

Alliance for the Transformation of Musical Academe

MUSIC EDUCATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Artistry/Pedagogy/Activism

The ATMA Music Education Leadership Initiative (MELI) aims to prepare a new generation of artists/pedagogues/activists/visionaries for America's K-12 school music programs.

With Black American Music at its core, the proposed model—in a single stroke—fulfills four key functions.

First, it provides an all-important cultural anchor for our nation's music teachers by grounding them in America's own musical heritage. Whereas conventional music teacher training programs have long been grounded in European classical music, the MELI framework changes the narrative by reconstructing music teacher education atop American musical roots. For the first time, school music will be guided by a self-evident yet long elusive axiom:

American music teachers teaching American students in American schools need foundations in America's own musical heritage.

Second, it grounds music teacher development in an unprecedented spectrum of creative, integrative and rigorous skills that are rich in openings to wide-ranging musical traditions—including the European classical heritage. An important connecting principle is the Contemporary Improviser Composer Performer (CICIP) identity that prevailed in earlier times in the European tradition and which has made its return in the mid-20th century, now in expanded and globally-mediated form, through Black American Music (BAM). Therefore, rather than rejecting or replacing conventional band-orchestra-choir experiences, a BAM/CICIP-based music teacher paradigm has the capacity *to reintegrate and significantly re-enliven engagement in these Eurocanonic areas within an expanded, creativity-rich and American cultural/transcultural context.*

Third, the new music teacher framework will significantly contribute to the racial justice healing imperative. Prevailing efforts to address this crisis through superficial modifications need to open up to paradigmatic change. Significant commentary on this is available on the ATMA website (see ATMA Declaration on the Foundational Positioning of Black American Music, and the ATMA Declaration of Musical Independence) and need not be reiterated here. Systemic overhaul of our nation's K-12 music teacher education programs will not only help address the systemic musical racism in the field and systemic racism in society.

Fourth entails an array of ramifications from the reformed model of music teacher education that extend to important educational and societal issues. These include social justice,

ecosustainability, transdisciplinary education, consciousness/spirituality and music as catalyst for peace.

The plan

To establish an initial consortium of 10-15 K-12 music teacher education and certification programs across the nation and world that will serve as pilot programs to lead the emergent movement.

ATMA will facilitate by establishing a network of participating programs and faculty/students, engaging music school/department leadership as well as college/university leadership in deliberations (within and across institutions) that guide implementation and pedagogy and assisting with funding.

Three stages of implementation

- **Stage I: Initial implementation**

The initial impetus is to shift core curricular requirements from longstanding Eurocanonic orientation to BAM-related coursework (that will often be rich in openings, either explicit or implicit, to broader genres and cultures—including Europe). Most schools already have this coursework in place, the problem being that Music Education students cannot significantly access it due to existing requirements. Accordingly, this initial shift can happen fairly quickly with little if any need for new course design or faculty appointments. While there is no denying that this move may meet with resistance, the newfound wave of anti-racism activism that has swept the nation's music schools yields a climate of unprecedented receptivity for core curricular reform. Skillfully framed proposals that unite social justice, artistic and pedagogical rationales can take advantage of this receptivity.

Conversation that accentuates the broader kind of artistry at play will help dispel concerns. Whereas artistry, pedagogy and activism have tended to be approached separately in music teacher education discourse, the MELI framework is predicated on the uniting of these three facets as key to 21st century music studies leadership.

Students will continue with private lessons in the proposed plan, although in later semesters might include instruction from BAM faculty. Large ensemble requirements will be modified by a four-semester maximum large ensemble requirement; students who seek more of this experience can elect additional terms.

Admissions criteria will open up to acknowledge BAM skills as of equal significance to European classical skills and therefore exhibit far greater flexibility than currently exists. While students with strong classical performance and little or no BAM skills may be admitted, the opposite now also holds—students with strong BAM skills yet little or no classical experience can also be admitted.

- **Stage II**

Stage II entails more systemic kinds of change. Key will be the design of new integrative, creativity-based musicianship models that unite improvisation, composition, aurality, musical embodiment, creativity-driven approaches to harmony, melody, rhythm as well as openings to historical, analytical, cultural, aesthetic, cognitive and transpersonal/spiritual dimensions of artistry and pedagogy. This new musicianship framework will replace separate coursework in current areas such as music theory and music history in the first two years, after which students may elect more specialized coursework in existing and emergent areas.

These creative, broad and integrative foundations will enhance critical thinking skills, self-driven/student-driven capacities and students' experiences in subsequent teacher education methods classes.

An important facet of the Stage II model is the cultivation of a broader aesthetic awareness that is informed by the deeper dimensions of black arts, creativity, transdisciplinary and transcultural syncretism and spirituality and in turn opens up to overarching aesthetic sensibility. The juxtaposition of Euro, Afro and other musical lineages at Stage I opens up at Stage II to a genuine confluence of lineages. The Stage II artist/pedagogue will have expanded capacities for new programming and pedagogy in conventional band/orchestra/choir realms as well as foster Black American Music grounding and global connections. This will contribute significantly to addressing the decline in youth participation in school music programs (particularly among young people of color).

Stage II Music Educators will thus assume greater anti-racism leadership by embodying new levels of the artistry/pedagogy/activism nexus.

Stage II music teacher education not only revolutionizes what transpires in public school music, it also had the capacity to revolutionize the college/university level programs at which music teachers are trained. Conventional performance faculty and students, for example, will likely seek to follow the lead of the emergent teacher education curricular foundations.

- **Stage III**

Stage III Music Teacher education builds upon the achievements of prior stages and fosters even more extra-musical inroads. Connections are strengthened to emergent educational movements such as contemplative, consciousness and spirituality studies, ecosustainability studies, transdisciplinary pedagogy, social justice and peace studies.

At which point, Music Education—often marginalized in academic musical culture—has the capacity to emerge as a catalyst for transforming not only music studies but significantly impacting broader change in education and society.

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