

# **The Basic Value of Music Study**

## **Ideas for Spreading the Word**

**National Association of Schools of Music**

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This compendium of ideas about music study was developed in honor of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the National Association of Schools of Music. It is based on two premises: first, that by far the most effective work on behalf of music study is accomplished at the local level, and second, that ideas about content come first in any promotional effort.

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## Overview

Those of us who are professionally committed to music and music education agree on the intellectual and cultural importance of music. Music joins languages, mathematics, science, the humanities, and the other arts disciplines both as a basic mode of thought and work and as an avenue for achievement. Because music is both an expression of civilization and a unique form of communication with its own body of knowledge and skills, music literacy is fundamental to every education. This literacy—the ability to read and write musical notation, to communicate through performance or composition, to work with musical elements and structures, and to be conversant with a body of musical history and literature—is gained through a comprehensive, sequential program of music study. Not only does this approach increase knowledge and enjoyment of music, it also enables the student to gain fuller access to the world. It expands individual potential.

As a community of professionals, we are too often ineffective in convincing a significant majority of the population that music study is so valuable as to be basic. Perhaps, because the value of music study is so intrinsic to our lives, we believe that the benefits, and especially the musical results, should speak for themselves. We are so involved in our own work that, too often, we leave it to others in education and culture to shape the contexts in which the value of music study will be considered. This is a potentially dangerous abrogation of responsibility, for among the constituencies involved in public debates regarding education and the arts are those whose public relations skills and political savvy are substantial, but whose agendas do not necessarily support basic education in music.

In most cases, the primary responsibility for prevailing in these conditions will probably fall on the shoulders of musicians. Administrators and faculties in higher education are an important leadership group among musicians. Because these responsibilities will only grow and because our students will carry all our responsibilities into the future, it seems critical now, more than ever, to develop improved content and techniques for delivering effective messages.

First, we must be clear about the values of studying music and be sophisticated in the ways that we promulgate them. Then we must ensure that our students have the fundamentals that will enable them to advocate the values of music study in their working situations. Finally, with a strong base in content and a strategic investment in continuity, we will be able to sustain a more effective promotional effort among the public at large.

The discussion that follows is based on the concept of music study at its best. This means a high level of professionalism in group and private instruction; regular, sequential, and curriculum-based classroom study under the direction of professionally trained music specialists; and committed individual music students. Casual, passive, or periodic acquaintance with music is not the same thing as music study.

This document has two purposes:

- to assist music schools and the individuals within them in the process of thinking through the value of music study and the importance of communicating this value to others, and
- to provide resources for conducting discussions of these values in a variety of contexts.

The first two chapters, both on “Thinking About What To Do,” contain several sets of questions to ponder with regard to ourselves, our students, and the public, as well as three essays that discuss contexts and considerations.

The third section contains a number of resources and ideas for those preparing speeches, presentations, programs, and other values-related initiatives. These include suggestions about what music schools and departments can do: an annotated compendium of basic values, including the texts of numerous “advertorials”; a summary of the *National Standards for Arts Education*; a policy analysis checklist; and a list of other resources.

## I. THINKING ABOUT WHAT TO DO: QUESTIONS TO ASK

Maintaining public awareness of the basic value of music study—a task related to but different from promoting the value of music—requires constant action by many individuals and organizations. Each responsible person or group must decide what is to be done in its own situation. At times, we are all tempted to make these decisions by imitating what others are doing. While imitation can produce success, it can also contribute to failure, especially when messages and distribution techniques are insufficiently correlated with goals or audiences. Making such correlations means taking time to think. In thinking about what to do, it is important to remember that while times change, music study continues. The overarching concern should be not whether music study will be available, but rather its richness, depth, quality, and accessibility. These latter issues are considered in a context produced by the public's perception of the values of music study. The following sets of questions are designed to help music schools and departments develop a quick orientation to their particular circumstances and goals. They provide the basis for a rapid analysis of conditions, values, and potentials, and, thus, a springboard for action.

### Preparing Ourselves and Our Colleagues

1. How can we become more proficient in honing both individual and institutional arguments in favor of music study?
2. What counterarguments do we hear and how can they best be answered?
3. How can we make our arguments for music study consistent with (a) the goals, objectives, and scope of music study in our institution and (b) the portions of the total music enterprise that we address through our curricula and programs?
4. How do we recast, refurbish, or rethink our arguments as counterarguments evolve? How can we anticipate and be ready for counterarguments?
5. What analysis and planning implications arise from the need to promote values development over time?
6. What ideas, mechanisms, approaches, and resources are available to music executives and faculties interested in developing common working definitions and philosophies regarding the value of music study?
7. How can definitions and philosophies inform the work of the music school or department—for example, with regard to missions, goals, objectives, artistic and intellectual climate, curricular requirements, and repertory decisions?
8. What are some specific projects or programs that music schools either have or could undertake to address values development internally?

## **Preparing Our Students**

1. Within our institutions, what do our artistic and intellectual climates, curricular priorities, definitions of quality and excellence, and approaches to the work of music, broadly defined, teach our students about the values of music study? What does the example we set say about our values and those of the profession?
2. How can we help our students become proficient in promoting the value of music study as part of their professional lives?
3. How can we help our students develop analytical skills that will help them to understand the possible consequences of specific professional decisions that, in turn, produce public messages about the value of music study?
4. How can we best give our students the intellectual and public relations tools necessary to make thoughtful decisions affecting public perceptions of the values of music study?
5. What are the curricular and programmatic implications of our answers to the first four questions?
6. What ideas, mechanisms, approaches, and resources are available to music executives and faculties interested in developing students' philosophical and operational competencies regarding the values of music study?
7. What are some specific projects or programs that music schools either have or could undertake to help students become aware of or proficient with issues concerning the values of music study? What content is associated with these projects or programs?

## **Reaching the Public**

1. What are the primary issues that music executives and their faculties face when working (a) institutionally, (b) locally, (c) regionally, and (d) nationally with public perceptions of the values of music study?
2. How can music schools and departments best participate with other concerned musicians and teachers in developing the content and process for community-wide efforts on behalf of music study?
3. How are decisions about the public presentations of the music school and other public interactions of faculty and administrators correlated with needs and priorities in the development of public values about music study?
4. What ideas, mechanisms, approaches, and resources are available to executives and faculties interested in working to develop public values favoring music study in their community or beyond?
5. As plans are made, to what extent should the approach focus on mass action, targeted audiences, or building understanding one student at a time?

6. What are some specific projects or programs that music schools and departments either have or could undertake to build public appreciation of the values of music study?

### **Analysis and Planning**

1. What group are we addressing?

*For example, faculties, administrators, students who are future music professionals, other students, various segments of the public, the public as a whole?*

2. What characteristics and attributes are present in the group that we will be addressing with respect to the basic value of music study?

*For example, what are the group's probable baseline values about music, music study, and the relationship between the two? What educational and cultural priorities are evident in the group? What are the group's concerns about general education, individual and group well-being, the nature of community, the role of the arts in the community? What music study experiences are members of the group likely to have had?*

3. What do we want members of the group to think, feel, or do about music study as a result of our effort?

*For example, change, keep, or intensify the value they place on music study; change, maintain, or enlarge their perspectives; change, maintain, or increase their involvement with music study?*

4. What do we plan to do, and how likely is the plan to achieve the result we seek?

*For example, how practical are our aspirations and how feasible are our techniques, given contextual conditions and resources? How consistent are our content and techniques with the goal we seek to achieve? What evidence will tell us we have been successful?*

In answering the four questions above, remember the following:

- In most situations, not everyone can be convinced.
- Values often change through example. Words, images, and financial incentives are not the only means of influence.
- Sustained effort over long periods of time are often needed to change values. “Magic bullets” are rare.
- Not all messages that contain “music” or “the arts” or “music study” will be good for your purposes.
- Not all arts or arts education advocacy promotes music study.
- Not all messages or approaches are good in every circumstance.

## The Market, Music Study, and Us

1. What is the size and scope of the market we are addressing?

*For example, is the scope of the market we are considering for a particular project institutional, community, statewide, regional, or national? Does it involve music teachers, performance organizations, presenting groups, professional or civic organizations, educational enterprises at various levels, media, the entire population, targeted segments of the population, and so on?*

2. What conditions would we like to see with regard to music study in the market we have defined?

*For example, acceptance of music as an educational basic; general ability to enumerate the benefits of music study; participation in music study at various educational levels; public and private support for educational institutions, content and results of music study that reflect seriousness of purpose, in-depth effort; and so on.*

3. In the identified market, how do current conditions differ from the ideal developed in response to question 2 above? What are the reasons for the difference between the ideal and the current reality?

*For example, images of music study we project ourselves, images of music study projected by others, economic pressures combined with traditional educational priorities, concerns about the practical value of music study.*

4. Given the conclusions reached thus far, how much should our specific project focus on creating the market or following the market on behalf of the specific goals that engage us? If we decide that we must begin by following the market, under what conditions can we convert to creating the market?

*For example, how do we gain initial interest? How do we turn interest into commitment, and commitment into specific steady action, either in music study directly or on its behalf?*

5. How do we measure success in our relationship with a specific identified market?

*For example, how many people do we need to convince to make a meaningful difference toward reaching the goals of our project?*

In answering the five questions above, remember the following:

- Music has a large number of intrinsic and instrumental values, some more closely associated with music study than others. These, together with the multiple uses of music by various individuals and groups, must be taken into account in considerations of any market.
- Any promises made for music study must be carefully evaluated to ensure that delivery systems can actually fulfill them. For example, it is common to argue

that music study produces self-discipline, but clearly it is possible to have educational activities in music that do not produce self-discipline.

- Targeted marketing is ubiquitous in American society. Given the tremendous efforts to segment the mass market into various categories and address each category on different terms, those concerned with music study must decide on the extent to which they will follow this approach or attempt to work more comprehensively. There is no single answer that works in every situation.
- Given the nature of music study, it is important to consider market issues on the basis of what will last and what may not. Ideas, projects, methods, even institutions can be considered in this way.
- For particular projects, it may be important to clarify both connections and distinctions between the value of music and the value of music study. For example, attendance at musical events and the purchase of recordings do not automatically equal commitment to music study either personally or as a matter of public policy.

### **Messages and Delivery Systems**

1. What is the message?

*For example, what priorities does the message express? To what extent does it deal with questions of why, what, how, and who? What are the immediate and cumulative effects of the message? What is the impact if this message is virtually the only message?*

*Does the message make sense; it is true? Does it address overall goals established for the market identified? If complex, is it internally consistent? Will it hold up over time?*

2. What techniques will be combined to produce the delivery system?

*For example, are the techniques within your capacity? Are they affordable? To what extent can their use be sustained enough to be effective?*

*What immediate and cumulative effects do you expect from these techniques? To what extent are conditions ripe in your circumstances for employing them? To what extent will the techniques that constitute your delivery system be seen as imitative, even if your message is not?*

3. What is the relationship between the message and the techniques used to create delivery systems?

*For example, to what extent do messages and techniques support or cancel each other? To what extent does the relationship of message and delivery technique result in a package that reflects the various goals established in analysis, planning, and market development phases? Does the total package reflect the emphasis on*

*message and technique necessary to achieve the values-related objectives of your project?*

4. How does the package created by the combination of message and techniques fit with the particular market being addressed: the conditions imposed by time; and the decisions about timing, specificities of place, and about whether to create or follow a particular market?

*For example, to what extent do your decisions about messages and delivery systems reinforce the efforts of others working with the same or related agendas concerning the value of music study?*

In answering the four questions above, remember the following:

- Messages and techniques appropriate for advertising may or may not be appropriate to support education in music. It is difficult to do successful advertising about education while remaining true to content.
- Look for internal confusions between messages and intended results. Music study is both fun and work. Usually the more work, the more fun. However, in contemporary promotional technique, fun and work are usually regarded as opposites.
- Organizations sustaining the most aggressive public relations campaigns are using techniques and saturation patterns far beyond the means of the community interested in serious music study. Attempts to imitate techniques without the resources to make them effective can be counterproductive. Those who place public-relations techniques and delivery systems before the content of their message court ineffectiveness and perhaps disaster. Without extreme care, technique tends to drive content rather than the reverse.
- The strongest values development system for the music teaching community is the vast number of music teachers and their personal interactions with students.



## **II. THINKING ABOUT WHAT TO DO: CONTEXTS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

This section contains three brief essays and five short advisories that explore ideas and conditions influencing values held about music study. Each looks at values from a slightly different perspective. All are based on the strong connection between ideas and values. These essays can be paraphrased, quoted, or used as the basis for individual or group orientation on the way to formulating specific action plans. The advisories suggest important issues that need careful consideration as plans are developed.

## **Ideas, Decisions, and Music Study**

Every day, decisions are made about music study. Some are favorable, others are not; some are made by individuals, others by groups. Unfortunately, many decisions affecting music study are made under circumstances in which the best interests of music are far from the primary concern. For this reason, if no other, we who hope to promote the study of music must understand more about the nature of decision making. Our strategies must be as varied as the people involved and reflect respect both for music as a discipline and for work as a means to individual fulfillment. The substance of our messages, not just the means for conveying them, must be foremost in our thinking.

### ***A Foundation in Ideas***

Personal decisions are the foundation of all decision making. But in any large, structured society, the decisions that influence policies for music, education, and cultural development are usually grounded in group action. These groups may be public or private and, like individuals, may be influenced by any number of factors, including prevailing ideas and values, economic conditions, demographic changes, and political expediency. Legislation, administrative action, advertising, and direct funding are among the means employed to shape the decision-making process and thus to influence social, cultural, economic, political, and educational environments.

But those who try to influence decision making without anchoring their efforts in the world of ideas are doomed to fail. Almost every policy decision represents an exercise of values based upon ideas, many of which lack empirical proof. Proof is not the issue, acceptance is. If an individual's mind is to be changed in favor of music study, his or her ideas about its purpose and benefits must be challenged. Many people, including those who make educational policy decisions, believe that music study is “nice” but not basic. Casual experience alone is not enough to change such attitudes. Rebuttals must be sustained, compelling, and intellectually secure.

The complexity of decision making can lead any of us who care about the future of music study in one of two directions. The first is to decide that these matters are so complex that no amount of effort on our part will be enough to produce sound, workable educational policies. The second is to recognize that our success in promoting the study of music depends on our understanding these matters so thoroughly that we can influence how resources are used. Is there any doubt as to which course committed musicians, teachers, and other citizens should choose?

### ***The Competition for Attention***

Our society is overwhelmed with messages designed to influence individuals and groups. Many of these messages bypass reason, relying on appeals to guilt, greed, compassion, or fear. Others are based on faith, morality, or principle. Still others are grounded in education, which historically has attempted to bring reason and emotion into balance through ordered work in the world of ideas.

The competition for attention that we face in trying to promote music study is especially intense in our demographically fragmented, media-saturated, technologically driven

society. Consider message repetition alone: A Fortune 500 corporation can easily spend tens of millions of dollars a year on advertising just to keep the name of one product before the public. If the music community had similar resources, music study would be more secure. But such resources are unavailable and other means must be employed. Our challenge is to learn how to influence decision making effectively.

### ***Leading, Not Following***

Many ideas in education have been generated by policy analysts and theoreticians who are virtually unknown to the general public. Their work has been accepted by key individuals and groups that have the power to make or change educational policies and to garner public attention. Yet much of the music community's advocacy is conducted as though these policy-development relationships did not exist. Significant emphasis is given to mobilizing *after* policy has been drafted; too little is devoted to shaping the climate from which policy springs. This failure is costly. Such an approach emphasizes the reactive protection of interests rather than the early advancement of strong ideas and principles to which we can subscribe as a community.

Misplaced faith in public opinion polls represents another hazard in developing sound strategies in support of music study. Polls tell decision makers where those polled stand, not whether that stand is the right place to be, now or in the future. True leadership does not follow polls, but creates and encourages ideas and values of such force that they cannot be ignored. If we hope to promote music study, we must develop and present such ideas and values so that they influence those who decide what constitutes a strong general education and how resources will be expended. To do otherwise is to be always on the defensive.

### ***Expertise and Action***

Individuals associate with organizations and institutions whose ideas and values are consistent with their own. For many, ideas and values are often formed in the crucible of experience and may not reflect formal study. Because no one can be an expert in everything, most people in positions to make policy decisions rely for guidance on others whom they trust. They seek both expertise and assurance that their own views are tenable.

In our society, tremendous energy is expended on creating images of expertise and trust, particularly as these translate into political, social, or economic power. Over the last twenty-five years, expertise in arts education has been claimed by a wide variety of public and private philanthropies, arts councils, and advocacy organizations. Many of these groups have been organized primarily to influence arts support at local, state, regional, and federal levels. This is in contrast to decades-old organizations of musicians and music teachers who banded together in the cause of professional development and program advancement. We must recognize that if expertise is equated with anything other than professional ability, music and music study lose position to other priorities. Fashion, personality cults, and unilateral pursuit of credit for patronage can have a negative effect.

Assuming that we have the necessary expertise in the music community to convey our messages, and assuming that our strategies are founded on strong ideas and values, should we put our efforts at the national, state, or local level? The answer is difficult and always evolving, but one thing is clear: Individual commitment and local solidarity are instrumental in preserving broad opportunities for music study worthy of the name. Nationally promoted ideas and programs favorable to music study can only reinforce local commitment, not create it. Where local commitment and solidarity have eroded or are missing altogether, music study looks ornamental and expensive. Nationally promoted programs that favor passive experience over study then become attractive because the image of music in education is provided, but at reduced cost. Unfortunately, in this way, American students and American culture are short-changed.

### ***What Must Be Done***

First, musicians and their organizations and institutions must develop powerful ideas that command attention and reinforce the distinctions between serious and superficial programs of study. Second, we must master in-depth analysis and sophisticated strategy as a means of influencing policy. Without these capabilities, plans to reach educational decision makers are likely to be random, uncoordinated, reactive, and ineffective.

Questions for us to consider as we develop our strategies include the following:

- What are some of the most important “sectors of influence” that affect decisions about music study—for example, parents, policy-development networks, the media, and so forth?
- How do ideas flow into and out of these sectors of influence? To whom do these sectors of influence turn for expertise at the local, state, regional, and national levels?
- Which sectors need what kinds of attention? How should basic messages about music study be tailored to reach these various sectors effectively?
- To what extent can a specific individual or group influence policy decisions across a broad front? What should be the scope of such an effort given the resources available? How can we best balance short-term and long-term objectives?
- What kinds of coordination and collaboration are natural in the music community as we attempt to influence decision making at various levels? How can other alliances be created, and how long will that take? What kinds of coordination and collaboration are too difficult to be attempted?

Both the “what” and the “how”—the content and process of promoting music study—are essential. Musicians, music teachers, and their committed supporters must pursue this double initiative with intensity, intellectual rigor, and unshakable determination. No one else, after all, will do this for us. The alternative—to leave the health and scope of music study to chance or, more correctly, to the random actions of isolated individuals—is unacceptable. The challenge before us is to maintain a higher level of thought about our promotional efforts; a deeper understanding of the nature of decision

making; and a more durable commitment to the best artistic, educational, and cultural values. Can the music community rise to this challenge on its own behalf?

## Ideas, Policy, and Education in Music

In some respects, the value of music in U.S. society is quite clear. Billions of dollars are spent annually on the purchase of music products and services in almost every sector of our economy. Music plays a central role in the daily lives of millions of individuals.

Yet while music is highly valued in general, it is significantly undervalued in education. As polls repeatedly show, public acceptance of music (and the other arts) does not translate into acceptance of music as a basic subject. In fact, when matched against other disciplines, music ranks near the bottom in educational priorities. How has this situation come about? What are some of the ideas that shape our music education policies? What can be done to create change for the better?

### *Valuing Music in Educational Terms*

It is clear that more people must be brought to value music in educational terms. Of the many plans proposed over the years to accomplish this; none have produced a fundamental change in the public's attitude. Historically, music teachers, music organizations, and the music industry have not effectively argued the case for music study to the public as a whole. In recent years, research showing connections between music and brain development has been honed and promoted with increasing success. It remains extremely difficult, however, to maintain clear distinctions between the value of music and the value of music study. Although this should not be read as an indictment against our best efforts to date, it does suggest that for all the excellence of music teaching in the United States, too many people—including those with high levels of education and even a fondness for music—do not understand why music study is basic. Apparently, convincing more people of the worth of studying music is different from promoting its availability and enjoyment.

The distinction between valuing music in educational terms and appreciating music in general is critical when deciding how to promote music study. Too often, the approach, style, and content of promotional activity obscures the educational message. Emphasizing music as fun and recreation, for example, can return hauntingly and destructively when policymakers “get serious” about educational priorities or when parents decide whether to pay for private lessons. The challenge is to build on the public's positive attitude toward music in ways that strengthen the case for strong, sequential programs of music study. Making distinctions, clarifying differences, and promoting the sturdiest values related to music seems the most productive path.

This task is complex. We must recognize and support the role of music in leisure and entertainment, while asserting that music merits study as purposeful as that accorded to science, mathematics, history, English, or foreign languages. To imply that music is not as challenging or important as these fields is to undermine the argument that music study deserves substantial investments of time and money.

Would the problem be solved if everyone agreed, in principle, that music is basic to education? Unfortunately, no. While this precept is the cornerstone of efforts to strengthen the position of music study, the wide range of ideas about the *purpose* of

education in music both enriches and complicates the debate. These ideas are often expressed through rhetorical shorthand that fails to clarify which of any number of positions is being advocated. Thus, an individual with a “moderate” view of competition in music study may unknowingly support a position quite contrary to his or her own, simply because the word “competition” conveys other meanings to other people.

In order to consider this condition more carefully, a list of ideas that figure prominently in policy discussions about education in music for children and youth is presented below. This list has been annotated to show the three most commonly held positions for each idea—expressed here as “*Position A*,” “*Position B*,” and “*Position C*.” Even if the reader does not agree with every characterization, a review should demonstrate that the music-teaching community needs the deepest thinking and the most careful structuring of its messages and actions if it is to move more people to value music in educational terms.

## ***Ideas***

Before beginning, we should establish what the music-teaching community generally regards as characteristic of a strong education in music.

Active work is the foundation of musical literacy and fluency. Performing, composing, listening, and basic musicianship studies are all considered central to the development of the musical mind, although the emphasis on each will vary from one educational situation to the next. Knowledge of the history of music is a worthwhile goal, but not at the sacrifice of actually making music itself. Implicit in these attitudes is the belief that the ancillary benefits of music study, including understanding its relationship to other disciplines, are best realized and appreciated when music is first learned as a discrete discipline.

Each of the twenty-seven positions characterized below has a potentially different impact on the music-teaching community. Putting each position to the test of the following questions will help to clarify what that impact might be:

1. What would happen if this position were *the* prevailing influence on public and private decisions about music study? What would be the effect on:
  - Contents of music instruction
  - Availability of sequential music study
  - Choice of settings for music study
  - Promotion of music study
  - Economic conditions in the music-teaching, creating, performing, and support communities
  - Musical culture
2. In what basic ideas is the position grounded? What are its philosophical, political, social, and historical origins?
3. Who are the position's proponents and what is their relative power—their ability to convince other people to follow them?

4. What are possible counterarguments and counterstrategies?
5. What changes or conditions—political, technological, intellectual, and so on—could either enhance or decrease the influence of this position?

The following twenty-seven positions are divided among nine categories.

### **Creativity and Personal Development**

**Position A:** The primary purpose of all arts education is to provide individuals with the joy of their own creative expression and response. Disciplined learning of facts and skills is incompatible with this objective; in fact, such learning often destroys creativity and joy in aesthetic activities. Music should be a relief from the rigors of other lessons.

**Position B:** Both an enhanced understanding of creativity and positive personal development are ancillary benefits of music study. By developing musical knowledge and skills, students are able to explore and understand the nature of creativity both as it relates to personal expression and as a driving force in the development of artistic communication.

**Position C:** Creativity and personal development are not matters that should overly concern music teachers because creativity is essentially hereditary and personal development is an individual responsibility. The purpose of education in music (as in anything else) is to give each student the strongest set of intellectual and physical tools, which can then be applied to personal development and creative activities as the student matures in music and other disciplines.

### **Experiencing Professional Artistry**

**Position A:** The experience of professional performance offers students the best fundamental education and the best introduction to the excitement and mystery of music. The artistic personality is usually attractive to the K–12 age group, and thus the artist is the preferred teacher and introducer to his or her art. Experience, not study, is what captivates students and creates incentives to be music consumers.

**Position B:** The experience of professional performance is an important element in regular music study. Professional performance both stimulates and confirms learning and inspires continued effort. The ratio of study to experience will vary according to the individual and the location, but each augments the other.

**Position C:** Exposure to professional artistry is widely available in the market and is not a responsibility of the formal teaching process. Artists-in-school programs have done more harm than good by highlighting and promoting the entertainment aspects of art rather than its educational content. Schools and private lessons are for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, not for the provision of celebrity role models.



## Entertainment

**Position A:** All music is entertainment. Different kinds of music simply provide different experiences for people with varying backgrounds and tastes. Quality is purely a matter of personal taste.

**Position B:** All music, from the simplest folk songs to the most complex orchestral piece, has the power to be entertaining. However, a large body of music goes far beyond entertainment. A serious education in music not only recognizes music's powers to create immediate appeal but also enables students to broaden and deepen their knowledge of various repertoires and to become discriminating on the basis of quality.

**Position C:** Music associated primarily with entertainment has little or no value in an educational setting. To bring such music into education, particularly youth-culture music, is to destroy the basis for teaching music as an art. Popular culture needs no support from education; music as art, on the other hand, cannot survive without an educational foundation.

## Competition

**Position A:** Competition is the primary driving force in music study. It creates support from parents and others who react positively to winning. Since most music students will not become professional musicians, and since competition is an important element in life and livelihood, total immersion in musical competition both prepares students for life and presents an educational agenda that participants, supporters, and policymakers can understand.

**Position B:** Competition is a valuable tool for intensifying educational activities and for creating energy, excitement, and a sense of purpose among students. It should be used but with great care.

**Position C:** Competition should be severely curtailed or banned altogether in settings where music study is addressed to the general public. Competition is particularly dangerous when it places winning ahead of the continual acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, and repertoires.

## Technology and Technique

**Position A:** Technology and technique are not just part of the future; they *are* the future. Music and music study should be transformed as quickly as possible to take advantage of new technological developments and the public faith in technology. Computerization of music instruction is the most urgent priority. Students will be attracted in droves, and educational decision makers will be convinced of music's importance.

**Position B:** Technology and technique are central aspects of music and music study, but they are not everything. Music and music teaching should use technology and technique as means to artistic and educational ends, and a good education in music

should provide insights into their limits as well as their importance. These principles should be explained to policymakers.

**Position C:** Music and music study are not fundamentally technical, but artistic and intellectual, being human and not machine-centered. Music and the other arts are important antidotes in a technological world. To lose this distinction between the technological and artistic is to lose one of the most powerful appeals of music study and the basis for supporting its presence in educational settings.

## **The Humanities**

**Position A:** For most students, music should be studied as a humanities discipline, with an emphasis on appreciation. All arts should be taught as part of general intellectual and cultural history, and both performance and musicianship—useful only for the talented—should be de-emphasized in the music portion of the general curriculum.

**Position B:** It is valuable to study music from the perspective of the humanities, particularly when such historical and theoretical study is either concurrent with, or based on, the acquisition of musical knowledge and skills. As a subject with a long intellectual tradition, music has many connections to other humanities disciplines. In particular, the history of ideas has been affected by musical developments. However, there are important distinctions between the arts and the humanities: outcomes and modes of work and inquiry, for example, are quite different. Students should become increasingly aware of these connections and distinctions, the role that the arts and humanities play in the development of culture, and the power of each to enhance our enjoyment and understanding of the world.

**Position C:** The distinction between the arts and the humanities is so great that the gap cannot be bridged in the general education of children and youth. From kindergarten through high school, music study should focus on applied studies in performance and musicianship, which should be developed to a high level. Trying to combine this agenda with any other only undermines both. Support for music study depends in large part on the evidence of accomplished performances. The humanities connection should be made in general history courses or postponed until the college years.

## **Cultural Pluralism**

**Position A:** Changing demographics and world conditions demand that equal emphasis be given to the value and viability of all musical cultures. To accomplish this, Western traditions must be de-emphasized. Western classical, or “high art,” music must be placed on a par with the achievements of other cultures, not above them.

**Position B:** Music study invariably reflects cultural biases, since education in any society emphasizes the dominant culture. However, many trends in the United States and the world underscore the importance of broader knowledge of, and respect for, the musical legacy of other cultures. In the spirit of open inquiry and intellectual curiosity, curricula should be adjusted to address this need, emphasizing cultures that have contributed to the shaping of the United States.

**Position C:** The plea for cultural pluralism in music study obscures the distinction between education in music as a discipline and education in the social sciences. Furthermore, to deny any hierarchy among works is to destroy the very concept of excellence. The first purpose of public education is to create a common culture within each society as a basis for continued cultural achievement and the civilized conduct of life. Further, cultural pluralism in music education is meaningless when most people have little specific understanding of their own culture and only the vaguest idea of what *culture* means.

### **Multidisciplinary Arts Education**

**Position A:** For the general student, all the arts should be taught together in general appreciation courses. Music should be taught in equal proportion to the visual arts, theatre, and dance. The goal is an orientation to the arts, and particularly to works of art as artifacts. The connection between appreciation and future patronage is critical and must be maintained.

**Position B:** Music is one of several fine arts, each of which entails substantially different content, orientation, and technique. Therefore, although the fine arts are related at some levels, the study of any art discipline, including music, should be discrete, particularly in the K–12 years. Multidisciplinary approaches are notorious for masking superficiality under the guise of comprehensiveness.

**Position C:** Music is, and should be, preeminent among all the arts disciplines studied during the elementary and secondary years. This position has been gained through the initiative and perseverance of the music-teaching community, which must be vigilant if the study of music is not to be diminished through the imposition of multidisciplinary arts education.

### **Political Action**

**Position A:** A primary purpose of music and other arts disciplines is to support movements that address the great political issues of the day, in a world in which every action is essentially political. Music study is useful to the extent that it orients individuals to the political nature of human experience and raises political consciousness. For example, studies might focus on how artistic endeavor and reward have been driven by the interests of ruling elites. At their best, the arts are a force for political change and a spur to conscience.

**Position B:** Music study can develop understandings that influence the evolving political positions of individuals. For example, performing with others teaches lessons about leading and following: at times one's part may be dominant and at others subordinate, all in support of a unified achievement. The history of music also presents connections with political ideas and expressions that range over the spectrum of human thought and emotion. These connections deserve attention as part of each student's cultural legacy.

**Position C:** Art should be as separate as possible from politics, particularly in elementary and secondary education. The purpose of music and other arts instruction is

to build a base of knowledge and skills, and this along is difficult enough to achieve. To attempt any political connection is to impinge on students' freedom to develop individual political positions as they grow older. In addition, politics often teaches dissatisfaction and cynicism, which undermines a student's self-confidence and motivation.

### ***Music Teachers and Public Debate***

Why is it important for the music-teaching community to be concerned about these ideas and values? How do they bear on the day-to-day business of teaching students, publishing, making and selling instruments, managing a music store, or directing a music program?

The answer is that debate on these positions defines the strategic ground on which policy is developed. School-board members voting on a school music program, parents deciding about lessons for their children, and music teachers developing the content of their instruction all make decisions on the basis of choices among these various positions. Both public and private music instruction are affected, whether they are institutional or individual. Any shift among the positions outlined above influences the kinds of music study offered and the extent to which that study is grounded in musical knowledge and skills.

At present, the music-teaching community is struggling to become a more vigorous and skillful player in the national educational policy debate. As a repository of great expertise and skill, the music-teaching community must become a more forceful presence if it is to preserve and promote music-centered values in the marketplace of ideas.

This is particularly important now because concern about what students know and can do has turned up the heat under efforts to establish each discipline as an educational priority. Many people are justifiably concerned about the status of reading, mathematics, and science education, for example, and the debate about how to improve education in these subjects is lively and well-publicized. Concern about the status of music study is muted by comparison.

The music-teaching community must find ways to present powerful ideas regularly both to policymakers and to the general public. For example, the engine of international economic competition is one driving force. More people need to realize that cultural productivity, the life of individual minds, and the fullest development of our creative potential are tightly intertwined with economic growth and well-being. The arts are not just decorative desserts that follow the meat and potatoes of economic imperatives.

The professional community concerned with education in music often debates at a disadvantage because its time is primarily consumed with work in the discipline. Very little attention is paid to big-picture strategic analysis and action. Even if it successfully marshals its considerable resources to respond to a crisis, the field subsequently retreats to its private garden of musical ideas, events, and enterprises, leaving the larger world of ideas and values untended until disaster looms again. Music teachers, the boards and

staffs of professional associations, publishers, instrument manufacturers, retailers, and the higher education community are all very busy at their basic tasks. This is as it should be. But they and others concerned with music cannot afford to be unaware of, or inactive in, the broader debate. Less knowledgeable people are always ready to fill any policy vacuum.

### ***Leadership and Cooperation***

Our society expects those who are influential in a field to use the privilege of their success to help advance higher values that serve the community as a whole. Theirs is the responsibility to exercise an active and purposeful leadership that goes beyond immediate personal interests. Such leadership is characterized by strong adherence to viable principles, a desire to learn, openness to new ideas and insights, an ability to formulate the most appropriate and helpful questions, and more concern about accomplishment than about credit. Leadership also requires a vision of the common good, a passion for the work at hand, and an ability to negotiate wisely among many different interests and positions in service to a common program of action based on substantive content.

Granted, our society also encourages us to value autonomy, the pursuit of self-interest, and individual competition. But as John Gardner observes in his book, *Excellence*,

A pluralism that is not undergirded by some shared values, that reflects no commitment whatever to the commonweal, is pluralism gone berserk.... The price of that treasured autonomy and self-preoccupation is that each institution also concern itself with the common good. That is not idealism; it is self-preservation. If the larger system fails, the subsystems fail.... The war of the parts against the whole is a hazardous undertaking.

These wise words return us to our twenty-seven positions. If wise choices are not made among them, unnecessary and corrosive oppositions develop. Instead of mixtures and balances that support a common cultural advance, entertainment wars against education; creativity against knowledge and skills; social action against music study; technique against art; knowledge through words against knowledge through sound, sight, and movement; process against content; and the ordinary against the excellent. In countering such negative conditions, the following questions seem basic and urgent:

- What content and values should the music-teaching community promote through music study?
- How should these values and content be expressed as policies and in promotional efforts, especially at local levels?
- How can common ground be established on which to develop implementable strategies in support of music study that influence policymakers and the general public in favor of substance?
- What strategies will help the music-teaching community participate more fully in policy discussions related to education in music?

- How can the music-teaching community develop and promote a more widely shared vision of its work, its role, and its values?

### ***The Stakes***

To do nothing—to abdicate leadership by treating the world of ideas and policy as unimportant or as belonging to others—is to surrender the future of music study. The music-teaching community must find the interest and the will to formulate, articulate, and press for strong music-centered ideas and positions. The existence of music in society is not itself at stake; music will continue to be valued in a general way by the public. What *is* at stake is the scope and depth of our musical culture, and all that education means in terms of ideas, opportunities, individuals, and civilization. These are high stakes indeed.

## Entertainment, Education, and Music

We need to reexamine the relationships among entertainment, education, and music, for it is not certain that the interrelationships among them are understood. Among the fundamental questions to be pondered are:

- What is the nature of the relationships among these important aspects of our culture?
- What do these relationships mean for the development of our work, our business, our community, and the cultural future of our country?

While these questions and the issues they raise are important for all citizens, they are particularly important for members of the music community. And in the music community as a whole, they are most critical to those involved with education in music—students, teachers, schools, and businesses.

Why? What *does* compel new attention to these matters? Simply stated, what is perceived, thought, and known about entertainment, education, and music creates what is valued about each of them. What is valued, in turn, influences decisions—decisions on which the health and scope of music, music teaching, the music industry, and our cultural development depend.

The following discussion explores these relationships and influences and asserts that a better understanding of them provides a more secure foundation for promoting and developing music and music study. Its approach is realistic, yet grounded in high aspirations for a broadly based, multifaceted musical culture. Its focus is on building capabilities, on expanding capacities, on bringing a more complete range of musical activities to our nation's attention, and on reflecting that range in our nation's values.

### **Entertainment**

Entertainment is an important and powerful force. The word signifies unrestricted enjoyment—pleasure without struggle, fulfillment without risk. It is comfortable, friendly, and promoted as being benign, a kind of passive play. We accept entertainment on our own terms and on our own time, without fear of consequences. Entertainment is thus central to the human condition—as the opposite of work and study, it provides balance: “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.”

Most of us would agree that all play and no work make Jack and Jill even duller—unproductive, potentially alienated, prone to internal or external violence. Clearly, entertainment, while vitally important, is not enough to sustain the human spirit. To forget this truth—which applies to music as much as to other pursuits—is to lose balance, to stumble and fall into a trap from which there is no easy escape.

Those concerned with education in music must continue to act on this truth as technologies, trends, and our times evolve. Such action is not always easy, since music is one of the most effective forms of entertainment. Music provides both a respite from, and an enhancement of, the workaday world. Its transporting power is apparent in all cultures and, like other awesome powers, must be handled with care, particularly given

the nature of its source: sounds and rhythms organized abstractly in the air, here and gone in a moment, creating logics that can have an impact long after the music is over.

This power of music has given it many different roles throughout human history. Some societies regard music primarily as a cultural aspect of folk traditions. Others regard it as an aesthetic medium for the conscious application of intellectual skills and techniques. Music may be treated as a therapeutic force by some, or as an entertainment commodity by others. In contemporary Western societies such as the United States, all of these values are present and contribute to the sum total of culture. Music based on any one of these values has the power to be entertaining, but music that is entertaining does not necessarily achieve cultural, intellectual, therapeutic, or marketing objectives. With this truth, we have an insight into why an entertainment-only perspective limits possibilities: both all work/no play and all play/no work restrict the development of human capacities. Entertainment and work are no monoliths; both can be good but both are not always good. Content makes the distinction case by case: some entertainments support education, while others are hostile to the life of the mind or even its health. Common sense tells us that an overall policy toward music in general, and education in music in particular, ought to be both pro-work *and* pro-play, both pro-study *and* pro-entertainment—the positive content in each supporting the other, not one at the expense of the other.

Several present conditions hamper an effective pursuit of this balanced approach. Perhaps the most prominent is the tremendous cultural and financial impact of music-as-entertainment on the perceptions, thoughts, knowledge, and values of musicians, music teachers, those engaged in the business of music, and the public at large. Incredible wealth, fame, and images of power are conjured across the spectrum of musical content, from jazz to classical, rock to country. Because focusing on music as entertainment is perceived to be so much more satisfying and profitable, an imbalance grows: the work aspect of music is at first tolerated, then ignored, then denied, and finally opposed for fear that by associating effort with musical activity, the entertainment-only market in personalities, goods, and services will be damaged. Such an attitude has a particularly devastating effect on the teaching and learning of music because it denies the important connection between music and work in order to reinforce the connection between music and play.

The good news is that there are ways to support the idea of work in music without denying its entertainment connection. This can best be done by embracing two objectives for public involvement with music: entertainment *and* education, two different enterprises with many positive and productive connections. Fortunately, the United States has a massive and powerful infrastructure that supports high-quality music study in every state and region. While the connection between work and music is not as strong as it should be, it has not been neglected. Excellent teaching and substantive learning are taking place throughout the nation, and the implementation of the *National Standards for Education in the Arts* in many states has reinvigorated this effort. Our concern is not so much with the past or present, however, as with the future—the future of music, the future of education in music, and the relationships between the two.



## **Education**

Where is education in music most in jeopardy? School-based music programs are under severe pressure in many areas, and the pressures on all music teaching may continue to increase. A primary reason is that much of general education is perceived to be spectacularly ineffective in conveying even the most basic skills needed by the future work force. As politicians, the business community, parents, and teachers sustain an education reform movement of unprecedented and often counterproductive duration, the rhetoric continues to escalate in favor of disciplines that are perceived as broadening knowledge and developing skills. Areas of study that are regarded as frivolous are in greater danger of being cut than ever before. The more severe the crisis in basic knowledge and skills, the more the danger of such cuts.

Exactly how basic *is* music study perceived to be by the general public, by politicians and business leaders, by educational policymakers, and by policy intellectuals who generate much of the reform rhetoric? A review of the facts shows that while no one opposes music *per se*, it is not considered vitally important, nor central to the development of mental capacities. The entire music community has experienced this crippling attitude; polls continue to prove its existence. The music community is thus left with two options: (1) to let this attitude stand and attempt to follow wherever it leads, losing, preserving, or expanding programs as conditions allow; or (2) to change this attitude and to expand the vision, potential, and markets for music and music study.

While each option has its partisans, let us assume that we embrace the second and become active on our own behalf. We soon find that there is no quick fix, no single answer, no specific set of words or images that will effect massive change right away. The general perception that music is nice but not basic has been in the making for decades, and it will take decades to reverse it. But one thing seems clear: If the music community wishes to become more active in preserving and expanding the multiple benefits of education in music, it must carefully monitor the relationships among entertainment, education, and music. It must also manage these relationships wisely, keeping in mind the long-term goals of changing the public's perception of music study.

To misjudge the place and intensity of the entertainment connection in the promotion of education in music can be devastating, particularly over the long term. Our purpose is not to undermine music's value as entertainment, but to add new education-related dimensions to the public's understanding of music. For while music is entertainment, it is also more: it has cultural, intellectual, physical, and psychological content that is as worthy of educational pursuit as mathematics or the sciences.

A major policy question arises: How can the entertainment connection best be used in the promotion of music study?

We must avoid two pitfalls. The first is attempting to support music by denying the value of entertainment. The second is attempting to use the entertainment connection in ways that reinforce the perception that music consists of nothing else. To deny the value of entertainment is foolish and unnecessary; but to misuse the entertainment aspects of music is even more shortsighted: such a strategy abandons any hope of bringing music into the family of basic studies, of ensuring that all children study music in school, and

of making private study a higher priority for more students and parents. Work *in* music is neglected for entertainment *from* music. This may result in little obvious short-term loss to entertainment, but it will cause tragic losses to education, to music development, and to civilization. This is a course we cannot afford to take.

## **Music**

If we argue that music has value beyond entertainment, we must be prepared to make the case for music study in terms that are compelling both to the public and to policymakers in education. To be successful, we must become teachers, expanding the general knowledge of music and of its personal and cultural influence.

Work with music can produce many benefits. Promotional campaigns for music study traditionally feature such attributes as self-discipline and the ability to work as part of a group. Other important rationales center on the issues of cultural and intellectual heritage, the place of music among civilization's great achievements, and the role of music in providing a sense of cultural continuity from the past to the future. These arguments are powerful, based in fact, and worth repeating. However, other benefits of education in music also need to be articulated:

- The study of music introduces concepts and means for using and developing the mind. These concepts and means are unique in how they work in music, but they have broad application to other areas of life.
- Music study teaches ways to use creativity within a set of principles. It teaches the relationship between individual creativity and governing principles and thus encourages habits of thought that make our individuality more productive.
- Music study teaches about the relationships among physical skills, intellectual organization, problem solving, and strategic planning. It teaches individuals to find uniquely correct answers for given situations by employing the mathematical certainties of music in creative ways. These lessons are central to artistic thinking and have applications beyond the arts. (It is no accident that we speak of the art of government, the art of business, or the art of negotiation, for example.)
- Music study teaches the relationship between technique and results. While music study is centered in the quest for ever-higher levels of technical skill, work in music proves over and over again, at every level, that technique alone is not enough. Important lessons can be learned about the nature of technology, technique, and technological solutions. Music study thus provides a magnificent lesson about the vital role that technique plays—and also about its limits.
- Music study provides competence, and eventually fluency, in one of the most important communication media of the modern era. The powerful psychological impact of music on our times is unquestioned. The power of music to communicate important ideas is obvious. Given this power and influence, musical competence and fluency are essential to good education.

## **Questions**

The relationships among entertainment, education, and music pose many questions for those seeking to promote music study in schools and private settings. These questions address themselves to a wide range of organizations with a variety of objectives.

Strong, work-based educational programs in music are more important to some segments of the music community than to others. The organizations and individuals most directly affected by public perceptions of entertainment/education/music relationships are those whose life's work is tied closely to education in music. Composers, performers, and presenters of music also have a tremendous stake in the development of an informed public, whether that public regards their work as entertainment, or art, or a mixture of both. The community least affected is that part of the music entertainment industry that is concerned solely with producing a stream of commodities with high return and short shelf-life. Put more directly, strong, work-based educational programs in music are more important to some segments of the music community than to others.

This leads us to a governing question: To what extent can the music community find increased comfort in the coexistence of two objectives—entertainment and education? Further, what are the next steps for the music community in addressing this most fundamental question? We believe that when a powerful case is made for the importance of work, the public will respond. Americans are willing to do all sorts of difficult things to improve their health, their state of mind, their mental capacities, their knowledge, and their prospects for advancement. Music education can bring these same benefits *in addition to*, not in place of, the benefits of entertainment.

Another important question is how to generate initial interest in music in a way that leads to long-term commitment. How can more individuals be moved from using music solely as entertainment to working with music, thus enriching their musical experience?

A final question concerns the nature and content of messages that are used to advance the cause of music among education policymakers. How can we develop the values about music held by those able to shape decisions have a powerful impact on the scope and health of music study in our nation's schools?

## **Activities, Images, and Action**

All of these questions bring us to the heart of the matter: many of the activities currently associated with education in music reinforce the public's perception that music is solely entertainment. This does not mean that we should respond by dismantling marching bands and concert performances. It *does* mean that these activities should be presented to the public and to students in ways that reinforce their educational content and objectives. We should be careful, for example, when we use stars to promote music and music study. If such tactics focus on the personality of an entertainer and feature his or her career, they may obscure the importance of music study for everyone, no matter how gifted or fortunate.

The educational activities of professional performing organizations also need careful scrutiny. If students are taken to concerts or interact with artists in ways that are

unrelated to regular study, then each event becomes another in a long series of entertainments. When prior study and classroom follow-up are involved, these experiences are placed in an educational context, and important connections are made between entertainment and the life of the mind, between work and play, between practice and accomplishment.

The entertainment, music, and education relationship is especially important in developing the content of music instruction and in national efforts to promote the work of music teachers. Every class or private lesson, every rehearsal, every press release, and every musical event allied with education represents an opportunity to teach vital lessons about the balance between work and play in musical life. Given that those who teach music know what an uphill battle they face regarding the general public's perception of music study, it is doubly important to consider what teachers themselves can do to remedy this situation.

With sustained effort, much can be done. Five years of steady work will produce small glimmerings of progress, ten years will demonstrate that the effort is succeeding, twenty years will show significant gains in changed public perceptions of music education, and fifty years could see a tremendously enriched musical culture where entertainment and education coexist, each flourishing and contributing to the other. A primary question is whether musicians—noted for their ability to sustain difficult efforts in their art forms over long periods of time, driven by faith that such efforts will produce magnificent results—can muster the same perseverance, energy, and faith to address the public values that have so much influence on the climate for their work.

Businesses and industries closely tied to the teaching of music also have a tremendous stake in enlarging public perceptions about the capacities of music and music study. But it is essential to remember that in the world of entertainment and in that of education, success is often measured very differently. Music industries that are allied to education need to understand how to use the entertainment connection without obscuring the serious content of music study. The future of these industries, which depend on a growing population of music students and amateur musicians, is on the line.

The questions and issues posed above are extremely difficult, but they lie at the heart of the problems that the musical community has in advancing the cause of education in music. There are individuals in this community who, for various reasons, do not want to acknowledge these challenges as an aspect of professional responsibility. At present, too little work is being done to change the public's perception of the relationships among entertainment, education, and music. Thus, the music community continues to find itself reacting to events rather than shaping them. Either we continue in this way or we change: it is up to us to decide, and up to the individuals, institutions, and businesses most closely allied with education in music to make sure that the decision is the right one.

## Research and Promotion

The music community avidly seeks empirical proof that music study will fulfill goals established by various values and forces in society at large. At present, preliminary findings linking music study to brain development and more rapid acquisition of math and science competencies are heavily publicized.

These findings are encouraging, but caution must be exercised in the interest of long-term public-relations security. To put all bets on one rationale is imprudent. What if current research is superseded by other, less favorable findings? While taking every advantage available, promoting music study successfully means bringing as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, to a comprehensive set of rationales.

## Audience Development and Music Study

Audience development has become an increasingly important goal, especially for the outreach programs of visual and performing arts presenters. Major foundations are also involved. Audience development is usually centered on advertising technique and community interaction rather than on formal education. Its first goal is participation, not the development of knowledge and skills. Again, the policy issue is not choosing between audience development and music study, but rather a clear understanding that one is not the other. Education in music usually develops audiences better than audience development programs do, but education requires a long-term investment, while the need for audience support is almost always urgent. Higher education has a serious interest in keeping the two functions clear and helping all in a community understand that both types of effort are necessary to develop understanding, support, and, ultimately, long-term security.

## The Standards Anchor

When working on the value of music study, it is critical to understand the role played by standards. Today, standards are controversial. Too many individuals and organizations cannot separate standards—a set of common goals for learning—from standardization—minute regulation of curricula, lesson plans, and evaluation, all overseen by a pulverizing bureaucracy. Indeed, when misused, standards of any kind can become a counterproductive nightmare. In their best and most reasonable manifestation, however, standards indicate what is important and what is expected. Standards often express professional consensus, but they also serve to define common bodies of knowledge and skills for those who are not professionals. The presence of a consensus-based set of standards says: This is the content and these are the expectations for serious education and work in this field.

Standards set specific goals against which specific educational efforts and experiences can be measured. Standards are a serious impediment to the notion that arts education can be achieved without regular study. They are an anchor that prevents foundering in shallowness, that holds education to a solid foundation of content. Therefore, in the policy area we are discussing, it is important to be sophisticated when analyzing comments and proposals about standards, whether they are the *National Standards for Arts Education* or the foundational documents for the 1998 National Assessment for

Educational Progress evaluation of K–12 arts education, or the standards of the arts accrediting agencies for teacher preparation, or any set of state or local standards. Because standards are so central to maintaining appropriate distinctions and connections between formal and informal education, it is critical for all in higher education to ensure that revisions do not deprive current standards statements of their focus on serious study and practice. While almost any formulation can be improved, it is important not to let “improvement” become a Trojan horse bringing about loss of substance. Working effectively to promote music study often means clarifying for others what standards do and do not accomplish.

## **The Issue of Talent**

When promoting the value of music study, it is not unusual to be confronted with the issue of talent. The usual assertion is that music study is certainly appropriate, but only for those with sufficient talent and interest in the field to become professional musicians. Such an argument misses the point that music study carries benefits for everyone. After all, the same argument could be made about any other subject. However, we do not argue for the development of advanced mathematical skill only for those who show great talent. Mathematics is studied because it is a means for doing work in the world, for communicating, and for building intellectual skills. These same rationales apply to many other subject matters, and they also apply to music. Talent is an important consideration in the lives of people and in the conduct of various disciplines and professions. However, talent is not the fundamental criterion for determining a course of study for all students.

## **Moving from Interest to Engagement**

It can be useful to make distinctions between interest and engagement when working to develop values that support music study. Almost everyone likes music, and the vast majority are interested in it enough to listen attentively, attend performances, and purchase recordings. Such interest, however developed, is often a first step to deeper engagement. However, it is possible to develop promotional programs for music and music study that do an excellent job in generating interest but little to turn interest into more substantive engagement with music study. When we plan promotional campaigns with respect to music study, a principal question is how to help individuals make the transition from interest to engagement, from initial excitement to long-term commitment.

### III. RESOURCES FOR ACTION

#### What Music Schools Can Do: Ideas for Action

The following suggestions are intended to provide specific examples of ways that faculties and administrators may more actively promote the basic value of music study.

##### 1. Compiling an Understanding for Ourselves

- Set aside thirty minutes to an hour to do nothing but think about the basic values of music study and jot down notes. Take a similar period to write an outline or a statement of several paragraphs. The work of this second period can become the basis for further planning/programming/promotional activities.
- Ask faculty joining you in this effort to do the same two-part exercise.
- Plan a meeting *after* all participants have spent time thinking about this issue individually. Suggestions for consideration:
  1. Which values concerning music study are most germane to the programs you offer?
  2. Which values are currently emphasized?
  3. Which values should be emphasized?
  4. Are these values explicitly communicated, or is an implicit understanding assumed? Is the status quo appropriate?
  5. In what setting(s) should these values be promulgated? For example, private lessons, ensembles, general classroom studies, education courses, career seminars, convocations.
  6. What specific suggestions can be made for imparting understanding of the basic values you have chosen?
- Plan a faculty retreat centered on this issue. Include sessions for both individual and collective brainstorming and planning.
- Plan a one-day workshop on this issue to include other music educators in the community, including, as feasible, K–12 public and private school music teachers, private teachers, choral and ensemble directors, organists and church musicians, and education directors for professional arts organizations such as orchestras and opera companies. Include round-table discussions. Suggestions for consideration:
  1. How closely do we agree on the value of music study and the need to promote it?

2. How can each member of this music community stimulate discussion and understanding of the values of music study among his/her colleagues?
3. How can each member encourage articulation of these values in work with students, parents, ensemble members, audience members, patrons, board members, and the public?
4. What resources do participants have or know of for encouraging this discussion? How can these resources be shared?
5. What resources can be jointly created or sponsored within the community? For example, advertising materials and trained speakers.
6. What joint ventures are possible within the community that will promote greater understanding of the basic values of music study?
7. How much will is present to sustain an effort over time?

## **2. Engaging Our Students**

- Ask students to articulate in writing their understanding of the value of music study—a “personal musical philosophy.” Make students aware that this philosophy will evolve throughout their lives.
- Ask students to prepare short speeches on the value of music study to be delivered to parents, PTAs, civic organizations, school boards, and other potential audiences.
  1. Have students role play, delivering these speeches to their classmates for critique.
  2. Ask outstanding students to deliver these speeches in the community, perhaps in conjunction with performances.
- Ask art/design and music students to collaborate on the design of posters, advertisements, and advertorials promoting the value of music study.
  1. Use these materials in the classrooms, concert programs, and other venues.
  2. Make these materials available to teachers in the community.
- Integrate thought and discussion about the value of music study in multiple areas of the curriculum—fundamentals classes, education classes, colloquia, convocations.
- Demonstrate the transferable nature of skills learned through music study by making students aware that they are using these skills in a variety of ways. For example, knowledge and skills are, can, and should be integrated across all areas of study—theory is not discrete from performance, history from



education, or music itself from the other arts, the humanities, sciences, and social sciences.

- Be certain that all students know how to talk about music as well as make music. Without the ability to talk about music, students are greatly hampered in their ability to promote music and music study.
- Help all students understand that they share responsibility for promoting music study for all.
- Encourage understanding and sophistication about messages and delivery systems.
- Be certain that all music majors, performance as well as education majors, are familiar with the *National Standards for Arts Education*, especially the music portion.
- Help students be aware of the resources available from a variety of sources: MENC, MTNA, NASM, CMS, National Coalition for Music Education, etc.
- Encourage students to participate in the musical life of the community through community service, teaching, performing, advocacy, and other endeavors.
- Encourage faculty and administrators to be effective role models as public advocates, active in civic and community life. Reward these efforts.

### **3. Engaging Public Attention**

- Prepare 5-, 10-, and 20-minute speeches or sets of “talking points” appropriate for delivery to parents, PTAs, civic organizations, school boards, and other potential audiences.
  1. Makes these speeches or talking points available to faculty, colleagues, and other interested parties.
  2. Use excerpts from these carefully prepared texts as soundbites when needed.
- Develop informational programs/materials for the parents of potential music students, presenting the values of music study.
- Prepare “demonstrations/recitals” involving students and faculty. These explain how music works and show how musical knowledge increases enjoyment.
- Develop workshops, seminars, and other programs that will assist teachers in public and private schools, private studios, and community programs to include discussion/understanding of the value of music study in their teaching.

- Sponsor open-house activities to demonstrate to potential students and the community the kinds of learning involved in music study.
- Prepare “advertorials” to be used in concert and recital programs on and off campus, in newspapers, magazines, and other printed media.
- Collect testimonials from leaders in the community who credit music study as an element leading to their success. Use them to prepare a feature story for the local newspaper, comment in concert programs, or portions of speeches to local audiences.
- Develop and print an overview of the value of music study for parents to read while waiting through a child’s music lesson.
- Involve parents in their children’s musical study.
- Present the *National Standards for Arts Education* in as many venues as possible.
- Be aware of and use the resources available from a variety of sources: MENC, MTNA, NASM, CMS, National Coalition for Music Education, etc.
- Do everything is possible to support the work of music teachers in private studios, elementary/secondary schools, and community education programs. Be certain that they know that their work is valued.
- Project the message to the community that music and music study is for everyone.
- Use all possible means to communicate that music is an active, not a passive, activity, and that music study is the way in to full participation.
- Consider ways to include presentation of the value of music study in websites, homepages, and other electronic venues.
- Develop a local working group on the promotion of music study.

#### **4. Keep in Mind**

- Does the discussion/program/activity focus on the value of music study, rather than on the more general value of music itself?
- Many of these values are self-apparent to anyone who has studied music, but not to those who have not. Where appropriate, are the values of music study promoted in such a way that they are understood by those who have not already studied music?
- To what extent should the agenda be focused on the study of music rather than on repertory? In what contexts is it appropriate for discussions of basic values to focus on specific genres or styles?

# A Compendium of the Basic Values of Music Study

## 1. Intrinsic Values

The values that are intrinsic to music and to the study of music are difficult to articulate, for they are communicated in a nonverbal language. These values may apply as well to realms other than music, but their primary virtue speaks through perceptions of music itself and in the effect of those perceptions upon individual minds and spirits. Several terms and phrases used to describe these values are: *aesthetic pleasure; development of “musical intelligence” and musical capacity; ability to produce and perceive in an aesthetic realm; emotional engagement; awareness of that which is beyond the individual.*

*Aesthetic Pleasure.* The enjoyment of beauty is a universal experience, known among peoples of all cultures, all eras, and all ages. The pleasure, the joy of music, comes in large measure from the perception of musical beauty. Music study increases the ability to perceive this musical beauty.

*Development of “Musical Intelligence” and Musical Capacity.* Musical thought is a distinct form of comprehension or intelligence. Thinking in musical terms means being able to pose and solve design problems in the realm of sound. This ability to think and know is subject to extensive development.

*Ability to Produce and Perceive in an Aesthetic Realm.* Music study enables the individual to use the language of music to create or to recreate works of art and provides access to the artistic works of others.

*Emotional Engagement.* The most uninformed response to music is likely to be purely emotional. Music study increases the ability of the individual to engage emotion with intellect.

*Awareness of That Which Is Beyond the Individual.* In an era of individualism, there is much to be learned from experiences that enable us to transcend ourselves. Music study increases these experiences, both in the literal sense of being part of a performance that involves others, and in the numinous experience of that which transcends place and time.

## 2. Instrumental Values

In addition to its intrinsic values, skills learned through the study of music relate not only to music itself, but to many aspects of everyday life. These include *cognitive skills, areas of personal development, interpersonal skills, and cultural understanding.* In addition, the teacher of a young person has the opportunity to be a mentor, role model, and friend in a way that only a nonparental adult can be.

## ***Cognitive Skills***

*Concentration and memory; attention to detail and subtleties; active listening and the active mind; ability to work with symbols and the unfamiliar; abstract, non-linear, creative, and interpretive thought; logical thinking; conceptualization; problem solving and decision making; making value judgments; possible enhancement of learning ability in other areas.*

*Concentration and Memory.* Music study requires close attention to specific skills and to musical elements such as pitch and rhythm. The mastery of these skills requires repetition; this in turn leads to both muscle and cognitive memory. Preparing music for performance often requires memorization of extensive, detailed material. This process requires concentration not only on the whole but on the parts and on their various interrelationships.

*Attention to Detail and Subtleties.* Music only works when it is done right. Small mistakes in pitch can cause unpleasantness; mistakes in rhythm can cause a musical train wreck. Beyond these basic elements are the subtleties that make music magical—nuances of phrasing, timbre, and ensemble that make music a living language.

*Active Listening and the Active Mind.* The passive ear hears only a fraction of what is happening, the passive mind processes almost none of it. Serious listening requires that ear and mind together be alert, curious, and reflective.

*Ability to work with symbols and the unfamiliar.* Learning to read, write, and interpret musical notation provides access to a world of thought that is both symbolic and nonverbal. The ability to work with abstractions in terms of symbols is an important mark of creativity.

*Abstract Thought.* Study and experience with the organization of music increases the ability to perceive whole/parts relationships. Work with musical forms and structures builds fluency in recognizing and applying organizational principles. Rhythm, pattern, sequence, contrast, development, and variation are concepts that apply not only to music, but to many forms of human endeavor.

*Intuitive and Nonlinear Thought.* Intuitive understanding is an important route to the comprehension of musical structure and meaning. Although music unfolds in sequence, the underlying organizational structure usually represents a pattern.

*Creative and Interpretive Thought.* Whether for the creation of new work or for recreation through performance, music requires imaginative use of musical materials for the expression of musical thought. In this, music is no different than other disciplines.

*Logical Thinking.* Analyzing a musical work from a cultural, structural, or historical perspective or improvising within a certain musical style strengthens both inductive and deductive reasoning skills.

*Conceptualization.* Learning to classify and generalize by identifying different types and styles of music, recognizing how different cultures use music for personal and cultural expression, and recognizing common elements in different musical works develops this essential aspect of abstract thought.

*Problem Solving and Decision Making.* These skills are taught through learning the basics of musical language, such as harmony, or preparing and interpreting a work for performance.

*Making Value Judgments.* Although the performance of music is grounded in the realm of the objective—pitches and rhythms, for example, beyond the basics, music enters the realm of the subjective. Learning to comprehend, consider, and evaluate in music teaches informed decision making. Discriminating between great and lesser works or justifying musical choices in performance or composition exercises this ability.

*Possible Enhancement of Learning in Other Areas.* Recent studies have explored connections between music study and other forms of learning. Cognitive functions appear to be linked, and there is evidence that engagement in musical study can increase not only the capacity but the desire to learn in other areas as well.

### ***Personal Development***

*Self-discipline and self-motivation; commitment, patience, and perseverance; personal responsibility; mind/body coordination; setting and achieving goals, both long and short term; aspiration; achievement; self confidence and poise; enjoyment, discovery, and enthusiasm.*

*Self-Discipline and Self-Motivation.* Practicing is work, but mastering skills and repertory is fun. One reinforces the other in a continuum of advancement. With due respect to supportive parents and teachers, the deepest continuity develops when discipline and desire come from within.

*Commitment, Patience, and Perseverance.* Music is rarely easy. Remaining faithful to studying, solving problems, and overcoming obstacles is central to achievement in music.

*Personal Responsibility.* Although teachers and parents can encourage, the responsibility for learning lies with the student. Only the music student can acquire knowledge and skills through sustained effort; there is no opportunity to shift responsibility for music not learned. In performance, there is no place to hide.

*Mind/Body Coordination.* Mental ability, physical precision, split-second timing, hand-eye-foot coordination, proper breathing, and fine motor skills are all essential abilities developed through the study of music.

*Setting and Achieving Goals.* Music study requires a learner to start and complete a definite task, to organize the steps for accomplishing the work, and to follow a

schedule for completion. The goal may be as near as next week's lesson, or as distant as Carnegie Hall.

*Aspiration.* Striving for excellence—artistic, technical, and intellectual—and aspiring toward maximum use of these skills are hallmarks of music study at its fullest.

*Achievement.* There is joy and deep fulfillment in gaining understanding of the previously unfamiliar and fluency with the formerly difficult. Virtually every piece of music and every musical skill presents a challenge and a reward.

*Self-Confidence and Poise.* Self-confidence has many aspects, among them the belief in one's worth, ideas, feelings, and abilities. In addition to this, which is primary, is a second form of confidence born of the ability to express all of the above. Both the study and the performance of music enhance all of these many aspects of self-confidence. The ability to behave gracefully and comfortably in public and to perform well under pressure are aspects of poise that are developed through performance.

*Enjoyment, Discovery, and Enthusiasm.* The rewards of music study far exceed the span of lessons—knowledge and skills in music provide a lifetime of pleasure in making and listening to music and the ability to enlarge constantly one's realm of musical knowledge. The delight in these endeavors translates into an enthusiasm that can transcend both the subject and the individual, adding perspective and richness to all else one does.

### ***Interpersonal Skills***

*Participation, cooperation, and collaboration; ability to lead/willingness to follow; verbal communication; nonverbal communication; building community.*

*Participation, Cooperation, and Collaboration.* Participation in any ensemble requires the individual to be responsible to others and to have patience and respect for colleagues.

*Ability to Lead/Willingness to Follow.* In small ensembles, the musical lines determine the leaders and followers, and an individual must be prepared to lead this moment and follow, the next. In large ensembles, as the director is clearly the leader, players or singers must follow or risk disaster.

*Verbal Communication.* Music may be a nonverbal language, but the process of preparing ensemble playing or singing requires words. Discussing a phrase shape means being able to express a concept; deciding among varying concepts, as in the preparation of a string quartet, involves working toward consensus.

*Nonverbal Communication.* Perhaps music's greatest gift is the ability to cultivate our thoughts and feelings, to express them through music, and to respond to the musical communication of others.

*Building Community.* Shared goals and experiences are among the prime factors in bringing people together and creating community. Whether the community in question is based on the social bond of an ensemble, the musical aspirations of colleagues, or the cultural impetus of a community at large, these connections are enhanced by music study.

### ***Cultural Understanding***

*Knowledge and Understanding of Culture.* The arts are among the most powerful communicators of a culture or civilization. The study of music enables one to know and understand one's own culture and those of other times, places, and people.

*Participation in Culture.* Music study enables immediate artistic, intellectual, and emotional involvement with all cultures, places, and times. Through performance and study, it is possible, for a time, to actually be *in* different cultures. This involvement is richer than only learning *about* other cultures.

## Short Statements or Advertorials

The following texts could be used in a variety of ways. They were originally produced as advertisements for use in concert programs, newsletters, and other publications. They are suitable for speeches, texts, media announcements, introductions to performances, and so on. They speak directly to many basic values of music study. These texts are oriented to children and youth, but they are easy to edit to address any age group.

**Music Study from A to Z.** Accomplishment. Broad Horizons. Cultural Awareness. Discovery. Education. Friendships. Goals. High Standards. Imagination. Joy. Knowledge. Literacy. Manual Dexterity. New Interests. Opportunity. Problem Solving. Quickness of Mind. Rigor. Skills. Tenacity. Understanding. Values. Working with Others. Expressiveness. Years of Pleasure. Zip, Zest, and Zeal. It's an Education for Life!

**Music Study and Excellence.** Academic excellence, excellence on the job, individual excellence—all demand commitment to high intellectual, physical, or creative standards. In a well-rounded education, the study of music fosters just such a commitment. As students acquire basic musical skills and knowledge, their understanding enables them to perceive how musical standards define excellence, to recognize excellence in the works of others, and to achieve excellence in their own performances. Thus, a balanced and sequential program of music study can serve as the foundation for personal achievement at the highest possible level—and as a doorway to past and current accomplishments in our musical heritage.

**Music Study and Understanding.** Researching, experimenting, analyzing, interpreting—these are all ways of understanding ideas and concepts, which is central to a child's education. Music study employs each of these skills. For example, analyzing the structure of a composition or interpreting a piece of music teaches a student to break a work into its parts and to understand how those parts form the whole. In this way, a child's ability to comprehend what is abstract, complex, or problematic grows stronger. This ability is put to use in other areas, such as language and mathematics, and eventually in work and advanced studies. It's another example of how music study can contribute to a child's development now and help lay the foundation for accomplishment in years to come.

**Music Study and Communication.** Throughout history, human beings have found expression in music, enabling one age, individual, or culture to communicate with another. The child who studies music acquires the skills and language to take part in this "human conversation" and to appreciate its artistic and intellectual achievements. Regular practice also enables a child to express himself or herself in music, sharing what is unique with others. By encouraging music study, we do nothing less than help build a child's repertoire of ways to respond both to personal experiences and to those that humanity holds in trust.

**Music Study and Organization.** Everything from computer programming to architecture depends upon organizing principles that determine whether or not a task is successful—whether the software ultimately works or the building stands or falls.



The study of musical forms and structures provides a student with insight into the same underlying principles that govern a work of music. For example, a student may learn to break a more complex work into smaller, simpler parts in order to grasp its total effect. Or a melodic pattern may be traced as it unfolds logically over the course of a composition. In these and other ways, students learn to understand and apply the concept of organization in music—and to recognize the importance of organizing principles in all systematic endeavors.

**Music Study and Tenacity.** The difference between success and failure is often the refusal to quit. Perseverance in studying, solving problems, and overcoming obstacles can provide the extra advantage that a student needs. A rigorous and sustained program of music study underscores this lesson whenever a student prepares for a class or strives to master a particular work for performance. Practicing and studying music help cultivate patience, attention to detail, and a longer concentration span. The determination and high standards that characterize a successful effort are called upon constantly in music study. Of course tenacity doesn't come easily. But the satisfaction and self-mastery that a student acquires make it worth all the work.

**Music Study and Independent Judgment.** Independence of mind and the knowledge to back it up are the cornerstones of participation in our nation's civic life. Such independent judgment determines the outcome of elections, the fate of government programs, the character of our judiciary, and the thoughtfulness of citizen activism. In the same way, our nation's cultural life—including music—depends on people capable of informed and knowledgeable judgments about the works they encounter. A comprehensive program of music study provides the educational foundation and skills that can make the entire experience of music—performing, composing, and listening—a new exercise in discovery, independent thinking, and personal choice.

**Music Study and Goal-Setting.** Learning to set goals and achieve them is an essential part of a good education. That's one reason why a regular program of music study is so important to a child. By memorizing a composition or learning to play a piece well, a child learns that steady effort and hard work pay off. Studying music also teaches a child to start and complete a definite task, to organize the steps in doing so, and to follow a schedule for completion. What a child gains in the long-run is self-reliance, motivation, and the satisfaction of real accomplishment.

**Music Study and Cooperation.** Harmony in music is the pleasant result of blending different tones. But it's more. It's the mechanism that enable a child to cooperate with a teacher and fellow students. Performing in a band, orchestra, choir, or small ensemble demands patience, respect, and sharing. Each music maker must understand not only his or her own unique role, but also the role of others in the section, of those around the section, and finally of the entire ensemble. By performing in this way, a child also discovers the balance between individuality and cooperation and learns that one can enhance the other. The beauty of harmony, after all, is the beauty of individual achievements combined.

**Music Study and Subjectivity.** Our society places a tremendous value on technological achievement and quantifiable results. This emphasis on objectivity has become

as much a part of the American character in the twentieth century as the pioneer spirit was in the nineteenth. But tests and technology haven't altered the fact that our lives are filled with uncertainty or that a question may have more than one right answer. That's why a systematic program of music study is an important part of developing the skills and instincts that enable us to work with ambiguity. Listening to, performing, and creating music entail choices that involve nuance and differing interpretations. By teaching us to use ambiguity creatively, music study helps us to develop both a wider repertoire of intellectual and emotional responses and a fuller appreciation of subjective expression.

**Music Study and Creativity.** Notes, like colors, words, and numbers, are symbols that make expression possible. A child who studies music learns to use them to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas and is taught to recognize these expressions in the works of others. Learning to communicate in this way is at the heart of intellectual and cultural development and generates skills that strengthen a child's creative abilities. In addition to helping develop this creative potential, the study of music also reinforces the connection between diligence and individual accomplishment. The power of music literacy to enrich a child's creative impulse is another reason why music study is an essential part of a basic education.

**Music Study and Discovery.** "I know what I like" is a familiar refrain that many of us rely upon when faced with something new. What we really mean is, "I like what I know." Unfortunately, our preference for the familiar can also be a closed door, and in the case of music, this means shutting out an entire world of knowledge and experience. That's why music study is so important—not only because it opens the door to discovery, but also because it gives us the grounding in understanding that makes informed musical choices so rewarding. The more we learn about music, the more comfortable we become with what was once strange or unusual or simply new—and the more assuredly we can say, "I *know* what I like."

**Music Study and Music Literacy.** A basic knowledge of the language, structure, methods, and skills of a subject is essential for understanding and working in any discipline. This is true of music no less than any other field of study. Because music is both an expression of civilization and a unique form of communication with its own body of knowledge, music literacy is fundamental to every good education. This means being able to read and write musical notation, to work with musical elements and structures, and to be conversant in musical history and literature. Just as we learn to read, write, and speak a language, so a mastery of the "grammar" and skills of music enables us to create, perform, and listen discriminately for a lifetime of musical understanding and participation.

**Music Study and Using Symbols.** Music is a language much like the spoken and written language we use daily. Learning its symbols offers a child a new form of literacy, new means of self-expression, and a new way of understanding the expression of others. The study of music teaches a child to read and interpret these symbols, to recognize their organization as phrases and movements, and to perform works based on them alone or in a group. The skills, poise, and self-discipline that a child acquires become enduring assets that contribute to success in other areas and that continue to serve a child well in years to come.

**Music Study and Mental Development.** The study of music provides one of the earliest and best means for developing a child’s memory and mental discipline. Well before learning to talk or write, a child may demonstrate a surprisingly large musical memory, and music may have a captivating effect. Subsequent music study at an early age builds on this natural connection, and a sustained program of study extends a child’s memory as it adds to the store of musical knowledge and skills. In the process, children learn to listen closely; to think about what they are hearing; and to develop the mental self-discipline required in studying, practicing, and performing.

**Music Study and the Active Mind.** In a world of passive entertainment, an active mind is something to be treasured. But without the training that mental engagement offers, it becomes more difficult to use our minds independently and creatively. One reason the study of music is so valuable is that it challenges the mind by requiring critical thinking, problem solving, and the ability to conceptualize abstract ideas. Students of music—whether in school or in private lessons—learn to think actively by thinking in new ways as they acquire literacy in nonverbal ideas and expressions. The result, an antidote to passivity, also brings the delight of discovering how much music has to offer when students are challenged to participate first-hand.

**Music Study and Motor Skills.** Performing music accurately requires concentration, physical precision, speed, and split-second timing—motor skills that all children need to develop. Learning to sing or play an instrument in a balanced program of music study will teach control of the small muscle systems, hand-eye-foot coordination, proper breathing, and more. In music, as in all endeavors, mastering fundamentals like these makes further achievement possible. That’s why even an act as simple as producing the first clear, sustained note can mark not only the beginning of new motor skills, but of new ambitions as well.

**Music Study and Poise.** Personal poise and the ability to behave gracefully in public are distinguishing attributes of great value. Music study offers numerous opportunities to develop these skills. Learning to perform in public gives a child self-confidence and helps overcome the fear of public appearances that even many adults experience. Performance also teaches control of movement, good posture, and the courage that Ernest Hemingway described as “grace under pressure.” The result is that as poise increases, so does the pleasure a child feels in sharing what he or she has learned with teachers, family, and friends.

**Music Study and Investment.** Unlike other investments that are bought and sold as they rise and fall in value, an investment in music study is permanent and continually growing. For the student, it yields intellectual and personal dividends that will be needed throughout a lifetime: self-discipline, creativity, critical thinking, and an appreciation of some of humanity’s greatest achievements. For our culture, a sustained and disciplined program of music study assures that the next generation of musicians and audiences will share in and add to our musical heritage. Naturally, even such a safe investment needs to be properly funded, nurtured, and sustained. But the results are impressive—and, as with any good investment, a strong performance speaks for itself.

**An Education in Music is an Education for Life.** An education in music is much more than a diversion for an hour after school. Well-organized, sustained music study gives your child intellectual and creative advantages that will last a lifetime. The study of music allows children to gain an appreciation and understanding of some of civilization's greatest achievements—and it nurtures skills and abilities that form the basis for success in any area.

**Preparation for Success.** The ability to lead, the willingness to follow, self-discipline, a keen sense of timing—all are essential for success in the board room. If they are to develop these skills and attributes, young people must have an education that will prepare them for success. The study of music helps them learn the skills that will enable them to be effective in business or cultural endeavors—cooperating, planning, managing, motivating. The goal is the same—performance.

**The Next Mozart?** Mozart's genius was nourished and sustained almost from his birth, but many children with a spark of musical ability are never given the opportunity to develop it. A high-quality program of music study lets talent shine forth, but, equally, it encourages intellectual and physical development, it nourishes cultural awareness, and it builds a deep and abiding love of arts and civilization. In short, the study of music is essential to the growth of an educated human being. That is as true now as it was in Mozart's day. You can help assure that all the children in your community have access to an education that includes the development of basic musical knowledge and skills. Who knows, you just might find another Mozart.

**Music and the Adult Learner.** Did you know that research shows that mental functions such as memory and problem-solving grow stronger and last longer if they are exercised? Stretching the mind makes good sense, and the ongoing study of music can be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding ways to aid mental development. Music study brings exposure to new ideas, encourages memorization and organized thinking, and stimulates a complex interaction of intellectual, psychological, and physical responses. What's more, as an adult you bring a lifetime of experience and understanding to your studies that you didn't have when you were younger. Because of this, adult learners can think more analytically and progress faster, enjoy longer attention span, and become more self-motivated. By choosing to study music, you sharpen your perceptions, sensitize your emotions, and continue to cultivate your mind.

**Music and Its Enduring Benefit.** If you once studied music, have you thought recently about what it has meant to you? In ways that you may not have realized, the skills that you acquired serve you today. For example, the study of music encourages critical thinking and problem solving. It teaches a student to recognize how parts make up a whole. It provides opportunities for personal achievement and builds self-confidence. Performing in public develops poise, and playing as a group offers opportunities to make new friends and to learn the value of cooperation. Other lessons—such as the importance of hard work and good judgment—are also part of this experience. If music study has done this much for you already, think of what it could still offer, with benefits for now and for all your years to come.

**Music Study and Entertainment.** The entertainment industry is a multibillion-dollar enterprise, and music plays a leading role in it. In fact, the frequency and variety of musical entertainment available every day through radio, television, and concerts can overwhelm even the most accustomed listener. That's one reason why a comprehensive program of music study is such an important part of a good education: It teaches us to listen attentively, to think about what we hear, to recognize complex musical content, and to participate fully in the musical experience. After all, great music is always entertaining—but if we don't even hear it, we'll never know everything else it has to offer as well.

**Audiothrombosis.** There may be no such word or ailment now, but if background music becomes any more pervasive, who knows what the effects will be? As it is, we've become accustomed to—even expect—a steady stream of music to carry us in our cars from our homes to work in the morning, up and down elevators, through stores, and home again, where we tune in to radio and television programs that treat us to more “easy listening.” Even being put on hold can start the violins playing.

Is it really so bad that music is so ubiquitous? Yes and no. It's true that such music can create a more pleasant environment, be amusing or diverting, and even soothe our nerves. But, as music steadily becomes secondary to other activities, we may sacrifice the awareness and enjoyment of *all* music. The price, in other words, may be the loss of one of our most special pleasures.

Fortunately there's a remedy for passive listening—an exercise routine that consists of these three activities: *studying music* in a regular, sequential program in order to get the most out of it; *consciously listening* to musical works during periods set aside specifically for this purpose; and *making music* yourself. The result will be hours of enjoyment, deeper understanding, and a new range of intellectual and emotional expression. Better yet, you'll probably never get audiothrombosis—or hear the world the same way again.

## An Overview of the National Standards for Arts Education — Elementary and Secondary Level

### *What students should know and be able to do in the arts*

There are many routes to competence in the arts disciplines. Students may work in different arts at different times. Their study may take a variety of approaches. Their abilities may develop at different rates. Competence means the ability to use an array of knowledge and skills. Terms often used to describe these include creation, performance, production, history, culture, perception, analysis, criticism, aesthetics, technology, and appreciation. Competence means capabilities with these elements themselves and an understanding of their interdependence; it also means the ability to combine the content, perspectives, and techniques associated with the various elements to achieve specific artistic and analytical goals. Students work toward *comprehensive* competence from the very beginning, preparing in the lower grades for deeper and more rigorous work each succeeding year. As a result, the joy of experiencing the arts is enriched and matured by the discipline of learning and the pride of accomplishment. Essentially, the Standards ask that students should know and be able to do the following by the time they have completed secondary school:

- ❑ *They should be able to communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines—dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts.* This includes knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabularies, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of each arts discipline.
- ❑ *They should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form,* including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.
- ❑ *They should be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art* from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives, and from combinations of those perspectives. This includes the ability to understand and evaluate work in the various arts disciplines.
- ❑ *They should have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods* and a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines, across the arts as a whole, and within cultures.
- ❑ *They should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines.* This includes mixing and matching competencies and understandings in art-making, history and culture, and analysis in any arts-related project.

As a result of developing these capabilities, students can arrive at their own knowledge, beliefs, and values for making personal and artistic decisions. In other terms, they can arrive at a broad-based, well-grounded understanding of the nature, value, and meaning of the arts as a part of their own humanity.

## Policy Analysis Checklist

From time to time, those teaching and promoting the value of music study need to analyze a policy proposal. The scope of the proposal may be local, state, or national; it may involve music study in any setting. Some or all of the following questions may be useful to determine whether the proposal supports serious music study. The questions discuss issues in terms of arts education, because that rubric is the most common for policy discussions. Simply substitute music and/or any other art for arts education as necessary.

**1. Does the program, policy, or activity treat the arts disciplines with the same seriousness as English, math, science, and other basic subjects?**

Student learning in the arts, like student learning in the other basic subjects, must be supported by sequential curricula, regular time on task, qualified teachers, sufficient resources, and high expectations. Any school-based arts program that fails to do this works against arts education, the arts, and the cultural development of individuals. The *National Standards for Arts Education* provide one working formulation of what is taught when the arts are basic.

**2. Does it make clear distinctions and appropriate connections between formal education, on the one hand, and entertainment, exposure, and enrichment, on the other?**

Policy, practice, or public relations materials must not imply that experience is a substitute for study, or vice versa. To make such substitutions demeans the arts and relegates them to frill status in educational settings.

**3. Does it respect and promote the arts as disciplines worthy of study in their own right and on their own terms, rather than using the arts to accomplish other educational goals?**

As with all other basic subjects, the greater the competence in the disciplines themselves, the more that competence can be connected to other uses and fields. Competence in math is necessary for mathematical applications across all disciplines. The arts are no different. Counting tubas or ballet shoes to learn math is not arts study, any more than counting grammar textbooks is English study. Pretending otherwise is false and extremely harmful to the development of knowledge, skills, and values positive to the arts.

**4. Does it focus on arts education or arts advocacy?**

Advocacy is important, but it is not the reason for, or the content of, arts education. Advocacy works to convince. Education works to teach. Advocacy encourages belief. Education encourages and enables individual competence and thought. Advocacy is centered on support mechanisms and fund-raising. Education is centered on making and understanding art itself. Obviously, advocacy and education can and ought to work together, but the substitution of advocacy for education does not work and must not be promoted or funded.

**5. Does it recognize and support the only existing delivery system that matches the educational task to reach all children and youth?**

The basic resources necessary for school-based learning in the arts are present in most U.S. communities. The most critical resource is teachers who are themselves qualified in the arts themselves by virtue of long study and practice in the discipline and who are *prepared and willing to devote their professional lives to the daily work of building competence, student by student*. These teachers represent the largest artist-in-residence program in the world. Those who work in public schools are supported by local education dollars, prepared and nurtured in higher education programs throughout the land, and joined together in large state and national organizations focused on the arts and teaching. They are the inheritors of a magnificent legacy from their predecessors who established, built, and sustained K–12 arts education long before the appearance of public and private grants programs. These specialist arts teachers and the programs they lead constitute the only system that can deliver substantive arts education to *all* children and youth. Thinking or acting as though this delivery system does not exist, or is insignificant, unprofessional, or in decline is wrong, both because these notions are false and because they corrode local support for programs that lead students to real knowledge and skills. Communities now without the benefits of this great system of basic arts education for all need to return to or to establish it. The current or projected absence of basic K–12 arts education must not become an excuse for treating it superficially. As essential as they are, other community institutions, private teachers, and presenting organizations are not a substitute.

**6. Are claims made to support or evaluate the policy accurate and based on student learning?**

Common efforts to support arts education are diminished and sometimes thwarted when attempts are made to substitute arts-marketing techniques for sound educational effort. Because they are found wanting and lead to public mistrust, distorted or overstated claims are eventually counterproductive. Honesty also includes fair representations about responsibilities and achievements and willingness to give responsibility and credit to those in other communities of the arts whose programs we do not control, fund, or otherwise influence. Arts councils and presenting organizations must sustain policy support for regular school-based instruction. They must not minimize, compete, or, worse, stand aside while it is cut, quietly hoping for opportunities to provide or gain funding for entertainment, exposure, or enrichment programs they themselves furnish.

**7. Does the program or policy promote clarity of roles and thus common effort among various groups and organizations that teach and present the arts?**

For reasons already stated, any program labeled as arts education that substitutes experience for study sets people who should be working together in conflict. The same is true when advocacy is substituted for education, artists-in-schools for arts teachers in school, and grants programs for long-term school-board support. These substitutions produce divisions among those deeply concerned about the arts. The result is polarization and a tragic diversion of energies that should be dedicated toward common cultural advance.



## **Other Resources**

The following organizations are focused on education in music and maintain publications and other programs that develop public and professional values.

### **College Music Society**

202 West Spruce Street  
Missoula, MT 59802  
<http://www.music.org>  
800-729-0235 📠 Fax: 406-721-9419

### **MENC: The National Association for Music Education**

1806 Robert Fulton Drive  
Reston, VA 20191  
<http://www.menc.org>  
703-860-4000 📠 Toll-Free 800-828-0229 📠 Fax: 703-860-1531

### **Music Teachers National Association**

441 Vine Street, Suite 505  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-2814  
<http://www.mtna.org>  
513-421-1420 📠 Fax: 513-421-2503

### **National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts**

40 North Van Brunt Street  
P.O. Box 8018  
Englewood, NJ 07631  
<http://www.natguild.org>  
201-871-3337 📠 Fax: 201-871-7639

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