

## Do You Hear What I Hear? Musicians Composing the Truth

By Peter Gouzouasis & Karen V. Lee

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*Melodic ideas we share  
Back and forth  
Diverging, converging  
Dissonance, consonance  
Emerging anew  
In contrapuntal dialogue  
Our composition unfolds*

### Prelude

This article forms a portion of the dialogic relationship between a female doctoral student and her male graduate supervisor. The dialogue surrounds the doctoral dissertation entitled, "*Musicians Becoming Music Educators: An Intersection of Identities.*" The narrative dissertation explores literary study, arts-based research, and feminist based literature. Karen Lee investigates the nature of musicians' lives during practicum, university, and school based contexts, as well as the nature of institutional education, societal issues influencing musicianship, the conflicts of love, issues of loss, the paradoxes of musicians becoming music teachers, the power of writing as a form of inquiry, and the experiences of a woman writer-

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musician-music educator-music teacher educator. Her dissertation is composed of a collection of short stories about her experiences with musicians during their teacher education program. After experimenting with different modes of narration, it became clear that writing short stories allowed musicians to voice an account of their understanding and experiences of personal, emotional identity changes.

This narrative begins as a discussion in research traditions and ends in a discourse concerning the nature of truth. Our discussion takes the form of a musical fugue, and as such, is reliant on musical terms. A *fugue* is a contrapuntal composition. Not all fugues have *preludes*, but like those found in music, ours serves to introduce motifs that are explored throughout the composition. In the *exposition*, the *subject* (i.e., a short melody or phrase) is introduced in imitative fashion. Subjects can vary in length and should be long enough to impart a notion of being an actual line (i.e., musical idea). After the initial statement of the subject, another voice called the *answer* enters in a related musical key. Through the introduction of a variety of music ideas, not necessarily directly related to the subject, *episodes* provide smooth transitions (between keys) to the next subject statement. In a *stretto* section, the subject ideas are closely overlapped and pulled tightly together (i.e., rather than being spread out in succession). *Retrograde* is a device where the subject is written backwards. The final statement is the *final portion* of the fugue, where there are at least one or two statements of the subject.

Throughout the musical discourse, we investigate narrative inquiry and the way it influences our thoughts and feelings. We both challenge, probe, and (de)construct the words of each other and play with words that create something of a Baroque fugue of intertwining melodic material. At the final cadence, we cross voices (i.e., staves, in a metaphoric sense) to sustain and progress our relationship. In the wake of feminist and postmodernist critiques of traditional qualitative writing practices, notions of boundaries blur and jumble. We were free to tell and retell and not “get it right,” but rather “get it” contoured and nuanced. Our dialogue sought coherence, verisimilitude, and interest.

We believe that voices can re/sound beside one another and tell stories both individually and together. One criterion we explore is whether the text inspired something beyond itself—that is, more research, social action, and a change between “us.” Through interwoven voices, we compose a music invention with underlying themes, fugal statements, episodes, and rich counterpoint. Writing and rewriting strengthened our individual voices, as we became more present, more honest, and more engaged. We do not think of ourselves as ‘authoritative voices’ but recognize that we can assemble a variety of voices and perspectives into a ‘multi-voiced’ composition, presenting contrasting points of views through our eyes, ears, and mouths. Though the tradition of the directly persuasive, single-voiced ‘realistic’ narrative still prevails, we encourage the multi-voiced text as a way of drawing attention to the process of exploring the meaning of experience, of collecting different aspects and interpretations of events, and examining the

relationships between them. In the end, we want our composition to be an open invitation for other voices to be heard, for others to draw on their empathetic, affective, and aesthetic modes of understanding, and for others to improvise and compose their stories in the themes and counterpoint of our story.

## Exposition

I drive past Spanish Banks and think about his words. *Relativistic perspectives*. “If everything is just my interpretation and your interpretation, it collapses into relativism. I’ve become a skeptic with regard to the vast body of educational research,” he says. He is intense and emphatic. Peter says credible research that is quantifiable constructs knowledge. He even says that narrative research is “hippie-dippy.” I ask him whether the issue is epistemology. He agrees, and adds descriptive metaphysics to the conundrum.

Through the years, we have debated many issues over lunch, coffee, cookies and sushi. Sometimes I am excited by his ideas. At other times, I am confused by his thoughts. And there are times I am angered by his statements. It was after I took his course rooted in metaphysics and epistemology that I connected with him. He has since taught me much about research and life. His world view has deepened my understanding about the nature of reality. And he always poses challenging, thought-provoking questions. He does not know that some of his questions have haunted me for days. Today, relativism is the ghost. The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (1995) defines relativism as “the denial that there are certain kinds of universal truths” (p. 690). Is that how Peter defines relativism?

I remember meeting him five years ago with his black baseball cap, long hair, and dark black sweater. We sat in the old Muses Computer Lab, a small piece of classroom space with a wired fence around it. He smiled and laughed and spoke long sentences about research, the faculty, and the literature I had to read. He was friendly and jovial, less formal than I expected. I thought he would be rigid, structured, and directive. Instead, he was flexible and collaborative. He is open-minded, and always willing to explore new concepts. He was very interested in hearing my point of view, but at the same time I had little to say. I just lingered over his words. His enthusiasm was contagious.

Now, I have come to really care for him. Our relationship has progressed to the point where we communicate on many levels. Once, he said that I was his “qualitative, fuzzy-wuzzy gal,” and I liked that. He understood my need to explore qualitative research. When first contemplating narrative inquiry, I wondered about his reaction. Some of his academic training involved quantitative research. His mentor was the most published researcher in the history of music research. Sometimes, I think about his ‘Americanism’ when he talks. Being Canadian, I am sensitive to American lingo. But over the years, I believe he has acculturated into the Canadian lifestyle. And Peter is a narrator. I will convince him. After all, I have

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listened to hours of his narratives, stories about being a music program director, guitar gigs, the famous jazz musicians he has known, Edwin Gordon, his friends, teaching and learning, relationships, and his son.

#### **A Subject**

Spanish Banks. The water is blue today. Not long ago, we walked this beach. I listened to his story about his dog, Skye, needing psychiatric care. I look over at the bench we sat on. I remember it well. He wore the black baseball cap.

Peter has a gift for making me think. I sense he is pushing me forward again, and I will challenge his notions of relativism. “Peter, you suggested that narrative inquiry was interpretive. You said it seemed relativistic. Could you elaborate?”

#### **An Answer**

Thanks for setting the table, Karen. The ideas have incubated. We are on the same wavelength, even though we didn’t talk about which way we’d go with this “hippie-dippy” . . . no, this hard-core . . . no, soft-core . . . this “narrative” research. I’d better measure my words with you now. This may all become data no, danda no, dubitanda (Pepper, 1942). I smile as I tease you, and I know you laugh with me. I have stalled on the first page of the article you gave me to read (Norman & Leggo, 1994-1995). I have read it dozens of times and I’m confused by what I believe to be a gross misunderstanding of the term “counterpoint” and its metaphorical mis/application. I do not want you to think I am going off on one of my diatribes, but I am. In my research program, the question is not of research being rooted in either quantitative or qualitative paradigms. It is a matter of striving for coherency, for accuracy, for clarity and for, dare I say it, something that some call Truth.

Do you recall the years of study I did in music history, music theory and music composition in graduate school? That is one point where we can always relate. Music. The grueling comprehensive exams I took to enter and exit my doctoral program. The first morning, I go into a piano-less room with a booklet of notation paper. There are two subjects to choose from, and they ask me to write a three-part invention. They lock the door and allow me to emerge for lunch. I wrote a great “contraption” as we used to jokingly call them. My mother told me I looked like Beethoven when I was in the throes of composing, so she made me a ceramic bust of the “great one” to remind me of my music roots. That’s what I looked like that day; I had wild hair. From at least one perspective, all music theory/history is rooted in the qualitative realm. My research has never been all about quantification, but that was my mentor’s research orientation. I do possess qualitative roots, and I bore colleagues with music knowledge when they mention the concert they saw the previous evening. I wonder if they “heard” or better yet, audiated, what they “saw.”

“Talk about relativism,” she says. Karen, walk over to your piano and play a Bach Invention. Better yet, play a fugue. “Art of the Fugue” the master called it. Not

science or mathematics of the fugue, but “A-R-T.” Are the voices always heard, or performed, as equal partners? The fundamental starting place for learning counterpoint is with species counterpoint. In each of the five species, the voices are not necessarily treated equally. In first species, perhaps yes, but in second, third, fourth and fifth species? There is tension and release of suspensions in fourth species, and we learned the careful way we treat four-three, five-four, nine-eight, two-one, and four-five suspensions. In the famous treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Steps to Parnassus, 1725), Fux (1943) warns us to be careful preparing and resolving dissonances caused by suspensions. Preparation, suspension, resolution.

What is the role of the cantus firmus? The cantus firmus is the foundation, the starting point, and the most important voice. How did the Renaissance masters treat polyphony? I smile as I audiate my favorite Monteverdi madrigal. You know, Karen, I sang both countertenor (i.e., alto) and bass parts for many years. A straight guy singing alto parts. Talk about anomalies. It was always different being in the middle than on the bottom. Singing the different parts rarely felt equal, and I learned so much from being able to move throughout the scores. We know the term “counterpoint” is not used to describe “polyphonic” music before the early Baroque period, because all voices were considered equal.

And what about the word “counterpoint”? I recall from day one of my first counterpoint classes, in German the word *kontrapunkt* means “point AGAINST point,” not “point WITH point.” I check my books that line the dusty top shelf of my office, and my tattered counterpoint notes fall to my desk. Some people think those books are neglected, but they are the pinnacle of my knowledge. So I place them in a position of prominence—top shelf knowledge. The old masters—Palestrina, Fux, Bach, and Handel—confirm my perspective. Are the voices in a three-part fugue always equally heard? Is the subject of the fugue always presented in the same manner? Is the subject not frequently obscured using various, unique compositional techniques? My favorite is the backward and upside-down presentation of the fugue subject. Very heady.

What about those segments between expositions of the fugue subject? What is that stuff? Do four different artists performing the same fugue interpret it in the same way? I am not against you, but I am not with you. Sometimes you speak, sometimes I speak, sometimes we agree, sometimes we disagree, sometimes you make sense, sometimes I make sense, and sometimes neither of us are sure if we make sense. This is where I will begin. Ho, ho, ho. There is more I will fill in, of course, and I will attempt to compose coherent, meaningful metaphors. Wait for my next “real” narrative. I want you to know I am thinking with you. How is the tone of my voice? “Testing . . . one, two, three . . .”

## **First Episode**

I am not sleeping well. So I wake, a strange chill in my limbs, to the sound of

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Peter's voice: familiar halftones, the words he says over and over. "It is a matter of striving for coherency, for accuracy, for clarity and for, dare I say it, something that some call truth."

*In the dense obsession of the deep dark rain  
I tread, silent, like the night, past all voices.*

I hear him sing. His voice rises, immersed in words I cannot understand. I listen with closed eyes. The rain ceases, and the room floods with the sound of his guitar.

Memories. We stand on the deserted beach, our place to debate and discuss. We talk and stare into sheets of rain that dance along the waves. Rain explodes everywhere. We walk along the pathway mesmerized by the storm and sea, until it hits me that perhaps he is not hearing me. He says, "research must be systematic."

It is early, not yet 6:00. I dress carefully, my skirt ironed and my black high heels polished. I prepare breakfast as I would every morning. I mix blueberry yogurt with grapes and a banana. Then I stir a mixture of Metamucil into prune juice. It cures what ails me. At 6:45, I sit down and eat. First my yogurt, then my juice. At 6:55, I wash the dishes and clean the kitchen counter. Breakfast is entirely systematic.

Coherency, accuracy and clarity, the ideo/logical struggles of research. I think about McKay (2001). She says that according to Grove's Dictionary of Music, *acciacatura* and *appoggiatura* are considered a pair of dualisms. She also states, "research, re/creation, it is all vexed and interesting, two poles of the territory represented on the one side by the Purists, and on the other by 'who gives a shit?' And, standing somewhere in the middle, of course, it matters, but not with a pickle up your butt. A cooler and wiser head." Of course, she got that published.

I stand in the middle. It *does* matter. I told Peter how I want to re/present my research data. Though he is open about different forms of re/presentation, he insists on 'hard core data.' He wants coherency, accuracy, and clarity. Peter is searching for the truth. But what is the truth? I am writing short stories about musicians, their trials and tribulations, their journeys and experiences of becoming educators. If I find common themes in my interviews of musicians, would Peter consider that truth?

This is the story of Peter. Truth. Truth. Truth. Peter, you confuse me. I left his office saying I would do a comprehensive data analysis and incorporate the information into my short stories. Would this process create a strong voice?

I sit upright  
on my piano bench  
fingers grasping the keys  
thoughts about 'art.'  
Bach Invention No.8.  
Which voice will be heard

## **Countersubject**

I saw Peter today. He assures me he has lots to say. Peter points to a picture on his office wall and says it makes him think about the truth, and me. It is different for him not to think about numbers, and writing narrative makes him feel more open. He is excited by this approach.

I wait for Peter to write. I keep a list of things in my head I will tell him: how my house is never the same, when the window is open, new thoughts breeze through. The other night, I woke up like the night before. I lay there, listening to the wind and rain thinking about the truth. My insides caved in and my brain twisted and turned. I guess things get worse before they get better. Help, Peter. My mind dwells on the truth. People search for it. Some say the truth will set you free.

I must introduce my friend Bob to Peter. Bob is a zoologist who believes in scientific truth. Validity of the physical sciences relies heavily on physical measurements because their data can only be measured within a certain range of precision. Though they too, are vulnerable to some error. And so, Bob has expensive equipment in his lab. He has an inverted microscope outfitted for epifluorescence microscopy, fitted with phase contract optics, a video camera, and a duo photometer for spectographic analysis. In addition, the entire set-up is mounted on a vibration isolation table. There is also a patch clamp amplifier attached to the whole set-up. Data acquisition and analysis is accomplished with his Pentium III computer. Research involves ion sensitive fluorescent dyes and electrophysiological techniques to measure changes in intracellular calcium as they respond to hormonal stimulation in the epithelial cells of the human ear. This is how Bob searches for his truth.

Truth. Peter is hung up on the truth. Why has he not written back? I know he thinks about the Truth. Whenever I see him, he brings up the issue of the truth. He said he saw a book about the Truth in a bookstore, so I know the word hangs on him. And I am glad I hung it on him. As we parted today, he said, "I know I need to write to you about the truth." So write, Peter. Tell me what your thoughts are. I am so confused.

I know how to get Peter to answer me: "Peter, I'm sorting through some stuff. Is Herbert Spencer an organicist? Does an organicist integrate both rationalist and behaviorist perspectives?"

## **Second Episode**

No, organicists do not mix both perspectives. That is why Robert Gagne is considered a mixed model and his work is not coherent in many ways. Remember it is the metaphysical and epistemological positions you need to decipher. Does Spencer, like so many others, try to obscure their reliance on material explanation? If Spencer does what Gagne does with his learning sequence, i.e., all simple, elementary aspects of learning can be explained by S-R rooted behaviorist principles and higher "forms" of learning are best explained by modern rationalist principles (i.e., stuff like concept formation), then it is mix and match. The reason why Edwin

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Gordon's (1993) learning sequence is inconsistent is because it was originally based on Gange's work, but one can "interpret" Gordon's whole theory from an organicist perspective. Gordon may not agree, but that is another story. It is all about coherence. Can one pick and choose from different theoretical positions to create a mixed research model? Many say it is not possible, because we lose coherence, and one of the aims of knowledge acquisition, and of research, is to attain coherence.

The organismic world view uses the method of structural corroboration as a coherence theory of truth. Joachim (1906) is one of the first thinkers to propose a coherence theory of truth. From that perspective, truth is about logical relationships. Pepper (1942) says it is a correlation of one hypothesis with another hypothesis. The context of discovery, acts of cognition, and the innately active mind all play a necessary and essential role in our movement from common sense to highly-refined knowledge. Stuff like metaphors and creative ideas come from the context of discovery. A theory or model is like a "lens" that transforms the world. You and I construct a story, a metaphor, to bring order and organization to the domain of interest. From that perspective, all data are theory laden and there are no pure observational data. Kuhn's (1970) position is that data is always influenced by theory; theory is inextricably in data. My fears of qualitative research are rooted in the notion that I interpret it as fundamentally realist in nature because of its total reliance on observational data and experience. By definition, "empirical" means "experience," therefore qualitative data is essentially empirical.

The mechanistic world view uses the method of multiplicative corroboration, and is, therefore, a correspondence theory of truth. Through this world view, truth is that which corresponds to observation, truth is that which fits the facts. It is a correlation of one observation with another observation. The context of discovery merely plays an ancillary role. From that perspective, the important feature in moving from common sense to refined knowledge involves a fixed data base and inductive generalizations. A theory, or model, is like a window through which one can observe phenomena in the real world. Theories, models, and metaphors have no cognitive value. They are merely places to hang data. Supposedly, theories merely allow one to organize a vast array of data without effect on the data. And that is more toward the "truth."

### **Countersubject**

The sun shines, yet I can't see anything. I stand in the middle of the road near my Tercel. I am dazed, wondering what happened. When I approach the driver, he stares at me. I gesture for him to roll down his window.

An hour later, I tell the nurse at the hospital I was rear-ended at 16<sup>th</sup> and McDonald. I cannot move my neck and my back is in deep pain. I wait for an X-ray, and think about Peter. "Research involves coherency." Right now, I sit amid

scientific equipment, while doctors compile data on my physical state. Will their data be reliable? Will it help them find truth? They will diagnose me and prescribe treatment based on their data. I am vulnerable to their truths.

Small talk, small courtesies, Peter has no further time for the truth. He seems hung up on dichotomies. That mixing models is incoherent. He ends by saying, "That's more toward the truth."

I need to talk to Peter about hermeneutics. I need to tell him that Smith states that "whenever we are engaged in the activity of interpreting our lives and the world around us, we are engaging in what the Greeks called 'practical philosophy,' an activity linkable to the character of Hermes in the Greek pantheon" (p.27, 1999). Also, hermeneutics do not seek pure ground, some place of objectivity from which to view and analyze people or situations. The hermeneutic voice attempts to speak from the center of action.

Peter, help. My mind is getting frail. I can't do it anymore. I ask myself, why bother. But somehow, his words matter. It matters. He is a man of finely gauged increments, of flashpoints, of starbursts, and rich skepticism. He is relatively young and already been granted tenure. As a graduate supervisor, Peter is an excellent advisor and mentor. When we talk about issues, he quickly engages me in critical analysis. He is a deep thinker that presents alternative perspectives about knowledge. Peter has many inherent qualities that make him one of the best teachers I have ever had. But he has been more than an advisor and mentor to me. He has become a very supportive friend. He is warm and caring, and has a lot of depth as a person. We have had many deep discussions. Peter is extremely intellectual, while, at the same time, wonderfully sensitive and emotional. I should phone him. But I will not. I do not want to hear his words today. It might throw my day off.

But he is there. At this time of the day Peter is at work. By seven in the morning, he is in his office, checking email, firing off letters that become quarrels or sharp inquiries. Peter, why must we think about dichotomies of knowledge? Can't the two meld together? You say they are incommensurable but are they? Don't we engage in both forms of metaphysical realms?

### **Restating The Subject**

I struggle with the truth everywhere I go. I talk to people around me, probing their innermost thoughts about the truth. Day and night I think. Someone suggested I read *Truth: A History and Guide for the Perplexed*. So I bought it.

Is the truth ruining my relationship with Peter? Or does the truth bridge a gap between us? Take this afternoon. Peter and I walked to the Student Union Building for pizza. Things seemed tense. He did not smile and it threw me off. Not that it mattered. He ordered pepperoni while I got a slice of vegetarian. We sat down to eat and it picked up the pace. We began to chat and I suggested publishing some of our dialogues. His face brightened with a look of delight, followed suddenly by an

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incredulous look. He asked who would be interested our narrative. I could not say, but urged him to write.

He wanted to know how our dialogue would evolve, and I could not say. He wanted to know if we had any themes and I could not say. But by the time we walked back to his office, I felt we had made progress. Perhaps a goal for our dialogue might move us forward. Could we flesh out more of the truth? I don't want the truth to put distance between us. Truth is beginning to frighten me.

### **Searching for an Answer**

Day after day at the ivory tower, and not a word from Peter. The sky is still, the disconnection builds. Last week, I bumped into him in the hall and he smiled. Another time, he hugged me and said he would write me about the truth. But still, nothing. I am heartbroken. The truth transforms our relationship.

Truth has the quality of water. In water, I can move through a conscious element. But truth is a part of today, not simply a measure of its passing. The dimensionality of truth is not apparent. I felt the truth today near the water at Spanish Banks. I knew I moved through something that had substance. Here was the sun, the sky, and the water. Here was the truth and I felt free.

### **Stretto**

You are right, Karen. I think about the truth every day. I should write down my thoughts in a free flowing narrative, like an ongoing composition with free improvisational elements. But improvisation has some structure, even if it seems unstructured to a naïve listener. Similarly, there is "being" in "becoming." Chords change in the flow of an improvisation, where structures seem to be unstructured in the free expression of ideas.

I see truth in my son's eyes. He is six-year-old. He runs into my music studio tooting his latest creation on the harmonica. He pauses for a breath and asks, "Daddy, how do you spell "harmonica"?" I tell him, sound it out, and write it on a piece of paper. He asks me, "Daddy, how do you like my song?" I tell him "I love it, sunshine boy." Then I suggest blowing in and out to create his sounds. He is amazed with this epiphany. He asks me to show him more. I show him where to play the low sounding pitches and where to play the high sounding pitches. End of music lesson, and he runs away gleefully tooting his composition. He returns a few moments later and proclaims, "listen to this!" It's a nondescript melody but I recognize the rhythm as "Deck the Halls." I guess the name of the song and his eyes light up as he runs out of the room. I continue my improvisational noodling with my latest nemesis: improvising over the changes of "I Got Rhythm" in all 12 keys.

"Tell me the truth, brother!" people shouted at the many jazz concerts I attended in Philadelphia when I was music director of the jazz radio station. I always smiled when I heard people yelling "yeah, brother!" and "well alright!" at the peak of a

fabulous solo. “Sco-baby!” they’d shout at John Scofield, and “Sterno!” at Mike Stern when, with their blistering solos, they’d shred the paint off the walls at the now defunct Chestnut Cabaret. There were other jazzers who inspired such mania, but I recall those instances because the audiences were filled with hard rockers who had recently been “converted” to the truth of jazz by listening to my “Fusion Friday” program.

A few years ago, I was tortured by a well-respected researcher and a so-called “major journal” editor when I submitted a critique of a quantitative study on the development of the singing voice in young children. The paper was riddled with contradictions, numerical and definitional inaccuracies, and blatant fallacies. It still exists as one of the worst papers ever published in music education. In my idealist mindset, I thought I could initiate a point-counterpoint discussion in the journal (1) on the topic in general and (2) on the author’s motivation for writing such an article. I thought readers of the journal would want to “know” the truth. How naïve. The heartache and mental fatigue, let alone dollars spent in legal fees defending my right to share a vastly different interpretation of “the facts.” My critique was not published and I suffered serious depression for over six months. What I experienced through that debacle led me to my current position on the “truth.” And my disillusionment with and abandonment of most forms of so-called “scholarly research.” At this point in my life I am skeptical of finding any truth in the hallowed halls of universities. And when I am in my most skeptical frame of mind, I frighten myself and am afraid to tell you what I think about the truth.

First, there is no absolute truth in academic research. There is no such thing as pure data, pure fact; it is all danda (i.e., data influenced by theory; Pepper, 1942). Second, very few people are interested in the “truth,” whatever that may be. Humans are interested in what they want to believe. Third, and related to both points above, the “truth,” if it exists, is relative. Eric Idle once spoofed something to the effect of “this is my theory, and that is my theory, and that is that.” It breaks my heart to tell you, but that *is* that.

I hear (i.e., audiate) ii-V chord progressions in my head as I drive my car, mow the lawn, eat my dinner, write this narrative, speak with you. I can’t escape them. They are there—they exist both mentally in the idealistic sense and materialistically in the real sense of recordings and printed music. They are a part of almost every song written in the 20th century. I know the truth in music when I stop thinking about how I’m moving my fingers and where I am in the chord changes and the music just flows. I am one with my guitar, and my guitar is one with my mind and spirit.

I always find truth in music. Many musicians have shared glimpses of the truth with me. Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Joe Pass, Zoot Sims: they all tried to tell me the truth during my interviews with them. Whether in music composition, music improvisation, music listening, or music performance; whether I’m working solo or in a group, music has always provided me with truthful insights. “Music is truth, truth music.” Yes, I know. I borrowed the basic structure of that notion from Shelley. But this is one of the most secure, stable, honest, sincere “definitions” of

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truth I can offer. Music is not a language. Music transcends language, yet like language, music is all about coherence. One of my favorite thinkers, Kant, wrote (pp. 82-83) “What is truth? The nominal definition of truth, that is the agreement of knowledge with its object, is assumed as granted; the question asked is as to what is the general and sure criterion of the truth of any and every knowledge.” Kant adds, “. . . it is quite impossible, and indeed absurd, to ask for a general test of truth,” and “of the truth of knowledge, so far as its matter is concerned, no general criterion can be demanded. Such a criterion would by its very nature be self-contradictory.” If a work of music is coherent, whether I like it or not, it *is* true. It just is, and that is where epistemic and non-epistemic truths form a perfect unison. Being and becoming, untruth and truth. What about Greene’s (1978) thoughts about wide-awakeness, and Eisner’s notions of understanding, imaginative extrapolation (1995, p.4), and artistically-crafted research (p.5)? Think, Karen.

### **Another Episode**

The subject resurfaces. This quote makes me think of Peter.

“I’ve gone to the guitar because I’ve had an idea, a line or a riff. But I don’t do that when I start playing. I do something completely different that I had no idea I was going to do. Something inside that is an uncontrolled wish to express itself, and that’s where I begin.”

—Eric Clapton, British Musician

Progress. Progress. We are getting there. Intellectually speaking, we will unite in a fugue. Our relationship is a basket of emotions. Debate, validation, confrontation, approval, security, and companionship.

*You write  
In the fierce rain storm  
From upon wild waters  
In the thunder of clouds  
In torrential pour*

*You write  
In the fiery of life  
From upon kindled fire  
In the blaze of flame  
In murky smoke*

*You write  
In the performance  
From upon the ivory keys  
In the chromatic scales  
In symphonic sounds*

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*You write  
And plead for a song  
From roses and twilight  
In the lyrics and guitar tunes  
In pianissimo and fortissimo*

Peter talks about things being in the here and now, in the moment. “Music compositions are frozen improvisations,” he says, “and writing narrative cannot represent improvisations. They are merely one attempt at representing coherent thought.”

We can recontextualize what Maxine Greene (1978) talks about and make it significant in music. Perhaps “wide-awakeness” allows one to get closer to truth, to approach truth in music, and attain it through music. For example, while performing music, one’s mental acuity is paramount. Anything less leads to incoherence, and without coherence we may not advance musical understanding or truth in music.

Musician. Peter is all musician. Besides being conflicted by the truth, Peter is conflicted by two identities: scholar and musician. Maybe there is a link between the conflicts around truth and identity. Perhaps that will help us both gain a deeper understanding about how narrative can unfold the truth. In many ways, truth is a product of profound understanding. Is that what you mean?

## **Retrograde**

*Session Type: Symposium  
Self-Centered, Irreverent, Artsy-Fartsy Inquiry: Girl Talk About  
Narrative Research*

Do you want to go, Karen? Maybe we can do a session called “Hippie Dippy Inquiry: Girls and Boys Can Really Talk About This Narrative Stuff When They Want To Make Music And Play.”

## **Countersubjects**

This is my addition to the truth, Karen. I want to approach narrative as improvisation, not frozen ideas. I saw the keynote at the conference this past weekend. He is a very good storyteller, but you’re right. I can tell good stories too. It was a good experience hearing all the narratives this past weekend. I was completely immersed in stories, and I felt elated knowing that I could “do it” too. I just need to feel more comfortable with my newfound voice. It is much like the shift I made from singing baritone/bass to countertenor. I knew I could do it, I had done it for so long with children in my classrooms, but I didn’t know what others would think of my voice. And one morning I walked into the rehearsal room at the Valley Forge Memorial Chapel to sing the early mass and who would be there warming up? My voice teacher! I nearly died because she sang alto as well, and there I was singing her part with her. She always told me that there was something different about my voice, and that morning she discovered what it was.

### *Do You Hear What I Hear?*

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Imaginative extrapolation (Eisner, 1995, p. 4) is embodied in jazz improvisation, and in the moment of meaningful music-making, it enables truth to emerge. Remember “tell me the truth, brother!” that oft-repeated encouragement at jazz concerts? Artistically-crafted research (p. 5) reveals truths regarding human nature and human understanding. As Eisner said “coherence, imagery, and particularity are the fruits of artistic thinking” (p. 5). And for some, truth is the fruit of musical thought. At the peak of imaginative extrapolation one may attain the clarity of the “enlightened eye” (Eisner, 1991). Pure consciousness can be found in being (Heidegger, 1992), the awareness of the place or moment in the improvisation, and becoming, in the awareness of where you are going in the improvisation. Once a musician, always a musician. I proclaim defiantly “I AM MUSICIAN! HEAR MY FEEDBACK AND KISS MY AMP!” And that’s all I’ve got to say around truth.

### **Final Portion**

As usual, I woke up to the sound of rain. A note struck as a car passed by. A sounding. It was time to write Peter. He is so passionate about music. He lives and breathes music. He is all musician. Though I’ve seen him wear a tie and sport jacket and speak scholarly words, I mostly envision him wearing a black baseball cap, with a guitar in his arms.

I also remember how frustrating it was for him when he tore the tendon in his right ring finger. It was such a loss for him. One time after he explained the loss, I left his office in tears. His injury brought back memories of how I suffered from tendonitis. The pain and suffering I still carry around. Now burdened by my neck and back pain, I am lessened to a life of permanent physical damage. I cannot play the piano for long periods of time without neck pain. And that’s the truth.

Peter, what has happened? You attended a conference and listened to narratives. Transformation. This is transformation. When we first met, you talked of the psychology of music and music aptitude tests. You taught the statistics portion of a required course. Now you are exploring narrative methodology. This completely excites me. We have taken a long journey together and expanded our thinking. We have created a contrapuntal composition.

Our musings have brought us to this point. Despite your conflicts about the truth and identity, you proclaim truth can exist in music. Music is coherent. Music is logical. That’s all you know, for now. But this helps me. It means that we discover truth in what we believe to be the truth, as long as it is coherent. Drawing on Denzin’s ideas (1995), music discourse in a jazz improvisation context may be interpreted as a dialogue. There is the ensemble, the improvisational soloist of the moment, and the audience. Most of the audience does not understand the music at hand. They merely react to it on a visceral level, exhorting the musicians for the truth in their dialogue.

For an instrumentalist, contrary to Denzin’s notions on intonation (p. 11),

intonation is concerned with how one's instrument is in tune with itself and in tune with other instruments. Thus, a musician who does not play in tune plays incoherently. Poor intonation in music is not "double-voicedness." It seems that "double-voicedness" is more closely related to two people simultaneously performing the same song in two different keys. Charles Ives based much of his compositional language on that strategy. Musicians need to play in tune, regardless of whether they are performing the same or different parts from one another. And they can perform in different keys or different tonalities. That is the truth. Music expression reveals a necessity to move beyond non-musician's notions of voice to include not only hearing and listening but also audiation (Gordon, 1993). Audiation is the ability to create and recreate music when the sound is not physically present (Gouzouasis, 1992). Humans audiate when they compose music, improvise music, write music that has been previously heard, conceptually recall music, listen to music, and read music. Audiation is to music what thought is to language. Thus, if others hear me, and I perform (i.e., improvise) what I audiate, others may hear me as I internally hear myself.

### **Coda**

Audiated aspects of music move us away from empirical and visual representations. Irigaray (1985) argued the feminine gaze (unlike the male look) to be multiperspectival or multisensual. She says the masculine gaze, the "other side of the mirror," is an underground world where there is the "dark side of the feminine soul." But we believe, in music there is no masculine or feminine side, because performing music involves an ensemble of voices with musicians reflecting themselves and each other. We would say this is a form of reciprocity. In music, reciprocity is another important characteristic, as in qualitative and feminist research (Lather, 1991). Lather argues that reciprocity will take us "beyond a concern for more and better data." Musicians attend to reciprocity through a give-and-take of musical interactions to develop a thick, rich, in-depth sound.

Kundera (1993) may have over generalized when he spoke of the equality of voices (p. 75), as he was not thinking across all stylistic aspects of polyphonic music composition. No one would deny the obvious differences in polyphonic techniques developed and explored by Machaut and Dunstable, or Palestrina and Monteverdi. And they fade into relative insignificance when compared with the differences between Bartok and Schoenberg on the one hand, and Cage and Stockhausen on the other. However, Kundera's notions of how music form has influenced his novels amplify our ideas. Novelistic counterpoint unites philosophy, narrative, and dream (p. 80). Our interpretation of music contrapuntal form in arts-based research enables us to fuse philosophy, narrative, and creative writing (i.e., poetry, which in many ways may possess dream-like properties). Moreover, we recently discovered that Fox & Mitchell (1986) used a newly composed piece of music to explore the impact of a teacher education program. As musicians, we can understand and relate

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to their premise, however, it is conceivable that non-musicians are incapable of making connections with the power of music as a research tool. Moreover, as Gordon (1993) believes that music has a syntax but not semantics, and Hindemith and Stravinsky essentially agreed with Bernstein's notion that music is only notes (Fox & Mitchell, p. 29), there are musicians and music researchers who may deny our premise. On the latter point, one may consider that not all musicians comprehend the music of both Eric Satie and Cecil Taylor, two diverse piano composers. Related to the consideration of individual music preferences and lack of interest in highly improvisatory music, an explanation of the denial of music in arts-based research is metaphorically related to and perhaps parallels these issues.

Emergent research has revealed that musicians are musicians (Lee, in progress). Their musician identities stay with them forever. They live and breathe music. It is their truth. Now it seems that has confirmed, and it is consistent with that research. There is accuracy, coherency, and consistency in this statement. Would one say this is the truth? Despite a year in a teacher education program, they cling to their musician identities. Music is their reference to the truth.

While some pre-service music teachers may not understand the broader philosophical issues surrounding this article, it is our belief that though their understanding of music they can begin to engage in this form of dialogue. From a musician's perspective, much of what has been written in arts-based research is rooted in visual art traditions. We live in a visually-based society, where music fluency and music literacy seem not to be core concerns in the broad education of children. With more music scholars composing and sharing artistically-crafted research, this discourse could have an even greater impact on music teacher education. This dialogue has taken us to a new level of understanding about how musicians' voices can perform a valuable role in arts-based research. And that's the truth.

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