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Facing the music:

Three personal experiences, five historical snapshots, seven conceptual shifts and twelve continua as an accessible pathway to understand different approaches to cultural diversity in music education

THREE VIGNETTES

n 1975, when the worst clouds of hashish smoke and incense had lifted after the psychedelic 1960s, I embarked on what is now a 35-year profound relationship with the sitar and its repertoire of ragas and talas. While being privileged to study North Indian classical music for over twenty years with two of its highly accomplished masters, Jamaluddin Bhartiya and Ali Akbar Khan, I received surprisingly little explanation on how this very complex aural tradition actually 'works.' Most of the lessons consisted of getting material (not even repertoire), without much explanation about its role in this highly evolved tradition marrying age-old melodic and rhythmic patterns with spontaneous musicianship. As years went by, however, I found that my analytical skills got more and more attuned to this holistic way of learning, and discovered how it sharpened my learning abilities.

Two decades later, while observing and working with musicians from Africa, I found they prioritised very different aspects of musicianship than the ones I had been taught to look for in Western or Indian music. When I asked them about what mattered most to them in their music, it became clear that they judged excellence in their own performances by criteria like finding new variations in age-old rhythms, achieving a sense of togetherness (*ubuntu*), and their ability to make the women dance.

Such direct audience response was more difficult to gauge a few months after these interactions with African musicians, when I was witnessing a ceremony for the dead in a village in North Bali. I was the only breathing audience member (in the presence of over 100 urns) at a virtuoso *gamelan* performance, while the rest of the village was watching a shadow puppet play on the village square. The spiritual value of this performance was obviously of paramount importance. Speaking with several gamelan masters and scholars later, they claimed they never 'learned' music, they felt they just 'knew it' as a result of the total immersion in the music from an early age.

These—and many other—experiences made it clear to me that many of the preconceptions we have about 'how music education works' and ultimately 'how musicking works' may be much more culture-specific than we often assumed them to be. This is also reflected in our dealings with cultural diversity from an historical point of view.

FIVE HISTORICAL SNAPSHOTS

In 1822, the well-known music educator Lowell Mason advised, "We should see that the songs of your families are pure in sentiment and truthful in musical taste. Avoid negro melodies and comic songs for most of their tendencies is to corrupt both musically and morally" (quoted in Volk, 1998, p. 27). It would appear that in the first decades of the nineteenth century, music from other cultures was not ex-

actly *en vogue* yet.

Almost a hundred years later, just after the First World War, there was a strong —and somewhat naïve—idealistic longing for global harmony, which was very inclusive:

> When that great convention can sit together—Chinese, Hindu, Japanese, Celt, German, Czech, Italian, Hawaiian, Scandinavian, and Pole—all singing the national songs of each land, the home songs of each people, and listen as one mind and heart to great world music common to all and loved by all, then shall real world goodwill be felt and realized (Frances Elliot Clark, quoted in Volk, 1998, p. 49).

In the early 1930s, a couple from Kansas travelled to Africa to shoot the first ever film with sound to be produced on that continent. Martin and Osa Johnson documented the wildlife and extensively studied the local pygmies. A highlight in the interaction with what they call 'the little savages' is a scene where Osa places a gramophone on top of a traditional drum and teaches the pygmies to dance to a jazz record, unaware of the ironies of that situation. Martin observes: "It was remarkable the way they quickly caught the rhythm of our modern music; sometimes they got out of time, but they quickly came back to it again" (Johnson, 1932).

In the 1950s, on his return from The Netherlands, Ki Mantle Hood began actively developing bi-musicality in his US students, although his teacher Jaap Kunst had probably never actually played a gamelan (Hood, 1960; personal communication, 1995). In doing so, he laid the foundation for a substantial tradition of 'performing ethnomusicology' in American music departments (cf Solis, 2004). This opened the road to considering important factors in learning music across cultures, such as the institutional environment, the multiple role of the teacher, pedagogical approaches, cultural context, teacher identity, archetypes of instruction, and various percep-

tions of authenticity, including staged authenticity and idealized representation (Trimillos, 2004, pp. 26–37).

In 1967, the Tanglewood Declaration heralded the beginning of the current strands of thinking in culturally diverse music education:

> Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety, including currently popular teen-age music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures (Choate, 1968).

This was followed by initiatives and policies of national and international organisations (including the Music Educators National Conference and College Music Society in the US, and the International Society for Music Education with its explicit 1996 *Policy on musics of the world's cultures*). From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, faced with growing influx from people from other cultures, governments also committed themselves increasingly to supporting what was usually referred to as multiculturalism. The challenges were on the table, but there were issues in the degree to which the various players were prepared for the conceptual and practical challenges associated with cultural diversity, and their impact on music education at large.

SEVEN CONCEPTUAL SHIFTS

Over the forty-odd years since Tanglewood, music education has witnessed a number of important conceptual developments, many of which are increasingly and importantly becoming part of global thinking on cultural diversity. These can be represented as shifts of focus in discussions and practices:

From individual traditions 'in context' to 'recontextualised' world music programs. Increasingly, ethnomusicology programs

and world music in the classroom have moved from single culture electives and one-off courses. Now, there is a wealth of dedicated practical degree courses, teacher training courses, preparations for community settings (within and outside cultures of origin), and studies of popular world musics in contemporary urban environments.

From 'world music as material' to appropriate 'world music pedagogies.' As insights and experiences expand, there is a reappraisal of transmission through aurality, emphasis on intangible elements, and on holistic learning. In the discourse, there is even some room for considering confusion as a pedagogical tool, deliberately applying cognitive dissonance to the learning process.

From mono-directional instructional didactics to acknowledging complex relationships. It is clear that within Western cultures—and even more when we consider all cultures of the world—there are vast differences in the relationships between learner and teacher (or facilitator), encompassing issues such as power distance, individuality/collectiveness, short/long term orientation, issues of gender, and varying degrees of tolerating uncertainty (cf Hofstede, 1998).

From a single sense of (reconstructed) authenticity to multiple authenticities and 'strategic inauthenticity'. While authentic music making was strongly associated with reproducing an ideal in the past or other cultures, there is a growing acceptance of the spectrum from striving to recreate contexts to acknowledging recontextualisation as a reality of most music practices today (cf Westerlund, 2002).

From static views of traditions to acknowledging living traditions. Early ethnomusicology has probably played a significant role in attributing 'ideal states' to musics from other cultures, thereby condemning all change to a representation of decline. More recent insights inform us that constant change is in fact the essence and lifeline of many living traditions. This creates significant space for recontextualising tradi-

tions in the classroom, acknowledging that they will have a new identity.

From socially constructed cultural identities to individually constructed ones. While the cultural background of children used to be the principal motivation for engaging with particular musics, music educators increasingly acknowledge that the relationship between ethnicity and musical tastes, skills and activities is increasingly fluid (with interesting differences between first, second and third generation immigrants).

From personal passions to global concerns. The early pioneers of world music education tended to be isolated and risked accusations of being the "mad professor who sits students on the floor and has them beating pots and pans in the name of music" (Hood, 1995, p. 56). Since then, greater concentrations of world music professionals in institutions, policies by organisations such as UNESCO, IMC, and ISME, as well as dedicated networks such as CDIME (Cultural Diversity in Music Education), have created greater acceptance of the relevance of cultural diversity in music education.

Twelve continua

There are many ways of dealing with the complex and interrelated range of issues raised above. At first encounter, many of these seem to be based on dichotomies: aural versus notated, static versus dynamic, individual versus collective, et cetera. On closer analysis, however, many turn out to be the extremities on continua, and the subtle intermediate positions help us understand and even plan the diversity of moments and trajectories of learning music across cultures. This can be represented succinctly in the framework on the next page.

Twelve Continuum Transmission Framework (TCTF)

Issues of context

static tradition	<————————>	constant flux
'reconstructed' authenticity	<————————>	'new identity' authenticity
'original' context	<————————>	recontextualisation

Modes of transmission

atomistic/analytical	<————————>	holistic
notation-based	<————————>	oral
tangible	<————————>	intangible

Dimensions of interaction

large power distance	<————————>	small power distance
individual central	<————————>	collective central
strongly gendered	<————————>	gender-neutral
avoiding uncertainty	<————————>	tolerating uncertainty
long-term orientation	<————————>	short-term orientation

Approaches to cultural diversity

Monocultural	multicultural intercultural	transcultural
	<——————|——————————|——————>	

Figure 1: Framework for understanding music transmission in culturally diverse environments (Schippers, 2010).

As I have argued elsewhere, this framework can be a powerful and effective instrument to better understand music transmission processes when a number of observations are taken into account:

The framework can be viewed from four perspectives: the tradition, the institution, the teacher, and the learner. These may be (and in fact often are) at odds with each other. The way these tensions are negotiated is crucial in creating learning environments that will be perceived as successful by all concerned.

There are neither 'right' nor 'wrong' positions on each continuum: the framework is essentially non-prescriptive and non-judgmental. Positions are likely to vary from tradition to tradition, teacher to teacher, student to student, between phases of development, from one individual lesson to another, and even within single lessons. The aim

of the framework is not to establish the 'correct' way of teaching for any music, but to increase awareness of conscious and subconscious choices.

There is some coherence between the continua: a general tendency to the left (atomistic, notation, tangible, static concepts, hierarchical, monocultural) points towards formal, institutional settings; a tendency to the right towards more informal, often community-based processes. When a 'right-oriented' tradition finds itself in a 'left-oriented' environment, there is an increased risk of friction and unsuccessful transmission processes (Schippers, 2010, pp. 124–125).

The latter may explain many of the problems reported from projects trying to introduce community, popular, folk and world music in European and American formalized environments. While the easy conclusion tended to be: "World music does not work in our institutions", it would have been fairer to state "We have underestimated the complexities of dealing with cultural diversity". Overall, the underlying assumption of the model is that teaching is more likely to be successful when the institutions/teachers/learners are aware of the choices they have and make, and are able to adapt to the requirements of different learning situations by choosing positions or moving fluidly along the continua. For this to work, it is important that such thoughts enter the minds of those working in teacher training, curriculum development, and the classrooms. ■

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