

“Transgressing ‘accustomed’ creative experiences in music education”

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Abstract

The present study involves the investigation of the compositional process as seen from several 20th and 21st century influential composers' viewpoints which supply new paradigms for transgressing the boundaries of the traditional composing experience in schools and challenging established notions of creativity in the philosophy and research of music education. The choice of the composers was dictated by my desire to include as wide a variety of personalities of serialism, avant-garde, modernism, minimalism, *musique concrète*, and electronic music who placed emphasis on creative freedom as inseparable from expression in order to reject musical conventions and to shock “accustomed” listeners into an awareness of their mired condition. It is hoped that the direct access to composers' thoughts about the subjective experience of composing in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century may also promote the image of a fragmented culture whose ghettoization in music education is a serious impediment to the development of a comprehensive aesthetic education.

The seemingly diverse themes emerging from the alloy of composers' experiences of their creative processes offer a fertile context for redefining the place of music creativity in education. More specifically, the common thread of composers' idiosyncratic concerns and practices that captures the overall aura of their music creativity pertains to: a) the intangibility of the unconscious throughout the compositional process, b) the painstaking discovery and development of their own individuality, and c) the desire to transgress existing rules and codes, due to their personal and social conflict between tradition and innovation. While music creativity has been a component of music education research for decades, some of the themes arising from professional composers' experiences of their creativity have not been adequately recognized in the literature of music education.

The paper draws music educational implications that intend to help student composers immerse in learning experiences that respect the ‘mysteries’ of their intuitions, liberate their own aesthetic sensibilities, and dare to create innovative music that expresses against-the-prevailing-grain musical beliefs. Failing this, musical creativity remains a predictable academic exercise in our era that is characterized by uniquely extensible creative possibilities. Finally, it is hoped that learning about the creative concerns of the composers chosen for examination will help music educator imbue a new refreshing aura of boldness, surprise, and a sense of breaking through old rules and stepping into new territories in their music composition teaching. For these composers were genuine “modernists”—that is, artists in the service of innovation and “code shaping,” willful iconoclasts, and de-idealizing idealistic seekers of the new within the Western musical thought, risking audience popularity due to an intended, in most cases, ‘discomfort’ of listening.