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Response to Music Matters, Chapter 3, *Musicing*

We have always known that in most things, particularly in music, being able to talk about it does not mean you can do it. We all know of those who pontificate about any subject and exhibit lots of formal knowledge about it, but who, when given the opportunity to demonstrate skill in it, either fail miserably or make a quick exit. By the same logic, a performer's musical understanding is exhibited not in what she says about her performance, but in the quality of what she gets done in and through her actions of performing.

The reason we were all drawn to this thing called music is because we love to *make* music. When we went to our first lesson, if our teachers had sent us home with a book to read about how one is to play the instrument, instead of exciting us to practice by having us actually play the instrument, most of us would not be here now. Just as it is unlikely that a didactic approach would have engaged us as music students, we can hardly expect to create excited, enthusiastic music-makers and listeners simply by teaching them *about* music, rather than having them experience it.

I really like the idea of music learning of the "formal" type being filtered into the teaching-learning situation *parenthetically and contextually*, rather than being separated from the music-making process. The teacher incites the students to create beautiful music and in the process, the students learn to identify and solve all problems standing in the way of that goal. For example, if students are engaged with making a musical phrase, breath control will take care of itself.

I once had an inner city student who sang the baritone aria, *Hostias*, from the Offertory of the Faure Requiem. He was a very religious young man and I explained to him the meaning of the text. Once he made the connection of the phrase of text with the musical phrase and was able to understand how a long, coherent line could project the meaning of the words, his breath control became phenomenal. Of all the professional and highly accomplished singers I have worked with since that time, none stands out as possessing such musicianship and power, and incredible breath control for those long phrases, as did that teenager.