

Title: Reimer Responds to Knieter

Author(s): Bennett Reimer

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Reimer Responds to Knieter

By **Bennett Reimer**
Northwestern University

I am grateful to Gerard Knieter for his generous assessment of APME. He highlights important aspects of the book, both philosophical and practical, and is sensitive to its mission as presenting “a” philosophy rather than being a text on musical aesthetics as such.


I am particularly struck with his insight that, in our search for academic respectability, we tend to avoid dealing with subjectivity. A good deal of music education research has, in fact, taken place unguided by a philosophical orientation to the values of musical experience. That accounts, in large degree, for the lack of unity in our research as to purposes and goals, and the unfocused nature of what we choose to research. It also explains the “academic” flavor of much of it, in that it exhibits a certain level of technical sophistication with little comparable sense that it exists to help the profession with its central values. Having not defined those values, or assuming those defined in philosophy are unrelated to “hard research,” research tends to go its way untouched by the fact that it can be, and should be, a vital source for guidance in doing what we care so much about doing at the level of practice—enhancing the quality of personal musical experience for all people.

Knieter’s remarks about the many applications of my philosophy to practice points up an essential aspect of any successful music education philosophy—that it be useful as a guide to action in addition to being philosophically defensible. A philosophy for an educational field needs to yield both broad curriculum principles and explicit suggestions for particular program areas. That is why a book proposing a philosophy of music education should include attention to such matters. While they are not, strictly speaking, philosophical matters, they

validate the philosophy by demonstrating its applicability, help professionals understand the complex interface between philosophy and curriculum, and provide specific recommendations for teaching and learning which can be carried forward in full-blown program planning efforts. As in research, much program building in music education has gone on un-

founded on a philosophical base. Rather than employing methodologies as means to achieve a set of deeply grounded values, we have in many instances equated methodology with value. This has produced several examples of “educational inversion,” in which means become ends and ends are defined in terms of the means being employed. At best, such “programs” or “methods” or “approaches” are simply narrow: at worst they are bizarre and even dangerous. Music education, tending to be atheoretical or aphilosophical, is in constant danger from such programs,

as our recent history demonstrates.

Finally, Knieter reminds us of the necessary inspirational function of a philosophy of music education. Inspiration without a solid foundation is demeaning, and we have had more than our share of salesmanship masquerading as philosophy. But in the valid sense, inspiration arises out of conviction about the importance of what one is doing. That conviction deserves no less than a philosophy grounding it in the values of music most compelling, most satisfying, most meaningful to the culture in which American music education resides. I am satisfied that, despite this or that weakness or flaw in my explanation of it, this philosophical orientation does indeed provide such a grounding, and therefore allows us to cherish the contribution we attempt to make as music educators. 

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