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## **Editorial: TOPICS for Music Education Praxis**

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Welcome to the inaugural full issue of the journal, *Themes, Opinion, Practices, Innovation, Curriculum, Strategies (TOPICS) for Music Education Praxis*. TOPICS is a journal of the MayDay Group (MDG), which is an “international think tank of music educators that aims to identify, critique, and change taken-for-granted patterns of professional activity, polemical approaches to method and philosophy, and educational politics and public pressures that threaten effective practice and critical communication in music education” (MayDay Group 2024a). The MayDay Group is guided by eight iterative, dialogic, and non-hierarchical Action Ideals that communicate the aims and values of the MDG: anti-oppression and justice; collaboration across cultures; collaboration across disciplines; curriculum; ecological consciousness; policy; technology and digital media; and theory and philosophy.

TOPICS was first established as an open-access journal in 2015 by the late Thomas Regelski, a co-founder of the MayDay Group. Tom envisioned a journal that would “fill the gap” between theory and practice in music education (TOPICS n.d.) and that would focus on praxialism, a mandate that exists to this day. Praxialism in music education is an approach that understands music as a social, ethical, political, and practical human action, rather than simply an aesthetic object or purely “expressive”

artifact (Alperson 1991; Elliott 2005; Elliott and Silverman 2015). The word *praxis*, according to Regelski (2023), “is a term that we inherit from the Greeks. Aristotle’s Nicomachean 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” (92). Indeed, praxis, in the words of *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education* (ACT)<sup>1</sup> Editor Lauren Kapalka Richerme (2024), is “inextricable from ethical considerations” (3).

Drawing from Spanish-El Salvadorian scholar Ignacio Ellacuría, who was influenced by Marxist understandings of praxis theory (*viz.*, Critical Theory), Regelski articulated in his later works that praxis can encourage and advance emancipation from oppressive ideologies and be used in the service of political change. As Deborah Bradley (2012) reminds us, questions of what counts as “good” or “right” in music education must always be understood in relation to whom such practices serve and whose knowledge systems they privilege. TOPICS draws on this philosophical and ethical orientation, focusing on “practice”—the practical, praxial, praxical,<sup>2</sup> pragmatic—and the ways in which such practices may be forged to be better attuned to *phronesis* (an ethic of care), within the sociological and philosophical framework of Critical Theory and critical thinking. TOPICS authors are thus asked to reflect critically on the social, ethical, political, and practical implications of their work in music education (see Bates, Bradley, and Goble 2025).

### **Submitting to TOPICS for Music Education Praxis**

TOPICS publishes for an international audience of music education academics, students, and teachers in diverse contexts. The TOPICS journal aims to support both emerging and established global scholars who explore “practice” within the “theory into

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<sup>1</sup> *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education*, is another open-access journal of the MayDay Group, established in 2002.

<sup>2</sup> In his 2023 TOPICS article, *A Lexicon for a Praxical Turn in Music Education*, Regelski (2023) explains praxical curriculum as “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)” (90–1). Regelski used the term “praxical” after reading it in an English translation describing Ellacuría’s work (Gandolfo n.d.).

practice” and “practice into theory” problematic. Prospective authors for TOPICS are obligated to adhere to ethical standards in every aspect of the research and publication process. To help authors understand their ethical responsibility, we point to the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (World Conferences on Research Integrity 2010), of which the four core principles were included by scholar and ACT Guest Editor Roger Mantie (2025) in his article, *On the Ethics of Mentorship in Authorship, Reviewership, and Editorship*: “**Honesty** in all aspects of research; **Accountability** in the conduct of research; **Professional courtesy and fairness** in working with others; **Good stewardship** of research on behalf of others” (36, emphasis in original).

TOPICS authors thus must engage in the research, authorship, review process, and publication process “in a good way,”<sup>3</sup> following pertinent and appropriate research ethics protocols, acknowledging conflicts of interest responsibly, acknowledging all authors in authorship, ethically disclosing any use of artificial intelligence (AI),<sup>4</sup> following submission guidelines (MayDay Group 2024b) to the best of one’s ability to minimize workload for others, and engaging with honesty, thoughtfulness, and respectful provocation and dialogue during the review process. (As Roger Mantie (2025) reflects, “*I always ask myself if I would be willing to put my name at the end of [an anonymous comment]. If not, I edit*”) (38, italics added).

### **In this Issue**

This inaugural full issue of *TOPICS for Music Education Praxis* includes four articles by a diverse group of international scholars from Norway, USA, Sweden, and Spain. The first article, *How to Develop Aural-Improvisational Powers in Higher Music Education: Pedagogical and Philosophical Perspectives* by **Mattias Solli and Njål Ølnes** (Norway) explores two methods for developing aural-communicative capacities: aural-communicative ensemble learning, and the aural imitation method. Drawing from

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<sup>3</sup> “In a good way” is a phrase used in many Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island/North America, and refers to respectful practices that are undertaken with good intentions and relational integrity.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), “Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data, must be transparent in disclosing in the Materials and Methods (or similar section) of the paper how the AI tool was used and which tool was used. Authors are fully responsible for the content of their manuscript, even those parts produced by an AI tool, and are thus liable for any breach of publication ethics” (COPE 2023). Failure to disclose AI use will result in automatic rejection from TOPICS.

qualitative research on a jazz post-secondary program in Norway, the authors develop a framework that is informed by philosophical hermeneutics, developmental psychology, and enactivism. The article includes multimedia to further illustrate the research.

In *Measuring Social-Emotional Learning in Music Education* by **Danni Gilbert and Briana Nannan** (USA), the authors advocate for incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into music education assessment practices. They argue that while many proponents of music education state that music promotes social-emotional development, self esteem, positive mental health, and well being, these outcomes are not typically assessed in the evaluation of student progress. The authors contest exclusive use of standards-based musical assessment, offering instead a more holistic idea of assessment in music education that incorporates SEL into music education assessment practices. The article includes several examples of SEL measurement tools.

*Expandable Learning: Teaching Digital Music Production in Swedish Schools* by **Anna Linge, Göran Nikolausson, and Martin Knust** (Sweden) examines digital music production in Swedish music education. Drawing on scholarship in music and art education and media studies, they advance a values-based pedagogical model that can be used when teaching digital music production, informed by a multi-step “expandable learning” process. They conclude with implications in the classroom and beyond, touching on the commercial music industry, entrepreneurship, democratization of music making and dissemination, and cultural impact.

*Rethinking Music Teacher Education in Spain: Popular Music, Folklore, and the Pluralistic Curriculum* by **Isidoro García Díaz** examines preservice music teacher education in Spain. The author problematizes the hegemonic educational context that largely subscribes to Western classical canonic repertoire and pedagogical approach. Drawing from critical pedagogy, praxial theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy, the article advances disrupting entrenched musical hierarchies, and proposes a “pluralistic” curriculum that incorporates students’ musical cultures, re-signified local sound heritage, and active methodologies supported by emerging technologies.

This inaugural full issue presents provocative scholarship that advances our understanding of “practice”—theory into practice; practice into theory—and the ways in which we take up the MayDay Group’s Action Ideals (MayDay Group 2024a) informed by

praxialism. We hope you enjoy *Themes, Opinion, Practices, Innovation, Curriculum, Strategies* (TOPICS) for Music Education Praxis.

### **Ethics Protocol**

Nothing to declare.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Nothing to declare.

### **AI Disclosure**

Nothing to declare.

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Nothing to declare.

### **About the Authors**

**Danielle Sirek** is Arts Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Arts Education at Western University, Canada. Her program of research is primarily focused on teacher education in the arts and the ways in which artistic collaboration might inform pedagogical practice. Her research is published in journals including *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *International Journal for Music Education*, and *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*; and has been presented at conferences in a variety of disciplines including International Society for Music Education (ISME), International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA), and Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE). Dr. Sirek sits on the MayDay Group Steering Committee and is currently serving as Editor for the MDG journal *TOPICS for Music Education Praxis*. In addition to her scholarly work, Dr. Sirek sings professionally with the JUNO-nominated Canadian Chamber Choir and is a conductor with Amabile Choirs of London.

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