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## Book Review

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Keith Swanwick. *Teaching Music Musically*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

In *Teaching Music Musically*, the well-known British music education philosopher and teacher, Keith Swanwick, presents a sophisticated, thought-provoking philosophical basis for music education practice. The book's title, the author's engaging writing style, his philosophical models and explanations, and his numerous practical suggestions and real-world examples result in a clear, unequivocal position on the nature of music, a resulting philosophy of music education, and useful ideas about the practice of music education and assessment of the same.

Along the way, Swanwick takes a broader view than do most British and North American music education philosophers in defining music education as the teaching and learning of music wherever and however it occurs. He includes avenues through which music teaching and learning take place incidentally, in addition to formal settings such as schools, colleges, universities, and private studios.

The author was able to apply his philosophy of music education to a wide range of situations because it grows out of his views on "the nature of musical experience" (p. xi), which could be read as a philosophy of music itself, although he stops short of calling it that. Essentially, Swanwick believes that the key to understanding (and teaching) the musical experience lies in accepting (and applying) the idea that musical activity (including listening) is a form of discourse, and that "*the dynamic phenomenon of metaphor* underlies all discourse" (p. 8).

Swanwick does not provide a precise definition for his broad concept of metaphor in this context, but he does quote from the literature on the subject, gives examples from poetry, and lists some outcomes: "metaphorical processes allow us

to see things differently, to think new things" (p. 8). He then goes on to describe three levels of metaphor: "Tones are heard as 'tunes'," "Tones are heard together in new relationships," and "Music informs the 'life of feeling'" (pp. 15-19). From this concept, Swanwick draws on some of his previous work in describing "four observable layers" that derive from the metaphorical processes: "materials, expression, form and value" (p. 19). Finally, the author presents his three principles of music education: "care for music as discourse," "care for the musical discourse of students," and "fluency first and last" (Chapter 3).

A chapter on assessment procedures built on the author's ideas about music as discourse through metaphor and his principles of music education follows the first three chapters. The final chapter deals with music education in the future, with emphasis on school-community partnerships, to use the current American jargon for relationships of this nature.

This book represents some of the most sophisticated thinking in music education today, and it does so in a highly readable form. However, the author asks a great deal of the "unwashed" reader who may not accept some of his premises. For this reviewer, the linchpin in Swanwick's arguments, brilliant and well set forth though they may be, is his concept of how people "process" music.

Specifically, despite his attempt to reconcile the terms "aesthetics," "aesthetic emotion," "peak experience," and "flow" with each other and to subsume them under his concept of "musical value," the author's beliefs about the essential nature of musical experience still smack of traditional aesthetic theory. For this reviewer, Herculean efforts by traditional aesthetic theorists, music education philosophers, writers on the other arts, and now Swanwick himself still

have not provided solid evidence, philosophical or otherwise, for the existence of, for example, "music's potential to suggest virtual weight, space, time and flow" (p. 20). Moreover, the notion that musical sonic patterns activate people's memories of past events, particularly memories from infancy still residing in the subconscious schemata, seems to be a rather speculative foundation for the profession's philosophy or practice.

Swanwick gives considerable and welcome emphasis to the social aspects of musical and music education experiences, phenomena that have been underplayed, even denigrated, by too many music education philosophers for too long. However, despite his attempts to reconcile the social and the aesthetic (to use the traditional terms), Swanwick tips his hand early in the book when he says that ". . . by themselves these [social] reasons are not enough to justify music in an educational system" (p. 3). It seems ironic that, for Swanwick, music can be justified as a school subject alongside other subjects with which it shares some of its discursive, metaphoric essence, but it should not be justified on the basis of its social outcomes, many of which are also shared with competing subjects and activities.

Perhaps the essence of musical experience is that it calls up a participant's memories of past musical experiences and of non-musical experiences with which the former were associated in a given individual's past. This recall process may be less metaphorical and more directly associative than Swanwick suggests, as in "that is the kind of music my father liked," or even more directly, "they are playing our song." Furthermore, these associations may tie in as much with a given music's text, performance-listening milieu, subculture identification, instrumentation, or even "the beat" as it does with the tonal-rhythmic patterns that the author emphasizes.

Despite Swanwick's comment about the relative lack of research on American music students' attitudes toward school music programs, researchers have found (among many other things) that high school students value the experience of playing instruments and of interacting intimately

with music itself, as well as the social benefits they see as arising from their participation in school music ensembles. Research on parent attitudes suggests even stronger valuing of what parents see as social outcomes of school music participation. In an age of widespread social problems among school-age children, it is easy to understand this valuing of activities that are seen as enhancements of students' self-esteem, self-discipline, attitudes and the skill of cooperation within groups, and the like.

On the other hand, perhaps music as metaphorical discourse does lie as the heart of all musical experience and this discourse contributes directly to the highly valued social outcomes that are seen as emanating from school and other musical activities. For readers who accept this notion, and for those who do not but who embrace Swanwick's highly developed, well-reasoned models for the nature of music and the best ways to teach it regardless of social outcomes, this book could provide "the essential philosophy" (p. 109) on which music curricula could and should be built.

Philosophical orientation aside, anyone interested in teaching music would find much of value in this book. Swanwick repeats his main ideas throughout the book in ways that this reviewer finds helpful. More importantly, he sheds light on several controversial aspects of music education, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States. His views on community music relations, on North American music education philosophy and practice, on national curricula (standards), and other topics too numerous and diverse to mention here make for interesting reading in and of themselves. Swanwick's observations, plus his many examples of actual music teaching, make this book a must and enjoyable read for musicians and music researchers of all types.

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