

Managing Editor's Preface

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In a collection of conference proceedings published about 10 years ago, I framed the idea of vernacular pedagogies as a matter of “trusting the traditions”; that is to say, trusting not only the beauty and expressivity of the vernacular idioms that we love, but more fundamentally and revolutionarily, trusting the essential efficacy of those idioms’ teaching methods.¹ Then, again, in 2009, at a meeting of the Texas Music Educators Association (with over 10,000 members, the single largest state music education association in the USA), I and some colleagues used the phrase again, to argue for the unique capacities of vernacular *pedagogies*—the teaching methods indigenous to the traditions—to provide unique educational development for students. As vernacular idioms have entered conservatories, at times they have been subjected to pedagogical redefinition: teaching vernacular traditions using methods native to classical music or jazz, rather than the methods developed by the traditions themselves. This “cultivation” of vernacular idioms has sometimes rescued idioms on the verge of popular demise, but has also sometimes distorted their fundamental aesthetic, functional, and/or socio-cultural meanings.²

We seek a different path: we seek to honor the beauty of the idioms, the communal vitality they create, and the efficacy of their pedagogies. We believe that the vernacular idioms provide endless possibilities for learning, enrichment, and empowerment, and—indeed—the chance to reimagine, renew, and transform the conservatory.

¹ Christopher J. Smith, “Trusting the Tradition: The Meaning of the Irish Session Workshop,” *Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. Patricia Shehan Campbell (Queensland: Australian Academic Press, 2005), 69-78.

² For an account of how this conservatory adoption impacted four vernacular idioms—choral music, band music, solo piano music, and jazz—see Austin B. Caswell and Christopher Smith, “Into the Ivory Tower: Vernacular Music and the American Academy,” *Contemporary Music Review* Special Issue “Traditions, Institutions and American Popular Music” 19/1 (2000): 89-111.