

Classroom Discussion and the Community of Music Majors

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Modern theories of teaching and learning recommend that students actively participate in their own education. For the music history teacher this usually means some form of in-class discussion. Yet generating meaningful discussions can be problematic, and many instructors lament the difficulties they experience when attempting to instigate and sustain discussions in their classes for music majors. Viewing the community in which these young musicians live and learn through the lens of ethnomusicology helps to explain how music majors perceive their role in the classroom, which in turn sheds light on why they may or may not engage in classroom discourse. An awareness of the social and professional dynamics surrounding music majors can help instructors handle student responses in a way that promotes engaging discussion in the music history classroom.

Linguistic Models of Classroom Discussion

Studies indicate that active, cognitive engagement, as opposed to passive reception, can increase the comprehension and retention of materials while promoting critical thinking and developing logical and rhetorical skills through social interaction.¹ The verbal exchange of ideas between students, and between students and teachers, is one of the most common and effective ways for creating an interactive classroom experience. Certainly there are many additional ways to foster student participation in the music history classroom, such as brief in-class writing assignments, quizzes with immediate

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1. Charles C. Bonwell and Tracey E. Sutherland, "The Active Learning Continuum: Choosing Activities to Engage Students in the Classroom," in *Using Active Learning in College Classes: A Range of Options for Faculty*, eds. Tracey E. Sutherland and Charles C. Bonwell (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 3–16; and Richard E. Mayer, "Should There be a Three-Strikes Rule Against Pure Discovery Learning?" *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (January 2004): 14–19.

assessment and feedback, or student presentations.² Yet discussion remains one of the most widespread and viable collaborative activities, especially in the traditional mid-size to large lecture setting to which most music history teachers are consigned. Not surprisingly, discussion, debate, and other such interactive or participatory situations are often popular with students.³ Why then are there sometimes problems generating discussion?

Understanding the basic linguistic structure of guided verbal exchanges between teachers and students is a useful first step when examining where and how such attempts may be failing. For example, the discursive model Jay Lemke titled triadic dialogue has proven to be a useful means of separating the mechanical parts of classroom discussion while exposing potential weaknesses behind each part.⁴ Triadic dialogue consists of three primary components: initiation, response, and evaluation (IRE) or follow-up (IRF). Generally speaking, initiation consists of the teacher asking a question, and the response is the student's answer. In the IRE model the third stage is an evaluation of the student's response and a correction if necessary; in IRF the student's answer is followed by some action that expands upon the student's response or moves into a new direction.

Viewing student-teacher exchanges through such a basic framework allows instructors to examine and critique each part of a discussion on its own terms as well as how each step influences the others. The first part, initiation or questioning, sets the stage for the quality and duration of any subsequent exchange. Using Barbara Gross Davis' terminology, there can be exploratory

2. David G. Brown and Curtis W. Ellison, "What is Active Learning?" in *The Seven Principles in Action: Improving Undergraduate Education*, ed. Susan Rickey Hatfield (Bolton, MA: Anker, 1995), 39–54; and Peter J. Frederick, "Student Involvement: Active Learning in Large Classes," in *Teaching Large Classes Well*, ed. Susan Rickey Hatfield (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 45–56. For a number of useful peer learning scenarios for the music history classroom, see J. Peter Burkholder, "Peer Learning in Music History Courses," in *Teaching Music History*, ed. Mary Natvig (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 205–23; see also Martha Snead Holloway, "The Use of Cooperative Action Learning to Increase Music Appreciation Students' Listening Skills," *College Music Symposium* 44 (2004): 83–93.

3. Marsha Barber, "Reassessing Pedagogy in a Fast Forward Age," *The International Journal of Learning* 13, no. 9 (2007): 143–50.

4. Jay L. Lemke, *Using Language in the Classroom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). See also Gordon Wells, *Dialogic Inquiry: Towards a Sociocultural Practice and Theory of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 167–208; and Hossein Nassaji and Gordon Wells, "What's the Use of 'Triadic Dialogue'? An Investigation of Teacher-Student Interaction," *Applied Linguistics* 21, no. 3 (September 2000): 376–406. The two models of triadic dialogue are examined in John M. Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard, *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), and Hugh Mehan, *Learning Lessons: Social Organization in the Classroom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

questions (dealing with factual information), hypothetical questions, summary questions, and more.⁵ Different types of questions will elicit different types of answers that may or may not be conducive to subsequent discussion, regardless of the quality or content of the student's response. In this sense the IRE model using a factual question does not promote ongoing discussion, as the answer and subsequent evaluation (even if correct) can end a train of thought.

In any class it is necessary that the correct type of question be asked when searching for certain types of responses. This can be deceptively challenging for the music history teacher, as seemingly straightforward questions often contain levels of complexity not found when working in other disciplines. The inescapable aesthetic nature of musicological materials can require processing or clarification prior to answering what in some cases might seem a simple question.⁶ The ambiguity of musical content likewise complicates the discourse; a student in an English literature course has the comparative lucidity of the written text to fall back on, whereas the music major must often turn to the more indistinct score or recording when formulating a response.

Even if a suitable question is presented (one that encourages a relatively easy answer worthy of follow-up) there is no guarantee that an answer will be offered, or that discussion will ensue. There are recommended techniques for encouraging students to offer their answers or opinions, such as waiting an appropriate amount of time, or repeating or rephrasing the question.⁷ Yet successfully soliciting answers from students depends on what follows their response as much as the question that preceded it. How students believe their answers will be received by the teacher and their peers is just as important as whether or not they believe that they have the correct or appropriate response. How a teacher responds to a student's answer—including not only the choice of words (supportive vs. stifling), but even the body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice—is critical to generating immediate discussion, let

5. Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 83–84. See also Thomas P. Kasulis, "Questioning," in *The Art and Craft of Teaching*, ed. Margaret M. Gullette (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 38–48; and Lewis C. Goffe and Nancy H. Deane, "Questioning Our Questions," *College Composition and Communication* 25, no. 4 (October 1974): 284–91.

6. James A. Davis, "Aesthetic Questions and Questions of Aesthetics in the Music History Classroom," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 87–94.

7. There are numerous publications that offer basic advice to teachers for starting and maintaining discussion in the classroom, such as Joseph Lowman, *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), Chapter 6; and Wilbert J. McKeachie and Marilla Svinicki, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), Chapter 5.

alone ensuring that questions will be answered in later situations.⁸ In fact, if the later stages of triadic dialogue are not handled carefully, the process becomes teacher-centered as opposed to student-centered and can actually be inhibitive as opposed to inspiring. An interactive yet overly authoritative presentation may successfully invite responses but then reject them when the answer is wrong without leaving room for dialogue.⁹

Teachers need to be conscious of their behavior in relation to the students' internal and external process of answering if they hope to generate discussion. For those facing a roomful of music majors, this should include evaluating whether the classroom environment is supportive and advantageous for musical dialogue. In addition, music history teachers need to be aware of the potentially complex nature of the answers solicited, or at least the complexities as perceived by the students. To appreciate the full scope of these issues requires a better understanding of the social organization of the music history classroom, and by default, the world of the music major.

The School of Music and Communal Identity

Scholars of teaching and learning have spoken of the benefits that come from creating a community of learners within the classroom.¹⁰ Such an environment endorses learning as constructed through cooperative and interactive situations where the students' previous knowledge and experiences are brought

8. "[F]indings suggest a strong relationship between participation and the following teaching techniques: praise, asking questions, probing for elaboration of student contributions, accepting answers, repeating answers, using student names, and correcting wrong answers." Claudia E. Nunn, "Discussion in the College Classroom: Triangulating Observational and Survey Results," *The Journal of Higher Education* 67, no. 3 (May 1996): 259.

9. Christine Chin, "Classroom Interaction in Science: Teacher Questioning and Feedback to Students' Responses," *International Journal of Science Education* 28, no. 11 (September 2006): 1315–46. See also the discussion of teacher "interventions" in Eduardo Mortimer and Phil Scott, "Analysing Discourse in the Science Classroom," in *Improving Science Education: The Contribution of Research*, eds. Robin Millar, et al. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 131–33.

10. Ann L. Brown and Joseph C. Campione, "Interactive Learning Environments and the Teaching of Science and Mathematics," in *Toward a Scientific Practice of Science Education*, eds. Marjorie Gardner, et al. (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1990), 111–39; Ann L. Brown and Joseph Campione, "Guided Discovery in a Community of Learners," in *Classroom Lessons: Integrating Cognitive Theory and Classroom Practice*, ed. Kate McGilly (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 229–70. See also Miriam Gamoran Sherin, Edith Prentice Mendez, and David A. Louis, "A Discipline Apart: the Challenges of 'Fostering a Community of Learners' in a Mathematics Classroom," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 36, no. 2 (2004): 207–32; and Lee S. Shulman, "Communities of Learners and Communities of Teachers," in *The Wisdom of Practice: Essays on Teaching, Learning, and Learning to Teach*, ed. Suzanne M. Wilson (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 485–500.

into play. A supportive community of learners can show students how their beliefs fit within their immediate social structure, increasing their respect for the diversity of opinions held by their peers. As the name implies, the community of learners not only pushes the concept of the student as an active participant in their own education, it implies a measure of equality, cooperation, and collegiality in the classroom. The notion of a community of learners in higher education is multilayered. While the immediate application is within the classroom, most colleges and universities would like to see the entire institution functioning as a community of learners, involving faculty members as well as students, and ranging beyond the walls of the classroom.

Considering the music history classroom as a conventional community of learners can be beneficial to some degree, yet such an approach also raises issues not found in other teaching situations. Music majors can be part of a classroom community, and they are of course members of the larger community of learners at the school where they are enrolled. In addition to these traditional communities, however, music majors are part of another community, one that predates—and for many of them outranks—their membership in any other group. Music majors see themselves, and are encouraged to see themselves, as musicians first and foremost. The imagined community of musicians has unique social guidelines and expectations, and these defining characteristics can have a direct impact on the learning experience. For this reason the social environment in which music majors live and learn is particularly important to music history teachers.

Bruno Nettl's ethnographic study *Heartland Excursions* provides valuable insights into the social organization of a school of music. Examining the school of music as "a religious system or a social system," Nettl shows how this "society of musicians" maintains rituals and beliefs that promote a distinct community.¹¹ There are classes of members within this community, including students, teachers, and administrators, with subordinate classes segregated by activity (applied vs. academic studies), performing medium (singers vs. instrumentalists), or even stylistic preference. Nettl's summary of this unique social structure is worth quoting in full:

The complex, and perhaps Byzantine, social and sociomusical organization of music schools results from a combination of factors; the transfer of the industrial model of corporations and markets to an educational environment; the role of music in Western and particularly American society, again transferred to the academic framework; the symbolic roles of various instruments, of singing and conducting and their relationship to the roles of various groups in society; the hegemony of large musical ensembles as musical metaphors of large, successful organizations in which each member plays a specialized part; the imposition of the taxonomy of races and

11. Bruno Nettl, *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 5.

genders on the musical and educational scene; the concept of talent and its presumption from a musician's association with others, living or dead; the concept of genius, associated with a pantheon of composers no longer living; and the willingness of musicians in art music society to play with relationships reminiscent of political and social processes that might not be readily accepted in other domains of the culture of modern real-life America.¹²

So many distinctive social conditions create an exclusive environment that shapes how music majors view themselves, their colleagues, and their education. There is probably no other discipline on a college campus that both consciously and unconsciously fosters this kind of social cohesion between majors with a consequential segregation from other majors on campus. The means and motivations behind this socialization impact the behavior of music students in the classroom, and music history teachers need to consider this environment if they hope to establish open and productive discussions.¹³

Central to a music major's communal identity is musicianship. Whereas other fields take discipline-specific ability as a goal of the educational process, the music major is expected to possess certain skills and abilities before entering the curriculum. It is assumed they possess musical talent, and this talent is what establishes their membership in the society of musicians.¹⁴ This is significantly different from other students on campus. Music majors are not just members of a group that has been formed to learn something new; they have come together to expand their knowledge and abilities with other members of a preexisting group. Musical aptitude binds this group and is the defining characteristic of its members. Any perceived assault on their appearance as musicians is a threat to both their personal and communal identities.

12. Nettl, *Heartland Excursions*, 80–81. While this essay focuses on one effect of this socialization, it would be useful to examine each of these characteristics to see how they impact the music history classroom. See also the useful distinction between “identities in music” and “music in identities” found in David J. Hargreaves, Dorothy Miell, and Raymond A. R. MacDonald, “What Are Musical Identities, and Why Are They Important?” in Raymond A. R. MacDonald, Dorothy Miell, and David J. Hargreaves, *Musical Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2, 12–15.

13. Subcultural values and norms influence a willingness to participate in a discussion as well as the directions a discussion can take; see Stanley E. Jones, Dean C. Barnlund, and Franklyn Saul Haiman, *The Dynamics of Discussion: Communication in Small Groups* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 92–113. See also the discussion of “perceived personal control” in Raymond P. Perry, “Perceived Control in College Students: Implications for Instruction in Higher Education,” in *Effective Teaching in Higher Education: Research and Practice*, eds. Raymond P. Perry and John C. Smart, (New York: Agathon Press, 1997), 11–60.

14. This parallels the culture of talent that Henry Kingsbury discussed in *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 59–84. See also Susan A. O'Neill, “The Self-Identity of Young Musicians,” in MacDonald, et. al., *Musical Identities*, 79–96.

Being a music major is a way of life, a blending of learning and doing, of art and craft, of vocation and avocation.¹⁵ Not only is there an expectation that music students function within their roles as members of a school (as “college students”), they are also expected to perform as neophyte or apprentice musicians. This skill- or talent-based identity merges characteristics of both a professional and educational community. Each member of the organization has a job with specific responsibilities, and the entire group is working towards a specific goal. Successful participation in this organization is a means of reifying membership in the group, whereas failure to perform could mean banishment from the group.¹⁶ Community membership is a complicated and perpetually evolving state for music majors. They must satisfy the demands of their curriculum in their role as student; they are working within the adolescent social realm of their peers, with all the complications that can entail; and they are continually proving their right to be members of the community of musicians. Put together, these factors go along way towards explaining why discussion in the music history classroom can wax and wane.

Before offering an answer to a teacher’s question or joining in an emerging debate, any student will be extremely self-conscious of how they are perceived by their peers. Being wrong, or revealing ignorance, is an intimidating experience. While this is true of most teaching situations, the problem is exacerbated in the music history classroom. For the music major it goes far beyond appearing stupid in front of your peers. Making a mistake when replying to a music-based question could indicate a lack of musicianship, the key to a student’s membership in the exclusive clique of the music school. This hazard is amplified by the potentially incestuous environment in which music majors live and work. No other facility on campus can boast of so much activity for so many hours a day as the music building. Students all but live in the practice rooms, rehearsal halls, and classrooms, where the same small corps of classmates surrounds them both socially and academically. Music majors will see the same people in their theory and history classes, ensemble rehearsals, even during breaks between classes. This environmental intimacy is quite different from what the average liberal arts major experiences, where less time is spent in one location or with those in their major. Moreover, music faculty members are part of this concentrated network, and it is likely that most

15. Estelle R. Jorgensen, *The Art of Teaching Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 95–9, 103–6.

16. Robert Weaver and Jiang Qi, “Classroom Organization and Participation: College Students’ Perceptions,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 76, no. 5 (September-October 2005): 570–601. In this sense the school of music is more akin to a “community of practice”—a form of social learning that emphasizes shared goals—than a community of learners; see Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

music students know and converse with more of their faculty members than majors in other liberal arts degrees. As a result, a “wrong answer” for the music major is not something that will evaporate at the end of the class period. A poor performance in the classroom, just like a poor performance on stage, is something students will carry with them through the day (if not longer), with the potential to impact their interpersonal relations with both students and faculty members.

In addition, classroom discussion can be seen as challenging (or even threatening) to the music major due to the intrinsically personal nature of the subject under study and the often unavoidable aesthetic evaluation that such answers demand. While many topics placed before students in the history classroom have technical aspects that can be handled objectively, the study of music most always includes some aesthetic component. In this way the study of music falls somewhere between learning an art and a craft. An interactive setting could be especially beneficial for this reason, as the aesthetic side can provide an ideal point of departure for discussion. Yet at the same time the subjective nature of the topic may cause students to hesitate.¹⁷ Offering aesthetic responses or justification reveals a personal value that risks further exposure in front of one’s peers. Commenting on a piece of music is commenting on yourself through your tastes; a music major describing a piece of music is exposing him- or herself personally and professionally. A similar situation can be found in the English classroom, where students can bond emotionally with what they are reading, requiring some delicacy on the part of the teacher when framing any questions so as not to be taken as judgmental or discourteous by the student. For example, Mark Gellis discusses the “Master Questions” approach he uses in his English classes. Useful for either written assignments or in-class discussion, he addresses technical questions of plot, style, genre, as well as more interpretive questions of rhetoric, race, gender, culture, and morality, all the while recognizing the student’s “ownership” of the text.¹⁸ While musicologists can learn much from their colleagues across campus in these situations, such approaches require modification to suit the comparative ambiguity of the material under study along with the music major’s professional dedication to the subject.

17. It is worth recalling Joseph Kerman’s observation that we are all engaged in criticism despite any claims of objectivity; *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

18. Mark Gellis, “Master Questions and the Teaching of Literature,” in *Inquiry and the Literary Text: Constructing Discussions in the English Classroom*, ed. James Holden and John S. Schmit (Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2002), 15–35. For an interesting tactic from the history classroom see David Frye, “An Alternative Approach to the Discussion Class,” *The History Teacher* 27, no. 2 (February 1994): 167–75.

For all of these reasons, responding to student comments in music history classes can require a measure of diplomacy not needed in other classes. For example, a common technique for encouraging discussion is to follow a student's answer with a question. In the music history lecture this could backfire; if the student is personally, professionally, or aesthetically invested in their answer, then they might hear the teacher as disputing their answer as opposed to accepting and building upon their answer. The teacher may inadvertently cause the student to feel dismissed rather than challenged, which could lead this student (and those listening) to stop speaking in class.

Class Discussion in the School of Music Community

Failing to provide a supportive response to students' comments can create an environment in which students no longer feel personally or socially comfortable, which in turn diminishes their willingness to join in discussion and derive the full benefits from the educational experience.¹⁹ Various scholars of teaching and learning have proposed methodologies or mindsets that can help instructors create and maintain an atmosphere favorable to student participation. Estelle Jorgensen noted that there are two "interconnected principles," justice and mercy, that underlie her approach to evaluating student performance: "justice necessitates dispassionately and carefully weighing and appraising the evidence; mercy requires kindness in remembering how hard-won are human accomplishments and how difficult are the circumstances in which people must sometimes labor."²⁰ In a similar vein Kevin J. Porter drew from philosopher Donald Davidson for the role of charity in teacher-student interactions. For this framework Porter suggested a pedagogy of charity ("which assumes that students are rational beings with mostly true and coherent beliefs") as opposed to a pedagogy of severity ("Shutting down of dialogic possibilities, assigning labels and making corrections instead of asking questions and searching for new answers...").²¹ Both of these methods advocate giving students the benefit of the doubt by respecting the background each student brings to class, acknowledging the effort it took to get where they are, then rewarding attempts to contribute. A similar approach can help music

19. Holly E. Long and Jeffrey T. Coldren, "Interpersonal Influences in Large Lecture-Based Classes: A Socioinstructional Perspective," *College Teaching* 54, no. 2 (2006): 237–43; and Lisa Tsui, "Fostering Critical Thinking through Effective Pedagogy: Evidence from Four Institutional Case Studies," *The Journal of Higher Education* 73, no. 6 (November-December 2002): 740–63.

20. Jorgensen, *Art of Teaching*, 63.

21. Kevin J. Porter, "A Pedagogy of Charity: Donald Davidson and the Student-Negotiated Composition Classroom," *College Composition and Communication* 52, no. 4 (June 2001): 576.

history teachers to respect the diverse musical backgrounds found in their classrooms while recognizing the professional and communal pressure that music majors face. Such an approach can make young musicians feel safer; even if a student offers an answer that must be treated as incorrect, the right presentation can still promote a dialogic standard by separating the answer from the answerer. A carefully handled response makes it clear that the person answering is not diminished even though their answer may be misguided, and also that their musicianship is not being called into doubt.

There are other discipline-specific issues that can influence how answers are handled in the music history classroom. Most young musicians have been studying their instruments or voices for some time prior to entering college. Through years of private lessons and ensemble rehearsals they have evolved distinctive learning styles that can impact the nature of discourse in the classroom. For example, music students tend towards perfectionism more than their colleagues in other disciplines. So many young performers have been drilled into believing that they must put the right notes in the right place to be good musicians. This attitude can carry over to a history lecture, where students now assume that there is only one right answer and that a guess or an opinion is not valuable.

A room full of music majors is also unique for the differences they manifest as well as the similarities they share. While any class will have students of diverse backgrounds and learning styles, a room full of music majors also has specialized experiences, vocabularies, concepts, personalities, and motivations, even though they theoretically operate within the same discipline. As Nettl showed, differences can be based on instrument of choice, musical style preferred, career track, and more. A brass player with marching band experience will have a different perspective on the nature of performance compared to a string player who never had to perform outside in subzero weather. A jazz pianist and a concert pianist may have significantly different concepts as to what “practicing” or “rehearsing” entail. In cases such as this, the difference of perspective might subtly influence the way a question is heard or how an answer might be framed. Modes of discourse are central to community identity.²² While musicians share many basic terms and vocabularies, there are unique concepts, experiences, and perspectives that separate instrumentalists from vocalists, music education majors from composition majors, or jazz players from orchestral performers. A question given to a performance major (who specializes in vocal jazz) and a music education major (who plays cello) may elicit the same basic answer even though the formulation of that answer may sound strikingly different.

22. James Paul Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996).

History teachers would do well to consider this multiplicity of perspectives among music majors when seeking ways to provide a better forum for discussion.²³ Any particular idiosyncrasies inherent in young musicians may stifle discussion in certain situations. A trumpet player may have an answer to a question about opera, but feel that a vocalist knows more about such things and is therefore better suited to answer. In situations where conversation lags, it may be that many music majors don't lack for an answer; they may simply believe that they do not have the best answer when compared to their peers from other sub-disciplines. In the competitive environment of a music department, being close is not the same as being right, and such an attitude may be enough to hinder student expression. Clarifying the non-technical or observatory nature of certain questions, and stressing the usefulness of comments from outside of a particular musical orientation, may be necessary to break this mindset. In addition, instructors need to remember that they also have certain biases due to their particular musical backgrounds. Musicologists are a product of the same environment in which their students are working, and it may be that they are unwittingly phrasing their questions or hearing student answers through the filter of their own musical experiences.²⁴

Conclusion

There are many factors to consider when instigating discussion in a classroom. Questions should be chosen that promote continuation as opposed to closure; answers should be handled respectfully and considered carefully; and a follow-up question or comment should take from the previous exchange and move forward in an unambiguous and logical progression. When working with music majors in the history classroom, there are additional factors to be considered. The social and professional dynamics at work in the school of music require that special thought be given to fielding answers by majors. When discussion is not forthcoming, music history teachers should remember the unique apprehension their students may be experiencing. Music majors see themselves as musicians first. Offering an incorrect or misguided response could draw their musicianship into doubt, something that could undermine

23. Colleen M. Conway and Thomas M. Hodgman, *Teaching Music in Higher Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Chapter 3; and Jane W. Davidson, "The Solo Performer's Identity," in MacDonald, et. al., *Musical Identities*, 97–113. See also the essays by Eunmi Shim and Melinda Russell in *Community of Music: An Ethnographic Seminar in Champaign-Urbana*, ed. Tamara Elena Livingston-Isenhour, et al. (Champaign, IL: Elephant and Cat, 1993), 107–19, 159–74.

24. A provocative consideration of some external influences on teacher performance can be found in Gary Spruce, "Music Assessment and the Hegemony of Musical Heritage," in *Issues in Music Teaching*, eds. Chris Philpott and Charles Plummeridge (London: Routledge, 2001), 118–30.

their membership in the community of musicians that is so critical to their identity. For the music major, it may seem better to remain silent than to risk being ostracized from their peers. To overcome this, teachers must show, in both their choice of words and their demeanor, that it is safe for students to answer and that musical opinions are valued in addition to “correct” answers. In addition, instructors should be aware of the subtle diversity found within their specialized students and be willing to accept and make use of different experiential perspectives.

The same can be said of the sensitive nature of aesthetic responses that dominate the music history classroom. Care should be taken to ensure that students do not feel judged when offering an aesthetic response and that their musical tastes can be investigated without threatening their musicianship. Instructors need to be sensitive to the aesthetic nature of their questions and the students’ answers, and clarify the distinction between being right and wrong versus offering a subjective opinion. At the same time teachers must be aware of their own musical backgrounds to be sure that they are not biasing any discussion with their own personal history.

It should be added that the concerns mentioned here are not something that need to dominate a teacher’s thoughts for the duration of the course. Such a pedagogical approach functions well within the notion of instructional scaffolding, wherein prototypical materials or interpersonal support is given to students when first learning new skills or concepts. Students learn from modeling themselves on the expertise presented; these supports are gradually removed as students gain experience and confidence, eventually continuing the process on their own.²⁵ Classroom discussion is like the proverbial snowball rolling downhill in that once a pattern of discourse is established it tends to become self-sustaining. It only takes a few successful exchanges before a discussion is underway and the teacher can step back to assume the role of moderator. After a few classes with successful discussion the students become comfortable, even expectant, of such interactions and instructors may not need to be overly concerned about these issues. If anything, the teacher may need to transfer their focus to the students’ choice of questions, and how students handle each other’s answers. At that point the teacher will have achieved a true community of learners, where all participants are refining their ideas and broadening their horizons through respectful, productive communication.

25. For one discussion of instructional scaffolding, see Bruce Sherin, Brian J. Reiser, and Daniel Edelson, “Scaffolding Analysis: Extending the Scaffolding Metaphor to Learning Artifacts,” *Journal of the Learning Sciences* 13, no. 3 (2004): 387–421.