

Repositioning “The Elements”: How Students Talk About Music

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This article was of interest to me in that I was intrigued by the idea of reading about how students talk about music. I would have expected a scholarly article to concern itself with the way students learn about music or the way students make music. I have always thought of talking about music as a student, with other students to be something that is very casual, and of no benefit to our teachers. However this article proves the opposite. I was surprised by the way in which this article calls teaching by way of the curriculum into question. I was taught using the elements throughout my life, and I had never thought that there was anything wrong with that until this point. Being a student I was put in a place where the teacher is seen as the authority, however what I failed to realize is that teachers also have someone to answer to. They have expectations put upon them, and arguably the most important of those is to follow the curriculum whether they know that by doing so they are “academicking” something that should be highly personal and creative. I was surprised to find that these basic fundamentals of music can be taught in more than one way, and that this narrow minded approach is stopping some students from connecting to music within a classroom setting. I had always just assumed that there was an order to learning music. That the elements were essential to understanding music in general. However this article showed me that the best way to understand and conceptualize music is to listen and talk about it. I was frustrated in a sense while reading this article because I agree with what it has to say about music education being Eurocentric and denying individuality. I have always noticed the disparity between the repertoire that I sing in a classroom and that which I

choose to listen to and enjoy on an everyday basis. Being in a music history class in university has led me to question why we only ever learn about European composers. It bothers me that music education only represents works by certain people from a certain part of the world. I struggle to understand under who's authority this was put in place and why certain songs are not considered good enough music for an academic setting. I would like to commend the author on their work and believe they have made some major breakthroughs in terms of finding different, more creative ways to learn about music and understanding what students think about when they hear music. I would like to say thank you to the author for looking at music from an adolescent perspective and seeking answers as to why music can be such a great part of the life of a teen, and yet at the same time they can feel so disconnected from it because they believe they are unable to understand the elements behind it.