

Responses to The Kapilow-Borromeo Quartet Presentation

COMMENT: Last night at the “What Makes Music Great for Education Presentation” we saw some excellent examples of a particular type of artist presentation: the one-shot, in-and-out assembly program. There was an entire range of interactions, discussed in the followup panel, interactions which artists need to be engaged in. The artist who can sustain a relationship with a teacher over time truly works in a collaborative way. It’s important to understand the expertise that the teacher brings to the equation. These are skills that are a lot more difficult and a lot more sophisticated than the brilliance we saw last night.

ARNOLD APRILL, CHICAGO ARTS PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION: Maybe we can also look at last night from the opposite perspective. I know we are all very concerned about the educational welfare of children in classrooms, but it is also very important when you think of an ensemble such as the Borromeo, that you notice that it is comprised of performers who come from organizational cultures where the idea of a teaching performance to audiences is usually very foreign. It is very important that we appreciate that there are many ensembles, many extraordinary ensembles, who could not have done what that ensemble did last night. How can more performers be invited into sharing their expertise in such an educative manner?

It may be useful to consider the parallels to the drama-in-education movement, where if a theater company comes in and does a one-shot presentation, you are lucky if one kid gets totally engaged. A one-shot presentation only provides a moment of excitement, of stimulation, and that doesn’t have much of an impact unless the educators in the school provide a context before and after the encounter to give it meaning in the curriculum. In contrast, we see some full blown programs in England, where drama-in-education has standing as a legitimate part of on-going instruction.

COMMENT: I think the overwhelming feeling I had while watching the presentation was how much music

education one could have before one runs into a performance of that quality, or a learning experience of that quality. It was really wonderful and unusual and contrasts with the global statements we hear about music making you smarter and being the panacea for learning. What the presentation makes me feel very strongly is that we need not back away from descriptions of what constitutes quality music instruction. I think that is a very difficult thing to do, and we are scared of it because we are scared of limiting creativity and limiting innovation or saying that something is good and something else is not. We really need to begin to describe what the dimensions of quality music instruction are, so that we can begin to think harder about quality issues.

KWANG-WU KIM, FORMERLY EL PASO PRO MUSICA, NOW LONGY SCHOOL OF MUSIC: The suggestion has been made that our country’s cultural and educational leaders should be in a position to teach a lot of smaller organizations. I think we should be careful with our attitudes; my perspective is that there are extraordinarily creative people who are doing remarkable things in music in education with very little fanfare, very little help, and with almost no resources. What drives these people is a sense of necessity. They have no time for theorizing or for pontificating; they have to deal with the situations which are far less ideal, make something work, and always be aware of placing music and the kids first. So I think there could be a very interesting dialogue about various forms and challenges of music in education and that many people would learn from this dialogue that there is more than one cutting edge in the profession. ¶

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