

IS MUSIC A DEAD LANGUAGE?

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Imagine a world where people could only speak other people's printed words to one another. Since people in this world could only communicate the ideas of other people, they wouldn't be able to speak their own thoughts, feelings and attitudes with anyone else. We would call their language "dead" since it lacks a personal or cultural means of creative expression. Surprisingly, the language of music is often taught exclusively through speaking and reading the ideas of others (composers), even though other languages teach listening, speaking, reading and writing.

While we've made strides over recent years in teaching creative musicianship using national standards and improved technology resources, the following statistics reflect how much farther we must go to create a truly balanced education for our students. These statistics compare Music statistics with Latin statistics to illustrate how music compares with a known "dead" language. If you're not already teaching the creative process through music, I hope you'll consider it in your curricula after today.

"Children are expected to draw pictures and write stories when they're sent off to school. But when it comes to music education, the emphasis is on playing music rather than making it up."--Robert Jourdain, MUSIC, THE BRAIN, AND ECSTASY

Available State Data

Music Data

71 student compositions were submitted for the 2001 Wisconsin School Music Association/Department of Public Instruction Composition project, while 77, 000 performances were submitted at Solo/Ensemble. *(Note: 12 of the Solo/Ensemble submissions were original Compositions, but it is unclear whether any were submitted for the aforementioned composition project)* (Source: Wisconsin School Music Association)

Most states have content standards patterned after the MENC National Standards (which include Composition, Improvisation and Arranging). However, **teacher certification requirements in most states only require that students pass an accredited college music program to receive certification.** It is not known how many colleges require courses or proficiencies in Composition, Improvisation, and Arranging in their music education curricula. (Source: 2002-2003 State Arts Education Policy Database)

Latin Data

49 entries were submitted for the Wisconsin Latin Teachers Association Essay Competition in 2000. (Source: Wisconsin Latin Teachers Association) These entries represent 3% of the students studying Latin in Wisconsin. **If we had 3% of the students who participate in Solo/Ensemble creating their own music, we'd have over 2, 300 student composers!** (Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Wisconsin Latin Teachers Association)

For teacher certification, virtually all states require that teachers demonstrate competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the foreign language they will be teaching. Many states require competency examinations such as Praxis I, Praxis II (both of which require writing in the language) or the equivalent state examination for foreign language teacher certification. (Source: Joint Committee on Classics in American Education Committee of the American Philological Association, and the American Classics Association)

Available National Data

K-12 Data

74% of all music students surveyed were “never” or “hardly ever” asked to make up their own music. (Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress Report—1997) Using MENC national enrollment estimates, this translates into **31 million music students.**

In 1990, 91% of music students surveyed in grades 4-8 wanted to learn how to make up their own music in school. (Source: Yamaha Marketing Research)

Collegiate Data

72% of all entering UW-Stevens Point music majors since 1995 had no previous Composition and/or Improvisation training prior to college. (Source: UW-Stevens Point Music Department)

In 2000-2001, Composition degrees represented 3% of ALL music degrees received in the US and Canada, even though all music graduates rely upon composed music. Improvisation degrees aren't listed in the survey.

86% of the 4-year undergraduate music departments nationwide do not offer Composition degrees, even though virtually all college music courses rely upon composed music. Improvisation degrees are not listed in the survey. (Source: NASM/Higher Education Arts Data Services/National Center for Educational Statistics)

Current College Music Society statistics indicate Composition faculty members are 5% of college music instructors, even though virtually all music faculty teach using composed music. Improvisation ensemble directors represent 1% of college music instructors. **In 1997, there were more higher education music departments than Composition faculty.** (Source: College Music Society and NASM)

In 2000-2001, 63 Doctorate degrees in Classical languages were granted, compared with 72 Music Composition doctorate degrees. (Source: NASM/Higher Education Arts Data Services; Digest of Educational Statistics)

Related Data

120, 999 students participated in the National Latin Examination in 2002 and this total has grown every single year since 1978. To reach the same number, you need 2,419 high school composers per state! (Source: National Latin Examination)

55, 482 students nationwide were members of the National Junior Classical League (pre-professional society for high school students) in 1999. (Source: American Classical League)

If you combine ALL of the following nationwide young composer and young music educator data below, you come up with 6,245.

Student Society of Composers Inc. (SCI) members	510
Entries in the SCI/ASCAP Young composers competition (for college/high school students)	107
Entries in MENC National Convention Young Composers showcase concert	44
Entries in MENC electronic Composition talent search	40
Collegiate MENC	5, 465
2002 John Lennon/BMI Songwriting Contest entries were already Collegiate MENC members)	<u>79</u>
TOTAL	6, 245

(Sources: SCI, MENC, BMI)

Advanced Placement Latin exams have outnumbered the Advanced Placement Music Theory exams by approximately a 3:2 ratio each year for the past 7 years. (Source: College Board/Educational Testing Service)

et cetera....ad infinitum...ad nauseam...

Our reason for sharing these statistics is not to depress you! Rather, our purpose is to demonstrate how we must continually strive for a healthy balance between reading, writing, speaking and listening to music.

We urge each of you to share these statistics and resources with other music faculty, administrators, parents and music support groups so they can help in addressing this need for balanced music instruction. If we each assume responsibility for the perpetuation of our musical language, we will chart a new course for the profession as we move through the 21st century.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”—Margaret Mead

Perspectives

Getting more information can't hurt

Survey the perceived training needs of existing existing K-12 Music teachers.

How many NASM students are currently enrolled in college Composition or Improvisation courses in the US and Canada?

Survey recent music education graduates on their preparation to teach the MENC National standards in Composition, Improvisation and Arranging.

Survey recent Doctoral Composition graduates who have not secured a college teaching position to find out if they will apply for an alternate K-12 teaching certificate.

Survey NASM schools to see how many schools require pedagogy courses for Composition majors.

Survey NASM schools about how they are each satisfying the Composition and Improvisation accreditation requirements.

CMS will likely be conducting a survey of Composition in the very near future.

WHY TEACH THE CREATIVE PROCESS?

- 1) **Your students study and perform composed music!** The interpretive process can be thorny since sounds cannot be expressed ideally through visual symbols. To solve these complex problems, we must examine the creative process that produced these printed structures to ultimately understand a composer's original thoughts. Common sense suggests a music student could best learn how to "think like a composer" through personal experience in Composition. However, music curricula rarely require students to actually compose. As a result, students are often left to sort out these complex issues on their own.
- 2) **Creativity in college curricula shouldn't be limited to creative writing and finding a parking spot!** Typically, schools foster an appreciation for right answers above creative exploration and mistake making. Author Roger von Oech expressed this idea by saying, "Much of our educational system is an elaborate game of 'guess what the teacher is thinking', and we've come to believe that the best ideas are in someone else's head rather than our own."
- 3) **When we refer to performing as "making music", are we really "making" our own music or are we presenting something already "made" by a composer?** Let's teach our students to "make" their own music too. Mark Twain characterized this by saying, "Our public school boy—his 'education' consists of learning things, not the meaning of them; he is fed upon the husks, not the corn." Education in the creative process also provides an unlimited outlet for students' musical participation after they've graduated.
- 4) Composers will always have a strong influence on music curricula as long as schools rely on composed music. **We must be very careful when we allow small groups of people to have autonomy over our art form.** If we produce more composers and composer advocates, we have increased potential for growth in our profession.
- 5) **The solutions to repertoire/literature problems are the students sitting in front of you every day!** Give your students the opportunity to be the "voice of the future." Curiously, many teachers in Wisconsin listed Literature as a higher priority for re-training than Creativity on the Self-Expressed Professional Development Needs of Wisconsin Music Educators survey. (Source: Chelcy Bowles, University of Wisconsin-Extension)
- 6) **There is one thing that will never go out of style---PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS BE CREATING!** Peter Drucker agreed by saying, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."
- 7) **Ideas are the single most valuable commodity that humans have!** Albert Einstein agreed saying, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

- 8) The Latin root words for education are “educō” or “educere”(to draw out that which is within). Creativity education is central to exploring and developing “that which is within!”
- 9) **Teaching creativity in music classrooms isn’t just about producing professional composers.** Just imagine where we would be if English teachers only thought writing classes were to produce novelists! Creative education is about teaching students how to communicate with others and develop their own creative problem solving skills.
- 10) **Everyone can learn to create music!** Every child learns to speak their mother tongue, regardless of how difficult the language is. Furthermore, we teach every other aspect of music to ALL of our students (performing, history, theory, singing, etc.), so why do we exclude creating? **English would be a dead language if parents and English teachers believed that communication couldn’t be learned by every child!**
- 11) **Most educational institutions are allocating money for technology.** Fortunately, many music software programs are designed for Improvisation (sequencing software) and Composition (notation software). What better way to use this money than to buy equipment to help you teach Improvisation and Composition?
- 12) **Teaching Composition and Improvisation can attract an often neglected and diverse student population into a music program.** Students who take piano and/or guitar lessons might actually participate in music programs which provide useful skills for their diverse performing environments.
- 13) **It will help students perform better, not worse! Remember: in spoken language, the composer and performer are the same person!** Furthermore, outstanding public speakers share one practice: they write their own speeches! Are we surprised that many of our greatest performers throughout history were improvisors and composers?
- 14) **Creating reflects thinking.** In our experience, creative experience MORE accurately reveals what your students know and don’t know about musical communication. **Creative activity teaches students how to think IN music not just think ABOUT music!**
- “Students learn effectively...when their artistic learning is anchored in artistic production...Talk about music is an ancillary form of knowledge, not to be taken as a substitute for ‘thinking’ and ‘problem solving’ in the medium itself.”—Howard Gardner*
- 15) **How often do students get to see an unfinished piece of music?** You can’t learn the creative “process” by focusing exclusively on finished pieces.

- 16) **Creative experiences , such as the birth of a child or an original work, can provide some of life's most meaningful moments.** Creative experience can express the entire spectrum and depth of human thoughts, feelings, actions and spirit. Mark Twain described this saying, “What is it that confers the noblest delight? What is that which swells man’s breast with pride above that which any other experience can bring to him? Discovery! To know that you are walking where none others have walked; that you are beholding what human eye has not seen before; that you are breathing a virgin atmosphere. To give birth to an idea--to discover a great thought.”
- 17) **If you want to REALLY assess what your students know about music, have them compose, rehearse, conduct/perform all of the pieces on a concert by themselves!** Curiously, the composing is usually what gets left out of most traditional student concerts.
- 18) Music schools expect composers to have minimum performing skills (applied study, ensemble performance, etc...) but we rarely, if ever, expect our performers to have minimum composing skills.
- 19) **There is more to producing music than turning on a CD player!**
- 20) **Composing is one of the MENC National Standards.** Composing is a K-G (Kindergarten through Graduate school) problem. Training future K-12 teachers in the creative process is essential, because currently we have a teacher shortage of approximately 5, 000 teachers (roughly double the number currently “produced” each year from university music education programs). Since most K-12 music teachers did not receive training in the creative process when they were in college, **we must train our current music education students in the creative process before addressing the teacher shortage or we will double the existing problem.** Furthermore, Federal and state funding to reduce class sizes will likely require more teachers and more classrooms than already projected due to enrollment increases. Fortunately, the current student/music teacher ratio in this country is 380 students per one music teacher. This means every music education graduate trained in the creative process can potentially influence 380 students! (Sources: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Education Week, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, MENC National Executive Board Summary and NASM)
- 21) **Composing is also a national standard for the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM).** These standards represent the highest level of thinking among music teachers and administrators in this nation.
- 22) **The best composers in your school might be the performers who have never had a chance to compose before!**

- 23) Researchers James Pennebaker and Joshua M. Smyth in their books, *OPENING UP* and *WRITTEN EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION*, demonstrate that **writing is a therapeutic activity which improves physical health, psychological well-being, physiological functioning and general functioning—particularly in “at-risk” populations.**
- 24) **Composition and Improvisation are among the oldest practices in music.** In his book, *MUSINGS*, Pulitzer-prize winning composer Gunther Schuller said, “We forget that the musician of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries was rarely just a composer or just an instrumentalist. If he was an oboist, he was also a composer and perhaps a pianist; if he was a composer, he was also perhaps a flutist or an organist. The creative and re-creative aspects of music were an integral balance in such a musician’s musical constitution, and the one fructified the other.”
- 25) **Every child learns to think, listen, speak, read and write using language.** Let’s teach every child how to think, listen, speak, read and write in music too—not just the talented ones! In music, we too often teach reading first, listening second and writing and speaking only when time allows.

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”—Albert Einstein

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