

Bowman, W. D. (2004). "Pop" goes . . . ? Taking popular music seriously"
In Rodrigues, C. (Ed.). *Bridging the gap: Popular music and music education*. US: MENC.

Today, society so easily jumps to conclusions about popular music, eager to deem it as not useful and unnecessary in music education. This makes me wonder why we carry this close-minded attitude about music education around with us.

Of course changing music curriculum in schools will be a hard task to endeavour, but if children today are finding meaning in it, then why are we not trying to do the same? Like the author had stated, pop music is meaningful and influential in their lives, so we cannot just turn our backs on it. We have to at least try and understand it ourselves. If we increase awareness surrounding popular music, we can all improve our musical creativity. It presents a new perspective, one of the twenty-first century. Incorporating popular music into music education will help students understand music concepts in a way that relates to them. It can bridge the gap between formal music training, which is equally as important, and the creative process behind making music, creating balance. Personally, I don't think popular and formal music education are two separate things. In fact, I think they have much to learn from one another and should be equally incorporated into teaching. By combining the two, we can provide a well-rounded music education to children.

I was fascinated by the concept of seeing music education from "above" versus from "below". To someone who thinks they are 'better' than popular music, it is viewed as standardized amateur music. Then, being seen from below, it becomes the music of real life creating connections to day-to-day life. This is why I agree that popular music cannot be narrowed down to any one thing. It is individualized, and creates different meaning from each person to the next. For some people, it may not seem relevant to their musical training, but then musicianship may not be valuable to the next striving musician. So even music education in itself will be individualized based on what the individual is looking to get out of their training.

I'm not sure if I'm surprised or offended that the author opened the definition of popular music up to describing it as amateur engagement. There is a sense of informality associated with pop music of today, but sometimes the simplest things prove to be the most effective. The author went on to state how popular music entails a continuity with our everyday concerns, because when you think about it this is exactly what pop music does: gets you through the day. So it is then the simplicity of pop music that can make us feel better about ourselves, and not the Classical music of Mozart or Beethoven. If popular music is able to do this, then we should not be so quick to disregard it in a music education setting.

I want to tell the author that I agree with him when he says change can be a good thing, especially with the declining numbers in music programs these days. Many students currently in school may not see the relevance of Classical music but find so much meaning in popular music. So maybe we ought to take it seriously, because students these days sure seem to understand its importance, and I bet they could offer us this insight and teach us a few things.