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Musical Experience as Aesthetic: What Cost the Label?

Wayne Bowman

Abstract

This brief essay draws upon a number of themes introduced in Carolyn Korsmeyer's recent book *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2004; ISBN: 0415266599). It does not attempt a comprehensive or critical review of her book; instead it focuses selectively on certain of her points in order to raise concerns of some significance to the music education discipline and, perhaps, to philosophical aesthetics.[1]

Key Words

music education, gender, artistry, taste, disinterest, feminism, praxis, agency, intrinsic value, aesthetic value, binary opposition, aesthetic education

1. Introduction

Historically, the notion that musical experience should be considered a subset of what is called "aesthetic experience" has figured prominently in arguments designed to convince skeptics that studying music is of general educational importance and thus should be taught in schools. This aesthetic rationale[2] - the effort to rationalize on aesthetic grounds how music is essential to human growth and development - served not only to persuade others skeptical of the significance of the efforts of music educators, but also to shore up, collectively and individually, music educators' sense of worth. It became, as result, tightly linked to their sense of disciplinary and personal identity. Only the nature of the aesthetic on which this rationale was based and from which, subsequently, significant parts of music teachers' identities were crafted, was seldom subjected to thorough or critical scrutiny. Indeed, it could be argued that its utility was due in no small part to an elusiveness and vagueness that permitted its use wherever an affirmative adjective was needed: aesthetic this, aesthetic that, aesthetic whatever.[3] The term gained considerable currency as a loose synonym for expression, for feeling, for creativity, for beauty, for profundity and, it seemed, often for genuine or authentic musicality itself.

In such circumstances, to criticize the aesthetic rationale for music education was to undermine the very possibility of musical value, to say nothing of the honor and integrity of music educators for whom aesthetic sensitivity had become the *sine qua non* of educational credibility. Thus, a way of understanding certain aspects of certain music and of explaining some of the reasons some music might be important became the key to the nature and value of all music everywhere and, for many people, the entire point of music education. This is not to deny that there were those who had carefully considered what a specifically musical variant of an aesthetic experience might entail, understandings that were judiciously circumscribed and qualified. But these fragile and contingent understandings were eventually transformed into ideologies,[4] buttressed frequently by the kind of doctrinal

fervor that characterizes doubt as betrayal.

In the waning years of the twentieth century, the debates over the aesthetic rationale for music education became more heated. To those not philosophically inclined, these arguments may have seemed much ado about nothing: differences of personal opinion that were a source of embarrassment, undermining music education's professional solidarity, credibility and integrity.^[5] However, with the passage of time, some of the profession's defensiveness toward critiques of the aesthetic rationale has begun to subside. It has become increasingly apparent that the notion of aesthetic value at the center of this rhetorical storm was not, in fact, the timeless absolute its advocates had claimed it was. And the consequences of relinquishing these claims to the universality and neutral objectivity of aesthetic doctrines have shown themselves to be not only less dire than many had expected but beneficial in many respects.^[6]

We have become increasingly aware that the aesthetic rationale for the benefits of music study, instead of being based on music's innermost essences, was, like the notion of the aesthetic itself, a cultural construction. Like most cultural constructions, it emerged as a way of addressing particular sociocultural problems and concerns, and it owed its continued existence to its efficacy in addressing those needs and interests.^[7] But human needs and interests change over time. Among the important things we have come to realize about human needs and interests is that they tend not to be the universal sorts of things we once took comfort in believing they were.

Human needs and interests are nearly as various as humans themselves. Since theories are tools that are crafted in service of certain ends (which is to say, certain needs and interests), it is seldom the case that a given theory, however efficacious it may be for certain uses, is equally efficacious for all. Theories are abstractions, selective in the evidence upon which they draw and valid, when they are valid, for purposes related to their intended uses. They validate certain kinds of data while marginalizing others. As musical and educational voices representing different needs and interests have demanded to be heard, the adequacy of the aesthetic rationale has become increasingly suspect.

The needs and interests served by the idea of aesthetic value never were universal; rather, they were the needs and interests of certain social groups. The claims to universality, objective neutrality, absolute status and the like served to advance these needs and interests as though they were everyone's, to silence competing needs and interests, and to bifurcate the world of music into the genuine (the aesthetically valuable) and an illegitimate, inferior remainder. This was neither the best way to understand music, nor was it particularly becoming of a profession committed to musical education.

2. Korsmeyer's Critique

To be clear, Korsmeyer's book does not advance explicitly the argument outlined above. Nor, for that matter, is it concerned with music education *per se*; nor even, extensively, with

music. But among my reasons for examining it here is that it puts together, even in its title, things that conventional aesthetic doctrines have insisted we keep apart. It provides, among other things, an accessible accounting of the historicity of the concepts of art, fine art, artistry, aesthetic value, aesthetic experience, beauty, expression and more, and of the various ways these have incorporated and perpetuated gendered stereotypes that subvert the needs, interests and actions of women.

I will not pursue here the important relations and distinctions between gender and feminist concerns. Instead, I want to draw selectively on Korsmeyer's analysis to point out the ways that ideas like art, the aesthetic and beauty, as gendered constructs, undermine the comforting, inspiring claims traditionally made on their behalf by the music education profession.^[8] The first three chapters of Korsmeyer's book support this effort very well.

The notion of the artist, Korsmeyer reminds us, "is inseparable from ideas about what counts as 'art'" (p. 15); and what counts as art has varied dramatically over the centuries of recorded history on the subject: ". . .the products that count as art . . . have a history that shifts in tandem alongside the changing idea of the artist" (p. 16). What emerged in the modern period, however - the period, not coincidentally, from which the idea of the aesthetic also emerged - was the notion of the artist as "a fully autonomous individual who creates for the sake of creation alone" (p. 10). An important corollary to this concept of the artist and, more generally, artistry, was a conceptual and practical division between fine and practical or applied arts, often parallel to the more general distinction between art and craft. The concept of fine art "singles out works [and by extension, artist/producers of such works ^[9] that are produced for their *aesthetic* value alone" (p. 26, italics in original), in distinction, that is, from works or actions that are functional, practical and utilitarian. Thus, the end of art is beauty and beauty alone. As Victor Cousin put it in 1818, "utility has nothing to do with beauty" (p. 27).

"The notion of aesthetic value," Korsmeyer explains, "emerged from new approaches to pleasure and to the receptivity and appreciation that were summed up in the idea of 'taste'" (p. 28). Good taste was grounded in aesthetic pleasures, pleasures contrasted to those associated with action, use, economic value, social meaning and bodily gratification. To have good taste, then, was to take aesthetic pleasure in the full and proper apprehension of polite things designed solely for that end: works of art created by artists for the sole purpose of aesthetic gratification. True art was, as the saying goes, "for art's sake": for appreciative rather than practical engagement. Connection to any other praxis either diminished its artistic value or disqualified it from artistic consideration.^[10]

This opposition between the beautiful and the practical was also evident in the idea of the artistic genius, a creative individual with a "powerfully original mind" capable of "vaulting over" conventions and rules to "discover entirely new ways of conceiving and acting. . . ." (p. 30). That this unique, imaginative creative capacity (genius) was attributed to the

male mind is hardly coincidental, once one sees the ways these various notions interconnect. The idea of fine art precludes by definition many of the endeavors in which women, historically relegated to the domestic rather than public realm, were engaged. That the artist is stereotypically male follows almost automatically; the practical nature of women's domestic obligations assures their status as artisans rather than artists. To plumb the depths of creative imagination, Korsmeyer explains, required considerable freedom: "freedom from tradition, from the fetters of social expectation and constraint, perhaps even from family and other responsibilities" (p. 32). Such freedoms fell primarily to men, most often of a privileged social class; seldom were they characteristic of women's lives and experiences.

"The noteworthy thing about the implications for the presumed gender of the artist," writes Korsmeyer, "is that everything that is included in the elevated category of fine art has a typical maker who is masculine, to the point that for some art forms women were actually considered unfit to participate fully, and were diverted to lesser, adjunct roles" (p. 33). Gender is a "systematic and occasionally insidious phenomenon that can impart to concepts considerable power to shape the ways we think and see the world" (p. 34). And despite radical changes to the status of women in society since the historic period that gave rise to these concepts, gendered expectations about what counts as art, about who qualifies as an artist, and about what kinds of products and experience are worthy of such recognition or status, continue to shape belief and value systems in ways that have undesirable consequences.

The term "aesthetic," notes Korsmeyer, was first employed in eighteenth century philosophy to designate a "level of cognition that one receives from immediate sense experience prior to the intellectual abstraction which organizes general knowledge" (p. 37). It was soon revised, however, to refer more broadly to the kind of insight imparted by the experience of beauty, insight that was immediate and particular, rather than general,^[11] and intuitive rather than logical. Establishing the validity of these particular, intuitive insights, that is, the judgments that certain things constituted bona fide instances of beauty, was a major preoccupation of the time. It was therefore important to set standards for beauty and its attendant pleasures and to distinguish genuine instances and sources of aesthetic pleasure from imposters.^[12]

Among the pleasures that might be mistaken for aesthetic ones, thereby detracting from authentic standards of beauty, were pleasures that were selfish, self-interested, self-serving and/or merely personal. So the idea of aesthetic experience came to figure prominently in the effort to distinguish the pleasure occasioned by genuine, durable beauty from that which was personal, sensual and fleeting. Kant's version of the aesthetic notoriously excluded both "interested" pleasures and conceptual orientations, in an effort to establish its "subjective universality."^[13] Although aesthetic judgments were subjective, he sought to prove that they were not necessarily idiosyncratic. Indeed, they were universally available to any and all who were capable of assuming, or inclined to assume, the correct -- i.e., aesthetic, disinterested, conceptless --

perceptual stance.

Assumptions like these helped distinguish the cultivated from the boorish and were important parts of the machinery that helped distinguish the socially privileged from those less so at a time when an emerging middle class made such distinctions matters of considerable concern to those being displaced.^[14] This much is well known. But as Korsmeyer also explains, "the ideal aesthetic judge, the arbiter of taste, was implicitly male, for men's minds and sentiments were considered to be more broadly capable than women's" (p. 46). She points, for instance, to the "distinction between a 'feminine' taste for things that are pretty and charming and a 'masculine' taste for art that is more profound and difficult" (p. 47), further made manifest in the important aesthetic distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Among the terms of criticism at the time, Korsmeyer explains, was the idea of effeminacy, applied to the work of male artists, but not women, since "a work with similar quality by a woman would simply be feminine and thereby charming and minor" (p. 47). In short, the quest to establish standards for aesthetic judgments was part of a broader quest to establish standards for pleasurable experience; and in that quest, "the preferences of people who were already culturally accredited" became the criteria for determining validity. Such people were, by and large, men of social privilege, which is to say that ideas about taste and beauty ("aesthetic judgments") imposed standards instead of discovering them (p. 48).

These conventional aesthetic doctrines restricting the appreciation of beauty to those who assume the disinterested aesthetic attitude had the effect of prohibiting questions, since to ask questions, for example about moral or political concerns implicated in a work of art or a piece of music, would violate the aesthetic attitude by dragging in extraneous considerations. "It is precisely the prohibition on asking questions that has prompted many feminist critics to reject this tradition in aesthetics," observes Korsmeyer (p. 50). Indeed, convictions like these have often been used to seize disciplinary control over music study, declaring entire ranges of musical and musicological discourse out of bounds.^[15] These strategies of isolation and prohibition function ideologically, suggests Korsmeyer (after Cornelia Klinger): they are "consonant with the social subordination and exploitation of women" (p. 51). Rejecting these aesthetic orientations admittedly undermines the disinterestedness and universality conventionally claimed for them. However, Korsmeyer points out, such losses must be weighed against the restoration to music of a crucial attribute muted by aesthetic theories: its power.

3. Contemporary Alternative Ideas and Practices

Against the older, modernist, Enlightenment aesthetic traditions,^[16] Korsmeyer asserts, contemporary theories and practices emphasize the reinstatement of desire. Also influential are anti-universalist stances, grounded in convictions that a neutral, universal point of view is not just impossible, but politically implicated in concerns like gender, class, nationality, and historical perspective. "Universal ideals," she writes, "have been replaced by the value of the particular

perspective mindful of its situation in society and history, without pretense to universality" (p. 56). And as to the structure of traditional aesthetic theories:

"Aesthetic objects are assigned the passive role of being-looked-at rather than active looking; they are objects presented for the tasteful scrutiny of the perceiver. . . . Combined with the gendered thinking that pervades eighteenth-century accounts of beauty, this structural relationship can take on what we might call the form of gender in the relationship between subject and object, a structure that possesses traits parallel to those obtaining between masculine and feminine positions more literally described" (p. 57).

The structure of aesthetic appreciation, in which the passive, beautiful object stands as a feminine counterpart to the activity and potency of the male artist, is thus poorly suited to certain kinds of art. Its "spectator-art disjunction" does not serve participatory or group experiences, such as music-making, to take a nontrivial example. "Theories of [aesthetic] taste," Korsmeyer reminds, "are theories of connoisseurship rather than of participation," theories that perpetuate "assumptions about what kinds of arts are central models for aesthetic theory" (p. 57).[\[17\]](#)

"The paradigm of musical composition in the fine-art system is a work that is just to be listened to for its own beauty, intricacy, novelty, or complexity—in short, for its aesthetic qualities alone," Korsmeyer observes (p. 62). As we have also seen, the notion of artistic genius was also involved. And these modernist aesthetic ideals, writes Korsmeyer, helped create "a climate in which women's participation in the arts was fraught and difficult" (p. 58). In music, specifically, the inaccessibility of the fine-art system's professional opportunities to women assured their status as amateurs: people who performed and created in private, often domestic environments, earning little or nothing in recompense. "No matter how accomplished, an amateur performance is for a relatively small audience of intimates; its purpose is diversion or entertainment, the musical version of decoration" (p. 68-9).

The fine-art tradition is "but one moment in the history of art," writes Korsmeyer; and "it is one that emphasizes the autonomy of art and the contemplative distance between audience and artwork" (p. 99). These orientations favor experience that is abstract and disembodied; objects or works whose pleasures are not overly or overtly sensual; and undertakings whose practicality or usefulness is not direct or conspicuous. Fine art's existence is solely concerned with experience that is said to be aesthetic; and aesthetic gratification[\[18\]](#) comes of having perceived and experienced aesthetic qualities alone. However, Korsmeyer argues, under the fine-art orientation, women's creative engagements were largely confined to areas that were practical, functional and often sensual, such as food preparation, for example. They were thus, by definition, neither artistic nor conducive to experience that was aesthetic. Yet, she observes, "the presence of aesthetic qualities alone does not make something a work of art" (p. 99). There is a "deep gender bias" in the way we have come (under aesthetic/fine-art philosophical

traditions) to understand bodily senses. Here we encounter the "operation of gender at a level of conceptualization where the very presumptions regulating philosophical importance are formulated" (p. 102).^[19] It is for these reasons that many feminist interventions, both philosophical and artistic, are committed to exposing the fundamental "error and power" of the traditions we have been discussing here.

4. The "Difficulty" of Feminist Art

Korsmeyer's point is that much of the purported "difficulty" of feminist art in the postmodern era stems from its rejection of "the aesthetic values that reigned when the concept of fine art developed in modern history" (p. 108). Conventional aesthetic notions like expression and significant form serve to honor certain kinds of artworks and their makers and to delineate features that distinguish excellence from mediocrity. They also serve to smother attention to the sexual politics of representation.^[20] Korsmeyer examines the important distinction between art and non-art through Dickie's institutional theory, which asks "not what makes a work aesthetically valuable but what qualifies it to be called 'art' at all"; and Danto's historical/theoretical theory ("Art these days has very little to do with esthetic responses," quoted by Korsmeyer on page 116). She summarizes, in a statement aesthetically-enamored music educators might do well to consider carefully: "What artworks share is not any perceptual quality (such as beauty or significant form or the expressed visions of artistic genius) but is rather a relational quality with art traditions unfolding within culture" (p. 117).

Perhaps the most provocative and most easily misunderstood aspect of Korsmeyer's book is her treatment of what she designates "difficult pleasures"-the disgust or revulsion she suggests constitutes a contemporary parallel to one of the aesthetic hallmarks of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, sublimity.^[21] Although I will not attempt a thorough examination of her arguments here, it is important to understand her basic one. Because of the ways gendered binaries have been implicated in the neglect and denigration of the feminine and of women, feminist theorists and artists "have a particular stake in mind-body debates," she explains (p. 132). By evoking disgust, "above all others the most physical, visceral emotion," some contemporary feminist artists challenge directly the traditional doctrines conflating art with beauty and the pleasure of disinterested contemplation. Unlike modern aesthetic discourses that were rooted in theories of pleasure,^[22] she explains, contemporary and in particular, feminist perspectives often resist affirmation and the evocation of comforting emotions, deliberately evoking emotions instead that are "difficult, painful, and aversive" (p. 136). An important part of such artistic endeavors is the "shocking disruption of traditions of aesthetic value" (p. 133)^[23].

5. Musical Experience as Aesthetic

Whether music is capable of evoking the kind of disgust Korsmeyer describes is an interesting question that need not detain us here. But even if disgust and revulsion are beyond music's capacities, the broader issue warrants consideration. The polite tastes and detached, disembodied appreciation associated with modern aesthetic theory, and to which, note

once more, most versions of the aesthetic rationale for music education appeal directly and centrally, are relatively poor fits to many of the things many people find so compelling about musical experience: the impulses Nietzsche designated Dionysian - energy, disorder, unruliness, the visceral - the very satisfactions, one might say, of musical action.[\[24\]](#)

There are two possibilities that warrant consideration here. The first has already been introduced: that the acceptance of the aesthetic norms of modern theory tends to marginalize significant realms of musical practice that do not conform to its defining characteristics. The second, though related, deserves equally explicit consideration: that it distorts perception and understanding of what people are doing when they engage in music as musicians. It tends to subordinate musical action to works or pieces, reducing the point of musical engagement to faithful production of consumable, i.e., listenable artifacts. As a receptive stance, the aesthetic orientation to music neglects the importance of musical agency; and, as a formally-oriented stance, it tends to neglect in musical experience dimensions that contribute importantly even to the value of the traditional canon: the timbral, the Dionysian, the corporeal, and so on.

Regardless of one's philosophical stance on the particular issue of musical disgust, these concerns should remind us of the extreme fragility and porosity of the borders between and among sound, music, and noise.[\[25\]](#) It is not just that people who reject traditional norms are considered non-musicians; it is also that the intentionality, habit and identity so closely bound up in musical experience are such that sound perceived to lie outside the range of musical sound -- a range whose borders are both constructed and variable -- is simply not music.[\[26\]](#) Sound asserting musical status can be and often is a presence that is variously annoying, invasive or repulsive. The use of Frank Sinatra recordings for psychological punishment; of Bruce Springsteen recordings as psychological weapons; of recorded classical music to keep "undesirables" from congregating in certain public places; and of music as an instrument of torture: each of these points to musical power that goes well beyond the kinds envisioned by modern aesthetic theory.[\[27\]](#)

The questions I have tried to raise here, taking Korsmeyer's book as a point of departure, are (a) whether and how the assertion that music's value is primarily aesthetic, as that is conventionally understood, can be sustained; and (b) whether music's value should be regarded as primarily, intrinsically, inherently or exclusively musical, when that term is taken by definition to implicate the exclusions of modern aesthetic theory.[\[28\]](#) My response to both questions is "No." The differences between music as an occasion for aesthetic experience and music as human, social praxis, and the differences, in turn, between aesthetic education and music education are not just noteworthy, but potentially profound. Music education conceived as aesthetic education necessarily neglects, and even excludes, critical dimensions of music-making as a mode of human action or praxis. The focus of aesthetically conceived music education is pieces rather than events; entities rather than actions; properties rather than uses; listening rather than making. Music considered as praxis

- as a form of practical knowledge and a mode of human action - embraces many things of instructional significance that aesthetic theory has been deliberately crafted to exclude. Aesthetic engagement is one mode of musical praxis and an optional one, not the whole of it. [\[29\]](#)

At issue, ultimately, is whether, given the sexism and inequality that are part of the very origins of the concept of fine art, the aesthetic can be rehabilitated. Does the nature of the aesthetic mean that its endorsement introduces sexism and inequality into the very structures of what we teach? Is resistance possible within such a framework or does its attendant conceptual territory preordain the marginality of musical attempts to modify or subvert its assumptions, because of their presumed extra-musical or sub-musical status as performance art or as music that is merely popular, not the genuine article?[\[30\]](#)

In closing, let me turn briefly to one of Korsmeyer's particular interests, one I have so far neglected: the tastes, figurative and literal, associated with food and its preparation. I believe that her conclusions about food's potential status as an art form warrant our careful consideration. Korsmeyer specifically resists the appellation "art form" because it "does not do justice to the complexity of food practices and their significance."[\[31\]](#) More specifically, she argues that in order to qualify as an art form, food would have to be capable of the "disinterested" savoring requisite of specifically aesthetic attention. "I would not call cuisine a fine art," she writes, "because too much is sacrificed for the gain of a label."[\[32\]](#) Despite widespread criticism and attempts to extend their range, such classificatory terms have conceptual baggage that is not easily set aside.

As I read these statements, I cannot help but substitute "music" for "cuisine." The fit is an apt one. This disposes me to ask how the fine-art concept of music has shaped and continues to shape our assumptions of what music is and about which (i.e., whose) music is the proper focus of formal instruction. What in our understandings of the nature and value of music and music education has been sacrificed "for the gain of a label?" My personal list would begin with things like our appreciation of music's radical diversity, music's social and political significance, music's complicity in issues of power, music's profound linkage to individual and collective identity, music's fundamental transience and ambiguity, music's corporeal, sonorous, and timbral roots, and music's considerable capacity for ends both good and bad, on different levels, and often at one and the same time. These issues have been conspicuous in their absence from musical and educational studies, and for reasons, I am suggesting, that are hardly random. The cost of a label has been significant.

For the field of philosophical aesthetics, which has been nearly as slow as music education to integrate feminist perspectives, the challenges are equally significant. The gendered binary oppositions around which Korsmeyer has chosen to structure her book - these hierarchical dualities - are among the templates that powerfully frame theoretical thinking. Since they are more often the tools of thinking than the objects of thought and critical scrutiny, their pervasiveness and

tenaciousness too often go undetected, facts that make their consideration not just an indispensable starting point for feminist analysis but for philosophical analysis more broadly.

Endnotes

[1] This essay is drawn from a more extended editorial introduction to issue 5:1 (January 2006) of the on-line journal, *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education (ACT)*. The issue consists of critical analyses and commentaries on Korsmeyer's book, written by five music and music education scholars. These were followed by a response from Carolyn Korsmeyer (mas.siu.edu/ACT/index.html).

[2] Sometimes labeled MEAE: music education as aesthetic education.

[3] It is this capacity of the term "aesthetic" to mean so many contradictory things that disposes me to avoid use of the term. I believe I speak and write with greater clarity as a result. I invite readers to join me in asking, as I now do whenever I encounter the word: (a) precisely what it is intended to mean in the context at hand; whether (b) it adds something indispensable to the point being made; or whether, on the other hand, it (c) could be deleted-or changed, say, to "musical"-without consequence. My answer to (a) is most often, "Who knows?" while my responses to (b) and (c) are frequently negative and positive, respectively. Note: my criticisms do not mean that I deny experiencing in some musical circumstances things some might wish to call "aesthetic"-but rather that I think more apt and more useful descriptions are generally available.

[4] By, one is tempted to say, disciples and true believers.

[5] To some, regrettably, these debates seemed pointless-matters of no consequence to the business at hand: teaching and learning music, pure and simple. I say "regrettably" because of the extraordinary naivet- of such "practical" stances.

[6] Renouncing such claims has been crucial, for instance, to the acknowledgement of musical diversity and cultural pluralism.

[7] To ask whose needs and interests it served, and whose it did not, is therefore a revealing question when it comes to understanding the heat of the debates.

[8] Since readers outside the music education profession may find this reference to "comforting, inspiring claims" obscure, I will elaborate briefly. The "aesthetic rationale" for music education was and is essentially an advocacy argument, one primarily intended to serve the political end of substantiating music's (and thus, apparently, music education's) inherent or unqualified worth. Claims like the following are typical: Music exalts the human spirit. It enhances the quality of life. It brings joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment to every human being. Music is sound that is used to explore and understand the realm of human subjective reality, the patterns of sentience. Aesthetic education (and music education that is aesthetic in orientation) thus involves the education of feeling, which enhances the quality of the "inner life" by making people more

aesthetically discriminating and sensitive. By teaching people "how feelings go," studying (good, quality) music balances intellect's coolness with the warmth of emotion. Music provides a direct link to students' inner lives. In short, music education is the education of human feeling through the development of responsiveness to music's intrinsically expressive qualities. (Note: A pivotal assumption underlying these claims is that music's value is intrinsic, which precludes consideration of musics notable for their connections to things deemed intrinsic. An instructional corollary is that the exclusive aims of teaching are (a) full and proper perception of "the musical elements" and (b) heightened feelingful reaction to them.)

[9] Parenthetical insertion mine.

[10] The ideal was, as Peter Kivy's title would have it, *Music Alone*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[11] Or, more accurately, given the claim to subjective universality: simultaneously immediate, particular, and general. Among the important corollaries of these claims is that meaning somehow inheres in musical works in a form that is perennially available and intrinsically valuable. In educational theory, this latter assumption disposes the kind of perennialism that ignores the historicity and social construction of musical meanings.

[12] This, in turn, because of a need to distinguish people whose claims were warranted from those who were not.

[13] To be more specific, and perhaps fairer to Kant, he did draw a distinction between ideal or pure beauty on the one hand, and adherent or dependent beauty (judgments related to what things of 'this kind' are supposed to do: a love song, for instance) on the other. The problem was that Kant extolled the former and subsequent philosophers ignored the latter, thus effectively transforming a theory of ideal beauty into a theory of art.

[14] See, for instance, Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Preben Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order: The Making of the Modern Conception of Art* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997); Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Austin Harrington, *Art and Social Theory* (Polity Press, 2004).

[15] In music, heated debates have raged about whether issues like gender, sex, race, and power have any place in the study of the canon, since the proper focus of musicology is "the music itself." This latter stance has the effect of declaring, not only certain questions illegitimate and out of bounds, but also certain musical practices, their practitioners, and those concerned to raise the issues in the first place. To ask the curricular question "which music" is thus also to ask "whose music," "whose ways of engaging," "whose political priorities," and "who gets to say?" The entry of jazz into the academy was quite belated for these reasons, and popular music studies are still relegated primarily to cultural studies programs rather than music programs. It is worth noting as well that questions like "what should one listen for in music," and "what makes a music worthy of study" are also implicated, so that non-

structural musical attributes like timbre are rendered marginal considerations.

[16] Note that this "older," modernist aesthetic tradition is invariably the tradition invoked by music education philosophy. The Langerian philosophy of Bennett Reimer is one of the more prominent examples: Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education* (Prentice Hall, 1970, 1989, 2002). See ACT 2:1, 2003, for recent critiques and a response by Reimer. Note, too, that "newer," postmodern aesthetic traditions are designated "aesthetic" primarily in virtue of their inclusion in the academic philosophical field historically designated "aesthetics." (Indeed, even "anti-aesthetic" positions often appear under the aesthetic umbrella.) The adjective "aesthetic" and the noun "aesthetics" have very different references.

[17] It might be fairly objected that there exist aesthetic theories that avoid such biases-Dewey's experiential theory, for instance. However, whether Dewey succeeds in bridging this most fundamental of dualisms remains to be seen; and that his attempted re-definition of "aesthetic experience" failed to radically reorient the field-at least to date-is arguably beyond dispute. Part of the problem, it might be argued, stems from Dewey's failure to assign musical experience a central place in his accounts.

[18] A notion that is itself much debated, since if "aesthetic experience" serves to gratify, it is not "for itself" after all.

[19] Thus Korsmeyer designates it "deep gender."

[20] Musics and musical practices developed with the explicit intent of foregrounding these politics of representation are not acknowledged as music-since they do not do what it is assumed legitimate music must. The dilemma is that the master's tools, to use Audre Lorde's memorable imagery, cannot dismantle the master's house. In music's case, however, resorting to different tools seems to commit one to a wholly different project, leaving the master's house intact. This is almost certainly one reason there does not seem to be an analogue to "feminist art" in music.

[21] In her ACT essay (see note 1 above), Korsmeyer qualifies this claim in important ways.

[22] "Many philosophers identify beauty as a type of pleasure" (p. 134).

[23] This resonates in certain ways with Adorno's conviction that music is obligated to resist and challenge, although he hardly came to these convictions through feminism! Nor, of course, would he have condoned a deliberate or direct attempt to evoke disgust.

[24] Again, it is important to acknowledge that alternatives to modern accounts of aesthetic experience exist-although they were decidedly not invoked in music education's "aesthetic rationale" (and, had they been, would have led to strikingly different claims and conclusions). Consider, for instance: "From the pragmatist point of view, aesthetic experience is not characterized only as disinterested contemplation of art works and other elements of our environments of our environment as

objects of perception. Aesthetic experience is intertwined with different social and cultural practices in the flux of our everyday life." Or, more directly, "Action, practice and movement are epistemologically significant elements of experience. The environment is not just perceived, it is experienced by acting, moving around and participating in different practices. . . ." Pentti Määtänen, "Aesthetics of Movement and Everyday Aesthetics," in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Vol. 1 (2005).

www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=347.

[25] I have attempted to explore the fragility of these boundaries in my "Sound, Society, and Music 'Proper,'" in *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, vol. 2 no. 1 (Spring 1994) 14-24; and in my "Sound, Sociality, and Music" (Parts I & II), in *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, vol. V no. 3 (Fall, 1994) 50-67.

[26] What I have in mind here is the ease with which music becomes non-music, the ease with which a change in context or intentionality transforms music into noise. Sound has what has been aptly described as a peremptory immediacy. (D. Burrows, *Sound, Speech, and Music* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990). This accounts for our sense of oneness with music ("you are the music while the music lasts" [T.S. Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages,' in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988)]), but also means that unwanted sound, even if 'musical' for someone else (or for oneself, on another occasion), is experienced as invasive, intrusive, as noise. Intentionality thus has a great deal to do with the distinction between music and noise, and the frequent absence of middle ground.

[27] The Sinatra reference is to a teacher reported to use Sinatra recordings to make after school detention more distasteful and punitive for students. The Springsteen reference is to the U.S. military's use of Springsteen recordings to help drive dictator Manuel Noriega from his secure compound. The use of classical music reputedly keeps youth from congregating and loitering in shopping malls. Music's broader use as an instrument of torture is frequently mentioned in the mainstream media: the music of Christina Aguilera has been used for such purposes by U.S. forces in "Gitmo Camp" at Guantanamo Bay.

[28] I concede that this implication need not be granted. However, its existence is historically factual in the literature on music education.

[29] To acknowledge its limitations is simply, one might say, to concede that it is not universal-a view from everywhere or from nowhere. In a human world, this is hardly a radical notion.

[30] This question is raised by Elizabeth Keathley in her essay review of Korsmeyer's book.

[31] Korsmeyer's 'Response' essay in *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education (ACT)*, 5:1 (January 2006) www.siue.edu/MUSIC/ACTPAPERS/v5/Korsmeyer5_1.pdf, p. 7.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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