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Thank you. As in many families, my wife sends out a letter each year around Christmastime to friends and relations telling them what we've been up to. In the one she sent this past December she said about me:

“Steve continued to annoy the school music industry and some band directors, who continue to invite him to speak so he can annoy them some more.”

So I am honored to have the privilege of being here to annoy you today. I promise I'll do my best.

My involvement in this subject came about completely from my own frustrating experiences as the parent of two children who went through a wholly typical middle school and high school music program. Back in January 2005 I wrote a short, humorous article for the Washington Post about those frustrations—specifically the fact that as far as I could tell school music programs were no longer introducing our kids to any real music by any important composers of any genre; instead the kids spent all their time playing almost nothing but third-rate schlock produced by unknown music educators and foisted on school music programs by for-profit music publishers. I wrote that article mainly to just get this off my chest and without the slightest expectation of having any effect. I thought maybe I'd hear from two or three readers.

Five years later I'm still stunned by the outpouring of responses I have received from professional musicians, teachers, amateur music lovers, college professors, parents, students. I think I'm up to something like 200 people I've heard from as a direct result of that article, and I think the last time I tallied it up it was running about 7 to 1 in favor of what I said.

It's no exaggeration when I say that nothing I have written as a journalist, even when I was writing for an audience of two and a half million readers a week at US News & World Report, ever generated such a reaction. And really for no other reason than having my interest and outrage piqued at the absurdity of how we're teaching music in the schools these days, I found myself digging into this subject further to try to understand how we got into this mess.

I would be the first to admit I am not an expert in music or education. But I tried simply to apply the tools of my trade as a journalist and talk to people, ask questions, look at published studies, and try to understand the influences and interests that are at work. I had many very long and interesting discussions with people like Frank Battisti, Tim Foley, Ben Hawkins, Frank Byrne, Tim Reynish, John Casagrande, Phil Hash, and many others who got in touch with me as a result of my Washington Post article.

I also had long e-mail interchanges, phone calls, and face to face talks with a number of high school band directors who took issue with some of what I'd said and that too got me motivated to do more research to try to substantiate and flesh out the arguments I had made. Out of my many discussions with Tim Foley came the paper we subsequently submitted to the WASBE

Journal which lays out what I think is a lot of objective evidence documenting how bad the situation is and identifying some of the forces at work that are driving bad curriculum and repertoire decisions in our school music programs. You can find both the Washington Post and WASBE articles on my website if you're interested: www.budiansky.com

Although the Post article was written in a humorous vein, the honest truth is that I was really, really ticked off at what's happening. And as much as I like Bill Berz and as honored as I was to receive his invitation to speak to you this morning, to be honest with you the only reason I agreed to come and talk about this again is because I'm *still* ticked off.

And if I had to summarize the source of my ticked-offness (which by the way is not the term I use around the house), it's that we've created a whole self-perpetuating system of music education that places the interests of commercial music publishers, hack composers, school administrators, university music education faculty, vendors of instruments, uniforms, packaged trips, you name it — ahead of the interests of educating our children about music. I saw my own kids have what should have been a magnificent opportunity to learn about music, and learn to love music, basically corrupted by all these forces.

Both of my children began playing instruments in middle school band, one played clarinet, the other French horn; both were quite enthusiastic at the start, and I was genuinely impressed by the speed with which they were taught the mechanics of playing their instruments and playing in an ensemble.

But they emerged from 5 or 6 years of these school band programs literally knowing almost nothing – and caring almost nothing -- about *music*. They didn't know anything about musical forms, music history; they had no knowledge at even the most rudimentary level of composers, or periods, or styles of classical music; they knew nothing about the great American musical traditions of folk songs and jazz and rock and blues and musical theater. They literally knew nothing about music as an art form, had never even experienced music as the thing that has the capacity to inspire and move us and enrich our lives as almost nothing on earth.

Within about one nanosecond of their last band class in high school, they never touched those instruments again. And I am not exaggerating when I say they didn't touch them. Both were by that point quite advanced technically – but once band class ended there was simply no reason in their lives to play those instruments again.

And clearly closely tied to this utter failure to give them any real knowledge or lasting appreciation of music, or any motivation to keep playing their instruments, was the overriding fact that for all of their 6 or so years in band, all they did was play garbage. It was dull, gimmicky, pretentious, bombastic, simplistic, made-for-school music clearly written by mediocrities. It all sounded alike, it was all formulaic, none of it was remotely art and some of it was scarcely music – *and* with the possible sole exception of the “Flintstone's” theme it had no connection to any real music or any living musical tradition outside of the closed world of music education. None. Much the same thing had gone in in my daughter's chorus class – I especially remember her district chorus concert which did not include a

single piece on the program written by someone other than a contemporary music educator.

Every once in a while I still find myself standing back and just being incredulous at the bizarre absurdity of this. That children in school could learn to play difficult instruments with great facility, could learn how to perform in a large ensemble, sing in an advanced chorus, and that they could wind up after years of these programs without once having encountered a single piece of music by J S Bach, by Haydn or Mozart, by Schubert or Strauss; or by great American composers like Joplin, Ives, Bernstein; that they experienced almost nothing from America's rich and wonderful traditions of folk and spirituals and jazz; that they never sang an English madrigal or for that matter never performed anything written before about 1850 at all, and almost nothing written before 1950 — and that what they did play was almost exclusively the work of unknown third-rate talents — this is just plain nuts. The worlds of great musical styles and genres that have captured and moved and fired the imaginations and hearts of people who have had those doors opened to them – opera, early music, big band, baroque fugues, ragtime, Dixieland, Haydn masses, you name it — they had never heard, or heard of, in their school music programs.

If I made a list — and if any of you I think made a list — of a hundred or I daresay five hundred of the greatest and most enduringly beautiful pieces of music of the last thousand years that you know and love, my kids would literally never have encountered more than one or two of them in their entire experiences with school music programs.

And technically, their music education was, as I also began to realize, equally narrow. I'd hear them practicing and ripping out some frighteningly hard passages in key signatures and complex syncopated rhythms that made my head hurt just looking at them — and yet everything was narrowly geared toward the needs of producing a school band performance. They learned next to nothing about music theory even at a very practical level. They learned nothing about how to play their instruments in any other setting than school band, as I learned when I had to show my bewildered daughter how to transpose a part for the B-flat clarinet when she wanted to try playing a piece on her own with a friend: no one had ever explained to her about transposing instruments.

At the end of it all, I felt it was if they had been little more than workers on an assembly line who had been drilled in their one job and didn't even know what the factory was producing. Or, worse, they were like someone who had gone on a long, long tour through a beautiful garden and all they could tell you at the end was what the gravel path looked like which they had been staring down at the whole way. They had been given none of the sense of wonder and beauty of great music, none of the means for making music on their own, none of the knowledge to even know where to begin to explore great music — of any genre — on their own. They could play instruments but had never been given any reason to play them.

One of the things Tim Foley and I did in our WASBE article was to document the extent to which this takeover of school music programs has been occurring. The evidence was just overwhelming. Especially in band, but also in chorus and orchestra programs, even in elementary school general music classes, great works by significant composers are being

replaced wholesale by a continual parade of this recently written pseudo-music churned out by people who specialize in the educational market, who have no artistic reputations or accomplishments to speak of outside the world of education, and indeed whose pieces almost never enjoy an enduring place even in the school repertoire, as they are supplanted by a continual avalanche of new works of equally great mediocrity. We cited several studies which show that state lists for band are almost completely dominated by recently composed works by music ed writers and that the turnover of pieces on these lists is nearly 100% every few years.

One study we cited found for example that a full one-half of all of the pieces recently performed at district contests in one state were the work of ten individuals — every one of them, one of these present-generation hack writers of ed music whose names are unknown outside of the ed-music world. A full ten percent were written by one individual — the depressingly tireless James Swearingen, who according to his web site bio has written more than 500 compositions and I suppose is on his way to writing 1,000 before he departs this world.

There was another study we looked at that had compiled a database of 1,300 of the most widely performed pieces on state band lists. Reanalyzing this data, I made a list of the 20 composers who had the greatest number of pieces among these 1,300. Only two of those twenty were names that anyone who knows music -- but who doesn't know the weird world of educational pseudo-music -- would recognize: J S Bach and Percy Grainger. And those other top 18 nonentities accounted for a full 1/3 of these 1,300 most widely performed works.

Now it is an absolutely obvious fact to anyone who has ever spent any time observing human nature, marketing, the American capitalist system, advertising and promotion, the influence of interests, the profit motive, and the education biz in particular, that the people who sell stuff to schools are not simply passive players responding to educational needs. It is a glaringly obvious fact that in the case of the music ed biz, the music ed publishers are the leading beneficiaries of a system that involves the continual purchase of new pieces by living writers. And they do everything they can to keep it that way.

After I spoke at the WASBE conference in Cincinnati last summer, a number of people who both agreed and disagreed with me criticized me for quote “blaming” the music publishers for the problem. I think Frank Battisti was one who said to me, if we didn’t buy this junk the publishers wouldn’t publish it. And I agree with that — up to a point. I’m going to talk later about some of the other factors that I think help perpetuate this crazy situation, including the education of teachers, the role that contests play, the whole question of whether the focus on performance in school music programs is inherently inimical to educational goals.

But the influence of the educational publishing industry is really crucial to understand as well, and it simply cannot be brushed aside with the glib statement that they are simply responding to the market. Since last summer I’ve spent a lot of time looking into this and thinking about it and I want to carefully go through with you some of the distinctions I’ve tried to make about responsibilities, conflicts of interest, and the essential role of lively criticism in looking at the part the educational publishing industry plays in all of this.

Now let's be clear. I am not saying that music publishers are evil people. I am not saying there is anything wrong with making money.

But I am saying that music publishers are businesses whose job it *is* to make money, and that means it's a simple reality that their primary concern is not and never will be the education of our children or the promotion of artistic integrity.

And I am saying it is a verifiable fact, that left to their own devices and the dictates of the free market system, they have found that it pays to publish and sell to the schools an awful lot of dreck, and to keep a continual stream of new dreck coming. Left to their own devices they will continue to sell dreck.

Does that make them the culprits of this whole story? No, it does not. It means they are businessmen being businessmen. If I were in their shoes, I'd very likely make the same business decisions they do. But these *facts* have several very important implications for how the rest of us need to think and act.

First, it means that the publishers are not going to do *your* job for you of exercising critical aesthetic judgments and professional educational judgments about what is in the best interests of art and the best interests of the education of our children. Publication is not an imprimatur of artistic merit or educational value. It is a business decision on what pays.

We I think recognize this principle without difficulty in every other *serious* field of artistic endeavor. And we recognize that independent, informed published criticism is an essential, ongoing, continuous part of the whole process by which consumers learn about the artistic merit of new works — an essential source of information of a kind that is never going to be forthcoming from publishers and others who have a direct financial stake in the outcome. Criticism in the form of book reviews, theater reviews, movie reviews, dance reviews, serious concert reviews, academic analysis and criticism and theoretical debates is part of the essential discussion and flow of information that goes hand in hand with artistic endeavor and artistic integrity. No one in these fields thinks that because a work is published or performed or screened it's meritorious; they see robust and lively and engaged and informed and often very, very acrimonious criticism and debate and discussion as part of the process. They see it as part of the responsibility of artists and critics in fact to speak up against mediocrity, artistic compromise, the substandard and the inferior, the pretentious and overblown because that conversation is part of what maintains artistic integrity at all. Leading practitioners and academics are always part of the serious critical dialogue in these fields: the writer John Updike for example for years was one of the most astute literary critics; the pianist Charles Rosen has been a prominent voice in music criticism.

And in education, I'm certainly familiar from my years as a science writer of the very active and outspoken role that academic scientists and scientific professional societies have played in offering informed, sharp, and often very strongly argued critiques of the poor quality of scientific textbooks and curricula used in our schools.

What I'm trying to say is that criticizing the quality of a published work is not "blaming" the publisher: it is exercising an essential function in the artistic and educational process, an essential function that only people like you here today *can* exercise — you who have the knowledge, the professional stature, and the independence from the pressures and constraints of the profit motive. Criticism, and the type of discussion and thinking that intelligent criticism stimulates, is how we develop a sense of what is meritorious and what is not in the first place.

Yet I have looked in vain for a comparable literature of criticism in the wind band world or the music ed world. There is in fact almost a culture of the opposite in the wind band community and music ed community — a culture that views saying anything bad as unsupportive or unseemly; that embraces the values of boosterism over intellectual integrity; that in the name of diversity and inclusiveness has become almost allergic to offering genuine criticism. I was frankly amazed by several of the comments I received from people in the band and mus-ed communities who took me to task after my Cincinnati talk for being mean or even in the words of one "unprofessional" for criticizing R W Smith and James Swearingen by name. And I remember afterward remarking to Tim Foley that my comments were kid gloves compared to what you read every day in the music reviews in the NY Times or the LA Times or the kinds of literary feuds that often rage and he said, well, you've given them a taste of the kind of scrutiny that's the norm throughout the real art world and they don't like it one bit. The fact is, I think the people who write this schlock and publish this schlock have received a free pass of a kind that just would not happen in the normal course of events in other fields. Because of this free pass, the public

discussion of new works in the wind-band and music-ed worlds is by default dominated by the voices of those commercially promoting these works.

I think this immunity from vigorous debate or real criticism is unfortunately very ingrained in the wind band and mus-ed worlds. It was interesting to me also to read the hundreds — literally — of comments on the Texas Yellow Board band discussion site about my WASBE talk and one strain from those who were defending the status quo was to accuse me of wanting to “censor” the music publishers and wanting them only to publish what Steve Budiansky likes.

This would be silly if it wasn't so unfortunately representative of the rather namby-pamby thin-skinned attitudes toward grown-up criticism that are out there. But you know it's actually something that goes to the heart of a very important distinction I'm trying to make here. I believe music publishers have a constitutional right to publish anything that is not libelous, obscene, or plagiaristic. And I — and you — have a constitutional right to say that what they publish is garbage if it is. That's not censorship. That's the kind of free expression and vigorous debate that far from harming the development of art is vital to the development of art; it's the kind of professional scrutiny that is vital to place the interests of education ahead of the interests of profit.

A related point is that it is simply a delusion — and one that only serves the interests of the publishers who want to perpetuate their immunity from criticism — to believe that the problem of poor-quality music can be addressed by working quietly behind the scenes with publishers. The most effective tool that you have to improve the artistic quality of what's published is vigorous, vocal, and unabashed public criticism of works of

substandard quality. That is not only a right but a duty of those who care about art, and it's not too much to say that you are sacrificing both your rights and your duties when you hand the publishers an easy victory like that.

The second important implication that stems from being honest about the interests of music publishers and the poor quality of much of the material they profitably publish is that if you want to have institutions, organizations, forums, events, conferences, repertoire sessions, and people that are going to place the interests of art and education ahead of the interests of the profit motive, they have to be free from the influence and decision-making power of the music industry. You have to build a firebreak to insulate artistic and educational integrity from commercial interest.

Now again, I am not saying that music publishers are bad and evil people. But I am saying that the most basic principles of conflict of interest are routinely being violated in your business in a way that would be unthinkable elsewhere, and it is inconceivable that this is not influencing the perpetuation of a system that keeps this garbage being produced, sold, and used in school programs.

It's not as if we don't have well-established models on how to draw the line between acceptable financial support from business and ceding professional, intellectual, and educational responsibilities to business. It is not vilifying business to insist that they should not dictate the program content of a professional conference; that they should not be voting members of organizations that seek to advance educational or artistic values; that it's fine

if they sponsor cocktail receptions and put ads in the program and have a booth in the exhibit hall but that they have to be kept at arms length from any hint of influence over the professional and intellectual judgments on content and comment that is vital to artistic and educational values.

Let me give you a very apropos analogy. Drug companies, I would not hesitate to say, have done uncounted good for humanity. They have saved thousands upon thousands of lives. They have eased the misery and suffering of millions. They have spent billions of dollars on research that would not have been done but for them. Still — would you or I want a drug company sales rep making medical decisions about your treatment if you were sick? Would you even want a representative of a drug company in the room when your doctors were discussing your case and the best treatment for you? I don't think so. You don't have to say they're bad people to recognize that they have a conflict of interest. Human nature being what it is, you don't have to suggest someone is corrupt or dishonest or mendacious to see that people have a way of looking at things that favor their own interests. Upton Sinclair said it's very hard to make a man understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it. That's life.

And even when there's no outright quid pro quo, it's also human nature to want to help out your friends, not to criticize the people who have thrown business your way. We see this in medicine, and law, and politics and we know it, and we know the importance of setting limits and trying to minimize the effects of conflicts of interest. And you cannot tell me it does not influence decisions and it does not stifle criticism when a band director is being paid to make demo recordings for a publisher. Is he going to start

saying that this stuff is dreck when it's in his financial interests to find some reason to look kindly upon it, or at least keep his mouth shut?

The business model of the Midwest Clinic is just mind-boggling to me, and why the people in your business go along with it is mind-boggling to me. Basically, the publishers have bought themselves a forum that offers a patina of artistic and educational endorsement — and immunity from any serious artistic or educational criticism. Again, an analogy: my first job out of college was at the American Chemical Society. Though they are a professional society made up of individual chemists, they also get a significant amount of financial support from the chemical industry. But I can tell you that if someone even hinted at the notion of an industry sponsor trying to influence the selection or content of papers for their scientific meetings — or imagine even more if say Merck said, we'll sponsor the whole conference as long as half the papers discuss recently developed Merck products — you'd have had chemists with pitchforks and torches storming the ACS headquarters in protest at this transgression of the principles of peer review and academic freedom.

And this is not just a theoretical concern. After my talk at WASBE, one college band director came up to me and told me how he had presented a session at an MENC conference recently to show high band directors how Swearingen's pieces actually do not make their band sound good, and an MENC official furiously accosted him afterward and berated him for “bashing an exhibitor.”

Before I move on let me just say one more word specifically about the “if we didn't buy it they wouldn't publish it” argument. Again, I agree with that up

to a point. But I think it's awfully naïve to ignore the huge marketing, publicity, and promotion effort that the music-ed publishing industry engages in to *create* the market for this junk they publish: the demo cds, the paying band directors to make those demos, the hard-sell promises in their catalogues of "making your band sound great" or "gives the illusion of being more difficult than it is," the industry-sponsored clinics and repertoire-reading sessions that have become a fixture for the uncritical promotion of their products. They are always pushing the envelope this way, and as I said their commercial patten is dominating the discourse. And unless you attack this at the source by maintaining a strong adherence to what are after all well-recognized principles regarding intellectual freedom, conflicts of interest, and separation of educational and artistic decisions from financial ones, you're going to find your position eroding more and more. It's not just a matter of what stuff you buy from them: it's a matter of how much of your influence *they* can buy from you. And right now there's so much log-rolling in this the system it's just astounding to an outsider like me when I come across it. Music educators are enablers: they have bought into the game of allowing this junk to be promoted at state and district festivals, they invite the composers of this junk to present clinics where they perform their work, they speak reverently about "the music industry" when they should be saying "no" to all of this as a matter of very basic principle.

Let me move on to the demand side of the equation and the teachers who are buying this stuff and making their kids play it. When I began talking to university music and music-ed professors and school teachers and looking at how we train school music teachers, I was reminded of one of Groucho Marx's old "You Bet Your Life" quiz shows I was watching recently — now available on CD of course — and Groucho who was a huge baseball fan had

on the show this time a major league umpire who Groucho was needing as he always does. Groucho says, “What are the requirements for an umpire?” The umpire says, “An umpire must have honesty, integrity, good eyesight, and *plenty* of intestinal fortitude.” Groucho waits two beats, takes his cigar out of his mouth, and says, “Wouldn’t it help if you knew a *little* about baseball?”

Well, that was my reaction to the music education major. Wouldn’t it help to know a little about music? There’s all of these courses about adolescent psychology, and using technology in the classroom, and teaching multiculturalism, and conducting methods, and . . . almost no courses on music literature or music history. The result is a vacuum where core knowledge should be. Don DeRoche at DePaul University was one who contacted me early on and he said it very well: “we have systematically been creating a generation of students who are trained to perform and value mediocre music.” A couple of months ago I received a really striking e-mail from a high school band director that powerfully underscored this point. He wrote:

“I am a 39 year old band director, and until I went to graduate school in 2002, I was unaware of Grainger, Hindemith, Holst, Vaughan Williams and the like. I was raised on a diet of Swearingen, Holsinger, and Barnes. Even at the undergraduate level the closest I came to anything outside of the newer [educational] music was a transcription of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 (which is still one of the highlights of my band experience). I will never forget the first time I heard "Lincolnshire Posy," "English Folk Song Suite," and the other great works of the repertoire.”

Now of course one of the standard objections — which I have seen in a number of the teacher discussion lists — is that there's no time to add more music literature courses to the undergraduate music-ed curriculum given how many other courses are prescribed. And my response to them and you is well, fine — so did God say to Moses on Mount Sinai that this is the only way to train music teachers? I think it's undeniable that we have a huge problem; that part of the problem is the way we train teachers; and so if we're going to solve the problem we have to change the way we train teachers. If enough people who are involved in music education want this to change it will change.

One of the other things that I strongly sense is missing from the training of music educators is the tools, apparatus, vocabulary, and skills to make critical aesthetic judgments. In English classes we're taught this almost from the start of serious studies of literature in middle and high school. But I've been amazed and dismayed at the number of comments I've seen from teachers who basically say, "who's to say what's good music"; or other variations on the "it's just a matter of individual taste" argument. And of course this is just nonsense. The whole project of intelligent artistic criticism is to dig beyond individual taste and explore what makes good art and bad art; what is original and what is derivative; what has integrity and what is overblown and clichéd; what is deep and what is superficial. Of course there are differences in taste but the very act of thinking critically is part of how we develop taste. And I really sense this is not happening in the training of music educators today.

Band contests is another phenomenon that boggles my mind. I had initially thought this was a minor point, a distraction to the business of teaching

music, a problem only in that it was sending a message to kids and administrators that there is no intrinsic merit in music education, that the reason to do it because you get these extrinsic rewards of a trophy or a superior rating or the like. Even that is bad, I think, because what we know about learning theory is that if you offer an extrinsic reward for a behavior you can actually counteract the motivation to do something that ought to be rewarding for its own sake. I remember when my kids were in elementary school, Pizza Hut had this very popular program in the schools offering free pizzas to kids who'd read x number of books. And I always was a little uncomfortable and dubious about this but couldn't put my finger on why until I read an article by a psychologist who criticized this program specifically and noted that all it was likely to do was produce "fat kids who hate to read."

But I've come to realize the more I dig into the subject and the more I've talked to band directors that the whole contest business is far more pernicious. It's really become the tail wagging the dog of music education, and it has become a force in itself for terrible repertoire choices – all of the pressure is to choose pieces that "make your band sound good" rather than those that further the students' musical education. Clearly many, many of these schlocky educational pieces are written with the sole purpose of gaming the contest business. I've been appalled by the huge space devoted on the Texas band site and other teacher discussion websites to endless discussions about choosing contest pieces. If I had one wish from my fairy godmother to do something to improve music education, it'd be to get rid of every single contest, competition, festival, you name it.

There's a growing question in my mind even whether the whole program of teaching music through performance in middle and high school isn't a mistake. Performance unfortunately has the effect, inevitably, of displacing educational objectives with public objectives of pleasing parents, supporting sports events, making the administrators look good, and so on. It makes high school music teachers think of themselves as conductors of ensembles more, and educators less. It makes what could be a serious curricular academic subject into an activity. I do think we need to at least start asking the question of what ought to be taught, what students ought to learn in arts education and whether it is even possible to do that in a performance class – or whether band and chorus and orchestra ought to become extracurricular activities and what we teach in school ought to be general music classes for everyone.

But I still think it's not beyond the realm of human ingenuity to solve the problems without such drastic remedies. Playing an instrument is wonderful. Playing and singing is the best way to explore and experience great music. And one of the things I've been arguing til I've been blue in the face is that all of the evidence shows that when you give kids great music, they know the difference, they respond to it. It's just a total red herring that you have to use this made-for-school schlock to get kids motivated or for pedagogic necessity or any other excuses. There's no reason we can't have a repertoire for beginning and developing bands that is also a first rate music education curriculum at the same time.

For what it's worth, here are some of my thoughts on things that would I think begin to make a huge practical difference.

1. I wish people like you all would start writing a lot of serious criticism of new wind-band music and start separating the sheep from the goats. And I mean real criticism, not the sort of anodyne, value-neutral analysis or uncritical encomiums that unfortunately seem to be the norm in the journals I've looked at. You know, a book reviewer who had only nice things to say about new books would be out on his ear in no time flat. I think aside from the direct benefits of sharp, intelligent criticism, it would change the larger tone of discussion for the better.

2. I don't know how much effect this would have, but it seems to me there ought to be a great benefit in someone who knows the literature and understands teaching of instrumental music to develop a model curriculum for middle and high school bands that is based completely on great music and that places music education and music appreciation first and foremost. Having a solid example to point to on how it can be done would be a powerful answer to all of those who keep coming up with a million excuses for why it can't be done.

3. Start a nonprofit publishing company dedicated to making available high quality literature at all levels, from all genres of music. We could call it the "public option." This also is a potential force multiplier that could help budge the music-ed publishers off of their current focus on high-profit schlock by offering some competition.

4. Make aesthetic criticism part of the essential teaching of music educators. Give them the tools and confidence to make aesthetic judgments so they won't be suckers for schlock.

5. Get the standards changed for training music teachers so they have to learn more about music.

6. Draw the line at what is acceptable and unacceptable in financial relationships between the music industry and professional organizations and individuals. Agitate the organizations you're members of to adopt the kind of ethical standards that are the norm in other parts of the civilized world.

7. It's hard for me to say this one without sounding a bit like an ingrate, because I AM grateful to you for inviting me and listening to me. But I also can't help feeling that there's something wrong with that. You shouldn't have to hire an outsider to come here and tell you these things – you should be saying these things yourself.

8. Finally, let's keep our eye always on the ball. I made the mistake recently of attempting to read several of these huge philosophical books about the meaning of music and arts education and though their hearts are clearly in the right place they fill me with despair with their endless abstract discussions and ed-speak blather. I think it's actually pretty simple what the purpose of music education in our schools should be:

-- it's to give students the basis for a lifelong appreciation and enjoyment of music

-- give them an introduction to a wide variety of the greatest and most beautiful and inspiring music of all eras and genres so they'll have an entry point to explore further on their own

-- and then only secondarily, to give them technical skills in performance, and then only as a means to an end of musical education