



# New Directions in Music Education: Teaching Composition, Improvisation, and The New Musicianship

Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan

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- iPad Ensemble: Innovate, Perform, and Discover
- Toward Hip-Hop Pedagogies for Music Education
- Distance Collaboration and Voice Over Internet Protocol Performances: Two Schools, One Performance
- Approaching Creativity through Acoustic Ecology and Sound Art
- “Look at me! I’m on YouTube!”: Incorporating Mediated Musical Performance in the Classroom

In every case, the music educator was  
a fellow learner with the students.

Traditional assumptions that the teacher  
is an expert practitioner were invalid.

How do we prepare college students to be music teachers when the musical practices they will teach are emerging, evolving, or yet to be discovered?

# Beyond Praxialism: Preparing Music Educators to Teach the Unknowable

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Michigan State University

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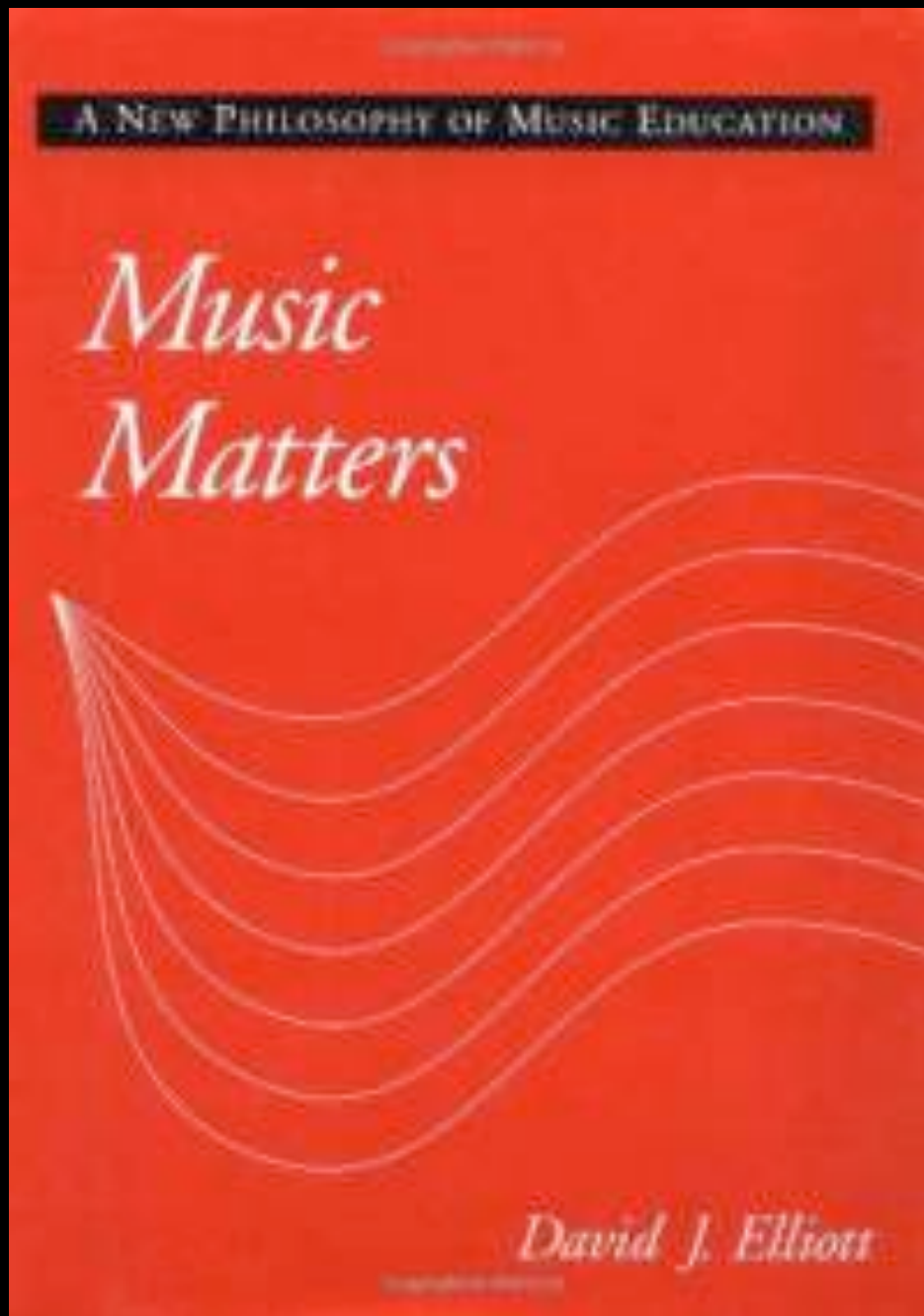
# Outline

- Praxial music education
- Collegiate curricula for music education majors
- Learning the new musicianship
- A pedagogy for the unknowable

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PRAXIS



# Praxis

- *In Ancient Greece:* One of three human activities and types of knowledge – *theoria* (leading to truth), *poiesis* (leading to production), and *praxis* (leading to action).
- *In education:* Paulo Freire – praxis is “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1968).
- *In music education:* Phillip Alperson introduced the phrase “praxial music education” at the first international philosophy of music education symposium (*What can one expect from a philosophy of music education?*, 1990).

According to Alperson, a praxial philosophy of art attempts “to understand art in terms of the variety of meanings and values evidenced in actual practice in particular cultures.”

# musicing

David Elliott, *Music Matters*, 1995

# musicking

Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, 1987

Elliott's view of **musicing** is grounded in the development of one's ability to enter an authentic musical practice.

Small's view of **musicking** is grounded in the development of one's identity and one's connection to other people.



What do you think of when you think  
of a master and apprentice?







# The changing nature of musical experience

- Technology has completely changed the way we listen to, create, perform, and share music.
- Many musical practices are emerging, with unstable characteristics.
- No masters can lead apprentices into these worlds, because the practice is being negotiated as it is being created.

# Questions?

- What kind of musicianship is being taught in collegiate schools of music to preservice music educators?
- What kind of musicianship should collegiate schools of music be teaching?
- What kind of pedagogy can be used when the teacher is not the master of the practice?

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# Opera de Paris (1875)

Classical music was a growth industry



# COURSE OF STUDY

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- 19th C. Conservatory

- extensive group instruction focusing on a single instrument or voice in the classic tradition
- extensive conductor-led large ensemble or opera experience with 19th C. repertoire
- some piano study
- multiple years of theory emphasizing written notation and solfege
- historical study of European music literature

- 21st C. School of Music

- extensive private instruction focusing on a single instrument or voice in the classic tradition
- extensive conductor-led large ensemble or opera experience with primarily 19th C. repertoire
- some piano study
- multiple years of theory emphasizing written notation and solfege
- historical study of primarily European music literature

Should the musical training of  
21st-century music educators be  
nearly identical to that of 19th-  
century performers preparing to  
join orchestras and opera  
companies?

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# Three Keys to Learning The New Musicianship

- Vernacular musicianship experience and skills
- An openness to experimentation and self-learning
- An I-Thou philosophy (Buber, 1970/1923) in which the needs of the students take precedence over the performance demands of any particular practice.



# Three Musicianship Projects in a Music Methods Class

- Perform a cover song
- Perform an arrangement of a song in a different style
- Perform an original song



# Musicianship Project 1:

## Perform a cover song

In a team of four to five class members, prepare a performance of a cover version of a popular song that is learned entirely by ear. You may use any combination of instruments and voices. The timbres may be different from the original version, but performers should try to copy exactly the notes in the recording.



# **Musicianship Project 2:**

## **Perform an arrangement of a song in a different style**

**In a team of four to five class members, choose a popular song to perform. Then arrange the song in a style that is completely different from the style in the original recording. The style you select should enhance the song, not simply be weird. The original song should still be recognizable in your performance.**

## **Musicianship Project 3:**

### **Perform an original song**

**In a team of four to five class members, compose an original song. Each group member should have some input into the music and/or lyrics of the song. Then arrange the song for performance.**







Projects like this provide preservice teachers with authentic experiences in learning music by ear, arranging, and composition. The students take great pride in their work and spend an inordinate amount of time working on the projects.



The only way teachers can really understand this way of learning, creating, and performing music is through first-hand experience in as authentic a context as possible.



Our group created a  
trusting environment  
and I felt very  
encouraged to just  
explore on my  
instrument. I had never  
had that feeling before.

In working on these projects it was wonderful to see how much personal ownership and pride and sheer joy were present, aspects that are sadly missing from many students' large ensemble experiences.



I cannot begin to  
express how much I  
have learned from doing  
just three projects with  
my band.

# The Personal Musicianship Project – SUNY Potsdam

Mark Robin Campbell, Debra Campbell, Julie Bannerman,  
Jennifer Kessler, Benjamin Rybolt

- Learn and perform on an unfamiliar instrument
- Compose and perform in an unfamiliar practice
- Listen and expand understanding of a unfamiliar genre



# Learning an instrument and performing

Choose an instrument (unfamiliar to you) from the list below. Learn and perform a piece on it. Reflect on and discuss your learning process.

Ukulele, Guitar, Bass, Banjo,  
Mandolin, Electronic/Digital  
Instruments, Drumset



# Composing and performing

Choose a musical creative practice (unfamiliar to you) from the list below. Research authentic compositional/performance practices. Compose/perform an original song/rap/etc. Reflect on and discuss your learning process.

Songwriting, Rap/Hip Hop, Digital Music Making, DJ-ing, Mash-ups, Remixing, Turn-tabling



# Listening and expanding understanding of new genres

Choose a genre (unfamiliar to you) from the list below. Research it. Create a short presentation on key components needed to understand and experience the genre beyond mere exposure. Reflect on and discuss your learning process.

Electronica/Dubstep, Jam Band,  
Indie, Country/Western, Pop, R&B/  
Urban, iPad/iPhone Apps

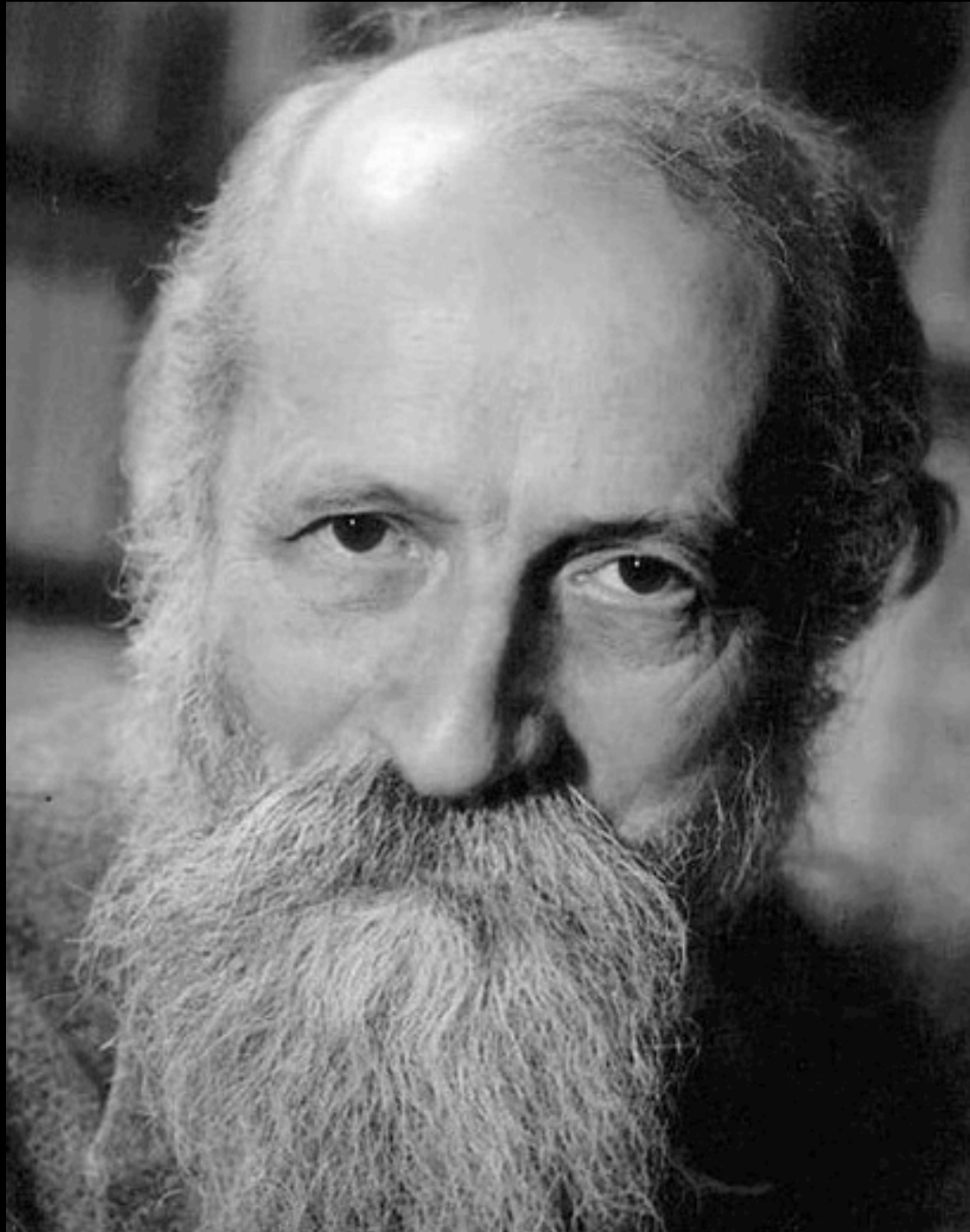


Students then create a video tutorial, teach what they have learned to one other person, reflect on their own learning, and write a two-page outline that another teacher could use to teach these ideas in the classroom.



Projects like this provide preservice teachers with the skills and confidence to teach themselves something new in music and pass what they have learned on to others.



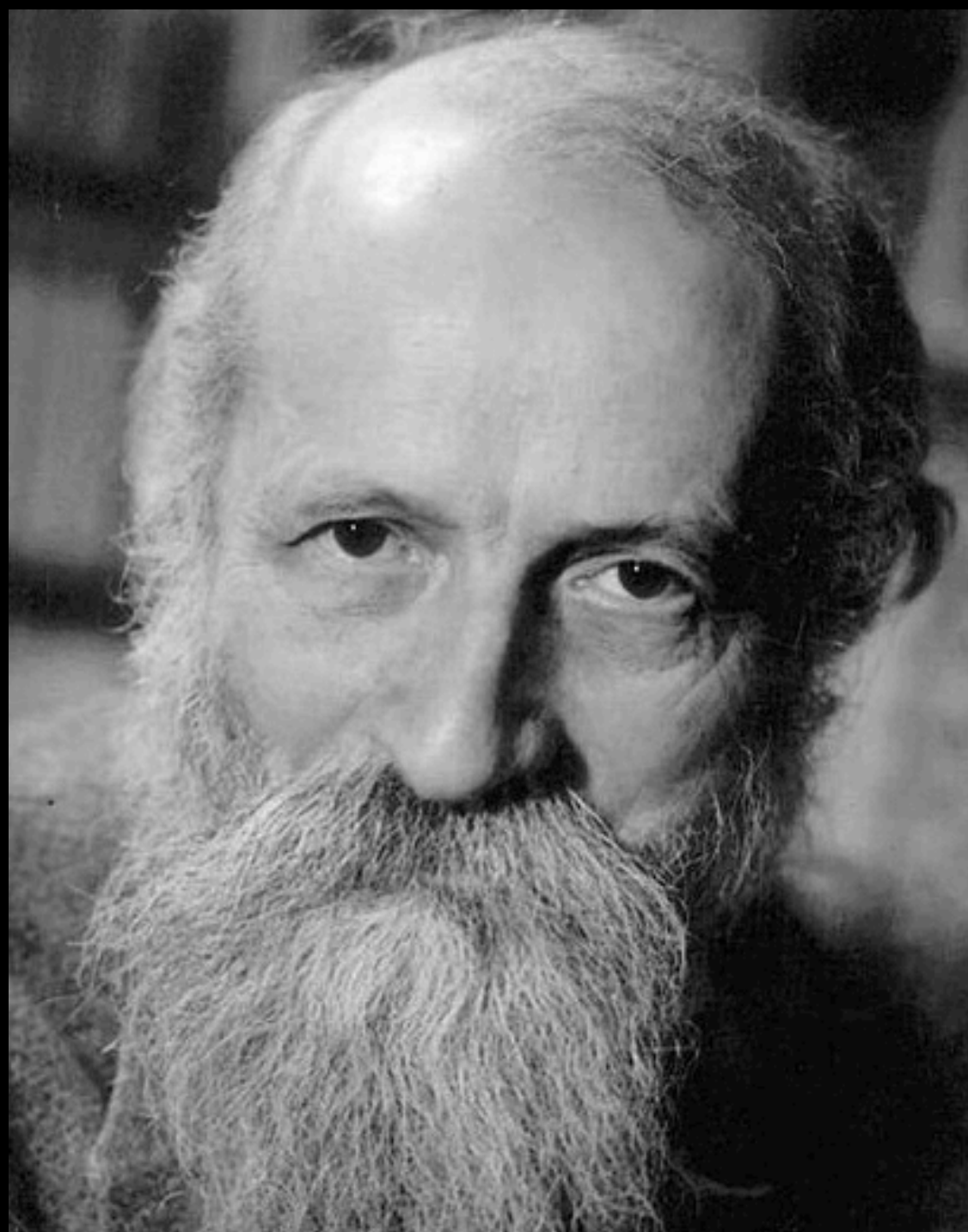


Martin Buber

1878-1965

*I and Thou*

*Between Man and Man*



Our ways of interacting with  
the world and each other

I-It ~ Experience

I-Thou ~ Encounter

“Any education worthy of the name is the education of character.”

Education contributes to the formation of self.

## Buber on creativity in education

“Man, the child of man, wants to make things. He does not merely find pleasure in seeing the form arise in material that presented itself as formless. What the child desires is its own share in this becoming of things; it wants to be the subject of this event of production. . . . What is important is that by one’s own intensively experienced action something arises that was not there before.”



## Creativity is not enough

“As an originator man is solitary... Nor can it help him to leave his solitariness that his achievement is received enthusiastically by the many... Only if someone grasps his hand not as a “creator” but as a fellow-creature lost in the world, to be his comrade or friend or lover beyond the arts, does he have an awareness and sense of mutuality. What teaches us the saying of *Thou* is not the originative instinct but the instinct for communion.”

The education of the self requires the exploration and development of “two autonomous instincts.”

- Originative instinct - self-knowledge and knowledge of the world
- Communion instinct - sharing with others to allow for a true dialog with the Thou

Remember: Christopher Small's concept of **musicking** (1987) is grounded in the development of one's identity and one's connection to other people.

# Martin Buber's *I and Thou*

I–It

Classroom

Achievement

Autocratic

Assignments

Subject-centered

I–Thou

Community

Growth

Dialogic

Challenges

Student-centered



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# Curricular Guidelines for Music Education 3.0

- Sustainable
- Socially responsible
- Global and local
- Individually expressive
- Collaborative
- Life-affirming





Yrjö Engeström

Standard theories of learning are focused on processes where a subject . . . acquires some identifiable knowledge or skills in such a way that a corresponding, relatively lasting change in the behaviour of the subject may be observed. It is a self-evident presupposition that the knowledge or skill to be acquired is itself stable and reasonably well defined. There is a competent 'teacher' who knows what is to be learned.

The problem is that much of the most intriguing kinds of learning in work organizations violates this presupposition. People and organizations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time. In important transformations of our personal lives and organizational practices, we must learn new forms of activity which are not yet there. They are literally learned as they are being created. There is no competent teacher. Standard learning theories have little to offer if one wants to understand these processes.

Engestrom, 2010

This is the kind of education takes place in Music Education 3.0. Practices are not stable; they are being learned as they are being created.

“The object of activity is a moving target, not reducible to conscious short-term goals.”

**Contradictions** and **collaboration** are the agents of change.

We all have much work to do – in collaboration with teachers, students, and fellow musicians – to develop these new pedagogies.

Let's not wait another 200 years to change the paradigm.



Thank you for your kind attention.

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