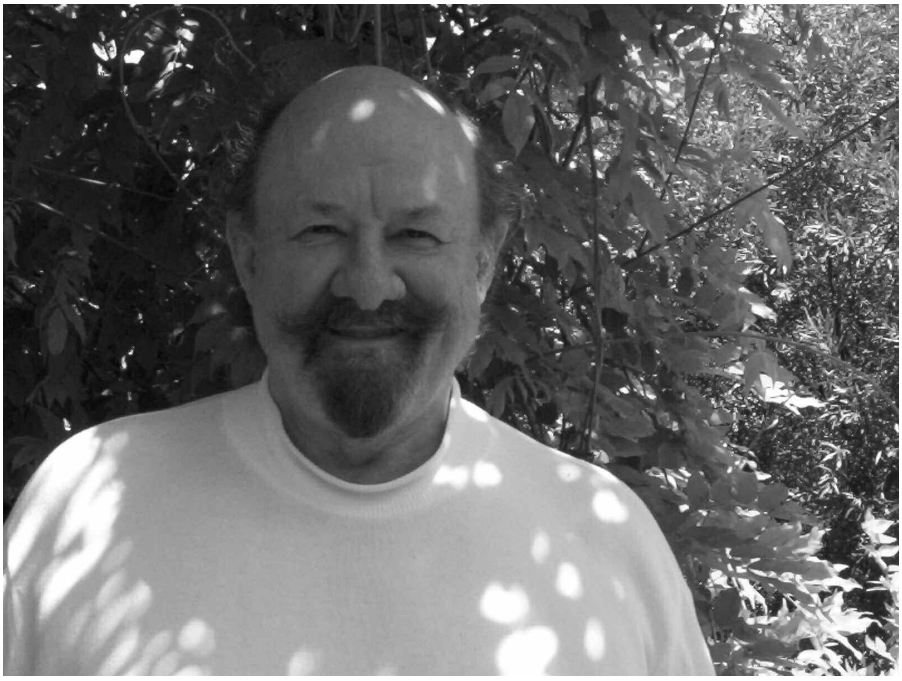
MUSIC EDUCATION



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As Director of Music in two selective grammar schools and an ancient cathedral school in England, Robert Walker developed a curriculum which encapsulated both the western art music traditions from medieval music onwards, plus the music of the twentieth century avant-garde. His students performed, studied, and composed music in these diverse styles as well as composing and performing electronic music. He continued his career teaching music and music education in universities in England, as full professor in two universities in Canada, and now in Australia where he teaches at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. His Ph.D. from London University was an empirical study of twentieth century avant-garde notations, and this inspired his research into auditory-visual perception published in *Perception and Psychophysics* and several similar journals. The author of eight books, 10 chapters in books, and over 100 research papers, he has written on a variety of topics including music perception, music and culture, the nature of the music curriculum, and the musical distinction between education and entertainment. He was Chief Examiner for Music and Coordinator of Performing Arts Programs for the International Baccalaureate Organisation from 1987–1993, during which time he reorganised the music program for IBO schools worldwide to include an equal study of both non-western and western music and opened up performance and composition components to include any style or genre of music. He was also Chair of the Research Commission of the International Society for Music Education. He has lectured and given workshops on all continents across the world over the last two decades, including being part of an initial team to develop research in music education in South Africa, especially among the indigenous population following the end of the Apartheid era.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Cultural Values, Social Change and Innovation

By

ROBERT WALKER

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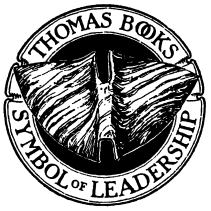

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To my wife Myung whose loving support and helpful critical comments have sustained me in writing this book.

For Emily, Liam, and Saan

FOREWORD

I first met Robert Walker at a research seminar of the International Society for Music Education held in Victoria, British Columbia in 1984. I clearly recall the paper he presented, and remember being struck by the sheer intelligence, musical knowledge, research skill, and commitment to music education reflected by the paper and by his oral commentary. That same day we sat down and started to talk. We have been talking ever since.

For over 25 years Walker and I have discussed, argued, theorized, cajoled, and shared research about the nature of musical understanding and the implications of this for music teaching. For several years we carried on by phone every Friday afternoon, and on the rare occasions we could actually meet we would pick up exactly where we left off the previous time. Once when he invited me to his home in Vancouver we talked well past three in the morning, getting up at six only to continue the debate. Another time at a conference in Saskatoon we met for dinner at an Italian restaurant and didn't leave until they closed the place at midnight. By that time we had covered the paper tablecloth with diagrams, models, hypotheses, and formulae, each of us trying to press home our point. (Several of our friends joined us, but later neither Bob nor I could recall who they were, when they left, or what they talked about. Quite rude, I agree, but there you are. Some topics are just more important than others.)

Our talks continued wherever and whenever we had the opportunity: my house, his house, conferences, email, whatever. Over and over and over we argued our respective theories, each time bringing new evidence or new hypotheses and conclusions to the table.

You see, the point is that we simply didn't agree. Walker had his theory and I had mine. What kept us going was mutual fascination for the other's theory, its compelling logic and empirical evidence and, particularly, the fear that the other might in fact have it right.

Walker was educated in England and began teaching in the late 1960s. He was convinced at the time that the way to get children involved in music was to have them experiment with sound, learning to organize its elements into musical structures found to be interesting and meaningful to them. As

Walker explains in this book, the approach "encouraged children to be creative and exploratory in expressing their own feelings and ideas through music, rather than being mere empty vessels learning archaic rules from arid textbooks." Others in England and North America were trying the same approach. But as potentially involving and downright musical as classroom composition may have seemed music educators ultimately abandoned it. The reason was simple. As Walker explains, the strategy placed huge musical and creative demands on the music teacher. Music teachers who failed to have a thorough understanding and background in western music, its traditions and repertoire, found they were unable to help children realize creative and productive results. The outcome was frustration and helplessness for both the child and the teacher. The only alternative was to resort to method-determined teaching, in effect giving up the attempt to help children develop their own self-sufficient and independent musical decision-making.

Part of Walker's approach to classroom composition included children inventing personal notation systems so that they could preserve their work. This led Walker to the next phase of his research: auditory imagery. What Walker did was to invert the question: if children can invent visual symbols that for them successfully stand for specific kinds of sounds, can a set be identified that represents the basic elements of sound universally–pitch, loudness, time, and timbre? And if so, can these in turn be used to test for a listener's auditory perceptual understanding?

Walker designed a 16-item, multiple choice, cross-modal (visual-auditory) test. (The instrument was subsequently shown to have high statistical reliability and validity.) Walker used the test with a diverse range of subjects: musically experienced, musically inexperienced, young children, older children and adults, urban subjects and rural subjects, subjects from Canada, the United States, Argentina, Egypt, Australia, Korea, Mexico, England, and elsewhere. He even rewrote the instrument in brail so as to test the congenitally blind. In all cases the results were the same: consistent agreement in matching certain visual shapes with particular sounds. Except in one instance.

The one exception was an Inuit tribe in the Canadian north that demonstrated, convincingly in my opinion, that pitch was an unknown entity. The tribe had no concept of pitch, could not make pitch discriminations, had no idea what pitch was about. (What they probably did instead was associate changes in pitch with timbre fluctuation, a fundamental component of their culture's musical system.)

The importance of this result cannot be overstated. Concepts of pitch (at least) and pitch differences seem to be learned; they are not necessarily the outcome of the brain's genetic design. In other words, pitch perceived as relative "highs" and "lows" is not an auditory necessity. Pitch perception may

instead depend on *enculturation.* (Walker's report of this study, published in *Perception and Psychophysics* in 1987, has attracted wide interest and received considerable praise and discussion.)

I think it was the auditory imagery studies and a more philosophical paper he wrote around the same time that set the foundation for his theory that ultimately became the basis for this book. In 1986, Walker published a paper in the *International Music Educator* in which he argued that there was no logical reason for assuming that all human brains are designed in the same way. Instead, brain function, he said, is determined solely through cultural experience. He published a whole book in 1990, entitled *Musical Beliefs*, which took the argument further. The paper, however, offered acoustic spectrum analyses comparing the vocal output of professional opera singers with northern Canadian tribes of Inuit. Walker attributed these differences to cultural and environmental factors that, he claimed, define local musical meaning. Though the paper is now dated, my students and I return to it frequently. Later, he extended this study to include Australia Aboriginals, and more groups of First Nation People in North America. It is thick with information and the argument is flawless.

Which does not mean that I agree with him. Given that I had staked my career on the premise that, in fact, brains are hardwired and designed genetically you can imagine my frustration and amazement at such a claim. Thus more phone calls, more late-night discussion, more cajoling. Both of us were *very* serious about the importance of research, *very* convinced of the importance of music in education, *very* concerned about the ludicrously uncontrolled directions both music and music education research were taking at the time. On that we agreed. It is just that we had this one niggling problem: is musical understanding determined by in-born perceptual and cognitive brain structures or is it solely the outcome of experience.

I must admit that I have since given in part way. I now contend we are both right. The physical structure and set-up of the brain's auditory mechanisms are predetermined (there are bundles of hard evidence to support this); but to be functional perceptually the (predetermined) auditory neural networks responsible for emitting meaningful sound percepts must first be "tuned." This tuning is accomplished through early exposure to the local sound environment (possibly directed by a short-lived brain mechanism) during which the brain learns to identify tonal-rhythmic regularities (possibly by sound element fixation) from a noisy acoustic environment. For humans, the brain's motivation for doing this is the genetically-determined need to acquire facility in speech perception so as to develop linguistic ability. Musical development is probably a secondary benefit of this development.

In other words, both brain design and cultural experience are at play simultaneously, culture affecting the "tuning" of the brain's hardwired audi-

tory networks. Walker's cultural determinism theory and my neural network theory seem to me to be highly compatible.

But Walker would have nothing of it. At least at first. Throughout the 1990s he argued that "We cannot have it both ways." He said this to me, he said this at conferences, and he finally wrote it all down and said it in the *Psychology of Music* journal.

I recall a visit I made to Vancouver several years ago. It was raining, of course. And as we sat at a traffic light on our way to lunch someplace, I explained to Bob once again that it had to be both: cognitive brain design and cultural-behavioral shaping. You can't have one without the other, I said. Musical understanding depends on both. I thought he would be quite pleased with this since I had accepted his theory in part without having to sacrifice much of my own theory. I recall very clearly his thinking hard about what I said, nodding cautiously, and saying, "Hal, I think you're right. You're right, it has to be that way. It is the only possible answer. I think we've found it." Imagine my elation. Years of hard work, discussion, and debate had finally paid off. We were finally on the same page.

It was a mere six months later that we attended another conference. And what does he say? "Music perception can only be the outcome of the effects of culture." Oh Bob, Bob, Bob, where did we go wrong. What happened to our agreement from that rainy day in Vancouver?

Shortly after that Walker moved to Sydney, Australia. No snow, of course, warmer temperatures, hours on the beach. We still kept in touch, mostly by email and exchanging each other's writings. Plus of course the same old disagreement, though neither of us paid much attention to this any longer, because something had changed.

I couldn't put my finger on it at first. But something important was going on. For one thing Walker was collecting more data, data of a very special kind, multicultural data from places and people that had not to that point been formally investigated. For another thing he was paying close attention to Asia, its education systems and particularly its music. While others had explored Asian music as well Walker was carrying out his enquiries with detail, patience, and musical experience exceeding anything done previously. And he did this always with a strong theoretical foundation. He was not merely collecting descriptions as others had done. He research was driven by his now well-developed behavioral theory of music perception and learning. In short, Walker concentrated his research on a single issue: music as a derivative of culture.

Which brings us to this book. *Music Education: Cultural Values, Social Change, and Innovation,* is the most important music education monograph published in the past 15 years. The book meticulously builds a case that music education has taken a bad turn, and that setting the field back on

course is going to require a shift in thinking about the place of music in today's culture. The goal is simple: to show that "the most important single purpose of music education in schools . . . is to teach music as representative and embodying cultural values."

Prerequisite to accomplishing this is, "A well-educated music teacher [who ensures] not just a good standard of musical education in the school classroom, but [who] engages students emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually." Now before you react with, "Oh no, here we go again, just the same old aesthetic education argument all over again; thought we got over that years ago," read on. It is not that at all. Instead, Walker offers the most refreshing, inventive, practical and sensible depiction of what it means to be educated musically that the field has seen in a very long time. The book is not merely a distanced description of multiculturalism. It offers instead the first-ever comprehensive depiction of musical understanding in the context of culture, and the importance of attachment, "historically, psychologically, and emotionally," with the state of one's own culture.

Walker develops three points: First, music education has been diverted over the last 30 to 40 years from what should be its main focus, namely *to draw students into what musicians actually do.* This diversion has come from the failure to distinguish the difference between *education and entertainment*, or, in other words, the failure to distinguish between the quality of the music education experience, that is, music as an expression of cultural values, versus "a marketplace of music where quality is measured in dollars and sales figures" where "media hyperbole [distorts] our perceptions of musical value and quality."

Second, music educators have given in to a threat: because children (teenagers particularly) spend so much time listening to pop music, music education curricula must therefore include a lot of pop music, otherwise children will abandon school music programs, finding them to be irrelevant to the "real" musical world. "For many children in school the choice lay between learning about something that appears to be defunct . . . and a popular form of music, which was comparatively simple, immediate in its emotional appeal, and seemingly relevant to their lives."

Walker's third point is that understanding music means understanding the culture that produced it: "Musical values arise from cultural values and practices." Now at first glance, you might think that this point gives in to the threat inherent within the second point. Not so. Because to secede one's expertise as a music educator and featuring pop music as the central curricula attraction, "focuses on trivia and superficiality, leaving students with the idea that culture has no emotional depth, no strong allegiances, and no reason to feel attachments."

Note that this is not a diatribe against popular music, just that current

practice separates (popular) music from the very culture which produced it in the first place. Walker knows popular music. More so, he knows the history of the genre, its historical context within western culture, and the influences pop music has had not only on contemporary music but its effects on other cultures as well. Further, he convincingly shows that pop music is **not** a western development but is instead a corruption, even theft, of a kind of music that originally belonged to Afro-American natives rather than western European tradition. This conclusion is indeed a severe commentary on the "music industry" as well as the assumptions of its consumers. Pop music has essentially been separated from the historical, psychological, and emotional conditions of culture and has created a new culture that is essentially isolated from twenty-five hundred years or so of western development.

In respect to music education Walker provides a solution: either admit that music education is merely entertainment or design music curricula such that they embed music (any kind!) in the culture which spawned it. "We should, I argue, teach music as culture, with all the critical, analytic, investigative techniques and interrogative attitudes which are possible." This leads Walker to suggest that, "one can only truly appreciate the power of another culture for someone born into and nurtured by that other culture, if one fully understands one's own culture." If pop music originates with Afro-Americans, which culture is music education really explaining?

Walker shows us that the west has made two contributions: "a system of musical analogies between a mental state, an emotion, a dramatic situation or a psychological condition, and particular musical sounds which are intended to match the state or psychological condition"; and "pure musical forms" that are "intellectually and aesthetically challenging." (He traces the rationale for these back to Plato and Aristotle.) Both contributions led to the development of opera and, later, film music, both of which link the thoughts of the viewer with the thoughts expressed by the composer via structures that are psychologically and aesthetically rewarding. The two contributions, musical analogies and pure musical forms, ("pillars on which western art music is built") justify "the content on which [western] music education . . . should be built." Culture is "less to do with location and ethnicity and more to do with keeping alive the historical links and artifacts which feed the mental sense of belonging to a culture." In short, "education is about cultural value: that is the point."

Walker draws on his extensive knowledge of music history, literature, performance practice, foreign musical systems, and music education experience to explain the effect of contextual understanding on the meaning of today's (pop) music, the context of music in the western culture (its diatonic tonal system as a derivation of a now-ancient theory of the physical world) with other musical systems (rooted in cultural understandings, traditions, and

assumptions that are distinct from the west), and the realization that education in foreign musical cultures reveals better understanding of our own music: its function, importance, and means of expression. The goal and outcome of this is a strong statement about the state of western music education and the need to reconsider its "philosophy" and the ways we go about educating our students musically: "Music is a significant part of [education about culture] and the western system of values and ideals, and to be educated means to understand the ideals, theories, practices and applications, and to be able to recognize their manifestations in musical sound and performance practices."

"School music" has become disengaged from the very culture in which it takes place and to which it is responsible. For Walker this denigrates music education to the role of entertainment (half-time shows, pop concerts, mimicking Broadway shows, and the like). Isolating and teaching pop music in the classroom (which, for some teachers is the exclusive content of their programs) on the rationale that it is "most relevant" and inherently exciting defeats musical learning.

Walker sets out a complex task. The result, however, is a highly readable, beautifully written critique of music psychology and sociology offered by one of the most musically and culturally knowledgeable writers in our field. You will like this book. It is substantive, meaty, informative, connecting a number of problem areas that have for the most part been carried out in isolation from each other. Walker doesn't waste the reader's time telling us what we already know, coddling us by reinforcing past assumptions and biases. Instead, Walker shows what has gone wrong with a field that is in need of a hard look at its practices and false hopes. You may not always agree with Walker but he certainly will cause you to think about your role as a music educator.

Recently, my wife and I traveled to southeast Asia on a research project. On the way we detoured to Sydney so that I could once again visit with Bob and his wife, Myung, and to once again compare research notes. Over barbequed steaks and carefully selected Australian wine I asked Bob where he drew the line between autonomic brain processes, a construct that Walker, with some reluctance I think, finally acknowledged a few years ago, and cultural effects on musical understanding. He said, "It's the connection between, say, perceiving the squeal of a truck's brakes and learning the meaning of the squeal as a cultural function (that is, 'it's a truck')." I thought about this answer for awhile the next day on our long flight to Asia. Finally I decided, "Right, who can argue with that." Cheers mate!

Harold Fiske
University of Western Ontario

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MUSIC EDUCATION

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In this book I take a deliberately international position for many reasons. International comparisons of student achievement are now commonplace, and governments worldwide study them. With the growth of international schools, especially in Asia and the Middle East, curriculum is no longer the exclusive preserve of national or parochial authorities. As much as the United States exports its AP program across the international school scene, several States of the Union embrace the International Baccalaureate program in its high schools. Music figures largely in these developments.

Education, especially in a political context, has become a special focus of governments worldwide, especially so since the early 1980s when various "back to basics" movements arose in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Music education was not exempt, and by the 1990s there had appeared national standards for music education in the United States, the United Kingdom National Curriculum with its highly intrusive inspection system of what actually goes on in classrooms, and in Australia and Canada, where educational responsibility is devolved to states and provinces. Various professional organizations sought to establish national standards for both the training of teachers and the curriculum outcomes and content taught in classrooms. A most significant recent development, however, is the growth of private providers of education in the United Kingdom, Australia, and to a lesser extent in Canada, motivated largely by effects of globalization and the ethos of private enterprise. In addition, there are expanding numbers of parents in these countries who "home-school" their children, preferring to take personal control of their children's education as opposed to leaving it to a teacher or a school. Such developments are beginning to impact on the nature of music education and the increasing range of opportunities available for music educators.

As a result, ideas and theories about music education and its practices are no longer (even if they ever were) the exclusive preserve of academics.

Government-mandated curricula override all other curricula ideas in some countries, and in others with more devolved political structures (as in the United States, Canada, and Australia) government pressures to identify standards in education are having similar effects. There are other pressures in education worldwide which also impact on music education. I describe these important developments and their potential impact on what we know as music education throughout this book and, in addition, invite the reader to reflect on how we came to our current state of awareness in music education from its origins in ancient Greece. More importantly, I describe the current scene and its potential impact on the future of music education. I believe that we are in a new and quite different political and economic situation in education which is already having an impact on how music educators work. Many of the more traditional influences on music education are, I suggest, being subsumed within more complex and diverse forces which are changing the way education is delivered to those at kindergarten age to grade 12 (18 years).

The word "choice" has now become an important watchword in education. Consequently, scholarly ideas and arguments about the nature of music education, expressed either in psychological terms or in philosophical argument, have to some degree become victim of market forces in the sense that parents are being encouraged now to decide for themselves what they want for their children, and to be directly involved in arranging it. For this reason I have not included comment on the many texts on content and approaches to music education appearing over the last few decades from such authors as Bennett Reimer, Keith Swanwick, David Elliott, Estelle Jorgenson, Wayne Bowman, and many others. We are, I believe, moving into a new and quite different era in education where music in education can only be justified as an exemplar of a particular cultural practice, and not as some universal or generically valuable educational source. My point is not that such texts are out of date, rather that other and more pressing imperatives have arisen in the form of various government interventions.

In this new era, there are, I argue, few psychological reasons, nor philosophical underpinnings relating to the concept of an ideal education, for including music in an education which might successfully attract the attention of all the diverse players and stakeholders in education who are now emerging. Much as the era of big government or an overarching commitment to a political theory is past, so is the grand theory of anything in education which relies for its dissemination and implementation on a centralized authority wielding controlling powers.

Music is a product of specific cultural ways of thinking and doing, and its inclusion in education can, I argue, only be justified in terms of the importance a particular culture places on its music as a valued art form. Moreover,

respect for other cultural traditions and their art forms can only occur, I argue, if one knows one's own culture and its artistic traditions sufficiently well to understand and respect its strengths and weaknesses. It is in this context that I focus on the music of the western artistic and aesthetic traditions and on a justification for the importance of these traditions in education where western cultural traditions are valued. The same holds true for any cultural traditions, and this is the point. There is a growing trend for people to want their children educated in their own cultural traditions, whatever they might be, and in many countries schools are offering these different cultural traditions. Western culture and its art music, therefore, becomes something parents either want for their children, or not. This book focuses on western art music and its place in an education in western cultural traditions. Other cultural traditions and associated music, about which I know little of substance, deserve their own book devoted exclusively to them.

From current evidence, I suggest in parts of the book that there is a growing trend for parents in western countries, and across the world, especially in Asia, to want a more traditional, western-oriented education for their children, and this includes the art music of the western traditions. The increasing range and number of international schools across Asia, especially in China, offer a western style education, taught by staff who are western educated and trained. Importantly, the programs offered in such schools are based on western art music, and include the International Baccalaureate Diploma program, the British General Certificate of Education, and the United States Advanced Placement program. All of these focus on western art music.

When it comes to the works of art of western culture, an educated mind must know the nature, intent, purpose, and content of the practices of musicians in the traditions of western thought. We, in many western countries are in danger of losing these important traditions under the weight of entertainment and its music of immediate gratification which acknowledges no cultural ties except those invented by popular culture. The educational world itself is, I argue, changing dramatically, and music as a culturally valued art form, whatever the culture, has an important role to play in its future development.

Diversity of offerings is now becoming important in educational delivery and content. Generic ideas about music education have, as a consequence, assumed less and less importance in, what many are now referring to as, the educational marketplace. Some parents want a more traditional type of education, as they see it, and they choose an appropriate school. Others might want a type of schooling which is more open, creatively organized, and flexible in its content and structure. Governments across the world are encouraging this diversity. Music teachers will, I argue, face increasingly diverse