

New Relationships that Support New Roles for Music Teachers

BY ARNOLD APRILL

If we hope to have our music teachers create innovative and effective new roles for music in our schools, we need to create new opportunities for these innovators to develop their new ideas and practices. It is the experience of the Music-in-Education National Consortium (MIENC) that the formation of new relationships between schools, arts organizations, and universities provides a powerful and meaningful context for exactly this sort of growth. Music teacher Natalie Butler's article "Digital Media Tools: Healing the Disconnect in Music Education" explores an exchange of exciting musical ideas and practices between public school music teachers, professional musicians, and university professors. It is also an occasion for her to examine her own teaching practice.



I have been privileged to work with Natalie through an evolving set of roles and relationships. We first met when she was a guided intern at Northwestern University, working under the guidance of Gail Burnaford (School of Education and Social Policy) and Maud Hickey (School of Music). I presented to her class on community arts partnerships at Northwestern, was audience to her presentations at national MIENC conferences (where she shared the stage, undaunted, with major thinkers and leaders in the world of music education), and served as a mentor to her internship work in Ravinia Festival's collaboration with Chicago Public Schools.

We next met when she, as the music teacher at Philo Carpenter School, became my colleague in a city-wide public school arts education advocacy initiative supported by the Chicago Community Trust, and we discovered that we shared a particular interest in integrating theory, innovative practice, and policy. As our working relationship matured and evolved, my organization, the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), was lucky enough to have her volunteer as a summer intern. She needed some intellectual stimulation in the lazy days of July and August, and we needed bright young minds like hers. She asked what CAPE (which integrates all the art forms into all areas of public school education) needed most to develop its music integration practice. I couldn't have been more pleased. I had pages and pages (literally 50 pages, single spaced) of intriguing, verbose, exciting, meandering email exchanges between musicians, teachers, and scholars concerning the role of digital media tools in innovative music education. They were completely unedited.

These emails grew out of MIENC's practice of professional development exchanges. On one such visit to my colleagues at New England Conservatory, I encountered the New York based musician

and music professor Michael Cain and subsequently visited his Digital Playground at the Hoboken Charter School. I had long been looking to connect with music educators exploring new roles for technology in music education, as well as for music educators investigating culturally diverse approaches to instruction (see Michael's piece in this *Journal*). This opened up whole new worlds for me. CAPE brought him to Chicago to make a scholarly presentation on his youth composing practice to the public, to work with Chicago based musician and music educator Nick Jaffe, and to run a week-long Digital Playground Chicago Style institute at the Duncan YMCA Chernin Center for the Arts, resulting in an original CD composed and recorded by young people from across the city. Nick Jaffe had already been working on-line to exchange ideas with

music educators I had connected with in Australia, and students from around the country and around the world (Chicago, Hoboken and Down Under) started composing together on-line (something that CAPE had always dreamed of). I received an email of one of these trans-global compositions on the day it had been completed, and that evening I played it, as an example of global youth capacity, for a community organization I was advising on strategic planning. Wouldn't you know it, one of the composers was right there in the room with his family? Young Lawrence got to co-compose on-line with a young person from Melbourne in the morning, have his teacher email it to me in the afternoon, and be held up as a model for the future of his community in the evening.

There was quite a buzz flowing between these music education innovators. A lot of buzz. Fifty pages of buzz. Unedited. This is where Natalie came to the rescue. She read carefully through the stimulating, disorganized mass of music education ideas, experiments, rants, and theories proliferating in the email exchange, and patiently drew out a few major themes. She then thoughtfully applied these themes as inquiry tools for interrogating her own practice as a music teacher, and invited me into her process as one of the editors of the piece. I learned a lot about myself as an editor, and we learned a lot together about digital media tools as an opportunity for reflecting on core principles of music education. ¶

WE NEED TO CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THESE INNOVATORS TO DEVELOP THEIR NEW IDEAS AND PRACTICES.

DIGITAL MEDIA TOOLS: HEALING THE DISCONNECT IN MUSIC EDUCATION

by

NATALIE BUTLER

I am not in the slightest a technology person; I am usually the last person I know to use the latest high-tech product. Furthermore, I never had a lot of opportunities to work with emerging music technology. In fact, even though I have chosen a career in music education, I have always found it easier to ignore music technology and digital media tools (DMT) than to spend the time and energy learning about them.

However, after five years of teaching general music and band in grades K-8 in the Chicago Public Schools, I have come to understand the areas of separation in music and music education which these technologies are trying to bridge. I have come to fully appreciate just how lamentable it is that music, which for so long was as deeply embedded in our culture as language itself, has become for us a mere subcategory of experience, a profession for the talented few. I have come to understand how recorded music has created a deep division between consumers and the people and processes that create the music they buy. And of course I have seen first-hand that in public schools music has fallen to the margins of the curriculum and that music teachers themselves are often completely cut off from the rest of the school culture. Even in my own classroom I sense the divide; while each year I become excited as my students learn more about music and are able to perform, compose, and understand music with a higher level of sophistication than the year before, I have noticed a deep separation between the music that my students listen to and the musical concepts I am trying to teach them.

As a result, I have become more interested in finding new ways to help make music more vital to our culture in general and to education in particular. This summer while volunteering at Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), I was given access to an email conversation between people who regularly use digital media tools (DMT) in their music teaching. DMT are a wide range of technology and equipment that can be used to create, notate, and record music. These include any combination of hardware and software that can be used in a recording studio: e.g., electric/acoustic instruments, recording devices, cables, mixers, and software for sequencing, editing, and arranging music.

Greg Dodge and Nick Jaffe were the primary voices in this email conversation. Nick Jaffe taught a class called "Art and Science of Recording" at the Chicago Children's Choir Academy. Jaffe's classroom was in essence a working recording studio in which students produced, arranged, performed, and recorded music. Greg Dodge owns a music marketing business in Australia and is currently partnering with government, universities, and industry to develop a range of youth-based contemporary music-making programs in which DMT are utilized. Other voices in this conversation included Michael Cain and Larry Scripp from New England Conservatory and Amy Rasmussen and Arnold Aprill from CAPE.

Upon reading this extensive email conversation I was intrigued by the passion and focus these writers showed in discussing the impact that using DMT has had on their classrooms, students, and communities at large. Three important themes recurred in the email conversation. The first was the impact of DMT on students' academic, musical, and social growth. Second, several pedagogical issues emerged, such as the role of the music teacher



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