

Article URL:

http://topics.maydaygroup.org/articles/2023/Regelski_2023.pdf

A lexicon for a *Praxical Turn* in Music Education

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ABSTRACT

For over 60 years, my research and in-school observations concerning *action learning* and *music as social praxis* have warranted the following terms, ideas, suggestions, and cautions. This lexicon briefly outlines the leading themes of my published articles and books. It represents a significant *turning away* from traditions and taken-for-granted assumptions; and *toward* the important implications for teachers in a *praxical turn for music education*. It is my hope that students and teachers will jointly examine these precepts (and their brief qualifications), and engage with pro and con essays, discussions, and experiments with the praxical suggestions described. Thoughtful consideration, I hope, will lead music educators from defending school music through advocacy to, instead, producing the substantially notable results characteristic of praxis that will mitigate the profession's *legitimation crisis*.¹ I believe that by stressing the main points of my praxical approach, these conclusions will promote change in teaching praxis. *Certain recommendations may be repeated and reinforced according to the main point or word under consideration.*

Keywords: *Music education, praxis, praxical, value-added, amateurism, intentionality*

Introduction and Background

For more than a few years, music education has been beset with declining support from school boards and ministries for budgets and scheduling, which is to say that the *legitimacy of music education in schools is doubted* by taxpayers and by those officials in charge of how taxes are spent. This *legitimation crisis* is due in part to advocacy that only falls back on the advertising claim that “music is basic,” a reliance on vague beliefs supporting notions of “basic education” that are argued to no good end among the professoriate and that taxpayers either don’t understand or ignore. Basic to what? And music is certainly different in most respects from all other subjects in schools (except possibly for art education and literature), subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics that are seen as having a lasting benefit to students and society. Whether, how, and why music *is* important in today’s complicated world are complex questions and mainly suitable for dialogues among philosophers and social theorists.

That music educators perceive a need to advertise advocacy suggests a basic insecurity felt in today’s schools; an arena of mounting concern, for various reasons, among voters. Half a century or more advertising music’s benefits on aesthetic grounds have gone unnoticed, not least because parents or teachers do not really understand aesthetics; and, given the covert and concealed nature traditionally claimed for aesthetic response, tangible evidence of what might be called “aesthetic progress” is altogether missing. This also creates a problem in guiding instruction since, without tangible evidence of progress, planning is negatively affected. “Play more aesthetically” is not exactly useful feedback to student learners.

In recent years, various philosophers have theorized the idea of *praxis*—of doing actions, where what is done (or not) is amply evident and where a teaching ethic founded in “right results” (see Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*) of a specified (musical) nature is at stake. My *praxical theory* thus seeks to make a *discernible difference* due to instruction. *Praxical curriculum* is concerned centrally with what students *can do—at all, better, and with more enthusiasm*. Praxical teaching thus combines the Aristotelian notion of praxis (action, doing) with the modern philosophy of pragmatism (praxis + practical = praxical).

Pragmatism is rooted in making a difference—where the meaning or value of something is seen in the *difference it makes in use* (which also goes for musical meaning and value).

With that in mind, a *praxical turn* is argued *away from* premising music education on an abstraction such as “basic,” or an ineffable aesthetic response;² and a turn *towards* making a musical difference. Moreover, this difference is not just seen in the next concert, but a difference that is *made for and into adult life*—as with other school subjects. Thus, in addition to infrequent concerts, much more curriculum is needed to foster *musical independence* for life-long relevance. Furthermore, praxical theory is premised not just on performance but on *any or all forms of musicking*, from listening and composing to musical hobbies (playing with composition software, collecting media, writing music journalism, engaging in aerobics, creating party or dining ambiance with music playlists, etc.) *informed by school-based music education*. Such *musicking* (see Small, 1998), thus, promotes life-long *amateuring* of the most committed sort.

With the tangibly pragmatic benefits of such a turn, students, teachers, parents, and the taxpaying public are altogether more likely to notice the benefits of instruction and curriculum. Any claimed benefits that cannot be observed and judged fail the ethical criterion of *immanent critique*, which is *using claimed benefits as the criteria* for judging the worth and effects of instruction.³ With this turn in mind, readers are presented here with a range of vocabulary changes and their extended meaning in praxical theory that will guide their teaching in a praxical direction, and thus to results that make a pragmatic musical difference in the lives of students and, ultimately, to society.

A Lexicon for a Praxical Turn in Music Education

PRAXIS is a term that we inherit from the Greeks. Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics* describes praxis as “*action*” that promises to promote “*right results*” for personal or other important social needs. This promise requires us to consider *praxis* as an *ethical endeavor* where the promised results are predictably reached. A broken promise is *malpraxis*. Music education, by its very title, is a promise to successfully promote (educate) musical learning. Failure to produce such notable lasting learning has led to a worsening *legitimation crisis* threatening

resources for school music in many places where music educators are reduced to advertising advocacy to legitimate their music programs. The **praxical**⁴ turn, by definition, emphasizes “right results” that are easily evident to legislators, taxpayers, and parents who, in the absence of such pragmatic results, have been increasingly reluctant to support school music.

MUSIC is sociality in sound

Institutions “make special” their sociality by generating distinctive musics and musicking suited to their needs.

Music’s meaning is what it **does** for people and society in fostering and facilitating musical sociability.

Music education’s value is what it does to lead adults to musicking as amateurs.

- A. **Praxis** as a **NOUN**: A “work,” event, or occasion in the sense of a *result done or produced*.
- B. **Praxis** as a **GERUND**: An action (acting), *doing*, or a “trying to” of a socio-personal musical kind.
- C. **Praxis** as a **useful SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE**: **praxical knowledge** results from past praxis.
- D. **Praxis** as a **PLAN AND PROCESS** for pragmatic, lasting results.
- E. **Music-as-praxis** is thus a goal undertaking, accomplishing a product or result, temporally in the present. **NB:**⁵ Performance as music, not simply “of” a score.
- F. Music praxis is the **value added** by society/individuals to sounds, i.e., their social value, production, organization, and use.
 - ⇒ The **origin** of music is the “making special” of a social institution⁶ by its organization and use of sounds, subsequently granted the *social status* of

“music,” e.g., the social emphasis of inherited musicking (dance, song forms), hymns and chants, patriotic music, institutional pep songs, concert listening, etc.

Any praxis constantly evolves according to changes in the social world. Some scholars think the opposite; that the arts are harbingers of change and are especially likely to anticipate and contribute to change.

- G. Praxis facilitates different goals, needs, intentions, and *appropriation of affordances*: any musical work/performance “affords” (allows, facilitates) a variety of responses and uses (e.g., Barber’s *Adagio* can be listened to intellectually, for emotional response, or used in the war film *Platoon*).
- H. General social circumstances/conditions occasion the praxis (wedding music, patriotic music, concert music) and its meaning; e.g., a Bach chorale *as* worship in church vs. the same chorale in the *St. Matthew Passion* performed in a secular concert hall.⁷
- I. Specific circumstances/conditions occasion the musicking (this wedding, this concert, this performer, this audience, the same listener but on a different occasion, etc.).
- J. Spatial semiotics: the “sense” and “meaning” of the physical place in which music is performed conditions the music (e.g., in a church vs. a concert hall; sacred music in a church service vs. a jazz concert, chamber music or art song recital in a church; a jazz concert on a proscenium stage vs. in a club).
- K. “Works” of music are constituted anew in each present moment; scores (where involved at all) only occasion or afford the “doings” of the moment, which constantly vary according to the objective conditions (NB: no relativism because objective criteria are involved, namely, was the music/performance “good for” the concert, the wedding or funeral, the party, the dance, just listening, etc.?).
 - ⇒ Not performance of music but, rather, performance as the music.
 - ⇒ Successful or “good music” clearly meets the need(s) that occasioned the praxis that it is to be “good for” (e.g., audience listening, movie score, lullaby)

- L. *Phronesis*: ethical criterion for “right results,” judged according to the situation's objective conditions (requirements)—the personal “needs” or purposes of those being served by the praxis.
- M. “Goodness” is judged in terms of the particular human purposes, individuals, or groups served, not on absolute grounds (“Good health” at 8 years and 80 years are greatly different. “Good music” is similarly a matter of situated particulars: e.g., school choir vs. symphonic choir; elementary school ensembles vs. collegiate).
- N. The social “good for” being served provides the criteria by which the “goodness” of the music in question is judged (e.g., good for dancing, listening, worshipping, etc.).
- O. Ethical consequences of musicking consider questions of social justice, distributive justice, and equality of offering.
 - ⇒ Variables in an institution's history that affect *equal access to all musics* (e.g. racism; ageism) are targets of praxis—especially serving all students, not the “talented” or cooperative few.
- P. Types of/uses of music are for the “making special” of human sociality.
- Q. Types of/uses of music for a “good time”—understood as “time well spent,” *not* simply as “having fun” (i.e., a “fun” time). This fulfills the criterion of being “worthwhile” where “worth” = value or goodness; and “while” = a given period. → Thus, that musical time is “worthwhile” = “good time” or “valued time” (as opposed to wasting time, killing time, passing time, saving time, etc.).
- R. Different social “goods” and “affordances” are possible.
- S. In music teaching, curriculum goals, outcomes, and results are *pragmatic*; that is, as with the praxis of a physician, they should “make a difference”: a “value-added” form of “authentic assessment”⁸ is required.
- T. Chosen types of “common practices” should be approached as *curricular action ideals*. Action ideals are not idealist: e.g., “good marriage,” “good health,” “good friend.”

- U. *Curricular action ideals* consist of 1) a *praxial* dimension (the “action” or “doing” identified); 2) a *competency* dimension (how functionally well done); 3) an *attitude* dimension (a disposition encouraged for such musicking).

For music students: Praxis is,

- Realized/seen in what students can and *want* to DO (at all, newly, more often, better, or with greater rewards) as a result of instruction.
- Value-added to students’ informal music education.
- Value-added to students’ lives by musicking throughout life.
- Value-added to society/culture, ever-new musics.
- Making a lasting *musical* difference (at least in addition to what other positive effects musicking may promote).

Praxis as a **GERUND**: An action (acting), *doing*, or a “trying to” of a socio-personal musical kind.

1. A process:

- The act (process), the doing of which is, in part, its own reward: “*loving*” is a praxis. Doing, in this sense is more than a state of mind (i.e., I “love” you as a noun) that one is either “in” or not. It involves actions.

The success of an action is judged only in terms of the “value-added” [see above] where “right results” are “good results”; good music, good loving, etc.

2. Intentionality:

- Wants, needs, goals, “trying to” bring about a value-added condition via music. Intentionality represents the *focal attention* of the doer; a situation of pragmatic problem solving, where one’s present repertoire of habits is *not* immediately or entirely suitable to an immediate need, situation, goal, etc. It is the “aboutness” of an action; why it is undertaken.

- *Subsidiary attention* conditions are the context for *focal attention*: they involve the inescapable social and practical influence of *habitus* (Bourdieu), *background* (Searle), *social mind* (Dewey, Mead, Pierce), and *lifeworld* (Habermas)⁹ (e.g., formal concert, jam session, sight-reading new literature).
- Central is “collective intentionality” (we-needs, we-values, we-goals) involving socially conditioned factors and variables, benefits, etc., not the intra-individual Cartesian state of mind¹⁰ claimed by aesthetic theory (i.e., not simply within this person’s mind). This is the social attunement of all musicking.
- Any musical event is, at any moment, socially created and socially experienced. Even if the musicker is alone,¹¹ everything about the conditions of experiencing it is social: taste publics, instruments, devices used to play music, Internet sites for musicking, etc., all are social events and experiences.
- *Intentionality* is often un- or pre-conscious (and *tacit*), and thus frequently taken for granted (e.g., in the West we naturally tend to listen in a diatonic tonality rather than the prevalent microtonal modes found across Asia). What we consider to be needs, goods, etc., for example, are often taken for granted (thus, causing “culture shock” when we travel to cultures that don’t take the same things for granted, or in the same way: what they consider good food or good music is “shocking” or at least very “strange” to travelers).
- Typically, however, even unconscious (or collective) intentionality can become conscious (e.g., when we need to think about the upcoming technical difficulty in the score or correct a mistake we didn’t intend to make). It is the ability to adjust our mental “default” settings.

3. *In music:*

- *Doing* music (musicking): performing, listening, composing, collecting, discussing, critiquing, amateuring of various kinds, etc. (see Small, 1998).
- Music as “performative”: “doing,” **social acts/events that are socially created by the music**. For example, “I thee wed” creates a marriage. In music, a drumming

circle, sing-alongs/caroling creates the sociality involved; creating a certain party atmosphere depends on well-chosen music; use of music in aerobics; dance; therapy; worshiping/praying (not just “using” it, but hymns “as” musicking).

- The “going to the concert,” who you go with, its anticipation, and follow-up, are all part of the holistic praxis of concert-going (e.g., the “student recital” is saturated with social meanings, often more than musical ones—especially for family members and close friends or competitors).

4. **Music teaching:**

- Process of initiating students’ musical *actions* (their mindful musicking), rather than (mindless) activity (just following or going along to stay out of trouble as the least of evils, mindlessly following a director’s judgments, etc.), such as memorization, “concept teaching” as teaching or “experiencing” definitions of musical terms, etc.
- Praxis is a kind of practicum or apprenticeship, a musicianship laboratory for a praxis.
- “Breaking 100” (i.e., thinking of one’s “Self” as a “musician” in the same sense that one who “breaks 100 in golf” is apt to identify as a “golfer”).¹² For praxis as a practicum or apprenticeship, see David Elliott, *Music Matters* (1995) *passim*.
- Teaching reflectively and pragmatically in terms of “right results,” i.e., using *action research*¹³ and *action learning* where music and methods chosen are viewed as experiments judged for effectiveness by results. The value of praxis is judged by the notable effectiveness of its outcomes for those whom the purposes serve.

5. **Music students:** The intentionality of praxis and for practice is

- “Wanting to,” actively “choosing to” be involved musically for its special rewards and pleasures.
- Experiencing those rewards and pleasures while still undergoing instruction; looking forward to improving those rewards and pleasures by improving skills, learning new literature, etc.

- *Personal reflection* in and on their personal musical actions: desire for competence and, where possible in terms of time and limiting conditions, its ongoing improvement. Musicking, in this sense, should be like ice cream: once its pleasures are discovered it is actively sought and found pleasing.
- Acting adaptively according to changing musical needs and wants—yours or the situations to be served musically—throughout life.
- Creating (choosing) one’s own personal musical life, musical Self, and personal musical history: the existential, self-actualizing dimension that music is “good for”—identification with music (or a music); *musical personhood* of “I am a musician” or “musicking is central to my Self, who I AM.”
- Music “appreciation” is seen in use: use (how, when, why, how often, where, etc.) is *empirical evidence of appreciation; appreciation affects intentionality or what a learner chooses to do or aspires to.*

Praxial Knowledge

Praxial knowledge is the “know how,” “how to,” “can do” that arises *only* from praxis (as a gerund) within specific musical praxes (praxis as a noun: “A” above).

NB: Knowledge for praxis develops from praxis, not as a pre-condition of it. Thus, knowledge is “in” the practice, in and from the community of practitioners, and not “in” books or the heads of teachers or individuals.

1. **Cognitive:** facts, information, theory, and “concepts-in-action” (“balance” for skiing is a concept-in-action, but so is “playing in tune”) are developed through and in action, not as abstract (verbal) “concepts” or prior “background knowledge.” NB: Child: “May I go out to practice balance on my bicycle?”
- **All praxial knowledge functions as skills** (i.e., such knowledge can and is “applied”; *used*), not just memorized and forgotten. Anything that otherwise needs memorization—e.g., key signatures—becomes a functional/praxial skill to the degree it regularly gets used, and thus, like riding a bicycle, never forgotten.

- Cognition is developed “in action,” not as abstractions. It is “embodied” knowledge: knowledge “known” by the body—a “feel” for both the when, why, and how of use—not simply or solely in the mind.
- Meaning, success, and relevance are derived from *past* actions with music and are seen in the potential for, or actuality of successful *future* musical actions. NB: Pragmatism 101!
- Concepts are tacit, personal knowledge. Praxial knowledge usually can’t be effectively put into words but can be put to effective use (e.g., the difference between saying “I love you,” and “loving” actions). Words can guide action but are not the musical knowledge to be acquired via action. Instead of “play more musically,” specify the skills and knowledge that students need at the moment for that goal.
 - Because it is embodied (due to being acquired in action, through praxis) it is thus *existentially personalized* as “my knowledge” (because *my* body and its experiences are unique). It is constitutive of *my* Self: e.g., “I am a musical person,” “I am a church choir member,” “I am an audiophile,” “I am a jazz lover,” or “I am a guitar player in an amateur group.”

2. **Psychomotor:**

- *Techné* (technique) is acquired via practice in varied past (*holistic*) praxis; not “set” as absolute, invariable, for its own sake, or learned atomistically in little disconnected bits and pieces. Any learning that “focuses” on or “foregrounds” a particular skill aspect needs to be *integrated into holistic acts* before it becomes praxial (i.e., usefully useable). So, if the value of scales may be seen for playing Mozart and Bach, use the scales in their music to develop technique in a musically holistic context (and notice fewer students who drop out of music class).
 - ⇒ Thus, playing scales, in tune, with good tone, and fast, is of little value when done for its own sake; and when transfer to holistic music praxis is imperfect, nonexistent, or negative, students quit lessons out of boredom. They want to practice “music,” not “scales.” Virtuoso pianist and conductor Daniel

Barenboim recounts how his father (teacher) chose only real music as the basis for his technical development on the conviction that there were plenty of scales and arpeggios in Mozart. Thus, praxically focused teachers derive technique studies/exercises from the actual music.

- Embodied: relevant to and developed by/in/for *this* body and varies accordingly between bodies.
- Different bodies and minds have different needs; ignoring this is unjust.

3. *Praxical knowledge:*

- Is put “into practice,” into action, and developmentally enables ever-more functional knowledge.
- Is also created/advanced by experience (music experiments¹⁴)
- Results in personal, individuating knowledge, intuitive wisdom, and pragmatic “cleverness,” not standardized knowledge or mere craft “know-how” that just anyone can do (like following a cookbook recipe).
- Involves practical (procedural) knowledge and “practiced” (normalized, habitual) technique, the richness/effectiveness of which depends on the variety/depth or complexity of past experience (experiments) with music. Such habits, however, are mindful, not mindless or routinized (e.g., warming up a band on scales, warming up choir on a chorale; loud, soft, various tonguing, vowels, etc.).
- All the above are developed and practiced “in action,” where simply doing the praxis = practice—keeping in mind that intentionality = conscious direction and reflection. (Compare to golfers whose main practice is playing golf several times a week, but who go to a driving range or putting green from time to time to practice select skills.)
- Because of the point above, “practicing” music is different than merely repeating something mechanically or mindlessly (scales, vocalizes, etc.). “Practicing” = action that is fully mindful (intentionality) of musical results, or needs, or purposes at stake—intending to learn, to progress, to solve a *musical* problem or need.

4. *In music:*

- Musicianship, musicality, creativity, and artistry, are tacit and personal “know-how” applied under specific/situated conditions (not as an absolute or final achievement); musicianship is therefore “temporally conditioned” not once-and-for-all time or at any single time (e.g., this concert, this lesson).
- Praxis is existential, embodied, and unique according to a person’s background (life history, including different formal/informal learning) and musical needs.
- Praxis is equally unique (non-standardized) in use and in bringing about “good results”; i.e., results vary according to the practitioner, each of whom, nonetheless, can be said to be successful, has personal standards or goals of “playing well,” etc. These may need critical attending to if they are to change, e.g., replacing bad practicing habits.
- *Standards* = suitability to the objective requirements of general or specific practices undertaken, and the results are judged according to the objective needs/criteria of those socio-musical practices (good wedding music, good music for concert or home listening, good dance music,¹⁵ etc.).
- Standards vary according to the doer: children vs. adults; amateurs (especially “serious” ones) vs. professionals.
- Standards also vary according to the “doing” (praxis as a gerund), so performing for one’s own “good time” is different than performing for the “good time” of a paying audience; for the entertainment of friends and family; or a church choir’s role in the service versus that same choir putting on a public concert (requiring much more rehearsing).
- Standards of musicianship change as a particular musical praxis evolves, or as its praxial role changes. For example, playing/singing in tune needs to be much more acute for recordings than is typical for live performances; the social role of concerts today is vastly different than when they first evolved, and thus the musicianship needs for performers and audiences are quite different. Or, as jazz added an ever-richer harmonic vocabulary, jazzers moved beyond three-chord blues. Frequent

portamento singing and string playing of generations ago are viewed negatively today.

⇒ **NB:** The “knowledge base” of any praxis is “de-centered”: it resides not in the mind of this or that practitioner (expert, teacher, text, etc.) but in the collectivity engaged in that practice; and changes accordingly.

5. *In music teaching:*

- Reflective/diagnostic/adaptive teaching: *Teaching as action research* (i.e., methods, materials, curriculum regarded as experiments or theses to be confirmed by experiential results). So-called “good methods” and “best practices” are someone’s subjective and usually situated opinion—it “works” for them in their situation.
- Reflective/diagnostic/adaptive teaching is predicated on *applied theory* from various disciplines, plus developing one’s own “hypotheses” (theories) over time.
 - ⇒ Curriculum and methods are treated as *two levels of hypotheses*: (1) “what is worth teaching” (*curriculum* of action ideals) and (2) hypotheses for “how to teach” (*methods* of instruction) whatever is judged worth teaching.
 - ⇒ *Poor teaching* results can be due to (a) poor hypotheses for curricular choices (e.g., a curricular goal is unrealistic given time, resources, nature of students, etc.) or (b) due to choice of poor teaching techniques (or poor execution of otherwise suitable techniques), (c) or lacking expertise in both (*eupraxis*).
 - ⇒ The lesson (or series of them) is the experiment, the *test of the value* of hypothesized curriculum and methods/materials used: Can the student(s) do anything new or better because of instruction? Is progress long-lasting, or just within one class (not transferring to subsequent classes) or just related to the literature for this concert (new literature has been learned, but not the independent musicianship that could transfer to life)?
- Methods are tools that serve to advance the musical praxis of students (value-added) and are not otherwise valued for their own sake (“methodolatry”) as good. “Good methods” and materials cannot be judged in advance; they are confirmed by

intelligent use—which may often require practice over time by the teacher. Thus, they do not just work or not; they require progressive refinement in use.

- Good music teaching takes into consideration the musical needs of all students, regardless of social and economic variables; ensuring that *all* students are offered meaningful (musically and personally) options for musicking in school music—beyond the socially unjust emphasis on large ensembles, classical (or quasi-classical) music, and instruments.
- “Good methods” = “good results” for students’ musicking, their present and future actions/practices. *They cannot be determined in advance*. “Good methods” are no more “absolutely good” than, say, a particular medicine is. They can’t just be applied “across-the-board” as though an assembly line technology that can be used in different factories. It is precisely the belief that methods are technologies (techne) that leads to the many problems of the “factory model” of schooling—as though students were uniform widgets to be produced through uniform methods to uniform standards of quality control, e.g., commercial language arts programs.
- Methods/curriculum change and improve over time in a praxical program according to ever-changing needs, diagnoses, and improvements in current practice, technology, society, music, etc.
- *Teaching approximates the professional praxis and ethics* of, for example, doctors, lawyers, etc. That is, with an *ethic (phronesis: prudence or care-fullness)* or moral responsibility that judges successful practice by results for those served (students). Persistent failure or negative results = malpractice (*malpraxis*). Students who quit lessons or “hate music class” are our failures—the equivalents of a doctor whose patients die.
- Music teachers are “general practitioners” who diagnose present and future needs and know when to send students for specialized instruction they can’t provide (but where “specialized” can involve teaching by advanced peers).
- Teachers teach how to practice (mindfully) **not** just assign practice: thus, part of the lesson involves diagnosis of practicing, not just of whether last week’s practicing was

successful. Better (more effective, more efficient) practicing promotes more interest/rewards and serves lifelong learning/praxis.

6. **For music students:**

- *Musical independence/independent musicianship*: Learners can function/learn/practice successfully in the present and future without a teacher. This can also include, for example, finding music, using the Internet or local library for information and resources, knowing appropriate conventions of behavior/dress/etc. for a particular praxis, and so on.
- Lifelong *amateuring*, the disposition for continued praxis, is the ability to integrate preferred ways of musicking into meaningful daily life—regularly. Thus, the *need for addressing musical growth that can promote musicking throughout life*.
- The empowerment/increase of musical choices (in comparison to what fewer choices they had in kindergarten, or when they entered a particular grade level, such as middle school, or a particular class) is important; as is promoting the musical knowledge and skills to serve them (by “doing” the praxis that is the focus of choice (e.g., using GarageBand® software, learning to use a fingering chart, learning to use a media player, etc.).
- Knowledge is developed, then, in accordance with (from) *authentic models* of praxis (A above). These models serve at least as the basis for amateur/everyday musicking; and as the foundation for the possibility of specialized or more expert knowledge and ability, which itself will depend on engagement and embodiment with the specialized practices in question (i.e., “doing” music, as in B above).
- PREMISE: Since music is a value added to sounds by society¹⁶ and their use for social “goods,” then music education as praxis should be the *value-added* to the individual and society because of instruction.
- In schooling predicated on “general education,” this means that instruction should in some way produce *value-added results—to make a difference musically—for all* students who, in turn, are thereby empowered to produce not only vibrant and

active musicking for their own lives but who also enliven and advance or extend the musicking available in society (at least locally).

- Failure to address the musical growth and future of *all* students, outside of school and as adults, is unjust and thus an ethical failure; malpraxis.
- Value-added results couched in terms and criteria that take all students into consideration, instead, would produce a changed musical social world and a changed generation of new students as the basis for the next value-added cycle (e.g., consider how the children of parents will be musically and personally different due to the social institution; consider family musicking (*Haus Musik*) or choral singing of the family for every birthday in the extended family. Whatever happened to talent shows that displayed local talents, from instrument solos or groups, to yodeling?
- At present, aside from identifying and nurturing the elite or self-selected few who go on to musical careers due to music education (including becoming music teachers), “school music” is in a state of self-satisfied (and self-justifying) stubborn self-absorption; while the musical world outside of school has dynamics that are all but totally unaffected by what goes on musically in schools.
- Thus, “school music” has little or no impact—often negative!—on students’ musical engagement with “real music.” This is unjust and unfair.
- It also creates the ever-growing need for “advocacy” as budgets and schedules are reduced (by taxpayers’ representatives on school boards, and school administrations). In Sweden, the national curriculum specifies “from music in life to music in schools,” meaning that music (education) in schools should address the most important ways music is used “in life” by individuals and society, and not try to impose the “tastes” of classically trained musicians, critics, scholars, and intellectuals—who are only a small, self-declared elite in any society.
- Private lessons, as well, too often fail to promote lifelong amateurism as performers. At the end of lessons, too many students show little interest in performing or little lasting benefits of their lessons as audience members. Despite the frequency of piano lessons, there are few piano recitals, other than those of a teacher’s studio. Among

the reasons seem to be that lessons often are taught on the assumption that students will or might become professionals. When, instead, “music” is taught via an instrument, musicianship is learned. Even if the student cannot make or find time to perform as an adult, this musicianship influences listening and musicking of other kinds than just recitals.

- An unjust imbalance thus often results, with only a small percentage of students being addressed by the school music or studio curriculum and pedagogy. School music, as and for praxis, bypasses the usual socioeconomic biases and criteria, distributes opportunities among all kinds of musicking (especially those readily accessible in the community), and thus treats all students’ musical needs equally.
- A praxical approach starts with the assumption of producing interested, committed musicians who, in the best sense of “amateur,” are *lovers* of music and musicking and thus seek to continue to be active and improve (where “improve” may mean at present technical levels, but learning and performing ever-more literature, new styles, chords, apps, etc.).

In sum, a praxical pedagogy and curriculum is a pragmatic and professional approach to teaching music that aims to result in adult amateuring of some committed kind: listening, collecting media, attending live concerts, community groups (joining or starting), chamber duets, trios, family musicking, and the like. Otherwise, music education becomes a self-contained island afloat in a wealth of musical affordances in society that it ignores at its own peril.

Recommended List of Resources

The following is a selection from my publications which can help detail and explain more about the abbreviated themes and premises above. It might be noted that my interest in praxis was a natural evolution from my earlier interest in Action Learning, musical independence (for amateuring), and resistance to aesthetic discourses and “aesthetic this and that” in connection with music education philosophy that had been the focus of my

Ph.D. studies. My turn to praxis *per se* happened on sabbatical in 1990 at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland. In my philosophy class there, after mentioning that babies calm to the familiarity of their mother’s singing as heard in the womb, an orchestra violinist (while nursing in class!) informed me and the class that she would never sing for her child because she was such a bad vocal model and lullabies “weren’t real music, after all.” That indirectly motivated the 1996 “Prolegomenon” article as my research agenda, leading to 135+ refereed articles (and still counting) and several books. The premises above attempt to summarize basic conclusions for praxical curriculum and teaching transformed into my focus on amateuring in music, and it all culminated, or I thought, in *Curriculum Philosophy and Theory for Music Education Praxis* (Oxford 2021). I still have more in mind. I hope studying this research at the forefront of the *Praxical Turn* and away from ill-conceived aesthetic assumptions clarifies many aspects of the precepts explained above. I have another book manuscript and articles ready for submission as this is written. Stay tuned to praxicalism!

Selected Works by Thomas A. Regelski

Year	Title	Publication Information
2021	Curriculum philosophy and theory for music education praxis	Oxford University
2017	Automania: Music and music education from Mars	<i>Contemporary Aesthetics</i> , (15)1
2017	Pragmatism, praxis, and naturalism: The importance for music education of intentionality and consummatory experience in musical praxis	<i>Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education</i> , (16)2, 102-123
2016	A brief introduction to music and music education as social praxis	Routledge
2014	Reflective music education as a helping profession	In T. De Baits & T. Buchborn (Eds.), <i>European Perspectives on Music Education</i> , (pp. 15-27). Innsbruck Hiebling
2011	Ethical implications of music education as a helping profession	<i>Nordic Research in Music Education</i> , Yearbook 13, 221-232

2011	Ethical dimensions of school-based music education	In W. Bowman & A. L. Frega (Eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education</i> (pp. 284–304), Oxford University Press
2009	Curriculum reform: Reclaiming “music” as social praxis	<i>Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education</i> , (8)1, 66–84
2007	The Ethics of teaching as profession and praxis	<i>Visions of Research in Music Education</i> , 13, 1-34
2007	Amateuring in music and its rivals	<i>Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education</i> , (6)3, 22–50
2006	‘Music appreciation’ as <i>praxis</i>	<i>Music Education Research</i> , (8)2, 281–310
2005	Music and music education—theory and praxis for ‘making a difference’	<i>Educational Philosophy and Theory</i> , (37)1, 7–27
2003	Social theory, music, and music education as praxis	In H. Froehlich (Ed.), <i>Proceedings of the Sociology of Music Education Symposium</i> , University of North Texas. Published in <i>Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education</i> , (3)3, 1–42
2002	On ‘methodolatry’ and music teaching as critical and reflective praxis	<i>Philosophy of Music Education Review</i> , (10)2, 102–124
2001	Accounting for all praxis: An essay critique of David Elliott’s “Music Matters”	<i>Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education</i> , 144, 61–88
1998	The Aristotelian bases of music and music education	<i>The Philosophy of Music Education Review</i> , (6)1, 22–59
1997	Musicians, teachers and the social construction of reality	In R. Rideout (Ed.), <i>Sociology of Music Education</i> (pp. 95–111), University of Oklahoma
1996	A prolegomenon to a praxial theory of music and music education	<i>Finnish Journal of Music Education</i> , (1)1, 23–38

1996	Taking the 'art' of music for granted: A critical sociology of the aesthetic philosophy of music	In L. R. Bartel & D. J. Elliott (Eds.), <i>Critical Reflections on Music Education</i> (pp. 23-58), University of Toronto
1994	Action research and critical theory: Empowering music teachers to professionalize praxis	<i>Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education</i> , 123, 63-89
1992	The action value of musical experience and learning	In J. Paynter, et al. (Eds.), <i>Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought</i> (pp. 105-127), Routledge
1986	Getting into action for middle school music	<i>Canadian Music Educator</i> , (28)2, 43-54
1973	Self-actualization in creating and responding to art	<i>Journal of Humanistic Psychology</i> , (13)4, 57-68
1969	Toward musical independence	<i>Music Educators Journal</i> , (55)7, 77-83

About the Author

Thomas A. Regelski is “Distinguished Professor” (Emeritus), SUNY, Fredonia NY. He has a Master’s degree in choral conducting and a PhD in Comparative Arts/Aesthetics. He has taught choral conducting, and music education methods and foundations courses. He has been a visiting professor at Aichi University in Nagoya, Japan, the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland (on a Fulbright Award), Helsinki University, and was a research fellow at the Philosophy of Education Research Center at Harvard University. He is the co-founder of the MayDay Group, and from its inception until 2007, was editor of its e-journal, *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*. In addition to 145 journal articles and chapters, he is the author of 7 books, most recently *Curriculum Philosophy and Theory for Music Education Praxis*. He lectures occasionally at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and is presently a Docent at Helsinki University (Finland).

¹ The current problem music education faces is a crisis of *legitimizing music education in schools*. Music education is under duress to justify its expensive inclusion in the school budget and schedule.

² It is never specified whether an aesthetic education is premised on a natural ability for aesthetic responding or whether music education proposes to plant that seed and nurture its growth. In any case, the results cannot be determined since such responding is covert—strictly mental, metaphysical, etc.—and thus cannot be judged, by the teacher or the student.

³ How would a teacher do immanent critique with “basic” and “aesthetic” in mind? They don’t! Thus, teachers end up using favored pedagogy based on *ease of delivery*, **not** on *observable, musical growth* promoted by the pedagogy.

⁴ The spelling “praxial” has for some reason become common. Instead, I use the equally valid, alternative translation, *praxical* to brand the particulars of my work. This spelling sounds usefully like “practical” which, of course, praxis is intended to be lest teaching devolves into malpraxis or futility. Praxical is thus expected professionally when *discussing or citing my work*, which is unique in the ways summarized, from others who otherwise only casually associate themselves with “praxial” themes. *Praxical* thus represents a coherent theme and theory upon which to base music education.

⁵ NB – Nota Bene in scholarly writing, Latin for “note well.” Not just “for example,” but an important comment.

⁶ Formal, an informal cohort, a spontaneous group’s expression.

⁷ NB: Those who stand for Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus in a secular concert confuse the sociocultural condition as church worship service, not as a secular venue for musicking. This demonstrates the sociocultural premise of music’s sociality: it is concert music “for” listening not worshipping.

⁸ *Authentic assessment* tests learning via its application in “authentic,” realistic situations; fingerings are authenticated by their use in performing, not paper and pencil tests. Music appreciation is authenticated by *use* as choices to engage in musicking of some kind.

⁹ All terms emphasize the importance of the social and practical conditions influencing the socially conditioned mind and in which all musical actions are situated.

¹⁰ Cartesian philosophy (Descartes) separates mind from body. In *aesthetic* theorizing, this can disallow bodily responses (e.g., chills, frissons) as aesthetic in favor of purely cognitive or intellectual experience.

¹¹ This idea comes from Christopher Small, “A Solitary flute player.” In *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (pp. 201–206). Wesleyan University Press, 1998.

¹² See Thomas A. Regelski, “Action Learning and ‘Breaking 100 in Music’.” In *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8: A Musicianship Approach* (chapter 1). Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹³ Action research is research to improve teaching in the *conditions of a given teaching situation*. When done with *research methods* it might determine which teaching series is best

for your students. This kind of “best practice” is not generalizable to other teaching-learning situations. *Action learning* is learning through musicking not, for example, lectures or “activities” such as classroom instruments.

¹⁴ “Let’s see the musical difference for the phrase if we breathe here rather than there.” Briefly discuss. “Let’s” = lets us (the teacher is a member of the group) rather than “I need.” The former amounts to “pull teaching” not “push teaching”—cooperative striving to meet a recognized group goal, rather than dictating that goal.

¹⁵ A highly recognized jazz quartet got “dissed” by dancers because their music wasn’t “good for” dancing; there were too many tempo and meter changes and no tangos, a national favorite (Finnish tango).

¹⁶ *Sounds* are organized and are created for valued social practices and institutions (e.g., religion, funerals, coming of age rituals, ceremonial musics, etc.) and are sanctioned by that group and usually beyond, by society—as *music* thus “making special” the presence in society of the institution and often legitimating it. The music continues to serve the institution but will evolve over time with changing musical trends and resources.

