

Reviewed by **Richard Lawton**

Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility and Ethical Praxis

Edited by David Elliott, Marissa Silverman,
and Wayne Bowman
New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016

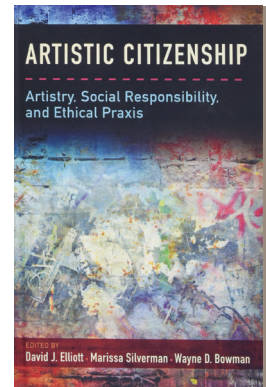
What, then, is our obligation to instill these values in our students? In their introductory essay, Elliot, Silverman, and Bowman address that question:

If artistic practices entail ethical responsibilities, instruction that

presumes to introduce learners to the full range of goods an artistic practice exists to serve must help students identify and confront local, national, and world problems through their artistic efforts. Mastery of technical skills, though necessary, is simply not enough.

This is not light reading. The editors are clearly looking to ignite a broad discussion of *activism*, to borrow a term from one of the essays. We teachers know that injecting politics into instruction can be perilous, particularly in public schools, but it is increasingly difficult to avoid. Social media and other ways of connecting digitally have given rise to both a false sense of community and a distorted idea of what it means to be informed. We've all seen it in our classrooms. We can bemoan our students' short attention spans and self-absorption, but, in the end, we need to teach them where they are.

Part I of *Artistic Citizenship* consists of six essays focused on foundational considerations. This is followed by collections of essays on dance- and movement-based arts, media and technology, music, poetry and storytelling, theater, and visual arts. All the essays are worth reading, if only to expose oneself to the range of interpretations of what it means to practice artistic citizenship, and to take inspiration from



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In *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility and Ethical Praxis*, editors David J. Elliott, Marissa Silverman, and Wayne D. Bowman have assembled a marvelous collection of 27 essays by artists, scholars, and educators that discuss civic responsibility in the arts and in arts instruction. This is an essential compendium for anyone who believes our work as teachers is not complete without providing our students with a social and cultural context for their creative explorations.

What does it mean to practice citizenship as an artist or art instructor? The idea is derived from three assumptions—that the arts are grounded in social interactions; that art, following the philosophy of John Dewey and others, should be a useful expression of everyday life; and finally that the arts, because they are not only a reflection of who we are but also a transformational force in all our lives, ought to be practiced in an ethical, civic-minded way. This last notion is based on the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*—living a life devoted to virtue, including a sense of responsibility to the community.

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Mary Shamrock is first recipient of AOSA Excellence in Research Award.



the unanimity of the authors' commitment to teaching in a socially responsible way. The book is also full of apropos-of-nothing-but-excellent-to-know bits of information. I, for one, did not know that puppetry developed as a form of political protest.

In Part II, the section devoted to dance, four choreographer/activists from diverse backgrounds discuss the intersection of popular culture, politics, and movement arts and how this has contributed to a re-evaluation of how dance is taught, practiced, and appreciated. For example, in "Moving Comfortably Between Continuity and Disruption: Somatics and Urban Dance as Embodied Responses to Civic Responsibility," author Naomi M. Jackson discusses elevation of urban dance as a legitimate area of instruction alongside ballet. Urban music has long been considered a vital resource for culturally relevant instruction, but as Jackson points out, urban dance is an equally authentic expression of urban life.

The four essays on music in Part IV are equally intriguing and highly applicable to practical issues confronted in the classroom. Finding it difficult to persuade your district that an experiential, general music program is better for kids than orchestra as an elective ensemble? Check out "Citizens or Subjects? El Sistema in Critical Perspective" by Geoffrey Baker. Trying to sort the increasingly complex issues surrounding technology, intellectual property, and rights? Try "Alchemies of Sanctioned Value: Music, Networks, Law" by Martin Scherzinger.

Participatory music, the idea that we should evaluate the success of musical presentations

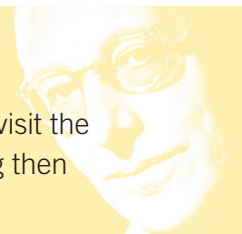
based on the experience of the performers rather than the audience, is a recurring theme throughout *Artistic Citizenship*; it is fitting, therefore, that ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino, author of the influential *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, is a contributor here. In his essay "Music, Social Change, and Alternative Forms of Citizenship," Turino describes his 30-year involvement with the contra dance scene, something to which many of us can relate. He also discusses the ramifications of social dancing and music making for building and reinforcing community, something with which all of us need to concern ourselves.

From time to time I hear (on social media, naturally) colleagues talk about "going down Orff rabbit holes" in pursuit of a new combination of material and ideas. Part of the appeal, apart from the exploratory curiosity central to being an Orff practitioner, is the opportunity to contemplate how what we do fits into the bigger picture—in our communities and in ourselves. It turns out an important conversation along these lines is taking place in many areas of the arts that this book frames beautifully. *Artistic Citizenship* asks you to dig deep, but that is, as the expression goes, where the good stuff is. ■

RICHARD LAWTON teaches general music at Roscomare Road Elementary School in Los Angeles, California, including after school ensembles in ukulele and recorder. Richard is the president of the Los Angeles Chapter of AOSA, the general music representative for the California Music Educators Association, and a member of *The Orff Echo* Editorial Board.

2017-18

- AOSA and *The Orff Echo* celebrate 50 years of Schulwerk in the United States.
- To learn more about AOSA's first 50 years, visit the 50th Anniversary webpage at www.aosa.org then click on the 50th Anniversary icon.



Thank you to all who have contributed to AOSA's development over the first half-century, too numerous in action and number to be appropriately represented here, and to those whose current and future involvement will grow AOSA through the next 50 years.