

Title: Reflections on a MENC Presidency

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It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

Reflections On A MENC Presidency

By Dorothy A. Straub

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The two years during which I served as president of MENC (from July 1, 1992 to June 30, 1994) can most accurately be described as a period of change — dramatic change. Music education has been in the midst of that change, and MENC has taken appropriate initiatives in response to its stated mission: the advancement of music education.

In April of 1993, MENC moved its headquarters from 1902 Association Drive to 1806 Robert Fulton Drive — a larger, newer facility in Reston, VA. This move reflected the growth of the association, its financial stability, and the foresight of its leadership. We now have space for meetings, workshops, symposia; a recital hall for music; plenty of room for publications to work and grow; an aesthetically pleasing building and surroundings; and office space available for other organizations.

We can now welcome with pride the numerous groups with which we are now networking. The transition to the new facility was swift and efficient. Not a day of work was missed. In a matter of hours, MENC's complete service to members was up and running at a new address.

The structure that houses MENC has been changed, and so have the association's structures for communication. The previous format of nine monthly issues of the *Music Educators Journal* (MEJ), supplemented by the MENC *Soundpost* newsletter, has been changed. The MEJ, retaining its scholarly focus on music education, is now published six

times a year. In the alternating months, MENC members receive *Teaching Music*, which contains short articles, news briefs, and practical information with immediate applications for the classroom. The format of the new magazine allows for more timely communication.

Even faster communication is possible with electronic communications networks. MENC has one such network in place, and usage is expanding rapidly. We are also actively involved in the development of ArtsEdge (on the Pepper National Music Network), a new national network for arts education information.

The need for information is obvious. Our members are asking all sorts of questions, and they need quick access to information, data on existing programs, and results of current research. What is the effect of year-round schooling? Where is it now being used, and how can a year-round music program be successfully implemented? What about the four-period day? Can a quality program of music instruction take place in that format? What successful models exist? MENC is dedicated to providing the answers to these and other questions.

Without a doubt, the most significant new direction of MENC is the development of national standards in music. In 1992, the United States Department of Education joined with the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund the development of national standards — support that now totals one million dollars. In 1994, the standards are a reality. Through a national consensus process, we now have a document which identifies what all children in America should know and be able to do at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12 in music, art, dance, and theater. These volun-

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tary, world-class standards represent not the status quo, but a vision for the future. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act is further national recognition of the value of the arts in every child's education. A brief chronology presents the rapid succession of events:

1989: At the request of President George H. Bush, the Education Goals Panel, chaired by Colorado Governor Roy Romer, addresses the critical issue of education in America.

1990: The National Coalition for Music Education is formed, the partners of which are the Music Educators National Conference, the National Association of Music Merchants, and the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

March, 1991: A symposium is held in Washington, DC. The report of the National Commission of Music Education, *Growing Up Complete: The Imperative for Music Education* becomes a primary document for advocacy efforts.

April, 1991: *America 2000* is published, including "The National Education Goals," the plan for the education of America's children in the twenty-first century. Goal 3 identifies five important subjects, but excludes the arts; in fact, the document contains no mention of music or the arts. Letters and phone calls to the U. S. Department of Education requesting inclusion of the arts receive only mild response, with no intent to make a change.

May, 1991: MENC President Karl J. Glenn testifies at a national forum in Little Rock, AR, held by the National Education Goals Panel, urging that music and the other arts be added to Goal 3. The Department of Education seems not to be listening until:

February, 1992: Michael Green, President of National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, appears on national television before an estimated viewing audience of 1.4 billion, criticizing President Bush and Education Secretary Lamar Alexander for a vision for the education of America's children which includes no mention of the arts.

The next day, things begin to happen. The Department of Education responds. No, the goals can't be changed. Yes, the arts are important, and therefore what? Produce a document of national standards in the arts. And what about funding? Yes, the Department of Education will provide funding, along with the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, an unprecedented collaboration. MENC will act as the agency through which the project is coordinated. John J. Mahlmann, MENC Executive Director, becomes the project's director.

March, 1992: At the MENC biennial in New Orleans, Frances Alexander of the Department of Education describes the seven initiatives of "America 2000 Arts Partnership," the keystone of which is the development of national standards in the arts. State frameworks based on the voluntary, national standards will be supported by the department.

MENC mobilizes to meet the request for national standards. The National Coalition is in place. A working relationship with the art, dance, and theater education

associations, to be known as the Consortium for Arts Education, has already been established and a statement of beliefs jointly written. MENC's "Descriptions and Standards," revised in 1986; four MENC "Course of Study" documents, published in 1991; and numerous state curriculum documents constitute the basis for the development of new standards in music. The following actions ensue:

- A Music Task Force is appointed, with Paul Lehman as chair.
- Writing committees are appointed for grades 4, 8, and 12.
- The arts, dance, and theater education associations gear up in similar fashion.
- Paul Lehman agrees to serve as chair of the four arts education committees.
- A national committee is appointed, made up of nationally recognized leaders in education, the arts, business, and government.

The standards project, a complex long-range goal, may be the single most significant event in the history of music education in this century.

July, 1992: The national committee meets for the first time, chaired by A. Graham Down, president of the Council for Basic Education. The task forces meet to determine common categories and plan the format of the documents. The project is underway.

January, 1993: The first draft of the music standards is printed in MENC's *Soundpost* and distributed to all members. Content and achievement standards are stated for grades 4, 8, and 12 in four categories:

- creation and performance;
- cultural and historical context;
- perception and analysis; and
- the nature and value of the arts.

Response from the membership is requested.

Early March, 1993: The Symposium on National Standards in the Arts and the National Celebration of American School Music take place at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. MENC's National Assembly discusses the content and achievement standards in detail with Paul Lehman. Symposium sessions include implications of the new standards, presented by members of the national committee.

Governor Roy Romer, as guest speaker at the symposium luncheon, describes how the mistake of the absence of the arts in the education goals will be corrected, not by changing the goals but by the development of national standards in the arts.

The celebration concert, a political event, features three excellent musical performing groups from America's public schools: an elementary chorus, a middle school band, and a high school orchestra. Celebrities including Robert Merrill, James Wolfenson, Alexander Bernstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, and Education Secretary Richard Riley speak in support of music and the other arts as a necessary component of education.

Late March, 1993: President Bill Clinton proposes education reform legislation, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which expands the identification of important subject matter to include foreign language and the arts. The legislation includes financial incentives for states that implement the national standards.

September, 1993: An updated draft of the music standards appears in the September issue of the *Music Educators Journal*.

The categories are now three. "The nature and value of the arts," no longer a separate category, is subsumed in other areas of the document. More than 700 responses to "retain, revise, or delete" material are recorded, studied, and reflected in the revision.

September and October, 1993: Forums are held in Sacramento, Albuquerque, Kansas City, Washington, DC, and Boston. The public is invited to respond and give testimony. Affirmation of the need for national standards in the arts and the question of implementation underlie responses.

October, 1993: Goals 2000 passes the House of Representatives.

January, 1994: The four arts standards are approved by the national committee. In the final draft, the structural categories are eliminated, allowing for a more concise document. The number of achievement standards is reduced and integration is optimized.

February 8, 1994: Goals 2000 passes the U. S. Senate with a vote of 71 to 25. The political action of local, state, and national coalitions is successful in countering substantial opposition to the legislation.

March 11, 1994: In a press conference, Education Secretary Riley accepts the national standards in the arts. The first of all the standards to be developed through the Department of Education, the arts precede English, science, civics/government, geography, and foreign language in their acceptance.

March 31, 1994: Goals 2000: Educate America Act is signed into law by President Clinton.

April, 1994: Implementation reaches the members. "Standards Implementation Project — From Rhetoric to Reality," the work of an implementation task force of 12 writers (five experts in the issues and seven representing constituent strategies), with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, is ready for dissemination.

April, 1994: National standards in music dominate the MENC conference in Cincinnati. Sessions for every level and special area of music education address the implementation of the new national standards. Technology, multicultural music, improvisation, composition, and integration with the other arts and

other disciplines distinguish the document from the 1986 "Descriptions and Standards." New publications available at the conference include *National Standards for Arts Education*; *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards for Music Instruction: Grades PreK-12*; *The Vision for Arts Education in the 21st Century*; and *Perspectives on Implementation*. The standards project, a complex long-range goal, may be the single most significant event in the history of music education in this century.

Coupled with the development of the national standards in music is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) project. A "snapshot" of American education, NAEP reports on U. S. student performance with comprehensive information about what students at grades 4, 8, and 12 know and can do in various subject areas. Every two years NAEP assesses nationally representative samples of students. For the first time in 20 years, the assessment will include the arts. Targeted for implementation in 1996, the music portion will be consistent with the national standards, as MENC has been directly and intensely involved with the development of NAEP as well.

MENC and Political Awareness

Action in the public policy sphere is another area of change for MENC. Begun during the term of President Robert Klotman, political awareness has become an important aspect of MENC's activity. National, state, and local coalitions for music education have taken a major step into this arena, educating our members about important issues and urging them to act.

The aspect of political awareness also represents a change in the definition of what it means to be a music educator. Until a few years ago, teacher preparation programs did not refer to advocacy. Now, many music teachers are familiar with the notion, though they may be uncomfortable with some of the roles they might be expected to fill as advocates. The threat to music education in our schools, however, necessitates a united voice advocating quality music education for all children in America.

"Connections" has been the title of the president's column in the *Music Educators Journal* and *Teaching Music*. In a broad

sense, "connections" represents the political involvement with individuals and organizations on all levels, within, but more importantly beyond the circles of MENC. With the realization that advocacy is a priority came the realization that we must make connections with other education associations, with the music world in general, with the business, and with government. A tall order indeed, these connections have moved us from the circles of MENC to the spheres of the global community.

MENC is now networking with organizations such as the National School Boards Association, the National Association of Secondary Schools, the National Parent Teachers Association, the Alliance for Curriculum Reform, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Kennedy Center, the National Federation of Music Clubs, SPEBSQSA and Sweet Adelines International, National Pastoral Musicians, the American Music Conference, the American Council on the Arts, and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. These are in addition to organizations such as the American Choral Directors Association, the American Orff Schulwerk Association, the Organization of American Kodály Educators, the American String Teachers Association, the National Band Association, and the National School Orchestra Association.

In response to so many changes, MENC's National Executive Board appointed a study committee that met in January, 1993, to address long-range planning issues for the association. Until that meeting, the Future Directions, as determined in 1990 and revised in 1992, had set the priorities for MENC and provided guidelines for MENC programs and activities. The outcome of this meeting was a two-fold recommendation to the National Executive Board:

1. That "Inform and Reform" summarize MENC's priorities at this time. "Inform" refers internally to the professional needs of the association and its members and externally to the communication and involvement necessary to inform the public of MENC's mission. "Reform" has to do with the role of music and MENC in light of education reform, the development of the national standards in music and the process for implementing those standards.

The challenge of implementation of the national standards in music calls for maximum effort. Only with the strongest, most unified effort can we music educators make a difference in reversing the trend of the marginalization of music and the other arts ... We have the potential to change America's attitude toward music and artistic endeavors.

2. That MENC should engage in a strategic planning process to formally and thoroughly examine what MENC is and should become in this last decade of the twentieth century.

The strategic planning process formally began in July, 1993 and was reported to the MENC National Assembly in April, 1994. Now the process of addressing the key issues is under way. Open communication and a free exchange of ideas are important in charting the course of MENC into the twenty-first century.

Toward a Music Education Network

A key issue to be addressed is MENC's relationship to other music education associations. MENC represents all levels of music education, from early childhood, K-12, higher education, and adult education. It represents all aspects of music education, including general music; the performance areas of band, orchestra, chorus, and jazz; research; administration; history and theory; professional and amateur music making; and music related to other careers. With this broad base, MENC is uniquely capable of representing music to the American public, advocating music education for all children, and focusing on an attitudinal change of the American public and its value of music as a part of life.

Another related key issue in this period of education reform is the relationship of professional musicians and community arts agencies with the school music program. As stated by the America 2000 Arts Partnership, "Priority will be placed on developing comprehensive and rigorous school curricula in the arts. Community arts institutions and organizations will also be enlisted as partners to broaden students' access inside and outside of school to a wide range of arts experiences, including museums, lectures, live performances, and local artists."

In many urban areas music education is weak or non-existent. Public awareness is being raised with regard to the importance of arts, and the business community is encouraged to support arts partnerships. These are hopeful signs, but it is critical that a quality, comprehensive, sequential music curriculum for all students be a firm commitment of education and civic leaders. Community concerts, theater productions, and so on, are rich additions to — not substitutes for — the school music program. Some cities offer excellent models of quality music education in the schools and a healthy, cooperative relationship with the professional artists and arts agencies in the community. The schools and the professional artists are mutually supportive. These models must be shared and emulated.

Each music education organization pursues one or more special aspects of music education, meeting the needs of a specialized membership and striving to improve that aspect of music education. Significant progress has been made in recent years in the teaching of music. Much credit is due to the work of these organizations. Most MENC members belong to at least one other association in their area of interest. All of these organizations should be working with MENC and with each other in a symbiotic way, so that all time and energy expended is focused on our common goal. Competition among these organizations is counterproductive, weakens our collective strength, and diminishes the effectiveness of individual organizations. If we recognize the common mission of these associations in terms of quality music education for all children and an American public that values music, we can proceed in a unified manner to carry out that mission. Each organization has a slightly different role to play in achieving our shared goal.

The challenge of implementation of the national standards in music calls for maximum effort. Only with the strongest, most unified effort can we music educators make a difference in reversing the trend of the marginalization of music and the other arts in our schools and communities. Key national figures including the President of the United States and the Secretary of Education support systemic change which places music and the other arts as an integral part of the curriculum. With reform and the standards, we have the potential to change America's attitude toward musical and artistic endeavor.

Some elementary schools in this country include music programs that are achieving the new standards, but they are relatively few. At the secondary level, even fewer schools are achieving the standards, and substantive change is needed to ensure that all students, including those in performing groups, receive a comprehensive music education.

Unified action on the part of all music education associations is essential if we are to realize our goals and fulfill our mission. The implementation of national standards and coalitions for music education must be accomplished through the collaborative efforts of MENC and all other associations dealing with music education.


MENC and other associations face the monumental task of the implementation of national standards and all that it implies. The Opportunity to Learn Standards are the real challenge, as they require resources to turn the rhetoric into reality. Preparing teachers to teach with these new expectations is a major challenge, too. A plan for assessment must be designed immediately, as it will go hand in hand with the implementation of the standards.

Reflections on State Visits

I have had the opportunity to visit more than 30 states in my two years as MENC president. State leadership and individual members have been most appreciative of personal contact with MENC. Awareness of the national scene varies, but even those who are well informed often feel overwhelmed with the complexity and the rapidity of the changes. In some states, such as California, Oregon, and Massachusetts, music programs have endured drastic cutbacks due

primarily to reduced funding for education. In each of those states, however, a small percentage of school districts have maintained excellent programs. States such as Kentucky and Alabama are coping with school reform which has come quickly, altering all education in the state. Music educators are hungry for assistance and information. Some are working within the system to effect positive change, and others are resisting the changes.

The structure of the state association often reflects the prevailing philosophy of music education in that state. Where the state MEA maintains a strong identity and is responsible for the operation of all professional and student activities, music teachers in the state are more likely to share a holistic view of music education. They are aware of the total K-12 curriculum and tend to hold the best interests of the student as the primary focus of music education. There is more likely to be a recognition that general music is the heart of the instructional program and that music performance is not a substitute for general music. In these states, an attitude exists that encourages students to be well-rounded musicians, able to sing and play. There is a sense of responsibility for developing the musical ability of all children, not only that of the talented. There is less autonomy of the special interest areas and greater involvement in state curriculum matters and advocacy efforts.

These are, of course, generalities. Each state has its unique history, style, and system of operation. Without exception, every state conference I visited reflected hard-working leadership, enthusiastic membership, and a serious commitment to children and to music. I don't know of a more dedicated profession. The amount of personal time state leaders spend, the responsibilities they accept, and the challenges they are willing to face reflect a dedication that is truly admirable. Of course a special part of every state visit was the joy of hearing children making music. It is the music, I have concluded, that propels us to persist with such energy in this business of music education. It is the music that transcends any ownership of programs or ideas. It is ultimately the value of the music itself, which has motivated us to strive for national standards and build coalitions. 

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