

Music Education in a Time of Tradition and Transformation

PATRICIA SHEHAN CAMPBELL

University of Washington (USA)

Abstract: While acknowledging our long history in the musical engagement of children, youth, and adults in schools, I acknowledge our continued efforts in providing the substance of a musical education for all who desire (and require) it. Culturally responsive teaching, shaped by a consciousness of music and musicians hailing from local communities and global cultures, informs as well as transforms mindful music education policy and practice. I argue for the study of music as core of a culturally conscious pedagogy, and suggest that experiences in listening, participatory musicking, performance, composing-improvising, and the interdisciplinary study of music as art, humanistic endeavor, and social behavior lead to a discovery of music, the community, and the world.

Keywords: music education and culturally conscious pedagogy; tradition and transformation

In our work as 21st century teaching musicians, we are positioned at the intersection of tradition and transformation. We straddle the divide, one foot planted within the realm of our long-standing school music curricular programs and the other dipping into less familiar musical content and pedagogical approaches that encompass a world of musical expressions. There are brilliant conventions to continue in the way of music in schools, as there are also rich adventures within reach for teaching and learning the world’s musical cultures. Many-splendored examples of folk music, popular music, and art music are there in real and virtual communities, and the musicians who know this music live down the street and around the corner as well as they are also easily accessible in 2-D all across the globe. We are challenged to know well who our learners are, what music we can teach that is deeply meaningful to them, what music from outside their experience yet sure to inspire them to think in more broadly musical ways, and how to teach the music in ways that respect the sound, and the cultural behaviors and values, of the music from its origin source on over to the students.

Even in the wake of a desire to sustain traditions, transformations can happen. The world is rapidly changing, and transportation, technology, and all manner of telecommunications have introduced changes to the societies in which we live and the schools in which we work. Migrations have colored the composite of our local communities, and we have awakened to other ways of the world’s cultures through a steady flow of images, messages, and sounds. The decisive technology of just a generation,

beginning in the late 1990s, has brought humankind to a state of connectivity never before known in the history of the world. Through technology and the media, social relationships have formed that encompass both local and global communities, and that have the potential to increase civic engagement and intercultural understanding across cultures. Technology has changed the ways of education and learning both in school and on the far outside of the old red brick institutions, and has offered greater opportunities to the many-splendored musical and artistic practices of all humanity. Even as some musical traditions are maintained, others are infused with new ideas from multiple cultures.

We live in a head-spinning time of cultural-crossings, and music education sits at the junction of tradition and transformation. We are at a juncture, poised to withdraw from or advance to change that reflects the demographic composite of our communities, the small world in which we live, the fast flow of ideas and exchanges that are there for us to experience. I share a slice of my own story, before I was an ethnomusicologist, or a university educator, when I was a first-year school music teacher. Because we all came from somewhere, this is my story of transition from conventional music education through an awakening to greater diversity. As so many teaching musicians are making our way through “the change”, we have much to share in the ways that society is impacting our work as musicians and teachers.

There was a time when a school music teacher thought that she should be the font of all musical knowledge, the keeper of facts, the epitome of a bottom-line veracity in her decisions and interpretations. She believed that teaching was about what she knew from her university music major studies and what she would musically “give” to her students, that she should be the hub and heart of a community of young learners in her classes who could come to know the music as she knew it. Oh, and she really did know the music: She could sing many songs in French, German and Italian, and play many instruments as per her studio studies in piano and her methods courses that were geared to how to play scales on orchestral instruments. She could make sense out of complex musical works, and would lead students to perform and listen analytically to working out their meanings and figuring out why the music was important to people of a time and place. Like the many-armed, multitasking Hindu god, she was the source calling attention to herself, reaching out and drawing student to the music that they should know.

True confessions: I was this music teacher. In the mid-1970s, in my first year of teaching, I thought I needed to know everything about music (that was Western art music). Fresh from my university degree in music education, the music we’d made was Western art music, and the music teaching that was modelled in methods classes and supervised teaching internships was monoculturally Western. Despite my curiosities and even engagements with other musical styles in my younger life, I hid those folk and popular music styles in a secret place in my past, far away from the focus of my professional work. Instead, I stormed through my studies of music of the Baroque, the Viennese classical period, the 19th century, and gave a good look at the experimental music compositions of the 20th century. In my first years of teaching, I stayed up late to fastidiously put

lesson-after-lesson together, choosing scores, selecting recordings, studying the basal music textbook series of materials, and rehearsing--singing, playing and conducting--the music that I would bring to the students the next day. I was weary from the preparations, but that was my professional task: To bring the music of the great Western way to the students.

People have moments of reckoning, thankfully. For me, it was one little girl’s observation of my car collection of the recordings of James Brown, Nina Simone, and Stevie Wonder, who grilled me (I wrote her questions my diary on that remarkable day in March 1975): “Why you got those cassettes but you never let us listen? You think we don’t know James Brown or something? You know what his songs mean? How come you listen to Black music, anyway?”

That was the opening to my conversion, to coming through the sea change, from reckoning with what music I taught and how I taught it. Music with a capital “W”: Western art music, music of my elite musical education and training, that I delivered to students without their input, that was fully notated, that was all about me and the line I’d fallen for hook-line-and-sinker in my methods courses. “The rest is history”, as they say, beginning with the unravelling of a false notion of what music education is all about. There came the start-up of listening to the students, mixing up the musical styles, pulling out the folk musical “secrets” I treasured, dipping into popular music, featuring a varied diet of musical possibilities, searching the music together for insights and perspectives on people and culture (and music), and having conversations about what music means to people of any time and any place in the world. It took a child to set me on track (Campbell, 2018).

Trails of Musical-Cultural Diversity

With the growth of cultural diversity in schools and communities, and the rise of an enveloping global network, comes the rationale for featuring many of the world’s musical splendors for students to listen to, to sing, play, dance, and understand. We 21st century teachers require plausible pathways for diversifying music classes and rehearsal sessions, in venues that extend from preschool to post-college and everywhere in between, in elementary, secondary, and tertiary-level education. Mandates are there in our educational institutions to diversify the contents of various courses, including music classes and ensembles, and curiosities are leading to a greater commitment in multiculturalizing and globalizing music programs in educational settings of every sort. Some trails have been blazed with regard to music, education, and diversity, while other trails, in many localities, are lying in wait for pioneering teaching musicians to develop.

Internationally, music teachers are responding to diversity by meeting the spectrum of individual needs that culturally diverse learners bring to classes and lessons. Some teachers are taking stock of the settings of the school in which they teach, highlighting the music and musicians who are present in nearby neighborhoods and local communities. Through culturally sensitive 21st century music education practices, some teachers are giving their best efforts to work with diversity that is musical, pedagogical and responsive

to the cultural heritages of locally living students, their families, and their communities. As a result of various perspectives on diversity, some teachers are attending to issues of social justice and educational equity, and are working to highlight music that is easily accessible in the community and even already familiar to their learners. Teachers may be teaching with demographic diversity in mind, standing up for a musical education that is reflective of the diversity of their student populations and of their local neighborhood surrounds. In such cases, salsa and reggaeton may feature in school music programs of Puerto Rican communities, gospel-style singing may be on the docket for teaching students of African American heritage, and guitar classes may be built in to curricular programs of students in communities where Anglo-American bluegrass and country music guitar-bands are valued.

Meanwhile, other teachers are asking the question, “How can I teach music that is distant and distinctive from the music that surrounds my students?” They wonder about bringing music from far-away places into the lives of their students. They hope to teach salsa and reggaeton, gospel music, and Anglo-American oriented bluegrass and country music because their students are far removed from these expressive cultures. These teachers may feature music in China, Egypt, Iran, Korea (South and North), Mali, the Philippines, Russia, and Syria partly because of the musical inventions in these cultures and partly because of the way in which music may lead to an honoring and respect by students of people in countries in turmoil or transition. Close-up and personal, whether in person or through the resources available on the internet, teachers are recognizing that a culturally responsive teaching approach is critical in every school circumstance. They are seeking and finding ways to connect their students to communities through music.

Teaching the World’s Musical Cultures

Particularly since the middle of the 20th century, music teachers are aiming for an active commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in their classrooms and ensembles. Among attempts at teaching the world’s musical cultures, one means that has morphed into a pedagogical pathway of its own is World Music Pedagogy (WMP) (Campbell, 2004). This method arises from the nexus of ethnomusicological principles and elemental features of multicultural education, and has very much in mind the in-school instructional process of musically educating children with multicultural, intercultural and global aims in mind. Musical goals are enhanced rather than compromised in this method, largely through the construction of learning experiences that are fully multicultural in nature and extent, and that underscore music’s sonic structures and social contexts as well as its meanings and values within cultures of practice. World Music Pedagogy takes aim at cross-disciplinary

issues in music, education, and culture, detailing theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and learning the world’s musical cultures in ways that contribute to the diversification of repertoire and instructional approaches (Campbell, 2018).

An amalgam of multiple techniques of strong and effective teaching, World Music Pedagogy addresses diversity head on from a musical perspective, and presses at how teachers of children and youth, from earliest childhood through adolescence, can facilitate experiences and understandings of any and all music, from anywhere in the world, for their students. The method challenges the adage that “the West is best”, even as it recognizes the legacy of long-standing Western classical music genres in school classrooms and rehearsal halls. It suggests that the music of a school’s local community, while rightfully an important component of curricular content, need not be the singular focus for diversifying an educational program, particularly now that all the musical world is within reach through recordings, video-recordings, and websites. With interculturality and a global consciousness in mind, WMP claims that since musical expressions of the world’s cultures are accessible for listeners to learn, that it is their listening that can lead them to their development as singers, players, dancers, and inventive creators of any musical selection. World Music Pedagogy offers ways and means for diversifying the music that is taught and learned in schools, so that children and youth can know a wider palette of expressive practices that they can cherish all their lifetimes long.

Through a teaching and learning process that is based on the dimensions of World Music Pedagogy, the ears of students of every level and circumstance will fill with a spectrum of musical sounds, even as an array of mindful understandings will be developed by them on music as a world phenomenon. These varied styles can move them beyond melodies in major mode, and rhythms in duple meter, and songs with standard three-chord harmonies. Because the ultimate outcome of the WMP process is musical understanding that is both broad and deep, and that is both multicultural and global, then there is every good reason for spreading out the repertoire for students so to encompass experiences in Spanish flamenco, Lakota Sioux powwow, Hindustani North Indian khyal, Saami joik, Egyptian maqam, Scottish strathsprey, Mexican ranchera, Brazilian samba, Samoan sa-sa, and ngoma of the Akan, Ewe, Mandinka, and Yoruba people. With every musical expression that is experienced and learned, there is a deepened sense by learners of the many splendors of the musical art. The culture-specific treatment of elemental musical features holds great fascination to students, even as the discovery of cross-cultural similarities of musical cultures underscores the meaning of music as Music with a capitol “M”, all music, as fitting a pan-human spectrum of musical we truly are.

As the world spins, it follows that a teacher’s commitment to the development of meaningful musical experiences from a particular place in the world may in fact shine light

upon people whose cultures are troubled, misunderstood, and in the midst of geopolitical challenges. Music functions for students as a window on these places and people, a gateway through which musical meaning is understood as part of people’s cultural identity, their histories, current events, and everyday lives. Teachers, then, hold keys to cultural respect and understanding, because as music affords powerful (and beautiful) encounters, so do their students make the transfer of their compelling musical experiences to a genuine curiosity and regard for the music-makers and their cultural values. In fascinating ways, then, music teachers can find themselves in ambassadorial positions of a sort, as the music they share with students serves as a bridge to cultural understanding. Through application of World Music Pedagogy to a traditional Korean changgo rhythm, or a maqam-based melody out of the Levant region of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, or a lyrical song from Ukraine, or a kulintang gong sequence from the Phillipines, teachers make a difference in the way their students think about the world of music, musicians, and people at large.

Listening at the Pedagogical Core

As music is the aural art, so too is the pedagogy of music—its transmission, teaching and learning—linked to the art of listening. The oral-aural art of music is celebrated through the application of multiple listening experiences that reach progressively deeper into the music, and that lead learners from initially picking out musical features, through partial participation in the act of recreating the music, and to a fully informed performance with all the musical nuances that no system of music notation could ever represent. The ear catches what notation simply cannot represent, and with every opportunity to listen and every invitation to sing or play the music, the connection between listening and musical expression is evident. In particular, the initial three (of five) dimensions of World Music Pedagogy rely on repeating listening encounters, so that learners can experience the musical features by ear as they graduate to participatory musicking and then full-out performance of the music precisely as it sounds. In the ever-important experience of creative composition and improvisation, all of the prior (and continuing) opportunities to listen provide students with a vocabulary of sonorous possibilities for their spontaneous or deliberately fashioned expressions. These new creations are thus musically informed by the logic and beauty of works they’ve experienced by ear, and by the musical features that they have derived from listening.

World Music Pedagogy acknowledges not only the importance of teaching more of the world’s musical cultures from earliest childhood through elementary and secondary school music education, and in university-level studies as well, but also the cultural behaviors associated with the music. Once again, listening to initially unfamiliar, “strange”,

and “new” (to them) instruments and vocal styles results in curiosity by students to understand why the music sounds the way it by people in a particular place. Here then comes the integration of ideas that fill out the stories behind the music, and that fosters cultural understanding that was first initiated through the musical sound. From a pedagogical standpoint, WMP plays to a set of dimensions that help teachers to bring the music to students through the oral tradition, into the ear, “the bloodstream”, the brain and the body. Understanding music of the world’s cultures begins with listening, as the art of listening is front and center in a process that is applicable to any and all musical cultures, genres, and pieces.

Education-Relevant Ideals in Ethnomusicology

Any consideration of diversity as it relates to music as a local and global phenomenon, and to the education and training of students to know music broadly and deeply as a pan-human phenomenon, is ultimately linked to ethnomusicology. This hybrid field, a discipline that might be best described as a “humanistic social science”, arose from the work of musicologists whose interests are traditionally the sonic structures of music, and anthropologists who examine the human experience within societies and cultures. As the study of music as a reflection of culture, ethnomusicology is focused on understanding human musical life—how people use music, perform it, compose it, and think about it (Nettl, 2015). Ethnomusicology seeks to understand the nature of music as it is expressed, learned, listened to, and valued by the full spectrum of humanity. Young and old, urban and rural, “western” and “non-western”, people are defined by the music they make, and not only the sonic features of the music but also the behaviors and beliefs of musicians and listeners are of interest and attention by scholars of ethnomusicology.

Research in ethnomusicology embraces the study of individual music cultures (such as Irish flute of Clare County, Ireland), comparative study of multiple cultures (such as improvisation practices in India, Iran, and Turkey), music within its cultural context (such as rhumba music in a Havana, Cuba, club) or in diaspora (Mexican American music in East LA or Chicago). The research can be more or less musicological, replete with musical descriptions, sonic-structural analyses, and transcriptions in Western staff notation. It can be anthropological, with attention given to the people as they behave musically, attending to how music is used (such as in ritual, for social occasions, in political messages, in churches and schools). Ethnomusicology is typically the study of living cultures, whether long-running or in new formations, and typically enjoys a considerable attention to musical function and to the meaning and value of the music to the people how make it.

For music educators and teaching musicians, ethnomusicology sends a clear message that music is more than the sound itself. Music is what people do with it, and what it does for people. Music is emotional expression for people everywhere in the world, a means of cultural identity, and a way of building relationships with those who enter into the music together. The stories behind the music are important for clarifying music’s uses, and it is the work of ethnomusicologists that help to paint the picture of music in the lives of those who value it. By going to the musicians, getting the back-stories, the histories and herstories, even the “mythstories” that people share, ethnomusicologists provide a fuller sense of music as sound, behavior, and values. Now, there is a growing acceptance that ethnomusicology’s emphasis on music-culture studies offer prospects for teaching and learning music, and about musicians, and about the social and cultural context of a musical work (Rice, 2014).

Decades of work by educators in the movement to diversify musical content in the curriculum have prompted connections and collaborations of educators with ethnomusicologists in searching out songs, instrumental music, and dances that may personify and exemplify a musical culture. Frequently, teachers have been intent on connecting with scholars who might help them with recommending music that would reach-and-teach students in elementary and secondary school music settings. In a reductive sense, ethnomusicologists sometimes have been seen by teachers as sources of “the goods”: Music as “material” only, without attention to transmission processes and learning behaviors, or music’s contexts, functions or meanings. Today, there is evolving understanding of the outcomes of collaborations between educators, ethnomusicologists, culture-bearers and heritage musicians in providing learners with music that stands for itself, and music learning experiences that comprise oral/aural experiences or experiences in reading other notation systems (Schippers, 2010). Musical selections are less often seen as representing all the people in a cultural group, but as opportunities for learners to slip inside artistic and social expressions that are musically beautiful and meaningful to a few, or even to an individual, within a culture (rather than to the entirety of a culture).

From an ethnomusicological perspective comes the attention in World Music Pedagogy to honoring orality/aurality in the teaching-learning process, finding meaning through interdisciplinary probing of why the music sounds the way it does in a culture, and recognizing the importance of music as a living expression that may sound differently (and distinctively) in the voices and instruments of people who are closer and further from the cultural center of the music. Music educators and teaching musicians do well to listen carefully with their students to recordings of the origin source of the music, and to pay tribute to the musicians whose music it is. At the same time, they are reasonable in recognizing that with every performing musician, and in every performance rendition, the

music is uniquely expressed in ways that are genuine and true to the musician even while the link to the origin music is clearly in evidence. Further, given the vast array of the world’s musical styles that highlight spontaneous creative expression, the WMP process is again within the scope of the ethnomusicological perspective in encouraging listeners to figure out the music in order to assimilate it into their systems. In educationally valid terms, musical experience and study flow easily into the creating act, as learners progress through a full sweep of the music to the point of making the music their own in inventive new ways.

Ethnomusicologists are uniquely drawn to the struggles of the oppressed, the challenges of minority groups, the lives of those who have been ill-treated, subjugated, even tyrannized. Teachers, too, tune to the need by their young students to be understood, respected and supported--across the board, and many are aware of the neighborhoods their students call home and what color, creed, or class may characterize them. For teachers, an ethnomusicological lens on their work can strengthen their own conviction of the critical importance of music in building human relationships. Ethnomusicology is a music-centered and people-centered field that is imbued with an impassioned spirit of activism, and teachers with a lens on ethnomusicology gain further understandings of how best to support the struggles of the marginalized.

Intersections of Music, Pedagogy, and Culture

From a belief in the principles of democracy, the ideals of education and ethnomusicology have coalesced into a driving force for the steady presence of musical diversity in school music classrooms and rehearsal halls. The emergence of World Music Pedagogy provides a weaving of music and cultural studies into the teaching-learning process, and suggests that the exclusion of musical styles for study is inherently the exclusion of the people whose music it is, and that music of all cultures are worthy of study--regardless of the class or ensemble. Democratically speaking, this approach maintains that the principles of equity and inclusion are in action in the design of the curriculum, the selection of the repertoire, and the full play-out of regular encounters with the world’s musical expressions. It considers the complexities of diversifying the musical content of the curriculum, the multicultural-intercultural facets of the teaching-learning interface, and the myriad ways in which social justice is achieved through a transformative design of an equitable education in and through music. World Music Pedagogy provides a pathway for fashioning powerful experiences in knowing diverse musical practices, systems, and cultures, and upholds music as the multicultural-intercultural and international phenomenon that it truly is.

With the growth of multicultural awareness in society and its schools, World Music Pedagogy has emerged from earlier efforts by educators, ethnomusicologists, and artist-

musicians to seek effective means for teaching and learning the beauty and logic of the world’s musical cultures. For well over a half century, various programs and projects have come forward to multiculturalize and globalize school music studies. Across North America, and internationally, declarations have been issued, textbooks have been revised and expanded, and conferences, symposia, and a steady stream of workshops have given focus to methods and materials that address issues of cultural diversity in music education. Schools and their communities can boast exceptional programs for children and youth of West African drum-and-dance troupes, Trinidadian steelbands, Gospel choirs, Zimarimbas (Zimbabwean marimba ensembles), and Mexican mariachis. There are exemplary study modules or curricular units of “music in the Americas” and “music of the African diaspora” that are in practice in various elementary and secondary schools, some that feature visits by culture-bearing heritage musicians who perform, facilitate participatory experiences, and otherwise highlight or extend studies of a particular people and place in the world. Noteworthy programs in music education, including those that maintain long-standing band, choir, and orchestra programs, have taken on the occasional song from South Africa or Samoa or an instrumental arrangement from Senegal or the Sioux Nation to experience and study.

Five dimensions of World Music Pedagogy can be applied to any selection of music, from anywhere on earth (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Five Dimensions of World Music Pedagogy

***Attentive Listening**

(Multiple directed listening experiences)

***Engaged Listening**

(Participatory musicking; Active participation while listening)

***Enactive Listening**

(Performance through continued oral-aural listening)

***Creating World Music**

(Inventions in the style of a studied selection)

***Integrating World Music**

(Connections of music to disciplines, fields, topics)

Since music specialist teachers frequently go it alone in their classrooms and rehearsal settings and do not typically have the wherewithal to work with culture-bearers from the

community nor to have instruments from every corner of the world, the WMP process acknowledges the importance of recordings to initiate and advance the learning of the world’s musical expressions. With the use of historic recordings of folk and traditional music in their rustic surrounds to contemporary productions of current performers who mix older and newer layers of music into newly fused forms, teachers can facilitate learning through the phases, offering students opportunities to grow more widely and deeply musical, as well as more culturally compassionate, over time.

Three listen-to-learn dimensions are core to the process of World Music Pedagogy: (1) Attentive Listening, directed and focused on musical elements and structures, and guided by specific points of attention; (2) Engaged Listening, participatory listening, or the active participation by a listener in some extent of music-making (by singing a melody, patting a rhythm, playing a percussion part, moving to a dance pattern); and (3) Enactive Listening, the performance of a work in which, through intensive listening to every musical nuance, the music is re-created in as stylistically accurate a way as possible. These listening dimensions may sit as separate entities within a class session, or they may be linked in a sequence in which attentive listening leads to participation (engaged listening) and performance (enactive listening). To these three listening phases come also two more essential dimensions: (4) Creating World Music, the invention by students of new music in the style of a musical model through composition, improvisation, songwriting, and even the act of extending a piece just “a bit” beyond what is represented of it on a recording; and (5) Integrating World Music, the examination of music as it connects to culture, and as it illuminates a prism-like grasp of subjects as varied as history, geography, language and literature, the sciences, and the visual and performing arts. These dimensions may quite naturally seep in between and around the listening dimensions, rather than to be reserved chronologically for a point later in the process.

While listening inherently evolves and proceeds across the three phases, the dimensions are not lock-step but rather there to be used with a balance of logic, flexibility, and relevance to the teaching-learning situation. Altogether, these five WMP ways of knowing can feature in a teacher’s facilitation for her students of music as sound, behavior, and values. The dimensions do not preclude the possibilities for co-teaching with culture bearers, heritage musicians, or with teachers of other subject areas (especially language arts or the social sciences), but as assembled they do suggest that a thorough-going understanding of music cultures can happen through the course of these phases. World Music Pedagogy offers a practical course for honoring those whose music it is by listening and learning it well enough to participate in it, to enact it through performance, to fashion it in creative new ways, and to understand its meaning in culture.

Joining the World in and through Music

More than ever, the world we live in requires the development of a genuine cultural sensitivity for one another. Such empathy typically does not come naturally, but is a result of an education that promotes cultural knowledge and provides for the development of respect for distinctive ways of thinking, doing, and being. Music is a powerful bridge between cultures, and a way into the heart of a people who may at first appear “strange” or “different”, a perception that too easily can catapult to suspicion and fear, the very elements present in times and places when things (can) fall part. Such circumstances can be avoided when teachers delve into the intricacies of a musical culture, genre, or particular work, and facilitate the experiences that lead to their students’ musical and cultural understanding. It is through experiences that fully activate their listening ears, as well as a resonating of their minds and the bodies, that music’s many-splendored experience can lead to sympathetic awareness and compassion. Then, even the most distant music can captivate and compel the learner, so that the riveting musical experience inspires a cultural curiosity and a cultural respect and honoring.

Avanti! In troubled times like these, it takes the commitment of thoughtful teachers to go forward in countering violence, in seeking remedies to student angst and unease, and in steering students from bias and bigotry to tolerance, acceptance, and genuine respect. With an embrace of music as a pan-human phenomenon in all of its rich cultural variety, thus qualifying it as worthy of inclusion in meaningful learning encounters, the capacity of teachers is invincible for holding on to cherished traditions even as they respond to the inevitable transformations that abound in society and its schools.

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