International Journal of Education & the Arts

http://www.ijea.org **ISBN 1529-8094**

Volume 8 Review 3 **September 21, 2007**

Valuing Musical Participation: A Review Essay

Jason Helfer
Knox College
Galesburg, Illinois

Pitts, S. (2005). *Valuing musical participation*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. ISBN 0–7546–5095–2, 157 pp.

Citation: Helfer, J. (2007). *Valuing musical participation: A review* essay. *International Journal of Education & the Arts, 8* (Review 3). Retrieved [date] from http://www.ijea.org/v8r3/.

Introduction

Valuing Musical Participation is a welcome addition to music education scholarship. In this text, Stephanie Pitts weaves data from four case studies to demonstrate the complexity of musical participation and, in the process, explicates its importance to those who teach and to those who study music as a sociological or anthropological phenomenon. Pitts' work is developed from case studies focusing upon music students at the transition point between Year 13 and the university, performers and audience members in a Gilbert and Sullivan Festival, participants in a contemporary music festival (Contemporary Music-making for Amateurs [herein COMA]), and performers and audience members at a chamber music festival. These studies, coupled with a variety of theoretical perspectives from related literature, result in thought provoking work that provides the reader much to consider regarding the importance of

musical participation in the lives of those who are school age as well as those who continue to enjoy and identify deeply with music throughout their lives. This review will provide the reader with the general structure of the text and a summary of the central ideas within each chapter.

Structure of the Text

Valuing Musical Participation contains eight chapters. Chapters One and Two center upon defining *what* it may mean when one sees him or herself or others as a musician. Chapters Three and Four examine *how* performers view musical participation from the perspectives of individual and group and the costs and benefits gleaned from participation. Chapters Five and Six examine *why* participants select and advocate for those musics in which they find fulfillment and how participation as an audience member provides a deep sense of value and belonging. Chapters Seven and Eight serve as two distinct conclusions developed from the work of previous chapters. Chapter Seven provides suggestions for those involved in education regarding the importance of considering musical participation as a possible educational aim. Chapter Eight summarizes the major themes of the book and suggests additional avenues of research.

Chapter 1 – Introducing Musical Participation

According to Pitts, the importance of musical participation derives from the necessity of ascertaining "how and why performers and listeners engage with music of their choice" (p. 2). In order to ground her study, Chapter One begins with a brief review of the literature. While the information gleaned from these studies is important, it does not, according to Pitts, focus upon the centrality of experience for the performing musician or audience member. Pitts' approach to the literature review allows her to claim that "a growing recognition of the value and impact of musical participation has yet to be systematically supported with the experiences of those involved" (p. 3). Using interviews, diaries, and questionnaires, Pitts focuses upon both the individual experiences of particular performers and listeners, and develops a sense of how various individuals come together to create a unique group dynamic specific to a particular context. The reader is also provided with a brief description of the four case studies from which the central themes of *Valuing Musical Participation* are developed.

A strength of the text is Pitts' ability to navigate between the necessary theoretical information and the pressing research questions developed in and from each particular case study. For example, in her study of music students in transition, Pitts discovered the importance of the construct "musical identity." At the initiation of this case study what it meant for an individual to consider his/her self a musician was, at best, cloaked in

conceptual ambiguity. As the study continued, various divisions became evident between those who would continue to study music at the university and those who would not. These divisions lead Pitts to develop further questions about musical identity that were partially answered through the young adults in the Music Students in Transition study. In order to more fully flesh out the threads from this study, Pitts shares her findings from the other case studies, and, when relevant, introduces the reader to seminal ideas from related studies both inside and outside of music. The chapter concludes by presenting general themes used throughout the book, as well as her procedures for coding and identifying data within the text of the book. This, too, is helpful for the reader as it provides a thread from which one may consider the central ideas of the text and see how the various themes intersect.

Chapter 2 – Becoming a Musician: Dilemmas and Definitions

Chapter Two begins by presenting the difficulty of defining and applying the term "musician" using the data from the Music Students in Transition Case Study. This study focused upon students in Year 13 and undergraduate students in order to provide a picture of the transition between secondary school and university music studies. The reader is provided with a deep sense of the excitement of leaving secondary school to focus on music, and the almost necessary disappointment when one realizes, as did many of the participants in this case study, that one went from being "a big fish in a small pond" to a "small fish in a big pond." This realization allows Pitts to focus upon the differences between the definition of the term musician and the complex process of applying this definition of the term to one's self-image. The age range and experiences of the Year 13 students and their University counterparts limit how the cleft between the abstract and operationalized definition can be understood. Moreover, these students are still in a fertile period of development – they are not only moving into the full responsibilities of adulthood, but also transitioning from being seen as an advanced novice to a young, "green" professional.

In order to construct a more complete image of students' negotiation of this transition, Pitts analyzes a number of additional studies that focus upon the distinction between musician and non-musician. This is important in so far as the students in Year 13 and the University premise their definitions and self-image upon the false dichotomies of insider/outsider, have/have not, and, of course, musician/non-musician. Pitts resists such simplistic dichotomies within this section and spends time examining the limited utility of such labels within current music education practice in the schools. For Pitts, the problematic nature of the musician/non musician dichotomy make it imperative that "young people are made to feel that they have musical potential, even when they may have not yet acquired extensive skills or experience" (p. 22). In order to demonstrate the

falsity of the dichotomy, Pitts introduces other varieties of musical experiences across the lifespan.

For instance, Pitts examines the distinctions between the professional and amateur musician. Unlike the musician/non-musician dichotomy that served as a central means of self-identification for the student-aged music students, for the greater majority of individuals who value music, there comes a time when one may identify with being a musician but must also decide if one will *become* a professional musician or choose to continue studying or enjoying music without pressure to make one's living from this pursuit. According to Pitts, "Just as 'musicians' are partly defined by comparisons with 'non-musicians,' so 'amateurs' are set alongside 'professionals' to draw distinctions of attitude, extent of activity, and sometimes quality" (p. 24). And while the activities are limited in terms of what could constitute a professional musician, the possibilities for the amateur musician allow for greater possibilities of participation. This is explained using data from the COMA and the Gilbert and Sullivan case studies in which participant views are interspersed with additional theoretical and research literature to paint a vivid picture of the range of distinctions between the professional and amateur musician. For instance, "the *process* of performing is itself an achievement for those who consider themselves to be amateurs, whereas professionals are judged solely on their *product*." (p. 25). From this general distinction, audience members may also have very different expectations regarding their assumptions of quality and, possibly, potential for deep insight to be gleaned from the performance. Similar to her work in Chapter One, Pitts resists simple views of the professional/amateur dichotomy. In this instance, Pitts discusses how *audience members* often enjoy when the professional and amateur, in effect, switch *expectation*—the professional musician is accessible within his/her role as a performer and the amateur musician presents a penetrating interpretation of a work.

Chapter Two concludes with a presentation of theoretical research regarding musical participation. For instance, the professional/amateur divide is further explicated through analysis of how music making choices affect leisure use and personal development as well as identity and self-concept. While one distinction between the professional and amateur musician is the former makes a steady, living wage from his/her musical involvements and the latter participates "just for fun." It is unreasonable to assume that the professional does not think about how his/her professional obligations affect his/her personal development in general, and more specifically, in terms of perceived identity and self-concept. Musical participation is a multifaceted construct. It takes on a variety of forms and these "forms of life" provide the individual with a core sense of identity – one that may serve as a thread throughout the individual's life both personally and socially. In the next two chapters, Pitts focuses more acutely on how the case study participants view their participation as individuals and collectively.

Chapter 3 – Music and Individual Experience: Learning, Self-Discovery, and Development

To focus upon the individual and his or her musical experiences, Pitts introduces the interrelationships between the individual and the group. Whereas an *individual* may fulfill his or her personal goals, individual musical aspirations, self-discovery and development, and individual satisfaction, or escape from individual responsibility through musical engagement, the *group experience* supports social goals, musical achievements, acceptance of corporate responsibility, group coherence and development, and friendship (p. 33). For many amateur performers, the interrelationship between the individual and group is necessary because it is within the group context where opportunities for music making occur.

In order to provide a foundation from which case study data can be more powerfully considered, Pitts presents related research distinguishing between individuals who play in private as opposed to perform in public. Individuals who perform in public most often do so in a group and, therefore, must balance personal desires with the cost and benefits provided by working with others. Pitts uses the COMA case study data to show the error of assuming a simple sort of linear transformation between the work and desires of the individual and that of the group.

For example, the COMA Summer School allows individuals with an interest in contemporary music performance and composition the opportunity to meet and work with like individuals. The nature of the COMA summer school makes it necessary that individual goals are modified by those with whom the individual works. According to the data, the participants enjoyed sharing ideas with one another, and the opportunity to challenge themselves through setting personal musical goals.

Through exploring the notion of using intense experiences like the COMA summer school as a means of escaping from the everyday to an activity seen as individually fulfilling, the idea that music is an ordinary activity is introduced.

> Arguing for the 'special' nature of the musical activity can be counter-productive, although it is frequently attempted in educational debate, where the pressure to justify the role of music in the curriculum encourages claims of uniqueness. Other academic disciplines reinforce this notion that music is inherently different from other human activities, often by conflating the cultural value that is attached to particular musical works with the sociological benefits of music making. (p. 44)

Pitts emphasizes the importance of viewing musical participation as an ordinary activity, and one that necessitates an understanding of the reasons that serve as bedrock as to *why* one would choose to use his/her leisure time in such a way. Musical participation, as Pitts makes clear, is *not* simply valued for its musical results. The chance to work with others while growing from the interaction and helping others grow through one's contributions is central. The general distinctions between one's work and one's use of leisure time can be seen in a similar fashion had Pitts "interviewed actors, footballers or rock climbers" (p. 44). For Pitts, one must keep in mind the pragmatic use of *value* or *valuing* – it is not so much what one does that creates individual value, but how, why, and sometimes with whom the thing is done.

The reasons individuals participate in musical activities with others are considered within the remainder of the chapter through examining themes such as "*Being something you're not,"* and *"What I would do if I wasn't doing this*." Chapter Three provides important insight as to the give and take of working with others for individual and mutual benefit. Most significantly, rather than approaching music making as a mystical event in which one must possess a specific knowledge base, facile skills sets, and particular attitudes, Pitts demonstrates that while music making does necessitate particular knowledge, skills and attitudes, these are developed individually and in consort with others who share a similar interest.

Chapter 4 – Music and Group Experience: Rehearsing and Performing with Others

The case study data used by Pitts supports her contention that musical participation is multifarious. The intersections of individual desires and the necessity of interacting with others creates the potential for conflict. These conflicts may, however, turn out to be beneficial for the individual – in terms of growth as a musician, and for the group – in terms of the development of the musical product that is eventually shared with an audience.

Considering the "off stage" and "on stage" experiences of participants is one way of conceptualizing the necessary give and take nature of preparing for a public performance. For example:

> Membership of a performing society brings a continuity to the musical involvement of participants. . . . Between the high points of performances comes the ongoing negotiation and fulfillment of musical aims, much of which takes place off stage, invisible to the audience, who see only the culmination of the weeks or months of rehearsal. (p. 54)

Using this idea as a heuristic coupled with the data from the rehearsal process of the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival brought to light three areas of importance when individuals work as part of a group: the social, the organizational, and the musical. The importance of each area is dependant upon the self-concept of the group within the festival. Those groups who are "less professional" or involved in the music making process for social reasons emphasize the social aspects to a greater extent. Individuals may find that engaging in an activity with those sharing a like interest creates the necessary foundation from which to explore a musical work, but a central part of the value from this group endeavor is sharing the experience with others, not necessarily the final performance.

This is not an attempt to oversimplify the rehearsal dynamic and its role in developing a performable product. Indeed, Pitts examines the "risks and rewards of rehearsal" (p. 58) that afford participants opportunities to realize the social, organizational, and musical benefits of their work. Because of a tacit agreement between participants that the purpose of the endeavor is music making, participants, almost by necessity, must focus on constructing a product. The work toward the product thus assumes that participants within the group use their skills and understandings to challenge and be challenged by others. Often, the myopic focus on the musical outcome of a specific music-making event overshadows other extra-musical elements that, outside of the specific experiences, may become important in developing group dynamics (e.g., income, gender, type of employment). When extra-musical elements are muted, participants can enjoy working with others toward a mutually negotiated goal, and do this through the lens of music. Here too, Pitts teases out the complexities of this negotiating process by presenting case study data and related theoretical literature, allowing the reader to consider how other activities may(not) afford participants the same sort of experience.

Pitts also examines the question "of what exactly it is that participants enjoy about their musical activities" (p. 63). While the tensions of working within a group may, at times, try one's patience, the data shows that the greater the musical challenge, the deeper the resultant satisfaction. Part of this may occur due to the nature of the engagements that make up the data for the case studies. In the COMA study, the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival Study, and the Music in the Round study, participants were involved in intense, focused experiences. In each of these case studies time and the unspoken understanding that the focus of participation was on music making were factors affecting the inferred quality received from musical participation. This focus necessitated the taking of individual risks to ensure one's abilities and ideas are offered for utilization by the group. This sharing and risk taking becomes paramount for the group success and individual fulfillment.

Pitts also spends time considering the role of performance on the musical life of the case study participants. The performances of the case study participants should not simply be understood as a concluding experience; rather, these performances serve as models that inform their individual listening and future music making (see p. 66). Pitts has made a clear case for the importance of musical participation to support the achievement of numerous personal and vocational needs. Thus far, the text has focused upon developing operational definitions of the individual and group musician through examining a variety of participatory opportunities. Chapters Five and Six will begin considering the question of *why* individuals – both performers and audience members – become interested and choose to be involved in and with particular types of music.

Chapter 5 – Identifying with Music: Preservation and Promotion

Whereas previous chapters focused upon the individual and group roles that were assumed and developed through musical participation, Chapter Five focuses upon why audience members and performers *identify* with particular genres of music. The case study data affords the reader a broad perspective regarding this query in so far as each study is centered in a different sort of music – Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, contemporary music, and chamber music. Necessary foreground information is provided to understand how one develops an increasingly deep attachment toward a particular genre of music. For instance, "Participants' attachments to the genres in which they were active inevitably varied in nature and degree: some came to a particular kind of music out of curiosity, some as a considered and impassioned choice, others by accident or necessity where the events and groups joined were simply the most convenient source of musical activity" (p. 73). Also, Pitts distinguishes between the reasons for identification between performers and audience members in terms of particular repertoire. Those who performed were more willing to be involved with a variety of repertoire because it allowed them greater opportunity to perform, whereas those who were audience members often had much stronger allegiances toward a specific type of music. As an extension of this prefatory section, Pitts spends a portion of this chapter providing a glimpse of how audience members and performers view their musical identification through the contexts of the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival, the COMA summer school, and the Buxton Music in the Round Festival. To generalize the distinctions between the case study locations:

> There are many clear differences between the Buxton and the COMA participants: the former had come to entertain or be entertained, the latter to learn or develop their skills; Gilbert and Sullivan attracts audiences familiar with and devoted to the genre, but contemporary music invites a more questioning approach. (p. 79)

Here too, Pitts resists making simplistic causal connections between identification and participation. Her resistance further strengthens the claims regarding the complexity of understanding *why* people identify with particular genres and *what* factors may lead an individual toward deep experiences within a genre as either a performer or audience member. These ideas are connected with an analysis considering the inherent difficulties of ascertaining what, if anything, an individual's musical choices say about the individual. This topic is examined through intertwining case study data with the rich literature on this subject. The picture that is painted is, understandably, complicated and Pitts does an admirable job of *suggesting* connection between the case studies and the relevant theoretical literature.

The chapter concludes by discussing the variety of social responsibilities and challenges facing those who value musical participation. Generally, the data from the case studies suggests that participants – both performers and audience members – *care* about their musical participation and the participation of others. Thus, there appears a need for the structure of the festivals and summer school to transmit this importance to the audience members, while beginning to involve new generations of performers and listeners. Within each location participants were attempting to strategize ways to increase initial involvement to ensure the continuation of the festival or summer school. Interestingly, one of the ways that this is achieved is through the assumption that the music in which one is involved is important and, in effect, that the value should be self-evident—"There is a common thread amongst the case study participants of wanting to convert others to participants' own tastes; and evangelism about music styles, influential people, particular venues, and the events themselves" (p. 93). The tensions between listening for enjoyment as an audience member and ensuring, as best is possible, that newcomers are afforded opportunities to experience and learn from listening experiences is the focus of Chapter Six in which Pitts examines how the participant audience member views his or her place in the spectrum of musical participation.

Chapter 6 – The Participant Audience: Listening and Belonging

A strength of *Valuing Musical Participation* is Pitts' inclusion of the views of the participant audience member:

> The inclusion of audience members in the category of 'participants' for this study challenges the notion of the passive audience. . . . Attending a concert demands a certain commitment from audience members; not just of time and money, but of the concentration and energy necessary to listen to live music for several hours. (p. 95)

By rejecting the simplistic notion that musical performances are "done to – or at best for – an audience" (p. 96), Pitts accentuates that even though the audience member does not perform with the musicians, he or she must choose to listen, what to wear, how much one is willing to pay for a ticket, what concerts are worth attending, and so on. The audience member is not simply undergoing an experience in the concert hall. Rather, the participant audience member has brought to the setting a series of expectations and outcomes. If, for instance, an individual attends a concert of somewhat unfamiliar music, his or her frame of reference is premised upon previous concert-going experiences. The balance between expectations and outcomes resulting from the current concert would affect the degree to which he or she is willing to engage in like situations in the future. When one considers Pitts' findings from Chapter Five, the desire to have similar experiences in the future – which may afford one additional entry into the a specific genre – are, at least, partially contingent upon the choices the participant audience member makes based upon the music performed.

Prior to a musical experience one should understand the expectations of concert-going. For the seasoned concertgoer expectations are supported by continuing concert attendance. The Music in the Round participant audience members' development as aficionados occurred through the focused environment at the festival – in which they were with like-minded individuals, as well as using external resources such as CD and Internet sites for concert preparation. This demonstrates the active engagement of the participant audience member; they have chosen to use their leisure time to prepare for the concerts within the festival. Another way of demonstrating the importance of the musical aspects of these experiences is the focus upon the choices participant audience members make in terms of allegiance for specific repertoire. Many participant audience members used the intervals to talk about the compositions performed. These musical experiences solidified particular social aspects of the experiences that occurred within, between, and after the formal concert. While the musical choices may be the most obvious avenue from which to prepare for a concert, Pitts also teases out the motivation for concert-going of participant audience members.

One's motivation for concert attendance can take on a variety of forms. For instance, the data from the Music in the Round study suggest the quality of music is the most preferred reason for attending the festival. Conversely, Pitts points out that if a performer is friends with or related to an audience member, that the motivations for concert attendance have little to do with the music being performed. In the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival the audience membership consisted of many whose personal connections were the central reasons for attending as opposed to "loyalty to the festival or to the musical genre it celebrated" (p. 102). So too, familiarity with repertoire and sharing an experience with like-minded people were also important motivations for concert

attendance. Pitts spends some time considering the risk aversion that some participant audience members demonstrated. The Gilbert and Sullivan Festival and the Music in the Round Festival participant audience members preferred familiar works. This presents obvious challenges to the artistic director of a festival and to potential audience members. The balance between the known and the unknown repertoire is critical. Too much of either can significantly affect attendance and, more importantly, limit entry points into music providing new insight into old works and the introduction of new works to the engaged participant audience member.

The reader is also provided insight into the complex nature of how audience expectation figures into the resultant concert ethos. The concert venues in the Gilbert and Sullivan Festivals and the Music in the Round Festival assumed a familiarity with the works. This could be seen as a detriment to providing a comfortable entry to novices. This tension is in direct conflict to the desire of festival insiders to develop the next generation of audience members. Pitts provides evidence demonstrating this conflict in terms of how participant audience members justify their preference for particular music as well as the difficulty of balancing challenges to the performers (who may desire opportunities to play a variety of repertoire) and audience members who desire familiarity for the most part. While the view of the longtime participant was most strongly heard, The Music in the Round study data also demonstrated that some first time members held views consistent with those who are long time festival participants in terms of comfort/familiarity. However, while entry into the festival was not complicated, it may be the case that the long term participation consists of establishing a group of like-minded individuals over time.

Valuing Musical Participation began by considering the definitions of musician as articulated by students in Year 13 and the university. Pitts returns to this general theme in Chapter Six when she considers the listener as musician. Interestingly, the participant audience members share the same difficulty when asked to self-identify as a musician. Whereas the quality of involvement was not as important to the Year 13 and university students, it was central for many of the participant audience members. Pitts also spends some time debunking the generalization that "those who can, do, and those who can not, attend concerts." A significant point to be gleaned from her discussion is that the quality of involvement and depth of participation ought to be more broadly considered than simply those who perform and those who listen. Many of the participant audience members had some sort of previous performing experiences and, as previously stated, also considered "extra-musical" preparation a central means of participating in musical endeavors. Within Chapter Six, Pitts has shown that individuals who choose to participate in musical experiences as an audience member are "fully participant in the musical event" (p. 100). The skills, knowledge, and attitudes brought forth by the participant

listener are central to the complete ethos created by the intersections of audience, performer, and music. In Chapter Seven, Pitts uses the information gleaned from her case studies and additional research literature to consider potential educational implications.

Chapter 7 – Fostering Musical Participation: Educational Perspectives and Implications

Chapter Seven may be thought of as three distinct "big ideas": Music education in the "real" world, Challenges and implication for music in the school, and Challenges and implications for higher education. Each of these ideas connects with the complex idea of musical participation that develops from educational experiences throughout the lifespan.

Music education in the "real" world

The abundance of time and energy spent on justifying music's place in the public school curriculum, while important, may lack focus. Those attentive to the history of music education in the United Kingdom or United States are well aware of the sorts of justification that advocates usually put forth (e.g., self-expression, creativity, and a variety of extra musical benefits). The data from Pitts' work, however, suggests that enjoyment, self-fulfillment, and a variety of social factors are essential in the initial and continued participation in musical activities. This is an essential point. The aim(s) of music education should not only focus upon justifying music *instruction* as a part of schooling. So too, teachers and advocacy groups should also consider the *continued* participation of individuals as an aim. According to Pitts, "Musical learning needs to have both current value and sustainability, such that teachers are faced with the challenge of enthusing young people about musical participation as well as equipping them with the learning strategies and critical awareness to pursue their interests independently" (p. 121). This is a difficult task for a number of reasons. First, so many of the curricular offerings within the schools are ensemble based and depend upon a teacher to pick literature, teach skills, and lead performances. Second, for better or worse, the emphasis on accountability – even outside of mandates of things such as NCLB in the United States – have made it necessary for music programs to "show their stuff" though public performance. Third, even those programs that provide children opportunities to compose or participate with music in other ways are limited by the "real" world in terms of opportunities for similar sorts of engagements outside of the school.

One of the most interesting aspects of Pitts' book is her explication of how participation is foundational to the act of music making or music listening. The case study data and other literature make it clear that one does not learn skills and knowledge and then begin to participate in music. Rather, one's participation within musical

environments is synonymous with music learning. Thus, the questions that educator's ought to consider should encompass how musical participation throughout formal schooling can provide a variety of entry points and opportunities to develop new perspectives for music students and those who enjoy listening to music.

Challenges and implications for music in the schools

In order for children to have extended and deep experiences with music in primary and secondary levels of schooling, Pitts suggests that the schools ought to provide these opportunities for *all* children (e.g., not only through band, choir, orchestra, but also opportunities for the developing participant listener). These opportunities should not only be centered upon the music teacher making choices for the students. It can be argued that one of the reasons so many children terminate their more "formal" sorts of musical participation once they leave secondary level schooling is because their teachers – for a variety of reasons – do not afford the students enough opportunities to become independent. Musical participation in the schools is premised upon *group* participation and not enough time or emphasis is provided for the development of individual value. Children should have the responsibility of selecting literature and conducting ensembles. In other curricular areas such as mathematics and English literature, evolving mastery is demonstrated through solving problems, writing papers, and giving presentations; the student is wholly responsible for demonstrating their evolving independence. The same cannot be said for music education in the schools. Pitts suggests that music teachers take the children "backstage" with them. That is, the music teacher could bring in a composition on which they are working and talk through the challenges of creating or preparing a piece of music. Additionally, children should have ample opportunity to observe professional musicians. This could occur through inviting individuals or performing groups to perform for the whole school or work with young musicians. As Pitts points out:

> The satisfactions and pleasures of musical participation are best understood from the inside; and that, perhaps, is the compelling argument that educational debate so often skirts around – young people cannot *know* whether they feel an affinity with musical activities if they have not had sufficient, varied, and authentic opportunities to experience them. (pp. 129-130)

Challenges and implications for higher education

Suggestions that could assist those working in higher education the means by which to further opportunities for students' musical participation are provided in the final section of Chapter Seven. First, institutions of higher learning ought to provide a variety

of classroom settings and legitimated performing opportunities. The traditional rehearsal hall, the private studio, and the lecture hall are important spaces for musical growth. Even so they limit opportunities for students who desire to continue their musical participation because of their previous experiences (often outside formal educational settings). This is not at all to imply that these spaces should be excised from the music school. Rather, if one focuses upon what musical participation "is," then additional opportunities from which students can develop their skills and knowledge may be developed. These ideas developed from questionnaire data in which university students reflected upon their hopes and desires at the initiation of their program of study and at the end of their first semester of study.

What is clear from the data is the change in perspective in terms of the individual student's hopes and the responsibilities of being a music student in the university. Like her suggestions for primary and secondary schools, universities ought to expand the legitimated opportunities and foci of desired outcomes. This is premised upon the possibility that such offerings – especially when formalized – will enable students to experience the richness of musical participation. This richness would assist the student in developing his or her skills and knowledge in a vital environment in which the personal and group benefits and challenges are negotiated in the construction of a musical performance. The sorts of experiences that afford the participant listener and amateur musician entry into musical participation warrant consideration, too. One also needs to keep in mind the purpose of considering the range of opportunities for musical participation. It should be emphasized, similar to the participants in the COMA, Music in the Round, and Gilbert and Sullivan case studies, that musical participation is a variety of things to a variety of people. There is a limit to the sorts of variability that can be supported, especially in formalized educational settings. Nonetheless, the greater the range of experiences supported, the more probable it becomes that participants will bring unique perspectives to their future music making endeavors. This idea becomes especially significant as Pitts suggests that the majority of pleasure, self-actualization, musical development, and learning results from an individual's desires and motivation. Much of the value that one takes from musical participation is not contingent upon formal learning that takes place in schools. Thus, if institutionalized learning, curricular requirements, and implicit definitions of what it means to be a musician are to assist the student in *becoming* a musician, it seems reasonable that institutions of higher learning take seriously the development of musical and social values through musical participation. This appears to be a useful idea to consider seeing as Pitts has spent the majority of this book focusing upon musical participation outside formalized educational settings.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions: Understanding Musical Participation

In Chapter Eight, Pitts provides rationale for using the four case studies and summaries of the cogent themes. She also justifies her methodological choices and provides suggestions for future research. Pitts suggests, in order to further understand the complexities of musical participation and their importance in the development of the "individual self" and the "musician as self," that the range of musical experiences studied should be expanded. The ways that "musician" is defined at different points of the educative journey should be further interrogated, and studying the ideas of musical "outsiders"—those individuals who have selected to forego musical participation—may be a useful way of doing so.

Pitts rightfully, and obviously, explicates that the central means through which the complexity of musical participation can be understood is by providing encouragement, support, and educational opportunities so individuals can begin or continue participating within the variety of musical organizations that exist both formally (e.g., the festival, community band/choir), and informally (e.g., the garage band, the community woodwind quintet).

Concluding Remarks

Valuing Musical Participation is an important addition to the scholarship in music education. The book is particularly relevant for undergraduate and graduate students in music education. Curricular offerings in the "typical" music program in the public schools have been stable for the past 50 years. Most K-12 programs are structured in such a way that children will learn basic musical skills and knowledge in general music courses in the elementary grades, and should they choose, continue the refinement of these skills and knowledge in a choir, band, or orchestra in middle and high school. To be sure, most middle schools and a minority of high schools provide interesting "general" music offerings, and Pitts' work provides a unique perspective that allows the reader to reconsider the potentials and pitfalls of the traditional course offerings and pedagogical approaches to musical instruction. Introducing the perspectives contained in *Valuing Musical Participation* to pre-service teachers or teachers with more experience can only benefit the children with whom they work. This can occur by broadening the focus of music education preparation and practice to include the important skills and knowledge necessary to be an independent musician while also emphasizing synonymous development of value that supports musical participation.

About the Author

Jason A. Helfer teaches in the Educational Studies Department at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. Mr. Helfer worked as an elementary teacher for one year in Illinois and six years in Texas, and has extensive experience working with pre-service teachers. His research interests include the philosophy of education and arts education, and aesthetics. Mr. Helfer served as an assistant editor of *The International Journal of Education and the Arts*, and is president of The Society for the Philosophical Study of Education.

International Journal of Education & the Arts