NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

ASSESSMENT ON OUR OWN TERMS

-GENERIC PRESENTATION VERSION FOR INSTITUTIONAL USE-

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"Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem."
John Galsworthy

"I often find that theories are like exquisitely beautiful machines that explode the moment they are switched on. The virus of life immediately infects the system and proves far too polymorphous to be contained in its structure."
Michael FitzGerald

"He uses statistics the way a drunken man uses lamp posts – for support rather than illumination."
Andrew Lang

"When a single boy too often cries "wolf" in the absence of wolves, we disregard his speech. When it becomes the habit of many to cry "wolf" in the absence of wolves, our system of speaking itself is undermined."
Nicholas Woltersdorf

"Change the water, keep the baby."
Nancy Smith Fichter

On Screen:

By Way of Introduction   **Opening Remarks**

Speaker 1

Our session today is entitled "Assessment On Our Own Terms." In

January 2007, the NASM Executive Committee asked Mark Wait,

Dean of the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, and

Samuel Hope, Executive Director of the National Association of

Schools of Music, to prepare a session that would look at the

question of assessment from an internal perspective. This session

was presented at the NASM Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City in

November of 2007. Throughout the presentation, the text references

a new resource that was assembled by the Council for Arts Accrediting Associations, an association of which NASM is a member. The Achievement and Quality Resources can be found online at http://aqresources.arts-accredit.org. In addition, the two authors drew on their extensive knowledge of and experience in higher education and the policy arena in which decisions are currently being made that will greatly affect the future of higher education on national, state and local levels. Mark Wait, Samuel Hope, and NASM have agreed to make this presentation available to the general public in the form that we will present today. It is important to note that this presentation does not constitute a policy position of NASM or as statement of NASM requirements for institutions. It reflects the policy analysis and professional development functions of NASM, and is intended as a springboard for local thought and action.

Speaker 2

A Premise:

The possibility of improvement does not negate the fact of past achievement or current expertise.

This presentation is shaped by a basic premise. As highly educated and experienced musicians, we know how to make effective evaluations and assessments. Improvement is always possible, but the fact that we can improve does not mean that we do not know what we are doing. All musicians work their whole lives to improve their powers of self-assessment. In fact, if expert judgment were still trusted in our society and among policy-makers associated with

higher education, there would be been no need for this session. Our problem is not that we do not know how to make assessments and evaluations, but rather that we are not as adept as we need to be in explaining to others what we do, how it works, and why it works. We also need to improve our abilities to debate effectively when our explanations are rejected.

Speaker 1

As is true in all professions, we take for granted a lot of our knowledge about what we do. What we do makes sense to us – it has musical logic – but it is hard to convey this to others because we have to translate it from musical logic into speech logic. And so, when we try to inform others of what we do and why we do it, we often face a lack of comprehension that we cannot surmount. Articulating what we do is difficult, both for ourselves and for listeners who are not musicians. This presentation is in part an effort to help us better communicate what it is that we do. In order to accomplish this we have divided our presentation into five sections.

We begin with describing some of the artistic principles surrounding our discipline as well as the approaches and philosophies we use to evaluate our work. We relate our principles and practices to the progress of our discipline. We then use these ideas as a basis for developing ways of communicating about what we know with

Another Premise:

There can be a difference in (a) levels of expert knowledge and (b) ability to communicate that knowledge to the public

A Distinction:

**Musical Logic
      and
Speech Logic**

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

II. How do we apply these principles in the various forms of evaluation we use?

III. Why these principles and the way we use them are essential for the progress of the discipline.

IV. How do we explain our principles, achievements, and methods to others?

V. How do we debate when necessary?

individuals and groups outside our field, including how we might debate with intellectual and procedural opponents when necessary.

Speaker 2

Before we begin, let us be extremely clear about the nature of our session this morning. Our purpose is to help us all think about ways to address the communication problem that we and all fields of expertise have at the present time. We do not present our points as final answers, nor do we suggest that our wordings, descriptions and arguments will work in every situation, nor that these are the only descriptions and arguments that are necessary. Again, our purpose is to help us all think more deeply about communication to maintain assessment on our terms in these difficult times for all of American higher education.

Our Purpose:

To present elements of a framework for thought and action.

Our Goal:

Keep assessment on our terms – The terms useful to and productive for the music profession.

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

"Art is not a thing, it is a way"

Elbert Hubbard

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

(Pause for reading of quote)

Speaker 1

Let us consider some principles that are critical to artistic evaluations in music. In presenting the particular principles we have

chosen, we are also going to touch on the nature of artistic

evaluation. But first we need to make a point that applies to this

entire presentation. We are talking about the assessment of artistic

work. Fundamentally, artistic work involves making choices and

combining those choices in the creation or presentation of music. To

some degree, works of music and art are developed for a particular

place and time. Musicians and artists are not the only people who

work this way. Teachers, diplomats, investors, politicians, and many

others also work this way. And, at the highest levels of achievement

in almost every field, this artistic mode of thinking and working is

present. It applies to advanced theoretical work in the sciences and

to the most creative and communicative kinds of scholarship. There

are certainly elements of the sciences and humanistic scholarship

that do not and cannot work this way if they are to be effective in

their fields. So when we are talking about artistry or artistic

evaluation, we are not just talking about composition and

performance, but also teaching, scholarship, therapy, and other

musical specializations practiced at the highest level.

Our Focus:

Artistic Work, especially
evaluations of application
of the artistic mode of thought, of
artistic ways of working.

Artistic Work:
Making design or "compositional"
choices in the creation or
presentation of a work.

Making creative, situation-specific
choices…

Not simply applying science-based
technical systems designed to work
exactly the same way all the time.

Speaker 2

Let's begin with a simple evaluation principle. This principle is

centered on our need to consider complete wholes that may contain

many parts or elements.

**Principles Set 1:
Parts/Wholes/Goals**

Evaluations of parts alone are not sufficient.

(add) The parts have value primarily in relation to a particular whole.

The parts or elements may be evaluated separately, but the most critical thing is how they work together to produce a composite result.

Intent sets the goal for the whole.

Here is another principle: the composite result is judged in terms of its intent. And this intent is determined by the creator of the work. Intent is expressed quite simply with regard to performance: "I shall play Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata." However, in terms of interpretation, the performer may approach a particular work in any one of many successful ways. The composer has an infinite number of possibilities, and makes particular choices among them. To some extent, teachers and scholars and other music professionals have the same kinds of choices.

Goals are individual, even unique.

Evaluation requires knowledge and skill to understand:
❏ Many specific goals
❏ Use of elements to reach each goal

The nature of successful evaluation in artistic matters depends on understanding the goal of the creator in great depth, and then being able to evaluate the creator's success at reaching that goal

The Goals/Wholes/Parts relationship in the arts means:

(add) Individual evaluation trumps standardized assessment

Since there is a virtually infinite number of goals, and since decisions about them are made by individuals, effective assessment requires deep knowledge and sophistication. It is for all these reasons, and for other reasons we have yet to describe, that the arts rely primarily on individual evaluation rather than standardized assessment.

Principles Set 2: **Technique**	<u>**Speaker 1**</u>

Technique
(add) is essential

We all know that technique is essential, but it is not everything. Perspective on technique changes from the first music lesson to the last. At some point, technical proficiency needs to rise so that it reaches total fluency or transcendence. It's not like acquiring knowledge, which is done once. A transcendent technique must be maintained by constant practice. There is no such thing as obtaining technique and then forgetting about it.

(add) and must be maintained.

Technique

(add) Goes beyond physical ability to encompass interpretative knowledge and skills

As we all know, technique is the fundamental ability to sing or play an instrument, and assessment of technique varies greatly in approach and depth when we consider the gamut of skill levels, from beginner to virtuoso. As musicians grow in sophistication, technique becomes more complex. Methods of analysis and interpretation are combined with instrumental and vocal techniques, blended with them, integrated and synthesized at ever increasing levels of sophistication.

Individual notes become units and patterns, so that one acquires the ability to negotiate arpeggios in a Beethoven concerto, or scales in Mozart or Bellini. Those scales and arpeggios become building blocks of still larger patterns, so that a musical structure and an aesthetic architecture emerge. And our motor skills and our mental recognition gradually work in larger and larger units. This reflects

the same principle that we talked about in our first point. The goal of the beginning student may be primarily to perform a work accurately, and that accuracy can be judged in a somewhat standardized way. We start with accuracy, then progress toward making a musical statement. And every step of that progress involves individual decision-making.

Our evaluation of that progress is necessarily complex. Some elements of our evaluation will have rather universal yes or no answers, while other elements will not. Artistic professionalism – a professional standard – requires mastery of <u>all</u> these elements – those that are easily quantifiable <u>as well as</u> those that are not-technical mastery as well as aesthetic decisions. We all know that mere accuracy is not sufficient for true quality.

Technical accuracy can be evaluated in yes/no terms.

But comprehensive artistic technique is best evaluated in terms of specific goals.

Technical accuracy, though essential, is not enough for artistry

Principle Set 3-Structural Frameworks and Systems

Speaker 2

The arts not only have techniques, they have structural frameworks. The simplest example is the various forms of musical composition. But there are other frameworks as well. Frameworks are established in part by the size and scope of particular works, an art song in comparison to a full-length opera, for example.

Structural Frameworks
(add) compositional forms, for example.

The frameworks we have are common, but applications of them are not. These frameworks are discernable to those with sufficient knowledge. They structure basic forms of musical communication.

Common Frameworks
(add) but widely varying applications of them.

They are like the nine or so basic plots in literature. There are only so many standard ways to begin a piece of music. But the framework itself is not the entire goal, nor does the framework produce a standardized result. It is not a die that stamps out identical pieces of machinery. A framework may call naturally for certain techniques, but it does not require that they be used in a specific way, at least beyond a fundamental level of detail.

Framework is not a scientific law, chemical formula, or technical machine.

From time to time, various aspects of musical practice or individual musicians develop systems. These systems can be integrated with frameworks and techniques. But originally, the systems are developed in order to create a work or a series of works. Neither the framework nor the system is the work itself.

Systems

(add) tonal harmony, for example

Frameworks and systems are means and forms – not ends.

(add) In artistic applications, they too are goal driven.

In other words, in the application of frameworks and systems, we are seeking differences, rather than sameness. We are not looking for imitation, but rather new and fresh insights, different revelations, the uniquely powerful application.

Consistent with the theme we have already sounded, successful, effective evaluation in the arts depends on a sophisticated understanding of frameworks and systems and their integration with technical means, all to produce a specific work or performance or act of teaching, or scholarship, or therapy, and so forth.

Effective artistic evaluation – requires the sophisticated ability to consider integration of goals, wholes, parts, frameworks, systems, and technical means.

Principles Set 4-Art works differently from other modes of thought

Art

(add) Discovery

(add) by Individual Creation.

Science
(add) Discovery
(add) by empirically-based research.

Speaker 1

Music as well as the other arts is about discovering but in a different way than the sciences, the social sciences, or history and the other humanities.

To simplify as much as possible, the artistic mode of thought and work discovers things by creating with them. Bach discovered a great deal about the fugue by creating fugues. Shakespeare discovered things about tragedy by creating magnificently with the elements of tragedy. This is why the arts work with things and make discoveries that are not revealed in other kinds of analysis often until centuries later.

The arts express. Express what? Emotions, of course – states of mind and of being. And also relationships among characters or states of mind. Think of the thematic transformations of melodies in Schumann, or in Mahler. A single theme can have many different guises. The arts are by nature ambiguous. Their analysis and evaluation are complex, even elusive.

Science, on one hand, discovers by locating the laws, principles, and formulas that have always existed, and expresses them most usually in mathematical terms. Science is finding out how things work. Art is creating new things from what is already available. Each approach is a mode for discovery. Science is looking for the universal answer;

Science-Universal Answer

Art-Unique Answer

For the Arts:
The kinds of evaluations used in
the sciences are not enough.
Science-
One answer is correct or best

(add)Art:
Many Answers are correct;

(add) There are many superlatives,
but no single best.

art is always crafting a particular answer – in fugue or in tragedy, for example. For this reason, scientific kinds of evaluations can never do the entire job of evaluating in the arts disciplines. Science is looking for single answers; the arts for multiple answers conceived by individual creators as they set their particular goals for specific works or performances.

All these points show clearly why a total reliance on quantifiable data, sometimes mischaracterized as "assessment" is not consistent with the nature of evaluation in the arts. This is why we are extremely reticent about so-called "best practices" which suggest that one way of doing something is better than all the others. For us, "best practices" cover a range rather than focusing on a specific formula or approach.

Principles Summary:

Speaker 2

Wholes Trump Parts

Let's summarize and extend what we have said so far. The arts are centered in a culture of achievement in an evaluation of whole works rather than a culture of evidence with regard to easily assessable parts.

Goals Trump Rules

Successful works are those that achieve goals they have set for themselves at the beginning. In performance, opening moments of the work or the interpretation often set these goals, especially for the discerning receivers.

Goals drive applications of conceptual and technical means.	Given our understanding of the goal, we assess against the "best" things that we know given the depth of understanding we have about the goal.
Sophistication: knowledge, skills, experience – underlies both achievement and full recognition of achievement.	When we assess, we are interested in artistry or applications of the artistic mode of thought, or the development of knowledge, skills, experiences, habits of mind, and so forth that lead to highly sophisticated achievements.

Speaker 1

An Important Wrinkle: The Level of our Students	With student evaluations, we are dealing with a group of individuals who usually come to us after several years of working out their aspirations to be as good as they can possibly be. Our students bring a lot to the table before we accept them into our programs. That is why we accept them as students.
We are not starting at the beginning	So, in the vast majority of cases we are not dealing with beginners, and therefore, our evaluation challenge is far greater than if we were dealing with the elementary techniques of beginners. Many of the complexities that we are speaking about are already in play when our most advanced students come to us.
(add) Thus	
(add) many of our evaluations need to address high levels of complexity.	It is for this reason that evaluations based on standardization are not appropriate. We will talk more about this in Section III of this presentation.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

"A writer is somebody for whom writing is harder than it is for other people"

Thomas Mann

Our Focus:
Artistic work, especially evaluations of:

(add)
educational goals,

(add) set and described in many ways.

NASM standards are frameworks

(add) not blueprints

Goal setting becomes more precise as we move from NASM standards, to institutional expectations, to individual artistic objectives and decisions.

II. How do we apply these principles in the various forms of evaluation that we use?

(PAUSE for reading of quote)

Speaker 2

In this portion of our presentation, we are going to talk briefly about a number of the evaluation mechanisms we use in music. We hope you would agree that the principles and nature of evaluation we have just described are derived from the nature of the arts themselves and specifically the art of music. We have already talked about setting goals for achievement as the basis for artistic endeavor. It is clear to anyone looking carefully at our field that we also set educational achievement goals at all sorts of levels.

We have standards statements, and these are published and readily available. They are frameworks, not blueprints, at least at the national level. The NASM Standards represent a general consensus about what is necessary. These necessities are expressed in terms of overall goals.

At the institutional level, decisions about goals become more specifically defined. Institutions determine how they will achieve general expectations of the field and their own particular expectations in the various areas they teach.

At the individual level, goal-setting is even more detailed. The individual makes specific decisions associated with creation of a particular work or event in whatever specialization of music they practice. The more complex the goals to be expressed in music logic become, the harder it is to write them down in words with clarity and specificity. But the basic truth is that the field does have goals at all levels that are expressed in standards. There is no reason for the music field to agree with critics who charge that there are no specific goals for achievement.

The more sophisticated the applications of music logic, (add):
the harder it is to express them in speech logic or math logic.

Failure to express music logic in words or numbers is not an indicator of failure to express music logic in music.

Speaker 1

Standards or expectations can be expressed in many dimensions; for example, levels of technique, degrees of breadth and depth, types of knowledge application, and so forth. But beyond specific standards, we also have working formulations of ideas about the attributes of successful work. For example, we are going to put up on the screen a number of important attributes and characteristics of individual achievement that appear on the Achievement and Quality section of the National Office for Arts Accreditation Web site.

PAUSE

Quality – in terms of the Individual Artist

- Basic professional-level of knowledge and skills
- Personal vision evident in work
- Conceptual acuity and creative virtuosity at

multiple levels of
complexity
- Imagination and ability to
  channel it to reach artistic
  goals
- Technical virtuosity
- Conceptual and technical
  command of integration
  and synthesis

Now we would suggest that to some extent meeting the standards set
by NASM and by individual institutions enables development of
work with these attributes by practicing professionals. However, the
attributes are not manifested in the same way. Their actual
realization is subject to preferences or individual aspirations and
standards of quality that are internal to the kind of work being done
and to the development of each artist or even each work of art.

Speaker 2

When we move beyond individuals to institutions, we have also
developed sets of general standards that lay a foundation for the
specific work of those institutions. But in addition to these, we are
also able to identify important elements and conditions that are
present when institutions are successful. These are attributes
observable in most successful music teaching institutions. The actual
text we have on this topic on the Achievement and Quality Website
is too long to put up on the screen but here are the major sections
which remind us of the fundamental themes.

These attributes are achieved by different institutions in different

ways, and certainly they are applied to different purposes in different ways.

PAUSE

<u>Speaker 1</u>

Consistent with the way the arts work, we not only have general and individual goals expressed as standards, attributes, and conditions, but we also have both technical and artistic means of evaluating how well we are achieving these goals. At the individual level a tremendous amount of educational time and energy is spent developing and honing skills of self-evaluation to the highest possible level. This is absolutely critical in musical performance where evaluation is constant even in the final performance itself. In fact, virtuosity in constant adjustment is a significant goal.

Self-evaluation is a critical skill for artistic work.

But beyond internal self-evaluation abilities, we also have means to accomplish external evaluations. These means are more varied,

External evaluations are constant.

involve more people, are more public, and more frequent than in many other disciplines, especially in the course of formal education. Our institutions use a combination of means. Let us look at the set of means we use from two different perspectives. First, let us just list them, or at least the most common ones. To use some assessment terminology, we accomplish both formative and summative evaluations within and across this set of means. These are things we already have.

Commons Assessment Mechanisms
(hold as title)

Juries

(add) Competitions

(add) Auditions

(add) Public Performances

(add) Private Lessons
(add) Rehearsals

(add) Peer Criticism

(add) Self-Evaluation against superlative work

We have juries. Individuals perform for and are graded by teachers other than their own. We have all sorts of competitions. Some are public, but many are internal. Competitions for roles or for chairs in ensembles, for example. Much work is obtained through audition or portfolio review. Public performances followed by public and peer criticism are the norm. We have the constant assessment of the private lesson and the rehearsal. And of course we have the relentless criticism of other musicians, and particularly in technical areas, the ability to compare our proficiency with that of others.

(add) Coursework Exams
(add) Project Assessments

(add) Journalistic Criticism
(add) Summary Exams
(add) Achievement and Aptitude Tests

In addition to all of these arts-centered approaches in evaluation, we have mechanisms that are more common to all fields, such as examinations on coursework, journalistic criticism, assessments and evaluations of projects, achievement and aptitude tests, and so forth.

<u>Speaker 2</u>

<u>**Student Achievement Goals –**</u>
<u>**Indicators/Evidence Analysis**</u>

Competence in basic arts
techniques
- Entrance, continuation
  and graduation
  requirements
- Achievement tests
- Course evaluations
- Class or laboratory
  examinations

Basic understanding of the history
of the art form in Western and
other civilizations
- Course requirements
- Syllabus content
- Class examinations

Basic general education at the
college level, including the ability
to understand distinctions and
commonalities regarding work in
artistic, scientific, and humanistic
domains
- Transcript analysis
- Curricular requirements
- Syllabus review
- Achievement tests
- Class and laboratory
  examinations

Entry-level competence in the
major field of study
- Juried Examinations
- Placement Records

Ability to enter graduate study in
the major field
- Graduate school
  acceptances
- Records of completion of
  graduate work

A coherent set of
artistic/intellectual goals evident in
each student's work and the ability
to achieve these goals as an
independent professional
- Assessment of student

We now put up on the screen a number of typical student
achievement goals and we provide the kind of indicators or evidence
that we have available. These come from an April 1990 briefing
paper of the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations, an
association of which NASM is a member. Let us take a moment to
review these.

PAUSE

As our on-screen review continues, it becomes clear that we not
only have principles and goals, we also have means. We believe that
we can say honestly that over the last century our goals and our
means have worked together to improve the quality of professional
music activity in all specializations because our goals and means are
consistent with principles derived from the nature of our art.
Certainly, these goals and means have resulted in an unprecedented
spread of high levels of musical expertise in every corner of our
nation. This is not a reason to stop working on goals or means, and
of course, being artists, we don't stop. We always believe that we
can do better. But let us look at all that we have been talking about

projects
- Content of final projects
- Faculty and peer assessment of final projects
-

Ability to form and defend defined judgments
- Project assessments
- Master class evaluations

Ability to communicate in spoken and written language
- Syllabus review
- Project Assessments

Ability to communicate ideas in a specific art form in professional circumstances
- Internship reports
- Employee ratings of performance
- Employment records

thus far from another perspective.

PAUSE IF NECESSARY

Speaker 1

Different Mechanisms tell us different things.

A return to parts and wholes.

What do all these goals and means accomplish? What do they tell us about individual achievement? I think we would all agree that these mechanisms tell us different things depending on the nature of the evaluation, but also on the content and level being addressed. For example, some evaluations determine whether there has been a specific knowledge and skill development. These factual or technical elements are important foundations for all students. But these evaluations also tell us the extent to which an individual can assimilate or integrate knowledge; in other words, bring various parts together to create a new whole. It is not just whether the person can play the notes technically, but whether there is a meaningful

interpretation that relies on but does not come entirely from technical skill with an instrument. There are all sorts of different ways to talk about this, and none of them are adequate to express exactly what happens. But at the higher levels of achievement, our assessments get further and further away from sets of discrete bits of knowledge or discrete technical skills and move to questions of blending of aesthetic choice, of timing, and so forth. The thing that makes all of this extremely difficult for those on the outside to understand is that there is almost never a pure correlation between discrete knowledge and technical skills on one hand and artistry on the other. The proof of this is that there are far more musicians with high levels of technical proficiency than musicians whose interpretive abilities are acknowledged to be supreme by most musicians and by audiences in the thousands. We cannot claim scientific cause and effect relationships. And so, our evaluations move from what is easy to measure to what is difficult to measure, and ultimately to matters of personal aesthetic preference.

In summary, our field clearly has highly developed evaluation systems which function at all sorts of levels. These have been developed to be consistent with the nature of the field and its specializations. Critics may not understand what we do, or see validity in it because it is not consistent with science -, social science -, or humanities-based views of how knowledge and skills

A Different Concept:
No pure correlation between discrete knowledge and technical skills,
THE PARTS
and artistry,
THE WHOLE

Much of arts evaluation is about things that are extremely hard to evaluate.

If anyone is truly interested in "outcomes," our outcomes prove the validity of our approaches to evaluation.

are organized and taught, or how they are evaluated. But no one can say that we in music do not have systems and approaches that work in terms of who we are, what we do, and the nature of our field.

III. Why these principles and the ways we apply them are essential for the progress of the discipline.

Speaker 2

(PAUSE for reading of quote)

Let us turn now to our third section and discuss five reasons why our fundamental evaluation principles and the ways we apply them are essential for the future progress of our discipline. Let us begin with a few thoughts about change. The first issue is not whether we should change, but whether any particular change proposed will make improvements. This question is appropriate at every level, from the national, to the institutional, to the individual. If we are really wise, we will not answer questions about improvement superficially, but will go beyond what sounds good and ask ourselves what can go wrong? How can a particular change, or line of thought about a change, turn on us or be destructive in some way in the future? What are the risks; do the benefits of greater success or a breakthrough outweigh those risks?

We have to confront these questions directly because, in much

evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

(add) The general rather than the individual

(add) Blueprints rather than frameworks

(add) The technical and science-based over the artistic, the universal over the specific

(add) Numbers and images they produce

(add) Standardization for purposes of comparison

What happens if these terms are forced upon us?

The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

policy-making about evaluation, we and the practitioners of other disciplines are being told that evaluation methods derived from the natures of our disciplines are self-serving and unacceptable. We are told that we have to become more generic in our evaluations. Instead of assessment systems serving learning and creating in our discipline, learning and creating in our discipline are to serve assessment. There are calls to move from frameworks to blueprints at every level. There are assumptions that anything that works, works as a technology and therefore can be made to spew out numbers that provide "transparent" information about what is happening. Increasingly, we must confront the notion promoted by our opponents, that the artistic way of working – the production of unique answers for unique situations – is just wrong, in part because such answers cannot be easily compared.

What happens if we either volunteer or are forced to succumb to these ideas and thus abandon the principles and the ways we apply them we have described?

Speaker 1

So what would happen if we were to assess our work on others' terms?

Here are five probable results:

Alien evaluation environment	1. First, we would be placed in an evaluation environment that is alien to the pursuit of our particular goals, an environment that attacks any attempt to solidify the validity of our goals.
Time requisitioned	2. Secondly, our precious time would be requisitioned for purposes not consistent with the nature of our work. Because time is a finite resource, our ability to be productive in our fields would be lessened.
Expertise basis shifts from music to assessment	3. Third, the illusion would be created that assessment requires no expertise in the thing being assessed, but only expertise in assessment. A way-station to this goal is the splintering of wholes into parts and then focusing on the parts that are easy to evaluate in a technical way and magnifying them to obscure or deny the existence of the whole.
Loss of local curriculum control and individual goal-setting	4. Fourth, these three results would lead to a loss of control in curriculum, teaching, individual approaches, and evaluation. Control would pass from the field to external, usually centralized bodies that make judgments on the basis of images created by numbers, rather than real achievement in the discipline.
Reduced Productivity "An [uninformed] idealist is one who, in noticing that a rose smells better than a cabbage concludes that it will also make better soup." *H.L. Mencken*	5. Finally, an abandonment of our principles and ways of working would reduce our productivity as our time and energy are spent either fighting for the working room we need to be productive, or answering assessment requirements that are not based on the nature

of what we do.

Speaker 2

Let's go on to Part IV

IV. How do we explain our principles, achievements, and methods to others?

(PAUSE for reading of reading of quote)

At about this point in our presentation, you may be thinking, "This is a very in-depth description of how we think about evaluation in our field and how we accomplish it, as well as what could happen if our methods are not better understood, but how in the world can we formulate these ideas to explain them in situations where there is no

How should our field work on this problem?

in-depth understanding of the music profession and its ways of working, especially at the highest artistic and intellectual levels. In other words, how can we package these things in convincing ways for those who don't know what we know and can't do what we do?

We believe this is a fair assessment of what has been presented so far and where we as a field need to go. We believe that the ideas presented and others like them can be explained, but we do not

There is no silver bullet.

believe that there is a single formula, approach, package, or slogan

that will do the job in every instance.

We believe that creating explanations is an artistic project rather than a technical one. As an artistic project, it has technical elements, but different techniques need to be applied for different circumstances and situations. We have laid out the elements of a framework that might be the basis for developing individual responses. NASM has a number of resources and is building additional ones as we speak. But these frameworks can only be useful if the concepts in them are taken and applied in specific situations. This means making choices about what must be done to be effective in a particular place and time.

Speaker 1

Before we take this issue further, let's look at one overriding principle. You cannot explain or debate effectively unless you yourself are convinced that what you are doing and the way you are doing it is fundamentally better than any other approach. This does not mean taking a rigid position or being inflexible about any changes at all. Normally, that is not only unwise, it is impossible. Our point is on a higher conceptual level. For example, you cannot argue effectively for democracy if fundamentally you believe that totalitarianism offers better alternatives. You cannot explain or argue effectively for the combination of individual evaluation and

Creating explanations is an artistic project.

We must all develop the ability to produce site and situation specific responses and answers.

A prerequisite for effectiveness:

You must believe and communicate that "our terms" are better than any "other terms" we know of.

mentoring that we use to develop artistic abilities if you really believe that standardized testing is better. An arts-centered position does not necessarily mean refusing to accept any common testing at all, but rather accepting it as appropriate as part of your overall framework.

Speaker 2

When we are considering how to package a particular explanation, we need to ask first who all the recipients of the package will be. We also need to know, insofar as possible, what their basic orientation is. For example, do they believe that standardized testing is a superior alternative to anything else? If so, the only explanation that they are likely to accept is "we have looked at what we are doing, decided that it is completely wrong, and we are moving to a total regime of standardized testing." Obviously, this is an answer we cannot give. Here is another thing we need to think about. To what extent do the philosophical positions, livelihoods, job performance evaluations, and so forth of the individuals we are addressing demand that they prove us wrong or inadequate no matter what we say? Or, to be more positive, are we addressing individuals who want to learn about what we do and understand it in relationship to overall evaluation needs in some larger context, such as an entire institution?

A second set of questions: What do they want? What can they

Who is the audience?

What is their orientation?

They must prove us wrong or inadequate

(add) or

(add) They want to understand what we do

(add) and connect it to something larger.

What do they want or need to be

satisfied?

require? What will satisfy them? What will cause them to leave you alone? Do you need to explain anything, or rather do you just spend a bit of time translating something you already know and do into terms that they understand or will accept? To what extent does the thing that will satisfy produce marginal costs in time or protect the concept of expert evaluation as the primary assessment mechanism?

(add) Don't provide more than necessary.

What values will be used to interpret information?

Another critically important question is what values will be used to interpret the information provided? This may be the place, and perhaps the only place where explanation is appropriate.

What level of complexity is appropriate?'

Another thing to think about is the pros and cons of giving complex explanations. In some cases, presenting the complexity of what we do will cause a realization that others are not qualified to evaluate what we do. In these cases, it does not matter whether we are perfectly clear or not. The goal is to show that if you don't know the field, you cannot really play in it.

If you don't know the game, you can't really play.

Speaker 1

There is an analogy that may work here. If you want to use a computer, you have to work with that computer according to the nature of the programs it contains. In other words, you have to work with the computer on its terms and not yours. In a way, different fields of study and practice are analogous to the computer in the sense that they have their own systems. They have their own

mechanisms, their own pathways, their own structures of information. If you want to work with any given field in any kind of sophisticated way and actually help it improve, you have to learn a tremendous amount about that field. It is impossible to make suggestions about improvements to the internal workings of a computer system unless you know in great detail how such systems work and what various options are for certain kinds of decisions.

Speaker 2

So, in developing a particular package of explanations for a particular circumstance, you need to decide the level of complexity you want to unveil.

What is the next question likely to be?

Be careful about producing complex lists of things that you do, or the criteria you use, especially when you think the response might be, "OK, that's fine, but you need to put numbers on these things," or "You need to tell us empirically how you know whether someone is achieving or not. Your opinion as a professional is not good enough."

Speaker 1

What ideas and tools do we have?

Let us turn now to some specific ideas and tools we have to explain our evaluation procedures. We already have many formulations. We have statements of goals and expectations everywhere, from NASM

Standards at the national level, to course descriptions at our own institutions. Many units have taken the competencies they require, correlated them with where the competencies are developed in various courses, and described how these competencies are evaluated. In other words, it is not necessary to start over, or to offer a system of evaluation on terms that are not consistent with the needs of our profession. We want to point out that competencies expected in undergraduate music specializations have now been gathered together by specialization and published under the Achievement and Quality Resources section of the Arts Accredit Web site. These excerpts from the Quality and Achievement Website show nationally what is expected in terms of competencies, listing together, for example, the competencies for all Bachelor of Music graduates and those for each specialization.

Undergraduate Competencies in Music Specializations:
- Go to http://aqresources.arts-accredit.org
- Click on Evaluating Elements and Conditions in Institutions and Programs
- Click on Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization - Undergraduate
- Click on Music

(SAMPLE WEB PAGE)

Beyond what you have already done, formulate responses regarding issues or questions such as the following:

What aspects or elements of student work can be discussed in terms of the results of instruction?

1. What are the aspects or elements of student work that can be discussed in terms of the results of instruction usually provided in courses, lessons, rehearsals, curricula, and so forth; for example, perceptual, conceptual, and technical development, problem solving,

knowledge, skills, ways of working and thinking.

What aspects or elements can you identify that cannot be discussed easily in terms of their direct correlation with various forms of instruction?

2. What aspects or elements can you identify that cannot be discussed easily in terms of their direct correlation with various forms of instruction usually present in schools or departments of music? Here is an analogy that may be useful: Passing the Bar Exam with a high score does not guarantee that a person is an outstanding trial lawyer. With respect to being a trial lawyer, the Bar Exam is a condition of eligibility, not an assessment of competency or potential.

What elements and conditions of instruction contribute most directly to the level of student achievement?

3. For areas where you believe valid connections between instruction and student work can be drawn, what elements and conditions of instructions contribute most directly to the level of student achievement?

How do we determine that the elements and conditions of instruction that contribute most directly to the level of student achievement are working?

4. Continuing to separate areas of certainty from areas that are more speculative, how do we determine that the elements and conditions of instruction that contribute most directly to the level of student achievement are present and working well for an individual student and for a majority of students within a class, department, or school as a whole?

What are the areas or levels about which most professional in the field are likely to agree on the relative quality or value of the work?

5. What are the areas or levels about which most professionals in the field are likely to agree on the relative quality or value of the work?

What are the areas or levels where there is likely to be disagreement about the relative quality and value of work?

Outline Example
How We Evaluate and Why It Is Effective

The _____(School/Department, etc…) of Music

- How music works – the artistic mode of thought
- How our field defines achievement in the music disciplines we teach
- How we set goals for achievement
- How we evaluate student achievement
- How we evaluate faculty achievement
- How we evaluate our department/school
- How we consider external perceptions
- The competencies expected of the students we accept
- The competencies expected of students we graduate
- Why our evaluation concepts work and support our purposes

6. Where is there likely to be disagreement about the relative quality and value of work?

Having identified what can be known for sure, and what cannot, and/or the areas or levels where there is likely to be evaluation consensus and where there is not, you are then in the position to explain what you do on the basis of what can be done with honesty and integrity. You have also established the basis for defeating false correlations that outcomes ideologists are prone to seek. We have put up on the screen an outline that a music school or department might fill in to provide an overall explanation of its evaluation approaches. This is one of many possible packages, and perhaps not the best one for your situation. Resources for filling in the outline are on the Achievement and Quality Website.

V. How do we debate when necessary?

"The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers."

Sidney T. Harris

Choose debate conditions carefully.

Probing Debate Questions

1. What empirical proof do you have that the assessment system and approach you are proposing will work better for our field than the systems we use now?

2. What evidence can you provide that the world of higher education or our discipline is structured, operates or is organized conceptually in ways that makes your proposed approach more effective than ours?

3. How can you prove to us that putting results in a form that you define as measurable will lead to improvement in student learning, or to advancement and innovation in our field?

4. What proof is there that all quality in every dimension of life can be engineered through the application of massive large-scale assessment systems, or that the larger and more centralized the assessment system, the higher the quality will become?

V. How do we debate when necessary?

<u>Speaker 2</u>

(PAUSE for reading of quote)

Clearly, there are grand philosophical arguments that can be made as we advocate for assessment on our own terms. There are probing debate questions that challenge and show the conceptual weaknesses behind massive, large-scale assessment systems. We are talking about systems that would replace substance with a false kind of evaluation. In short, they would replace <u>doing</u> with <u>counting</u>.

We show a number of these questions on the screen.

(PAUSE)

5. How is it possible to call for a deeply integrated system of standardization so that results can be compared, and at the same time call for innovation or a climate of innovation.

6. Do you believe that students carry a great deal of responsibility for what they learn?

7. Isn't a model always a diminished version of the original?

8. Can you prove that if we fashion a program that specifically works for us, we will fall behind?

9. Can you prove that any numbers we collect about specific performance indicators can predict for anyone the level of quality of education an individual student will receive, or the success of that person after graduation?

Speaker 1

Now, let's talk in very practical terms.

Usually, music faculties and administrators are not in a position to ask these questions.

Unfortunately, few of us in music have the opportunity to ask such questions, especially of the proponents of large, centralized systems. We do not have direct contact with the U.S. Department of Education, nor do we have much opportunity to develop the overall policy of our own institutions on such matters. Instead, we are asked

What are the philosophical and programmatic situations of senior administrators at your institution?

to respond to our deans, vice chancellors and provosts who oversee regional accreditation issues, usually while the accreditation review is in progress. And here, we are referring to <u>regional</u> accreditation,

The institutional accreditation issue.

Compliance not debate

not discipline-based accreditation. In such regional cases, we may be asked to demonstrate to these administrators or to university committees how we are meeting these new assessment requirements. Our task, we are told, is not to question the assessment, but rather to show how we are in compliance. And often our own institutional administrators and committees, for their part, choose not to get involved in the grand philosophical arguments. Rather, they are seeking merely to get through another cycle of accreditation with the least possible disruption.

Although this position may change as requirements increase and patience wears thin, these are often the current facts of our daily existence. Engaging in philosophical dialogue is usually a luxury not granted to us. As music faculty and administrators and as individuals we can make our broader arguments through letters to elected representatives and to agencies, but within our own institutions there is often little appetite for the discourse that is so needed on these critical issues. However, if you have the chance for such discourse, it is important to be prepared.

Speaker 2

When we can't debate, what <u>can</u> we do?

What can we do, then?

1. Demonstrate and explain what we have in place and why it works.

First, we can demonstrate more effectively the means of assessment we already have, and explain with greater clarity why these means

work well for music. For example, we have already mentioned that we have regularly-scheduled juries, where individuals perform for and are graded by teachers other than their own. We have competitions, many of them public. We have auditions for roles or chairs in ensembles. We have public performances followed by public and peer critique. We have exams in courses, and skills that must be mastered. And there is, of course, the constant feedback and criticism that goes with being a musician, whether in performance, scholarship, composition, or education.

a. We have many forms of evaluations.

Speaker 1

All these means of assessment are already there, and they are healthy precisely because they are informed and disinterested. That is an ideal combination – the intelligence of informed critique combined with the absence of self-interest on the part of the reviewer. Those who advocate for massive, large-scale assessment seek the absence of self-interest, but they neglect the more essential quality of <u>informed</u> criticism.

b. They are informed and disinterested in the personal sense.

In addition to demonstrating the many means of assessment that have served the arts so well, we can demonstrate convincingly that their purpose is improvement, not merely measuring or monitoring. This is a very important distinction. The most meaningful improvement comes from within a discipline, not from outside it,

c. Their purpose is improvement, not measurement for its own sake.

precisely because such criticism is substantively informed. It seeks

not just to measure, but to make better.

How will standardized tests and criteria other such assessment

techniques improve on already existing informed means of

assessment? How *could* they?

So let us never accept the argument that we are not interested in or

engaged sufficiently in evaluation. Rather, we should demonstrate

what we already have in place and why it works. Let us think back

to the lists of approaches mentioned earlier and learn to describe and

advocate them more efficiently than we are already doing at present.

At the very least, this will go far toward showing that we are serious

about what we do, and that, far from avoiding judgment and

criticism, we invite them, and already incorporate many forms of

honest assessment in our educational activities and daily lives.

Speaker 2

2. Counter assertions that professionals cannot conduct fair or objective assessments within their fields.

Second, don't accept the argument that experts in professions are not

sufficiently removed from their content and their interest in it to

conduct objective evaluations. Don't accept the argument that

a. Music professionals are more qualified than assessment professionals.

professionals have a built-in conflict of interest. We must not agree

that lack of specific disciplinary or professional qualifications

becomes a qualification for being an assessor. We can point out that

b. Experts are internally driven to improve their fields.

experts are internally driven. They are far more concerned about

quality and far more sophisticated in their understanding about quality in their field than anyone else possibly could be. If appropriate to the situation, we can also point out that the conflict of interest argument is usually made to seek redistributions of assessment powers, not to promote quality.

c. Conflict of interest arguments are usually not about quality.

A Few Final Points

Conclusion

Speaker 1

"We have sunk to a depth where restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men"
George Orwell

In conclusion, lets consider this wonderful statement from George Orwell.

(PAUSE for reading of quote)

At the beginning of this presentation, we started by trying to articulate what it is that we as musicians think about and do. We did this, in part, because we all take such activities for granted – to the point that we ourselves may be unaware of how much we incorporate artistic decision-making and criticism into our daily

What is obvious to us is not obvious to others.

lives. What is obvious to us is not obvious to others.

We hope it has been helpful to review these activities, and point out the constant assessment in which we already engage. Only then, in full awareness, can we convincingly demonstrate the vitality of our

We need to make what is obvious to us more obvious to others.

professional evaluation approaches. We must make what is obvious to us more obvious to others.

We close with a number of brief points. As we said at the beginning, the need to consider ways and means of keeping assessment on our own terms is a particular contextual problem that we face now. We are not alone in this. At the beginning of this national debate, music and other disciplines were being challenged by the tenets and arguments of the outcomes ideologists. Some institutions and some regional and specialized accrediting agencies bought into this ideology to the point that they were willing to accept some of its procedures. But now two things are increasingly clear at the national level. First, the outcomes ideologues have turned on the institutions and accreditors who bought in, as well as continued their criticism of the disciplines and professions. Second, and more encouragingly, there are several kinds of higher education reactions to this move, including counter-moves by the U.S. Senate, for example. It will be interesting to see what happens in higher education as a whole if the drive for centralization of assessment powers continues. Five years from now we may not be talking about this problem, or we may be talking about more advanced manifestations of it.

We in music, however, will still be evaluating, but on our terms, at least internally.

We are not alone.

The outcomes ideologues have turned on their former friends.

We do not know where the drive for centralization of power will lead, or who will prevail.

Speaker 2

It is our job to advocate, defend and improve what is necessary for assessment in our field.

No one else can do it for us.

We dare not cede the information battleground to others.
Be positive, direct, and clear.
Music and its nature must drive what we do.

What we have tried to do is to provide a number of ways of looking at the problem we face, formulating ideas and conditions central to assessment on our own terms, and suggesting ways of advocating and defending the validity of our assessment approaches in a fundamental sense. We understand, of course, that we can always learn from our opponents, even if our opponents are reluctant to learn from us. We hope this session has been helpful for you in terms of describing how you might proceed at your institution and in the professional realms you inhabit. It is helpful for us all as we think about the nature of this problem to consider how we can best address it locally in ways that maintain the integrity of our field.

Speaker 1

Thank you for your attention and consideration.
For more information, go to:
http://aqresources.arts-accredit.org

"Always do what is right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest"
   Mark Twain

We thank you for your attention. We hope this presentation gave you additional perspective on a topic central to the continued success of the arts and higher education. We encourage you to work together on this in faculty meetings, to discuss the topic in further detail and to share experiences with each other. We now open the floor to questions.