

## 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1 MEND Findings and Recommendations

Having maintained and respected the interpenetrations of the two strands of this enquiry (appraisal of the Irish music education dispensation and of philosophical pronouncements in apparent conflict), productive outcomes must now be offered as to how these separate lines of enquiry have cross-fertilized to the benefit of music education in general. These two strands have interacted in such a way as to distil certain truths that owe their discovery and (re)statement to the comprehensive documentation under consideration. The enquiry into the malaise in Irish music education has exposed certain underlying concerns leading to findings of general application, and the philosophical study has corroborated these conclusions.

The need for stable and applicable philosophical underpinning; to address and correct dichotomies and discontinuities of all kinds in the system; the confusion about the nature of performance; teachers as irreducible resource; the relevance of time management in curriculum planning - these have surfaced time and again as commanding issues which must be confronted. Response to these MEND Findings is the cornerstone of the edifice of practicable curriculum. With the helpful catalysis of White in binding these strands fast, it is hardly possible to pronounce on one without feeling that it is being stalked by the other. As Paul Lehman says: 'Philosophy and practice are mutually reinforcing, because philosophy provides a basis for practice, and practice provides an opportunity to test and validate philosophy' (MEND 403). The recommendations that follow are an attempt to fit philosophy in its rationalized and contextualized form to the template of Irish concerns. This concluding chapter then speculates further as to how this research could be expanded in other fertile contexts.

#### 7.1.1 MEND Findings<sup>199</sup>

1. There was little evidence at MEND of a **consistent philosophical stance** underpinning music education strategy in Ireland, apart from what has been tacitly imported as part of various methodologies favoured from time to time. There is a need for greater awareness and discrimination in this respect.
2. Without the benefit of ongoing philosophical dialectic, prospective teachers have been starved of opportunities to engage in philosophical discourse and to apply considered philosophical

principles to their teaching situations. The **route for philosophical underpinning to communicate** effectively from original thinkers to the taught cohorts is therefore inhibited.

3. There is a damaging dichotomy between academic and practical streams of music education in Ireland. This appears as mutual lack of understanding and intolerance between professional groups but also impinges on the learners, especially when questions of curricular **balance, relevance** and prioritizations of **available time** are concerned.
4. **Performance** as a component in music education is seriously misunderstood as to its potential (and limitations) vis-à-vis other components in the curriculum, its technical and interpretative demands, and its time constraints.
5. **Time management** of the curriculum demands constant reappraisal as to realistic estimates and expectations of quality, diversity and range in the *delivered* curriculum.
6. Teachers who are relevantly trained are the single most valuable resource in (music) education. There is concern that **teacher training** for music education in Ireland is neither adequate nor always relevant to the demands of the published curriculum, particularly so in relation to the revisions of the last decade at all levels of school music education. This must be reflected in progressively lower student standards - expected and/or achieved. The lack of teacher specialization in primary school music contexts necessarily limits or defines the standard and quality of the educational outcomes; these must reflect into higher levels.

### 7.1.2 MEND Recommendations

#### MEND Agenda I - Philosophical Considerations

##### General

1. Music education in Ireland should be underpinned by an informing philosophy. If this is to reflect the universality of music and music making as experience and faculty, it should itself aspire to universality of appeal and it should, at least, be based on a considered statement of minimal consensus. The philosophy should also take into account generally agreed understandings as to the nature and value of music/music education, appropriate involvements and diversity in what is offered in the curriculum. There should be ongoing collective invocation of fully informed (and ideally detached) judgement on matters germane to music education and support for the values arising therefrom. Promotion of the universality issue is

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<sup>199</sup> The Findings were separated as not being specifically curriculum-based. The MEND Recommendations, on the other hand, are either direct curriculum suggestions or are curriculum-linked.

assisted by making **SCHOOL music education the preferred vehicle of transmission**; all other provision should be seen as related to and deriving from that basic dispensation.

### Contextual

2. On the understanding that pure aesthetic theory (even that of Absolute Expressionism [Dewey, Langer, Meyer, Leonhard, Reimer]) is too restricting as a basis for contemporary music education with universal appeal, a philosophy which is open to referential and contextual applications should be adopted alongside one taking into account formal and praxial principles. Socio-cultural, functional/utilitarian dimensions in the educational experience should be valued, provided the bias is typically towards musical (artistic) intrinsicity over other considerations. The experience being a function of the repertoire, there are eminently serviceable criteria for making judgements of suitable music for the curriculum - based on inherent craft, sensitivity ('feelingfulness'), imagination and authenticity.
3. If music is to be part of the arts programme, it is unexceptionable that the conduct of the curriculum should conform to artistic theory. There should be a place, as demanded by circumstances, for the application of pure artistic theory, but the more adaptable the programme seeks to be, the more flexible it should be in admitting a wider range of musical experience. It should be noted that respect for aesthetic theory is not the equivalent of conforming to the canons and/or repertoire of western art music alone; it is therefore not necessary to disavow it in the interests of supporting other musical genres.
4. The criterion of quality/excellence is typically ineluctable in choosing educational materials and should be the guiding principle.
5. Product and Process are inseparable in music. Music education should seek to respect the importance of both and keep them in constant balance, both in practice and in inculcating attitudes.
6. Music education should seek to match musical challenge with the musicianship to respond to it. The recognition of creativity in learners at all levels should reflect their ability to manipulate materials with increments of skill and originality above the norm, and should be rewarded on that basis.
7. Variety (repertoire) and involvements (activities) in music education should reflect the demands of the class culture. Performance and listening should be in a balanced relationship. The possibility of either demanding specialist status should be carefully monitored and provided for. In particular the importance of the special place of performance in music education should derive from a validly popular attitude to it which has been honoured from time immemorial.

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Ministry to performance in general music education should not be confused with or equated to its specialist demands (see Performance below – MEND Agenda IV).

8. While music education should generally focus on the musical experience itself, as far as possible, it should be remembered that learning *about* music is a valid and necessary pursuit, which should be encouraged. Verbalization (use of language and concepts) cannot be dispensed with if this branch of music education is to be adequately covered.

### **MEND Agenda II - The State of Music Education in Ireland**

9. Advocacy efforts in Ireland should aim at establishing a condition of music education which recognizes school music education as the prime vehicle for inculcation in which:
  - i) Balance, Relevance and Time Management are in a compatible relationship which sets achievable targets, protects standards and interfaces satisfactorily with other areas of music education;
  - ii) such music education is available, accessible and affordable for all, on a countrywide basis;
  - iii) the defining characteristics of performance as a branch of music education are recognized and afforded appropriate support across its spectrum, distinguishing between its exploratory and specialist modes and their characteristic demands;
  - iv) deleterious discontinuities are identified and removed; (The fractured continuum between second- and third-level music education is a current case in point.)
  - v) practical and academic components of the curriculum are brought into balance and compatibility which characterizes holistic education;
  - vi) it is underpinned by well-understood philosophical principles and supported by ongoing methodological research;
  - vii) the norms of western art music are respected, especially in the area of methodology (**Specific MEND unanimous recommendation**);
  - viii) the repertoire and practices of other musics (popular, traditional and multicultural) are reviewed on an ongoing basis as to their timing and suitability for inclusion in the overall dispensation;
  - ix) teacher training is relevant to and adequate for the delivery of the curriculum;
  - x) the scope and intent of third-level education in music is subject to ongoing rationalization to ensure the most democratic provision and the optimization of the resources available;

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- xi) specialist teaching services are provided and readily available as the need arises;
- xii) all genres of music are initially afforded parity of esteem which is, however, subject to the refining processes of quality assurance and relevance for the ongoing educational need. In particular there is a need (as much socio-cultural as aesthetic) to close the virtual gap between western art music and popular genres if the school experience in music and the realities of music in community life are to be complementary and compatible. **This is one of the commanding challenges of contemporary music education.**

**MEND Agenda III - Continuum in Music Education**

10. The curricula for primary and second-level (junior and senior cycle) music education should be systematically reviewed on an ongoing basis (this is provided for in the NCCA documentation) and, if necessary reformed, for theoretical (documented) and practical continuity. This exercise should be completed by a committee drawn from representation of all the parties involved.
11. An effective continuity should be developed, linking second-level (LC) with third-level music education which does not arise merely from a lowering of standard of entry to third-level with the cumulative and downward-spiralling effect of this on the eventual standards reached by graduates. The possibility of developing a two-credit LC music option should be reconsidered, failing which special provision (by subvention) should be made for providing booster studies in music for suitable candidates, particularly in senior cycle for those identified as likely to pursue third-level studies in music. The 1995 White Paper on education referred to such a provision (see McCann - Ref. I P vi).
12. Talent education should be a feature of the overall music education dispensation. This should proceed along lines which recognize giftedness, disproportionate over-achievement and personal commitment as worthy of special provision. Talent education should not discriminate or be seen to discriminate against the general stream, but should be based on the understanding that the profession itself and the overall educational dispensation benefits from the selective encouragement and support of giftedness.

**MEND Agenda IV – Performance**

13. The subdivision of Performance into competent as distinct from proficient and expert levels should be recognized as defining the level at which it must be treated as a specialization. Effective performance cannot be divorced from ideas of skill acquisition and the time frame necessary to achieve the psychomotor facility, *inter alia*, to support it. Considering the provision, in theory at least, that has been made in the school curriculum in the last decade of

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the millennium to boost music education at all levels, and in third-level through the proposed ministry of the Academy for the Performing Arts (APA), **the only serious lacuna in Irish music education (again in theory only) is the lack of support, by government subvention, for the performance function at lower levels.** Effective performance typically cannot be achieved in the school ambience, considering the curricular time frames in question. An outgrowth of proficient and expert performance is necessary to support the global enterprise. This must be seriously considered as a specialization deserving of support in the overall interests of music education. **It should be encouraged by way of setting up arts centres throughout the country or by subventions to existing institutions to ensure an adequate distribution of services countrywide.** The peripatetic scheme, if it ever functioned effectively, is ripe for replacement by more permanent structures. Such a provision would merely mirror similar activity throughout the EU, Ireland being the least developed system in this respect within the union (see *Deaf Ears?* Report 1985).

14. Proficiency in Performance should continue to be demanded for third-level entry to music education (**another agreed MEND recommendation**), but this should now be seen against the background of widespread provision of expert performance teaching at lower levels and on the understanding of its being generally available, accessible and affordable.

#### **MEND Agenda V – Assessment**

15. Assessment is an underdeveloped resource in Irish music education and there is evidence that it is being inappropriately applied as to its aims (see Ref. II D iiib). The fact that assessment in music can be subjective by nature should not inhibit its being carried out in the first place. Initiatives in this regard should be pragmatically based and should not be taken to levels of obsessive preoccupation with the assessment procedures themselves, which can tend to interfere with and detract from the teaching process. (See Swanwick - Ref. III P iv for a simplified model worth exploring.) It should be used judiciously to test the standards implicit in curricula, and to inform the teaching/learning process; it should always be musically orientated. Assessment is a useful tool across a wide spectrum of applications (see Lehman - Ref. III P iii for an impressive exposé of this theme); without assessment the idea of standards is meaningless, accounting for much of the malaise in Irish Music Education.

#### **MEND Agenda VI - National Music (Multiculturalism)**

16. The possibility of the increased presence of Irish Traditional Music and Musics of the World's Cultures (multicultural repertoire) in schools should be kept under constant review by a

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dedicated sub-committee of the Forum for Music. The outcomes of MEND deliberations and analysis are inconclusive on both counts.

17. Pedagogical interaction, in a dedicated sub-committee, between the traditional and formal systems of education should be encouraged to lubricate the processes of cross-fertilising current educational provision with the most promising dimensions of the ITM (Irish Traditional Music) enterprise.
18. The research base dedicated to **methodology** for the enhancement of Irish traditional music modules in formal education should be strengthened at the University of Limerick.

**MEND Agenda VII - Third-level Music Education; Teacher Training; The Academy for the Performing Arts**

19. Standards of entry to third-level music education should be maintained and should not reflect the problems of the lower standard currently built into and therefore attainable (typically) from the Second-level Senior Cycle (Leaving Certificate) curriculum. Skills in performance should continue to be esteemed highly in prospective candidates for all third level courses in music. Facilities for the inculcation of these performing skills should be more widely available to ensure fairness to the candidature on a countrywide basis (see MEND Agenda IV - Performance above).
20. Rationalization of all third-level music courses should be undertaken by a dedicated sub-committee to ensure the widest range of discrete options; the results should be presented in composite form for the guidance and benefit of prospective candidates.
21. Teacher Training should be perceived and provided for as an ongoing professional evolution in three distinct phases: (i) pre-service, (ii) induction/probationary with links to parent institutions, and (iii) continuing professional development assisted by rationalized and co-ordinated in-service modules.
22. The newly-established Academy for the Performing Arts (2000), to be functional within five years, should be the flagship committed, above all, to multi-lateral collaboration with all educational institutions in the state committed to the promotion of music, as is implicit in its promulgated brief. Its functions should be carefully monitored to ensure that it does not unnecessarily destabilize current provision. The Academy should establish liaisons and be influential at all levels of performance training and assessment.
23. Courses committed to the (continuing) professionalization of musicians should be more available. These should, in general, widen the knowledge base in philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, methodology, advocacy for music education and other promotional skills, research

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method, ethics and so on. Such a programme could be spearheaded by the Forum for Music (see MEND Agenda VIII below) in collaboration with the Academy for the Performing Arts and other interested agencies acting for the profession.

24. Philosophy of Music Education modules should be considered for inclusion in the curriculum for all music teacher training programmes.
25. There is a need for specialist music education services to schools if standards are to be set and maintained. The intimate relationship between promulgated (intended) curriculum and the levels of specialism required to deliver it should be invoked in reviewing the entrenched government position on the primacy of the class-teacher input to child-centred education at primary level. If curriculum is tied to (and synonymous with) standards expected, its ongoing review should be coupled with enquiry into ways and means of making specialist music education services available at all levels. The current situation as the culmination of a history of neglect is unacceptable.
26. There were consistent calls at MEND for the promotion of research-based materials<sup>200</sup> for school music teaching based on Irish folk music themes. The work of Albert Bradshaw in this respect was cited as particularly germane and worthy of further encouragement and development.

#### **MEND Agenda VIII - A Forum for Music Education**

27. The successful outcome of MEND deliberations depends on the continuity inherent in the workings of a permanent forum for music education in Ireland. Such a forum was established in November 1996 as part of the MEND proceedings and as mandated by the delegates to the MEND conferences. While the forum is theoretically still extant (2001), its work having been arrested in late 1997 by default in reconvening its plenary membership, there seems little point in its coexistence with the similarly dedicated but more recent (1999) Forum for Music in Ireland. The recommendation, which existed in embryo from the early days of the MEND Heralding Conference in 1994, therefore stands that:

**A permanent forum for the processing of issues related to music education in Ireland should be established, maintained and supported by all agencies of music education in the state.**

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<sup>200</sup> The support for Recommendation 26 comes from the detail of the MEND debates (some of which produced their own recommendations). The work of Bradshaw (in the area of Irish-folk-music-related teaching materials) was consistently praised for its quality and appositeness.



## 7.2 Overall Conclusions

### Background: The MEND Aspiration

It was arguably predictable that the Irish initiative called the Music Education National Debate (MEND), because of the tendentiousness of its ‘back to basics’ approach, would evolve towards a preoccupation with the light that philosophical dialectic could throw on educational malaise. MEND started as a well-intentioned attempt simultaneously to identify the factors which define the gestalt of Irish music education, and its problems. However, it was quickly to expose the initial shortcoming of an inability unambiguously to establish the interrelationships, interdependencies and interpenetrations of the components in the gestalt to fashion a hierarchy for a systematic reform strategy. Questions about such diverse matters as access, relevant involvements, diversity and balance in the curriculum, repertoire, aesthetics, skill acquisition, teacher training, assessment, quality and standard, entertainment, the effective use of time, specialization and streaming, continuum, definitions and so on, jostled in a Babel of self-interest. Individually and collectively they were all linked to and dependent on an understanding of the nature and value of music itself and of its inseparable facilitator, music education, predicating philosophical enquiry and the advocacy that flows from it.

But a philosophy of music is not the same as a philosophy of music education. Theories about the nature and value of music itself are interesting to scholars, *inter alia*, but they are not innately threatening; it is only when they lead to a *modus operandi*, such as education implies, that they can become aggressively contentious. In fact, it is difficult to keep an aspirationally pure philosophy of ‘music education’ from becoming prescriptive; it is a somewhat unstable discipline and, because it is so susceptible to emotional and highly charged challenge, it tends to be reactive. The drama of the confrontation with scholarly pronouncements on music education philosophy which followed in the wake of the MEND enquiry could not have been predicted. This transported the whole exercise onto a different plane, which was to witness a fortuitous and fructifying interaction with a contemporaneous debacle in the global scene. The *dénouement*, if it can be so termed, of this wider conflict was to become the substance of the current thesis. This thesis, therefore, owes its origin to the MEND Initiative.

### **The Universality Aspiration and the Irish-American Linkage**

Music and music-making have been shown, and are assumed to be, universal experience and faculty.<sup>201</sup> The universality claim calls for philosophical enquiry. As to the value of music, the observable and overwhelming human involvement in it can be taken as irrefutable evidence, and as justification for its inclusion in education. On the other hand, there are so many extant theories as to the nature of music that the feasibility of a universal philosophy of music must be called into doubt; philosophical enquiry itself is so protean, almost by definition, and ever-changing in its discoveries. It follows that the search for a universal rationale for music education is likely to be barren if it seeks the accommodation of all views. However, in the interests of ideology, the attempt should be made, beginning with music itself and moving towards a rationalization of rival stances. If the exercise leads, as it almost ineluctably must, to the defeat of the universality claim, the search must continue for a compromise position which will effectively accommodate the wide spectrum within which instances of music occur.

The triumvirate that formed the nuclear force and the source of much of the material with which the MEND Report engages were the North American music education philosophers, David Elliott and Bennett Reimer, and Harry White, Professor of Music at the National University of Ireland - the catalyst, so to speak. White's seminal and provocative paper, with the cryptic and puzzling title - *A book of manners in the wilderness*<sup>202</sup>, was calculated, from its philosophical stance, to draw the other two into a response which linked the Irish case into the broader context of theory and practice in American music education.

The management of the general and specialist streams of music education and the intimately-related conceptual confusion as to the nature of performance within them were at the centre of a vituperative exchange (1996) between Elliott and Reimer, each putatively aspiring to recognition as the prime philosophical underwriter of the new US National Standards which had just been issued (1994). The US held its breath, as Ireland did, in anticipation of a new order in music education to usher in a dawning millennium. Few could have anticipated the destabilizing force of the presence of two such seemingly polar theories about music education. Both scholars are respected in their shared field. The rationalization of these counterpositions, when first examined, was thought to present an impossible challenge; yet, a secure path for music education would remain dangerously obfuscated until the two were reconciled. The aim of this thesis, in the interests of giving clear direction especially to Irish

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<sup>201</sup> Frank Heneghan, *Interpretation in Music: A Study in Perception, Expression and Symbol* (Dublin, Trinity College Dublin and Dublin Institute of Technology, unpublished treatise, 1990; MEND Document 608), 8.

<sup>202</sup> Harry White, Music Education National Debate (Dublin, MEND Report. Document 308, 1996).

music educators, was to accept the challenge to offer a satisfactory clarification of the issues at stake. As detailed below, this proved to be possible.

### **Philosophies in Conflict**

Elliott's book<sup>203</sup> was the self-styled antithesis of Reimer's still unchallenged pronouncements of a quarter of a century earlier<sup>204</sup>. Because of their virtual polarity it could be assumed that the theories invaginated a comprehensive middle ground; to reconcile Elliott with Reimer would be to re-establish some normality in music education theorizing, at least as far as formal approaches to schooling were concerned. Both scholars attempted the exposition of a universal philosophy of music education. The two versions are approached from diametrically opposed stances and, therefore, offer a valuable overview of the terrain to be rationalized into adaptability to contextual considerations, the eventual template used for reconciliation. Reimer's is characteristically systematic and candid (it is only when he deals with Praxialism [Elliott's favoured approach] that he betrays any suspect emotion). But the universal philosophy theory, while it is a model of balance and containment, was a self-admitted utopian ideal and therefore a failure - a noble one at that - and as such was no more than a compromise(d) paradigm lacking universal adaptability; after all, Absolutism and Referentialism, in their wider claims, had always been incompatible. However, in a magisterial epilogue Reimer rounded off his essay with an invocation of cultural anthropology in seeing music as a vehicle for the expression of the essence of any culture, through its art, with a relationship to the Platonic idea(l). Although Reimer does not develop his own views on art at this stage, he leaves us with two valuable access points to an understanding of the nature and value of music and music education, viz., context as validation, and artistic integuments relating music to aesthetic theory which, in its purest form, can act as a template for all musics - and not, significantly, just for western art music.

Elliott's work, for all its flashes of brilliance, is as aggressively reactionary as it is elusive. The universality which is encapsulated in his rationale stems from his insistence that music is a universal experience and faculty - surely an unexceptionable assumption. This yields the two cornerstones of his theory, namely a manifold multicultural approach, claiming that 'all musical cultures are innately equal', and an insistence that *active* music making, by a definition that has also come under severe attack, should be the preferred educational methodology.

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<sup>203</sup> David J Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Elliott's book was heralded around the time that MEND was being planned, but had been published before MEND Phase II, at which Elliott was a featured speaker.

<sup>204</sup> Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Second edition, 1989).

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The problem in Elliott's addressing of the universality issue is that the 'innate equality' claim is as meaningless and naïve as asserting that 'all men are born equal' and the null hypothesis criteria that Elliott advances to prove it are spurious. Besides, the allegation that he fails to give full status to listening as an independent form of music-making places the universality claim under unsustainable pressure.

Elliott's equality theory, too, is indiscriminating and his unmediated ideas on listening are too revolutionary, on such a fundamental issue, to garner general support. Yet he tempers his equality claim by conceding that not all musics are suitable for educational purposes, thereby, and in an important way, arguably approving Reimer's criteria for quality in music and in music education. The acceptability, in principle, of the main thrust of his 'universal' philosophy (because, in his case, it lacks balance in the distribution of time to the various involvements), depends for its validation, like Reimer's, on the concept of context - the interrelated conditions under which an instance of music occurs and by which it can be validated or otherwise (notionally there are contexts that would be unacceptable in education, on ethical grounds). This is a powerful means of adapting a refractory philosophy to the demands of society but it must be seen as a pragmatic alternative to universality rather than establishing it in the first instance. It accounts for, as much as it confirms, the failure of the universality hypothesis. Context is, therefore, a potent criterion in essaying the reconciliation of rival philosophies.

### **Reconciliation**

The review of David Elliott's book by Bennett Reimer and the rebuttal by Elliott are quintessential to an understanding of the cut and thrust which advanced their mutual positions vis-à-vis one another to a point where polarity seems to evaporate on most, if not all, of the substantive issues. It is the individual biases and balances, rather than the presence or absence of the components themselves, that set them in opposition. There is a plausible way forward for music education which is not anarchical and which can coexist with the widest possible occurrence of variation in approaches, without appearing to single out Elliott and Reimer as the only two. The next step is the ultimate question as to claim to universality.

It is no criticism of Reimer to say that the universality aim is defeated. It just is not possible, except by massive distortion, to bring such theories as Absolutism and Utilitarianism (as a referential value) or Langerian Expressionism<sup>205</sup> and the claims of the extrinsic benefits in music, into agreement. Even

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<sup>205</sup> The reader is referred to the works on aesthetics of Susanne K. Langer (see bibliography in Heneghan, *Interpretation* above (MEND CD-ROM Document 608) for her comprehensive treatment of the subject.

Reimer's own sensitively conceived version of Absolute Expressionism (Music Education as Aesthetic Education) is ill at ease with 'the incessant pressure of "Me" and "Mine" and the present tense of American popular culture'<sup>206</sup>. Nor would David Elliott advance the claim by offering for our consideration an amorphous array, such as total multiculturalism suggests, with its innate equality or common denomination, its implied right to inclusion in the educational canon without justifying itself, but above all with its spectrum of motivations such as he lists as accruing to it - interpretive, structural, expressional, representational, social, ideological and, of course, personal meanings. The extrinsic benefits of music education are refractory to any template of pure art. So the universality aspiration must metamorphose into something more adaptable to life as lived, and more compatible with the saturating presence of music.

### **Referentialism as Model for Contextualism**

So what must move; obviously ... the enabling philosophy, but by how much? It is axiomatic that philosophy must be adaptive; it should not seek to impose pre-conceived canons on its subject, but rather it should allow its topic to suggest its own delimiting parameters.

Reimer's definition of Referentialism, which is not itemized as to all its possible inclusions, is already adaptable. It might even be seen as encapsulating all the theories about music not covered by the Absolutist and Praxial approaches, the two that uniquely, admirably and separably align themselves to the music itself. 'Musical sounds, like words, *refer*. They point outside themselves to meanings, images, ideas, emotions, descriptions of places, things, people and so forth.'<sup>207</sup> Reimer also articulates his awareness and concern that by recognizing a plethora of non-musical results (such as Elliott's growth in self-discipline and self-esteem, optimal experience and 'flow') from musical activities, as referential values, he is rendering music vulnerable to being rivalled or supplanted by other occupations offering the same extrinsic benefits. There is a curious but distinct feeling of a slightly motley collection of values (well defined, it may be added, in educational advocacy literature) in search of philosophical sanction.

Referentialism is therefore beginning to take on the guise of standing proxy for, or masquerading as, the universal idea. It is even adaptable to an interpretation that, since musical sounds refer, the ivory tower engagement of the Absolutist, in his cerebral (and, yes, hedonistic) preoccupations with form and the Epicurean delights of Hanslick's 'Tönend bewegten Formen', is acceptable as an instance of Referentialism. Even the process of music (Praxialism) conjures up a wealth of meanings and ideas, if

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<sup>206</sup> Harry White, *A book of manners in the wilderness*, (MEND 308, 9).

<sup>207</sup> Reimer, *Should there be a Universal Philosophy of Music Education*, (MEND 401, 7).

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we accept Elliott's unexceptionable claim that 'works of music are multi-dimensional thought generators ... [and] music making is thought-impregnated action', and can arguably be included. So Reimer's Referentialism, as defined, is already a highly adaptable stance to accommodate the widest imaginable spectrum of musical experience. But since it is, *a priori*, an accepted theory of how music interacts with the human psyche, and with, perhaps, a somewhat narrower focus than here outlined, it is prudent to rename it in its wider, and indeed, comprehensive applications. Reimer has chosen Contextualism to define this stance which, because of its manifold adaptability, itself has the trappings of universality.

Contextualism, in Reimer's definition, is an all-embracing description of music as social text, and as such it can interact with any philosophical position in its ready adaptability to the human condition. 'In the contextualist view, the sociocultural functions of music are the focus of attention. What matters most about music is not its products or its processes or its messages or their consequences, but its status as a means of cultural/social engagement. Music is, first and foremost, a playing out of, or manifestation of, or aural portrayal of, the psychological, emotional, political and social forces of the human context in which it exists. As such, it is the function music plays in cultural participation which most explains its nature and its value. Viewing music as bearing certain cultural traditions and values, as transmitting those traditions and values, as inculcating them, commenting on them, sometimes calling them into question or even opposing them; that is, viewing music as an instrumentality for engagement with the traditions and values of a particular culture, is what is emphasized in the contextualist point of view. Music must be issues-oriented, value-centered, sociologically and politically involved in the culture's ongoing life.'<sup>208</sup>

As intellectual property, Contextualism can hardly be criticized as a mere clever semantic side-step to rehabilitate the universal idea with a socio-cultural flavour - surely an attractive option, in keeping with contemporary egalitarian ideas. All contexts are validated and all musical experiences are therefore candidates for inclusion as adding to the wealth of human interaction with the forces of music as universal experience and faculty. It is not that all musics are equal, by whatever definition, but rather that all instances are entitled to parity of aspiration until they prove themselves as worthy of being embraced in the music education enterprise.

### **The Criterion of 'Music as Art'**

There remains the ethical question, and here again Reimer is helpful. The writer suggests that music in the curriculum (in other words, in music education), if it is to be included in the arts programme, has

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nothing to lose from insisting that its artistic qualities be weighed as its justification. In this it cannot be seen as standing aloof from the aspirations of almost all music that is likely to be suggested for inclusion in the curricular repertoire, for ‘music as art’ is a binding force that can be embraced by all, provided the criteria are sensitively enlarged to include well-crafted music that has not lost contact with a basis in formal beauty. There is a compromise involved here, but it is surely a small price to pay for the enveloping security. Contextualism is a flexible philosophical tool, but it should not deny ethical or artistic considerations a place in its protective armoury.

The range of observable musical experience is bewildering to confront in this third-millennium world, which has shrunk to the confines of a ‘global village’ through the wonders of committed scholarship, communication and technology. It may be difficult to reconcile the symbolism of an African ritual dance<sup>209</sup>, embracing all the arts and music within them, on the one hand, and Bach’s Art of Fugue, with its declared erudition, on the other, as two of a kind, unless the validating philosophy is extremely accommodating. But accommodation is the stuff of philosophy.

### **The Ascendancy of Contextualism as satisfying the Universality Aspiration**

The attractiveness of the universality aspiration as a gestalt, bound, it is true, by the strong instrumentality of music, but comprising elements which are individually incompatible, is limited in scope; the amalgam is unpromising as an agency to bind all instances of music in a comfortable liaison. Referentialism, on the socio-cultural left, contains the embryo of compromise, though it is hard-pressed by the demands of Absolutism on the extreme right of the continuum. Because of the acceptance that product and process are inseparably bound, Praxialism has a tendency towards the right, too, since all musical processes presumably aspire, through the agency of their artistic intentions, which are not in question, towards the ultimate perfection and condition of ‘esteemed works’.

Education, bound by definition to the ministry of judgement and evaluation, which are natural to the human condition, is the facilitator. Process, no matter how valued in itself, eventually gives way to optimization. But all the music defined within these stances exists in a context - the interrelated conditions in which each example occurs. This is the binding force that must now be pressed into

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>209</sup> The writer was privileged to have been invited as an International Reporter to the Second Pasmae (Pan-African Society for Musical Arts Education) Conference on Music Education in Kisumu, Kenya in July 2003. The experience has added copious affirmation to the views here expressed. A typical indigenous African music group presentation, taking all that is claimed for it into account, is essentially a self-contained community-based experience in which there is coalescence of the musical arts (music, drama, dance, theatre, poetry *et al*). It is, on a first hearing, dramatically different from western art music in its presentation, involvements and expression. It is a perfect example to test and prove the canons of a contextual philosophy, in responding to the question ‘what

service to bring them all within the same rubric. If the defining dimensions of craft, feeling, imagination and authenticity (morality in its general sense) are further enjoined when exercising judgement, the philosophy of Contextualism benefits by being compatible with the commonly accepted norms and aims of education and adapts to a definition of what a music education philosophy should be.

## 7.3 Final Recommendations

In listing these recommendations (7.3.4 below), an evolutionary synthesis of ideas is being offered so as to provide an entry for scholarship, where further comment and research, aimed at clarification, are called for.

### 7.3.1 Background to the Recommendations

Music is a universal experience and faculty (MEND 608) and predicates the ministry of education. The commanding problems in music education for a new millennium were identified by Bennett Reimer (MEND 402; also 5.2.1 and 6.2) as i) the conceptual confusion about the nature of performance, ii) the high culture/pop dichotomy,<sup>210</sup> and iii) the impact of multiculturalism. To respond to these, a philosophy of music should be plausible: a philosophy of music education should be applicable. In enactment it should be feasible in a time-sensitive way; relevant (contextual is a proposed word here); balanced in the circumstances to which it is applied; flexible, if possible, to allow for a variety of applications. There is an aspiration towards universality of philosophical approach to music education. In curricular choices of repertoire the notion of music as art (though without any bias towards western art music as a paradigm) is persuasive as a criterion. The concept is strengthened by an approach through pure aesthetic theory, again without any pejorative preconceptions as to its favouring Absolutism, but with openness to compromise and adaptive universality. Finally, the MEND Agenda (Chapter 3), as debated, and the MEND Recommendations above, as outcomes, are offered as adaptable contextual models for the application of music education philosophy.

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is it that we want music to achieve'?

<sup>210</sup> The nature of performance is clearly more important to any philosophical differences between Reimer and Elliott than the dichotomy or multiculturalism. Reimer's three dilemmas were, nevertheless, treated on their merits in separate sections. The performance issue, is, in the author's view, a major concern. See Recommendations 13 and 14.



Reimer's *A Philosophy* (1970/1989) must be acknowledged as a classic, but surely, after a quarter of a century of perceived infallibility, it was, more and more inviting, if not expecting, a challenge. David Elliott's *Music Matters* (1995) threw down the gauntlet, and is epochal in having forced reappraisal on the complacent world of music education philosophy. But at a personal level the inevitable exchanges, fortunately documented, between these two scholars revealed a reactionary sharpening of focus on the essential issues that at first seemed to define their stances as incompatible; in other words, they were mutually fructifying. Product and process have been re-established as an inseparable pair, validating a wide spectrum of respected philosophical stances. It has been conceded that activities (performing and listening being typical) have to exist in a balanced relationship, whether thought of as separate or integrated. There is agreement too on the use of focused learning experiences based on verbal techniques (Colwell - MEND 403, 12). The relevance of music as art is celebrated either implicitly or overtly, though the writer feels that concessions from pure aesthetic theory will be required. Elliott is a total multiculturalist by necessity, for the idea is integral to his praxialist ideas; Reimer in a series of subtle, but honest, shifts, over the years, has brought himself in line - with political correctness, it might be added. Therefore both scholars are responding in characteristic ways to the Reimer-defined tripartite dilemma of turn-of-the-millennium music education, as noted above. Elliott's philosophy is at ease with viewing context as an approach to music education which respects its nature and value; Reimer is less so, but since the neologism of Contextualism is his, it is obvious that he is prepared to embrace its low level of inbuilt dissonance to forge a philosophy which is adaptable to contemporary ideas about user-friendliness in music education. Reimer and Elliott have addressed the universality issue. It has been argued that, under the concept of Contextualism, a formula for reconciling their differences has been found, thereby satisfying the universality claim, as far as it is possible in an imperfect world.

### **7.3.2 Whither Contextualism? Research Possibilities**

In analysing the philosophies of Elliott and Reimer with a view to establishing a compromise position and a way forward, the flexibility of Contextualism has opened up an inviting field for further enquiry. By definition, context will vary from system to system. Differences might be expected to be quite dramatic; each system therefore could benefit from the lead provided by this study. There are two obvious examples. Since the study insisted on the relevance of American practice in music education to the problems being investigated, it would be surely relevant now, as Reimer pointed out in his response to White (MEND 402), to examine the possible impact of its findings on evolving American practice. And since the thesis is being submitted to an African university, it is hoped that its findings may be worthy of investigation in an all-African context.

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The philosophical lobby in the United States has scarcely had time to recover from the putative destabilization caused by the Elliott/Reimer debacle. However, music education in the US is both compromised and challenged by the fact of state autonomy in the matter of the implementation of curricula. It is arguable that the level of unscriptiveness invaginated in Contextualism would be welcomed by individual states as they continue to come to terms, as is known to be the case, with the effective implementation of the 1994 American National Standards.

The African situation is one which seems very ripe for the kind of study that was undertaken in Ireland. Here the context of multiculturalism, as a single strand, could not be more different from the Irish case, or, indeed, from the American. The Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE) is currently addressing this issue. It is complex and refractory, since multiculturalism in the continent of Africa is not an imported phenomenon; it is an indigenous one. The potential for Contextualism to validate, if indeed this is necessary, an African approach to an African problem can hardly be overstated. But Contextualism, in its fertile relationship to and compatibility with other respected philosophical stances, carries with it the responsibility to keep the curriculum balanced and respectful of the parity in esteem that is due to all musics.

### 7.3.3 Research Question and Hypothesis

Since the issue of *MM* in 1995, the philosophical stance taken up by Elliott has attained some notoriety in the global scene of music education as being a direct challenge to that stated in Reimer's *A Philosophy* (1970/89). The writer's brief in offering guidelines, through MEND, for reform in music education in Ireland was so inhibited by this celebrated disagreement that he had to essay a reconciliation of opposing views to provide the basic building block for plausible recommendations.

In the course of the Analysis (Review of Literature - Chapter 5) and the Rationalization (Chapter 6), the essential parameters of perceived core difference were isolated, these being mainly the inseparability of product and process; the balanced relationship between performing and listening as activities in the curriculum; the significance of music as art (a covert dimension) and the related criteria for choosing repertoire. When the direct confrontational literature (Reimer's review of *MM* and Elliott's rebuttal) was analysed in detail, together with the source material, it was found that both scholars subscribed to these principles. **It is concluded that the philosophies are therefore reconcilable and that the hypothesis is proved.** In other words, it has been possible to find a satisfactory level of accommodation between the dissonances and apparent contradictions in current authoritative and highly respected philosophical statements on music education (those of Elliott and Reimer) to facilitate effective application in their reconciled format. The questions of relevance,

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balance and time management (6.7.12) are more in the area of implementation, and are therefore adaptable in the hands of local educators, and less generically crucial to the main thrust of the philosophies themselves, which are not mutually invalidated by differences in possible enactment.

**The research question** as to whether the final, reconciled, positions of Elliott and Reimer could further be refined into a stance approaching universality was a natural sequel. Reimer, in coining the word Contextualism and carefully guiding his readers to subsume other stances (Absolutism, Praxialism and Referentialism) under that rubric, fabricated a very plausible verisimilitude in relation to the aspiration towards universality. Elliott's philosophy is, by definition, contextual. The analysis and rationalization, leading to reconciliation, thus also **led to the discovery of an effective and benign interface (Contextualism) which would support universality**, depending on (albeit possibly compromised by) the informing definition of music as art.

#### 7.3.4 Recommendations

1. Where music is concerned, school music should be the central educational target in western cultures, aimed at the initial refinement of universality of experience and faculty.
2. Hellenic notions of the separation of academic and practical (performing) streams (with hierarchical implications) should be abandoned in favour of encouraging closer liaisons between, if not actual merging of, teaching disciplines in school contexts.
3. Curriculum development should be underpinned by a consensus philosophy of the relevant subject.
4. Curriculum, to be feasible in enactment, must be relevant, time-sensitive and balanced.
5. The promulgated curriculum should be the template for the delivered curriculum; quality assessment procedures should exist to evaluate the match.
6. Philosophies of music underpin philosophies of music education, which are, by definition, derivative. Since philosophies of music education impinge on the actual educational process they must be reconciled for individual applications.
7. Such applications form a context; each is a unique gestalt, which must be responded to.
8. Teacher training must be relevant, and be informed by and sensitive to the gestalt.
9. Where music education is to be part of 'education in the arts' - an unexceptionable classification - it should be compatible with a workable aesthetic rationale. This should not give preference/priority to any particular culture. In particular, aesthetic theory should be re-

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examined to maximize its compatibility with contextual ideals; this may entail compromise, which should, nevertheless, be carefully delimited, by consensus.

10. The nature of performance (especially in its psycho-motor demands with its associated heavy time-dependence) is such that it must be recognized as a specialism, in addition to its 'exploratory' dimension (a Reimer term [MEND 401, 9 and 13]) in general education, and supported in both modes.
11. The art of listening to music must be cultivated in the school ambience, since this is the main musical 'activity' of the majority of the adult population in western cultures. Performance at proficient or expert level is neither necessary nor sufficient for this to be possible. School music, on the other hand, should not be confined to listening only; a balanced syllabus of making and appraising (composing/performing and listening/evaluation) should be offered. The American National Standards (1994) are recommended for consideration as a balanced formula for school music applications in western and related cultures. Listening stimulated by performance is an ideal; listening as 'vicarious performance' is a pragmatic compromise which can simulate that ideal.

### **Recommendations for FURTHER Research**

12. Contexts outside of western culture form other *gestalten*. (Ireland, a western economy, was the target of one strand of this thesis, hence the emphasis, which does not, obviously, preclude other research targets.) These may and should be examined as possible applications for the contextual philosophy advocated as the outcome of this thesis. In particular, the musical arts in Africa, which are considerably more integrated than in western cultures, offer a fascinating field of study to test the contextual approach.

Of the two philosophies of music education examined in this thesis, that of Elliott (the Praxial) had many ambiguities and inconsistencies to be clarified, but it fitted comfortably with the idea of context (praxis itself being a context) as conferring value on musical experience in education. Reimer's universality essay (the latest position examined in the thesis [MEND 401]) accepted Praxis as an approach, modified Absolutism, and used Referentialism tendentiously to propose a new position - that of Contextualism. There is material for further study in holding a variety of aesthetic theories up to the flexible template of Contextualism - to establish the full scope and implications of the latter, and the degree of compromise necessary the better to harmonize one with the other (in the case studied, Elliott with Reimer). The North American scene of music education, which spawned the rival philosophies in the first place, is particularly ripe for further scholarly research and dialectic along the lines of enquiry opened up by this thesis.

### 7.3.5 Envoi

It has been painstakingly stressed in this thesis that national systems of music education and the philosophies on which they are based (Ireland being the specific target of this study) ideally look to unbiased theorizing as a fundamental building block for reform strategy. It has been argued that the American system, imperfect as it is by admission, is a useful paradigm, as revealing the typical shortfall between theory and practice, its being also impossible to trace its kaleidoscopic manifestations to a single doctrinal provenance. However, philosophical dialectic in North America, and in relation to music education, has been at such a confrontational level in recent years that it may be taken as encapsulating the widest spectrum of views, as indeed its search for universality of approach and adaptability must now become increasingly tendentious.

As has been suggested, a universal philosophy of music education is a utopian ideal: but the notion of Contextualism, binding all systems of music education to one another as to the context in which they operate, is not. It is a plausible compromise position, accommodating and only minimally dissonant with respected theories of how music education works in practice; it depends on the acceptance of training in music as a species arts education, by a flexible definition. The concept was clearly sublimated by the rationalization study to bring rival American philosophies (Elliott and Reimer) into practicable agreement. The desire for reform in music education in Ireland spawned MEND. The Report and Recommendations from the initiative were stalled by the need for an underpinning philosophy - a reconciliation of existing conflict - from which consensus could follow. The purpose of this thesis was to work towards that end. The strategy of keeping an intimate and constantly cross-referenced relationship between the progress of the theoretical adaptation exercise and its practical application to a named system (the Irish one) has not only shown Contextuality to be a plausible approach, but has confirmed its adaptability to the needs of other systems, too (see 1.9). In keeping with the twin-stream format of this study, the two sets of recommendations underline this interdependability and show how generality and specificity in approach (philosophical enquiry and the parameters of the system [Irish] in benefit) can be mutually fructifying.