Cody Hinson

Dr. Guler

ENGL – 400

18 October 2018

A Rhetorical Analysis of Attempts to Save Music Education

When the recession hit the United States in 2008, many areas of both the public and private sector were hit hard. One of the fields that was hurt the most by the recession was education (Figueroa, Leachman, Masterson). States were scrambling to try to keep their budgets in check, with most of them choosing to create large cuts to programs that they deemed to be nonessential. In most cases, one of the first programs to go was music. While the United States economy slowly recovered and education budgets were restored, the trend of cutting music programs for programs in the STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Math) fields continue.

This analysis will examine the rhetoric of two artifacts; a Ted Talk by music educator Richard Gill, as well as an article published by the National Association for Music Education entitled *Why Music Education Actually Matters.* Both of these artifacts will be examined from an Aristotelian perspective in which the use of the three classical appeals; logos, ethos, and pathos are examined. Additionally, rhetoric appeals from Jay Heinrichs will be used to analyze the artifacts. The analysis suggests that both artifacts effectively communicate the message that proper music education is incredibly valuable in the development of children and should be taught effectively in school. They create an effective argument that music education should continue to be funded in the public school system.

*Approach to Analysis*

In this analysis, I will use Aristotle’s three rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) as well as Jay Heinrichs’ rhetorical concepts such as decorum, synecdoche, and irony. By using both of these forms of rhetoric, I will be able to provide a more thorough analysis of the two artifacts.

*Aristotelian Concept of Appeals*

One of the greatest rhetors of all time, Aristotle, suggested that people use three main forms of communication to attempt to persuade their audience: ethos, pathos, and logos. One of these appeals which is still commonly employed today is ethos. Ethos can be defined simply as an appeal to character (Heinrichs 46). In other words, it is whether or not the audience finds the rhetor credible. For example, a CEO at a Fortune 500 company possesses ethos due to the qualifications that they were required to have to receive the job. Pathos is simply defined as “argument by emotion” (Heinrichs 46). This appeal is one that that is meant to use an audience members emotional state to achieve the desired outcome. An example of an effective use of pathos is the SPCA commercials where images of animals in sad situations invoke a feeling of sadness so that you will donate money to help animals in need. Lastly, logos is defined as “argument by logic” (Heinrichs 46). This appeal relies on logic and reasoning to create an effective argument. For example, “All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.” (“Logos Examples”). This statement uses logic and reasoning to create a fairly concrete argument. These are not the only rhetoric appeals that may be used to look at artifacts as there are many other appeals and methods of rhetoric as well. For the purposes of analyzing these artifacts, three others will be used: decorum, synecdoche, and irony.

*Other Methods of Rhetoric*

Decorum, as defined by Heinrichs, is when a rhetor matches their audience’s expectations of them (Heinrichs 47). For example, when a doctor is checking on his patients in the hospital, he will walk around with his white lab coat with business casual clothes on underneath it. This allows the audience to play trust in them as they meet their expectation that a doctor should be a professional. Synecdoche is defined as “swapping a thing for a collection of things” or “making a representative stand for the whole group.” (Heinrichs 222). An example of this would be that The White House often stands for all of the employees that work within The White House (Heinrichs 222). Lastly, irony is defined as “swapping the apparent meaning for the real one.” (Heinrichs 222). For example, when “your parents pretend not to know that you dented the car, and ask a series of seemingly innocent questions that eventually lead to your confession.” (“Examples of Irony”).

*Analysis of Ted Talk*

From the very beginning of the presentation, it is apparent that the presenter, Richard Gill, is establishing his ethos by using good decorum. He is dressed in business casual which is what the audience would expect from a presenter at this event. Additionally, one of the first statements that he makes begins with “I like to see you as my class.” (“TEDxSydney 00:25). This gives the audience the perception that he is a teacher and someone who is knowledgeable enough that they should pay attention to. Gill then switches to using logos by outlining all of the positive impacts that a child receives from a proper music education, even at the young age of three years old. He then uses the audience to provide an example of the exact skills that music teaches young children. Gill makes sure to use all three of Aristotle’s classic appeals, however pathos is used in a way which one may not expect. He uses humor throughout his presentation to both keep the audience engaged and interested in the information that he is presenting, as well as to associate a feeling of fun and happiness with that of music education. He uses comical examples from students that he has previously taught, as well as small insults directed at himself in order to make him see more relatable to the audience. By doing this, Gill is almost subconsciously persuading the audience that music education is in fact important, but also fun. This will allow him, in theory, to achieve the goal of his presentation which is to continue to provided music education for children both in public schools, and privately. Gill also uses an example of irony in his presentation. During one of his examples, one of his students stated “well, we learned about crotchets and minims (Australian names for music notation), but I had to teach us”. It is clear that Gill is the one who actually taught the subject, however it provides an example of humorous irony.

*Analysis of NAfME Article*

It is apparent early on in the article that the author, Blake Madden, will rely heavily on logos to create his argument. He begins his article with a statement that the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act identified music as a core subject, however it is not one that is to be tested. In this same sentence, he also uses hyperbole as he states “…just not one worthy of testing” (Madden). The act itself does not say that music is a subject is not worthy, rather he uses this phrasing to create an appeal to emotions of the targeted audiences, which is both music educators and supporters of music education. He then goes on to point out that a 2012 report from the U.S. Department of Education uses synecdoche as the report stated that “music education was almost universally available in the nation’s public elementary schools.” (Madden). However, by using synecdoche, the report hardly addresses that many schools feel that their resources are “not at all adequate” or minimally adequate.” (Madden). Additionally, Madden discusses the use of pathos in numerous ad campaigns that have been created to attempt to save music education. For example, he uses VH1’s Save the Music Foundation’s commercial which featured children stating what music education has done for them as an effective appeal to pathos. He uses the statements “Music is challenging”, “With an instrument, you have to be very focused, and that’s the same with schoolwork”, and “Drums just make me concentrate.” to not only appeal to the audience’s pathos, but also to their logos as he quickly follows these statements with scientific evidence to support them.

Madden continues by appealing to ethos when he quotes the recipient of the 2010 Nobel Prize for Medicine and Physiology Thomas Südhof. Madden uses the quote “My bassoon teacher, Herbert Tauscher, who taught me that the only way to do something right is to practice and listen and practice and listen, hours, and hours, and hours.” from Südhof to appeal to ethos that his argument is credible. He then uses Südhof’s elaboration as a way to appeal to his audience’s logos that a world renowned scientist benefited from a proper music education.

He then continues to use logos to further substantiate his claims as he cites a scientific study that was performed that shows a correlation between students who participate in formal music education and academic achievement. Madden outlines all of the areas in which most schools wish to improve, and then shows how music helps these areas. He then points out the irony in many school’s ways of thinking as a way to weaken their argument. He shows that since music education positively impacts academic performance, that by taking it out of the curriculum, schools are actually hurting student performance while trying to help it. Madden then goes on to further explain each of his points with additional studies which uses even more appeals to logos.

Both artifacts managed to create effective arguments for the same topic, the importance of music education, while using different rhetorical methods. In the Ted Talk, Richard Gill uses many appeals to ethos as he has to attempt to establish credibility with his audience in a relatively short time. He does this effectively through the use of decorum, humor, irony, and personal stories. By his effective use of ethos and logos, and his creative use of pathos, he was able to use all three of Aristotle’s rhetorical concepts to create an effective argument.

Blake Madden used a different approach as his argument was structured more heavily around appeals to logos, although he did include all three of Aristotle’s concepts. Madden had to establish less credibility as the location in which his argument was published already established some credibility for him. Instead, he focused on using data to support his claims that music education positively impacts students in more ways than just the classroom. He also points out the flaws of counterarguments made against him by showing the irony that exists when schools take away music education to improve test scores. His heavy use of logos, as well as his discrediting of counterarguments made against his claim allowed him to create an effective argument that music education actually matters.

Works Cited

“A Punishing Decade for School Funding.” *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, NeaToday, 28 Feb. 2018, www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-punishing-decade-for-school-funding.

Heinrichs, Jay. *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us about the Art of Persuasion*. Three Rivers Press, 2017.

“Logos Examples.” *SoftSchools*, softschools.com/examples/literary\_terms/logos\_examples/242/.

Madden, Blake. “Why Music Education Actually Matters.” *NAfME*, NAfME, 18 Oct. 2017, nafme.org/why-music-education-actually-matters/.

“Pathos Examples.” *SoftSchools*, softschools.com/examples/literary\_terms/pathos\_examples/243/.

TEDxTalks. *YouTube*, YouTube, 16 June 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeRus3NVbwE.