

## **Philosophy of Music Education – Daniel Szelogowski**

Music is the most diverse, interpersonal form of information that one may both obtain and experience. While some may overlook its importance, music education provides students of all backgrounds with academic knowledge of most major fields given its scholarly nature and historical significance. Not only this, but choral music programs provide students with a sense of belonging and community that they otherwise may not experience, as well as having a place within a group of like-minded students where everyone is able to express themselves while being mentally and emotionally enriched. As for myself, the broad nature of the choral curriculum has always drawn me to the subject and provided me with experiences I would have never experienced otherwise – traveling domestically and internationally, building connections with musicians worldwide, discovering history and cultures I may have potentially never been exposed to outside of music, and creating lifelong friendships without fear of expressing my own thoughts and feelings; given that music has been so beneficial and critical to the shaping of my life and experiences, it is only reasonable for me to provide these life-changing opportunities to future generations.

Music education as a whole provides students with a universal skillset, both applicable for work and enjoyment, as well as a curriculum which may be tied to any subject: science, math, language, literacy, history, business, technology, academia, etc. Great scientists and artists alike have been musicians including Max Planck, the founder of quantum theory who was a gifted musician, playing piano, organ, cello, singing, as well as composing operas and songs, and Albert Einstein who played violin and piano as a means of boosting productivity in developing his

theories<sup>1</sup>. Students who struggle with any of these subjects, whether by difficulty or by interest, may find it easier and/or more enjoyable to learn when related to music – to which music teachers have unlimited potential to build and explore these relations, not only cultivating the student’s music-related knowledge, but in subjects which they may have otherwise faced difficulty with. This universal-curricular nature places tremendous weight on the shoulders of music teachers, but those who succeed are setting up their students on the path to universal success. To this, I believe that life-long learning to retain proficiency in a wide variety of subjects is more important to a music teacher than potentially one of any other subject, given the vulnerable, interpersonal nature of music and the freedom to express and ponder it provides to students of all ages. Resultingly, students may also feel more comfortable with their music teacher than those of other subjects, so it is of utmost importance that the teacher be prepared to assist students and provide them with a multitude of teaching approaches and assessment strategies – designing a curriculum which nurtures the study of many subjects may make the difference in whether a student succeeds academically, as it may be their only scholarly outlet<sup>2</sup>.

Community also plays one of the largest roles in the world of music; ensembles, patrons, and viewers simply seeking aesthetic entertainment alike are all members of the underlying musical community to which the world is connected. On the classroom level, the sense of community generated by being in an ensemble provides students a secondary home of sorts, fostering group identity, self-expression self-confidence, and self-discipline, giving students an introverted take on an extroverted social group where they can feel safe being themselves. Given this, it is once again up to the teacher to foster this sense of community between ensemble members, encourage cooperative learning, and creating an over-encompassing sense of inclusion

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.openculture.com/2013/06/the\\_musical\\_mind\\_of\\_albert\\_einstein.html](https://www.openculture.com/2013/06/the_musical_mind_of_albert_einstein.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3216183?origin=JSTOR-pdf>

for students of all ability levels regardless of background and physical/mental limitations. Not only this, but the teacher must equally value patrons such as supporting faculty and family members, and general audience members alike – even if they may not be performing, they are contributing to the music community and play equally important roles.

At the secondary level, choral music programs allow for a great level of flexibility in teaching styles and approaches and a more student-centered education. Given the linguistic nature of vocal music, students learning English as a secondary language are treated as equals to native speakers, as all students should expect to sing in a language they are either not proficient in or may have no knowledge of what-so-ever; not only does this feature alone assist in equalizing students of all backgrounds, it also enriches students in world history and cultures, as well as giving multi-lingual students the ability to take lead and profess their own language, simultaneously building their own self-confidence in things like public speaking and their appreciation for their own culture. Given the heavy focus on preparing students for adulthood at the secondary level as well, music not only provides students with a means of hobby and entertainment for themselves and others, but equally provides them with a vast set of potential fields of study and work, including performance, education, technology/business/production, composition, therapy, and various medical and life-science fields, among many others, allowing students the chance to succeed in at least one or many areas of study.

Additionally, studying and performing music significantly improves our motor and reasoning skills<sup>3</sup>, and fosters higher order thinking skills and problem solving, creativity, critical and abstract thinking, and brain development in general<sup>4</sup>. As well, the student may develop a better

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fastcompany.com/3022942/the-surprising-science-behind-what-music-does-to-our-brains>

<sup>4</sup> <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/music-is-an-important-ingredient-for-child-development-and-parent-child-relationships/>

attitude toward their school and its curriculum, so long as the teacher properly supports it. These facets denoting the crucial role of the music teacher greatly support the importance of music education and choral ensembles, and I believe these qualities are skills that I possess and can use to provide students with both hobbyistic and vocational skills, and a truly liberal education. As an educator, my primary drive is to treat all students like collegiate-level learners – no student should feel as if something is beyond their learning capabilities, and struggles should be faced as opportunities for academic growth rather than decline. I aim to provide all of my students with a curriculum which tailors to the needs of all learners and learning styles and encompasses as many subjects and cultures as possible to nurture both a scholarly and culturally diverse mind. Teaching at the secondary level, my hope is that students who come to my classes initially lost in their plan for their future will find inspiration within themselves through the self-discovery that music fosters, and those who may consider giving up will become ones which construct dreams and aspirations into lifelong journeys and accomplishments.