

II.3 “Positive Action through Positive Reinforcement” An Example of Performance-Based Music Education in Contrast to a Reflection-based Music Lesson

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This article deals with the differences of a performance-based approach of music education in the USA and a reflection-based approach in Germany. The lessons represent very different ways to reach students through music. The students respond either more enthusiastic or more rational, but always positively.

This article will be structured differently to the reflections of the other lessons. In 2014, I had the opportunity to work as German researcher at the University of California Irvine. During this time I collected data of a music lesson in a local school and prepared it for the International Symposium in Leipzig,¹ Germany. As I do not have personal experience of being a music educator in the United States, my perspective on the Californian Lesson is a perspective from outside and consequently the setting of the Analytical Short Films (ASF) with my observations and explanations will be reversed. In my role as a researcher I will present my observations of the Californian Lesson (ASF-1) and the American teacher’s idea of music education based on the recorded interviews and in connection with philosophical foundations. Afterwards I will contrast certain aspects of the Californian Lesson with the German Lesson from Lower Saxony (ASF-2) whose philosophy and structure is more familiar to me.

After focusing on the Californian Lesson with its performance-based approach, I will contrast it with the reflection-based approach of the Lower-Saxony-Lesson, and finally, provide insight into the effectiveness of both approaches to music education.

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Analytical Short Film 1 (ASF-1) – Steps of a Performance-based Music Lesson

An example of music education in California, USA

Music education is part of the curriculum in most public schools. Elementary schools focus on general music education using a variety of different approaches to learning basic musical elements. In middle school² and high school³ students can often choose between different music courses. There are three different categories of music classes: ensemble (e.g. wind, string, brass, jazz band, choir), composition/theory and, harmonizing instruments (e.g. guitar, keyboard). In addition, many schools also have a marching band. An important function of this band is to accompany the school's football team during the games and therefore, the band rehearses and performs only during the high school football season (late August to November). The bands, orchestras and choirs are important for showcasing the school to the community therefore several public performances during the school year are an integral part of the school calendar. Beyond that, many schools participate at musical competitions and festivals requiring a lot of preparation, and the success in the competitions often influences the music curriculum of these schools.

The school where the music lesson was recorded is located in California. This school was selected to demonstrate a good music lesson, because the school has an outstanding music program⁴ and is known for its strong music education. Even though the performances of the music groups are of a high standard, the teachers in the music department are very relaxed and down-to-earth. The teachers believe that it is more important to provide a strong music education and practical experience for their students than using students to showcase their music program. Therefore, they decided not to participate in music competitions⁵, but rather concentrate on various other

2 (for students who are between 10 and 14 years)

3 (for students who are between 14 and 18 years)

4 With four string orchestras, four wind bands, three jazz bands and six choirs the music department of this school is extraordinarily big.

5 Music Contests as part of secondary education have a long tradition in the U.S. to represent the school in public and to support the legitimization of music education in public school curricula. But there have always been controversies about these competitions. Some reasons for the criticism are summarized by Miller (1994), who identifies competition as the antithesis of productivity, creativity and individuality.

possibilities for the students to express themselves through music. The chosen lesson demonstrates how the choral teacher achieves this goal and how he interacts with the students in a way that make them feel valued and supported in their musical development.

The presented lesson was recorded in a chorus class for beginners. Most of the attending students are in ninth grade, first year of high school, when the students are between 14 and 15 years old. They have different musical backgrounds. Some of the students already play instruments, some of them have previous choral experience, and some have no practical musical experience at all. The objective of the class is to start from the beginning and to teach the basics of singing, music theory and music history. For the students, it is possible to take this class not only in the first year of high school as a freshman, but also as a sophomore, junior or senior⁶. The student interviews show that this class is very popular even for advanced singers. Several students take this class a second or third time⁷. We will see in the lesson that the mixed ages and different musical experience of the students contribute to the learning process. A special characteristic of this class is that it is a women's chorus with over 80 students. They meet two to three times a week for 90 minutes each class.

The lesson was filmed in the beginning of 2014. By this time, the students had attended the class for half a year, since the beginning of the school year is in late August. It was the last lesson before the final exam of the first semester. This exam consists of two parts: a written exam about basic music theory, and a singing performance in small groups. Content of the recorded lesson includes a review of relevant music theory topics and a continuation of working on the current music pieces. At this point in the school year, the class rehearsed three songs in preparation for a performance in March 2014. Due to the longer music theory review there was only time to rehearse two of the three songs.

6 It is common in the U.S. to call students in high school “freshman” (9th grade), “sophomore” (10th grade), “junior” (11th grade) and “senior” (12th grade).

7 See for example student interview 4, 64 ff.

The lesson can be divided in eight phases:

	Phase	Content	Time
1	(Arrival)		0:00 – 3:04
2	Administration	Attendance Check	3:05 – 7:05
3	Theory	Music Theory Review (Final Exam Preparation)	7:06 – 41:36
4	Warm-up	Voice and Body Warm-up	41:37 – 49:07
5	Rehearsal	Rhythm-Reading of “Hold On”	49:08 – 65:06
6		Sight-Reading and Singing of “Hold On”	65:07 – 74:10
7		Singing of “Stand Together”	74:11 – 83:43
8	Organizations	Organizations and Leaving the Class- room	83:44 – 86:24

In the following section, I will describe five different phases of the lesson (Music Theory, Warm-up, “Hold On”, “Stand Together”, Speaking about the Value of Art). Since it was not possible to create the ASF in collaboration with the Californian teacher, I picked notable points of the lesson that demonstrate the setting and the different phases of the lesson and situations that were mentioned as successful teaching moments by the teacher in the interviews. Therefore, the cuts are chronological with the exception of Sequence 5 (“Value of Art”).

This part of the conversation about the value of art took place at the beginning of the lesson in the context of reviewing music theory topics. However, I put it at the end of the ASF, because it addresses philosophical aspects of music performance and thereby demonstrates the intentions of the teacher. Subsequent to the ASF, I will substantiate the performance-based concept with theoretical aspects of the praxial philosophy (Elliott 1995).

Fig. 1: Tabular Presentation of the Complementary Information for ASF-1, California-Lesson

Cut No	Time	Angle	Source	Reminder	Point of Quality
1	00:00	back	17:24	Music Theory Review Logic of sharps and flats in key signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music theory review at the beginning of the lesson. • Class reviews logic of sharps and flats in a certain key signature. • Teacher explains it in a simple language so that the students can understand it easily. • This phase is teacher-centered although the students are allowed to speak up or make comments without raising their hands.
	00:20	back	17:44	“Light Bulb”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request of a student. • Student is assimilating the new information and wants to make sure that she understood correctly. • Special moment of learning. • Demonstrates also that the student feels comfortable to ask a question.
2	00:36	front right	46:24	Warm-up Working on opening the throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on singing techniques. • Singing open tone. • Students are engaged and serious about the warm-up. • Students are copying the teacher. • Warm-up exercises are already familiar.
	01:08	front right	47:33	After working on opening the throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result of working on opening the throat. • Improvement is clearly audible.

3	01:21	front right	52:58	“Hold on” Sight Reading and Speaking the rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight reading of a new music piece. • Teaching method is to speak the text in rhythm. • Teacher helps with clapping the beat and speaking loudly. • Pianist supports learning process with comments and also clapping the beat.
4	01:40	back	01:14:09	“Stand together” Students like the piece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous reaction to sing “Stand together” is very positive. • Students are enthusiastic about singing this song.
	01:46	front left	01:15:11	Working on the dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on the dynamics means that the students already internalized notes and rhythm. • Teacher uses singing techniques that were developed in the warm-up. • Clear connection between warm-up and singing.
	02:02	front left	01:17:25	Singing it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement after working on the dynamics is audible.
5	02:32	back	37:46	Value of Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher speaks about the value of art. • He wants to generate an awareness of the impact of music on our lives. • Deeper understanding of music as an expressive art and the importance of live music.

Sequence 1 – Music Theory Review

Although the Californian-Lesson represents a performance-based music education approach, music theory is an important component in the curriculum. The teacher states that knowing about basic musical concepts and historical backgrounds helps a student to better understand the music and in consequence leads to deeper appreciation of it. Therefore the teacher implements music theory units in his lessons that are relevant for singing. In the recorded lesson, we see a review of music theory aspects that will be part of the final exam. This written exam helps the teacher to assess the students. He mentions in the interview that with the exam, he is able to evaluate the students more objectively. The other way he assesses the students is through the practical part of the exam where the students have to perform sections of current pieces in small groups spontaneously in front of the class, and he observes them during the lesson. The teacher calls this “immediate assessment” (teacher interview after the lesson, 197). But, as one can see from the teacher interviews, as well as the student interviews, it is apparent that grades are only marginally important and that appreciating the music and being part of the group is crucial. Therefore, the requirements for the written exam are not especially high. The students are allowed to use their notes any time, even during the exam.

In Sequence 1, we see the class talking about keys in minor scales. They discuss if the relative minor key of E major can be called D flat or just C sharp. The teacher’s approach in this situation is “teacher-centered”, but we see in other parts of the lesson that he is also open to questions and comments from the students and that he often encourages the whole class to answer and to react. In fact he seems to be in a dialogue with the whole group and the students appear to be attentive and engaged. He explains the music theory in a way that the students can grasp. In the interview, the teacher confirms that for him, the needs of the students are essential and that he tries to address all students at their different paces and skill levels. That means that he changes methodological approaches and language to explain topics in several different ways so that every student has a chance to understand it. This way of teaching is highly appreciated by the students. They respond well to the step by step process and entertaining teaching style as one of them expresses:

He is a very good teacher and he ... instead of just like throwing everything at you at once like with the key signatures. We will go over it slowly over a course of like

two weeks maybe. So, we don't feel overwhelmed with all this new information and we just repeatedly learn it, so we know it for sure and it is not a matter of remembering it. Whereas most classes they all give it to you at once. And then you either remember it or you don't. I think his strategy of teaching is very good (S-Interview 3, Lines 260 ff.).

In Sequence 1, we see such a special moment of learning. A student is processing the teacher's explanations about key signatures in minor keys and the relation between major and minor.



Fig. 2: Music Theorie Review

This student wants to make sure that she understood correctly and shows the teacher with her question that she is assimilating the new information and is learning something new. These kinds of moments are very important for the teacher. He speaks in the interview about “light bulbs” turning

on when he sees that the students learned something. He calls himself a “light bulb junkie” (T-Interview I, Lines 232 ff.).

Sequence 2 – Warm-up

In the warm-up, the class is working on singing techniques. In Sequence 2, we see how the teacher is focusing on opening the throat. His approach is to teach the students singing techniques. Even with the inexperienced students, he wants to achieve a high standard. He teaches them to breathe correctly, to use their whole body to support the voice, and to help themselves with physical gestures to imagine openness. As mentioned above, the teacher likes to work with freshmen because it is rewarding to see the development of the new students. He compares the singing abilities of the students in the first week of the semester with those of an elementary school chorus. After teaching them how to open their throats and to use other singing techniques the students sound like young women not like young girls, and this is not only motivating for the teacher but also for the students. In the student interviews they confirm that in the beginning of the class most of them had limited experience with singing and that they were embarrassed by the

warm-up exercises. It was strange for them to stretch and to use their voices in unfamiliar ways. In this situation, it helped them that the class consisted of different age groups and that they could learn from the older students. Since the experienced students seemed to be comfortable with the exercises the freshmen soon learned that the warm-up is important and helps to improve their singing (S-Interview 2, Lines 265 ff.). In the video, we see a lot of dedicated students who seem to be confident about using their voice and gestures. In the review of the lesson, the teacher highlights this warm-up as successful.



Fig. 3: Warm-up

working on opening the throat, the tone improvement is clearly audible.

The students notice that the teacher is serious about the quality of their singing, he doesn't just accept the first outcome. They see him listen intensely and afterwards he interrupts the singing to integrate a small exercise to support more openness. In the sequence we don't see the whole episode, but the second short segment of Sequence 2 shows us that after

Sequence 3 – “Hold on” Rhythm Reading

In Sequence 3 we see just a very short section of the fifth phase of the lesson. In this phase, the class rehearses one of their music pieces. Although this piece is not completely new some of the parts are, and the students have to sight read the new sections. The teacher's approach is to let the students first read the song text in rhythm. The music is very syncopated and the rhythm is challenging but he helps by conducting and speaking the text loudly. In this phase, the students master the correct rhythm and in doing so also realize that learning a new piece of music is hard work. In this part of the lesson, the mixed age groups are again beneficial as the abilities of the advanced singers help the whole group to learn the new rhythm much faster. Another helpful factor is that the teacher is accompanied by a pianist. Having a pianist in a public mu-



Fig. 4: Rythm Reading

sic class is not common, but can have a huge impact on the musical experience of the students. In this case, the pianist is provided by a parent's initiative called Booster Club⁸, through which money is raised to pay the pianist (among other things). The pianist is extremely helpful for the

teacher and everyone appreciates her. In the lesson, we see that she is not only playing piano, but also supports the learning process with tips and comments on the students' performance.

Sequence 4 – “Stand Together”

The second music piece the class is working on is “Stand Together” by Jim Papoulis. In Sequence 4 we see a spontaneous joyful reaction by the students when the teacher announces that they will now work on “Stand Together”. They appear to be happy to sing this piece and in the video they emphatically say “Yes”. In the interviews the students confirm that this piece is their favorite. They are very enthusiastic about the song and state that they will be really sad when they will move on to other music and won't sing it anymore after the concert. They also talk about their feelings when they sing this song in class. In the following excerpt of the student interviews, the students demonstrate their emotions regarding “Stand Together” (S-Interview 4, Lines 370 ff.):

I: How do you feel when you make this music?

N: I think that song in particular when I'm singing it ... like the first time we ever sang it all the way through, I don't generally get all choked up during the song. But I definitely did with this one because ...

M: I cried the first time we heard it.

N: ... it sounded so powerful because we were all super excited because we finally learned it. I think more performing the song, I don't know how it's going

⁸ Besides raising money for the pianist, the members of the Booster Club help the teacher with all kind of organizational requirements like organizing concerts, selling tickets and raising money for attire, music, facilities etc.

to transfer to the audience but when I'm performing, I definitely feel a lot emotionally, really.

O: You were absent the day that he actually showed it to us on YouTube, a different part of singing. And that's when we all fell in love with it before we even started singing it.

M: We heard it and we're like, "How are we going to do justice to this song?" That actually made me cry when I first heard it. I personally feel so like as we are a unified choir because even though we all have completely different parts, it's like the sopranos are singing the actual lyrics, the soprano twos and the altos are giving rhythms, but it feels so unified because for a good amount, we don't worry about the harmonies themselves.

(...)

Q: Personally it is my favorite, it makes me feel connected to everyone in the room. Everyone's just together on this song.

M: The first "stand alone, see the rain that's falling down ..."

N: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. Don't even start. I will probably cry.

P: This was a song that we picked up really fast and I think it's because everyone ... you're not going to find a single person in this class, I think, who's going to say, "Oh, that's not my favorite." So I'm pretty sure that's why we learned it pretty quick. And we get like sad if we go by a class and not practice it because he knows that we know it.

M: It's like, "Well, we could still work on it."

I: Yeah (laughs). I see.

P: Yeah. It just makes me happy. I really enjoy that song, singing it with emotion and it's really great. It's really inspiring.

This extract demonstrates clearly that the students fell in love with this song. It also shows that, beyond liking to sing it, they feel inspired and there is something special happening in the group. The students can sense an emotional connection between each other when they sing this song. The music, the harmonies and the passion for this song unifies them while singing together and it allows them to have a special musical experience.

This feeling of being part of a group and accomplishing something extraordinary together is extremely important for the teacher. He emphasizes the value of being a collective on several occasions during the lesson and also in the interviews. In particular, he explains that he differs between the words "choir" and "chorus". He uses "chorus", because it expresses the sense of community he strives for and explains that it is divided into "chor" and "us". In contrast, he states the word "choir" contains the letter "i" and indicates a more self-centered perception. This is just a play on words, but the teacher is serious about the meaning. He makes the class strong by spreading this

team spirit and the student interviews show that he is successful. The students feel the emotional connection and are proud to be part of the group⁹ (S-Interview 1, Lines 35 ff.):

A: My favorite part is usually when once we know a song really well, we can ... the whole group sings it with confidence and then at one point in the song you can just ... everyone is together and there is kind of harmony (...) and that is my favorite part of singing in the chorus.

This kind of experience is one of the music teacher's most important goals.

In the teacher interview after the lesson, the teacher points out another goal for this phase. He strives to work with the students on the song's dynamics and helps the students start to express the music more musically. In the second part of Sequence 4 a short video segment illustrates how he clarifies the dynamics of the beginning of the song. There are only a few minutes left in the class for working on "Stand Together", but in this short time the teacher is able to clearly demonstrate the intended dynamics and he supports the students with short comments and vivid conducting. He also reminds the students occasionally throughout the lesson on their singing technique (e.g. "take your breath, ladies, always prepare") and thereby, connects the warm-up with the actual singing. The students learn that everything they do in class is connected. Theory helps them to understand the music better and the warm-up improves their abilities to sing and to express music. The difference between the first attempt at the song and the result after working on the tone is clearly audible.¹⁰ The teacher values this outcome as a sign of successful music education.

Sequence 5 – Value of Art

Throughout the lesson, the teacher talks about various topics. They are not all directly connected to the music pieces and some are not even connected to music in general but rather with the daily living of the students.¹¹ Many of his remarks are somehow funny and amusing to the students but he also implements meaningful comments like we see in Sequence 5. When speaking

⁹ See also lesson, 01:13:02 ff.

¹⁰ See lesson 01:14:22 compared to lesson 01:15:30.

¹¹ For example when he talks humorously about how to deal with boys (lesson, 00:07:54 ff.).

about the value of art he suggests that making music is not just a cheerful activity but has a deep impact on our lives. He explains that the students are able to enrich the lives of the people in the audience with their music and that human contact is one of the most important factors. With comments like these the teacher generates an awareness of the essence of music and perhaps arouses a deeper understanding of what music can mean to his students and others. In the student interviews, we can see that some of the students already realize the meaning of music for themselves. They speak very passionately about their deep feelings when they are singing and about the impact that being part of this chorus has on their lives.¹² They express what the teacher wants to achieve in his music lesson and show that his way of teaching is effective. They confirm what he is reflecting on in his interview (T-Interview II, Line 283): „Sometimes I wonder if the kids are having as much fun as I have. But I hope that they leave feeling empowered. Not only about art or about their education.”

Performance-based music education

This extract of the California-Lesson demonstrates a music education approach where performing and collective musical experience play an important role. In ASF-1 we see sections of a lesson that is structured like a choral rehearsal. It exemplifies music lessons in middle and high school in the American school system, where attending a music class means to participate actively in an instrumental class or a chorus. Therefore it can be seen as an example lesson based on a praxial philosophy of music education. Performance-based music education in school has a long tradition in the U.S. as mentioned earlier, but the philosophical foundation of performance-oriented concepts, called praxial philosophy is not as old. First approaches were initiated in the 1990s by Philip Alperson (1991), David Elliott (1995) and Thomas A. Regelski (1996)¹³. Their concepts can be seen as an alternative to the aesthetic philosophy of music education proposed by Bennett Reimer's "A Philosophy of Music Education" (1989), in which listening to "good music",

12 For examples see S-Interview 3, Line 226 ff.; S-Interview 5, Line 145; S-Interview 2, Lines 234 ff.

13 For historical developments of the praxial philosophy see for example McCarthy & Goble (2005).

analyzing of musical elements and developing aesthetic sensitivity are the predominant focus.

The Californian teacher describes his approach with the key sentence: “Positive action through positive reinforcement” (informal teacher interview). His acting in class and his explanation in the interviews regarding his intentions, provide several links to the praxial philosophy, especially the ideas of David Elliott who developed theoretical foundations of a praxial philosophy and implications for music education in school in his book “Music Matters. A New Philosophy of Music Education” (1995).

In the following, I will summarise the most important statements of the Californian teacher and relate them to the philosophical framework of Elliott. With the teacher’s opinion that “positive action” is a priority in music education, he agrees with Elliott’s point of view and the basis of praxial philosophy, that “(m)usical works are not only a matter of sounds, they are also a matter of actions” (Elliott 1995, 49). In order to underline that making music is a natural human practice, Elliott created the by now well-known word “musicing” (Elliott 1995, 49)¹⁴. “Musicing” accentuates musical activity, but should not be misunderstood as unreflected action. Elliott emphasizes that “Musicing in the sense of musical performing is a particular form of intentional action” (Elliott 1995, 50) and therefore, it means to act “*thoughtfully and knowingly*” (Elliott 1995, 50, italics in original). In the California-Lesson and the teacher’s interviews, we see that the teacher shares this perception (without citing Elliott directly). He states that implementing music theoretical aspects (like we see in ASF-1), talking about historical contexts and explaining musical standards are important for the students to become not just singers, but musicians (T-Interview I, Lines 21 f.). Musicianship for the teacher doesn’t just mean to perform and to listen to music, but to be reflective and informed about music. Therefore he includes theoretical issues in his lessons so that the students “have more handles (...) to grab on, to have ownership of the music” (T-Interview I, Lines 81 f.). Beyond that, the teacher has the opinion that this will also lead to more appreciation for the music (T-Interview I, Line 86), which for him is one of the main goals of music education. Elliott’s concept supports this point of view. In his philosophy the

14 Similar to the musicologist Christopher Small who established the verb “musicking” in order to emphasize that music is an activity: “Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing ‘music’ is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it at all closely.” (Small 1998, 2)

“aims of music education, (...) are to enable students to achieve self-growth, self-knowledge, and musical enjoyment by educating their musicianship in balanced relation to musical challenges within selected musical practices”. (Elliott 1995, 129)

In America it is expected that music teachers are trained in instrumental or choral teaching and directing as they generally teach instrumental or choral classes. Therefore, it is crucial to have a broad knowledge about rehearsal techniques, as well as pedagogical skills. Elliott outlines the requirements of a music educator as follows:

Knowing how to diagnose, coach, critique, and correct a student’s musical thinking-in-action; knowing when (and when not) to interrupt musicing and listening for verbal reflections; knowing how to reduce temporary problems that impede musical problem solving; and knowing how to encourage students’ ongoing efforts when they experience temporary boredom or frustration. (Elliott 1995, 134)

The positive and enthusiastic student interviews and the singing outcomes seen in the lesson, suggest that the Californian teacher is highly skilled and that he succeeds in balancing musical challenges, theoretical aspects and enjoyable moments by utilizing his musical expertise and his entertaining teaching style. By watching the whole Californian Lesson¹⁵, there are many examples of his “positive reinforcement”¹⁶. He tries to be connected to every single student and wants to initiate a positive learning process, similar to Elliott’s goal to keep the students in the “musical flow channel” (Elliott 1995, 134).

In addition to the teacher’s proposition “positive action through positive reinforcement”, he emphasizes the importance of being part of the group and to succeed together. Using the word „chorus“ versus „choir“ expresses this perception explicitly (see also Sequence 4). In his view, it is essential for students to work together and to develop a common spirit through music making, especially in a chorus. He sees this ability as an important aspect of musicianship and tries to raise this mutual awareness in the class. Bowman underlines that this kind of collective experience is constitutive for a performance-based approach.

15 In the ASF-1 we just see fragments of his way of teaching. To get a broader picture of the interactions in the classroom I recommend watching the video of the whole lesson. In addition, the teacher interviews offer valuable clues about his intentions and his understanding of being a music teacher.

16 For examples see lesson 00:13:21, 00:14:53 ff., 00:17:56, 00:19:31, 00:19:58.

Musical performance is not just physical, then and not just psychological, but social as well. It is not just about sounds and selves and “flow”, but also about people and relatedness. On this particular point, it is important to be very clear: the social is not simply the context in which music making occurs, it is a fundamental component both of the making and what is made. (Bowman 2005, 147)

These aspects of performance and musicianship culminate in the teacher’s belief, that music is not just something marginal. He is convinced that music is necessary for our lives. He experienced this himself and therefore, wants to enable the students to have similar fulfilling experiences. His ultimate goal is to put the students in touch with their soul. He feels that deep experiences with music will add a dimension to their lives that is unique and highly enriching. If the students leave the classroom saying that art became an essential piece of their life, the teacher is more than happy. In his eyes, supporting the students to enjoy art, to understand art, and to affirm the importance of art in the human condition, is one way to help raise a great new generation (see T-Interview II, Lines 264 ff.) He summarizes his wishes for the students in the interview as follows:

Not that they need to be a professional musician, but that they keep it and that they respect it and that they see how much work it takes. And that they end up loving music for what it is. A great expression of the human condition. That’s what I hope. (T-Interview II, Lines 303 ff.)

The important role that music can play for everyone’s life is in fact underlined by Elliott as he states that “*MUSIC education is a unique and major source of several fundamental life values*” (Elliott 1995, 308, italics in original). These values are for example: “self-growth, self-knowledge, musical enjoyment, flow and the happiness that arises from these” (1995, 308). With emphasizing the aspects of enjoyment, flow and happiness Elliott stresses values that are of particular importance in the American culture. We will see in the German Lesson that the teacher bases his lesson on a totally different theoretical background where reflection and analysis are important, leading to a very different mode of self-growth and self-knowledge.

Analytical Short Film 2 (ASF-2) – Steps of a Reflection-based Music Lesson

An example of music education in Lower Saxony, Germany

As mentioned earlier, my perspective on the California-Lesson is affected by my German background and by working and studying in a very different educational system. Therefore observing American music lessons was a new experience for me and showed me various strategies of teaching that included lots of performing as illustrated in the Californian-Lesson. As a result, I decided to reverse ASF-1 and ASF-2 with respect to the familiarity with the methods. Since the American performance-based approach in ASF-1 is different from my own experience, I wanted to choose a familiar way of teaching for my ASF-2. I found it in the lesson of Lower Saxony. While in the California-Lesson, collective performance and musical experience is of utmost importance, the Lower-Saxony-Lesson is based on the reflection and cognitive perception of a music piece through listening, analysing and discussing. The German teacher has a strong theoretical framework in mind, called “Didaktische Interpretation” (Ehrenforth 1971/Richter 1976) and implements this when he is planning the lesson. In the following, I will outline a few teaching moments illustrating the reflective approach and the theoretical framework of the “Didaktische Interpretation”.¹⁷

The German Lesson follows a certain structure that seems to be familiar to the students. After listening to a piece of music combined with a picture of the composer, the students talk about their first impressions. Two analytical steps follow this introduction. First, the students get information about the composer and his historical background, and are invited to reconstruct reasons for his way of composing. Second, they work on the music score and do



Fig. 5: Listening to “Mirror in the Mirror” by Arvo Pärt in the beginning of the lesson

17 For a more detailed view on the Lower-Saxony-Lesson see Chapter II.6.

some analysis of the violin part to discover the compositional structure. For this analysis, the students work together with a partner and finally, some students present their results. The teacher captures the results on the black board and lets the students listen to the piece once more. He finishes the lesson with a homework assignment to argue why the composer might have decided to name the piece “Mirror in the Mirror”.

This short overview already indicates the focus of the lesson. There is no performing, or “musicing” as Elliott would say, but reflection and analysis. The teacher explains in the interviews that he creates his lesson based on a concept called “Didaktische Interpretation” by Ehrenforth/Richter¹⁸. The concept, inspired by the philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer and the principles of philosophical hermeneutics is based on the following theses (Richter 2014, 53 f.):

- “Experienced understanding” has the function, to let the inquiring subject encounter the answering object.
- This encounter is determined by the historicity of both sides. The transforming historical horizons change the status of the listener as well as the status of the music.
- Prior knowledge and preconceptions are always relevant in the process of understanding.
- The (repeatedly reconstructed) reality of the music is the result of the interaction between the affect of the music piece and its impact on the listener.

That means for the music lessons that the students are invited to approach the music with an awareness of their own experience and “Lebenswelt” to get a better understanding of the music and its meaning. Fundamental experience with sorrow, joy, farewell, death, celebration etc. are utilized in the concept of the “Didaktische Interpretation” to get a connection to the music or possibly to the intentions of the composer. Ehrenforth developed his approach on the idea that music is “expression of life in notes” (Richter 2014, 54). There-

18 This concept bases on the philosophical hermeneutics and was theoretically developed in 1971 by Ehrenforth. It was later continued by Christoph Richter (1976), who transferred the philosophical ideas into exemplary interpretations. In his book “Musik verstehen. Vom möglichen Nutzen der philosophischen Hermeneutik für den Umgang mit Musik” (2014) Christoph Richter explains the “Didaktischen Interpretation” from today’s perspective.

Fig. 6: Tabular Presentation of the Complementary Information for ASF-2, Lower-Saxony-Lesson

Cut No	Time	Angle	Source	Reminder	Point of Quality
1	00:00	front	00:48	Listening to the music: „Mirror in the Mirror“ from Arvo Pärt	Teacher is presenting the music of Arvo Pärt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students listen to the music without any specific focus.
2	00:22	back left	04:09	First Impressions	Teacher gives students room to talk about their first impressions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important moment to retain first impressions without knowing anything about the music. • Basis for reflecting.
3	00:46	front	08:52	What is the composer thinking?	Teacher asks about the motives of the composer in order to invite the students to relate to the composer's thoughts and feelings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection between composer and students: Students try to understand the situation, motives and feelings of the composer on the background of their own experiences.
4	01:15	front	15:26	Why is he composing like that? (historical background)	Teacher directs the attention of the students to the biographical situation of the composer and the historical background. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More details about the circumstances help the students to relate to the composer and think about possible reasons for his way of composing.

fore, he intends to use the “Lebenswelt” (“life world”) as place of dialogue where music and student can “have a conversation” (Richter 2014, 55) about common experiences to get a better understanding of each other. Ehrenforth is convinced that in spite of all the diversity there is a common world, which connects everything and which has to be negotiated consistently (Richter, 2014, 54 f.).

For ASF-2 I chose situations where the German teacher initiates these connections between the students and the music by asking the students to identify themselves with the composer. After listening to the music for the first time (Sequence 1) he gives the students the opportunity to formulate their first impressions of the piece without directing them in any particular way (Sequence 2). This gives the students the opportunity to connect with the piece individually. Then, by distributing information about the composer in a second step, he expands their views on the piece and provides more links for understanding the music, which helps the students to identify with the composer or revise their first impression. With the questions “What is the composer thinking?” (Sequence 3), “Why is he composing like that?” (Sequence 4), “Is the position of the composer comprehensible?” (Sequence 5) he helps the students to reflect on the motives of the composer and to use their own life experience, to comprehend the circumstances and the “Lebenswelt” of the composer. These sequences illustrate how the teacher emphasizes the reflective approach on the basis of the “Didaktische Interpretation”, where students connect with the music, become aware of their individual experiences, and discuss it in class.

A music lesson in 10th grade structured this way is quite common in Germany. Reflection and analysis of music is often emphasized in the upper classes (grade 9 through 12), especially in the Gymnasium (academic-oriented high school). The teacher explains in the interview that students in this age group are occupied with discovering themselves and are interested in questions that are related to their personal experiences and their social lives. The student interviews confirm this assumption (S-Interview 5, Lines 64 ff.). Several students state that they liked the lesson and appreciated the preparation by the teacher, the opportunity to express their own opinions, and the chance to listen to new music. They explain that they see this lesson as an example for a good music lesson, because it included a lot of questions, a lot of classroom discussions and many practical examples. (S-Interview 4, Lines 182 ff.). For them “practical” means listening to music and then doing some analysis

together with a partner. In contrast, they call a lesson “theoretical” when they just discuss a new music piece, presumably without listening to it. Some of the students express that they either don’t expect to have music performance in the lessons, or that they have had a negative experience with performance and that they don’t miss that type of classroom situation. Some students mention that they got frustrated with noisy and undisciplined instrumental practice. They also defend the teacher’s opinion that adding performance in the recorded lesson would have been too much (S-Interview 3, Lines 180 ff.).

Contrasts between performative and reflective music education

Both, the California-Lesson and the lesson from Lower Saxony are examples of music lessons that are developed in different school systems and that serve different music educational goals. For the Californian students, music in school predominantly means performance in various forms. When students decide to take a music class, they have to choose between orchestra, band or choir programs. Music theory is integrated in these lessons, but it typically plays a minor role. The students in Lower Saxony have very different expectations. In high school, they can typically choose between music and fine arts, but they can’t take specific performance-based music classes. Therefore, they may have fewer opportunities to choose a class based on their personal interests.

As a result, the music classes in Germany have to be more general in content since they have to serve students with a wide range of interests and levels of musical knowledge. Some of the students are already quite proficient on their instruments due to private lessons taken outside of school while others don’t have any musical experience at all. The majority of the students are somewhere in between. Based on this situation, the teacher is challenged to develop a lesson plan that enables all students to participate and therefore focuses on non-performance-based teaching.

Both teaching approaches are consistent with the framework on which they are based and there are advantages and disadvantages to both concepts. It was impressive how enthusiastic and dedicated the American students were about their class, teacher and music, while the German students were more restrained regarding their music lesson.

These differences not only base on the diverse personalities of the teachers. They are the result of different theoretical frameworks of teaching music and they are based on different cultural developments in the two countries USA and Germany. While in Germany the traumatic experiences of World war II strongly influenced the development of music teaching concepts, the U.S. didn't have to deal with this kind of political and cultural collapse.

It was a big challenge for German music education to dissociate itself from the misuse of music education during the fascistic regime in Germany. In the Second World war singing of songs with militant tenor was central for the fascistic indoctrination. The goal was not to work on professional singing techniques and to perform on high aesthetic standards, but to transport principles of the Nazi regime and the racial collective. Individual learning abilities of the students were not of importance any more and reflective music analysis was repealed. Performing of simple music and emotional musical experience were the new ideals (see Gruhn, 2003, 274). German music educators after 1945 were first struggling with a new orientation, but then, provoked by Adorno's "Kritik des Musikanten" (1956) (a critique of non-reflective music education) and other philosophical and political influences, they developed new concepts of music education, where the interpretation and reflection of music were more important than the collective musical performance.

In this spirit Ehrenforth and Richter also developed the "Didaktische Interpretation" where "understanding" of music plays an important role. Even though the "Didaktische Interpretation" and other new concepts after 1945 involved music production to a certain extent, the performance was always embedded in a reflective context.

Therefore it is not surprising that German students speak totally different about their music lesson than the American students. The rather sober reactions of the German students and the more enthusiastic reactions of the American students are in fact intended and cannot be accredited to a more or less successful approach. The students of the Lower-Saxony-Lesson are not as enthusiastic as the Californian students about their music lesson, never the less the students did express that they liked the theoretical approach and the reflection on the music and the composer's motives.¹⁹ This kind of cognitive reflection of the meaning of the piece and the composer's background is not part of the California-Lesson. In contrast the Californian students describe

19 For example see S-Interviews 1, Lines 104 f; 1, 115 f; 3, 78 ff.; 3, 90 f.; 4, 24 ff.; 5, 106 ff.

how emotionally attached they got to their favourite piece. However neither lesson is able to represent American or German music education in general terms. The differences between both countries are not as clear-cut. There are developments in America to expand the reflective approach²⁰ and there are movements in Germany to implement more performance-based activities in the music lessons.²¹ For these developments it is beneficial for both countries to learn from each other. Hence it is relevant for these countries to be informed about respective successful teaching strategies and current research, while the national distinctiveness should always be preserved.²²

What we can see in the presented lessons is that, music education can be successful in different ways. Whether it is through performance or through reflection: both student groups got in touch with music that was intended to become meaningful to their lives. It is not possible to judge how deep the impact was for each student. But the student interviews prove that the students realized the special meaning of music and its potential value for their life. Probably this awareness was not evoked by certain approaches, but more through the authenticity and dedication of both teachers.

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20 In tradition of Bennett Reimer and his ideas about “Music Education as Aesthetic Education” (MEAE).

21 For example in the concept of the “Aufbauender Musikunterricht” (<http://www.aufbauender-musikunterricht.de>), a concept that focuses on the progressive development of performance-orientated skills in context of the own music tradition and foreign cultures or by implementing choir-, orchestra-, and band-classes in the schools.

22 See Kertz-Welzel 2005, 275 ff. for more information about the importance of international exchange in particular for German music education.

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