# Music Education at its Tipping Point

It is a calamitous, undeniable fact that music education has experienced a decline in enrollment, influence and financial support in recent years. However, I was surprised to see how critical this situation is. Apparently, between the years 1999 – 2004 music programs in America experienced a decline in student enrollment by nearly 50%, thus resulting in the unemployment of 1,503 music educators, further increasing the unemployment rate for teachers. It was shocking to discover that one of the factors that is responsible for this epidemic is the allocation of budget money taken away from music programs and given to other subjects such as math, science and English. This is absolutely preposterous considering, “93% of Americans agree that arts are vital in providing a well-rounded education.” I found it absolutely appalling that school boards decreased funding for music when the vast majority of Americans agree that arts and music is of vital importance.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Kratus incessantly blames the teachers for pushing music education to its tipping point. It is no wonder that music educators around the world are enraged with this article. Kratus consistently manages to bring it back to his major point that music educators are the ones to blame for this crises. He never suggests that it could be the school boards fault for wanting to allocate their money differently or that students have no desire to learn about music nowadays or even that music isn’t as positively viewed anymore. Instead, Kratus decides to blame music teachers which is why music educators around the world are infuriated with this callous article.

Personally, I share the feelings of the music teachers who find this article distasteful and simply incorrect. Kratus describes music teachers an authoritarian leaders who offer no room for personal growth or development. He suggests that teachers in other subjects allow for more integration and personal input into the curriculum, “The ensemble director selects the music, makes all the artistic decisions regarding interpretation, and shapes the resulting performance through tightly managed rehearsals to match a preconceived notion of the piece, correcting errors along the way.”
My question for Kratus is:

Who should select the music if not the teacher? Who should make all the musical interpretations?
The vast amounts of students in the class who have little to no education and knowledge of ensemble music? Obviously it is going to be the teacher. You wouldn’t suggest that students in a math class should decide what the course curriculum should be. So why is it different for music teachers?

 Kratus also suggests that choirs and ensembles should stray away from classical ensemble music and focus on the music that kids listen to nowadays. Though I agree to an extent there is a major problem with this because the music that dominates many adolescents’ ears is Electronic Dance Music (EDM) or Pop songs that become irrelevant after a month. First, it is nearly impossible to transpose EDM songs for ensembles and it will typically not sound pleasant if it is done. Second, with new pop songs becoming irrelevant so quickly it is insensible to spend time creating harmonisations for choirs and ensembles. Third, songs that the youth listen to are not made for choirs and ensembles they are made for bands and solo voices and should be kept that way.

 Kratus does have a few sensible points I am on the side of the infuriated music educators. And if Kratus is right then Music Education will experience the fate of a stationary shark.

 Jeremy Fox-Revett