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# Sound compositions for expanding musicianship education

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**Composing has been slighted at all levels of education. Following an analysis of the history and failure of compositional pedagogy for developing musicianship, a new rationale for such pedagogy is presented. This pedagogy is argued to be essential for preparing contemporary musicians and audiences to understand most properly what music ‘is’ and ‘is good for’, and for promoting ever-new conceptions of ‘music’ and of its evolving values. In addition to advancing general musicianship in relation to the standard repertory, the special contribution of pedagogy rooted in composing organised sound pieces is outlined in relation to a new praxial philosophy of music that is challenging the limited and limiting theory of music and its value provided by traditional aesthetic theory. The latter is seen to be a major impediment to new compositional modes that expand musical frontiers, while the praxial theory supports, as well as gains support from, various new attempts to organise sound for expressive and other purposes.**

## INTRODUCTION

The traditional aesthetic premises of so-called ‘art music’ and the resulting preference of audiences for the unchallenging familiarities of the standard repertory of ‘easy listening’ favourites finds most audiences resistant to both new concepts of composition and of music, and to new roles for performers and audience members. Music has therefore become a conservative – Conservatory – matter of ‘good taste’ and ‘great works’ that actively shuts out consideration of, and thus the development of, the creative possibilities and values for organised sound. As a result, and as those interested in new ways of thinking about music know full well, music as traditionally understood is increasingly taking on a museum status – ‘the imaginary museum of musical works’,<sup>1</sup> as one historian has observed.

This problem is worsened by the hegemony of educational practices rooted in ideas inherited from the last century and protected by philosophies of educational *Perennialism* that support only the ‘great works’ of the past as being properly music or of value. These ideas are rooted in aesthetic notions of ‘autonomous’ notated

‘works’<sup>2</sup> whose meanings are said to be timeless, placeless and faceless, where the ‘composer’ is more than a mere mortal, and where ‘value’ is a mysterious yet somehow objective ‘given’ or datum – a built-in essence – that performers and audiences alike must fathom in order to *discover* its meaning. Thus the ‘works’ of the past are dissected and analysed, and taken for granted as being most representative of what music ‘is’ and is ‘good for’.

One consequence, a serious one indeed, is that new ‘serious’ music (for lack of a better term to distinguish it from commercial, folk, ethnic and world musics, etc.) is almost non-existent in concert halls today, save for university schools of music and their small audiences. It is especially worrisome that even those audiences are often denied exposure to organised sound pieces that probe beyond the usual bounds of traditional aesthetics. Equally worrisome is that, in general, the students in those audiences whose education is presumably being served – most of whom are studying performance, but also music education, music business, etc. – seem not to realise or understand the musical potential of sound pieces of various kinds that are not notated ‘works’ in the spirit of the aesthetic doctrines of Romanticism and before.

The present account thus seeks to provide an analysis of the problems and premises of such educational practices – not so much to convince readers of this journal who presumably already accept the value (musical and educational) of composition more broadly construed and who understand the value of other kinds of sound source and of sound organisation than are represented by traditional conceptions of a composition. Rather, the intention is to expose some of the historical conditions and the philosophical limitations of the aesthetic tradition, and the limited and limiting educative practices it supports. Further, this analysis is offered in the expectation

<sup>2</sup>Autonomous not only in terms of their supposed formal or ‘intrinsically musical’ dimensions that are the source of music’s ‘for-itself’ purity, but autonomous of performers and the exigencies of performing. Traditional aesthetic philosophy is largely silent on performance practices and instead supports at best accounts that allow different ‘interpretive’ realisations (‘readings’ in the current jargon of critics) of autonomous ‘works’ that, while of some interest in themselves, are not *the* musical interest of aesthetic merit.

<sup>1</sup>Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

that those engaged in and who support composing acts that are ‘outside the box’, so-to-speak, might profit from an account of the specific practical and philosophical advantages for sound compositions as a major ingredient in music education in schools and universities – for ‘general’ students (not majoring in music) as potential audience members, and especially for all music students, be they aspiring performers or composers, or musicians engaged in music education, therapy or business, etc. Those readers who are already sympathetic with the values and virtues of organised sound pieces as music (or as art) will hopefully be profited from the practical and philosophical considerations advanced; and they might consider either sharing the rationale with others less or not at all convinced, or profit from delving further in the role and practice of such kinds of composition in their own classrooms. What is not offered here, however, is a ‘how to’ account, though sources for this are suggested in the notes.

In particular, a perspective from the newly developing *praxial theory of music* is offered. This newly arising philosophy of music is decidedly post-aesthetic and is rooted in Pragmatic and other forms of philosophical realism. Thus it promotes an account of music not rooted in traditional aesthetic criteria for timeless, faceless, placeless Beauty. Praxial philosophy of music is not only *not* rooted in traditional aesthetic theory, it actively rejects such theories. Furthermore, its approach to what music ‘is’ and is ‘good for’ is especially hospitable to and supportive of new and expanded concepts concerning sound and its organisation and use as music. The result is an expanded notion of ‘music’ and of musical value and interest. This praxial conception of music thus makes none of the noble and refined-sounding claims concerning ‘the True, the Good, and the Beautiful’ nor the intellectual conceits claimed by aesthetic theory for music. Instead, it promises to support and sustain the evolution of the very idea of ‘music’.

In this, it can offer new bases for arguing the educational importance of composing and give new insights into the nature of composing itself.

## SECTION I

For reasons already suggested, in comparison to performing and listening, composing has by and large been slighted in the music education of all but the few students in schools and universities who were interested in becoming composers. If included at all, it has been typical only to use composition exercises as means of teaching rudiments of tonal harmony and form, or of counterpoint and the like. In response to an assignment to ‘compose 32 measures of music in the style of Scriabin’, a sceptical graduate student was overheard to complain, ‘Why bother?’. Indeed, the habit in music education of having students compose mainly for the purposes of learning the techniques, styles and practices of the ‘great

works’ and ‘great composers’ of the past has built-in risks and limitations. In the main, it has served only to avoid or obscure the very role of composing and of compositional thinking from the considerations that *should* inform performance and listening.

Composition as an educational tool for simply becoming familiar with the ‘syntax’ (etc.) of important music from the past is undoubtedly an improvement over passively listening to lectures or memorising information about that music. My intention is not to deny that value. Arguments have been repeatedly made, for example, that music theory and history can be made fully functional only when approached in a unified curriculum where students are composing and performing (including conducting) their own works. However, curricular attempts in this direction have repeatedly failed at all levels, in large part because few musician-teachers are in fact capable of such breadth given the narrow specialisation and other limitations of their own training. As a result, even this role for composing typically plays a minor (if any) function in teaching theory and history to students.<sup>3</sup> In most classes devoted to advancing the ‘music appreciation’ of non-majors, their lack of musical background in notation, performance and theory makes the pedagogical use of composition unlikely and impractical.

In 1963, in the United States, the Ford Foundation awarded a grant for what was called the ‘Contemporary Music Project for Creativity in Music Education’ (CMP). The focus of CMP was on understanding contemporary music, nurturing creativity, identifying future composers and more fully integrating composition as part of a meaningful music education. The project ended in 1973; as with all projects of its kind, it was proclaimed a success by those involved. However, as is so often the case in education, for all the money and attention, there is simply no evidence of any lasting impact. However, other innovations date from around the same time.

The ‘Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program’ (MMCP), funded in 1965 by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, was based at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, in Purchase, NY. Instead of the study of information *about* music, it stressed that a proper music education should provide experience from *inside* music. Only intimate experience from within music, it was held, could nurture valuable and useful knowledge *of* music. In the same year, Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer published *The Composer in the Classroom*,<sup>4</sup> which provided an instructional model

<sup>3</sup>These are typically taught *as* disciplines for their own sake, which is altogether different than teaching them for predictable pragmatic functions in connection with the variety of musical needs musicians of all kinds are likely to encounter.

<sup>4</sup>Republished in 1976 with other of his educational writings from around the same time, as *Creative Music Education* (Schirmer Books, NY).

based on his own classroom experiences using compositional explorations and lessons in real school classrooms.

The MMCP approach began by getting young children to listen to and use the sounds of their own lives and environments as the basis of what were called 'sound compositions' – sound pieces that were largely improvisations or based on invented notation of a very sketchy kind. Students were as a result encouraged to think directly in the medium of sound; and, of course, giving *organisation* to their sound pieces in terms of certain formal or expressive criteria was stressed. The resulting pieces were often recorded, listened to, analysed and sometimes refined. Over time, what was learned was applied to new compositional challenges and to listening. Interestingly, the parallels to what Schafer was recommending in his educational experiments and writing and shortly thereafter developed in even greater detail are striking in retrospect. Schafer's intent was to all appearances very similar and, coming from a composer, were perhaps all the more instructive.

The last phase of MMCP was called the 'College Music Curriculum Project' (CMCP) and sought to introduce the learning-from-the-inside approach at the university level. Several university music schools implemented pilot programmes. One, at the School of Music, SUNY Fredonia NY, was under my direction. It offered a programme in the rudiments of harmony, form, style analysis, history, composition and conducting (approximately half of the first-year class). The emphasis throughout was on ear training, creativity and self-directed learning. This experiment eventually succumbed to the inertia of status quo politics in support of teaching theory and history for their own sake (as disciplines) and thus passively and in isolation from each other and from contemporary idioms.<sup>5</sup> Around that same time, Schafer was invited to the Fredonia campus where he led classes, gave lectures and participated in discussions. Importantly, performances of his music were featured by collegiate as well as public school groups.

In consequence of these and other influences, I was emboldened to advance my own similar attempts in schools and in higher education by the publication in 1981 of *Teaching General Music: Action Learning for Middle and Secondary Schools*.<sup>6</sup> In that text, a pedagogy for sound composition in schools was detailed and, over the years, it has been further refined.<sup>7</sup> In brief, it involves

three different kinds of organised sound products: free improvisations, planned improvisations, and notated pieces (that still involve a lot of improvisation and spontaneity). Students are presented with varying kinds of formal and expressive musical 'problems' or 'challenges' to solve or explore. Older children and younger adolescents profit from assignments that are rooted in life experience. For example:

A 60 second sound piece, in two sections. One section should be expressive of the experience of the last 5 minutes of a good party; the other should be expressive of the experience of 5 minutes in the dentist's chair. Whichever is done first, will be 'section A' and the second one will be 'section B'; and hopefully your audience will be able to tell which is which.<sup>8</sup>

Older adolescents can deal with more direct musical challenges<sup>9</sup> such as:

Explore a traditional instrument (or group) of your choice for a range of non-traditional (and non-destructive) sounds it can produce. Use those sounds in a composition of 60 seconds that has at least two clearly contrasting musical 'themes': Either begin with one and musically 'evolve' away from and toward your second and contrasting idea at the very end of the piece, or have two sections that each begin with one of your 'themes' that are then 'developed'. Whichever approach you chose, it should be amply clear to the audience.

Such challenges are intended to highlight and investigate an array of important musical issues. They are *experiments* that ultimately lead (along with a host of skills and new understandings, to a working 'theory' of music in the sense of what it 'is', what interest and values it offers, how composers think, compositional techniques (augmentation, diminution), etc. Such classes are best treated as *musicianship laboratories* in exactly the same way that science 'labs' in schools are directly exploratory and promote understanding by doing.

One special feature is for students to explore non-traditional sounds and sound combinations. 'Found sounds' in the classroom (chairs, books, keys, coins, etc.) are always a convenient starting point. Thereafter, ordinary objects that produce interesting sounds and homemade instruments are collected in the classroom for

<sup>5</sup>A study conducted at the end of the experiment by the American composer Walter Hartley, a member of that faculty at the time, concluded that students in the experimental programme were at least as well-versed in such musicianship skills as the comparison group in 'traditional theory', but were altogether more open-minded in general and to contemporary idioms in particular as a result of their personal compositional activities. There were, of course, other important positive differences for 'musicianship lab' students that were not easily quantified on tests.

<sup>6</sup>Schirmer Books, NY. Now out of print.

<sup>7</sup>These refinements are detailed in a new text, presently untitled, to be published by Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup>In context, the teacher will be clear that the 'pain' of the one and the 'pleasure' of the other are not at stake, only the differences in the experience of time, of 'fast' and 'slow'. 'Expressive of' is likewise a distinction that needs to become clear in context. Thus, that music is 'expressive of' (say) 'sadness' (or in the present instance, 'the experience of time passing quickly' is philosophically quite different than Romanticism-inspired claims that music 'expresses' (i.e. contains) 'pain'. As Peter Kivy demonstrated in his book *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton, 1980), the face of a St. Bernard dog is 'expressive of sadness' (because of the drooping features). It does not 'express sadness' because the dog is not actually 'sad'; it just looks sad. Similarly, music is not literally sad and thus does not *express* sadness; it is at best *expressive of* sadness.  
<sup>9</sup>The work in England of John Paynter offers many good examples; see, for example, *Sound and Structure* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

use. And, of course, the use of non-traditional sounds from traditional instruments is always interesting and profitable – as is handling the traditional sounds of such instruments in decidedly un-traditional ways. All of this is intended to effect a kind of ‘ear cleaning’<sup>10</sup> concerning the direct relevance and *qualia* of sounds for compositional use.

Composing groups (4–5 students per group is ideal) perform their own pieces and performances are recorded. Sometimes live performances are discussed, but discussing the recordings (after all have performed) tends to focus more on the sonic results alone (thus eliminating visual elements, particularly distracting ones).<sup>11</sup> Discussion focuses on the different approaches to and solutions of ‘the problem’, with a view to identifying those musical ideas and techniques that were most and least successful and interesting. Discussion can lead to immediate improvements. However, usually a better use of time is to allow the benefits of a particular lesson to be applied to subsequent lessons.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to stress that personal ‘creativity’ *per se* is not the primary intention of such lessons, though it often results regardless of the group approach. What is at stake is the adequacy with which the problem is handled – the ‘formal’ criteria being provided in how the problem is stated. Further criteria always arise in consideration and comparison of the actual compositional results and thus are always seen by students as relevant. Thus, any of a range of reasonable solutions can be adequate, though some will always be more interesting or creative – though which, and to whom, according to what principles, end up being instructive issues as well. Some students gain considerable compositional insight and skill, depending on the breadth of instruction offered. All students gain new and valuable skills and attitudes, among which, in particular, is the ability to listen to music with ‘new ears’ – new expectations, newly informed values and new interests. At the very least, most students become definitely more receptive to ‘new musics’ regardless of genre (e.g. ‘free jazz’ or stochastic pieces).

## SECTION II

The use of sound pieces of this kind can and, as I have urged in my work, *should* be a staple of pedagogy at all levels of music education. To begin with, in order to

properly prepare students – whether as future professionals, amateurs or audiences – for the widest array of musical choices (professional or personal) throughout life, *general musicianship* needs to be developed that is broadly capable of dealing with a wide array of musics including, most notably, musics of our own day and beyond. Primary schooling, where students are naturally most receptive, too often avoids new music other than the tunes from the latest Disney film, etc. While secondary and higher education may sometimes include a bit of ‘twentieth-century music’, most of it certainly does not include innovations from the last half-century. Furthermore, it is altogether uncommon for theory classes to address new musics, in part because teacher-professors are themselves unfamiliar with it and because there is no ‘common practice’ about which to theorise.<sup>13</sup> History surveys, for their part, regularly short-change even the early twentieth century and, thus, insufficiently if at all address music from the latter part of the century. Such music – indeed, anything outside the Canon – is thus typically marginalised in higher education and, as a serious consequence, in primary and secondary education.

To the result of general musicianship, sound compositions are exceptionally useful at all levels of schooling – adjusted in their particulars, that is, for the age and interests of the affected students. They are, to begin with, extremely valuable in helping students understand *why* music is composed in the first place. Among other values, the opportunity to compose disabuses students concerning the stereotypical ‘Romantic aesthetic’. This is the idea, widely accepted and taken for granted uncritically even by many trained musicians, that composers ‘express their emotions’ in music, or that what composers ‘express’ amounts to some kind of personal ‘communication’ rendered as aesthetic qualities. Instead of accepting this simplistic assumption for lack of an alternative, students engaged in sound composition learn instead what musical ‘expression’ actually consists of in tangible terms. They also learn how much of it is conditioned and directed by (i) the very nature of sound (and how much has been lost by limiting approved ‘musical sound’ to only those typical sounds produced by standard instruments); and (ii) by certain *musical* problems and needs concerning the organisation and notation of sound structures that will be performed and listened to by others. Sound compositions thus impress

<sup>10</sup>Murray Shafer, *Creative Music Education*, Part II, pp. 49–94.

<sup>11</sup>One special advantage here: students are entirely more attentive to their own and classmates’ composition than anywhere else in their listening experiences. This level of concentration is itself an important benefit and all the more so when such habits can be transferred to all other music listening.

<sup>12</sup>For more information on the overall process, see Thomas A. Regelski, ‘A sound approach to sound composition’, *Music Educators Journal* 72(9) (May 1986): 41–7; reprinted in *Creativity in the Classroom*, ed. D. L. Hamann (Reston Virginia, MENC, 1991).

<sup>13</sup>In a certain manner of speaking, ‘music theory’ might best be considered to provide a theoretical or philosophical account of what music ‘is’. Advanced levels of scholarship in that discipline do seem to aspire to such an account of music, but even those tend to be mired down in accounting for perceptual, cognitive, syntactical and other organisational ‘laws’ for analysing tonal music. In any case, as taught, ‘music theory’ is more of an introduction to the lower levels of the discipline (beyond which few musicians ever go) than it is a direct contribution to musical functioning. Were theory to be taught specifically with contemporary praxis (including of the Canon) in mind, it would of necessity be taught very differently.



upon students that the 'why' of composition is significantly more musical than personal in nature, and that 'expression' is thus more *musical* than the popularised assumptions of the Romantic aesthetic infer.

Sound composition also benefits students with a progressive understanding of *how* music is put together; an appreciation of the importance and techniques of 'giving perceptual form' or audible structure to sounds – or the consequences (creative or negative) of ignoring or avoiding 'form'. The 'why' of musical form, then, is understood before and as a condition of learning some of the typical ways in which composers have approached the 'conventional' or 'characteristic' forms studied in traditional 'form and analysis' classes – indeed, in perceptual and conceptual terms, why and how such forms as the sonata or rondo forms developed as they did to begin with. Students also find that such characteristic forms are not moulds but patterns of perceptual anticipation and structuring that are different in each such composition in important ways. In other words, they learn that there is no archetypical sonata form (the unfortunate impression given by the examples of form and analysis texts and classes) but rather that each sonata is a study in 'sonata-ness' of its own. But perhaps more important, issues concerning 'expressive', 'significant' and 'organic' form, to name just a few conceptions, are encountered from within, experientially, and not passively ingested from lectures or texts. Similarly, the processual development 'internal' to any such form – the dynamic interrelations informing aural organisation – are seen to be the important variables at stake, not the simple recognition of the 'external' pattern that can be labelled.

There can be little doubt that a background of such composition experiences can provide significant insights concerning the whys, wherefores and hows of composition, all the more because they *do not depend in advance on prior mastery of tonal music* or any of its prerequisites, such as reading traditional notation. However, concepts and insights developed through sound pieces are easily generalised to tonal and non-tonal musics of all kinds and genres. And even innovative practices that seek to replace or go beyond usual concepts of form benefit from recognising and taking into consideration the perceptual habits and expectations that are being abandoned. Failure to do so, in fact, can account for some of the widespread rejection of or resistance to music that abandons traditional notions and techniques for 'development' of musical ideas, or even what constitutes a 'musical idea' worth developing. Such musics thus demand new ways of conceptually engaging the 'informing' processes of listening.

Performers (at all levels of expertise) are too often incompletely or ill informed or inexperienced concerning the act and art of composition. Their 'interpretations' of scores, then, are often undertaken as outsiders to the compositional process since they cannot 'think

compositionally'. Thus they lack personal experiential insight concerning what a composer may have intended by certain directions in a score (notated or otherwise indicated) – notation being, of course, only a rather limited indication of a composer's intentions,<sup>14</sup> the details of which are left for the performer to 'interpret'. But such decisions are most often undertaken simply in terms of traditional hand-me-down judgements,<sup>15</sup> and end up being either quite conventional or, in any case, not informed by the performer's own insightfulness gained through composition. Certainly, more composition at all levels of music education can only help make all performers, including amateurs, more insightful concerning the kind of thinking evidenced by composers in their scores.

Audience members, too, are greatly benefited by the kinds of conceptual understanding of compositional whys, hows and wherefores. We should not fail to observe that among audience members are performers (professional and amateur). The listening required during performance, however, is quite different from what is undertaken by audience listeners, especially keenly insightful ones, among which number music critics. Of course, there was a time where music-loving audience members read and contributed to lively discussions about new developments in composition and about leading artist-performers. This was especially lively during the time when audiences of such listeners expected *new* music from composers, not repeat performances of old music. But history shows that this 'critical' or discerning listening on the part of audiences ended as performance itself became progressively professionalised.<sup>16</sup> The result of that process found professional musicians choosing the 'good music' to be performed whether or not audiences wanted to hear it. That often included performing again and again music they enjoyed performing<sup>17</sup> – and also for reasons connected

<sup>14</sup>I choose not to deal here with the question raised by philosophers called the 'intentional fallacy' – the position that the 'meaning' of music is *not* necessarily (or, in strong versions of the argument, *not ever*) simply a result of composers' intentions. For example, the creative process produces at least some unintended, serendipitous results or discoveries. Furthermore, just as the intention to convey a certain idea in words often brings about unexpected results, so too does composition often result in unintended meanings, and these can end up valued by others. In any case, even few musicians accept that a composer's performance of his or her own compositions is necessarily definitive or even the best alternative. The present discussion of 'intentions', then, refers to notational intentions and other more technical decisions of the composer.

<sup>15</sup>In the studio, then, this scenario is assumed, at least tacitly, and how far back it goes varies according to the literature, the instrument, etc.: 'My teacher studied with \_\_\_\_\_ who studied with \_\_\_\_\_ who studied with \_\_\_\_\_ who studied with \_\_\_\_\_ who studied with \_\_\_\_\_ who studied with Beethoven, and this is, therefore, the way Beethoven played it'.

<sup>16</sup>Amateur performance was also a victim of this professionalisation and home performance for or among friends and family became progressively rare. See Lydia Goehr, note 1 above, on this professionalisation of music.

<sup>17</sup>Charles Rosen, 'Beethoven's Triumph', *The New York Review of Books* (September 21, 1995), p. 52.

to not having to learn new music from scratch, an impediment that still plagues present-day composers).<sup>18</sup>

If audiences are to listen with ‘critical’ understanding and interest to contemporary musics,<sup>19</sup> they simply need as part of their own schooling in music plenty of experience with the different musical premises – and thus conceptual and perceptual requirements – that are at stake with such music. Organised sound pieces in the hands of insightful teachers address a host of important issues concerning not only contemporary musics, but in many ways provide a bridge between new music and the standard repertory. This bridge, first of all, is in the person of the students who are thereby enabled to have one foot in each world by virtue of having encountered many traditional musical practices via sound composition formats. For example, a sound piece that ‘develops’ or ‘works out’ a musical idea can be absolutely pivotal in understanding (from a performer’s or listener’s perspective) what is at stake in the ‘development section’ of a sonata or concerto. Similarly, a sound piece that establishes clear A and B sections contributes considerable insight concerning small part forms as well as larger sectional forms; and if the challenge is to create the greatest ‘contrast’ between the very beginning and the very end of a piece (as opposed to in the middle), then ‘developmental thinking’ of a quite rich musical kind is invoked.<sup>20</sup>

Certain other insights concerning very important musical processes and practices can *only* be addressed experientially, from the inside, by means of sound compositions. For example, typical university music majors, not to mention primary and secondary school students, do not usually have a chance to truly understand the nature, value, ingredients of, let us say, jazz, if they are not already sufficiently skilled on instruments and in a jazz idiom. Thus, most graduates of schools and university music studies have little or no understanding of the ‘innards’ requirements and typical practices of jazz, most notably improvisation – carried out not as ‘doing anything you want’ or ‘instant composition’ but in accordance with formal, expressive or other criteria. Sound compositions can explore the dimensions and ‘feel’ of jazz<sup>21</sup> for students who otherwise would remain total outsiders to it – even if they claim to like it (just as people who claim to like, say, sitar music appreciate it most usually as outsiders for its exotic uniqueness, not on its own terms). Others, despite or perhaps because of their training in other musics, find little of interest in jazz because they do not know, understand or appreciate

its ‘terms’ of being: e.g. they expect it to evidence the kinds of worked-out and fixed detail that they have come to expect in notated music because they have never experienced for themselves the unique musical value of intelligently controlled musical spontaneity!

Similarly, the various ingredients of, say, opera, can be experienced from the inside via sound composition approaches. A ‘sound composition opera’ (with suitably improvised ‘arias’ accompanied by a sound composition ‘orchestra’) on an anti-drug theme done by groups in a grade eight general music class of a rural U.S. community, incorporated all the characteristic elements of opera (recitatives, arias, duets, trios, chorus, ballet) intelligently and effectively and with great joy, enthusiasm and pride. Interestingly, the ‘arias’ of virtually all the groups had a ‘bluesy’ feel that led quite naturally to follow-up listening lessons from *Porgy and Bess*, the experience of which was actually thus enjoyed by these rural youths. And, as a culmination to these studies, they watched the film version of the opera with rapt attention. The local video rental store subsequently had a ‘run’ on rentals of that film.

Keep in mind, once again, that all such benefits are possible with little or no prior ‘training’ in rudiments of tonal theory, notation, or in the performance of standard instruments. On the other hand, I do not want to give the impression that sound compositions are but tools used to teach musicianship for the purposes of enlightening performers and audiences concerning the standard repertory. While they can deal with certain traditional forms, genres, etc., they do so decidedly *on their own terms* and thus also advance their own values. Whether such compositions end up having musical value on their own terms in the hands of certain students is, of course, a difficult question to answer. But there is little doubt that such compositions involve personal values and satisfactions and a sense of personal accomplishment that nurtures general musicianship.

The virtue of sound compositions for bringing students into experiential contact with the most basic issues, problems and questions of musical thinking is considerable. Even important philosophical issues can be probed. In evaluating the degree to which such compositions are ‘musical’ (as opposed to organised noise, collections of sound effects, etc.) for instance, I have seen even composition majors struggle with the essential question at stake, ‘What *is* music?’ In deciding on the degree to which such compositions are ‘*musically* interesting’ (and why or how), students at all levels begin to develop criteria rooted in their own explorations and experiments, rather than those imposed by the orthodoxy of ‘establishment’ values. The criteria thus developed at any stage and at any level of instruction serve ever-new efforts and, thus, ever-greater understanding – understanding that is rooted in ‘doing’ and ‘reflecting’, not in ‘receiving’ and ‘accepting without question’ the verdict of authorities. The authority (i.e. as *authoritative* rather

<sup>18</sup>A local scandal resulted when a certain (here unnamed) professional orchestra in a major U.S. city was unable to learn all the pieces of his that Günther Schuller had selected to guest conduct, and thus he left one off the previously announced programme. The musicians resented this, and newspaper critics had a field day.

<sup>19</sup>Which is to say, listening to ‘the music’ in distinction to listening critically to the *performance* because the score is already familiar.

<sup>20</sup>See the aforementioned two assignments.

<sup>21</sup>E.g. ‘swinging’, ‘taking fours’, etc.

than *authoritarian*) of the teacher comes to bear in the selection of sound composition experiments and explorations, and in getting students to listen analytically in similar ways to the compositions of recognised composers (e.g. the opera example above). From such ‘listening lessons’ (as preliminary to, and/or as follow-up to sound composing projects) students gain new or reinforced criteria that serve their subsequent compositional efforts.

Not to be ignored, particularly for primary and secondary school students, is the role of performance. Typically students perform their own sound compositions. The techniques I have developed for the practical conditions of schools most typically have students composing collectively in small groups, at least at the elementary and middle school levels. The composing groups perform their own works and thus learn the importance of performance variables to the interest, meaning or value of the composition. Groups soon discover that their musical ideas require certain performance skills in order to produce their anticipated results. Even performers’ deportment becomes an issue: They quickly learn that ‘clowning around’ during performance detracts from or is a poor substitute for musical interest. When teachers tape-record such performances, attention to the niceties of performance is at its highest; and ‘stage fright’ in front of a microphone becomes a variable – one more feature of music that ‘ordinary listeners’ benefit from understanding and appreciating. Such recordings also furnish new, reflective, analytic listening opportunities (and a history of compositional progress!). The criteria applied and newly derived from such reflection can be applied either to immediate revisions of the compositions in question or to the next compositional effort – or, and this is key, as bases (again) for listening analytically and ‘critically’ to recordings of compositions by established composers.

One feature of sound compositions that is particularly interesting to students is the need to notate their musical intentions for performance by other than the composer(s).<sup>22</sup> First of all, this really attunes students to what notation is ‘good for’ – why and how it is important to a composition. Secondly, it teaches better than any other way what notation notates and, conversely, what notation is and is not capable of controlling. Thirdly, and therefore, students learn in exceptionally tangible ways what level and degree of ‘interpretation’ or thought is inevitably involved and how the handling of choices and variables can be interesting, unimaginative or altogether incompetent. To this we can add, again, that they cannot fail to appreciate that performance skill or technique is not simply valued for its own sake, but in terms of specific musical needs and requirements.

<sup>22</sup>Though notated sound compositions take considerably more class time. Thus, they are typically used less frequently than planned improvisations that are ‘controlled’ by less detailed or specific notational indications.

In sum for now, sound compositions provide a complete and balanced blend of composition, performance and listening. This natural synthesis of results is indeed a harkening back to the origins of music, before the ‘rationalisation’ of music and music-making that came into being by the time of the Enlightenment had rendered the music world into altogether separate ‘tribes’ of specialised disciplines, practices and experts. At the very least, sound compositions thus provide important insights into the origins and nature of the musical impulse exhibited by humans. They certainly serve as a foundation upon which any further specialisation can be erected with stability. And they help develop a sensibility for contemporary musical thinking that goes well beyond orthodox and doctrinaire textbook discussions. Minimally, students become acquainted with innovative notation practices and, thus, with musical meanings and ‘expressions’ that exceed the bounds of traditional staff-based notation.

### SECTION III

The foregoing has hopefully served to promote a general understanding of the pedagogical virtues and values of sound composition in developing general musicianship at all levels of musical schooling, and of inclining students to a more open-minded and mindful interest in a kind of music that holds forth considerable promise precisely because it is of their own time. In terms of that broad picture, there exist more particular advantages and features that are worth pointing out in terms of certain instructional and curricular variables.

From the instructional point of view, as has been mentioned, sound compositions demand no prior skills with tonal theory, standard instruments or other such typical restrictions to composition in the classroom. This means *students can begin composing immediately* – and at any age! The earlier the better. They thus begin to benefit immediately by reflecting on and thus learning from the results of their own organisational efforts – efforts, in which of course, they have considerable personal interest. In this, appropriately adjusted for age level and classroom resources and conditions, such compositions are suitable at all levels of instruction.

Concerning classroom resources, sound compositions generally require little or no special wherewithal. Found objects, the body, existing classroom instruments and objects (desks, wastebaskets, books, etc.), and homemade instruments can all be used. The very ubiquity of such sounds also heightens students’ awareness of the sound environment in which they live and its potential for music. Such unconventional sources of sound (including unconventional use of conventional instruments) also have the benefit of what, once again, Shafer called ‘ear cleaning’. This gets back to the basic qualities and musical potential of sounds beyond those produced by conventional instruments, the hegemony of

which has needlessly limited the resources of composition and musical thinking.

Concerning instructional conditions, where working in small groups of composers is the practice, rooms only need to be large enough to separate groups during their compositional experiments. Active experiments with individual or combined sounds need to be kept at reasonable decibel levels, in deference not only to neighbouring classes but so that all composing groups can hear themselves adequately. To be sure, however, this manner of classroom instruction does have students active and thus musically involved. To the degree then that music classrooms *should* be filled with the sounds of music rather than talk about music, teachers (and administrators) must not expect the kind of quiet passivity that is more typical of other classes. On the other hand, such music classes (in primary and secondary schools) cannot be allowed to devolve into approximations of the physicality and noise of physical education or the playground!

The use of sound composition lessons is predicated on the pedagogical strategy of so-called *problem solving*. As mentioned already, the teacher poses a problem – compositional, formal, expressive, etc. – that students are interested in solving. That this should be a *musical* problem is crucial. Aside from setting such lessons apart from other ‘problems’ faced by students (e.g. tests, homework, boring lectures, note taking), the degree to which *musical* issues, learning, skills, knowledge, technique are invoked and involved will be the degree to which *musical* benefits result. This is mentioned only to point out that *student intentionality dictates what (if anything) is learned*, even under the most favourable of conditions. Therefore a student whose intention is to ‘have fun’ (because sound compositions are more fun than taking notes and tests) or to ‘show off’ (in non-musical ways) will benefit *musically* only accidentally, if at all.

Variable solutions of composers or composing groups to the commonly posed musical problem produce a wider variety of alternatives for future use than any teacher could plan to model or cover. There almost always is something interesting or worthy of special notice in each and every composition, as well. This contributes a certain sense of self-satisfaction and accomplishment on the part of students. On the other hand, even success is capable of ‘critique’ for further improvement. These factors together work against some typical negative effects of either success or failure, and thus maintain a beneficially positive frame of mind even on the part of those students whose interests or abilities are less developed.

Composition of sound pieces is individuating, even when done in groups. It produces a unique *product* with which a student can identify, in comparison to just an ‘abstract’ grade on a test, for instance. Problem solving, particularly via group cooperation, is particularly well

sued to the learning characteristics of middle school and young high school students, ages ten to fifteen. Among other things, this age group thrives on ‘comparitition’ rather than competition. An important part of learning for them is social and comparative. And, since musical problems can be solved successfully in different ways at different levels of refinement or expertise, comparisons of sound composition solutions promotes learning by means of the inevitable diversity of ability and interest levels in typical classes. A positive contribution can be made even by mentally handicapped students (by whatever educational label) and students for whom the language of instruction is new.

From curricular perspectives, curriculum that features plenty of sound composition (in conjunction with related listening and other performance opportunities) is *developmental* and *summational*, not *accumulative*. In other words, each prior stage of learning is incorporated (assimilated or accommodated) in the next level of development. The result is an increasingly complex network of richly related cognitive structures rather than a repository of impersonal, isolated ‘factoids’ *about* music. This is an obvious advantage in comparison to the usual lock-step approach that, at best, accumulates more and more unrelated (and often arbitrarily selected) information. The presumed pay-off of such accumulations, of course, is not even expected until the very end of instruction. But because the information was acquired in atomist bits and never used (i.e. only tested), because it is arbitrary in relation to what is or is not ‘useful’, and because of the failure of long-term memory, typically such information cannot be recalled or used in functional ways at the conclusion of a course of study. In contrast, the developmental learning arising from sound composing involves progressive integration of past learning and new learning in a so-called ‘spiral curriculum’ of ever-richer concepts and skills learned in action and thus capable of future use.

In a similar way, and for similar reasons, sound compositions encourage *holistic* learning. Rather than address the supposed ‘elements of music’ (or other pre-digested ‘concepts’ and ‘content’) atomistically in separate lock-step units of study, the separate ingredients or aspects of music that are simultaneously under consideration in the problem at hand are always holistically integrated. The integration and interrelations natural to the ‘parts’ of any ‘whole’ thus function in a natural synthesis. Not only does the whole get meaning from its parts, but the parts also get their meaning (or, at the very least, their relevance in terms of ‘why learn this?’) in terms of the meaningful whole to which they contribute. And parts are themselves wholes to their own smaller parts. This holism also extends to the naturalistic efficiency whereby such lessons always engage composition, performance and listening in a significant unity of musical and educational result.

As mentioned already, sound compositions go well



beyond the traditional possibilities of tonal music. Thus they open up a whole new world of post-tonal, avant-garde and other 'new' musics to which primary and middle school learners are particularly receptive. Mid- and late-teens and young adults who have been denied sound compositions as part of their primary school learning may be more resistant as to whether such sound pieces constitute 'real music' – which, sadly, they have already come to judge only in terms of the present orthodoxy of music education or by commercial models. With encouragement, however, it is usually not difficult to demonstrate how such music is of 'their time' and an addition to the music they otherwise and *exclusively* consume as part of teen culture.

However, because these compositions are not tied to the notation and common practice tonal theory of European musical traditions, they also allow many possibilities for exploring and incorporating the musical practices (instruments, sounds, uses of music, etc.) of other musical cultures. This is a distinct advantage in schools attempting to address 'world' or 'multicultural' musics in significant ways – i.e. beyond merely encountering 'samples' in a Chinese menu, buffet-style curriculum that at best allows a little 'taste' of this and that but no satisfying 'meal'. Schools with large representations of different ethnic groups often cannot address the musics of each adequately. In any case, most teachers are typically more ignorant about such musics than the students.<sup>23</sup> But in connection with sound compositions, all manner of sounds may be employed to all manner of musical problems, needs and musical meanings.

## SECTION IV

Challenge and resistance to the 'modernism' spawned by the European Enlightenment has resulted in a range of new theories. Among them is a newly developing *praxial philosophy* of music and music education that seeks to correct and replace the orthodox aesthetic doctrines that came into being with the beginnings of modernism in the Enlightenment.<sup>24</sup> These traditional aesthetic assumptions are seen by postmodern and

post-analytic philosophers as historically wed to the times in which such theories were operative – and then only in limited or tenuous ways. Traditional analytic aesthetics are no longer relevant to contemporary musics or even the modern experience of the standard repertory.<sup>25</sup> This rejection of the formal aesthetic tradition has long been the definitive situation in the art world, where modernism has been overthrown by 'anti-aesthetics' of various kinds.<sup>26</sup> However, such 'heresy' is not widely even heard of, let alone accepted in the 'conservatory' conservatism of the conventional music world.<sup>27</sup> A praxial philosophy of music, however, is gaining strength, at first in response to issues in music education<sup>28</sup> but more and more in terms of music itself.<sup>29</sup>

One of the key arguments praxial philosophy advances against traditional aesthetic assumptions is concerning what music 'is'. It addresses the very question raised in the 1960s by Schafer about soundscapes, 'Yes, but is it music?'.<sup>30</sup> The need to address this question represented an issue that could arise only because of and in terms of certain aesthetic assumptions taken for granted about music that Schafer was, along with others, challenging with his compositions and his educational ideas. For the praxial philosophy I have advanced, when sound is organised or presented in certain ways for human purposes, it becomes 'music'. In this view, the idea of 'music' is a 'status function'<sup>31</sup> assigned to organised sound according to the constitutive conditions and conditions of a particular praxis. These conditions determine *that* the organised sound is 'music' and shape the particularities, criteria and musicianship needs of the musical praxis thus created.

<sup>23</sup>Again, because of the narrowness of their orthodox training that typically features as 'music education' only one type of music, the Western Canon. Even teacher preparation programmes that require or allow a 'world music' sub-specialty cannot usually produce teachers broadly enough prepared to deal with all the various musics that often clamor for inclusion in the curriculum as part of the 'politics of recognition'.

<sup>24</sup>Aesthetic philosophy *per se* dates from the publication in 1735, the heyday of Enlightenment thinking, of Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, from which time all manner of contrary and conflicting aesthetic theories about transcendental Beauty have arisen, the sheer multiplicity and lack of agreement of which give lie to any confident conclusions about 'aesthetic meaning' 'in' music. From that age, as well, the term 'aesthetic' has been hijacked as a synonym for the 'philosophy of music and art' when, to be precise, aesthetic theories are but one type of philosophy of music. See, Robert Dixon, *The Baumgarten Corruption: From Sense to Nonsense in Art and Philosophy* (Pluto Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup>For example, recordings have altered both listening and performing. Modern listeners thus come to a new hearing of a familiar piece with what psychology refers to as considerably different *perceptual and anticipatory sets*. Familiarity thus influences the experience or contribution of form and interests people in the performance instead which does vary from occasion to occasion.

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle Washington: Bay Press, 1983). N.B. 1983!!

<sup>27</sup>Though rumblings get louder. See, for example, Derek Scott, 'Post-modernism and music', *Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim (Icon/Penguin Books, 1998), pp. 134–56; Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (University of California Press, 1995); and *Music/Ideology: Resisting the Aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (G&B Arts International/Gordon Breach Publishing Group, 1998).

<sup>28</sup>The ideal of a praxial alternative to aesthetic theory was first proposed by the editor of the *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, Philip Alperson, in his paper, 'What should one expect from a philosophy of music education', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* **23**(3) (Fall 1991): 115–44.

<sup>29</sup>See, for example, Thomas A. Regelski, 'A prolegomenon to a praxial theory of music and music education', *Canadian Music Educator* **38**(3) (Spring 1997): 43–51; 'Critical theory and praxis: professionalizing music education', *MayDay Group* (web page: www.maydaygroup.org), 1997, 40 pp.; 'The Aristotelian bases of music and music education', *The Philosophy of Music Education Review* **6**(1) (Spring 1998): 22–59; all of the above have extensive mention of and bibliographies to other authors and sources of praxial theory.

<sup>30</sup>*Creative Music Education*, pp. 96–101.

<sup>31</sup>John Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), pp. 152–6.

Here 'organised' need not even imply traditional conceptions of form. It simply means that sound is planned and employed as 'music' according to the constitutive variables of a particular human practice. These praxes, and the praxial values thus created, range all the way from social uses of music, such as dancing, celebrating, entertainment, worship, etc., to intellectual pleasures and connoisseurship associated with listening in an analytic and cerebral fashion. Furthermore, as 'sound' becomes 'music' under constitutive conditions of praxis, so then does 'music' become 'worship' (religious music) or 'celebration' (ceremonial music), or dance (dance music), or cerebral delight (concert music) under different controlling conditions. The praxial account of 'music', then, is one that recognises and values the entire range of musics that arise in connection with praxes that are as varied and unique as humans and the cultural realities they create for themselves. Thus, praxial philosophy accounts for *all* music rather than, as aesthetic theories do, just the 'art music' of the traditional repertory.

Viewed praxially, the uses for which sounds are created, selected or organised constitute the criteria for what music 'is'. Then the 'goodness' of the music in question can be considered in terms of what a given music is 'good for', rather than in the kind of absolute and singular terms claimed by judgements of 'quality' in aesthetic theory. It is thus relative to the conditions or purposes that elicit it, but is not therefore subject to 'silly relativism' of the 'anything goes if I like it' variety.

Take for example, music as worship.<sup>32</sup> Heretofore it has either been ignored by aesthetic theory or marginalised as impure for being 'useful' – *if* it is not otherwise seen as worthy of being ripped out of the worship service and relocated to the concert hall 'museum' to be relished 'for-its-own-sake'<sup>33</sup> – just as altars and religious sculptures have been removed from the situatedness that was their origin and that confers their meaning, and are displayed in museums as autonomous 'works' of 'fine art'. Praxial theory proposes that music as worship is a considerably different 'use' or praxis of its own than, for example, the praxis of concert music for 'just listening'. Each requires and thus involves different 'qualities'. In fact, the same Bach chorale in each setting has considerably different 'uses' and thus meanings and requirements, and is considerably different *music* (in terms of its reception and understanding) even though the *score* is the same in both cases. Similarly, the music of a gospel choir or African drumming *in situ* – the

musical values, 'goods' or meanings involved – amount to considerably different *music* in comparison to (the only 'surface' similarities of) performances for concert hall audiences.<sup>34</sup>

Whether the praxial value occasioning music is, to name a few typical uses, intellectual contemplation or affective delight, celebration or socialisation, worship or bacchanal, the sounds and silences of the moment therefore derive a considerable part of their meaning from the situated particulars of that moment which are, at root, social in nature and origin. Among other contrasts, this demystifies the quasi-sacredness of the 'work' as somehow containing 'in' it a timeless, faceless, placeless Absolute Beauty or Aesthetic Meaning. And with this reappraisal, the notated score usually associated by aesthetic theory *as* the 'work' is reconceived regarding its connection with what 'music' *is*.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, *sound, in the praxial view, has unique properties and values of its own*.<sup>36</sup> It has its own traits in regard to the human organism. Sound, then, is not simply a matter of physics or acoustics, or of pitch class, overtone series or harmony, and not even simply of timbre and sound envelopes. It has a certain interactive and evocative relationship with the human body that is unique of all the senses, and far from simply cerebral or 'disinterested' in the implication required by traditional aesthetic theories. It embodies, evokes or carries certain affective and visceral subjective qualities that provide a certain inherent delight, interest or satisfaction by themselves (or, if too loud, the opposite). This is, of course, all the more the case when *sound becomes music by being intended expressly and expressively for human purposes*.

Sounds are, in this view, uniquely expressive – as is silence – and are made further so depending on how, when, where, why they are used and organised. This expressiveness is not just embodied biologically (though

<sup>32</sup>This has been of particular interest to Canadian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff who has been concerned to validate religious music; see *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980).

<sup>33</sup>That is to say, it is valued only if it can serve as 'museum' art rather than as 'living' art. For the distinction, see Roy McMullen, *Art, Affluence, and Alienation* (New American Library/Mentor Book, 1968), Chapters 4–6.

<sup>34</sup>This important difference between *in situ* and concert performance prompts some indigenous groups who perform in concert to announce that they are presenting only 'demonstrations' of their music, not 'authentic' performances which, instead, involve a host of variables and qualities not present in concerts. After a 'demonstration' of the Seneca people's 'Song to the Homing Pigeon' (now extinct and thus a cause for sadness), the native performer allowed, 'You can never know that that song means to my people!'

<sup>35</sup>Comparison of the first and last recordings of Glen Gould's performances of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* should have long ago inspired such a reconsideration; but, and typically, the enormous differences of the two 'readings' were written off as part of the bizarre thinking of the artist in later years. Thus, few musicians were impressed with the philosophical implications for understanding the wide range of possibilities even a traditional score might provide given the vagueness of notation.

<sup>36</sup>It needs to be noted that aesthetic meanings are supposed to result from and for reason and intellect, etc., and thus they rise abstractly above matters of 'sense'. Therefore, while the artistic medium obviously does influence the possibilities for that medium, according to aesthetic theory, aesthetic meanings are essentially *disembodied* from the medium that occasions them and from the impact of the medium in question on human sensation. See David Summers, *The Judgement of Sense* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

auditory perception is certainly felt by the 'whole body' in ways that vision and thus visual art is not typically), but socially. The sounds available to a culture, how and the various praxes for which they are used, have considerable bearing on the meanings and pleasures of music.<sup>37</sup> Its organisation in and of time, furthermore, is often influenced by, and even sometimes dictated by, the social praxis in question.<sup>38</sup> Where these practices lean more to conditions of 'just listening' (e.g. at concerts or to recordings), a corresponding rigor concerning and thus interest in 'formal' and 'developmental' values can be expected. Where the sounds of music are, as is more typically the case, elicited in connection with other particulars of praxis (e.g. opera and ballet, with their stories and visual elements; dance, with its social and ceremonial involvement of the body; song, with its fitting together of music and words; conditions of religion, ceremony; etc.), organisation is thus and necessarily responsive to those particulars.<sup>39</sup> The sounds we *call* 'music', then, involve a sociality of habits, expectations and meanings that controvert the claims of traditional aesthetic doctrine that 'good music' involves 'aesthetic distance' and 'for-its-own-sake purity'. The sociality of music also takes the form of a musicianship that is specialised for each musical praxis<sup>40</sup> treated as its own realm of value rather than by comparison to the orthodoxies of 'classical' or 'art music'.<sup>41</sup>

Such departures from traditional aesthetic-based

assumptions concerning 'scores' and 'works', what music 'is', and notions of 'good music', provide a new and supporting rationale for soundscapes, sound compositions and organised sound pieces of all kinds. That different performances of the same score or set of directions will produce diverse musical results is not, in praxial theory, a deficit but an expected consequence and a potential value of its own. That improvisatory, stochastic, aleatory or spontaneous processes are employed is not held against such music; such pieces are judged in terms of those features and enjoyed in part for this of-the-moment originality. That such pieces are less likely (if at all) to provide the similarities we are accustomed to between two recorded recordings of a 'standard work' is, if anything, an advantage, not a liability; a source of interest, not a reason for aesthetic dismissal.

In fact, the role and contribution of performance achieves a new focus altogether. Performance is treated in aesthetic literature hardly at all and mainly in a mere craft-like role, as the carpenter is to the architect. In the resulting 'museum of imaginary works', a star system has inevitably arisen that focuses audience interest on the performance as virtually an end-in-itself because the composition is already familiar and is all but taken for granted. With organised sound pieces of various kinds, the 'music' is instead a joint undertaking of composer and performers – or composer-performers. Artistry, then, is not a matter of a particular interpretation, reading or instantiation of a score; it is *the creative act* itself. With this softening of the traditional boundaries between composing and performing (and the correspondingly new demands on the listener) come altogether new creative possibilities for organised sound and thus for the continuous evolution or renewal of 'music' in its broadest construal.

## CONCLUSIONS

Just the few aspects of praxial theory mentioned here briefly, then, open altogether new possibilities for all musicking<sup>42</sup> and, in the present connection, for soundscapes and organised sound pieces of all kinds. Those who have already discovered virtue and value in such approaches to music may have had their efforts thwarted by the pet and pat assumptions for music and musical value set over 250 years ago by the limited and limiting notions and traditions of aesthetic theory. Organised sound pieces are thus seen by such orthodoxy as entirely outside the canons of what 'good music' is supposed to be; or as a challenge to such canons that is easily turned aside by the overwhelming tide of inertia arising from aesthetic hegemony. Praxial theory, in contrast, at once

<sup>37</sup>John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Polity Press, 1997); John Shepherd, *Music as Social Text* (Polity Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup>As is amply demonstrated by all studies in the anthropology of music and by ethnomusicology where it is axiomatic that to understand a music you must understand the social milieu giving rise to it, and to understand the society, you must understand the music responsible in part for constituting it.

<sup>39</sup>This is in contradiction of the implied insult that 'there are music lovers, and then there are opera lovers', as though the latter were incapable of appreciating music without the visual accoutrements. Opera lovers, for their part, regain their *hauteur* in the 'pecking order' by disdaining *Porgy and Bess* and *The Phantom of the Opera* for being 'musicals', not art – mere 'entertainments', rather than 'serious music'. In any event, the 'for-its-own-sake' disinterested purity and Beauty of orthodox aesthetic doctrine treats such influences as 'extra-musical' impurities and thus such musics tend to be ranked lower on the inevitable aesthetic hierarchy that has the string quartet and similar 'pure' instrumental music as the *sumum bonum*. See Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>40</sup>Such 'specialised' musicianship being built on the 'general' musicianship mentioned earlier that is shared in some degree by discrete practices.

<sup>41</sup>As Dixon points out, 'classical' or 'art music' is but one *kind* of music, not the paradigm for or paragon of *all* music. It is a *type* of music, not a *quality* of music (or 'quality' music) in terms of which all others musics are judged inferior on the inevitable aesthetic pecking order. 'This confusion of kind with quality is the principal fallacy of the aesthetic orthodoxy'. Furthermore, 'the confusion, the fallacy, the unexamined assumption all revolve around a particular notion of art, and from talking about the particular as if were a universal' (*The Baumgarten Corruption*, pp. 39 and 41, respectively). The same logic applies then, to 'music' which is not, therefore, 'universal' in its 'essence' but, rather, is more properly a collection of highly particular and often dissimilar 'musics'.

<sup>42</sup>Christopher Small, in his book *Musicking* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998), adopts a praxial perspective by treating music as a verb, rather than as a noun, and thus incorporating in it a much wider sociality than aesthetic theories have approved of or allowed.

promotes and is promoted by conceptions of music that deviate from aesthetic orthodoxy and thus creatively renew the very idea of 'music'.

New generations are always ready to challenge their elders and no less so the present generations of students in schools and universities. For all but the few swayed to careers based on the institutional status quo, most of these students have not been 'converted' to aesthetics-based conditions of musicking and would welcome and profit from the tangible alternatives promoted by a praxial understanding of music and musical value. Thus, a pedagogy in schools and universities that includes a significant role for organised sound pieces will, in this regard, begin to open minds and ears to the possibilities of music that go well beyond the limitations of conventional aesthetic doctrine and the 'great works' of the musical museum.

At the very least, sound compositions serve in promoting the kind of *general musicianship* – the ability to think in sound, and to respond to organised sound of all kinds – that should inform the performance and reception of *all* music, whether the standard repertory of 'classics', the avant-garde music of the end of the twentieth century, or countless other musics. Instead of learning that is otherwise taught by the accumulation of 'outside' and thus impersonal and thus abstract information *about* music, learning is promoted instead in personal terms from 'inside' music through intimate experience with organising, performing and listening to sound pieces of all kinds.

Nevertheless and once again, the larger value to be realised is not putting sound compositions in the service of existing, aesthetic based conceptions of music. Rather, I believe it will inspire the young to explore anew the relevance and relation of sound in the contemporary world for its specific value in articulating or embodying aspects and meanings of contemporary life and sensibility. This potential has been overlooked or actively repressed by the prevailing orthodoxy of 'musical fundamentalism' in pretty much the same way that religious fundamentalism has resisted progress. The net effect of such active repression of or benign indifference to 'new' music has been the unfortunate turning of today's youth to the sole alternative of various kinds of 'commercial music'.<sup>43</sup> In the meanwhile, their contemporary sensibility still awaits other types and forms of musical nurturance that, in the hands of thoughtful teachers, will arise, and in multiple forms, to the degree that organised sound pieces, as a staple of progressive pedagogy and empowering curriculum, open ears and minds to other and limitless musical possibilities. The world of music, and the world in general, will certainly be the beneficiary.

<sup>43</sup>As a praxialist, I do not mean to disavow certain values for such music. But the singularity of this music in the lives of the young is certainly limiting, and sound compositions open a door to a world of other musical possibilities.