic position represents the prevailing philosophical perspective of most modernist music educators today; however, the research suggests that, in practice, the aesthetic movement is less than successful as a result of a lack of curriculum material, an ineffective methodology and fundamentally misplaced philosophies of practicing music educators in North America (Wing, 1992).

To summarize, the modernist music educator believes that the teacher is the dispenser of knowledge and that the students should assimilate this knowledge by being exposed to musical concepts through performing, creating/composing, and listening. This approach has been and still is the most widely used method of instruction in the modernist approach to music education (Costanza, & Kussell, 1992). In addition, by utilizing the aesthetic theories of scholars such as Suzanne Langer, R. G. Collingwood and others, along with embracing ideas of the child development and aesthetic education movement, the modernist music education package appears scholarly, internally consistent and logical, if one understands and accepts its basic premises and points of departure.

### Postmodernism

The postmodernist view regarding education has developed out of a long and distinguished tradition of 'critical theorists' from various perspectives including Marxist aesthetics, The Frankfurt School of Theodore Adorno and others, Jacques Derrida and others, through to such eminent scholars as Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Henry Giroux, Stan Aronowitz, Maxine Greene, Janet Wolff, Richard Leppart, Peter McLaren and Susan McClary. Postmodernist educational material is extensive and growing in many different subject areas including Literature, Math, English (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991), Physical education (Hellison and Templin, 1991), Drama (Doyle, 1989) and Art (Jagodzinski, 1991) (Jencks, 1986). All, to varying degrees, invite the students to get involved in a process of 'naming', 'deconstruction', and 'critical reflection' in order to recognize the extent of inequalities in our society and, therefore, to open up the possibilities for human growth, development and equality.

A definition of postmodernism by one of its leading theorist, Jean-Francois Lyotard describes it as ". . . a rejection of grand narratives, metaphysical philosophies, and any other form of totalizing thought" (In Giroux, 1988). Dick Hebdige states that postmodernism rejects master narratives

. . . which set out to address a transcendental subject, to define an essential human nature, to prescribe a global human nature, to prescribe a global human destiny or to prescribe collective human goals. (In Giroux, 1988, p. 14)

Postmodernists tend to view the purpose of education to be ". . . unconcealment through naming and deconstruction" (Jencks, 1986 p. 23), and that ". . . truth is not correctness", but ". . . truth is opening and unconcealment" (Jagodzinski, 1991, p. 158).

Postmodernism does not have, by its very nature, a universal theory of culture or grand theory of implementation but, instead, offers a perspective from which to view the world. It is a view which problematizes received canons of truth by challenging and questioning in a manner which demonstrates that 'reason' and 'truth' are ways of organizing perception and communication (Giroux, 1988).

Postmodernism by itself ". . . is inadequate to the task of rewriting the emancipatory possibilities of the language and practice of a revitalized democratic public life" (Giroux, 1988, p. 26). However, by combining the modernist notions of public democracy and enlightenment of the individual with the postmodernist concern for difference, power and contextuality, it becomes possible to create an educational paradigm which is both political and pedagogical in its mandate.

The modernist language of democratic public life tends to separate abstract rights from everyday life, in addition to defining all aspects of the community as a 'one dimensional' historical and cultural creation (Giroux, 1988). Modernist pedagogy, being transmission and imposition - oriented tends to avoid looking into the notions of difference, power and contextuality, in addition to not adequately allowing for significant student involvement (Giroux & Simon, 1989).

Dealing with difference and pluralism in a postmodern fashion means not only being able to listen to and understand the voices of others but actually to engage them in the attempt to discover and to eliminate actual forms of inequalities. Therefore, education in postmodern terms can become both political and pedagogical as a result of having combined the modernist concepts of a democratic public life with the postmodernists notions of pluralism, difference and a particular desire to question. Teaching in the postmodern sense then becomes much more than just teaching a lifeless 'transmission and imposition' type of methodology as a result of being very much situated in everyday life.

A postmodernist approach to interpreting the arts would also provide both a political and educational perspective as a result of viewing art as a 'contextual aesthetic cultural/expression' (Greene, 1988; MacClary, 1991; Leppert, 1987; Hamblen, 1990; Duncum, 1991). In other words, with

this perspective the art experience is still viewed as being 'aesthetic'; however, as a result of the art work being perceived as a socially contextual aesthetic experience connected to everyday life, the interpretation of the experience takes on a specific pedagogical and political meaning.

Postmodernists, like modernists, view art as a unique way for humans to deepen life's experiences; however, the difference lies in the interpretation. It is the postmodern emphasis and belief that art is connected to everyday life, as opposed to the modernist belief in universal truth and autonomy, that takes the aesthetic experience from being elitist and accessible only to those who understand, to being something that every human being experiences and understands within a specific social, cultural and historical context. In other words, the modernist perception of an 'aesthetic experience' is more restricted and limited in terms of the kinds of experiences which would qualify as an aesthetic experience than that of the postmodernist. For example, a modernist would not generally consider a rap or country and western song as being potentially aesthetic in nature but would, instead, view it as non-art or as entertainment.

However, it should be pointed out that it can be misleading to use the term 'aesthetic' when discussing postmodernist and modernist perspectives because the

definition varies within each stance. To clarify its meaning in the postmodernist sense, other names, such as 'multiple aesthetics' (Duncum, 1991), 'ethnoaesthetics' (Hamblen, 1990), and 'aesthetic cultural production' (Firth, 1987) are sometimes used. The actual term 'aesthetic' is obviously still an extremely useful term for describing the artistic process and I will continue to use this term cautiously, being aware of and sensitive to its use in both the modernist and postmodernist sense.

The following statements given by Duncum (1991) reflect a typical postmodern contextual aesthetic/cultural position.

***1. Art is an active participant expressing differing views/beliefs/feelingfulness from competing social positions and not a passive reflection or expression of all society.***

The modernist perception of the universal and autonomous nature of art would exclude seeing multiplicity and difference in society to the degree that a postmodern position would advocate and demand. Art is to the postmodernist an active participant or part of everyday life, and is not viewed as a passive 'art as artifact' approach to art objects. All musics to the postmodern educator would be viewed as a socially contextual 'aesthetic' experience and would therefore accept all genres and styles of music into the classroom.

***2. Art opens doors while at the same time establishes door frames.*** Art to the postmodernist has the potential to

open up new aesthetic ways of knowing while still recognizing that these 'ways of knowing' are socially conceived and are in themselves establishing parameters and limits. By accepting all types and styles of music, it therefore becomes possible to open up new ways of knowing. Modernists tend to limit their experiences and ways of knowing by accepting a narrow view of what qualifies as music. Any music outside of the euro-centric tradition is often treated as non-art rather than as a cultural aesthetic expression and as a way of accessing more and different kinds of knowledge.

3. *Art is linked to all life - economic, political, social.* Art works to the postmodernist are influenced and driven by all aspects of society including the economic, political and social. However, the modernist often feels that art works which succumb to such worldly influences are considered to be inferior and unsuitable for the classroom. As a result, there is the good and acceptable music which is taught in the modernist music classroom and then there is the music which the students actually live and experience outside of class.

4. *Art works are viewed as both a response and contribution to inequalities and tensions of everyday life.* Art works to the postmodernist are not only actively responding to, but are also contributing to the opinions, feelings and perceptions of everyday life. In other words,

there is no neutral art to the postmodernist as a result of its socially contextual aesthetic nature. The failure to see all musics arising from everyday life not only makes the modernist position incapable of incorporating real student involvement but it also hinders modernists from seeing and understanding their own political agenda. Many modernist educators view their art as autonomous and universal constructs above the fury and complexities of everyday life, making the educative process elitist, aloof, detached and often irrelevant to everyday student life. It is exactly this perspective which makes the modernist position incapable of incorporating real student involvement into education.

5. *Art is a constitutive complex networks of beliefs, values and meanings that prevail in society and which are an integral part of society.* Simply put, art is not created in a vacuum, autonomous from and outside of society, but is a socially contextual aesthetic form arising out of society.

The implications of perceiving and accepting art as a socially contextual aesthetic experience is the pivotal assumption which will allow for the creation, development and adoption of a postmodern paradigm for the teaching of music education which will be further developed in the following chapters. In the meantime, the following section will present examples of disciplines that have been questioning established canons of Western Works and Thought.

Questioning the Euro-centric Canon and its Pedagogy

*To question the most basic principles of modernity is tantamount, not only to redefining the meaning of schooling, but also to calling into question the very basis of our history, our cultural criticism, and our manifestations and expressions of public life. In effect, to challenge modernism is to redraw and revamp the very nature of our social, political, and cultural geography. (Giroux, 1988)*

As previously mentioned, modernist ideals are based on a belief in hierarchical knowledge and the universal truths regarding the canon of Western works and thought and it is ". . . the postmodern position [that] interrogates the priority of canonicity itself (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991 p. 17). In Silverman's (1990) words,

*Where modernism asserts centering, focusing, continuity . . . postmodernism decenters, enframes, discontinues, and fragments the prevalence of modernist ideals. (p. 5)*

and confronts any notions of universal autonomy by deconstructing and placing the canon within a situated social context.

Over the last fifteen years there have been major changes, as a result of work done in the fields of feminism, semiotics and critical theory, in the ways in which the arts have been studied. This is most apparent in the areas of literature, film, and the visual arts where two hundred year old modernist assumptions and notions that ". . . art

constitutes an autonomous sphere, separate and insulated from the outside social world" (Leppert & MacClary, 1987, p. xii) have begun to be seriously questioned.

In the visual arts there is considerable debate and controversy regarding the modernist position as advocated by Elliot Eisner and Ralph Smith in their Discipline Based Arts Education (dbae) approach to art education. In *Beyond dbae: The Case for Multiple Visions of Art Education*, a collection of essays are compiled to present very cogent arguments outlining the narrowness of the dbae (modernist) approach to both the perception and teaching of the visual arts (Burton, Lederman & London, 1988). One of the main criticism of dbae and its modernist approach is the emphasis on the 'masterworks' in a manner which excludes or places little importance on students' experiences of art. Thomas Ewens feels that in dbae the ". . . experience of art itself has been truncated and academicized" (Ewens, 1988, p. 20).

Ewens' position is similar to that of Peter London in that he feels

. . . experience, growth and learning [in the arts] comes about as a consequence of a direct encounter with life . . . instead dbae seems to hold that an understanding and appreciation of the accomplishments of others [masterworks] will lead the current generation to respect and emulate the achievements of the best of the brightest of their forbearers. (London, 1988, p. 38)

Some of the critics of dbae feel that not only is the emphasis on 'the masterworks' narrow and confining but, also, that the pedagogy goes against the very nature of teaching the arts. In other words, both dbae and its critics agree that the arts are aesthetic in nature but the difference lies in a) what they feel is important to teach - masterworks i.e. content; and, b) how the arts should be taught - transmission/imposition type of pedagogy.

Dbae typifies a modernist position and many of its critics have, to varying degrees, postmodern inclinations. London and Ewens exemplify individuals who have postmodern leanings in regard to both content and pedagogy, for they feel that the very nature of art requires its participants to experience and be involved in art before concept clarification regarding history, criticism or aesthetics occur. As Ewens points out ". . . if students can once taste this in their own work and that of others, then they will be likely to seek more information" (Ewens, 1988, p.20).

Gilson stated that, "All men (sic) ultimately desire to know what they love" (In Ewens, 1988, p. 20). In fact, 'passion before concepts' might be a good postmodern motto for teaching the arts for it is possible to have involvement before or even without concept clarification, as is evident in our students' love and involvement in their own music or for that matter, most people's love and involvement in a variety of musics including country, pop, reggae, folk, and

classical. It is this personal involvement and cultural specificity that postmodern educators feel is the missing link in most of our existing modernist pedagogy. Paulo Freire's pedagogy is built, in part, on these concepts in what he calls using students 'generative-themes' and 'problematized dialogue' as a starting point for educational encounters (Freire, 1988).

According to many critical theorists, our modernist teaching in education and particularly in the arts is based on a process which Paulo Freire describes as 'banking'. That is, many of our students today engage only in transference learning which requires them to take in and regurgitate the 'right knowledge', with little or no critical thinking taking place. Freire suggests a type of schooling which would see teachers use material that is relevant and meaningful i.e. 'generative themes', and these themes would be 'problematized' through dialogue (Freire, 1985). By problematizing dialogue Freire means that the teacher would ask pointed questions regarding the generative themes and, through this process, students would come to discover, re-create and re-write educational, cultural, historical, political ideas and concepts in relation to their own lives. As Wallerstein (1987) explains, this approach to education

. . . is based on Freire's view of the learner and of knowledge: the learner is not an empty vessel to be filled by the teacher, nor an object of education. . . Learners enter into the process of learning not by acquiring facts, but by

constructing their reality in social exchange with others. (p. 34)

The main objective of this dialogic process is to encourage learning through the problematizing of 'generative themes' i.e. meaningful personal experiences. In the case of postmodern music education, the meaningful experiences could include the students encounter with the music/text and it would be these meaningful themes that would initiate the learning process. As Winterowd (1987) explains,

one lives in a 'thematic universe', a web of interlocking concerns, and it is these 'generative themes' that form the basis for Freire's pedagogical method, which relies not so much on technic (e.g., phonic, drills, reading, attack skills) as what might be called rhetoric [problematized dialogue] that is, the relationship of words to the thematic universe in which the subjects live, and of the two, rhetoric makes meaning. (Winterowd, p. 7)

Freire's approach for the utilization of generative themes is similar to that suggested by Ewens and London regarding the idea of 'passion before concept'. In other words Paulo Freire, Thomas Ewens and Peter London all require the student to come into the learning experience through being a part of a meaningful art experience.

However, it should be noted that Freire's approach does take the process one step further than Ewens or London by suggesting the use of 'praxis', that is, 'action with reflection'. As Florence Tague states:

Freire's pedagogy insists on a deep connection between the culture of

everyday life and radical politics. For Freire, critical consciousness and the dissection of themes from daily life is an ongoing process that grows out of praxis and leads to further praxis. (In McLaren, p. 195, 1989)

The use of 'action with reflection' is necessary to assist the student in moving from being simply functionally musically literate in the modernist sense, i.e. reading, writing, and ability to identify musical concepts, to also becoming critically literate and aware that music is a culturally contextual art form that does express the day-to-day struggles of society. As such, music can help us understand ourselves as historical, ethnic, class-bound, and gendered subjects within society. As McLaren (1989) explains

Critical literacy, . . . involves decoding the ideological dimensions of texts, institutions, social practices, and cultural forms such as television and film, in order to reveal their selective interests. The purpose behind acquiring this type of literacy is to create a citizenry critical enough to both analyze and challenge the oppressive characteristics of the larger society so that a more just, equitable, and democratic society can be created. (p. 196)

In addition, one further benefit of problematizing generative themes leading to reflective action is that the students will not only display more interest in learning but will also more likely take greater ownership and responsibility for their learning (Wallerstein, 1987, p. 34) as a result of being personally involved in the process.

As previously mentioned, other school disciplines are also questioning some of the long-held assumptions regarding the philosophy and pedagogy of their subjects. However, in music education, there appear to be only hints of a growing concern with the implicit assumptions and the resultant methods and philosophies as advocated by individuals such as Bennett Reimer, Ralph Smith and Harry Broudy (Leppert & MacClary, 1987; Leppert, 1991; Roberts, 1991; Bowman, 1993; Andrews, 1993; Walker, 1993; Green, 1994). It appears that

. . . the only one of the arts that has remained largely untouched by such redefinitions of method and subject matter in its academic discipline is music. For the most part, the discourse of musical scholarship clings stubbornly to a reliance on positivism in historical research and formalism in theory and criticism, with primary attention still focused almost exclusively on the canon. (Leppert & MacClary, 1987, p. xii)

Janet Wolff speculates that the notion of the autonomy of art goes back to the Renaissance's idea of the artist as distinct from craftsperson. Events which influenced this distinction were ". . . the end of dependence on the guilds; improved economic situation; abandonment of the requirement that the artist provide a guarantor for a contract, and emancipation from direct commission" (In Leppert & McClary, 1987, p. 3). These ideas, combined with the modernist concept of artist as genius and the belief that the genius personality transcends tradition, theory, rules and even the

work itself, have all contributed to the notion of the art's autonomy. In other words, the individualism of the liberal-humanist tradition, combined with mercantile capitalism, both confirms and reinforces the modernist ideology of the artist as sole and privileged originator of a work of art. The perpetuation of the myth that art was an activity which transcends the social is very much alive in modernist music today (Leppart & McClary, 1987).

In response to this stubborn adherence to the modernist euro-centric canon prevalent in music and music education today, I will suggest an alternative postmodern music education paradigm that will combine the postmodernist position regarding what constitutes an education, i.e., the naming and deconstruction of positions of power (Giroux & McLaren, 1988; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Freire, 1985), coupled with viewing the arts as being a 'socially contextual aesthetic experience' (Hamblen, 1990; Wolff, 1984; Greene, 1978; Duncum, 1989; Leppert & MacClary, 1987).

The position advocated here is not intended to denigrate in any way any musical form, elitist or not. The Western European classical music which modernists value is a contextually significant and a perfectly valid and beautiful art form and one which occupies most of my own listening habits; but, from the perspective of the postmodern music educator, the music many modernist educators, critics, and musicians value is just one of many forms or types, each of

which has its own aesthetic and artistic principles that must be viewed through the appropriate lens. To the postmodern music educator it is a matter of developing a type of 'perception consciousness' so as to be able to value all types and kinds of music as a socially contextual aesthetic/cultural experience.

However, the position advocated is extremely critical of the narrowness of perspective that many modernist hold regarding aesthetic principles and the transmission and imposition approach to pedagogy. In short, it is the approach, philosophy and attendant pedagogical practices that are being taken to task and not the music itself.

In the following Chapter, I will suggest a postmodern 'socially contextual aesthetic' position that could effectively serve music education practitioners in being more inclusive and accepting of all types and genre of music. In addition, I will suggest that music educators can use 'critical theory' as an interpretive tool for examining both the music and text of the art form, including its extra-musical, social, cultural and historical meanings within society.

## CHAPTER 3

## DEVELOPING A POSTMODERN PARADIGM FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Aesthetic Position

The postmodernist aesthetic position being advocated for music educators would view music as a 'socially contextual aesthetic expression' (Greene, 1988; Wolff, 1981; Herndon & McLeod, 1989; Hamblen, 1990). The postmodern aesthetic experience would be much broader and more inclusive of all types and kinds of 'feelingfulness', than that which modernists such as Ralph Smith or Bennett Reimer might describe (Smith, 1986; Reimer, 1992). It would accept other 'expressive - representational - intellectual - cultural - aesthetic' aspects which the modernist might exclude. Just as Langer's view of an aesthetic experience accepts the inclusion of 'referential' and 'intellectual' material into the modernist aesthetic experience (Langer, 1953), so would this postmodern position accept other aspects as being a part of the contextual aesthetic experience (Greene, 1988). Much of society's music is kinaesthetic, visual, aural, verbal and tactile, and the subsuming of all these aspects into the art work would be to the postmodernist as legitimate and valid as Langer

accepting referential and intellectual material into modernist 'classical' music.

In addition, we see in the theatre arts that the study of semiotics explores both the aesthetic and extra-aesthetic meanings that are produced, by looking at areas such as proxemics, kinesics, dress, gesture, and language (Wolff, 1987). Therefore, so would the postmodernist music educator accept a larger and more inclusive view and perspective of what makes up a musical experience. For example, listening to our popular music on a compact disk is one type of experience, adding video is another, and hearing the same piece of music in a rock concert is still another. In other words, each experience is different and requires the participant to approach each with the appropriate contextual set of aesthetic expectations. Similarly, listening to a song by Dan Hill with the same tonal and stylistic expectation one would anticipate finding in a Mozart symphony not only does not work, but it misses the whole point that the songs of Dan Hill are as valid an artistic expression as any Mozart symphony and that Dan Hill's music contains ways of knowing which are only accessible through the tradition and songs of Dan Hill and not that of a Mozart symphony. It is little wonder that modernist educators who compare the euro-centric classical tradition with popular music often say they find it loud, simplistic and offensive, because the students and the modernist teachers are using

two very different sets of valuative parameters. It is like comparing apples to oranges and then saying that an apple is inferior, simplistic and offensive because it is not the same as the orange.

The postmodern aesthetic paradigm advocated here would position the role of aesthetic theorists, from all genres, as interpreters of the artistic process. As interpreters, the aestheticians would not, as often occurs in the modernist tradition, be the ones who judge, decide, and tell the listeners or the artists what does or does not qualify as art or what is or is not an authentic aesthetic experience. As Greene asserts,

[t]he point, again, is not to prescribe; it is not conclusively to explain. It is to increase the likelihood of people actively engaging with works of art . . . . Explicit [modernist] definitions can only get in the way and create a type of paralysis. [The use of postmodern aesthetic theories] . . . is to provoke attentiveness to features of works of art that might otherwise be unheard or unseen. (Greene, 1986, p. 60)

Greene's use of aesthetics is that of a tool to assist in provoking contextual attentiveness so that individuals can become more familiar and intimate with the art form; to the postmodern music educator, this would make eminent sense.

The postmodern music education position advocated also allows, views, and understands all music as existing to be experienced. Therefore, one of the main objectives of the

postmodernist public school music educator is to have students experience all musics within the appropriate contextual expectations. By proceeding in this manner, the teaching process moves from one of imparting and judging to one of experiencing the art work for its own unique kind of artistic/aesthetic contextual knowledge.

Postmodernist music educators adopting this position would also understand that music, as a result of its contextual artistic creative nature, will evolve and change and so should its interpretative aesthetic principles. The greatest weakness of modernist aesthetics, narrowness of interpretation, has occurred as a result of trying to describe new musics with old interpretive tools. The old modernist parameters that helped interpret a certain type of music, Western European 'classical' music, are not appropriate or adequate in perpetuity for all types of music. As Maxine Greene, (1986) states ". . . the spaces of aesthetic education, then, must remain open, even as the spaces of education generally must remain open (Greene, p.60). In short, postmodern educators would never include all musics into one stagnant monolithic aesthetic theory. It might be said that modernist aesthetic theories have tended to 'high-jack' the aesthetic experience. It is, as Maxine Greene says, ". . . when they [modernists] listen to new music it is as if they are afraid to have an aesthetic

experience in case they are wrong" (personal conversation, 1993).

Finally, the postmodern aesthetic position being proposed for music education is motivated and driven by similar concerns as those expressed by Hamblen (1990) regarding the visual arts.

Given the pluralistic nature of our society and the need for students to be critical and discerning thinkers, it will be proposed that art education should be concerned with multiple aesthetic literacies or, at the very least, a reflective, critically conscious stance toward the form of [modernist] aesthetic literacy presented in the schools. (Hamblen, p. 217)

Music education also requires the same type of critical reflection and consideration of its many obvious musical multiplicities. In the following section, critical theory will be discussed for its usefulness as a tool for interpreting all musics.

#### Critical Theory as an Interpretive Tool

The critical theorist's methods of discovery and interpretation are of a more scholarly and academic nature while the artist's are more artistic and aesthetic. In other words, one way of knowing is 'discursive knowing', that is, knowledge gained by reasoning, and the other 'non-discursive or artistic', is knowledge gained through arts contextually symbolic aesthetic language. Both ways of knowing are very

valuable and useful for the music educator and can assist in the quest for a better understanding of all types of music. It is for this very reason that the postmodernist music education paradigm suggested here also encompasses the use of critical theory as an interpretive tool.

The adoption and use of critical theory as an interpretive tool would bring about major changes in our current music education profession. Rather than viewing music as a universal and autonomous phenomenon, as musicians and music educators, we would question how our musical ". . . knowledge [has been] socially produced, legitimated, and distributed, [and make] explicit the ways in which such production, legitimation, and distribution [has taken] place" (Simon, 1983, p. 1119). We would begin to understand that our musical knowledge expresses and embodies the interests and values of some groups and individuals over others, and that this difference reflects issues of power, influence and control.

A critical analysis of modernist aesthetics and its relationship to music might very well reveal that the modernists who are more involved with justification and definitions rather than interpretation might be doing so as a result of wanting to maintain positions of power and dominance (Jagodzinski, 1991). As Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) have pointed out,

[p]ostmodernist criticism shows that the category of [modernist] aesthetics

presupposes a social hierarchy whose key is the description of exclusions, which are imbedded in the compositional conventions employed in the works. . . [as well as] in the institutions of artistic dissemination. (p. 17)

An area in need of deconstruction and demystification would include the position of control and domination that euro-centric classical music has in most universities, as well as its influence and control over public school music education beliefs and practices. In fact, this issue is exactly what a good portion of this study is trying to address.

It should therefore not be surprising that most facets of our current education system have been influenced by our generally myopic view regarding Western civilization and that music educators have all too readily accepted most if not all of the incontestable dictated canons of the euro-centric musical tradition (Wolff, 1984; MacClary, 1991; Green, 1994). However, for the postmodernist, it becomes a matter of asking pointed questions. Our modernist pedagogy tends to ask questions which have been skewed by the dominant ideologies of industry and the market place. Questions that are usually of the 'how can we do it better and more efficiently' variety, rather than questions of 'why are we doing it in the first place' and 'whose interests are being served'. Our current modernist 'methods orientated' music pedagogy has been consumed by these type of 'how to'

questions, questions that have more to do with efficiency, technique and production (Eisner, 1985).

In addition, our current music pedagogy has been strongly influenced by the scientific tradition that is positivistic in its outlook and approach to education. Bredo & Feinberg (1982) explain:

Positivists view knowledge as neutral, value-free, and objective, existing totally outside of human consciousness. Further, knowledge is completely separate from how people use it. Learning is the discovery of these static facts and their subsequent description and classification. (In Frankenstein, 1987, p. 181)

In other words, our education systems are ". . . characterized as basically [being] scientific in their assumptions, systematic in their procedures, and means-ends orientated in their view of education planning" (Eisner, 1985, p. 12).

However, once we start reflecting critically on our practice, these more profound 'why' questions can come to the surface. The variety of perspectives offered within critical educational theory can provide the theoretical and analytical underpinnings for some of these 'why' questions. Postmodern musical knowing then becomes tied in with history, culture, ethics, politics, and future aesthetic possibilities.

We should also realize that the theoretically true critical approach requires more than merely acknowledging

difference and pluralism; it should also lay out a political agenda of ". . . empowerment as a stepping stone to social reconstruction" (Duncum, 1991, p. 55) by way of 'action'. Duncum personally advocates a strategy which adopts Freire's concept of 'action' in his approach to teaching the visual arts in a program called Cultural Literacy Art Education (CLAE), (p 50).

It is the 'action' component that takes the musical experience beyond just simply being an 'art for art sake' experience, into the cultural, economic, historic and political realities of everyday life. "Thus, studying art [music] takes us to the very core of our social structure, and it does so because art [music] is constitutive of a complex network of beliefs, values and meaning that prevail in society" (p. 53). The driving force behind the action component is the desire to bring about a 'critical consciousness' in students (Shor, 1987) and, thus, to fuel their desire for a better world.

Our current university music education training programs ask educators to instruct in a manner so that the students will experience that which the teacher considers musical in music. However, once this is accomplished, the modernist music educator believes that the work has been completed. Any suggestion of doing more, such as taking a position which might demystify issues of power and domination, so as to further the move towards a more

egalitarian and democratic state through taking action, is often viewed by many arts or music educators as someone else's responsibility. A usual response by music educators would be to avoid involvement in what they see as covert and/or subversive political activity. However, modernist music educators should understand that knowledge is not neutral, that all education is political (Freire, 1985) and that their very silence is a form of political involvement, a complicity with the status quo. Susan McClary states, "For music is always a political activity, and to inhibit criticism of its effects for any reason is likewise a political act" (McClary, 1991, p. 26).

An interesting suggestion regarding 'action' has been made by Gablik (1986) who believes that we need the return of the Shaman to bring the 'purpose' of the arts back to the people. In other words, art to Gablik is something which not only is connected to life but should also open up other ways of knowing about life and it was the Shaman, in the North American indigenous population, who filled this role.

However, unlike Gablik, who suggests that the artist should take on this role, I believe that artists should only create the 'means or medium' ". . . to balance and centre society. . . and [as a means or medium] of integrating many planes of life's-experiences and of . . . defining the cultures relationship to the cosmos" (Gablik, 1984, p. 126) and it should be up to 'educators' to take on the 'action'

role of Shaman. However, regardless of the type or who initiates the action, most postmodernists believe they do need more than the narrow justification tactics of many modernist music educators who are often involved only in the furthering of specific stylistic causes, through what Gablik calls "stylistic gamesmanship" (sic) (1984).

Postmodern music educators believe there is a need for a more aggressive educational philosophy than the generally benign objectives which currently drive our modernist arts and music pedagogies. The critical stance, which includes 'naming and deconstruction' followed by 'action', as tools for uncovering issues of power and domination in order to make possible the move towards achieving a more egalitarian society - appears to many postmodern educators to be an ethically reasonable objective and one which is certainly better than silent complicity which seems to only want " . . . to cultivate in students an educated capacity for the appreciation of [only modernist] aesthetic excellence" (Smith, p. 16).

In short, I suggest that the best person to take on this role of the 'action orientated Shaman' would be the 'critically positioned arts or music educator' who understands both the formalistic and aesthetic parameters of all musics, along with the contextual aspects gleaned through the use of critical theory. Understanding the formalistic aspects of the music of any genre, i.e., rock,

classical, rap, and jazz is not enough, for it will result in and continue to perpetuate the same narrow 'stylistic gamesmanship' rampant in modernist arts and music education circles today where artists, critics and educators often become only interested in the furthering of their own specific stylistic causes (Gablik, 1984).

In addition to using critical theory to unpack the ways in which teachers deal with the processes of music education, it can also be used for giving added depth of meaning to the music itself. An example of such analysis has been completed by Susan MacClary, a traditionally trained modernist musicologist who uses critical theory to unpack 'the music itself', particularly in relation to gender inequities in both composition and performance practices (MacClary, 1991). MacClary (1991) writes of her forays into such analysis:

Yet, once again, it has always been music itself that has compelled me into these dark alleys, that has kept me searching for explanations beyond the scope of the autonomous analytical techniques musicology and music theory offered me. For if the principal obstacle to dealing with music critically has been its claim to nonrepresentationality, then critical and cultural theories make it possible to challenge not only the more superficial aspects of music (setting of song texts, the delineation of characters in operas, the references to explicit literary sources in program music) but, more important, its very core: its syntactical procedures and structural conventions. Thus it is at this level that much of my critique is

aimed - at the narrative impulses  
underlying sonata-allegro form and even  
tonality itself. (p. 31)

As a result of rethinking and accepting the role of postmodern contextual aesthetics, the use of critical theory as an interpretative tool for both the music/text and its cultural implications, along with the use of a pedagogy that employs generative themes through problematized dialogue, a much larger and more relevant view of all types of aesthetic experience and ways of knowing can be understood within its particular context in society. This approach would allow music educators to accept all styles and genres as worthy of attention and would view artistic creation as contextual works to be experienced for their aesthetic/artistic knowledge and not as bits of privileged information to be memorized and canonized.

The postmodern paradigm suggested here would offer a welcome change in direction for music educators 'on the front lines'. Many of these educators are seeing and experiencing in their students a seeming lack of concern and view of irrelevancy towards the art, or at least towards the type of modernist music currently being taught in schools (Tait, 1992).

The postmodernist understands that the public and our students are involved with 'aesthetic experiences' in everyday life (Winterowd, 1987), and it is part of our mandate as musics educators to assist them in expanding

their horizons and experiences of all types and kinds of musical experiences, all of which, to the postmodernist, have something unique to offer. The intention of the postmodern music educator is not to hierarchize various types of aesthetic/artistic experiences but rather to question the existing hierarchies and to open up new aesthetic possibilities to the student so they may understand these experiences as other ways of knowing. In short, the purpose of art to the postmodern educator is to provide a vehicle for human beings to deepen life's experiences (Greene, 1988) and the ultimate objective of music education is to assist in this discovery. By encouraging or presenting only a small fragment of what actually exists in the world of music through the use of a 'transmission', 'banking', and 'imposition' type of modernist pedagogy, we are limiting possibilities rather than "increasing the range and scope of possibilities" (Simon, 1983, p. 1120). The broader our aesthetic experiences the better our understanding of multiple realities. The better our understanding of multiplicity the more we are in touch with humanity, thereby increasing our capacity to become more human, alive and a better participant in the creation of our own knowing.

To summarize the strands of the argument so far, I am interested in a music education which acknowledges musical diversity and pluralism, that recognizes societies lived

musical experiences, that understands music as a contextually aesthetic way of knowing, that acknowledges the arts are 'about' and 'contain' issues of power and domination, and that education in the arts needs to be proactive and 'action' oriented. I am also interested in utilizing a music pedagogy that emphasizes bringing the students into a 'meaningful' personal relationship with the art of music as a part of the learning process.

In the following chapter, current modernist music education practices will be compared to a postmodern approach regarding: 1) a modernist elementary music methodology currently used in the public schools in both Canada and the United States; and, 2) the Nova Scotia Music Teaching Curriculum Guides.

## CHAPTER 4

## CURRENT MODERNIST MUSIC EDUCATION PRACTICES

A Comparison of Modernist Music Method to a Postmodern  
Approach

The Music and You (Staton and Staton et al, 1988) music series has been chosen to demonstrate a comparison of the modernist and postmodernist approach as a result of it being a synthesis of many modernist approaches used in music education over the last hundred years. The Music and You series utilizes an integrated approach of the Kodaly, Orff and Dalcroze methods of teaching music, in addition to using ". . . the wealth of research derived from the Comprehensive Musicianship Project, Manhattanville Project, Kodaly Institute, Dalcroze Society, Orff-Schulwerk and aesthetic education movements" (Staton and Staton, 1991, p. iv). The series presents all musical concepts in an "easy to use, sequential format" (p. 243) and is one of the most popular elementary methods used in Nova Scotia schools today.

An analysis of this popular modernist elementary method will show how students are led to discover 'musical concepts' such as melody, harmony, rhythm, tone colour, texture and form by having them 'make conscious' the musical concepts being taught. For example, in Lesson Four for Grade

Two it states that the focus of the lesson is rhythm, with the objective of the lesson being 1) to sing, play, and move to the beat, and 2) to clap and say Ta, Tee-Tee, Ta (quarter note, two eighth notes, quarter note) rhythmically. The appraisal or student evaluation at the end of the lesson is designed to determine if the students did in fact learn the stated objectives by having them perform on a rhythm instrument, sing or rhyme in time, and move to the beat when the recordings are played in class. In addition, 'echo' work between teachers and students is carried out with various combinations of ta, and tee-tee notes to reinforce the learning. In short, the students are exposed to the musical concepts of melody, harmony, rhythm, et cetera, through a process of teacher-directed discovery followed by an assessment in which students are encouraged to show that they have in fact learned these musical concepts by demonstrating them in behavioral terms.

The postmodern approach would proceed in a different manner by having students discover the musical concepts through utilizing the process of 'problematized dialogue'. The two approaches differ in that 1) the musical concepts being taught by the postmodern educator would arise out of the music that the students find meaningful, and 2) the utilization of 'problematized dialogue' would be directed at the aesthetic issues arising out of both the musical

concepts, the text, and the extra-musical social, political, and cultural considerations.

The modernist would proceed with the teaching of musical concepts guided by a scope and sequence chart, while the postmodernist would be guided by the concepts found in the student's meaningful music. Meaningful experiences with the music are central to the postmodern process. While a meaningful encounter to the modernist would be very acceptable and encouraged, it is in fact secondary or incidental to the ordered sequence of teaching musical concepts. In addition, and probably most importantly, the modernist pedagogy is said to be complete once the musical concept has been 'made conscious', where as the postmodern approach would continue with problematized dialogue of the aesthetic, cultural, social and political aspects of the art work.

The Music and You method does include both absolute music and vocal music, however, it is more concerned with what could be described as musical literacy (the learning of absolute musical concepts and the ability to read and write notation) than with discussing aesthetic/artistic aspects of the musical experience of either vocal or absolute music. The study of and exposure to musical concepts of absolute music is the major focus within most modernist methods. In other words, melody, harmony, rhythm, pitch and tone colour receive the most attention, while the study of the poetry,

text, contextual aesthetic and critical aspects of a piece of music receives little or no attention.

The type of dialogue which most often occurs in the modernist music class is one which usually sees the teacher uncovering or having the students discover the 'right' musical concept answers. Understanding and making conscious musical concepts in itself is a reasonable and desirable achievement, but to the postmodern music educator it is only the first step in the process. Music students do need to understand, feel and be able to appreciate these musical concepts, but they must also be able to link these feelings and experiences about the art of music to their own situatedness and existence in the world. The agenda is much larger for the postmodernist music educator than simply making conscious musical concepts.

The difference between 'problematized dialogue' of a meaningful experience and the 'discovery learning' of a modernist musical experience is that, in the latter case, the discovery for the student in musical terms is predetermined and becomes the end in itself. The modernist is primarily concerned with exposing their students to the predetermined musical concepts, while the music's critical interpretation and contextual aesthetic discussion is generally not on the agenda.

Many modernists state that it is impossible to talk about musical experiences (Reimer, 1970). In one sense, this

notion is probably correct in that words cannot replace or even come close to replicating the contextually aesthetic musical experience. However, from an educational point of view, dialogue becomes an extremely important means of communicating with students. True dialogue is two way and, unfortunately, our current modernist practices do not encourage the mutuality of dialogue. As Tait (1992) explains, "[p]erhaps more significant is that the verbal component [used in music classrooms] appears to be one directional: It is initiated by the teacher and continues to flow from teacher to students" (p. 527).

Two-way dialogue, to the postmodernist, is obviously much more than just the teacher talking to the students or the teacher having students 'discover' and 'make conscious' predetermined musical concepts. The research shows that "[t]hough music teachers talk for significant periods of time, the [modernist] talk does not appear to relate positively to student learning" (Tait, 1991, p. 528).

The following lesson presented in the Music and You series will be adapted to reflect a postmodern manner of teaching music especially in regards to the use of problematized dialogue. In looking at the Unit One overview in the Music and You Grade 8 book, the action words include: identify, discuss, compare, define, analyze, listen, create, and perform. In most of the action words used above, dialogue and teacher-student communications becomes

absolutely essential. The educational objective of this unit is to explore various musical styles, through identifying, discussing, defining, analyzing, creating and performing the various elements of music, i.e., dynamics, tone colour, tempo, pitch, texture, form, style, and reading. The objectives outlined in this lesson state that the students should come to understand and be able to 1) know what makes one style different from another; 2) identify and define style; 3) identify difference in form; and, 4) be able to perform simple accompaniments in different styles. Again, these activities, to the postmodern educator, should be viewed as only the first steps while recognizing that what must be added is the 'problematized dialogue' component regarding context, history, culture, and politics. In other words, each of the styles discussed - reggae, bwala dance from Uganda, the Kyrie from the Mass in G Minor by Vaughan Williams, African drumming, calypso, a Japanese Wind Dance, et cetera - would be discussed in term of the aesthetic and critical concerns surrounding each style.

For example, the lesson on Calypso which uses the song "Run Joe" is the story of two brothers who are in trouble with the law for stealing. As a result of the postmodernist view of all music, in this particular case the Calypso song, as an example of a 'culturally aesthetic' means of representing these kinds of struggles, the words and musical effects together can be the method of opening up a

conversation (problematized dialogue) regarding the poor in Trinidad and Canada, theft and the type of life style that the poor in Jamaica and Canada have to live. It could lead to discussions on inequalities and difference, power and domination, or any number of areas that would arise as a result of the meaningful aesthetic contextual experience.

Therefore, as a result of the 'feelingfulness' that the text relates to the students own life, the song takes on a relevance and added meaning that could have been missed if the musical concepts had been the only or main focus of attention, as is the case in the Music and You series. By proceeding in this postmodern manner, the music becomes much more than just a curious and delightful rhythmic ditty from some country in the Caribbean but, rather, it takes on a sense of community and sharing of concerns coming out of the students' meaningful musical experience. This sharing of concerns, to the postmodernist, should also lead to action. In other words, by experiencing all musics as an expression of life's everyday's joys and struggles the art form can be used as a spring board for social awareness leading to reflective action. As McLaren (1989) explains,

[t]o be committed to cultural action for *conscientization* means not only to engage in a vigorous form of ideology criticism but also to take part in a praxis (action based on reflection) . . . Freire's utopian project addresses the need for a fundamental faith in human dialogue and community. Becoming literate (musically) is not just a cognitive process (learning to read,

write and identify musical concepts) of decoding signs, but of living one's life in relation to others. (p. 195)

In addition to discussing and taking action regarding these types of political and cultural issues, the 'musical concepts' themselves should also be problematized and not simply pointed out. For example, syncopation, V-I harmony, and specific types of Caribbean rhythmic accompaniment, can be problematized so students can come to understand what is actually going on musically. To the postmodern music educator, it becomes necessary not only to point out (make conscious) the musical concepts but to be able to actually problematize and discuss these musical tendencies with the students.

Postmodern music pedagogy requires a language of aesthetics which is understandable to all grade levels. Modernist aesthetic language is academic, removed from everyday life and of little consequence and relevance to both the performing musician and modernist trained music educator working in the classroom.

The type of language which could be used can be gleaned from the work of Leonard B. Meyer (1955; 1967). Theodore Ziolkowski notes that Meyer is an author who ". . . has written here the first significant post-modern aesthetics" (Meyer, back cover, 1967). The type of language used by Meyer is particularly appropriate for helping describe what goes on in the music.

Briefly, Meyer explains that absolute music's affect (emotions) comes from musical tendencies that are either held or deviated from expected completion. In other words, deviation, in musical terms, creates the affect or emotion. For example, in discussing the V-I harmony utilized in the Calypso song, the postmodern educator would use a language that would talk in terms of musical tendencies and the 'push and pull' regarding these tendencies. A single chord by its self is meaningless; however, in combination with other chords more direction and meaning can be felt through what we expect to be completed. It is a matter of developing a language that can help verbalize these musical tendencies at the students level which will be a real challenge for the postmodern music educator since it does not exist in our current music pedagogy.

Our existing modernist music education vocabulary tends to be derived from professional performing musicians and ". . . may be technical, conceptual, or aesthetic. Words such as vibrato, articulation, and legato are technical; words such as tone, rhythm, and crescendo are conceptual; words such as blend, balance, and intensity are aesthetic" (Tait, p. 526, 1992). What is missing is an 'age appropriate' contextual aesthetic language, suitable for and made by music educators, not by professional musicians, that will bring meaningful two way problematized dialogue into the postmodern music classroom.

Modernist music educators believe that the arts have a humanizing effect. I would agree, but only if the process involves problematized dialogue which results in critical reflection and thinking regarding all aspects of the contextual aesthetic experience i.e. musical, cultural, social, political. A sterile understanding of musical concepts alone will not result in anything close to a humanizing effect, whether in elementary school or in the symphony hall. The overemphasis of modernists on sterile concept learning has made music education often cold and uninviting. Music education must be relevant and meaningful before any thoughts of its humanizing effects could ever be considered.

To summarize the main points in the analysis and comparison of the modernist/postmodernist in the Music and You method: a) the postmodernist sequencing of concepts will come from the use of meaningful musical experiences while that of the modernist would arise more out of the scope and sequence chart. The music used by the postmodernist would be, first and foremost, meaningful and relevant to the life experiences of the student as a result of the story line or as an extension of previously meaningful concept learning. The modernist, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the making conscious of the musical concept itself; the meaningfulness of the music is incidental. In other words, the meaningfulness of the music is less important than using

the music as a 'vehicle' to demonstrate the concept; b) to the postmodernist the exposure of musical concepts is very important but it is only the first step in the music education process. The modernist would consider the task completed once the students displayed behavioral signs of the internalization of the musical concept, while the postmodernist would take the process further by problematizing not only the musical concept but also the text along with encouraging reflective action regarding issues of culture, power and equality. In short, as a result of viewing music as a culturally contextual aesthetic experience, the postmodern music educator has a much larger mandate and agenda which includes the musical, aesthetic, cultural, and political aspects of a piece of music, where as the modernist tends to concentrate solely on 'making conscious' musical concepts. In addition, this larger mandate requires and demands that, c) an age appropriate language of aesthetics be developed so that the meaningful two-way problematized dialogue can be used to bring the students effectively into the experience/learning artistic process.

Comparison of Nova Scotia Music Curriculum Guides to a  
Postmodern Approach

The Nova Scotia Music Teaching Curriculum Guides are internally consistent and logical music education documents which present a typical modernist approach to the teaching of music education. The following discussion will highlight various modernist aspects taken from the Junior and Senior High Provincial music curriculum documents to differentiate modernist and postmodernist approaches.

Junior High School Music (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Guide No. 124, 1992).

*1. It is intended that students become both comfortable and familiar with as many aspects of the music program as possible through active involvement - whether this be listening, performing, discussing or creating (p. 1).*

Both the modernist and postmodernist would experience music in the same manner through listening, performing and creating/composing. However, it should be noted that the document uses 'discussing or creating' whereas the postmodern approach would use 'discussing' i.e.

'problematized dialogue' in all aspects of experiencing music and not simply substitute discussing in lieu of creating. In addition, the modernist definition of 'discussing' has more to do with having the students

discover musical concepts than with problematized dialogue regarding the total musical experience.

*2. A successful junior high school music program will address the aesthetic needs both of the school and the community, and use music of such quality that it will illuminate the nature of music as art (p. 2).*

The reference to using 'quality' music is one of the characteristics that the modernist position demands; in fact, the quality has to be of such a standard that it actually will qualify as 'art', implying that anything below that standard is not art. The reference to the 'school and community' refers to the responsibility that the modernist position feels it has to present the best art ('masterworks') that has been passed down from generation to generation.

The postmodern position would also address the aesthetic needs of the school and community; however, it would do so in a manner which would use all kinds and types of music of both the past and the present. The issue of quality would be confined to similar styles and genres and would not involve the modernist tendency of placing cross genre value judgements.

*3. The practical portion of the music program is designed to develop individual performance skills, while improving musical perception, enhancing aesthetic sensitivity, encouraging creative ability, and fostering social*

*intercourse. The practical component of the music program helps students to perform with accuracy and precision, and with understanding and feeling; it encourages in the students an awareness of aesthetic values through direct experience with high quality literature (p. 2).*

This is consistent with the modernist position that aesthetic sensitivity and other social skills are learned through performance (instrumental or vocal) of 'quality literature'. Both the modernist and postmodernist approach would utilize performance, however, the postmodernist would use it more equitably in combination with the other methods of experiencing music. In addition, the postmodernist would use the performance aspect as a means to 'problematize dialogue' in order to make the class into a living dialogical musical workshop and not just a place to prepare and rehearse for the next concert. This approach does not exclude having 'performance for performance sake' groups and rehearsals but a clear distinction must be made between a) performing as a method to experience music through problematized dialogue and b) performing and rehearsing as a musical group for a concert. Both are essential and valuable music education activities; however, it is absolutely necessary to make a distinction between the two, for to the postmodernist they are two very separate and distinct activities with each having very different objectives. In fact, it is this lack of distinction that has caused the

modernist approach to be charged with being overly performance-orientated.

*4. Aspects of musical literacy include - Theory, Ear Training and Dictation - Theory is the study of the rudiment of music i.e. intervals, scales, triads, musical forms, and notation. Ear training will help with the identification of intervals, forms, musical elements, and/or specific compositions. Dictation is one means of reinforcing the aural identification of intervals, certain musical elements, and rhythms (pp. 11-12).*

In addition, the guide suggests that the *Theory and dictation/ear training should go hand-in-hand, the one reinforcing the other. It is essential that the students see the theory "in action", observing a relationship between what is on the page and the actual sounds (p. 12)*

The guide also suggests that *It's always a good policy to help students understand the various aspects of music theory by using quality music literature currently being taught in a performance class (p. 12).*

Modernist education strives to achieve all of these objectives and many students do, in fact become 'musically literate' according to the modernist definition of musical literacy. Many students do learn to read, write and aurally identify various musical concepts; however, to the postmodernist music educator, developing musical literacy becomes much more than only being able to recognize and

understand musical concepts. To the postmodernist this stage would be only one of the steps involved in the music education process. In short, musical literacy to the postmodernist is much more than only being able to read, write, identify and perceive musical concepts pertaining to one type or style of music. To the postmodernist it becomes a matter of being able to do all of this for all types and styles of musical experiences and in a manner which allows for contextual interpretation of both the music, text and extra-musical social, political and cultural considerations - a critical musical literacy.

5. In a section listed as *Style/Periods/Forms the suggested areas of study include - Baroque; Classical; Romantic; Impressionistic; Contemporary Trends* (pp. 15-16).

It is through the exposure and study of the 'masters', found in these historical periods, that the modernist "cultivate in students an educated capacity for the appreciation of aesthetic excellence" (Smith, p.16). It is worth noting that, from a postmodern perspective, under the heading of 'contemporary' the guide does not mention any composers or genres of music which are not directly related to or have evolved from the euro-centric classical tradition. In particular, there is no mention of using any popular music which the students might find meaningful and relevant. The postmodern approach would cover the stylistic periods mentioned above, but would place them in context and include

other musics that might have been sung or played at the time.

#### Senior High School Music -

The Nova Scotia High School Music program has two components a) academic (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Teaching Guide No. 115, 1990) which includes the areas of Theory, History/Listening, Ear Training; and, b) practical (performance) which includes both Choral (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Teaching Guide No. 117, 1990) and Instrumental (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Teaching Guide No. 116, 1990). The contents of these areas are similar to and a continuation of the material studied at the Junior High Level. The examples taken from these guides demonstrate a consistent modernist approach to music education at the high school level.

1. *To develop discriminating tastes and an ability to make sensitive and aesthetic choices with respect to music* (Senior High School Music - Academic, 1990, p. 5).
2. *Be able to manipulate symbols (music reading/writing) with understanding* (p. 5).
3. *Develop an awareness of cultural heritage and historical perspective by relating music to historical development. The students will recognize and value the importance of music as a part of one's cultural heritage; and will become familiar with the major historical periods through the music and musicians associated with each of those periods* (p. 5).

From the postmodern perspective 'developing an awareness of cultural heritage and historical perspective' means more than just knowing the modernist musical heritage and historical perspective. Postmodernists would view this knowledge as being a valuable experience; however, it must be realized that this is only 'one' historical perspective of one type or kind of music and it is for this reason that the postmodernist views the modernist approach as being narrow, confining and elitist.

Both the Nova Scotia Instrumental and Choral guides (1990) are similar in approach where using performance as a medium through which aesthetic and musical excellence can be taught.

The following examples illustrate a modernist position taken in both the Choral (Senior High Music - Choral, Guide No. 117, 1990) and Instrumental (Senior High Music - Instrumental, Guide No. 116, 1990) music guides. The guide groups the learning activities under the following headings: 1) Performing, 2) Reading, 3) Listening, 4) Creating, and 5) Valuing. All of these categories are consistent with the modernist methods used to experience music through performing either vocally or instrumentally.

#### 1. Performing

Choral - *To discover, develop and evaluate their talents and singing abilities, and to establish and reinforce correct vocal techniques and skills (p. 4).*

Instrumental - *To discover, develop and evaluate their talents and abilities relative to playing a musical instrument, and to establish and reinforce correct technique and skills* (p. 3).

Postmodernists feel that it is the development of these vocal and instrumental techniques that dominates the modernist music education process over other ways of experiencing music.

## 2. Reading

Choral - *To interpret rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and expression as they appear in musical notation* (p. 4).

Instrumental - *To interpret rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and expression as they appear in musical notation through both cognitive and psychomotor responses* (p. 3).

Considerable time is spent on learning to read music beginning at the elementary level through the Kodaly method and continued through the teaching of instrumental and vocal music at the junior and senior high levels. Learning to read music would be considered important and necessary to the postmodernist, however, since the emphasis in the music classroom is less on developing performing groups and more on using the performance format as a dialogical workshop to explore the world of music, music reading skills would receive less emphasis in the classroom situation. In regards to postmodern performance groups that are brought together for performance only, it would obviously be considered to be

an important and necessary skill which would be encouraged and developed.

### 3. Listening

Choral - *To develop the ability to make aesthetic judgements based on critical listening and on analysis of music* (p. 4).

Instrumental - *To develop the ability to make aesthetic judgements based on critical listening and analysis of music* (p. 3).

The postmodernist would interpret this as meaning ". . . to make (modernist) aesthetic judgements. . . ." In addition, the type of 'critical listening' suggested is not 'critical' in the postmodern 'deconstruction and naming' sense but rather in the modernist 'analytical or judging' sense. In addition, the type of listening and analysis that generally occurs in the modernist performance class is aimed at improving the performance quality of the group and not at improving aesthetic sensitivity. If improved sensitivity occurs in the modernist performance class it is generally as a by-product of the process. The postmodern approach would place contextual aesthetic awareness through problematized dialogue of meaningful musical experiences at the centre of the teaching process.

#### 4. Creating

Choral - *To develop an additional avenue of self-expression by composing, improvising, and interpreting music (p. 4).*

Instrumental - *To develop an additional avenue of self-expression by interpreting and improvising music (p. 3).*

The reality is that very little time is spent on composing, improvising, and interpreting in the modernist classroom. With the exception of a few students in the school jazz band who might try improvising and even fewer who get a chance to compose, the modernist performance class tends to spend most of its time perfecting performance skills. In addition, the type of performance that usually occurs in the modernist performance class develops more 'copying and rote skills' than it develops 'an additional avenue of self-expression'.

#### 5. Valuing

Choral - *To become aware of the history of music style as it relates to choral literature; its avocational and leisure uses, and to grow in the appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of music as a source of personal fulfilment (p. 4).*

Instrumental - *To make students aware of the implications of music in our society with respect to music careers; its avocation and leisure uses; and to grow in the appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of music as a source of personal fulfilment (p. 3).*

It should be pointed out that as laudable as these valuing statements sound, to the postmodernist it is only talking about valuing one type or kind of modernist 'art' music.

To summarize, the Nova Scotia Music Teaching Guides ask the teacher to: a) teach music education through performing, creating/composing, and listening by using music of 'high' aesthetic quality; b) teach musical literacy which includes being able hear, read, write and be able to manipulate on manuscript the appropriate musical concepts; c) expose the students to the music of the 'master' in order to develop 'discriminating taste and an ability to make sensitive aesthetic choices with respect to music'; and, d) to teach the students to value specific types of modernist music as a source of personal fulfilment as either a career or in its avocational/leisure use.

It should be pointed out that all of the above objectives are consistent and well-founded if one ascribes to the modernist perspective and definition of music and music education. However, if as a postmodern educator one has a larger vision of what music can and should be in the public school system, it then becomes very obvious that the current modernist approach is not adequate and cannot accommodate the type of postmodern contextual aesthetics, educational philosophy and pedagogy that can bring students into a meaningful relationship with all musics.

In order to change the status quo of modernist music education in the schools, I believe that it is necessary and essential to change how music educators are being trained in the universities. In the following chapter suggestions will be made regarding the subject matter which might be included in designing a postmodern music education program at the universities.

## Chapter 5

TOWARDS A POSTMODERN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM AT THE  
UNIVERSITIES

If change is to occur, the first step becomes one of developing a postmodern 'critical consciousness and stance' towards all aspects of the music education process. Future postmodern music education will need to adopt a critical consciousness and understanding of 1) prevailing educational assumptions and beliefs; 2) modern and postmodern aesthetics; 3) postmodern pedagogy and the use of generative themes for problematized dialogue; 4) postmodern musical skills; and, 5) postmodern methods of experiencing music.

1) Prevailing Educational Assumptions and Beliefs - To change the status quo regarding 'how teachers teach' music, the first step becomes one of having future teachers understand their prevailing educational assumptions and fundamental beliefs. Music teachers would be taken through a process of 'naming' and 'deconstruction' (Deyer & Zeichner, 1987) of current educational philosophies and practices so they

. . . come to understand the current system as 'a regime of truth', in other words the 'doing' and 'how to do' or the 'means to an end' [methodology] dominates over the act of reflecting and

asking why. (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. xxxii)

Future teachers should come to understand how the current modernist system in music education is limiting in its overall educational goals and that the postmodern approach would strive for a new ethical educational perspective or moral imperative of personal and social emancipation based on democracy and egalitarianism (Greene, 1988; Giroux & MacLaren, 1989). Giroux and MacLaren state that

. . . schools need to be reconceived and reconstituted as counterpublic spheres . . . where students learn the skills and knowledge to live and fight for a genuine democracy. Equally important is the need for schools to cultivate a spirit of critique and a respect for human dignity that is capable of linking personal and social issues around the pedagogical project of helping students become critical and active citizens. (Giroux, McLaren, 1987, p. 267)

Music education becomes the 'counterpublic' sphere and place where students learn the skills to be active and critical citizens. It is through meaningful experiences with and understanding of the art of music as a socially contextual aesthetic expression of society that allows the music educator to 'link personal and social issues around the artistic pedagogical project'.

The prospective postmodern music educator would come to understand that their new pedagogy would, through having

their students experience all musics through 'listening', 'performing', and 'creating/composing', help their students

. . . get the knowledge and skills that allow them to ascertain how the multiple interests that constitute their individual and collective voices are implicated, produced, affirmed, or marginalized within the texts, institutional practices, and social structures that both shape and give meaning to their lives. (Giroux, 1989, p. 148)

For the postmodernist, the pedagogical goal is not just to have the students arrive at the right musical answers but, as Giroux (1989) states, we must create opportunities for the students ". . . to better exercise reasoned choice through a critical understanding of what the codes are that organize different meanings and interests into particular configurations of knowledge and power" (p. 148).

The new pedagogy argues for music educators to be engaged and connected with their students. The modernist sees the music teacher as the deliverer of 'truth', the implementor of an efficiency-orientated pedagogy that emphasizes technique and skill development (Giroux & MacLaren, 1989). To the postmodern music educator, the act of teaching carries much more than questions of skill development and cognition. Teaching is a political act in every respect and it is exactly this perspective that the new music educators must not only understand but adopt and use in practice. Our current modernist music pedagogy believes itself to be apolitical and wholesomely neutral and

is therefore unable to see its own political agenda. However, the postmodern music educator takes the view that knowledge and teaching is very much a political act. By knowing and understanding what qualifies as knowledge and in whose interest knowledge is selected, organized, taught and evaluated, it becomes possible to realize that knowledge and teaching is very much political in nature (Popkewitz, 1987). In addition, the postmodernist would argue that current teacher education programs serve primarily those who operate in the interests of the status quo (Giroux & McLaren, 1989).

Teacher education in general has only recently begun to consider the critical stance, let alone use it as the driving force for designing a teacher education program. The current modernist music pedagogy at the universities, being one of the last bastions of modernist practice and thought (McClary, 1991), is even more removed from not only not seeing its own political agenda but also from being inclined to adopt postmodernism as a part of their teacher education programs.

2) Aesthetics - Future postmodern music educators should have a firm understanding of both modernist aesthetics and the postmodern aesthetic position being advocated in relation to music education.

Aesthetics is the study of artistic knowledge and, as such, should undergo the same type of critique as any other

type of knowledge. As previously mentioned, musical aesthetics has somehow avoided this type of critical assessment and is one of the last areas of modernist thought to be penetrated and debunked (McClary, 1991).

The postmodern university music education program would incorporate the study of aesthetics into all aspects of its program. In fact, being able to verbalize 'contextually aesthetic experiences' through the medium of listening, performing, and creating/composing would be a major component of a postmodern music teacher education program. The postmodern music educator would not only need to grasp intellectually aesthetic concepts but would also have to be able to verbalize these effectively to all their students.

Our current modernist training practices at the universities tend to ignore aesthetics and, when it is discussed, usually only at the graduate level, it discourages the teacher from verbalizing excessively, in case the teacher's aesthetic interpretation interferes with the students 'authentic' aesthetic experience (Reimer, 1970).

Bennett Reimer (1970) discusses this topic to a great extent, but leaves his readers with very little in terms of concrete ways of opening up and approaching the topic of aesthetics with students. His point is well taken that aesthetic musical exploration can take place by showing, discussing, manipulating, imitating, comparing, describing,

defining, identifying, inferring, disclosing and amplifying, and that ". . . a language is needed which conceptualizes the expressive conditions of sound so that these conditions can be 'shown, discussed, manipulated,' et cetera" (Reimer, 1970, p. 121). However, precious little has been done to develop that language since this statement was made in 1970 and it is exactly this area that needs immediate attention and research in order that postmodern music educators may be helped to understand and feel comfortable in verbalizing the many aspects of the contextual/aesthetic experiences to their students. In fact, in the postmodern approach advocated here, the discussion regarding 'musical concepts' and its relationship with the contextual/aesthetic experience will make up the substance of the teacher-student problematized dialogue. In other words, any discussion of musical concepts would, of necessity, have to involve the verbalization of contextual aesthetics.

As previously mentioned an age-appropriate language of aesthetics is urgently needed. Susan McClary (1991) feels there are only a handful of musicologist/aestheticians who have been able to focus on the music itself without becoming enveloped in modernist semantics or, Hamblen's 'stylistic gamesmanship'. This condition, McClary states, has occurred ". . . in a field otherwise noteworthy for its absence and suspicion of intellectual activity" (p. 173). The few who McClary feels do concentrate on the music itself include

Edward Cone, Joseph Kerman, Leonard Meyer, Charles Rosen, Maynard Solomon, and Leo Treidler. In my opinion, it would be imperative that our future postmodern music educators be steeped in these works as a starting point for developing a workable age-appropriate postmodern 'musical aesthetic' language for music education. In fact, L.B. Meyer (1956) identified this problem when he stated:

[U]nfortunately both music theorists and ethnologists have mainly been concerned with stylistic descriptions and tabulations rather than with aesthetic effect. They have thus tended to discuss the process and significance of successive deviation only in the broadest terms. They simply tell us that the folk singer, the primitive musician, and the oriental composer do vary their materials in a elaborate and more or less conscious way, and they then describe and illustrate the processes involved. But of the affective aesthetic meaning of these processes we hear comparatively little. (Meyer, 1956, p. 248)

In addition to finding an age appropriate descriptive aesthetic language, the music educator must also use a language to discuss the extra-aesthetic, contextual and critical interpretation of all aspect of a piece of music. Fortunately, there is no need to reinvent the wheel for this language already exists and can be found in the discipline of 'critical pedagogy' which is particularly suited for the type of interpretation being suggested.

Finally, prospective postmodern teachers, instead of viewing all creative endeavour as being on a vertical

continuum from high art to low art to non-art, as the modernist tends to do, they would encourage students to view these experiences on a horizontal continuum with each style, type, or genre having something unique to express, with each genre approached for its contextual/aesthetic possibilities. The postmodern music education position would accept the fact that each style might have some works of art which are more effective than others to a particular individual, but to compare and place value judgements between styles would not only be inappropriate but would actually miss the whole point of the use of art as a means of expressing the concerns and events of everyday life.

3) Postmodernist Pedagogy - Following or congruent with the critical consciousness raising of both the postmodern aesthetic and the critical educational position, music education students should also be exposed to the type of postmodern pedagogy which this approach has advocated in regards to the use of problematized dialogue utilizing generative themes and reflective action.

It would be hard to find in any of our current university music education programs, courses that deal with problematizing dialogue and the use of student generative themes, in the Freirian sense. Not only do our current music education practices not encourage this type of dialogue, they tacitly discourage it as a result of the heavy use and

concentration on a technical and methods-orientated approach to teaching music.

Courses which emphasize the leading of class problematized dialogue should include studies in group dynamics, use of language, cultural studies, and student sociological/psychological development (Giroux & McLaren, 1987). Enabling future music teachers to problematize their students generative musical themes will likely prove to be of considerable difficulty, as a result of the majority having been acculturated, as we all have, into the modernist 'banking' and 'transmission' approaches to music education. Class dialogue, to the depth and sensitivity advocated in the postmodern educational paradigm, may well be totally strange and unfamiliar to most prospective music teachers and students. Marilyn Frankenstein (1987) identifies this dilemma as, "the complexities of moving students [and teachers] from massified to critical consciousness" (p. 200). However, it becomes imperative and absolutely essential that these dialogical skills be grasped and utilized as part of a postmodern music pedagogy. As Ira Shor (1987) states,

[a] dialogic class begins with problem-posing discussion and sends powerful signals to students that their participation is expected and needed. It will not be easy to learn the art of dialogue because education now offers so little critical discussion and so few constructive peer-exchanges. Dialogue calls for a teacher's art of intervention and art of restraint, so

that the verbal density of a trained intellectual does not silence the verbal styles of unscholastic students. (p. 23)

Many ideas and suggestions coming from various subject areas which have utilized some Freirean learning concepts such as generative themes, problematized dialogue, reflective action, et cetera, are discussed in Freire for the Classroom - A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching (Shor, 1987).

In addition to understanding and adopting the 'critical' position in regards to both the overall educational objectives and its type of pedagogy, the music educator must also acquire the appropriate postmodern 'musical skills'.

4) Developing Postmodernist Musical Skills - The current method of training modernist music educators involves acquiring a degree in music, usually followed by one or two years of a baccalaureate degree in education. The baccalaureate degree in music engages students in the study of various aspects of modernist music history, theory, ear training, and performance courses. Those planning on entering education usually take a number of methods courses appropriate to their area of concentration. (McGill, pp. MU 18-19, 1994-95; Dalhousie, pp. 279-282, 1994-95). For example, those entering elementary music teaching would take Kodaly and Orff methods while those planning to teach secondary music would take band, choral or string methods

courses. Both secondary and elementary areas include some form of vocal or instrumental techniques courses, where in the teachers learn how to teach students how to play and sing. In short, the bulk of the current modernist undergraduate music education courses concern themselves with the study of a basic technique for developing personal performance skills and musicianship, along with the study of modernist music history, theory, ear training and appropriate methods courses.

The education of a postmodernist music teacher would demand and require a different type of pedagogy for prospective teachers. For example, music history for future music educators would include much more than the modernist chronological survey of European classical styles. It would delve into the histories of all types and styles of musics and their contextual aesthetic/cultural settings. History, to the postmodernist, becomes an area of study for developing a critical perspective in regards to the social and aesthetic context of music. To teach music history in the modernist sense has meant teaching *someone's* musical history, i.e. European aristocrats, while to teach in a postmodern sense would mean to teach many other musical histories contextually and from a whole array of other possible perspectives (Popkewitz, 1987).

Theory classes for music educators would also be expanded to include the theoretical study of all types and

styles of music and not just the Western European tradition of music theory. The postmodern approach would also enable students to look at all types of 'music theories' - classical, pop, jazz, country and western, folk and the music of other cultures - as a means to help explain and interpret some of the many stylistic and contextually aesthetic differences that exist in the world of music. In short, postmodern university music theory classes would become much more than the modernist pedagogy of generally looking only at the various styles within the European classical tradition.

5) Methods of Experiencing Music - As a result of the basic premise of the postmodern music class of starting with the experiencing of music which the students find meaningful, every type and means of experiencing music would be utilized - performance, creating/composing, and listening. The postmodern music educator would place equal emphasis on all aspects of experiencing music, and would avoid an overemphasis on performance as the modernist approach often tends to do (Tait, 1992).

Performance - Learning how to perform would still be extremely important for the postmodern music educator; however, the emphasis would not be solely on achieving musicality and proficiency in the classical style, but in a variety of other genres. Ideally, and in practical terms, it

would mean the music educator should be able to perform comfortably in a variety of styles. The postmodern music educators university performance training would be more eclectic and would reflect training that would be designed to create a type of performer who would be capable of improvising with a jazz group, playing at a Cape Breton Ceilidh or performing a Bach prelude. In other words, the focus would not be on training future professional 'classical' musicians but on training future eclectic 'music educators' who use performance as a medium to teach postmodern music education.

Our current modernist music education approach of developing performance skills in music education essentially trains teachers only in the traditional classical European method of creating future performing musicians (Swanwick, 1988). The only exception to this can be seen in the few Jazz Studies Programs that exist at a handful of Canadian universities and, even in these programs, students are trained only as jazz performers. Unfortunately, specific types of performance training seem to drive music education pedagogy and being able to perform reasonably effectively in all styles, including rock, country, reggae, various folk styles, classical and jazz is not considered to be at all important in modernist music education pedagogy.

In addition, the postmodern educational paradigm advocated here would require a more eclectic and well-

rounded performing musician/educator as a result of utilizing performance music which is meaningful to the students. Postmodern music educators should feel comfortable and able to perform in many of the genres that their students find meaningful. There are some music educators in our current modernist system who do have this type of performance ability; however, where they do exist, it is more by chance and as a consequence of their own musical background rather than as a result of any university music courses.

To reiterate, the postmodern performance approach that sees the teacher using and being able to perform the students own 'meaningful music' as a starting point for problematized dialogue becomes much more than just another class which is preparing for the next concert; instead, it becomes a dialogical performance laboratory for experiencing the art of music.

It should be emphasised that to the postmodernist music educator this approach to performance would not in any way be lowering musical standards for, regardless of what type or genre of music being performed, the postmodern teacher would insist that the music be played with musicality, artistry and finesse appropriate to its own stylistic tendencies and standards. Being trained to perform only as a specific type of 'classical' performer not only limits the effectiveness of the teacher in front of the class, but it

also excludes the teacher from experiencing performance in genres that their students find meaningful.

Creating/Composing - The creating/composing aspect of experiencing music has received little attention in modernist university music education courses. Any composition courses given are generally meant for budding classical music composers and have little relevance to future music educators and to what actually goes on in the classrooms. Many music students remember the writing of reams of chorales, both in theory class and in composition class, in the style of everyone but themselves, followed by 16th century counterpoint, fugues, neapolitan 6ths, et cetera, only to realize that, after years of studying, the exercise is less of a creative endeavour and more of a copying of the 'masters'.

The modernist would defend this activity by saying that one must be steeped in the tradition before one can create in the tradition. While this may well be true, from the postmodernist music educator's perspective, it misses the point of using creating/composing in education as a way of experiencing meaningful music in the classroom.

Those who create their own music around family pianos, in coffee houses and boat houses, in garage bands and in symphony halls are all creating/composing and it is just as real, viable and truly authentic for everyone involved. The

creating/composing aspect of experiencing music, as a result of its cultural locatedness, takes on much more importance in postmodern music education and it would not matter whether the creation was a barber shop tune, a pop song, a Cape Breton fiddle tune, a rap song, a Bach chorale, or a classical symphony, each would be the 'meeting point' for the beginning of problematized dialogue to encourage critical reflection of the total musical experience.

It would also be extremely important that the future postmodern music educator have the type of arranging and composing skills which would enable them to compose or to arrange some of the music of students for use with the classroom instrumental or choral group. With the new music writing programs available on computer, it is now much more practical from a time perspective for music educators to arrange and/or to compose for their students. Developing these types of skills would be very important in the postmodern music classroom.

Listening - As a result of the majority of society not being 'performers' or 'creators' of music, the postmodern music educator would spend considerably more time on the 'listening' aspect of experiencing music. In fact, modernist music educators have also spent considerable time in trying to develop a similar part of their pedagogy, called 'music appreciation', where the listeners are suppose to learn to

appreciate music of superior quality. In my opinion, the whole music appreciation movement has faltered, and has met with very limited success as a result of not only 'what' was being taught, but 'how' it was being taught. Again, the modernist approach appears to the postmodernist as being limited and narrow in its scope and view of what qualifies as music; and most students, especially in the secondary grades, have not only tuned out but have stayed out of these traditional modernist music appreciation or 'general' music classes (Tait, 1992).

The postmodern music listening activities would also start with music which the students find meaningful and it would also explore all aspects of the contextual aesthetic and musical experience through problematized dialogue. The use of reflective critical analysis would allow for both the exploration of the music, text, and the extra-aesthetic principles which go into creating the overall affect. It must be remember that, as a result of striving for 'reflective action', the student's aesthetic/artistic experiences take on a connectedness to real life as was pointed out in the 'calypso' example in Chapter 4.

Finally, by using all forms of experiencing music - performing, creating/composing and listening - with equal enthusiasm the postmodern music educator avoids the modernist weakness of the instrumental student experiencing mostly absolute music, the vocal student experiencing mostly

music that has text and both being only marginally exposed to experiencing music through listening and even less through creating/composing. From the postmodernist perspective it therefore becomes obvious and absolutely essential that the universities involved in the training of future music educators emphasize all aspects of experiencing music - performing, creating/composing and listening.

I believe that the main obstacle and most difficult activity in trying to encourage change towards a postmodern position at the universities will be in getting prospective teachers to change or alter their existing modernist musical perspectives. It will not only be the most difficult, but also the most important task to accomplish. Why do we as educators try to encourage multiple perspectives elsewhere in education and society, while in music education we tenaciously cling to the old and outdated position of music as being autonomous, noncontextual and universal?

The other major challenge, and an area which needs considerable work and research, is the development of a usable age-appropriate language and vocabulary for explaining the workings of contextual musical aesthetics. Modernists have been and are efficient and effective at isolating and having students experience musical concepts as a result of this being the main thrust behind their pedagogy. However, to the postmodernist, concept perception by itself is only the first step and the language needed to

carry out the further steps of problematized dialogue of the meaningful musical experience will become the major thrust of developing a postmodern music pedagogy.

Finally, in addition to changing perspectives and developing an aesthetic vocabulary, it will take a concerted effort to convince those operating within university music departments that change is actually needed because of the very definite personal and professional vested interests many of these individuals have in perpetuating the status quo. However, I believe that once practicing music educators become cognizant of the confining nature of the modernist euro-centric musical canon and the influences it has had on music education practices, they will start asking for and demanding changes in the institutions which train future music educators. Once music educators recognize that the many problems they have experienced over the years of keeping students interested as well as keeping music in the curriculum has more to do with modernist pedagogy than with their own teaching, I believe the postmodern position will begin to make inroads into one of the 'last bastions of modernist thought'. In other words, I believe it is the university music programs that are perpetuating a type of modernist music education that, in reality, is causing music's declining student interest along with a growing perception that music is not as important as other subjects.

## CHAPTER 6

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Modernism - The Way It Is

In some ways it should not be surprising that our current notions regarding music and music education with its euro-centric Western philosophy and limited aesthetic view, are just as, if not more, myopic and biased than any other field of knowledge (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 20) since the foundations of our current Western musical syntax has evolved out of a Western European musical tradition.

Regardless, our modernist music education practices today are, for the most part, teacher directed (Tait, 1992 p.532), with a very definite euro-centric musical bias (Wolff, 1984; Green, 1994). In addition, the teaching is generally overly concerned with the dissemination of musical facts and the development of performance skills (Swanwick, 1988). The teaching process does not generally concern itself, at any grade level, with the concept of developing an aesthetic consciousness or sensitivity to all types and styles of music in our students. In short, modernist music educators seem preoccupied with musical production and the regurgitation of well-established musical facts regarding specific genres and styles. Modernist educators do not

recognize, fully accept or understand the differences in the music of the 'aural tradition', 'popular culture', and 'art music' (Andrews, 1993). Our current modernist pedagogy still approaches art as artifact and, as such, it often becomes esoteric and removed from our students and society.

Our current modernist pedagogy purports that we teach music through active participation and involvement with music, which has resulted, in many instances, in an over-emphasis on developing extensive 'performance only' programs (Swanwick, 1988). Even though most postmodernists would agree that the teaching of music, or any of the arts, through active participation and involvement is well-guided practice, many do not believe that the modernist pedagogy goes far enough in that the means often becomes the end. In other words, somewhere along the line modernists have neglected to learn how to teach effectively towards a larger contextual aesthetic sensitivity through performance or, some critics would contend, towards any aesthetic sensitivity at all (Wing, 1992).

The pedagogical concept of starting from 'where the students are' by using 'student generated themes' (Freire, 1985) often receives only lip service in most modernist music classrooms. In music education circles today, many heated debates have occurred in regard to teaching musical concepts through using the student's music. The prevailing modernist position is that using the student's music is not

education but entertainment and when student music is used, it is often used either explicitly or implicitly to compare its so-called simplistic qualities to the modernist view of 'good' music.

From a critical perspective, our current pedagogy participates in the maintenance of hegemony, where well-established modernist aesthetic theories, that malign certain types and styles of music while supporting others, drives the pedagogy (Green, 1994; Leppert & MacClary, 1987; Wolff, 1984; MacClary, 1991) and where institutions that train future music educators perpetuate these very narrow views and notions as to what constitutes good, bad and inferior types and styles of music (Andrews, 1994). Modernist aesthetic theories, generally based on the complexity of musical syntax, define what is 'poor-good-better-best' as compared to their own aesthetic standards. Not surprisingly, the students' music and the music of popular culture does not measure up (Reimer, 1970).

In fact, the terms used by the established musical elite, which most of society has accepted, ranks all music on a quality continuum from lesser to greater. Binary opposites such as popular music versus classical music, easy listening versus serious listening, and folk music versus high brow all tend to perpetuate a view which becomes one of the ways in which positions of power and control in culture are maintained. In other words, to help maintain hegemony, a

type of 'snob appeal' accompanies the view of high art as compared to the music of lesser art and of popular culture.

The universities continue to train performers in the age old tradition of creating future performing 'classical' musicians. This practice, by itself, is admirable and even a necessary function; however, it should be recognized as perpetuating essentially only one style or type of performance practice. Learning to perform, in any style, is only one of many steps required in creating an effective postmodern music educator for our public schools.

Music education needs to develop musician/educators who have a larger vision. We need musician/educators who use more than just a transference of knowledge approach, who do more than give musical dates and facts, who do more than tell students how to interpret and play, who do more than fix embouchures and who do more than put students to sleep with one-way teacher talk. It is no wonder that we all are implicated in perpetuating many of these modernist practices for that was how we were all taught and trained to teach.

#### Postmodernism - The Way It Could Be

*They [the arts] have the capacity, when authentically attended to, to enable persons to hear and to see what they would not ordinarily hear and see, to offer visions of consonance and dissonance that are unfamiliar and indeed abnormal, to disclose the incomplete profiles of the world. . . . they have*

*the capacity to defamiliarize experience: to begin with the overly familiar and transfigure it into something different enough to make those who are awakened hear and see. (Greene, 1988, p. 128)*

Postmodern music education in the public schools can become much more than the transmission, imposition and banking of one type or kind of music. The postmodern pedagogy advocated here involves the students in the learning process through encouraging 'problematized dialogue' of meaningful 'generative themes'. Music is particularly suited for this type of pedagogy in that there is a wealth of musical materials available that students will find meaningful. By experiencing music through performing, creating/composing and listening, students can be led to understand and appreciate a wide variety of musics of both past and present.

As a result of viewing music as a socially contextual aesthetic experience it becomes possible to accept all musics as something to be experienced for its own unique and particular kind of knowledge. Musics, of either the absolute or vocal varieties, are viewed by the postmodernist as being an expression of the joys and struggles of everyday life and it is only through making these connections to life that the art of music can become alive and truly humanizing.

In addition, and as a result of utilizing the critical stance regarding interpretation followed by 'reflective action', the postmodern approach changes the modernist view

of an aesthetic experience from being esoteric and removed from everyday life and most of society to becoming a meaningful and useful method of understanding "the incomplete profiles of the world" (Greene, 1988).

Of all the subjects taught in schools today, music has the potential of opening up minds by being meaningful, engaging, and exciting. Any move by music educators 'Towards a Postmodern Music Curriculum' will be a move to "enable . . . [students] to hear and to see what they would not ordinarily hear and see" (Greene, 1988). If music educators can provide the means to achieve these goals, then music in the public schools will be assured a long and distinguished position in the curriculum and schools of the future.

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