Needs and Gaps Swept Under the Carpet:

The Backlash of Competition and "High-Quality Art" in Classical Music

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(Written in part for TEDx Colorado)

Introduction

For over four years, Jeffrey Hsu has been extrapolating hidden needs and gaps—unwanted truths if you will—concerning the classical music community. These alleged needs and gaps can be substantiated or evidenced through credible sources (listed below). In rare instances, Hsu draws from his personal history as a young "buy-in" music student on up to his current professional/entrepreneurial role in the field. The format of this report cites references first (unless otherwise noted), followed by a brief description of the sourced content, and ending with a recapitulation of clear or highly suggestive needs and/or gaps. This report is not intended to market *Stringless Technology*; however, Hsu strongly believes and calculates that *stringless designs* can likely overcome hidden needs and gaps over time through complementary programming. Please contact Hsu for more details:

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Rondo Capriccioso

Feedback from a recent article (2017) published in *The New York Times* dubbed, "Warning to Retirees Who Take Up Music: The Cat May Flee the Room," illuminates clues as to why cultural music programs in public and private institutions fail to attract more students and fail to retain the majority of those students who did participate in school beyond K-12 education. Therefore, there is a need to design new music programs that can prevent artistic backlash or ongoing trends transparent in modern times, i.e., a continuing lack of popularity and support for music programs (and other related offerings), and the widespread syndrome of countless musical instruments "collecting dust in the attic."

Need to Design New Music Programs.

<u>According to this article, new music programs should:</u>

- Serve as physical and emotional therapy.
- Help student to master new skill.
- Reward accomplishments or improvements.
- Provide safe space for socialization/interaction.
- Approach learning through constructivism, i.e., musical freedom.
- Include basic music theory.
- Be affordable.

<u>Article suggests existing music programs tend to:</u>

- Demand too much time and money.
- Antagonize "perfectionists."
- Ignore or deflect those with lack of "talent" or intellectual understanding of music.
- Push or indoctrinate culture of executive order (top-down only).
- Aggravate intolerance to mistakes (frustration).*
- Generate fear or high-risk of failure.
- Use competition as motivational agent to succeed.
- Develop ego or aggrandizement.

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In a review of the *Suzuki Method* from a 1993 issue of *Strings* (no. 39), author Edith Eisler describes the pros and cons of Suzuki's widely practiced approach to learning stringed instruments. She exclaims, "...we all know the difficulties of teaching, and learning, to play the violin, so any method which promises quicker results with less drudgery is worth exploring." Therefore, there is a need for arts organizations, arts practitioners, and the like to be more open to innovation--for the sake of mission or student success--especially since, "...children are not equally talented…" (according to interviewee Mary-Lee Wilber) "but all [children] have potential which can be developed." Throughout the piece, Eisler and other arts practitioners criticize the *Suzuki Method* for failing to shepherd 'imagination,' 'agency,' 'concentrated listening,' and 'self-discovery.' Eisler goes on to say, "the degree of parental participation demanded by the Suzuki approach is perhaps the greatest problem for the American family." This suggests that a complementary emphasis on heuristic learning may be beneficial to programmatic trinities like 'teacher, student, and parent' or non-programmatic autodidacts.

Need to Embrace Creativity in Pedagogy.

Need to Complement Pedagogy with Heuristic Learning.

Learning Gaps in Imagination, Agency, Concentrated Listening, and Self-Discovery.

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Another article in the above referenced periodical (*Strings,* no. 39) titled, "Big Needs for Small Hands" by Mary VanClay concludes with a bottom line that: "...learning to play is hard enough for a small child without an uncomfortable instrument or a fragile bow making things worse." Luthier Ronald Fellar adds, "...adults shouldn't be surprised when a child with a poor instrument becomes a discouraged musician." Joan Balter, another luthier, further adds, "[children] can get tendonitis at age 6 [from an improper string setup], I've seen that." This information supports the idea that new and accessible technology may help to alleviate potential problems through the early stages of development rather than relying on so-called "existing technologies," which--in Hsu's opinion--are really just <u>anecdotes</u> for string playing.

Need for New Technology Beyond Strings.

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In 2010, the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) published a research report (no. 50) called, *Audience 2.0: How Technology Influences Arts Participation. Audience 2.0* is packed with statistical information, debunking the idea that innovation kills or will kill fine art, and instead, medals innovation as a proliferating contributor and as a creator of new audiences. However, this same statistical data sheds light on hidden needs which do not underpin a future heroic resolution. For example, stats show a need to attract and sustain more interest in historic offerings - even through electronic media (since classical benchmark activities fail to retain new audiences). Meaning, there are potential problems in terms of relevancy, growth, and future placemaking in the classical music community. Similarly, figures reveal that there is high early interest among youth in music programs; but, classrooms and/or instruction fail to retain student engagement (as buttressed and <u>polarized</u> above in *The New York Times* article about elderly revelations). Info also points to a creative learning gap in the arts by glossing over 'improvisation,' which is generally absent from pedagogy, performance, and public interaction. Integrating free-form into music programs may help to increase participation among or serve as a stepping stone for those attracted to improvisatory art forms while strengthening concert attendance.

Need to Gain, Sustain, and Retain Popularity in Classical Benchmark Activities.

Need to Improve Creative Diversity (for Audience and Participation).

Creative (Improvisational) Gap in Music Education (Excluding Jazz).

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From the 2016 NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Global Report: "Historically, new technology has been the biggest driver of industry growth. The electric guitar in the 1950s, the first synthesizers in the 1960s, digital technology in the 1980s, and more recently, software technology, all spurred sales by expanding musicians' creative horizons. Unfortunately, innovations like these don't arrive on a predictable schedule, nor can they be conjured at will. The industry's current slow growth is a reflection of the absence of major product innovation. In the absence of a groundbreaking product that brings new capabilities, we suspect that industry growth will continue to be limited."

Apparently, the above limitations are compounded by strict "music making" policy, seeing that NAMM essentially revoked Hsu's membership because Hsu failed to produce sound generating iterations of his invention (*the stringless violin*). Hsu's invention, in contrast, is not limited to sound generating musical platforms and includes innovative training designs that can scale acoustic practices through a new and accessible cognitive map. Hsu's portfolio, furthermore, includes innovative performance applications which were repeatedly ignored and even withdrawn by the music products industry.

Need for New Products, Sound Generating or Not.

Need to Expand "Music Making" and Performance Protocols.

Need for More Inclusive Innovations.

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In a contemporary report (2015) by the Santa Fe Working Group--and cosponsored by the NEA--entitled, <u>How Creativity Works in the Brain</u>, a panel (mostly made up of scientists) attempts to frame the quasi-infinite concept of "creativity." Creativity, in their words, consists of at least two parts:

"The Magic Synthesis" and *"Flow"*

At the conclusion of this report, the panel of scientists, disciplined leaders, technologists, and artists are forthcoming about international interest in the emerging subject matter (i.e., creativity) along with the needs of further inquiry – in order to establish creativity as a force for public good. (This report is particularly relevant to *stringless* philosophy, hypotheses, and experimentation.)

Need to Consistently Manufacture "Magic Synthesis" and "Flow,"

(Prospectively through New Technology and New Cognitive Map for Learning).

Need to Design New Cross-Sector Business Models that Do Not Constrain Creativity.

Need to Disseminate/Proliferate Creative Knowledge.

Need Replicable Models Intersecting Arts, Learning, Cognitive Science, and Neuroscience.

Need to Leverage Creativity for Public Good (*Stringless*).

Need to Outline High-Level Process(es) (*Stringless*).

Need to Outline Behavioral Assessment of Creativity (*Stringless*).

Need Neuroscientific Validation (*Stringless*).*

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More needs and gaps were identified through various sources, such as, arts practitioner research, peer reviewed articles, arts organization literature, 4+ years of *"stringless"* data collection, encyclopedia entries, and so on.

Need Stronger Correlations Between Music and Intelligence, and Music and Cognition.

Need to Expose and Integrate Innovative Cognitive Map for Learning.

Need to Strengthen Broad Public View of Arts through Meaningful Experiences and Emotion.

      (E.g., Combat Social and Political Threats against Networks, Programs, and Funding)

Need to Improve Benchmark Attendance.

Need to Authentically Modernize Artistic Offerings and Cultural Experiences.

Need to Improve Economic Access to High-Quality Instruments and H-Q Arts Education.

Need to Address Depression as Side Effect to Steep Learning Curve.*

Need to Minimize Unfair Assessments based on Observation and/or Competitive Results.*

Need to Examine New Pathways that Can Complement or Bypass Traditional Models.

Need to Open Gates of Gatekeepers to Free Creativity and to Understand Its Full Potential.

'Acting Out' Mental Training Gap in Learning and Instruction.

Developing Mental Ability Gap in Learning and Instruction.

Inhibition and Attention Gaps in Learning and Instruction.

Stage Presence and Stage Fright Gaps in Learning and Instruction.

Intuitive (Motion) Gap in Learning and Instruction.

Basic and Advanced Rhythmic Gap in Learning and Instruction.

Basic and Advanced Pitch Discrimination Gap in Learning and Instruction.

Basic and Advanced Reading Comprehension Gap in Learning and Instruction.

Fingertip Pain Gap in Learning and Instruction.*

Positive Emotional/Rewards Gap in Learning and Instruction.*

High-Driven Experiential Gap in Learning and Instruction.*

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This report does not include 'well-known needs'--like funding or social justice needs—in and across community arts education organizations or current needs presented by CYD (Creative Youth Development) or ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), or possible contemporaneous threats in today's political climate to avoid overstating the obvious and because they are not classified as "hidden" needs and gaps by the author.

* Though the needs of creativity span across all artistic disciplines, these specific needs (highlighted in red) are especially relevant to stringless work and may be explored in Hsu's TEDx Colorado proposal. Other highly relevant needs and gaps were not highlighted to avoid confusion.

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