



Review of Abeles, Harold; Hoffer, Charles; & Klotman, Robert. (1994). *Foundations of Music Education*, 2nd ed. New York: Schirmer Books

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KEYWORDS: music education

ABSTRACT: This article reviews the second edition of *Foundations of Music Education* by Harold Abeles, Charles Hoffer, and Robert Klotman. The review identifies the positive aspects of the text, while urging additional content for the next edition.

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1. Summary and Background

[1.1] In this second edition of their music education foundations textbook, Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman have prepared a thorough overview of the school music education enterprise in the United States. The original edition of their book was published in 1984, resulting from a need the authors experienced in their own graduate music education classes for a comprehensive text on issues in the profession. This new (1994) version updates the earlier content by identifying a number

of significant events and themes that have emerged in the decade between editions. According to the authors, there is approximately 40 percent new material and the book is expanded by 10 percent:

The second edition of Foundations of Music Education expands the scope of the original volume to include such issues as the perception of an educational crisis in the last decade. . . ; the ever-growing impact of new technologies; the increasing urgency of calls for cultural pluralism; and the implications of new theoretical positions in the psychology of education. (Preface, pages xiii, xiv)

2. Organization and Content of the Book

[2.1] The physical layout and structure of the second edition has changed little from the first. Following an introductory chapter that gives a broad historical review of music teaching and learning, the book is loosely organized into reports of a series of influences on music education, including philosophical, sociological/psychological, and pedagogical.

[2.2] A listing of the twelve chapter titles offers a glimpse of the contents: (1) history of music education; (2) philosophical foundations of music education; (3) the musical and aesthetic foundations of music education; (4) the role and purpose of music in American education; (5) sociological foundations of music education; (6) social psychological foundations of music education; (7) psychological foundations of music education; (8) applications of psychology to music teaching; (9) curriculum; (10) assessing musical behaviors; (11) research and music education; and (12) teacher education and future directions. Some minor changes in labeling have taken place, e.g. “Assessing Musical Behaviors” replaces “Measurement and Evaluation of Musical Behaviors,” reflecting a more current use of terminology; and Chapter 4 was formerly titled the Purpose and Function of Music in American **Musical** Education.

[2.3] Each chapter presents a kind of “mini-course” on a topic. Each concludes with a summary of the salient topics, and with study and discussion questions, individual or class activities, supplementary readings, and references. The following examples are taken from the first chapter:

[2.4] In Chapter 1, the summary is presented in the form of a multiple-page chronological table of the history of music education, offering a quick review and a visual reference for the sequence of music education events in American society. The study questions focus the reader’s attention on the factual content of the chapter. Examples of study questions:

Why were Lowell Mason’s efforts at establishing music in the schools limited to vocal music at the elementary level? On what basis did he justify the inclusion of music in the school curriculum?

What were the significant points made at the Tanglewood Symposium?

[2.5] The suggested activities involve more reflection and synthesis of information, and require expanded contextual understanding of the content of the chapter. They could easily be incorporated into a course syllabus as assignments or individual projects for paper writing and presentation. An example of a suggested activity:

Select a significant period in music education and explore in detail what was occurring in world events at that time. Who was being educated and what was occurring socially during that period? How did these events and attitudes affect music education?

3. Philosophical Foundations: Chapters 2, 3, and 4

[3.1] Although they have separate titles and themes, these three chapters essentially comprise the philosophical foundations component of the book. Chapter 2 sets out the philosophical positions and answers the question, “What does philosophy have to do with music teaching?” The authors’ answer is three-fold: (1) music teachers must make decisions and take actions; (2) a comprehensive, systematic understanding of what one is trying to do serves as a guide for action; and (3) teachers need to be consistent in what they do. To support this foundation for decision-making, AB&K outline three basic philosophical viewpoints: rationalism, empiricism, and pragmatism. [It is interesting to note that in the first edition of the book, there were

four philosophical views that formed the framework for this discussion: naturalism, idealism, realism, and pragmatism. In this second edition, rationalism replaces idealism, empiricism replaces realism, with naturalism subsumed as a variant of empiricism.] The chapter 2 summary includes a table comparing strengths and weaknesses of the four [sic] philosophies.

[3.2] Chapter 3 is centered around the issue of arguing for the inclusion of music and the arts as subjects for study in the school; identifying characteristics of the aesthetic experience; and the always controversial topic of “quality in musical works,” formerly titled “quality of musical works.” Leonard Meyer is featured prominently in this section, summarizing his views into four essential points, mainly dealing with expectations. Included also is a brief discussion of the non-musical value of musical study, a topic of continuing interest in the popular press in the 1990s.

[3.3] The final chapter on philosophy takes the “why” question into the “how” of environments for learning, namely public schools. The questions include why we need schools, and then why music learning should take place inside them as part of the total development of children. According to the authors, this all leads to the Music Educators National Conference because we need a professional organization to keep us on track:

Once music became formalized in a social institution such as the school, it then became necessary to provide a forum where music educators could interact and exchange ideas that would ultimately provide direction and standards for the profession. (page 103)

This statement seems to provide a rationale for the reference to or inclusion of, throughout the remainder of the book, nearly everything published by the MENC during the 20th century.

4. Sociology and Psychology: Chapters 5, 6, and 7

[4.1] These chapters are connected through their emphasis on the “people” dimension of music education; the sociology, social psychology and psychology themes are explored in detail.

[4.2] Chapter 5 emphasizes the tremendous importance of the social environment in which a child grows up as the influence on musical development. The traditional nature/nurture question opens the discussion, followed by sections on socialization, and music as human behavior. Extended descriptions of factors affecting musical behavior are reviewed, including functions of music, social stratification, age stratification, ethnocentrism, pluralism, cultural standards, mass taste, and the effect of technology on music and music teaching.

[4.3] The authors differentiate the content of Chapters 5 and 6 this way: While sociologists might study the roles of music in society (Chapter 5), social psychologists might investigate how individuals acquire musical preference (page 149). The topics of self-image, conformity, roles and expectations, competition/cooperation, leadership, and attitudes are covered in Chapter 6, along with creativity in its various forms in music education.

[4.4] Psychological foundations in Chapter 7 begins with a review of what the authors call dominant psychological schools of learning theories and theorists. These include behaviorists, such as B. F. Skinner and cognitivists such as Jerome Bruner, followed by developmental psychologists Piaget and Gagne. Sections on cognitive processing, musical ability and motivation, and contextual factors contribute to the potpourri approach of this chapter. Several graphic figures of learning models illustrate the content. The study questions are thoughtful and applied:

How might a behaviorist middle school general music teacher organize a lesson on the features of African music? How might a cognitivist middle school general music teacher organize such a lesson? (page 227)

[4.5] This type of study question actually leads into the next section of the textbook, chapters 8-10, where the focus shifts to teaching. Chapter 8 applies the psychological principles to music teaching situations, Chapter 9 recommends the organization of music content and music instruction through a focus on curriculum, and Chapter 10 advises how to determine what has been learned as a result of this instruction.

[4.6] Chapter 8 includes a wide range of somewhat unrelated topics on psychological themes: (1) a review of the taxonomy of

educational objectives originally attributed to Benjamin Bloom (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning); (2) the development of music objectives stated behaviorally; (3) the issue of accountability (with just a hint of the standards and assessments coming in the mid-1990s); (4) individualized instruction; (5) programmed and computer-based instruction; (6) music instruction with computers; (7) a behavioral approach to music instruction; and (8) Gordon's Learning Theory.

[4.7] The chapter on curriculum begins by defining curriculum, differentiating between curriculum and course of study, and continues by listing many types of curriculum projects that have been sponsored or endorsed by the MENC over the past several decades. There is a heavy emphasis on past MENC documents for descriptions of programs of study. Other newer topics of curricular interest are introduced, e.g., discipline-based learning, early childhood education, multicultural music education, and music education for the handicapped.

[4.8] Renamed from the first edition, the assessment chapter incorporates new thinking on the issues of assessment that developed during the past decade. The authors address the importance of this topic while acknowledging that music teachers in general have been poorly prepared to implement assessment techniques in their music programs. Following a brief theoretical grounding in assessment vocabulary and concepts, the chapter describes of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and the corollary music assessments; program evaluation and teacher evaluation are auxiliary sections.

5. Future Directions

[5.1] The final two chapters of the text involve research and teacher education, two topics that should not only examine the present but consider the future of the profession. The research chapter is an excellent introduction to the music education research initiative. This second edition provides a brief new section on ethnographic research, an expanding area of inquiry in music-related research. The suggestions for analyzing research, connected to an actual research study for critique, give the reader strategies for personal research review and writing.

[5.2] The chapter on teacher education includes several new topics. In the past decade, there were varied efforts to address issues of the qualifications of teaching personnel, among them reports from the Holmes group (higher education professionals) and from the Carnegie Commission. All of them recommended changes in the preparation of teachers in general, promoting increased time in the focused internship experience following the undergraduate preparation in the disciplines themselves. Along with these generic education reports, the chapter reviews the newer MENC publication on teacher education, Partnership and Process, which proposed strategies for the recruitment and retention of music education students in addition to promoting the connections between public schools and colleges in fieldwork experiences for students.

6. Conclusion and Critique

[6.1] As a foundations text for graduate courses in music education, the Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman text offers an initial level of understanding of how we arrived at this (1994) point in time in the American culture of schools, and identifies important themes for study and discussion. The content is comprehensive and well-written, with clearly organized chapters and activities that lend themselves easily to various forms of segmented study. This second edition will continue to serve the music profession well as a standard reference on the history and status of school music education programs in the United States.

[6.2] As a reference for music education broadly defined, however, the book just barely scratches the surface of this foundation. It could more accurately be titled "Foundations of Public School Music Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries," because its focus is so specific to that population of school-age learners, and because the text basically documents what has been done rather than what could be accomplished if we build on this foundation.

7. Specific Concerns About the Book

[7.1] In chapter 1, the opening five pages are devoted to the historical base for music study, in Plato and Aristotle, in the

schola cantorum and the medieval university, and in the conservatories and music schools from the 1500s to the 19th century. By page five, however, the content of the book is firmly planted in America, and from that point on the emphasis is not only singularly American, it is singularly public school in its discussion.

[7.2] Even within the public school theme, however, significant issues are not included. There is no discussion of current issues in education that are affecting the delivery of music instruction, such as the organizational structures of schools, middle schools, school-based planning teams, cooperative learning. . . Issues of urban education and the decline of music programs in urban school districts. . . Magnet schools and fine/performing arts high schools. . . How do these different learning environments influence the music programs? What about the advocacy efforts that draw together schools and communities on behalf of the arts?

[7.3] Especially in the sociological chapter, there also needs to be an awareness of the music education structures outside the frame of public school, the influence of community music schools, the influence of church music programs, the influence of other professional organizations beyond the MENC, such as the American String Teachers Association and the Music Teachers National Association. Reading this book, it appears that no music education takes place unless it's in public schools.

[7.4] In the section on curriculum, there should be discussion or description of influences on American music curriculum such as Kodaly, Orff-Schulwerk, Dalcroze, and Suzuki. In the section on handicapped learners, there is no mention of the most recent federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which has prompted the placement of increasing numbers of multiply-disabled children into music programs in school settings (called inclusion), as well as increasing the demand for private and community-based music instruction adapted for these learners.

[7.5] The authors of this text have in the past established themselves as organizational leaders for the music education profession. Both Hoffer and Klotman have been MENC presidents, and Abeles consistently contributes to MENC efforts. I would encourage all of them to broaden their horizons, and to establish the third edition of their textbook as the symbolic and structural foundation for music education--not just for today, but for the 21st century of American musical education.

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