

Experimental music in music education: Promises and conflicts

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the ideological and aesthetic underpinnings of the meeting between experimental music and music education that took place during the 1960s. It is an exercise in tracing the intellectual and cultural trajectories that inform creative music education, organized around 6 themes which might be seen as describing both core tenets and unresolved contradictions of the relationship between experimental music and creative music education: (1) *Experimental-ism vs. avant-garde-ism*: Conflation between avant-garde progressivism and experimentalism. (2) *Within and without history: Universalism*. Fostering experimentation and novelty in a non-foundational sense, while at the same time wishing to get to the *essential core* of what music is about. (3) *Piercing vs. opening: Experiments and the experimental*. Adopting an ambiguous position regarding the relationship between art and intention. This can be traced back to a central tension between the notions of experiment and the experimental (see Goehr, 2008). (4) *Against commodification*. Experimental music entered music education as means of radical emancipation of music from commercialism. Murray-Schafer's notion of 'Ear cleaning' points directly to a process of getting away from the burden of everyday culture. (5) *Locality and the neglect of the local*. Encouraging freedom of expression of individual children and at the same time silencing children's own musical cultures. It is argued that this rests on a transcendental view of the universality of childhood as a moment of recovery of the lost innocence of humanity. (6) *Creativity 'on demand': openness and predictability*. The creation of a link between children's creativity and the compositional processes employed by avant-garde composers became possible because of rise of a new conception of creativity that replaced the old dominant link between divine inspiration, greatness and musical creation.

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