

Since antiquity, intellectual concepts have been divided into seven liberal arts. They were further organized in retrospect during the Carolingian Renaissance and have since been known as the Quadrivium and Trivium, dividing the liberal arts into two tiers. These seven subjects, when studied together, prepared the student for what was then believed to be the most elevated pursuit of study: theology. Among the upper tier (comprised of numerical pursuits) were: math, astronomy and geometry. The final crucial part of this category was the study of music.

Within the concept of the seven liberal arts, stands my philosophy that music is one of several pursuits of enlightenment. It plays a crucial role in our development as conscious in the fact that it is a discipline and an intellectual subject, while also behaving as a form of expression and descriptive medium for our species.

I believe that all individuals should study music, for the same reason that our modern “core curriculum” ascertains such focus in the 21st century mode of education: our adult lives benefit from its study. We benefit from self-discipline, intellectual challenge, community engagement, and expression. The study of music not only provides a setting which offers all four mentioned above, it also provides a setting in which individuals may present their most intimate instrument to a communal setting: their body (by means of producing sound in one way or another). Aside from dance, no other art form requires that person give so much of themselves with so much personal exposure. Voice performance is the most intimate of all. As vocalists we are unable to see or touch our instrument. It is buried deep inside of us, and yet must be used to communicate and to impact the outside world.

Music allows a student to study the history, mathematical design, aural identification, composition, and presentation of organized sound. It is therefore a universal subject and must be taught as such. My personal philosophy encourages an open-minded approach, enveloping both traditional aspects of western art music as component of our culture, but also the cultural contributions of all societies and civilizations. All ages, all religions, all races, all ethnicities, all intellects, all income demographics may participate in their own way.

As we enter a new era of technology and means of creating lifelong occupations, I believe that we must reevaluate the place of Music Education as part of our standard curriculum. Are we, in fact, simply another subject to be separated from every other subject taught to children? In the former Utilitarian mindset of previous generations still focusing on an educational framework developed by the Industrial Revolution, perhaps this model found its way into acceptance as a form of idealism: music in a box. Science is also in a box. So are Mathematics, Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Economics, Social Sciences, etc. However, as we progress into a more globally diverse approach of development, we must adapt our standards of education as well. In this effort, we see that “STEM” or “Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics” is no longer a term used with younger students, but instead we

refer to “STEAM”, which incorporates the Arts. The employees of the future must have a sense of creativity, artistic and personal awareness and discipline in performance. This will expand across fields and potential occupations. As automation removes the jobs which once required a Utilitarian mindset, it is the purpose of today’s educators to prepare young people for the occupations of tomorrow. Music Education as an isolated field, music for music’s sake, does not necessarily fit into this description. However, Music Education for the sake of whole mind development and awareness, Music Education for the sake of creating the well-rounded thinkers of tomorrow’s society is a better use of this incredible tool given to us by the Ancient Greeks. No subject now exists for its own sake, all exist congruently and for the sake of each other to promote a rounded learning experience for an individual who must compete in a world requiring all possible modes of skills.

I believe that education is critical to the comprehension required for expression. Throughout my academic pursuits, I have constantly returned my focus to the study of educating future educators. This means scaffolding concepts in a clear and connected manner. Students must understand the fundamental aspects of music such as theory, aural skills, keyboard skills, music history and literature and healthy performance practices if they hope to achieve meaningful artistic expression. Like any other field, you cannot successfully create music without understanding its boundaries.

I believe therefore that teaching students to engage in music not only enriches their overall understanding of a core curriculum but enriches their interactions with others in a profound way. Students learn to affiliate discipline with emotional expression. This can be utilized and connected language arts, mathematics, science or any other region of education. As a teacher, I believe in structure understanding. Kodaly’s method of allowing a student to try something, then instructing them in how it is done, and then asking them to repeat the method of their own action while incorporating understanding is crucial to my daily form of instruction. Students create best through guidances and understanding of structure. Students also learn best when they are in an environment which provides equal measures of disciplined guidance and creative freedom. In music, this can occur in many different methods but this is most frequently found in elementary teaching, in which students are able to learn creatively while also being guided through an organized process.

It is frequently said that when singers perform together in an ensemble, their heartbeats sync to each other. I believe that this sense of humanity and unity is the primary focus of any music educator. That sense of humanity is also found within self awareness and understanding of our own bodies and the instrument within: our own sound within the sound of greater humanity. Within that heartbeat lies the concepts of self-discipline, intellectual understanding, and artistic expression. Thus, music justifies its placement in the Quadrivium on a modern level: it addresses all senses of human refinement. The study of music in its many forms allows this to happen in a sense which affects the most wide-reaching community and allows us to also express our sense of diverse humanity. I believe that teaching a student to embrace music is therefore teaching a student to embrace their own place within a greater sense of community.